



# EGYPT

## Common Country Assessment

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The Egypt Common Country Assessment is based on contributions prepared through January 2001. In some instances, information was added or updated through May 2001. Such changes are usually obvious or are noted in the text.

The information presented in the Common Country Assessment is derived from many sources and thus inevitably covers a wide range of data quality. Official government data have been used whenever possible. In the absence of comprehensive or representative national data, estimates made by the responsible United Nations agencies have been used following consultation with national counterparts. Statements made in this document do not reflect the official position of the Government of Egypt or any of its agencies or departments. All responsibility for error rests with the United Nations Team in Egypt.

## Acknowledgments

These acknowledgments cannot do justice to the many individuals and organizations that contributed their knowledge, advice, time, and guidance to establishing the first United Nations Common Country Assessment in Egypt. This publication is but a summary of the databases and analysis in evolution, but it captures the dedication of many to Egypt's effort to put knowledge at the service of its citizens and policy makers.

The Resident Coordinator called upon all the United Nations agencies in Egypt to make a commitment to this first Common Country Assessment (CCA). They did so, as did the World Bank. There has been no hierarchy of authority, only the designation by United Nations agency heads of staff members who would join them in offering their time and expertise to this exercise, working closely with official counterparts and other national experts in Egypt.

The following United Nations Agencies served as CCA team and theme Leaders: the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), overall responsibility; the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Population and Health; the International Labour Organization (ILO), Employment; UNICEF, Children at Risk; the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), Gender; the World Food Program (WFP), Food Security and Nutrition; the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Education; the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), Communications and Information Technology; UNDP, Governance, Political, and Civil Rights; the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), The Environment; UNESCO, Culture. A full list of CCA team leaders and members appears in the following pages.

We acknowledge those organizations that also assigned staff members to work on specific themes. These included, in addition to those listed above: the World Bank's Egypt Country Office, the United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention (ODCCP) Regional Office in Egypt, the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the United Nations Information Centre in Egypt (UNIC), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and the Regional Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Each CCA thematic group worked with its official counterparts in the Government of Egypt to review data and issues. The United Nations Common Country Assessment Team acknowledges in particular the resources and guidance contributed by:

- The Institute of National Planning (Egypt Human Development Reports)
- The National Council for Childhood and Motherhood
- The National Council for Women
- The Ministry of Insurance and Social Affairs
- The Ministry of Agriculture and Land Reclamation
- The Ministry of Health and Population
- The Ministry of Education

The Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS)  
The Information and Decision Support Centre (IDSC)

A list of government counterparts and other CCA contributors appears in the following pages. The wealth of available data and expertise was a challenge to absorb and focus in this summary publication. We recognize, in particular, the efforts of our editor, Margaret Elliott, who transformed the many voluminous CCA contributions and other resource documents into a succinct, readable final draft. Zeinab Weng, on behalf of the Resident Coordinator's Office, ensured that the CCA team stayed together through an electronic network. The design of this "virtual" United Nations in Egypt has made the CCA a living exercise. The Information Technology Team of the United Nations in Egypt devised solutions to reach all involved. They set up (and still maintain) a well-organized database of "core" and "optional" indicators that all team members helped define, access, and revise. We acknowledge in particular Dalia Abou-Senna (UNICEF), Sherif El Tokali (UNDP), and Charlotte Mortensen (WFP) for their unfailing support, imaginative solutions, and professionalism.

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## Acronyms, Abbreviations, and Terminology

bcm	billion cubic meters
CAPMAS	Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics
CCA	Common Country Assessment
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CIT	Communications and information technology
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
daya	traditional birth attendant
DRC	Domestic Resource Cost
EDHS	Egypt Demographic and Health Survey
EEAA	Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency
EHDR	Egypt Human Development Report
ERSAP	Economic Reform and Structural Adjustment Program
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization
feddan	one feddan equal roughly one acre
FGC	Female genital cutting
FGM	Female genital mutilation
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNP	Gross National Product
GOE	Government of Egypt
HIECS	Household Income, Expenditure, and Consumption Survey
ICPD	International Conference on Population and Development
IDSC	Information and Decision Support Centre of the Egyptian Cabinet
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute
IIP	Irrigation Improvement Project
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMR	Infant mortality rate
INP	Institute of National Planning
IOM	International Organization for Migration
ISP	Internet service provider
IT	Information technology
IUD	Intrauterine device
MALR	Ministry of Agriculture and Land Reclamation
MISA	Ministry of Insurance and Social Affairs
MOHP	Ministry of Health and Population
MOMM	Ministry of Manpower and Migration
MSEA	Ministry of State for Environmental Affairs
MWRI	Ministry of Water Resources and Irrigation
NCCM	National Council for Childhood and Motherhood
NCW	National Council for Women
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OPV3	Oral polio vaccine (third dose)
OSH	Occupational safety and health
PAPED	Pan Arab Project for Educational Information Systems
RDA	Recommended daily allowance
SFD	Social Fund for Development

TACC	Technology Access Community Centre
TFR	Total fertility rate
TRA	Telecommunications Regulatory Authority
U5MR	Under-five mortality rate
UN	United Nations
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNIC	United Nations Information Centre
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UNODCCP	United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WFP	World Food Program
WHO	World Health Organization

# EGYPT

## Common Country Assessment



## I. Introduction

The United Nations country team in Egypt completed its first Common Country Assessment (CCA) in the year 2000. The assessment was a collaborative effort undertaken to review Egypt's national development situation and identify key issues as a basis for advocacy, policy dialogue, and more effective coordination of development assistance. The 22 United Nations agencies in Egypt, led by the resident coordinator, regarded the preparation of the CCA as both a millennium opportunity and a commitment to the Secretary-General's program to ready the United Nations for the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Egypt began the new millennium with an ultra-modern sound-and-light media event at the pyramids as a statement of its pride in the country's pharaonic past as well as its readiness to adapt to the new opportunities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In September 2000 President Mubarak<sup>1</sup> committed Egypt to a social development agenda that gives special emphasis to the country's human resources, especially its children and women, and to sharing the benefits of growth more equitably among all Egyptians. In September 2000, the Secretary-General<sup>2</sup> reported to the heads of state assembled at the Millennium Summit that "the central challenge we face today is to ensure that globalisation becomes a positive force for all the world's people, instead of leaving billions of them behind..."

The Government of Egypt and the United Nations share a proud history of mutual respect and support that dates to the founding of the United Nations in 1945. It was thus only fitting that Egypt and the United Nations should enter this new millennium with a common strategic vision of how the United Nations could better foster the broad partnerships needed to address Egypt's development agenda for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The United Nations Development Assistant Framework (UNDAF) will summarize this common vision when it is published early in 2002. The Common Country Assessment serves as the analytical basis of the UNDAF. This document summarizes the results of the Common Country Assessment as well as the process of its preparation. It also presents recommendations for making the Common Country Assessment a continuous process to further enhance shared understanding of Egypt's development achievements and challenges.

## II. The CCA: Purpose And Process

The first Egypt Common Country Assessment (CCA) was a review of the national development situation undertaken by the United Nations system in collaboration with government ministries, non-governmental organizations, research institutes, and the donor community.

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<sup>1</sup> The President's speech to the National Conference for Social Development, Cairo, September 2000.

<sup>2</sup> The Secretary-General's report to the Millennium Summit, "We, the Peoples: The Role of the United Nations in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century," New York, September 2000.

**Purpose.** The purpose of the CCA was to arrive at a common understanding of Egypt's principal development challenges as the basis for a common vision, the UNDAF. The overall objective was to ensure more effective coordination among the partners of the United Nations system in support of Egypt's development agenda, with much greater emphasis on human development, human rights, and environmental concerns.

**Participating agencies.** Nineteen United Nations (UN) agencies took part in the preparation of the CCA. A smaller set of four agencies, those referred to as members of the United Nations Development Group, had previously made a commitment to the Secretary-General's call for improvement in the efficiency and effectiveness of UN development operations at the country level. By early 2001, their executive boards expected them to have "harmonized" their country programs, i.e., to have agreed on common starting and ending dates of program cycles that also coincided with the Government of Egypt's development planning cycle. These agencies were the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the World Food Program (WFP). Two others joined them in the harmonization process, one at its own, local initiative (the United Nations Organization for Drug Control and Crime Prevention, ODCCP) and the other at the initiative of its headquarters (the World Health Organization, WHO). This group of six agencies was expected to press the CCA process forward. However, one notable feature of the Egypt experience has been the readiness of other UN agencies to join in actively. Particularly noteworthy has been the contribution of the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The UN country team asked UNICEF to serve as team leader for the Common Country Assessment and UNFPA for the United Nations Development Assistance Framework.

**National partners.** As noted in the introduction to this section, Egyptian experts from a wide range of governmental and non-governmental organizations worked in close collaboration with UN agencies to assess Egypt's development needs and priorities. While these experts were not asked to clear contributions or documents with their respective organizations, the working groups described below were in regular contact with their national counterparts and felt confident upon submitting their CCA contributions that they had reached agreement on most (if not quite all) significant points.

**Strategy.** The United Nations country team made three strategic decisions at the outset:

- ?? Identify development areas in which the UN has the ability to make key contributions.
- ?? Rely on Egyptian centres of excellence and their United Nations counterparts in-country.
- ?? Build an open, interactive database drawing on this combined in-country expertise.

**The CCA process.** The UN country team, in consultation with its national partners, selected from among the main development opportunities and challenges

facing Egypt those areas of key interest to Egypt in which the United Nations has a significant capacity to provide advocacy, policy, and development assistance.

Human development emerged as having overriding importance: developing Egypt's human resources to their fullest potential is essential to poverty reduction as well as to sustained, dynamic economic growth.

The country team then looked again at the challenges and divided them into themes to be addressed by working groups. Human resource development, because of its importance, was subdivided so that it might be dealt with more thoroughly and effectively by additional thematic groups.

Agency heads assigned members of their staffs with specialized knowledge of relevant issues to the working groups formed to address each theme. A senior member of the UN country team with expertise in the topic led each working group. The country team made a decision to rely on the knowledge resources of the working groups and their national partners, keeping any form of paid consultancies to an absolute minimum.

Finally, the country team established a shared electronic database of agreed-upon indicators for measuring Egypt's progress towards achieving specific development goals and objectives.

**The CCA team.** The UN staff members who contributed to the CCA, a subset of the UN country team, are referred to as the "CCA team" in subsequent sections of this document.

### III. Summary of Main Findings

The following points emerged with great clarity from the assessment process:

- ?? Egypt has the knowledge and capacity to address the development challenges it faces.
- ?? Putting this knowledge together in appropriate forms for policy makers, donors, and the public, and making certain that it is effectively shared for action, is where the challenge lies.
- ?? There is a new willingness in Egypt to put forward difficult, and sometimes sensitive, issues; this willingness must be met by a seriousness of purpose and a sharing of useful experience on the part of the United Nations and other donors.

The opportunities for developing Egypt's human resources and the need to do so equitably across the country became more and more striking as the assessment progressed:

- ?? Egypt's population is healthier, better educated, and more youthful than ever before. Expectations, however, are expanding more rapidly than opportunities. Nearly 600,000 new jobs must be created each year to accommodate new entrants to the labour market.
- ?? The quality of preparation for new employment opportunities is not keeping pace with the needs of a changing marketplace.

?? Girls are nearly as likely to continue in school as boys once they enter the classroom, but there are still parts of the country where as many as one-third of girls never have the opportunity to go to school.

?? The digital divide is drawing deep boundary lines between those with access to new forms of communication and learning and those without. Egypt has developed a highly sophisticated communication and information infrastructure. The opportunities are there for an expansive opening of these facilities to those who currently lack access.

The assessment process revealed two resources for growth that have long been ignored or taken for granted: 1) Egypt's girls and women and 2) the water resources of the Nile. The CCA thus takes a particularly close look at gender issues, both as a separate theme and across most of the themes that compose the assessment. It also reviews carefully the inextricably linked issues of water, agriculture, pollution, and the environment.

A third resource, Egypt's cultural heritage, is of critical importance to the country's future and to its place among the world of nations. While identified by the CCA team as deserving special attention, the team found that it did not have sufficient professional resources to assess the situation adequately. The Government of Egypt and the United Nations made history in mounting the international salvage operation that rescued the monuments of Nubia from submersion in the waters of Lake Nasser behind the Aswan High Dam. Under the guidance of UNESCO, and in close cooperation with donors and private companies, this campaign was credited with feats of innovation in modern engineering worthy of the colossal ancient monuments they were designed to protect. Although not included as a thematic section of the CCA, managing the often competing priorities of development and the protection of cultural heritage will receive expert attention in the UNDAF.

#### **IV. Tracking Development Goals**

The Government of Egypt has prepared a twenty-year vision for development that covers the period 1997-2017. This vision is intended to serve as a framework for the development of a series of five-year plans. Experience has shown that the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) is usually more successful when such a government vision is already in place, i.e., that the government planning and UNDAF processes are mutually reinforcing.

Egypt's development goals and priorities are set forth not only in government plans and policies. They are also reflected in Egypt's commitments to the international agreements and action plans developed jointly by all UN member states.

Agreement on indicators for tracking progress against specific development goals has become one of the hallmarks of the international action programs forged through the United Nations global conferences of the 1990s. The goals reviewed at the Millennium Summit in September 2000, especially the poverty reduction targets and strategies for attaining them by 2015, build on this valuable experience for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Egypt has been an important player in United Nations conferences and served as one of the six initiator countries of the first conference of the 1990s, the World

Summit for Children, which called on heads of state to commit themselves to goals that could be achieved by the year 2000. Egypt has also participated in and subscribed to other global initiatives and declarations organized under the auspices of the United Nations system throughout the 1990s. In addition to the World Summit for Children, these include the World Conference on Education for All, the UN Conference on Environment and Development, the World Conference on Human Rights, the International Conference on Population and Development, the World Summit for Social Development, the Fourth World Conference on Women, the Second UN Conference on Human Settlements, and the World Food Summit.

Over the decade of the 1990s, Egypt has reported periodically on its progress in meeting specific goals and implementing various human rights treaties. In 2000, Egypt's National Council for Women prepared a report on implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women. Egypt's National Council for Childhood and Motherhood prepared a similar report on implementation of the Convention of the Rights of the Child as well as a report to the Secretary-General on follow-up to the World Summit for Children. The reports note the need to improve monitoring and to better promote an understanding of such conventions among legal practitioners, legislators, and the general public. The CCA team contributed to as well as benefited from these national review processes.

The Common Country Assessment uses a core set of indicators for assessing development trends in Egypt nationally, sub-nationally, and by gender across the 1990s. The indicators also measure progress in implementing UN conventions and declarations, the action plans of UN conferences, and various agency mandates.

Section X of the CCA, Sources for the Assessment, describes the process of collecting data and selecting "core" and "optional" indicators. The Annex presents all the CCA indicators (also referred to in other sections of this document as the electronic "CCA database").

## **V. Egypt: Background Information**

Egypt is situated at the northeast corner of the African continent. The total area of Egypt covers approximately one million square kilometres. Much of this land, however, is desert and only about 6% of the entire area is inhabited. Recently, the Egyptian government adopted a policy of land reclamation and fostering new settlements in the deserts.

Administratively, Egypt is divided into 26 governorates plus the city of Luxor. The four urban governorates have no rural population. Each of the other 22 governorates has both urban and rural areas. Nine of these governorates are located in the Nile Delta (Lower Egypt) and eight in the Nile Valley (Upper Egypt). The five frontier governorates (the largest by far and most sparsely populated) are located on the eastern and western boundaries of Egypt.

**Figure 1: Administrative Areas**

Urban	Lower Egypt		Upper Egypt		Frontier
Cairo	Damietta	Gharbia	Giza	Souhag	New Valley
Alexandria	Dakahlia	Menoufia	Beni Suef	Qena	Matrouh
Port Said	Sharkia	Behera	Fayoum	(Luxor city)	North Sinai
Suez	Kalyubia	Ismailia	Menya	Aswan	South Sinai
	Kafr El-Sheikh		Assiut		Red Sea

Source: EDHS 2000

**Development overview: a descriptive snapshot.** Egypt occupies an exceptional geopolitical position among the Arab states and on the African continent. Stability of political leadership within Egypt, extensive donor support for Egypt's economic development, and Egypt's role as a mediator in the Arab-Israeli conflict, have all set the country apart from its neighbors during the 1990s. Egypt has prospered in relative terms over the decade. Its neighbors have not. In a region characterized by conflict, slow or negative growth in comparison to resource potential, and conservatism, Egypt has pursued cautious but well-grounded development strategies and has received generous donor support in return.

**Economic readjustment.** Egypt embarked on an intensive Economic Reform and Structural Adjustment Program (ERSAP) in 1990/91. Market liberalization and privatization are two key strategies of this program. The objective is to transform the sluggish state-dominated economy into a dynamic market economy led by the private sector. The reform program has been widely credited with restoring the macroeconomic structural soundness of the Egyptian economy. However, liberalization policies also appear to have resulted in higher unemployment and increased levels of poverty in some geographic areas. Although poverty estimates vary widely, the 1995/96 Egypt Human Development Report (using the lower poverty line) places the percentage of Egyptians who are poor at 22.5% in urban areas, 23.3% in the countryside, and rural Upper Egypt highest at 33.7%.

The government's commitment to socio-political stability and the protection of vulnerable groups produced a prudently negotiated and designed reform and adjustment program with some increase in social spending despite a fiscal policy to reduce public spending. Social sector spending is one of the two largest categories of expenditures (the other is interest payments on the public debt). Together these two categories consume over half of the recurrent budget. Government commitment to education is strong as reflected in the proportion of its budget allocated to this sector. Whereas overall budget spending fell from 32 to 28% of GDP between 1994 and 1999, the share of education rose from 2.9% to 5.2% of GDP over the same period, with recurrent expenditure increasing somewhat faster than investment expenditure. Public expenditures on health increased from 1.6% of GDP in 1995 to 1.8% in 1997, at a time when public spending declined from 34% to 31% of GDP. Egypt has three main safety net programs, which together accounted for about 2% of GDP or about 4% of total government expenditures in 1999. The largest of these programs is the food subsidy program, which absorbed 1.5% of GDP in 1999; public spending on food subsidies has increased by only 0.1% per annum since the early 1990s.

The pace of structural reforms has slowed during the last two years, but growth has remained strong. GDP growth averaged 3.5% for 1990-1995 and in the

second half of the decade rose continuously from 5.0% in 1996 to 6.4% in 2000. GNP per capita in 2000 was estimated to be \$1,5000.

Nevertheless, the negative impact of the reform program has fallen primarily on the vulnerable, especially children, the elderly, women-headed households, and the urban and rural poor. Cuts in public sector investment and the removal of subsidies on some basic food items have worsened the condition of low-income families.

**Understanding poverty.** The 1995/96 Egypt Human Development Report (EHDR) in a trend analysis for the period 1981-1996 (using the upper poverty line estimates) concluded that the incidence of poverty rose from 30% in 1981/82, to 39% in 1990/91, to 48% in 1995/1996. There is no question about the geographical concentration of the poor. Both the EHDR and a 1998 survey<sup>3</sup> conclude that poverty is at its worst in rural Upper Egypt and among female-headed households everywhere. The United Nations CCA team did not have available to it the data required to analyse poverty in 2000, and welcomes the Government of Egypt's current efforts to analyse new survey data and other sources to achieve a better understanding of the extent, depth, and features of poverty in Egypt.

**Social and political development.** Many of the most important indicators of human development such as life expectancy, child survival, immunization, school enrolment, and access to safe water have improved markedly over the last decade, but disparities in wellbeing and access to services persist along income/social class, urban/rural, and gender lines. Egyptians enjoy higher levels of political freedom than in the past or in many other Arab countries, but the undeniable progress in this area has been hindered by practices that continue to obstruct full political participation. The thematic sections of the Common Country Assessment examine these and other demographic, socio-economic, and political trends over the 1990s.

## VI. Key Issues

The issues that emerged from the Common Country Assessment centre around the need for equitable and sustainable human development that will help break the cycle of poverty.

**Poverty and disparity reduction.** Reducing disparities, increasing access to productive, remunerative employment, and promoting inclusion are viewed as essential for political stability and continued growth.

**Preparing for the future.** Egypt enters the 21<sup>st</sup> century with a sophisticated communication and information infrastructure as well as a young population, healthier and better educated than a decade ago, but one with aspirations that may well exceed the country's relatively slow movement towards opening up to the global marketplace. Laws enacted under conditions of direct state management and control of the national economy continue to dominate the country's legal

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<sup>3</sup> "A Profile of Poverty in Egypt," International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), August 1998.

framework. Trade unions and labour syndicates are still heavily regulated and have a narrowly defined role in negotiating employment conditions. Egypt's out-of-date educational systems and limited experience with broad participatory processes may slow the trajectory required for full inclusion in the new global economy.

**Natural and cultural resources.** The Nile and Egypt's cultural resources are familiar to schoolchildren around the world. They are part of the world's heritage and have a significance that goes far beyond Egypt. They have also made tourism a significant, if volatile, source of economic growth during the 1990s. The stark divide between the rich, green agricultural fields along the Nile and the vast reaches of deserts on either side has long framed Egypt's cultural and economic history. Today modern technology is defying this traditional divide with ambitious plans for a new branch of the Nile into the Western Desert. The Nile is Egypt's main, and almost exclusive, source of fresh water. Egypt recognizes all too well, however, that water scarcity among its neighbors is already fueling conflict on the great river networks of the Middle East and Africa. Water is expected to become an ever more strategic issue in the geopolitics of Egypt's future and in its own development choices.

**Population density and distribution.** Egypt's population of 67 million lives in crowded conditions. The number of persons living within housing units is exceptionally high everywhere. And while the population density of Cairo is 31,750 persons per square kilometre, in some areas of Cairo and Alexandria the number of persons per square kilometre exceeds 100,000. Rather than distinct urban settlements, Egypt's urban pattern is now one of a continuous, unbroken chain along the Nile with high volumes of people and goods moving daily along the same north-south axis. Crowded neighbourhood and housing conditions, especially in informal settlements that lack even the most basic amenities, degrade the physical environment and put increasing stress on human health and interaction.

**The environment.** Issues of the environment – air, noise, and water pollution, the disposal of industrial and human wastes, soil degradation, agricultural chemicals, toxic substances in the workplace – have started to draw the attention of the government and the public. The decision to enforce particular preventive or remedial measures, however, is often difficult and contested because of perceived conflicting needs (i.e., jobs or livelihoods measured against the continuation of polluting practices), the costs of compliance, and competing claims for limited financial resources.

**Population growth.** Population growth will continue to present severe challenges to Egypt's future. Childbearing patterns have changed significantly over the last twenty years, but the dynamic of past improvements in survival will continue to fuel rates of natural increase close to 2%.

**A window of opportunity.** Those under eighteen constitute 45% of the total population and pose a real challenge for the economy to keep pace with the growing demand for jobs. Ten years from now, however, this younger better-educated potential labour force, with fewer young and elderly dependents, will offer a window of opportunity for economic growth if Egypt can mount the expansive, productive marketplace needed to absorb them.

## VII. Themes of the CCA

People are at the heart of the Egypt Common Country Assessment, with particular emphasis on the disadvantaged and the vulnerable.

As previously noted, the United Nations country team, in consultation with its national partners, selected from among the principal development opportunities and challenges facing Egypt those areas in which the United Nations has a significant capacity to provide advocacy, policy, and development assistance to improve the lives of Egyptians.

The cross-cutting issues and themes identified through this process focus on the equitable development of Egypt's human resources and on environmental concerns. Across all the themes, disparities by gender, income level, and place of residence receive close attention.

The thematic sections that follow summarize the assessments prepared by the United Nations working groups in collaboration with their Egyptian counterparts and other development associates. They also draw extensively on studies prepared by the Government of Egypt (see Sources for the Assessment) and national reports on follow-up to UN conferences.

## VIII. Cross-Cutting Issues

An initial review of Egypt's relatively poor indicators on gender pointed to the need to treat gender as a cross-cutting issue. Improvements in the health and education of Egypt's young people, on the other hand, have been especially encouraging over the last decade. Egypt's children and youth, its young human capital, all those under the age eighteen, both girls and boys, stood out as an exceptional opportunity. Accordingly, discussion of these two cross-cutting issues – gender and children and young people – precedes the eight thematic assessments.

### A. Gender

Egypt ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1981 – with a number of reservations – and has since pursued policies, legislation, and programs intended to ensure its implementation. The International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo, 1994) helped both governmental and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) focus more sharply on the reproductive rights and health of women and adolescent girls. Egypt participated actively in both the 1995 Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women and Beijing +5, and committed itself to the Beijing Platform of Action. Egypt was one of two regional focal points selected by the United Nations to organize preparations for NGO participation in the conference. As a result, Egyptian NGOs have been particularly energetic in implementing and following up on the Beijing agenda and in working to have the reservations to the CEDAW lifted.

**The National Council for Women.** In the years following ratification of the CEDAW, Egypt established a number of institutions to advance the status of women. In February 2000, the activities of these organizations were consolidated under the umbrella of the newly formed National Council for Women (NCW). The NCW is directly affiliated to the presidency and works at the highest political

levels. Its aim is to empower Egyptian women in all fields of life. The Council is charged with bringing together government and civil society around policies and strategies for advancing the status of women and solving the problems confronting them. The NCW's mandate includes advocacy for laws to improve women's status, enhancing the role of women in society, promoting women's economic participation, raising awareness of women's rights, and integrating policies and programs that benefit women into Egypt's national development plans. The Council's documentation centre will monitor the situation of women and girls in Egypt, and will make data available for advocacy and policy-making.

**Constraints.** Despite these positive developments, there remain many obstacles to achieving the goal of gender equality in Egypt. Within family and social structures, women generally enjoy little status or authority. There is a large gap between women and men in the area of decision-making, particularly in relation to issues of women's health, family matters, and society. Women are still subjected to constraining traditions and customs whereby they are deprived of educational rights because preference is almost always given to males. In many cases, they are also deprived of being productive members of society because social pressure may force them to marry at an early age and to bear as many children as rapidly as is necessary to satisfy recognized social values and expectations. Girls and women do not enjoy the same recreational benefits as their male counterparts, particularly in rural areas and crowded urban settings. And both women and adolescent girls suffer harassment in public places. Egyptian society still holds traditional attitudes: children come first, men are the breadwinners, and women who work must combine domestic responsibilities with paid employment. Men are still not fully involved in bringing up children. This is seen mostly as the domain of the mother, a view that is reinforced by popular culture and the media.

**Education.** Education is one of the most valuable means of achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women. About half of all Egyptian women are illiterate, and illiteracy is more prevalent in rural areas and among the poor. Despite a reduction in the enrolment gap between girls and boys, many girls in remote and under-served areas are deprived of basic education. Moreover, gender disparity is apparent at all levels of the educational system. The CCA Education section reviews educational reforms, efforts to combat illiteracy, and initiatives to enrol more girls in school.

**Poverty.** Poverty intensifies gender-based inequities. Direct access to financial or other resources is likely to be an important factor in women's autonomy, but few women in Egypt own any assets other than furniture or jewellery. Women also tend to be poorer than men in similar socio-economic circumstances. Available information indicates that poverty is at its worst in rural Upper Egypt and among female-headed households everywhere. Female-headed households are most common in urban areas. Such women are often uneducated, earn less than comparable male-headed households, and are twice as likely to have children aged 6-15 working to support the family. Households headed by women are more likely than others to require public assistance or resort to selling whatever assets they may have to cover living costs. The CCA Children at Risk section discusses child labour and women-headed households at greater length.

**Economic participation.** Women are less present in the labour market than men and are concentrated in sectors of low productivity, low earnings, and low status.

Women often earn less than men even in otherwise comparable situations, and stand a higher chance of being unemployed. Egypt's training system is highly gender-stratified and training for girls is often based on tradition rather than market value. Outside the public sector, there are few women in high-level management or technical posts. Labour market statistics overemphasize the discrepancy between the involvement of women and men in economic life by ignoring economic activities such as the production of goods and services for household consumption and unremunerated work done for family farms or business. Discrimination against women on the grounds of marriage or maternity is present, particularly in the private sector. Unequal access to bank loans exists as a result of higher female illiteracy and lesser integration with the formal sector. On a positive note, new technologies may create new opportunities and marketable skills for women who wish to participate in the internet economy or venture into non-traditional careers. The CCA Employment section provides a comprehensive review of Egypt's changing labour market. The section on Communications and Information Technology discusses Egypt's ambitious plans for a high-tech future.

**Rural women.** Rural women are under-served in terms of access to education, health care, social security, training, and agricultural credits and loans. They often endure inadequate living conditions in relation to housing, sanitation, electricity and water supply, transport, and communications. Rural women are among the poorest of Egypt's people. Gender and geographic disparities are examined throughout the following sections of the CCA.

**Adolescent girls.** Both the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Conference drew attention to the difficulties adolescent girls may experience in making the transition from childhood to adulthood in areas such as education, reproductive health, and work readiness. The CCA section on Children and Youth and the section on Health and Population also address the situation of adolescent girls.

**Health.** Egyptian women and adolescent girls face a number of gender-specific health problems. Maternal mortality rates, though declining, are still high. Significant geographic and socio-economic disparities exist in the quality of, access to, and use of contraceptive services, antenatal care, and trained medical assistance at childbirth. Iron deficiency anaemia levels are also high: 45% among pregnant women and 32% among lactating women. More than 50% of women suffer from some form of reproductive tract ailment, but sexually transmitted diseases and reproductive tract infections are more likely to be treated in men than in women. According to the 2000 EDHS,<sup>4</sup> slightly less than half the women in rural Upper Egypt and the frontier governorates report that they alone or jointly with their husbands have the final say in decisions relating to their own health care, compared with three-quarters of women in urban governorates. Reasons for not seeking care include poor health awareness, difficulties in obtaining permission to go, lack of time or money, not knowing where to go, distance to a health facility, and lack of a female health care provider. Adolescent childbearing carries high risks of morbidity and mortality for both mother and child,

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<sup>4</sup> El-Zanaty, Fatma and Ann Way. *Egypt Demographic and Health Survey 2000*. Calverton, Maryland (USA): Ministry of Health and Population (Egypt), National Population Council and ORC Macro.

particularly when the mother is under age 18. Female circumcision – also known as female genital mutilation (FGM) or female genital cutting (FGC) – remains a serious threat to the wellbeing of girls and adolescents, and may have serious long-term impacts. The CCA section on Population and Health discusses many of these topics at greater length; the section on Food Security and Nutrition reviews measures to combat anaemia and other micronutrient deficiencies.

**Political participation, legal status, and rights.** Political participation of women is low because of illiteracy, restricted involvement in public life, and the complexity of laws regulating and affecting women's status. Despite the fact that neither religion nor the legal system opposes women's political participation, women occupy only 27 seats in the two chambers of the Egyptian Parliament, and 20 of these women were appointed by presidential decree. The National Council for Women encouraged and assisted 134 women to stand as candidates in the November 2000 elections, but political parties nominated only 31, reflecting their belief that male candidates had more chance of attracting voters and winning. Similarly, very few women are members of local councils.

During the November 2000 election, the National Council for Women helped female voters by facilitating the issuance of identity cards for women who did not have them. The problem of women's access to identity cards is another symptom of inequality that women experience, especially women who are poor or illiterate. Without an identity card, it is difficult or impossible to sign a lease, enrol a child in school, vote, or obtain a loan. Children in Upper Egypt and rural areas are less likely to be registered at birth than other children. Girls, in particular, are more likely to grow up without identity papers.

Gender inequities are also evident other levels. While the law does not prohibit a woman from serving as judge, there are no women judges in Egypt. While the law regards domestic violence as a serious premise for divorce, domestic violence is a common phenomenon. The 1995 EDHS found that one in three married women had been physically abused by their partners on at least one occasion during marriage. Most women interviewed agreed that husbands are at least sometimes justified in beating their wives. While the Ministry of Insurance and Social Affairs runs approximately 150 family counselling bureaus nationwide, various NGOs which offer support for abused women believe that the problem cannot be adequately addressed as long as the police, the judiciary, and women themselves continue to regard the integrity of the family as more important than the well-being of the woman.

Legal discrimination against females can also be detected in various personal status and family laws. Women for example, cannot travel without the permission of their fathers if they are under 21 years of age. A married woman cannot travel without the permission of her husband regardless of her age. The law prohibiting a married woman from travelling without her husband's consent has recently been declared unconstitutional by the Egyptian Supreme Constitutional Court. However, until the legislature reviews this law, women prevented from travelling remain in the same predicament. A major achievement of 1999 was the annulment of a law that had previously allowed rapists to escape punishment by marrying their victim.

Egyptian citizenship can only be conferred through males. This means that the children of Egyptian women are considered foreigners even if they have been

born and raised in Egypt. Such children are denied free education and health care. They must also apply for residence and work permits.

The right of Copts to divorce is not recognized by the Church. Muslim women, on the other hand, have seen some recent progress. While Muslim men can divorce their wives without resorting to the courts, and even without the consent of their wives, the situation has been more harrowing for Muslim women who expect to spend up to ten years in court trying to obtain a divorce. A procedure was introduced in 2000 which allows a woman to obtain a swift divorce by relinquishing financial claims, even if her husband is opposed to the divorce. According to a prominent women's rights advocate, the financial stipulations mean that less than 1% of the divorce cases languishing in court for up to ten years have switched to this alternative procedure. Nevertheless, it can be regarded as a positive step in the establishment of the personal rights and dignity of Egyptian women.

Even though the average age of marriage is rising in Egypt, the legal minimum age (16 for girls) is often ignored in favour of local customs or as a consequence of poverty. Unofficial marriages between wealthy foreigners and poor young village girls are not unheard of, and new regulations have been passed in an attempt to protect the rights of such girls. Non-notarised marriages and the marriage of girls under the minimum legal age constitute continuing challenges. Marriage between relatives is common (close to half of all marriages in rural areas). In urban areas, 30% of women marry a first or second cousin or other relative. Some rural girls are forced to marry relatives in order to preserve the family name, ensure inheritance, or strengthen family bonds. The Governance, Political, and Civil Rights section presents additional discussion of political participation and rights.

**Gender priorities.** Egypt's goals for improving the status of women are laudable and ambitious. The persistence of high levels of adult female illiteracy, low levels and unproductive forms of women's participation in the labour force, and the increasing share of women-headed households living in poverty are significant challenges. Addressing these challenges will require political will, policy reforms, and greater capacity to transform plans into reality. Coordinated action will be needed under the UNDAF to assist Egypt in reaching its gender goals.

## **B. Children and Young People**

Children and young people are Egypt's greatest asset and its most serious challenge. Their status and potential cut across all the themes of the Common Country Assessment. Their interests are increasingly present in the minds of Egypt's policy makers.

President Mubarak's Declaration of the Decade of the Egyptian Child (1989-1999) put children at the centre of Egypt's social development plans. The National Council for Childhood and Motherhood was entrusted with the mandate of ensuring this political commitment was translated into investments and allocations in subsequent five-year national development plans. The commitment of Egypt to its children was renewed in February 2000 in the Presidential Declaration for the Second Decade for the Protection and Welfare of the Egyptian Child (2000-2010). Egypt has ratified the Convention on the Rights to the Child

and has submitted two reports to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child. The most recent was reviewed in January 2001.

Those under 18 constitute approximately 45% of Egypt's total population. They number close to 30 million, a group as large as the total populations of Iraq and Syria combined, or five times the population of Jordan. Because the average Egyptian citizen is young, just 21 old, policy makers must be ever more in tune with the aspirations of the young. Children and youth are a positive force, growing in number, thanks to improved health conditions for themselves and their parents. They are also becoming more knowledgeable, more demanding that knowledge be shared with them, and more connected to the world at large through Egypt's media and communication systems.

Healthy, educated youngsters are the trophies of Egypt's policy commitments and social development investments of the 1990s. But they also pose a real challenge. Some estimates suggest that as many as 60

0,000 new jobs must be created every year to keep the economy and Egypt on a stable course of economic growth. Unfortunately, the quality of preparation for new employment opportunities is not keeping pace with the needs of a changing marketplace. Diplomas no longer ensure employment. And not all children are in school. Behind the positive national averages and trends of the past decade lie disparities in educational opportunity and health status.

Two-thirds of Egypt's children live in rural areas, not in cities. These are the areas that are feared to be falling behind national improvements. A recent survey estimates that 64% of the poor and 74% of the ultra poor live in rural areas.<sup>5</sup>

While the focus on development issues has shifted to more visible urban problems – children in workshops and hawking small items in the streets – the majority of Egypt's children living in rural areas face different problems and often have fewer opportunities. Not only are their risks of dying or suffering from chronic malnutrition higher, but they may be unable to enter or continue in a school with a supportive learning environment.

Health and survival. Immunization trends over the 1990s indicate that almost all of Egypt's children, girls as well as boys, receive protection against all the vaccine-preventable diseases of childhood. There are very small disparities between urban, rural, and slum areas.

The impact of this effort on disease reduction is most visible in the disappearance of polio cases as children are reached nearly everywhere with multiple doses of the polio vaccine. All children are expected to receive four doses of the oral vaccine during their first year of life. When these doses are administered, the routine immunization system also sees to it that the infant is vaccinated against diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough, measles, hepatitis B, and tuberculosis. The vaccines are provided through the government's health services at no cost to parents.

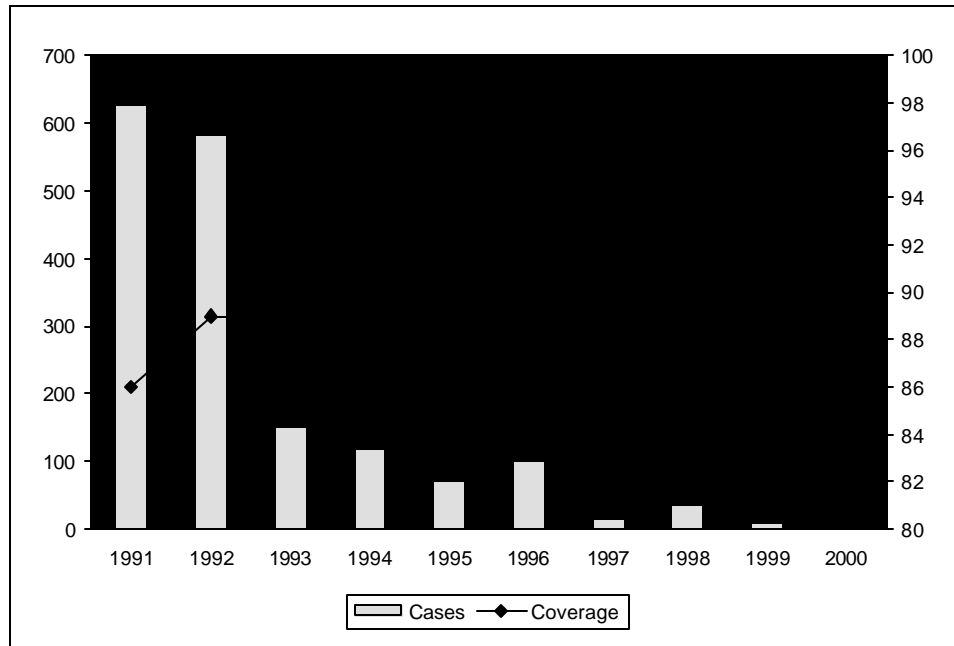
The graph below shows the percentage of children who received the third dose of the polio vaccine (OPV3) before their first birthday (the "coverage" rate), and the number of confirmed polio cases each year. The Ministry of Health and Population and the World Health Organization estimate that actual polio cases at

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<sup>5</sup> "A Profile of Poverty in Egypt," International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), August 1998.

the beginning of the decade may have been three times greater than those recorded and shown in the graph. By 2000, improved epidemiological surveillance had made it difficult to overlook a case. When a suspected case is reported, all children under five in a “high risk area” are given additional doses of the vaccine. Egypt is part of a global effort to eradicate polio by 2005, and is soon expected to be “polio-free.”

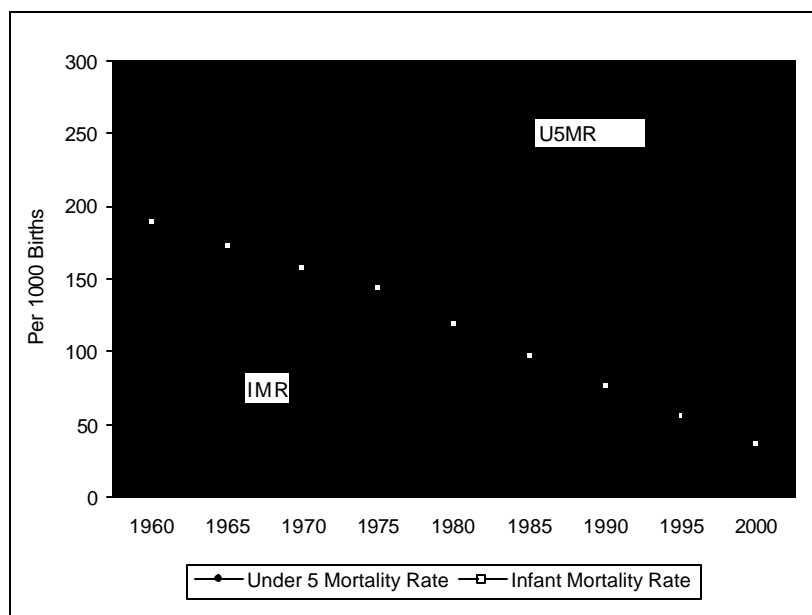
**Figure 2: Confirmed Polio Cases and OPV3 Coverage 1991 - 2000**



Source: United Nations

Between 1990 and 2000, Egypt reduced infant and under-five mortality rates by 60%, a remarkable achievement. Infant and under-five mortality rates are highly sensitive indicators of overall wellbeing and tell much more than immunization coverage figures. Improvements in child survival also reflect increased access to and use of health services, improved water supplies, better nutrition, and changes in the knowledge and behaviour of parents and other care providers resulting in fewer deaths from acute respiratory infections and diarrhoeal diseases. As shown in the graph below, Egypt’s under-five mortality rate (U5MR) stood at a very high 282 per thousand in 1960.<sup>6</sup> By 2000, the under-five mortality rate had fallen to 43 per thousand. This means that 4% of children in 2000 were likely to die before their fifth birthday. The risks of death were concentrated in the first year of life (IMR 37 per 1,000), especially in the period immediately after birth.

<sup>6</sup> United Nations infant and under-five mortality estimates are used here. They are based on the analysis of census, survey, and registration data available for Egypt. They may be found, with the methods used in the analysis, on the website [www.childinfo.org](http://www.childinfo.org)

**Figure 3: Infant and Under5 Mortality Rates 1960 - 2000**

Source: United Nations analysis

While national averages have followed this positive trend, significant regional differentials attest to varying rates of progress. Children in rural Upper Egypt live in conditions that set them apart from their peers in the rest of the country on almost every indicator (i.e., survival, nutrition, education). One in ten children still dies before reaching the age of five in rural Upper Egypt. This is nearly twice the rate found among children living in urban areas of Lower Egypt (EDHS 2000), and is nearly the same level of risk that was faced by the average Egyptian child in 1990. Children in rural Upper Egypt are also three times more likely to be stunted by age 5 than children in urban governorates (EDHS 2000). When they are eligible to start school they already have the learning scales tipped against them.

**The health of school age children.** Much remains to be done to ensure that children reach school age able to learn actively and play vigorously. Poor academic performance is strongly correlated with malnutrition. The three indicators of child malnutrition (underweight, stunting, and wasting) show steady improvements for the average child over the latter half of the 1990s. Nonetheless, the relatively high level of stunting (18.7%) recorded in the 2000 EDHS indicates that chronic malnutrition still constitutes a serious problem in some areas. Stunting is often used as a proxy indicator for poverty, and both stunting and wasting result from persistent deprivation. The data show significant geographic differences, with the highest rate of stunting (27%) in rural Upper Egypt. Iron deficiency anaemia is the most serious micronutrient deficiency in Egypt. Almost 30% of preschool children are anaemic, a figure that rises to 38% in rural Upper Egypt. Vitamin A is essential for normal sight, growth, and development. Egypt has introduced a program of vitamin A supplementation for new mothers and children. Iodine deficiency disorders are endemic in some areas, such as the oases of the Western Desert, where a 1992 study found that over 80% of school age children were afflicted with goitre. The CCA Food Security and Nutrition section

reviews the subjects of malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies in greater detail and provides an analysis of malnutrition on the sub-national level.

**Education.** Egypt's children who survive the early years of life enter school today in record numbers. Net enrolment ratios for girls and boys in basic education are 90% and 95% respectively. Enrolment of girls has risen rapidly over the decade, and girls are nearly as likely to continue in school as boys once they enter the classroom. The Government of Egypt has invested heavily in improving basic and secondary level education, has encouraged community-based strategies to draw families into sending their girls to school, and has raised the share of the basic and secondary school levels in government budget expenditures from 12% to 20%.

The 2000 EDHS added a special module designed to collect information on schooling patterns among children 6-15 years old. While most children 6-15 are currently going to school, 16% had either never attended or had dropped out at some point prior to the survey. The proportions never having attended school are nearly identical for boys and girls living in urban areas (6.4% and 6.9%), but there are marked differences between the level among boys (9%) and that among girls (19%) in rural areas. By place of residence, the proportions never having attended school are highest for both boys (10.4%) and girls (26%) in rural Upper Egypt and in the frontier governorates (boys 11%, girls 19%). The mothers interviewed were far more likely to say that a girl did not attend school because it was too costly (35%) or because of custom or tradition (16%) than they were to offer those reasons when a boy had never attended school (24% and 1%). Mothers living in rural Upper Egypt were more likely to cite cost or custom and tradition than were urban mothers. Eight in ten mothers cited child-related factors as the reasons for dropping out of school, particularly the child's lack of interest in school (54%) or the child's failing or repeating a grade (38%). Mothers were somewhat more likely to cite costs as a reason that a child dropped out of school for girls (24%) than for boys (18%)

Parents who do send their children to school question the cost, quality, and relevance of the education their children are receiving. Basic education, while in principle free, does have its costs (i.e., registration fees, uniforms, textbooks, supplies, and tutoring). In addition to being expensive for poor families, schools are viewed by many as not imparting skills that are valued by the labour market.

The CCA Education section discusses measures to reform Egypt's education system as well as education priorities and continuing challenges. The CCA Employment section reviews the relationship between Egypt's education and training systems and the high rate of unemployment faced by young people. The CCA Communications and Information Technology section presents strategies and plans to bridge the "digital divide" and prepare Egypt's children and young people for the new opportunities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**Working children.** What are children doing when they are not in school? Large numbers are working in some form of paid or unpaid activity. Estimates of children and adolescents in the labour force vary widely from one to three million. Child labour, and by necessity the prerequisite training in one of the trades, is rewarded in the labour market by much higher earnings than a few years of basic education. Families sometimes prefer to send their children, especially boys, to work where they may learn a craft or trade on the job and bring home pay. School

dropouts make up a sizeable proportion of working children. Boys predominate in the child labour reports, but there is general acknowledgment that girls' work is heavily underreported, most of it taking place in domestic or rural agricultural settings. A 1999 Ministry of Social Affairs report states that approximately one million children work in agricultural labour. Egypt's labour laws conform, for the most part, to international standards, but the implementation of these laws and the socio-economic factors that force families to send their children to work need more attention from all parties. The CCA Children at Risk section discusses child labour at greater length.

**Adolescent health.** A recent national survey and several additional studies<sup>7</sup> found that, overall, Egypt's adolescents are well-adjusted young people who are looking ahead to new opportunities. Nevertheless, they face a number of health issues that deserve attention: 86% of female adolescents aged 13-19 have been circumcised; nearly half of all adolescents suffer from anaemia,<sup>8</sup> with little variation by socio-economic level; as many as two-thirds of adolescents are infected with intestinal parasites; and stunting earlier in life continues to affect adolescents (18% of boys and 14% of girls). The 2000 EDHS reports that there has been a marked drop in girls marrying at young ages, but that 12% of girls aged 19 or under are already married.

Healthy lifestyles among young people are the subject of increased government attention, with an emphasis on sports and other extracurricular activities for both boys and girls. To encourage girls to participate, the Ministry of Youth and Sports has recently allotted specific times and places for girls' activities. As a result, the girls feel more welcome and families are confident that their daughters are in good hands. Smoking is widespread and on the increase, but the reported use of drugs is still relatively small. Egypt is taking a proactive stance, with United Nations support, to address the risks of smoking and substance abuse.

The CCA Population and Health section discusses the subjects of female circumcision, adolescent health risks, and HIV/AIDS. The CCA Children at Risk section reviews substance abuse in Egypt.

**Children with special needs.** As part of its commitment to addressing the welfare and rights of all children, Egypt has recently placed increasing emphasis on recognizing and providing for the needs of children with disabilities, working children, and other children in need of protection. As many as 8% of children suffer some level of disability, but early indications often go undetected and uncorrected. Few disabled children currently have access to appropriate services, and gender discrimination (i.e., hiding girls but seeking treatment for boys) is common.

The CCA Children at Risk section reviews the situation of children with physical or mental handicaps, children whose education or health is placed in jeopardy by the need to work, street children, and children who come into conflict with the law or abuse drugs. All of these children are in need of special protection and assistance.

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<sup>7</sup> Transitions to Adulthood: A National Survey of Egyptian Adolescents, the Population Council, Cairo, 1998. Additional studies by Assiut University, University of Alexandria, Cairo University (Dialogue with the Future).

<sup>8</sup> The 2000 EDHS puts the prevalence of anemia in children 11-19 at 30%.

**A window of opportunity.** Ten years from now, Egypt will have a healthier, better-educated and prepared labour force. If trends to marry later and have few children persist, these young people will have fewer young and elderly dependents to support. If their capacities to participate actively are fully engaged and productive employment opportunities are open to them, their optimism, energy, and talents could accelerate Egypt's development trajectory.

## IX. Thematic Assessments

This section of the Common Country Assessment presents the following thematic assessments.

- A. Population and Health
- B. Food Security and Nutrition
- C. Education
- D. Children at Risk
- E. Employment
- F. The Environment
  - 1. Water
  - 2. Agriculture
  - 3. Environmental Concerns
  - 4. Access to Water and Sanitation Services
- G. Communications and Information Technology
- H. Governance, Political, and Civil Rights

### A. Population and Health

The International Conference on Population and Development took place in Cairo in 1994. The choice of venue was significant. Egypt had become a prime example of population growth outstripping available resources. In few places in the world is the contrast between limited resources and rapid population growth so vivid as in Cairo: population density is 31,750 persons per square kilometre, yet the desert is visible on either side of the city.

Less well known is that Egypt's longstanding efforts in family planning have yielded significant results. The total fertility rate of an average Egyptian woman in 2000 was 3.5 children, two thirds of the number of children recorded in 1980 when women, on average, had 5.3 children during their reproductive years.

**Population size.** Egypt's last census was carried out in November 1996. According to the results, Egypt had a de facto population of 59.3 million (excluding the roughly 2.2 million Egyptians living abroad). The annual growth rate between the 1986 and 1996 census was 2.1% (1.85% in urban areas and 2.26% in rural areas). In 1996, 43% of Egypt's population lived in urban areas and 57% in rural areas; men made up 51.2% of the population and women 48.8%. More recent estimates put the size of Egypt's present population at 66.5 or 67 million.<sup>9</sup> Projections based on the 1996 census and growth rate indicate that Egypt's population will reach 77.5 million in 2010. The challenges posed by continued population expansion are daunting: each of these 10 million new

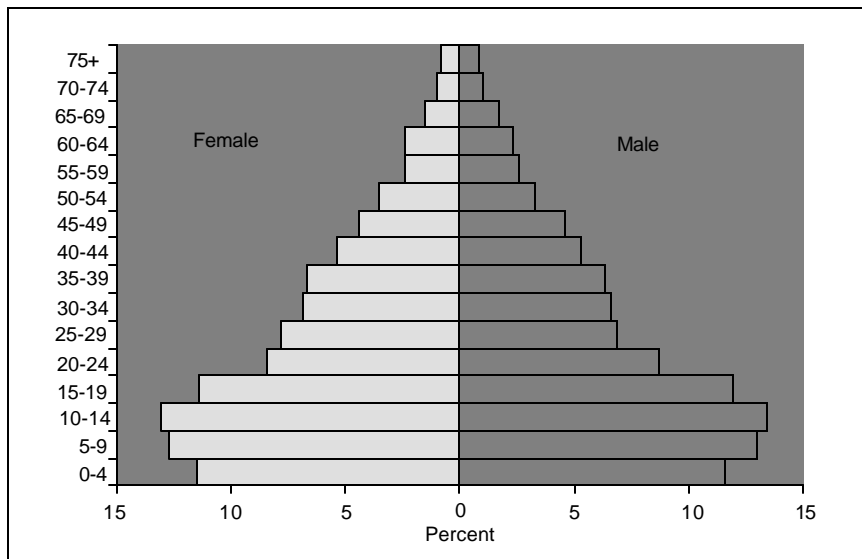
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<sup>9</sup> Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS), May 2001; UN Population Division, 1999.

citizens will require health care, education, food, water, a place to live, and employment.

**Population structure.** Figure 4 presents a population pyramid constructed with 1996 census data. The pyramid shows the effects of past demographic trends on the structure of Egypt's population and indicates the context in which a variety of demographic processes are operating. The pyramid has a wide base, with a large concentration (37%) of the population under 15 years of age. This pattern is typical in countries that have experienced relatively high fertility in the recent past. The effect of recent fertility decline is evident in the fact that the proportions of children under age 5 and age 5-9 are smaller than the proportion aged 10-14. The groups aged 15-19 and 20-24 increased from 15% of the total population in 1986 to 20% in 1996. This is expected to lead to an increase in the number of births in the near future.

**Figure 4: Population Pyramid, Egypt 1996**



Source: CAPMAS census data

The dependency ratio, defined as the ratio of the non-productive population (persons under 15 and age 65 and over) to the population age 15-64, decreased from 87 in 1986 to 70 in 1996. This decline reflects a substantial lessening in the burden placed on persons in the productive ages to support older and younger household members.

**Fertility trends.** As noted in the introduction to this section, total fertility has declined significantly over the past two decades. The pace of change was very rapid during the 1980s, began to slow in the early 1990s, and showed little overall change during the period between the 1995 and 2000 EDHS surveys. However, there were regional and other variations in fertility patterns that require further study and action. The urban/rural total fertility rates (TFRs) in 2000 were 3.1 and 3.9 respectively. Upper Egypt and rural Upper Egypt experienced the largest decrease over the 1995-2000 period: The TFR in Upper Egypt declined from 4.7 births per woman at the time of the 1995 EDHS to 4.2 births at the time of the 2000 survey. Similarly, the TFR in rural Upper Egypt declined from 5.2 to 4.7. The TFR rose slightly from 1995-2000 in urban governorates (2.8 to 2.9) and

more markedly in urban Lower Egypt (2.7 to 3.1). Although fertility rates fell over the period 1992-2000 among women with no education (from 5 to 4.1) and women with some primary education (from 4 to 3.8), they rose among women with primary through secondary education (3 to 3.4) and women who had completed secondary education or higher (2.9 to 3.2). Factors contributing to fertility decline include the availability and use of effective contraceptive methods, a steady increase in the age at which women marry, and nearly universal approval of family planning. The median age of women at first marriage in Egypt has increased to 19.5 years. From 1988 to 2000, it rose from 20.4 to 21.2 in urban areas, and from 17 to 18.1 in rural areas.

Programs are needed to address: 1) the likelihood of an increase in the number of births due to the increase in the number of persons aged 15-24, 2) the increase in TFR among educated and urban women, and 3) continued high fertility rates in Upper Egypt, especially in rural Upper Egypt.

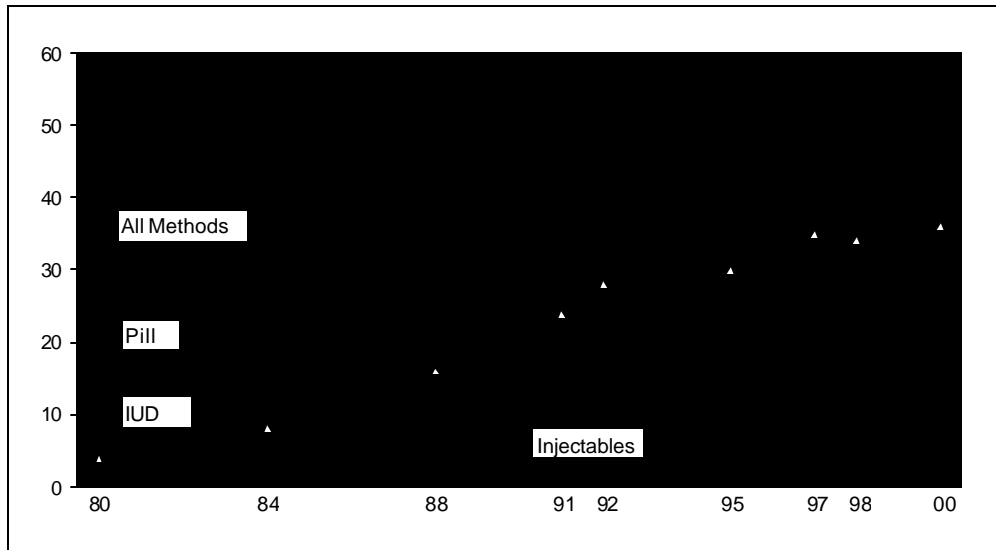
**Contraceptive use.** The use of contraception has more than doubled in Egypt, from 24% in 1980 to 56% in 2000. The level of contraceptive use differs significantly by residential category. Currently married women are more likely to be using a method in urban than in rural areas (61% and 52%, respectively). Contraceptive use rates exceed 60% in urban governorates and in both urban and rural areas of Lower Egypt. In contrast, use rates are lowest in urban Upper Egypt (55%), rural Upper Egypt (40%), and the frontier governorates (43%). Rural Upper Egypt experienced the largest increase in contraceptive use over the period 1995-2000, from 24% to 40%. Other increases included urban Lower Egypt (59% to 65%), rural Lower Egypt (54% to 61%), and urban Upper Egypt (50% to 55%). Rates of contraceptive use declined from 1995 to 2000 in two of the four urban governorates: from 60% to 58% in Port Said and from 62% to 58% in Suez. Contraceptive use rates are directly associated with a woman's age and the number of living children a woman has. Younger and older women are less likely to be using contraception than women aged 25-44. Few women use or approve of using family planning before the birth of a first child. The 2000 EDHS found that use rates increase from 42% of women with one child to 69% of women with three children, then drop off to 62% of women with four or more children. Use rates are also associated with a woman's educational level, ranging from 52% among women with no education to 61% among women who completed secondary school or higher. The level of use among women working for cash (67%) is higher than the level among other women.

The IUD is the most widely used contraceptive method in Egypt: 36% of women rely on the IUD, 20% the pill, and 6% injectables. Relatively few women use other modern methods such as the condom or diaphragm, but about 2% rely on traditional methods such as prolonged breastfeeding and periodic abstinence. The IUD is the most frequently used method in every residential category, followed by the pill and injectables. The pill is the second most widely used method in all areas except rural Upper Egypt where the proportion of women using injectables is virtually identical to that relying on the pill (8%). The IUD is also the most commonly used method among women at every level of education, followed by the pill. Users with secondary or higher education are about five times as likely to be using the IUD as the pill, whereas women with no education are about three times as likely to be using the IUD as the pill. The IUD is also the most popular

method among women in all age groups, with the highest levels of IUD use found among women age 30-39 (43%).

Figure 5 presents trends over time in contraceptive use and method mix. The dramatic shift from pill to IUD is clear, as is the relatively rapid expansion of the use of injectables following their introduction in the early 1990s.

**Figure 5: Trends in Current Use of Family Planning and Method Mix, Egypt 1980 - 2000**



Source: EDHS 2000

The percentage of users who obtained their method from a governmental provider increased from 35% in 1995 to 49% at the time of the 2000 EDHS. Much of that change is due to increased reliance on the public sector for the IUD (54%). One third of IUD users go to private physicians, hospitals, or clinics for insertion, while 10% obtain the method at clinics operated by private voluntary organizations. The public sector is also the main source for injectables (81%), especially rural health units (43%). Pill users mainly get their method from a pharmacy (82%). In general, rural women are more likely to go to a public sector source than urban women, and women from rural Upper Egypt are somewhat more likely than users from any other area to have the IUD inserted at a public health facility.

A key concern for Egypt's family planning program is the rate at which women discontinue use of contraception and their reasons for stopping. Overall, 30% of users in Egypt discontinue using a method within 12 months of starting. The rate of discontinuation during the first year of use is much higher among pill users (48%) and injectables users (48%) than among IUD users (14%). Reasons most frequently given by these women for discontinuation are method failure (3%), the desire to have another child (4%), and side effects or health concerns (14%). The rate of discontinuation due to side effects or health concerns among "first-year users" is 21% for the pill and 34% for injectables. The results of the 2000 EDHS suggest that family planning service providers are not offering women adequate information to enable them to make an informed choice about the method best suited to their contraceptive needs, and that many users are not offered a choice of methods. Many providers are also not counselling women about possible side

effects. Fewer than one in seven users who obtain the pill from a pharmacy receive information about side effects or other methods.

Many Egyptian women are having more births than they consider ideal. Overall, 5% of births in the five years preceding the 2000 EDHS were reported to be mistimed (e.g., wanted later) and 13% were unwanted. If Egyptian women were to have the number of children they consider ideal, the total fertility rate would fall from 3.5 to 2.9 births per woman. The unmet need for family planning services has fallen from 20% in 1992 to 11% in 2000. About a third of this unmet need represents a woman's desire to space her next birth, and the remainder represents a desire to have no more children. Two thirds of women defined as having an unmet need for family planning live in rural areas and a similar proportion have less than a primary education. The highest level of unmet need is in rural Upper Egypt.

Programs are needed to address: 1) the quality of services to ensure that women receive information about all family planning methods and possible side effects; 2) low rates of contraceptive use in Upper Egypt and the frontier governorates; 2) the decline or slow rate of growth in contraceptive use in some urban governorates; 3) low rates of contraceptive use among women aged 15-24 and 45-49 and among women with little education; and 4) unmet need in rural areas (especially rural Upper Egypt), in women with low educational levels, and in women who would like to space or limit births.

**Health sector reform.** Egypt's health system is enormously complex. Like the overall economy, it has gone through various phases, evolving from a state-controlled, socialist orientation to a mixed model of public and private finance and delivery. The health system displays some of the structural characteristics (e.g., centralized control, extensive infrastructure, state responsibility for health care for all individuals, extensive state involvement in the pharmaceutical sector) and strengths as well as many of the problems of the former socialist countries of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. It also has many of the characteristics (e.g., multiple public and private sources of finance and delivery, limited government oversight of the private sector) and problems of the more open-ended, market-based systems such as the U.S. and most non-socialist developing countries.

The Egyptian system has significant strengths and weaknesses resulting from this continuing evolution. In general, it performs well on physical access, macroeconomic efficiency (e.g., overall spending levels), and basic public health grounds. Extensive public and private infrastructures and near universal physical accessibility, the availability of most types of services and pharmaceuticals, high immunization rates, and the high level of access to safe water and sanitation have all contributed to an increase in life expectancy. In 1960, life expectancy at birth was 51.6 years for males and 53.8 for females; in 1996 it is 65.1 for males and 69.0 for females.

Despite its strengths, the current system faces serious problems. These include geographic, income, and gender disparities in access, use, and outcomes; poor value for money; poor quality and clinical effectiveness; consequent lack of consumer satisfaction; and lack of long-run financial sustainability. These problems will be compounded in the future by 1) continued population growth and 2) the expected shift to more expensive to treat non-communicable diseases

(e.g., cardiopulmonary diseases, diabetes, cancer) and injuries resulting from road and other accidents.

In light of the above-mentioned challenges, there was an urgent need for Egypt to begin the arduous process of health sector reform, with the overall goal of ensuring universal coverage among the population of primary health care basic benefits package of services. The health sector reform will be implemented in a phased manner and will cover six main areas: (i) human resources development, (ii) health care services reform, (iii) health sector infrastructure development, (iv) health sector institutional development and capacity building, (v) health care financial reform and sustainability, and (vi) pharmaceutical sector reform. While the country must continue to emphasize and improve its basic public health programs and basic delivery capacity, it must also deal with the difficult issues facing all middle income and developed countries: quality, efficiency, equity, targeting vulnerable populations, the public/private mix in financing and provision, and long-term financial sustainability. Given the accelerating proliferation of new and expensive medical technologies and the growing expectations of the public, health sector reform will be a difficult challenge.

**Maternal health.** Egypt's first national maternal mortality study, conducted in 1992-1993, found that the national maternal mortality ratio was 174 per 100,000 live births (132/100,000 in Lower Egypt, 217/100,000 in Upper Egypt). Audits of maternal deaths showed that 92% had one or more avoidable factors, including substandard health services, poorly trained health providers, difficulties in reaching health facilities as well as delays on the part of the women's family in seeking timely emergency medical attention due to lack of awareness of symptoms and failure to follow medical advice.

The care that a woman receives during pregnancy and childbirth reduces the risk of illness and death for both mother and the child. Over the past decade, maternal health has become a major focus of the Egyptian health system. The percentage of women receiving regular antenatal care (e.g., the recommended minimum of four antenatal care visits) rose from 23% in 1992 to 37% in 2000. The antenatal care received, however, often did not include recommended routine screenings or advice that is important in detecting and preventing complications. Few women were told where to seek assistance if they experienced problems. MOHP plans to increase awareness among women to detect early signs of risk. The percentage of women receiving one or more tetanus toxoid injections to prevent neonatal tetanus, an important cause of death among newborns, increased from 11% in 1988 to 73% in 2000. The percentage of women receiving medical assistance at delivery from a doctor or trained midwife increased from 35% in 1992 to 61% in 2000. Four out of five such women gave birth in a health facility. Most other women delivered at home with the assistance of a "daya" (traditional birth attendant) or a relative. Only 4% of the mothers who gave birth outside a health facility underwent any type of postnatal checkup. Rural Upper Egypt and the frontier governorates ranked lowest on antenatal care indicators. Urban governorates ranked lowest in tetanus toxoid coverage. And births in rural Upper Egypt were the least likely to be assisted by a trained health professional; rural Upper Egypt is the only area in which more than half of all deliveries (55%) were assisted by dayas.

A new maternal mortality study is currently under way, but early results suggest that there has been little change in the causes of death. The Ministry of Health and Population has set a target of reducing maternal mortality by half from 2000 to 2010. Egypt has an extensive network of public health facilities for maternal health care, but emergency obstetric cases (expected to be about 15% of all pregnancies) do not receive timely or adequate care, as coverage of needed services is not extended to all health facilities. The barriers that prevent women from seeking care, then finding it in place upon arrival at a medical facility, are being looked at closely. Action has begun to 1) develop emergency obstetric teams at properly equipped and prepared facilities and 2) forge links between these facilities, dayas, and the larger community through training, public awareness campaigns, and referral systems.

Programs are needed to: 1) improve the quality and availability of antenatal care, and encourage women to seek antenatal care; 2) improve the quality and availability of medical assistance at delivery, 3) educate and encourage women, husbands, and families to seek trained medical assistance at delivery, especially in emergencies; 4) address the many urban/rural, regional, age, and educational background disparities in access to and use of pregnancy care identified by the 2000 EDHS; and 5) promote postnatal care.

#### **A reproductive health and rights issue: female circumcision.**

Female circumcision, also known as female genital mutilation (FGM), puts women at risk of experiencing a difficult delivery or dying in childbirth. Immediate health risks may include haemorrhage, infection, urine retention, or obstruction of menstrual flow. In some cases, FGM may lead to sterility or disability.

The circumcision of girls is a tradition with deep roots in Egypt, a tradition practiced by Muslims and Christians alike. The extent of this practice, and its condemnation as “female genital mutilation,” became a public issue during the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD). The ICPD helped create an atmosphere in which support for FGM could be questioned openly. The Ministry of Health and Population (MOHP), Ministry of Social Affairs (MOSA), donors, and many non-governmental organizations are now working together to address FGM within their varied activities. In 1996, MOHP issued a decree prohibiting physicians from performing FGM. Education and advocacy to discourage the practice of FGM are included in most community development, gender, and health awareness programs.

The 1995 EDHS was the first national-level survey to include questions on the practice of female circumcision. The survey found that 97% of married women of reproductive age had been circumcised. Information was collected in the 2000 EDHS to further investigate attitudes toward female circumcision among Egyptian women and to assess whether there was evidence of changes in attitudes or behaviour during the period between the two surveys. Again, 97% of women reported that they had been circumcised. However, these numbers may include some procedures taking place prior to the decree. Moreover, it is evident that attitudes toward circumcision have been changing. The percentage of women who believe the practice should continue fell from 82% to 75%. And although the percentage of women with daughters already circumcised remained unchanged at

50%, the percentage of women who intend to have their daughters circumcised in the future decreased from 38% in 1995 to 32% in 2000.

Circumcision persists because of beliefs that it is sanctioned by religion and tradition, and that it will moderate female sexuality, make a girl eligible for marriage, and contribute to personal cleanliness or hygiene. Only 29% of the women interviewed in the 2000 EDHS believe that circumcision can lead to a girl's death, and only 8% believe that it can cause fertility problems or make childbirth more difficult. Urban, educated, and working women are less likely to believe that the practice of circumcision should continue.

The Egyptian medical community is not united in its views on female circumcision. Despite recent efforts by the MOHP to curtail the practice, doctors have become its most common practitioners. The 2000 EDHS reports that most circumcisions are performed by a doctor (52%) or by a trained nurse or midwife (9%). Dayas (traditional birth attendants) perform the majority (32%) of the remaining circumcisions. This finding supports growing concern that there is a trend toward the medicalization of circumcision.

A national survey of Egyptian adolescents conducted by the Population Council in 1997 found that 86% of girls aged 13 to 19 had been circumcised (most girls are circumcised before the age of 13). Similarly, the EDHS 2000 indicates that the level of FGM among girls in the near future is likely to be 82% (45.5% of women with daughters already circumcised, plus 32% women who intend to have daughters circumcised). These are promising signs that the concerted efforts of many groups are beginning to have an impact.

Programs are needed to intensify and expand current education and awareness efforts. Such activities can help bring about the many attitudinal changes (among parents, grandparents, teachers, the medical profession, religious leaders, policy makers, and young people themselves) that will be required to eradicate this practice.

**Adolescent health risks.** One of the most important effects of the increase in age at first marriage is a reduction in adolescent fertility. Teenage childbearing carries higher risks of morbidity and mortality for mother and child, particularly when the mother is under 18. At the time of the 2000 EDHS, the overall level of childbearing among women age 15-19 was 9% (6% had already given birth, and 3% were pregnant), slightly lower than the 10% recorded in 1995. The 2000 EDHS found that the proportion of women who had begun childbearing rose rapidly from 1% at age 15 to 20% at age 19. The level of teenage fertility in rural areas (11%) was almost twice that of urban areas (5%) and rural Upper Egypt had the highest rate of teenage childbearing (13%). The level of teenage fertility is strongly associated with educational level. The proportion of women age 15-19 who are pregnant or who have already given birth decreases from about 17% among women with a less than primary education to 7% among women with at least a secondary education. Teenage motherhood is of special concern in rural Upper Egypt where women are least likely to receive antenatal care and births are least likely to be assisted by a trained health professional.

Because marriage and procreation are of such central importance in Egyptian life, preparation for married life is considered to be one of the most important aspects of growing to adulthood. Adolescents in Egypt, however, have traditionally been shielded from information about reproduction and sexuality, and many remain

uninformed throughout their lives. The lack of such knowledge contributes to unwanted pregnancies (e.g., only 16% of women interviewed in the 2000 EDHS knew when a woman was mostly likely to conceive), a reluctance to seek medical assistance (e.g., for menstrual disorders, contraceptive services, pregnancy or delivery, sexually transmitted diseases), and the continuation of practices such as female circumcision. As discussed in the following section on HIV/AIDS, lack of information is already placing some Egyptian young people at risk.

Programs are needed to: 1) enhance public awareness in rural areas of the risks to mothers and children posed by teenage pregnancy, 2) ensure that teenage mothers receive appropriate care during pregnancy and childbirth, and 3) provide both male and female adolescents with accurate information about subjects such as human sexuality, reproductive processes, menstruation, contraception, and sexually transmitted diseases.

(See section on Children and Young People for additional discussion of adolescent health and presentation of information on children's health.)

**HIV/AIDS.** Notwithstanding Egypt's long efforts in family planning, knowledge of human reproduction and awareness of sexually transmitted diseases is limited. Egypt remains relatively complacent about the increase in HIV infections experienced by its neighbors in sub-Saharan Africa and along the Mediterranean coast.

There are good reasons to abandon this complacency. Egypt has become a major tourist destination, not just for its antiquities, but for the pleasures of its beach resorts. Large flows of worker migration abroad have introduced new patterns of sexually transmitted diseases into rural Egypt during the 1980s. And sexual mores are in a process of change, especially among Egypt's youth. Recent studies of Egyptian university students and adolescents reveal that: 17% of the students in one study have had sexual intercourse; only 14% of boys and 5% of girls know about the existence of the condom; university students have heard about HIV/AIDS, but have little understanding of the routes of transmission; young people are eager to have factual information about reproduction but can not find it; knowledge among male adolescents is higher than among female adolescents; adolescent girls have the least knowledge of the risks associated with sexual intercourse, and very limited knowledge of sexually-transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS.

Official figures concerning the prevalence of HIV/AIDS in Egypt are relatively low (928 recorded HIV positive persons on December 31, 2000), but surveillance is limited. The Ministry of Health and Population (MOHP) estimates the actual number of HIV positive persons at 3000 to 8000. Prevention and control measures target health personnel, youth, the media, religious leaders, HIV positive persons, and AIDS sufferers and their families. Recently, somewhat more information has been made available to the general public, but efforts have been sporadic and public awareness and understanding is still very limited. AIDS tends to be viewed as an external problem.

Insufficient attention is also given to sharing with the public information about the hazards involved in blood transfusions and the improper use of hypodermic needles. Unhygienic conditions in the use of hypodermic needles, lack of proper sterilization procedures, and improper disposal of used needles have been indicated in the exceptionally high prevalence of Egypt of hepatitis C. The

MOHP has made a concentrated effort during the last four years to improve blood bank procedures and to encourage Egyptians to donate blood (reluctance to donate blood for traditional reasons has been a serious hindrance to assisting both emergency cases and those requiring frequent transfusions). In order not to discourage blood donation, the risks of transfusions have not been sufficiently underlined.

Programs are needed to: 1) improve surveillance and reporting of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases; 2) increase public awareness of the routes of transmission and means of prevention.

## B. Food Security and Nutrition

The Egyptian government has ensured a high degree of food security at the household level by paying for food subsidy programs that have reached the large majority of the population. Thus, Egypt has been able to provide an average per capita caloric availability of food that has surpassed most countries in the world. In addition, Egypt is insulated from many of the most important environmental risk factors (e.g., drought and flooding) that create year-to-year variations in household access to food.

Nevertheless, several challenges to improved food security and nutritional status remain. Egypt still depends on importing large amounts of food to feed its population. Relatively high levels of malnutrition still exist among particular population groups, concentrated in particular geographic areas. And, according to the latest data, income poverty, which is closely related to food insecurity, was still a significant problem in the mid-1990s.

### Nutrition

Egypt has made good progress toward achieving the year 2000 nutrition goals of the World Summit for Children (see the Annex for a complete list of indicators and degree of achievement). Egypt's national nutrition strategy, formulated in the mid-1990s, provides a framework for the many initiatives designed to improve nutrition and control micronutrient deficiencies. These initiatives include iron and vitamin A supplementation programs, nutrition awareness and education programs, salt iodization, promotion of breastfeeding, growth monitoring and promotion activities linked with maternal and child health care facilities, and a national nutrition information system.

Although data on the three indicators of child malnutrition (underweight, stunting, and wasting) show that the nutritional status of children has improved considerably over the last five years, malnutrition still constitutes a serious problem.

**Table 1. Percentage of Children Under Five Classified as Malnourished**

Indicator	1992	1995	1997	2000
% Underweight (weight for age)	9.9	12.5	11.7	4.0
% Stunting (height for age)	26.0	29.8	24.9	18.7
% Wasting (weight for height)	3.4	4.6	6.1	2.5

Source: EDHS Surveys 1992-2000

The symptoms of malnutrition increased in the first half of the 1990s, coinciding with the early phases of the structural adjustment program during which some estimates document increases in poverty. The situation has ameliorated in the second half of the 1990s, which saw a steady decline in the percentage of children suffering from malnutrition. Nevertheless, at the end of the decade, stunting still affects almost one in five children under the age of five and there are significant regional variations in its extent. For example, while stunting affects only 8.5% of children in urban governorates, the prevalence is 27.2% in rural Upper Egypt (see following Food Security section for sub-national analysis). Gender disparities do not appear to be significant overall in the nutrition data, but the level of stunting is significantly lower for children of mothers who have completed secondary school or higher than for children of non-educated mothers (15% versus 23%).

Key issues related to child nutrition are infant and young child feeding practices and maternal nutrition. Egypt introduced a hospital-based breastfeeding protection and promotion program in 1992 and more recently expanded breastfeeding promotion to the community level. Exclusive breastfeeding is high in the first three months (60%) but declines sharply thereafter. Reflecting the need for more emphasis on child feeding and weaning practices, stunting levels are lowest among children aged below six months (10.7%), rise sharply at 6-11 months (19.4%), and reach their peak at 12-23 months (23.5%) before declining.

The incidence of low birth weight is a proxy indicator of maternal nutrition which has a significant influence on a child's future health, development, and growth. A national study conducted by the Ministry of Health and Population (MOHP) shows that the rate in 1997 was 12.9%. Although different methodologies limit comparability of findings to some extent, the Egypt Demographic and Health Survey (EDHS) 2000 reports the rate as 10.1%. This indicates that Egypt may be close to achieving the end-decade goal of reducing the low birth weight rate to less than 10%.

The EDHS 2000 (the first in the EDHS series to measure haemoglobin levels) reports anaemia prevalence rates of 45% among pregnant women, 32% among lactating women, and 26% among non-pregnant, non-lactating women of childbearing age. Almost 30% of preschool children are anaemic, a figure that rises to 38% in rural Upper Egypt. For adolescents aged 11-19, the rate is 30%.

Available data on the prevalence of vitamin A deficiency indicate that the problem is mild to moderate in Egypt; no cases of blindness due to vitamin A deficiency have been reported. The government added vitamin A to its child immunization program in early 1999. The EDHS 2000 records that vitamin A supplementation reached about 23% of immunized children and 11% of mothers. The MOHP and UNICEF believe that these figures are very much underestimated. The national health information system shows that distribution of vitamin A at nine and eighteen months (as part of the country's well-established immunization program) reaches 95% of children and that 40% of women receive vitamin A within one month of delivery. A national assessment is planned for the second half of 2001.

Egypt launched a national salt iodization program in 1995. Consumption of iodised salt at the household level is 56% (EDHS 2000) despite the 94% market availability reported by the MOHP in 1998. An emergency iodine supplementation program was carried out in the New Valley governorate (where

iodine deficiency disorders are believed to be most severe) when a 1993 study found that 82% of school children in the governorate were afflicted with goitre. The program successfully raised the median urinary iodine concentration of target groups above the sufficiency cut-off point of 10 ug iodine/100 ml urine (8.9 in 1993 versus 11.7 in 1998). A national assessment of iodine deficiency and household coverage is planned for the second half of 2001.

### **Nutrition Priorities**

**Stunting.** The relatively high level of stunting highlights the need to reinforce efforts to tackle chronic malnutrition at both the national and sub-national levels. Stunting is generally the result of failure to receive adequate nutrition over an extended period or the effects of recurrent or chronic illness. In Egypt, particularly in Upper Egypt, causes appear to include insufficient household food security, inadequate feeding and caring practices, and high infection rates. In addition to ongoing national health and nutrition activities (immunization, early diagnosis and treatment of infections including diarrhoea, access to safe water and sanitation), more emphasis needs to be placed on community-level growth monitoring and breastfeeding initiatives.

**Iron deficiency anaemia.** Iron deficiency anaemia is the most serious micronutrient deficiency in Egypt. High prevalence rates suggest the need for expanding the scope of iron supplementation, nutrition awareness, and iron fortification programs. At present, most iron supplementation efforts are focused on pregnant/lactating women and preschool children. Two initiatives to pilot test school-centred iron supplementation and nutrition education programs for students and their mothers were launched recently, the first in Lower Egypt (National Nutrition Institute) and the second in Upper Egypt (USAID-funded). Among those still in need of nutritional assistance and guidance are the children and adolescents who do not attend school. Wheat flour used in making bread is the most important staple food in Egypt. Trials of a flour fortification program in Fayoum, if successful, should be extended to the national level.

**Increased nutrition awareness and education.** Also needed are stepped-up nutritional awareness programs that will encourage and enable mothers to 1) adopt improved feeding and caring practices and 2) improve the quality of family diets with available resources. Particularly important are the community components of breastfeeding and growth monitoring initiatives that educate mothers about appropriate child feeding and weaning practices.

**Sustainability.** Measures to combat vitamin A and iodine deficiencies are on the right track. Sustainability is now the challenge. The government has agreed to assume responsibility for funding procurement of iodate in 2001 and may do so for vitamin A capsules in 2002. It will be important to monitor future developments in these programs.

**Data for assessment, monitoring, and evaluation.** Routine data collection, recording, and reporting related to low birth weight and the iodine deficiency disorders control program should be institutionalised in the national maternal and child health information system. Standard, Egypt-specific recommended daily allowances (RDAs) need to be developed, particularly for calories and protein.

## Food Security

Food security in its most basic form is defined as the access of all people to the food needed for a healthy life at all times.

### Food Security at the National Level

Egypt has been successful in assuring relatively high levels of food supplies at the national level through a dual policy of providing incentives for domestic production and meeting deficits through imports. Average per capita calorie availability increased from 2349 per day in 1961-63 to almost 3300 in 1998.

Overall food supplies also made available a relatively high level of protein, which rose from 69 grams per day in 1987 to 90 grams per day in 1998.

Cereal production has steadily increased over the 1990s while imports dependency (cereal imports to total supply) has decreased, but still amounted to more than 40% in 1998. Foreign exchange reserves in terms of months of imports have decreased by one third in recent years. This development may pose a future challenge to Egypt's ability to continuously import large amounts of cereals.

Dependence on food aid has decreased dramatically throughout the 1990s, falling from 1597 metric tons in 1990 to 50 in 1998.

Obviously at a national scale food availability is high and data indicate that a large majority of the Egyptian population consume a sufficient amount of calories. However, of the total population in 1997, about 12% fell below the daily critically required calorie level per capita of 2100 calories.

**Food subsidies.** One important reason for the high level of calorie and protein consumption in Egypt has been the government's commitment to ensuring national food security by providing sufficient food to the whole population through its food subsidy program which started in the mid-1940s. As previously noted, the most important staple food in Egypt is wheat flour used in the making of bread. (In addition to wheat, other foods commonly consumed include maize, rice, potatoes, vegetables, vegetable oils, fruits, milk, meat, fish, sweeteners, pulses, and eggs.)

At present the subsidy program covers bread, flour, cooking oil, and sugar. The first two items are unrationed while sugar and oil are available on a monthly quota basis to most Egyptian households through a ration card system. The program provides partial food safety given that other foods (such as meat, milk, fruits, and vegetables) are not covered.

The food subsidies form part of the government's long term policy of social equity. A 1999 study conducted by the International Food Policy Research Institute found that the system has generally been effective in providing food security for the poor: total income transfers account for about 7% of total per capita expenditures of the lowest two expenditure quintile groups.

Two major problem areas are related to the subsidy system. First, it benefits equally all income groups and is known to have an urban bias. Second, despite its limited administrative costs (no large bureaucracy for the identification of beneficiaries), the present subsidy represents high costs to the government (cost of food and high leakage rates), accounting for about 5% of Egypt's budget. Although the program is untargeted, government policy objectives aim at

protecting the poor and have been widely credited with the current high levels of food security in the country and with helping reduce undernutrition.

**Food security challenges.** Despite the positive food security data on a national scale, pockets of poor and food insecure still exist in Egypt. The CAPMAS Household Income, Expenditure, and Consumption Survey (HIECS) suggests that in 1995/96 about 23% lived below the lower poverty line, and thus were unable to cover their basic food and non-food needs (EHDR 1996). Furthermore, about 7.4% were ultra poor whose total expenditures were less than the amount required to meet basic food needs. The data generally show an increase in poverty from the early 1980s through the mid-1990s, particularly in urban areas. In addition, as noted in the nutrition analysis, national trends in malnutrition indicators for children suggest improved food security conditions from 1995 to 2000. However, the rate of stunting of almost one in five children is still high, suggesting that the consumption of calories is uneven or that diets for some households are not properly balanced.

### Food Security at the Sub-national Level

Specific studies on food security in Egypt are virtually non-existent. This absence of information has led the nutrition and food security working group to perform the following sub-national analysis which relies heavily on related poverty and nutrition indicators as proxies for food insecurity. Implicit in this approach, is the assumption that food insecurity, hunger, and poverty are all closely intertwined.

A convergence of evidence approach is used, whereby areas having both high malnutrition and high incidence of poverty are highlighted as priority areas for targeting potential interventions. Stunting (height for age) was chosen as the most appropriate indicator reflecting chronic malnutrition/food insecurity, while percentage of households below the lower poverty line was chosen as an indicator of aggregate food purchasing power and economic access conditions.

**Regional level food security.** Food security conditions in Egypt vary significantly, both regionally and according to urban-rural settings. This section examines the geographic distribution of chronic malnutrition and poverty across the five broad regions of Egypt shown in Table 2. Egypt's sparsely populated "frontier" regions are not included due to lack of data. Efforts should be made to close this important "data gap" for future analyses.

**Table 2: Incidence of Stunting (Height for Age) for Children Under Five**

Region	1992	Rank 1992	1995	Rank 1995	1997	Rank 1997	1998	Rank 1998	2000	Rank 2000
Urban/Metro Govs.	16.8	1	18.4	1	18.4	2	21.9	3	8.5	1
Lower Egypt/Urban	20.5	2	25.6	2	17.6	1	10.3	1	13.7	2
Lower Egypt/Rural	29.1	4	28.8	4	22.8	3	18.2	2	16.8	3
Upper Egypt/Urban	24.6	3	27.2	3	24.7	4	22.1	4	21.9	4
Upper Egypt/Rural	30.0	5	39.7	5	34.0	5	24.9	5	27.2	5

Ranking: 1= best, 5 = worst

Source: EDHS Surveys 1992-2000

As can be seen above, the rural areas of Upper Egypt consistently rank "worst" with higher percentages of stunted children across the 1992-2000 time series. Upper Egypt's urban areas rank "second worst" for the three most recent surveys,

despite small but continuous reductions in stunting since 1995. The region which shows the most dramatic decline in stunting over time is rural Lower Egypt which has gone from 29.1% in 1992 to 16.8% in the recently released EDHS 2000 survey results.

Unfortunately, similar time series data on the percentage of households below the lower poverty line, were not available at a regionally disaggregated level. The regional 1995/96 data however, provide a snapshot in time, presenting a relatively recent picture of the geographic distribution of poverty across the country.

**Table 3: Percentage of Households below the Lower Poverty Line (by region)**

Region	1995/96	Rank 1995/96
Urban/Metro Govs.	16.0	2
Lower Egypt/Urban	21.7	3
Lower Egypt/Rural	15.4	1
Upper Egypt/Urban	35.0	5
Upper Egypt/Rural	33.7	4

Source: Adapted from EHDR 1996 (using CAPMAS 1995/96 HIECS)

Upper Egypt as a region is clearly noteworthy in terms of its larger percentage of households below the poverty line. While urban Upper Egypt ranks worst, rural Upper Egypt is similarly disadvantaged with both regions showing approximately 34-35% of their populations below the poverty line in 1995/96. The inter-regional gap between Upper Egypt and other parts of the country is considerable, with the next closest region, urban Lower Egypt showing approximately 22% of its households as “poor.” In other words while approximately one out of every five urban households of Lower Egypt is poor, the comparative figure for Upper Egypt is roughly one out of every three.

Referring back to the 1995 nutritional data on stunting, the data confirm again that rural Upper Egypt clearly registers as the most disadvantaged region in the country. According to the EDHS survey data, nearly 40% of the children under five in rural Upper Egypt were stunted in 1995, while the figure for the next closest region of rural Lower Egypt was comparatively 29%.

**Governorate level food security.** Similar to the regional analysis above, economic data (percentage of households below the lower poverty line) were considered at the governorate level. While nation wide governorate level stunting data were not available, individual studies have reported governorate level stunting figures for specific governorates. These data have been used to complement the economic data when appropriate.

**Table 4: Percentage of Households below the Lower Poverty Line (by governorate)**

Governorate	% Households	Rank	Governorate	% Households	Rank
Cairo	10.8	7	Behera	28.5	14
Alexandria	29.4	15	Ismailia	9.7	5
Port Said	3.7	3	Giza	12.0	9
Suez	2.4	2	Beni Suef	34.0	17
Damietta	0.7	1	Fayoum	40.6	21
Dakhalia	11.4	8	Menya	35.8	18
Sharkia	13.9	10	Assiut	53.4	22
Kalyubia	28.3	13	Souhag	39.4	20
Kafr El-Sheikh	10.1	6	Qena	38.3	19
Gharbia	9.4	4	Aswan	30.8	16
Menoufia	22.8	12	Frontier govns.	16.0	11
Egypt National Average: 22.9					

Ranking: 1=best, 22 = worst

Source: EHDR 1996 (using CAPMAS 1995/96 HIECS)

Governorates with the highest percentage of poor households include Assiut, Fayoum, Souhag, Qena, and Menya. Of particular note is the governorate of Assiut, with more than 50% of its households living below the lower poverty line at the time of the 1995/96 CAPMAS survey.

Conversely, governorates with relatively low percentages of poor households include the two urban/metropolitan governorates of Port Said and Suez, as well as three rural governorates in Lower Egypt, Damietta, Gharbia, and Ismailia.

Available data on stunting at the governorate level, confirms many of the observations above. For instance, results from a 1994 nutrition survey (Hamza 1994) show Fayoum, “representing Upper Egypt,” as having a relatively high rate of stunting (34.8%), and the governorate of Menoufia “representing lower Egypt,” with a lower stunting prevalence of 18.6%.

A more recent 1997 nutritional survey reporting for three governorates in Upper Egypt (Rehim 1997) shows stunting figures of the same magnitude as Fayoum above, with stunting levels of 39.4%, 38.0%, and 29.9% for Menya, Assiut, and Souhag respectively.

In summary, based on both the nutritional and economic data presented above, it can safely be concluded that the governorates of Upper Egypt in general are more food insecure than governorates in other regions of the country. More specifically, the governorates of Assiut, Fayoum, Souhag, Qena, and Menya are likely to be among the most food insecure.

### Relevant Programs and Policies

There is strong political commitment in the Government of Egypt (GOE) for maintaining the present food subsidy program at least in the short run.

Government measures to reform the program are carried out with great caution. Recent reform discussions revolve around the issue of how to reduce food subsidy leakage and better target the program to the needy. However, the main sticking points are finding measures that 1) safeguard the welfare of the food insecure and 2) are also politically acceptable.

According to the GOE's long term development strategy, a continued major priority is to expand agricultural production (4.1% per year) through vertical and horizontal expansion and to eliminate imports of agricultural products by year 2017. More specifically, horizontal expansion included plans to bring under cultivation an additional 150,000 feddan<sup>10</sup> per year (see section on Agriculture).

Relatively recent reforms in the land tenure law (Law 96 of 1992) have allowed landowners to terminate rental contracts and for market determination of rents after a five year period (thus implementation started in 1996). These policy changes are designed to consolidate land holdings and to take advantage of economies of scale. It is expected that about one million tenants and their families have been or will be affected by this law, either by losing their land or paying increased rents. Estimates of the number of tenants who have become landless vary widely between 50,000 and 215,000; about 18,000 such tenants have been offered alternative reclaimed land by the government.

### **Food Security Priorities**

**Data.** Many poverty studies exist in Egypt, but few assessments look explicitly at the long-term ability of households to produce, access, and utilize food. Needed are more studies that look at the dynamics of the household food economy and the opportunities and problems that exist for stabilizing and improving its performance. In addition, there are insufficient and contradictory data in the field of the average daily calorie consumption among the poor and trends over time.

**Monitoring the food subsidy program.** The food subsidy program may mask some key structural vulnerabilities to food insecurity that might otherwise exist in certain households. It will be important to monitor future developments in the subsidy program, particularly the potential negative effects on the poor of further rationalizations of the system.

**Making food security/insecurity a higher profile issue.** Food security issues are perceived in Egypt as relatively benign. Since not much is known about the food security situation among the poor and food insecurity may be higher than expected, aid agencies with a food-related mandate may want to advocate for food security as a higher priority issue in Egypt.

**Monitoring the effects of land tenure reform.** The consequences of land tenure reform on the livelihoods/food security of affected land tenants should be monitored/investigated. Has a new group of food insecure households emerged and how have they coped or failed to cope with changes in land access?

**Analysis.** Future analysis of food insecurity in Egypt may benefit from being structured according to livelihoods systems as opposed to being structured purely according to administrative areas. For instance, the risk and coping factors of settled crop dependent families are clearly different than those of either nomadic herders or urban dwellers. Designing future analysis to address such differences is likely to lead to greater insights regarding causal factors and needed program interventions. Furthermore, food security analysis at a more disaggregated/local level (e.g., districts, sub-districts, and communities) is needed and could lead to much greater gains in targeting efficiency. Census and survey data are available at disaggregated levels and should be used for such purposes. Lastly, while

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<sup>10</sup> One feddan equals roughly one acre.

existing data and information are still underused, new efforts, either through traditional survey approaches or via more qualitative participatory approaches could also go a long way toward furthering understanding of food security in Egypt.

## C. Education

Over the past decade, Egypt has been positioning itself to enter the 21<sup>st</sup> century with a stronger and more competitive human capital base. Recognizing that its regional and international competitiveness was sliding as market fundamentals shifted rapidly in the face of technological change, Egypt has initiated a series of reforms to upgrade and adapt the education and training of its young population. To underpin this reform effort, Egypt has increased its national education budget by an average of 8% per year in real terms during the period 1991-1997. And within the education sector, Egypt has introduced important measures to shift resources to basic education as part of its drive to enrol all children in primary school. Furthermore, a major attempt is underway to upgrade system quality to meet the needs of an information-based global economy, and to foster meaningful dialogue at the national and internal levels on the scope and nature of reform needed. Egypt has sought advice and support from donor agencies in designing and launching past and future educational reforms, particularly from the World Bank, which has served as a partner in and catalyst for policy change.

In moving toward reform, Egypt is undertaking fundamental systemic changes. Specifically, it is tackling the difficult and politically contentious issues of decentralization and involving parents and communities in school governance and is positioning itself to take on entrenched interest groups with significant political clout. Many parties, including major donors, question whether the reforms are going deep enough and moving fast enough. Public interest in and demand for education is very high in Egypt. Yet the sector is generally perceived as falling short of expectations. The press and other media give almost daily coverage to education, but the reports are often negative and include a great deal of inaccurate information. Some of the resident donor missions also tend to be strongly critical of government efforts in the education sector. Such problems stem, in part, from lack of public and donor access to data compiled by government agencies.

A comprehensive World Bank education sector assessment is underway as the CCA goes to press (May 2001). The Bank team has been promised full access to education data from the Ministries of Education and Higher Education and will review the impact of ongoing education reform projects.

The goal of Egypt's education reform is to develop a human capital base that will improve its competitiveness in regional and global markets. The key objectives of the reform program and the issues that the Bank team will focus on are described in the following paragraphs.

**Universal access to basic education.** Egypt has made progress on implementing its reform agenda. The government has made a major effort in improving access to pre-university education through a school construction program over the last ten years. Improved targeting through a school-mapping system and community participation have significantly improved enrolment ratios for girls in rural disadvantaged areas, resulting in a 31% increase in girls' enrolment between 1991 and 1998, which doubles the rate of increase for boys. Helped by a declining

basic education age cohort, the overall gross enrolment ratio has reached 99% for boys and 93% for girls in basic education (8 years). A review of what worked and mechanisms for further improving the access of hard-to-reach populations will be explored.

**Improving the quality and relevance of student learning.** Problem-solving and technology skills have been identified as critical essential skills for graduates to thrive in the new economy. This means the quality of education from basic through tertiary levels will have to improve and be made relevant to the modern economy and the labour market. The government plans to introduce technology at all levels of education and has already changed the primary curriculum to incorporate computer skills. The challenges ahead are daunting as over 700,000 teachers in pre-university education and 100,000 administrators need to be trained not only in the use of computers but also in modern pedagogy and a new concept of teaching and learning through the use of technology in education. An achievement test has been introduced for the first time but implementation remains slow. Appropriate incentives for teachers and administrators to change remain elusive and a civil service structure that provides permanent employment for all regardless of performance remains an obstacle. A national consensus has been built around far-reaching reforms of higher education. At the tertiary level, the government intends to establish a quality assurance mechanism, linking accountability to financing, and upgrade the entire system with information and communications technology. An examination will be made of the effects of the government's policy decision so far and mechanisms for further implementation will be explored.

**Improving efficiency and governance.** The education system at all levels is highly centralized. Fragmented units and departments within the central ministry duplicate and sometimes undermine each other's work. Overstaffing of administrators has resulted in the loss of efficiency as well as a stifling of innovation and effectiveness at the school level as well as in tertiary education institutions. As part of the reform program under the Education Enhancement Program, a ministerial decree was issued which established parent councils and decentralized some budget and management authorities to governorates as well as school levels. Initial campaigns focused on the most under-enrolled areas and have resulted in significant increases in girls' enrolment (by 8-15%) in these targeted areas. Major challenges remain on implementation of this ministerial decree nationwide as many parents are still not aware of its existence and local administrators do not have the capacity to take on the added responsibilities. Accountability measures will have to be introduced along with increased authority at local levels. At the tertiary level, a radical reform proposal to grant autonomy to institutions and forge linkages with the private sector has been endorsed at a national conference of over 1200 stakeholders. Implementation of this reform program is yet to be launched with donor assistance. The assessment will examine progress to date on management reforms including a review of ministerial decrees issued and, to a limited extent, implementation at the school level.

**Financial implications for education reform.** Egypt's budget effort in education is high by international standards (5.2% of GDP). Furthermore, it has significantly increased investment in education by shifting resources from non-education sectors. In addition, the bulk of the increase has concentrated on the

basic education level. While current expenditure per student is in parity with other countries in the region at the primary and the secondary levels, expenditure per student at the higher education level is among the lowest in the region, resulting in a significant decline in quality. This is due to a demographic shift to the higher education age cohort and inadequate participation by the private sector in the financing of higher education. A major policy reform was introduced in 1997 to allow the private sector to open private universities, but its impact will take some time to materialize. An analysis will be made of the financial impact of the government's policy decisions to upgrade the quality of education at all levels, emphasize the use of technology, and achieve universal basic education. Options including reducing overstaffing and promoting private sector participation in higher education will be explored.

**Data.** Education statistics have been collected by multiple agencies, but have rarely been used for planning and policy making purposes. An assessment of the education management information system will be made and data reliability and validity issues will be examined. Special efforts will be taken to work through multiple and conflicting sector data and statistical bases to obtain reliable information on core education indicators.

The assessment will measure progress made to date under the government's comprehensive education reform program. It will take stock of changes that have occurred in the past five years, identify critical areas where further actions are needed, and disseminate this information to key stakeholders. The assessment's findings will contribute to the development of the government's new five-year plan and provide donors with clearer information about the status of reform as well as possible policy measures and recommendations for future support.<sup>11</sup>

Naturally, the assessment will be an invaluable aid to UN agencies developing programs and projects in collaboration their national partners and in coordinating UN agency/donor efforts. The attention paid to data reliability will greatly improve the tracking of indicators and progress toward meeting the goals of Egypt's social development agenda.

### **Education Priorities/Continuing Challenges**

Education's share in total government expenditures may have increased but these resources have not yet translated into producing the quality education that students will need to thrive in an increasingly complex, changing, and demanding economy.

**Basic education/quality.** There is strong political commitment for ensuring basic education for all in Egypt. The last decade has seen the building of new schools, the renovation of old schools, and the introduction of computer labs. Yet much remains to be done. The earlier section on Children and Youth discusses some of the social, economic, and cultural factors that stand in the way of achieving universal enrolment: basic education is costly and yields poor labour market returns, poverty affects enrolment and detracts from its outcomes, biases against the education of girls still exist, and the physical state and rote memorization practices of many schools are not attractive to children. It is now recognized that achieving universal basic education in Egypt will depend upon 1) eradicating

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<sup>11</sup> The preceding is taken from a World Bank concept paper prepared in March 2001.

differentials in enrolment (gender, income, and place of residence) and 2) raising the quality of basic education across the board. The latter, because of the need to retrain and motivate more than 700,00 teachers and change the ways of 100,000 administrators, is likely to prove the more daunting task.

**Expanding promising initiatives.** Community schools that are genuinely community-owned, free of charge, child-centred and girl-friendly without excluding boys, and that have curricula based on participatory methods have proved to be a great success in some of the poorest and most remote communities in rural Egypt. The measures of success of this model are not restricted to increasing girls' enrolment and continuation in school but extend to considerably higher levels of cognitive achievement, personality development, and sound gender relations. A large number of "one-classroom schools" aim to adopt this model.

**Fighting illiteracy.** Illiteracy declined from about 45% of the population aged ten years and older in 1990 to less than 35% near the end of the decade.<sup>12</sup> However, about half of all women are still illiterate, and illiteracy is more prevalent in rural areas and among the poor. Adult literacy programs, some tailored to fit the characteristics of local communities and teach income-generating skills, are one means of increasing the proportion of adults who are able to read or write. There is clearly a need for more programs of this nature. However, in light of the apparent resilience of illiteracy among adult women, eradication of exclusion from basic education appears to be the most promising avenue to combat illiteracy among women.

**Early childhood care and development.** There is now greater recognition in educational circles of the crucial importance of the first years of a child's life. Investment in a child's development during this period yields high returns. Early childhood interventions can enhance nutritional and health status, improve intelligence scores, increase school enrolment, and reduce failure and dropout rates. Studies also show that the benefits of early interventions are especially high for disadvantaged children and their families. Nevertheless, it is estimated that, at the end of the decade, pre-school education reached only about 10% of children. A national program of integrated support for early childhood care, development, and education (which includes a UNICEF-led parental education initiative centring around community school sites as well as extensive NGO involvement) is presently under consideration.

## Regional Support

The national consensus concerning the need for education reform is strong, but intensive technical assistance, capacity building, and financial support will be required to ensure success.

A regional initiative for education in the Arab states undertaken by UNESCO will assist in improving education management information systems. The Pan Arab Project for Educational Information Systems (PAPED) aims at enabling ministries of education and educational institutions to obtain timely, relevant, and reliable information on all aspects of education at the national level, and to promote the

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<sup>12</sup> Egypt Report to the Secretary-General of the United Nations on Follow-Up to the World Summit for Children, December 2000.

culture and practices needed to utilize this information in educational policy analysis, planning, and management. UNESCO's intervention in Egypt will address issues that are identified in needs assessments of the education system. Capacity-building workshops will train personnel who are involved in the production, processing, analysis, and utilization of education data.

## **D. Children at Risk**

In the last several years, Egypt has turned more of its attention to children with special needs. This shift in focus has been made possible by the many significant improvements in the wellbeing of the average Egyptian child, and by a new willingness to confront and address previously "hidden" issues.

This section of the CCA discusses the (often overlapping) categories of children at risk: 1) children with physical or mental disabilities; 2) children whose education or health is placed in jeopardy by the need to work, 3) street children, 4) children in conflict with the law, and 5) children who abuse drugs. These are the young people who are most likely to falter in their development, who do not have access to the opportunities that will help them grow into active, participating members of the community, and who thus are in need of special protection and assistance.

**Children's rights.** Egypt was one of the first countries to ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). In 1989, President Mubarak's declaration of 1989-1999 as the Decade of the Egyptian Child put children at the centre of Egypt's social development plans. In 1996, Egypt passed a Child Law which unified legal provisions for the protection and development of children and sought to ensure conformity with the spirit and the articles of the CRC. The commitment of Egypt to its children was renewed in February 2000 with the Presidential Declaration of the Second Decade for the Protection and Welfare of the Egyptian Child. This second declaration placed particular emphasis on addressing the needs of children in especially difficult circumstances. Egypt has ratified the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention No. 138 on the Minimum Age for Employment and is expected to ratify the ILO Convention No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour in the near future. The process of monitoring and reporting on compliance with UN conventions has helped highlight disparities and open a dialogue on child protection. An attitudinal shift is in progress towards ensuring that every child, even the most disadvantaged, enjoys "a full and decent life, in conditions which ensure dignity, promote self-reliance, and facilitate the child's active participation in the community."<sup>13</sup>

**Challenge.** The lack of standard data sources on children at risk presents a major challenge in defining the extent of the problems discussed below. As noted in the following section, there is a critical lack of national standardized disability definitions and categories. Statistical sources in Egypt no longer provide data comparable to that of earlier years on the economic participation of children, and the statistics that do exist do not differentiate between working children and child labour. Figures from past studies on street children are disputed. Data on children living in social welfare institutions is limited and there is a similar lack of information on the juvenile justice system, delinquency, and drug abuse.

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<sup>13</sup> The Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 23.

**Disability.** Children with disabilities have been the focus of policy attention since 1993 when a national task force was formed to develop policies and strategies. Estimates put the number of children with disabilities at about 8% of Egypt's child population, i.e., there are about 2.5 million children aged 0 to 18 with one or more physical or mental disabilities. Recognition of disability rises as the age of a child increases. Reported disability is about 10% in children aged 6 to 18, reflecting the school screening procedures that increase the probability of detecting disabilities. The introduction of a health card/record for every child in 1996 and health insurance for all children from birth in 1997 is expected to result in earlier and more widespread detection of disability. This combination of health record and medical services may also result in earlier treatment of relatively minor illnesses or conditions which, left untreated, could lead to more serious, permanent disablement.

The Child Law of 1996 states that a disabled child has the right to receive special care, including rehabilitation and social services for the child and its family free of charge. However, appropriate available services are few and there is a critical lack of national standardized disability definitions and categories. According to the National Council for and Childhood and Motherhood,<sup>14</sup> among those who fall outside the social service safety net, or have very limited access to it, are children with severe and multiple disabilities, children younger than four or older than twelve, and children with learning disabilities, cerebral palsy, or autism. The number of children using technical aids and attending special schools is believed to be very low. About 14% of children with reported disabilities are not enrolled in any school and available places in the special education systems probably serve no more than 3% of those who need them. A number of mostly low-cost, pilot interventions are being implemented by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), but specialists and personnel trained to provide effective services are scarce.

**Child labour.** In ILO Convention No. 138, the term "child labour" refers to any economic activity performed by a person under the age of 15. Prior to ratifying this convention, the Government of Egypt had already developed and enacted child labour legislation with provisions for protecting working children that are generally exemplary and broadly consistent with international labour standards. According to the Child Law of 1996, the employment of children under the age of 15 is prohibited. This law, however, does permit children to join training or apprenticeship programs at the age of 12, and children aged between 12 and 14 to participate in seasonal agricultural work which does not harm their health or interfere with their education. The law prohibits the employment of children under 18 in a number of hazardous occupations.

Not all work performed by children is detrimental or exploitative; working children and "child labour" are often two different things. Working children might include those who do light work after school, follow legitimate apprenticeship programs, assist in the family business or in household chores, help out on the family farm, or do other work that does not compromise their education or health. Such children are not necessarily "at risk." Conversely, child labour is a phenomenon that involves work that prevents effective school attendance or is

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<sup>14</sup> Egypt Report to the Secretary-General of the United Nations on Follow-Up to the World Summit for Children, December 2000.

performed under conditions that are hazardous to the physical, mental, or moral health of the child.

Notwithstanding the legal provisions that aim to protect children, child labour does exist in Egypt. Estimates of their number range from one to three million. Children often start work at quite young ages and sometimes face great hardships. Girls as young as six can be found working as maids or child minders in upper middle-class households. Boys often work in mechanic's workshops, quarries, or other places where they are exposed to toxic substances or occupational hazards. Many children receive harsh treatment from their employers. Adverse working conditions, long hours, regular beatings, exposure to harmful chemicals, and inadequate wages are all too often the lot of the many poor children working in Egypt. Recently there has been growing concern about one of the worst and most hidden forms of exploitative child labour, child prostitution. The government is increasingly aware of the risk to young boys and girls in an era when sex tourism, driven in part by a fear of HIV/AIDS, seeks younger and younger victims.

The links between poverty and child labour are strong. Like the more visible problem of children in the street, children in the worst forms of child labour are a persistent manifestation of the effects of a culture of poverty. Family economic pressures have been identified as significant factors leading to child labour and to family dissolution, which places children especially at risk. Women-headed households are often among the most vulnerable groups and rely to a great extent on the earnings of their children; if these women cannot manage to keep afloat economically, the tenuous family may collapse altogether. The 1998 CAPMAS child labour survey found that 29% of working children were from families in the lowest three income brackets. A 1991 study sponsored by UNICEF and the National Centre for Social and Criminological Research, indicates that poor families depend quite heavily on children to supplement their incomes and that a working child's income represents on average 23% of the family's income. The same study found that the principal factors contributing to child labour are failure in school, followed by the desire to learn a profession and the need to contribute to family income. The study noted that the vast majority of children do not combine work with education, especially in urban areas. Those best able to do are children in rural areas, because work in rural areas is often seasonal or flexible, especially on family farms.

Fines and labour inspections imposed and pursued by the government are not likely to bring a solution to the problem of child labour in Egypt. As long as socio-economic conditions still force a significant minority of families to send their children to work, employers, children, and even their parents will find ways of avoiding the inspectors.

**Street children.** Reflecting the high degree of sensitivity surrounding this issue, there is a fair amount of disagreement as to what terminology should be used in discussing, analysing, and addressing the situation of children who are exposed to street life. WHO provides a useful definition: a) children living on the streets whose immediate concerns are survival and shelter; b) children who are detached from their families and living in temporary shelters, such as abandoned houses and other buildings, hostels/refuges/shelters, or moving about between friends; c) children who remain in contact with their family, but because of poverty, overcrowding, or sexual or physical abuse within the family will spend some

nights or most days on the streets; and d) children who are in institutional (residential) care who have come from a situation of homelessness and are at risk of returning to a homeless existence.

The existence of children who spend some or all of their time living in the street has attracted considerable attention over the last decade from government authorities, non-governmental organizations, the media, and donors. Street children are primarily an urban problem in Egypt, and one that may be on the increase. A study carried out in Cairo in 1993,<sup>15</sup> found that the increase in the number of street children is related to general socio-economic changes in society, i.e., rapid urbanization, deteriorating economic conditions, declining governmental and non-governmental social programs, and weakening families ties. Urban poverty may lead to family disintegration, the neglect or desertion of children, or to children themselves leaving home and taking to the streets.

The Government of Egypt, while recognizing the problem, has not yet formulated a coordinated response to caring for what it refers to as “children in need of shelter” or “children deprived of home life.” These children are viewed by many as those most likely to come into conflict with the law because begging and peddling may be treated as legal offences.

The magnitude and nature of the street children phenomenon in Egypt are difficult to gauge. There is no doubt, however, that street children are deprived of basic services such as education and health care, and that many are ill and malnourished. All children exposed to the dangers of “the street” are “at risk.” Girls who lack the protection of their families and communities are especially so. Policy makers, social workers UN agencies and NGOs agree on the increasing urgency of the situation of street children. However, and despite considerable efforts to date, durable, workable, solutions to the problems have yet to be formulated.

In order to better understand the issues involved, three UN agencies recently collaborated in a rapid assessment of the situation of street children in Cairo and Alexandria.<sup>16</sup> The results of this assessment, based on a limited sample, do not claim to estimate the magnitude of the problem. The consultants suggest, however, that the number of children under age eighteen who are disconnected from their families and living at least in part on the street may be in excess of one million. According to the assessment, “70% of the children are school drop-outs, and the remaining 30% have never attended school at all ... 8% are exposed to the real and constant threat of violence from employers ... [They are] a malnourished sub-population subsisting on an inadequate diet ... Lack of access to medical services means that skin diseases, lacerations from fights, intestinal illnesses, and infections go untreated ... Isolated from their families and living in fear, at least two-thirds of the children resort to substance abuse ... If the rest of the world serves as a test case, this trend presages increased violence ... Few services exist that effectively seek to treat substance abuse among this subset of Egypt’s youth.” The assessment examines the governmental and non-governmental organizations that are working to support these children, and wherever possible, to reintegrate

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<sup>15</sup> *Street Children in Egypt*, UNICEF, 1993.

<sup>16</sup> Abt Associates. “Rapid Assessment of Street Children in Cairo and Alexandria: Draft Report,” prepared for the Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention (ODCCP), the World Food Program (WFP), and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), March 2001.

them with their families. The authors point to hopeful signs of a growing awareness on the part of intervention agencies, and state that “the government is more predisposed to coordinate strategies, cooperate with, and use NGOs committed to dealing with street children than at any time in the past.” “There has rarely been a more conducive environment within which to work,” they conclude.

**Children in conflict with the law.** Government policy tends to treat all categories of street children uniformly (i.e., the homeless and juvenile delinquents) because street children are considered “susceptible to delinquency” and regarded as a “potential social danger” to themselves or to others. The government’s main approach is to reunite such children with their families, or if this is not possible, to place them in social welfare, vocational education, or other juvenile institutions. This approach is aimed primarily at providing the care, guidance, and treatment that will help will the children reintegrate into society. The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, when reviewing Egypt’s latest report to the Committee in 2001, noted the need to review the juvenile justice system, and in particular its tendency to treat children at risk as children in conflict with the law. Support and rehabilitation measures are called for rather than detention and sentencing, which may simply accelerate a child’s downward spiral into deprivation and crime. Egypt has undertaken a review of the 1996 Child Law to improve on aspects such as these.

Although several NGO programs have been instituted to assist street children, the number of governmental and non-governmental residential care facilities is still limited. The Abt assessment pointed out that there is a serious lack of effective, trained, and knowledgeable professionals in this area.

**Drugs.** Abuse of volatile substances (i.e., inhaling the fumes of gasoline, paint, or glue) is widespread among street children in Egypt, where it functions as a social or congregational activity. Given their easy availability and low price, such substances also are often the first drugs of choice for adolescents. Volatile substance abuse can be instrumental in opening the way for the abuse of other illicit substances by young people in general, and by street children in particular. Many of the latter turn to substance abuse to cope with life on the streets, a life that is too often rife with violence, sexual abuse, and various other forms of exploitation. Although volatile substances are not subject to control under the UN Drug Control Conventions, they pose a serious health risk.

The main drugs of abuse in Egypt are Bango (cannabis herb) and heroin. The figures for the abuse of these two drugs and benzodiazepines show an upward trend in the 1990s. Drug abuse is mainly a problem of the male population between 20-30 years of age. The age of abusers of Bango is reported to be decreasing. The total number of heroin addicts is generally estimated at 20,000 to 30,000 although the source of these data is unclear. To define the prevailing drug abuse problem and to outline appropriate demand reduction measures, a Rapid Situation Assessment on Patterns and Trends in Drug Abuse in Egypt was conducted by the Ministry of Health with support of ODCCP in 1998/1999. The main findings of the report were that (i) Bango and other cannabis products together with alcohol are the most commonly abused substances. (ii) A larger proportion of the total sample than previously reported (approximately 25%) were using opium, cough sedatives and other psychotropic substances in tablet form. (iii) Friendship networks were important to drug users and nearly all drug-using

respondents reported that friends and colleagues also used drugs. In addition, about one-third of the total sample stated that their immediate family members used drugs. (iv) Only a minority reported injecting drugs, but amongst those, one-third recorded sharing injecting equipment with friends and over 10% with strangers. (v) Only a small minority had tried to seek help for their drug problem from formal sources. It was more commonly reported that people sought help from their family and friends, or stopped by themselves. Treatment and rehabilitation services for drug abuse in Egypt are limited in terms of capacity and expertise and mainly concentrated in the Cairo area. A number of NGOs have started providing treatment and counselling services, but no NGO working with children at risk has yet to start and maintain a drug counselling program. Recently the Government of Egypt, through the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood, has signed an action program to address this issue in its broadest sense with assistance from the United Nations agencies coordinated by the ODCCP. A project on treatment and rehabilitation will assist the Government in addressing the problem related to lack of capacity for provision of adequate treatment and rehabilitation services for an increasing number of drug addicts in Egypt.

**Response.** The United Nations agencies in Egypt have developed close working relationships with all of Egypt's governmental and non-governmental agencies tasked with improving the protection of children who are at risk. At present the work of the government and of NGOs in the areas described above is fragmented and uncoordinated. The United Nations agencies are similarly supporting a variety of pilot projects with no common framework for coordinating action, measuring results, or interacting on policies.

Egypt established the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood (NCCM) in 1988 as the highest government authority in charge of proposing and coordinating strategies and policies in the field of childhood and motherhood. The NCCM's mission and mandate is to bring together all governmental and non-governmental parties around shared objectives and commitments to children. Over the course of the 1990s, the NCCM has played a policy making, monitoring, and coordinating role for actions in the best interests of children at both the national and local levels.

Egypt is intent on developing the full potential of all its young human resources and on including all its children in the opportunities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It has recently accorded the highest priority to the most disadvantaged children. The NCCM is a natural focal point and has the basic resources in place on which to build an effective strategy for a coordinated, integrated response to the formidable challenges posed by children at risk and in need of protection.

## **E. Employment**

The Government of Egypt's objective for the coming decade is to achieve, full, productive, and decently paid employment with due regard to the reduction of poverty among the poorest and the inclusion of such disadvantaged groups as female headed households and the disabled. Achieving this objective will entail the creation of 500 to 600,000 jobs a year for new labour market entrants, improvements in the quality of the labour force, and a balance between increased returns to labour and increased productivity. These targets are particularly

challenging in view of increasingly intense competition from producers in other countries and erosion of the Gulf countries' ability to absorb migrant labour, Egypt's traditional safety valve.

**A changing labour market.** Egypt's labour market has undergone seismic shifts over the past four decades. The country moved from full but low-productivity employment in the 1960s and early 1970s, to rapid but unbalanced economic growth and rising unemployment in 1975-1985, to significant unemployment and declining real wages despite steady economic growth in the last 15 years. The private sector is now expected to become Egypt's largest employer, replacing traditional job creators in the government and public sector. Expansion of the private sector's capacity to absorb labour will depend on Egypt's ability to deepen economic reform, increase international competitiveness, enlarge the domestic market, upgrade the quality of the labour force, enhance the labour market's capacity to match demand for and supply of labour, and achieve a labour intensive macroeconomic growth path (i.e., not based on capital intensive technologies). Notwithstanding this changing economic context, the following characteristics will continue to typify the Egyptian labour market in the near future:

- ?? Forty percent<sup>17</sup> of Egypt's workers earn a living in micro and small scale enterprises that operate in the informal sector. This sector is likely to further expand, as, even in the best imaginable scenario, the formal private sector will be unable to absorb the annual growth of the labour force.
- ?? Most Egyptians work in agriculture or the public sector. While agricultural employment decreased between 1988 and 1998, public sector employment increased, accounting for over a third of the growth in employment in this period.
- ?? Only 46% of the working age population participates in the labour force. The remaining 54% is neither working nor looking for work. Among women, this "inactivity rate" reaches 80%.<sup>18</sup>
- ?? Social background, like gender, determines to a large extent what types of employment opportunities are considered. Upward and downward mobility is limited.
- ?? While unemployment exists among all educational categories, all age groups, and in all governorates, most unemployed people are young, educated, and looking for first jobs. Those least likely to find work are young, educated, female labour market entrants living in rural and Upper Egypt.

In the past, educated youths often preferred a public sector to a private sector career. They were traditionally attracted to urban rather than rural areas and to work opportunities in the Gulf rather than in Egypt. With the privatization process, the development of newly reclaimed lands, the competition of Asian migrants in the Gulf, and the Gulf states' strategy to minimize the number of foreign workers, these trends may no longer hold true.

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<sup>17</sup> Figure from the Ministry of Manpower and Migration, September 2000; other sources estimate the size of the informal sector to be even larger.

<sup>18</sup> According to CAPMAS; other sources indicate a significantly higher participation rate of women. The difference partly lies in the definition of work.

**Constraints.** Egypt’s economic growth is hampered by the lack of transparency of the labour market and the subsequent failure to match demand for and supply of labour. Labour market rigidities are aggravated by outdated legislation, inadequate manpower planning, ill-functioning education and training systems, and unwillingness to move outside Egypt’s major cities or to work in low-status or manual occupations. But even a thoroughly qualified labour force could not be absorbed in its entirety by the local labour market due to rapid population growth and the low employment elasticity of Egypt’s macroeconomic growth.

An approach that targets these constraints individually is unlikely to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the labour market significantly. Instead, a number of national development mechanisms – labour market information, employment offices, and training centres – must be addressed simultaneously and linked with each other to reinforce and maximize impact.

### **National Development Priorities**

The national priorities discussed below reflect the combined opinions of the UN members of the CCA working group on employment (ILO, UNDP, UNIDO, World Bank) and the counterparts consulted in the CCA process (the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics, the Egyptian Trade Union Federation, the Federation of Egyptian Industries, the Ministry of Industry and Technology, the Ministry of Manpower and Migration, the Ministry of Public Enterprises, the Social Fund for Development). They also reflect the spirit and action plans of the World Summit for Social Development and the Fourth World Conference on Women.

**Labour market information system.** A rapidly changing economic context necessitates continuous fine-tuning of labour market interventions. The quality of such interventions depends on the availability and quality of up-to-date labour market information. In Egypt, many institutions are active in the field of gathering, analysing, and disseminating this type of information which is often of high quality and generally gender-disaggregated. Unfortunately, insufficient coordination leaves gaps in data gathering and research, and leads to duplication of efforts and under-utilization of available information. One important gap is data on certain forms of unremunerated labour. Labour market statistics overemphasize the discrepancy between the involvement of women and men in economic life by ignoring economic activities such as the production of goods and services for household consumption and unremunerated work done for family farms or businesses. The UN system could assist in the development of a system that facilitates matching demand for and supply of labour market information, avoids duplication of effort, identifies information gaps, improves tracking of indicators and assessing progress on Egypt’s social development agenda, and is responsive to the needs of all principal users of labour market information in both the public and private sectors.

**Matching demand and supply.** The employment offices of the Ministry of Manpower and Migration (MOMM) and the MOMM vacancy bulletin aim to bring together jobs and workers. These initiatives, like the increasing number of office- and internet-based private employment agencies, compete with informal “word-of-mouth” and “wasta” systems (i.e., employers find workers through employees, relatives, or acquaintances). These traditional systems lack clarity and

produce sub-optimal supply and demand matches. The MOMM has requested the support of the UN system for its plans to upgrade the performance, image, gender sensitivity, and coverage of the employment offices and the vacancy bulletin.

**Training.** Notwithstanding some laudable initiatives, Egypt's training system is dominated by under-equipped, outdated training centres managed without the involvement of potential employers. The centres are staffed by under-qualified, poorly remunerated, and unmotivated trainers and work according to curriculums that were developed in-house rather than on the basis of national standards. Staff members do not have the means to keep abreast of technological developments and often have little practical experience. As a consequence, appropriately skilled workers are often hard to find. Manpower surveys of promising industries (e.g., tourism, some manufacturing industries) could help determine the type, number, and level of skilled workers needed. Transformation, standardization, and targeted expansion of the corresponding training systems would facilitate these industries' growth and generation of employment opportunities. Skills standardization in particular would enhance prospects for Egyptians on the labour markets in the Gulf.

**Job creation.** To supplement its efforts to facilitate Egypt's privatization process, the UN system has formulated a program that should enable the private sector to become internationally competitive. In addition, expanding the number and size of micro, small, and medium scale enterprises could create many job opportunities. Such expansion depends on an enabling environment and the development of entrepreneurial and technical skills. Formalizing the viable segments of the informal sector would also improve job security and working conditions.

**Promotion of employment-intensive economic growth.** Macroeconomic growth is often the best remedy against unemployment. However, if it is based on capital-intensive sectors or is sparked by technological innovations that render much labour redundant, its impact on the labour market will be limited. This has been the case in Egypt, where the last decade's labour elasticity of economic growth has been relatively low (albeit with large differences among economic sectors). A national policy on the promotion of equitable, employment-intensive growth is needed. Such growth can be achieved by 1) identifying economic sectors that have relatively high employment elasticity and encouraging investment in these sectors and 2) promoting the use of based-based production methods by building on UN expertise and experience gained through initiatives such as the Social Fund for Development (SFD) Public Works Program. Cost-effective based-based production techniques could become the standard for applicable infrastructure projects. Government and investor attitudes would have to change, however, as based-based production methods are considered "traditional" rather than "modern" and hence a step back rather than a move forward. An additional advantage of intensive-intensive public works programs is that they can be used to help break down gender stereotypes by employing women at all levels in what has traditionally been considered "men's" work.

**Desert development.** Turning the desert into agricultural lands and industrial zones ranks high on Egypt's political agenda. The objectives are to reduce unemployment, alleviate population pressures in major cities, and increase agricultural and manufactured production. Desert development programs have

reached a critical stage in which the target groups for the reclamation efforts may have to be redefined. The graduates' programs and other schemes that provide small plots of land to individuals and families create much employment per feddan of land. However, the initial investments needed pose a drain on government resources, and the fragmentation of land, in combination with the lack of agricultural experience of many settlers, leads to sub-optimal use of land. The alternative is the development of large farms, developed and cultivated by private investors. Large farms are less dependent on government funds but create less employment per feddan of cultivated land as they tend to use capital-intensive rather than intensive-intensive production techniques. In addition, large farms attract single male migrant labourers rather than permanent family settlers, thereby disrupting family unity and limiting job opportunities for women.

**Mobility.** Physical mobility among urban residents is limited, and jobs outside a person's original place of residence are often considered temporary. They are accepted, almost exclusively by young men, with the intention of saving money to marry and settle down "back where one belongs." Downward social mobility is even more limited. Notwithstanding the drawbacks of Egypt's educational system, large segments of society value higher education, even if it has a negative financial rate of return. Once graduated from a university, non-professional or manual jobs ? however well paid ? are rarely considered. The agricultural desert development programs and the development of new cities and industrial zones have broadened the range of job opportunities. Intensive media campaigns are mounted to attract people to these new places. Initiatives that illustrate the differences in opportunities and remuneration (such as the MOMM vacancy bulletin) may help convince job seekers of the economic benefits of physical and social mobility, but ingrained convictions are difficult to change. Some newly developed lands go unused and few people live in some of the new industrial areas.

**Labour law.** Egyptian job security regulations are complicated and protective. Many employers try to bypass regulations by hiring temporary workers or requesting signed, undated resignation letters upon recruitment. Some workers readily agree to unregistered employment in order to avoid "losing" 14% of their incomes on social security insurance. This attitude seems particularly prevalent among young women who intend to stop working while they are still young and healthy and feel they are unlikely to reap the benefits of the social security system. Adherence to restrictive employment policies contributes to sub-optimal resource allocation by preventing firms in the formal sector from adapting to rapidly changing market conditions by closing or modernizing outdated production facilities. Noncompliance has an impact on productivity as well, as temporary workers are likely to receive less on-the-job training. The government is aware of the need to adjust regulations to the needs of a changing labour market, and a more flexible labour law awaits discussion in parliament. The UN was actively involved in drafting this law and will continue to play a role in trying to ensure that the resultant labour market structure is to the benefit of all parties concerned: the government, employers' organizations, trade unions, and civil society.

**Youth.** Under the current labour law, life-long employment is all but secured once a person manages to find employment in the formal sector. Unfortunately, this first formal sector job is hard to find. Young people in Egypt do not always have skills that employers can immediately put to use. Lacking these skills, they

face fierce competition from more experienced adult and cheaper child workers. Alternatively, they leave the country in search of employment, an option more open to young men more than to young women. Not surprisingly, most of Egypt's unemployed are between 15 and 24, and the unemployment rate is highest for women in this age bracket. While youth employment is an obvious national development priority, youth may be helped more by the combination of interventions described in this document (equitable macroeconomic growth, transformation of the educational and training systems, increasing physical and social mobility), than by initiatives that target youth in particular. By simultaneously addressing several national development priorities, job security (i.e., a person will not lose his or her job) will gradually be replaced by labour market security (i.e., a person will be able to find new employment if his or her contract is terminated).

**Women.** Other than some protective measures that bar women from certain types of work and some women-specific stipulations related to maternity leave and nursing, Egypt's labour legislation grants women and men equal rights on the work floor. In addition, a number of programs aim to enhance the labour market position of women (e.g., some SFD projects, the Sharouk Project of the Ministry of Local Development). Nonetheless, women are less "present" in the labour market than men (though less so than statistics may suggest), and concentrated in sectors of low productivity, low earnings, and low status. Notwithstanding the labour law, women outside the public sector often earn less than men even in otherwise comparable situations, and stand a higher chance of being unemployed (i.e., able and willing to work, but unable to find employment). Egypt's training system is highly gender-stratified and training for girls is often based on tradition rather than market value. Outside the public sector, there are few women in high-level management or technical posts. The position of young educated women in the labour market is particularly critical. As the government employs relatively many women at all levels of its hierarchy, the privatization process puts additional pressure on women in the labour market. The expected loss of job opportunities in the public sector, where women are over-represented, could cause women to crowd the informal sector or to drop out of the labour market altogether (as appears to be the case with most early retirees). On the positive side, the changing economic context may create opportunities for women who wish to venture into types of activities that are new in Egypt and therefore not yet defined as the "male" work domain.

**The physically and mentally disabled.** The Government of Egypt stipulates that a certain percentage of any employers' work force should be composed of the physically or mentally disabled. To facilitate compliance, the MOMM employment offices help the private sector recruit disabled people and, in 1999 alone, the Central Agency for Organization and Administration ensured the appointment of some 7,500 disabled persons in the public sector. Nonetheless, implementation of the law is far from perfect and disabled people are often inactive or engaged in low-paying, unsafe home-based production or in low-status occupations such as micro-retailing or begging. The obstacles that disabled people face include negative attitudes (including low self-esteem and overprotective families), unequal access to education and training, inaccessible buildings and public transport, and lack of assistive devices and support services.

**Working conditions/occupational safety and health (OSH).** The most hazardous occupations (with the notable exception of some agricultural activities) are in the predominantly male small and medium enterprise sector. Women outside agriculture face more non-occupation-specific hazards such as long working hours, uncomfortable postures, and various forms of on-the-job harassment. Young women in particular may accept violation of even the most basic OSH rules if they consider their working life to be the few years until marriage only. For children, the range of potential work-related hazards is broader and the effects can be more grave, causing injuries and impeding a healthy growth process (see section on Children at Risk). OSH issues are covered in a number of international conventions. Egypt ratified some of them and developed its own OSH legislation but, like many countries, faces difficulties in ensuring compliance with OSH standards.

## F. The Environment

Egypt's population of 67 million lives in crowded conditions. While population density ranges from a low of 34 persons per square kilometre in Suez governorate to a high of 31,750 in Cairo governorate, in some areas of Cairo and Alexandria the number can exceed 100,000. In contrast, with the exception of the Red Sea/Sinai coastal resorts and several oases, vast stretches of Egypt's deserts are nearly uninhabited.

Rather than distinct urban settlements, Egypt's urban pattern is now one of a continuous, unbroken chain along the Nile with high volumes of people and goods moving daily along the same north-south axis. The number of people living within housing units is exceptionally high everywhere. Crowded neighbourhoods and housing conditions, especially in informal settlements that lack basic amenities such as piped water, sanitation, and garbage collection, degrade the physical environment and put increasing stress on human health and interaction.

Population growth and continued economic development will bring ever-greater demands for water and land. Although childbearing patterns in Egypt have changed significantly over the last twenty years, the dynamic of past improvements in survival will continue to fuel rates of natural increase close to 2%. A growing population and its concentration in the narrow Nile Valley and the Nile Delta will place increasing pressure on Egypt's limited land and water resources.

Per capita water availability has fallen from 1,893 cubic meters per year in 1959 to about 900 in 1999. This is lower than "the recommended world standard" of 1,000 cubic meters per person per year. If Egypt's population continues to grow and her share of Nile water remains stationary, forecasts indicate that per capita share of water will fall further to 670 cubic meters by 2017, and to 536 by 2025.

Good climatic conditions (maximum sunlight, mild winters) and the reasonable quality of its land and water resources make Egypt ideally suited to cultivating a wide variety of crops. Urban encroachment on agricultural land, however, may affect Egypt's future ability to produce sufficient food to feed its growing population and to meet its goal of increasing agricultural exports. For many Egyptians, economic growth and poverty reduction are synonymous with agriculture since 57% of the country's population and the majority of its poorest citizens live in rural areas.

Agriculture provides employment for about 30% of the labour force and consumes more than 80% of the available water supply. Some agricultural and irrigation practices contribute to the deterioration of water and soil quality and can also pose dangers to human health.

Issues of the environment – air, noise, and water pollution, the disposal of industrial and human wastes, the use of agricultural chemicals, soil degradation, toxic substances in the workplace – are beginning to draw the attention of the government and the public.

The following thematic assessments review the inextricably linked subjects of water, agriculture, and environmental concerns.

## 1. Water

Water scarcity will be the critical challenge for the future of Egypt. Key issues are water quantity, water quality, water use efficiency, and the financing of water infrastructure.

The Nile supplies 96% of Egypt's water. Egypt, however, shares the Nile with nine other countries and Egypt's share of Nile water is fixed by international agreement at 55.5 billion cubic meters (bcm) each year. The demand for water, fuelled by rapid population growth, agricultural expansion, and industrial development, has increased substantially since the agreement was signed in 1959 and will continue to do so in the future. Water is becoming increasingly scarce whether measured by a simple indicator such as per capita supply or by more sophisticated projections of future demand. Current water use is estimated at 67.47 bcm/year and demand is expected to reach 87.90 bcm by 2017.

The Government of Egypt intends to meet the challenge of water scarcity by 1) making the best use of available water resources, 2) protecting water resources from pollution, and 3) enhancing cooperation with other Nile Basin countries.

Water is expected to become an ever more strategic issue in the geopolitics of Egypt's future and in its own development choices.

**Available water resources.** Egypt's fresh water resources are limited to the Nile River (the main and almost exclusive source of fresh water), groundwater in the deserts and Sinai, rain and flash floods, and desalinated seawater. Rain falls during the winter in the form of scattered showers and storms and therefore cannot be considered a dependable water source. Nevertheless, some seasonal rainfed agriculture is practiced on Egypt's north coast and in the Sinai (rain provides about 1 bcm of moisture in the Delta each year).

Much of the difference between Egypt's annual 55.5 bcm allotment and its 67.47 bcm current water use comes from water reuse. On its way from the High Dam to the sea, Nile water is used over and over again to irrigate crops in the Valley and Delta. The agricultural drainage network returns about 4.5 bcm to the system annually for reuse and the groundwater withdrawn from wells in the Nile Valley and Delta amounts to 4.8 bcm/year Nile Valley/Delta groundwater is provided by the River Nile through seepage. Water withdrawn from wells must be replaced or "recharged" by surface water. Thus this renewable resource is not a "new" source independent of Egypt's Nile allotment. Recycling industrial water also moves about 6.5 bcm back into the system and reuse of treated domestic wastewater

returns 0.7 bcm. Government projections for 2017 include the following: rainfall and flash flood harvesting 1.5 bcm/year; groundwater use from the renewable Delta/Valley aquifers 7.5 bcm/year (the maximum safe yield); drainage water reuse 8.4 bcm/year; and treated wastewater reuse 2.5 bcm/year.

Egypt is blessed with considerable non-renewable groundwater reserves in the Sinai and the Eastern and Western Deserts, most notably the Nubia Sandstone Aquifer which extends below the vast area of the New Valley governorate. Groundwater mining is expected to increase from its current annual level of .57 bcm to 3.77 bcm by 2017.

Desalination of seawater has been accorded relatively low priority due to its high cost. Nevertheless, it may one day prove more feasible to use this method to provide drinking water (or water for industrial or tourism purposes) in remote coastal areas where the cost of constructing pipelines to deliver Nile water is high. Flash floods following short periods of heavy rains are currently a source of environmental damage, especially in the Red Sea area and south Sinai. This environmental liability could be turned into a development opportunity if rain and floodwater is harvested for later use.

### **Making Optimal Use of Available Resources**

The importance of water management can not be over-emphasized in a country like Egypt. The growing demands of competing users for limited water resources has led the government to formulate national and regional policies and programs to improve both water allocation and water use efficiency, particularly in the agricultural sector which uses more than 80% of available water (agriculture accounts for 83% of current use, industry 10%, and municipalities about 6%).

**Irrigation improvements.** The largest and oldest of these programs is the Irrigation Improvement Project (IIP) which began in the 1980s as a new approach to water management intended to increase water use efficiency and agricultural production (it is estimated that about 20% of water can be saved through canal-level improvements). The IIP is one of the major demand management instruments used to implement water reform policies. The project has achieved several intermediate objectives. These include: 1) strengthening the institutional capacity of the Ministry of Water Resources and Irrigation to continue carrying out irrigation improvement activities; 2) developing a national, interdisciplinary approach for planning, designing, and implementing renovated canal commands; 3) developing an Irrigation Advisory Service to provide water management technical assistance to farmers and water user groups; 4) organizing water users associations; and 5) establishing policies and procedures for recovery of a portion of irrigation system operation and maintenance costs, and all costs at farm level improvements. A more recently instituted policy is the formation of water user associations at the branch canal level as the first step in the improvement process. Farmer participation in irrigation planning and management is expected to increase the efficiency of irrigation deliveries, reduce inequities in water distribution, and reduce and recover some of the costs of operating and maintaining a sustainable irrigation network.

**Growing more with less water: new seed varieties, crop substitution, improved irrigation practices.** The largest consumers of Egypt's irrigation water are rice and sugarcane. Both have high water requirements and both (rice

especially) occupy considerable areas of land. The Ministry of Water Resources and Irrigation (MWRI) and the Ministry of Agriculture and Land Reclamation (MALR) are jointly implementing national and regional pilot programs that will significantly reduce the amount of water used in cultivating rice and sugarcane while maintaining or even increasing current production levels. Rice, grown primarily in the Delta (north of Cairo), requires almost 50% more water than cotton and slightly less than double the water for maize. Sugarcane, cultivated mainly in Middle and Upper Egypt (south of Cairo), requires about 30 to 50% more water than the typical rotation of other crops (maize and wheat for example). Egyptian rice breeders have developed several short season rice varieties. Substantial water savings can be made by reducing the area planted in rice and by using early maturing rice varieties in conjunction with improved farming techniques. Similar savings can be achieved by reducing the area planted in sugarcane and adopting improved on-farm water management practices and technologies (i.e., laser land levelling, gated plastic pipes, furrow irrigation) that produce 20 to 25% more sugarcane with less water than traditional flood irrigation.

**Reuse of agricultural drainage water.** Agricultural drainage reuse is an important source of irrigation in Egypt's Nile Delta but the current reuse system is increasingly threatened by contamination from municipal and industrial wastewater and agricultural chemicals. The MWRI recently conducted a pilot program to test the feasibility of a policy change that would shift some reuse operations from polluted main drains to unpolluted branch drains. Such intermediate drainage reuse captures good quality water before it can be contaminated. The pilot program demonstrated the technical merits of intermediate drainage reuse and the new reuse policy was approved in July 1999.

**Reuse of treated wastewater.** The increasing demand for domestic water due to population growth and improved living standards and the growing use of water in the industrial sector due to expansion of Egyptian industry will increase the total amount of wastewater available for reuse. Treated wastewater, either alone or blended with fresh water, could become an important irrigation source in the future.

### **Protecting Water Quality and Preventing Pollution**

Water quality will become increasingly important as Egypt tries to meet a growing portion of its future water needs through reuse of water. Technologies exist to do this safely but they require considerable funds and careful management. Pollution from industrial, agricultural, and municipal sources not only endangers human health, it can also make water unsuitable for reuse in irrigation. Not surprising, water quality tends to deteriorate as the Nile moves north from Upper Egypt to the Mediterranean. Overuse of chemical fertilizers, pesticides, and insecticides is contributing to the deterioration of groundwater quality.

One of the most urgent operational issues in water quality management is the discharge of untreated domestic and industrial wastewater into the water system. Egypt introduced water pollution controls in 1982. Law 48 ties allowable discharge limits to stringent water quality standards. Existing low compliance rates are related to high compliance costs to meet stringent standards, constrained

public and private resources for treatment, and limited institutional infrastructure devoted to compliance oversight. A program is in place to initiate compliance, even incremental compliance, at facilities believed to be causing the greatest water quality problems through a system of negotiated, site-specific compliance action plans. Law 4 of 1994 delegates overall responsibility for the environment to the Ministry of State for Environmental Affairs and its technical support arm, the Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency.

Water quality management is now crucial for Egypt. There are good monitoring systems, but use of monitoring data for management and enforcement needs more work. Especially important is a mechanism for achieving coordination between rural and urban water agencies and expanded collaboration among the many ministries and organizations involved in water, agricultural, and environmental issues.

### **Developing New Lands and New Water Resources**

Turning the desert into agricultural lands, industrial zones, and new communities ranks high on Egypt's political agenda. The objectives are to reduce unemployment, alleviate population pressures in major cities, and increase agricultural and manufactured production. The government invests considerable resources and effort in such projects. Plans to reclaim and bring under cultivation an additional 3.4 million feddans by 2017 will depend in part on: 1) making more extensive use of Nile water (new canals and diversions, renewable groundwater, reuse of agricultural drainage water and treated wastewater), 2) increasing the use of nonrenewable groundwater from desert aquifers, and 3) an additional 2 bcm/year becoming available when the Jonglei Canal, a project that has been under development for many years, is completed. Identifying the potential, scope, and mode of assistance in the management of reclamation operations remains a challenge for both the government and external assistance agencies.

One promising supply enhancement option is to save and use the large amount of water that is lost before the Nile reaches Aswan. This will entail the development of joint projects with other Nile Basin countries. As part of the ongoing Nile Basin Initiative process, the Nile riparians have begun to meet regularly to build trust and develop mutually beneficial projects. Support for the Initiative is led by the World Bank.

### **Financing Water Infrastructure/Expanding Participation**

Egypt has made substantial investments in building and operating the Aswan High Dam, seven large barrages, some 500 pumping stations, a vast network of some 35,000 kilometres of irrigation and 16,000 kilometres of drainage canals, and their control structures. Additional sizable investments, both public and private, will be required to realize the ambitious Toshka and other desert development schemes. Egypt must also find the funds to preserve, operate, and maintain the large water infrastructure built in the past and planned for the future.

Considerable work has been done in Egypt on cost recovery and its allocation to different users and there is good understanding of the need to institute acceptable cost recovery mechanisms. However, understanding of the concept and advantages of locally managed, autonomous water entities needs to be enhanced. As water user associations are built up through the IIP, the irrigation department

must become more responsive and adapt to a new “partnership” role in water management. Private sector participation in canal improvements is already underway. The MWRI has identified several additional areas for private sector involvement including pumping station operations and maintenance workshops, but these could be further expanded to encourage wider private sector participation in a variety of water management operations.

Cost recovery for canal level improvements is still minimal and water for domestic use is heavily subsidized with water rates in major cities set at less than the cost of delivery. Instituting a viable cost recovery and realistic water pricing program is important for several reasons: 1) low water rates often translate into poor service and inadequate supply; 2) as liberalization policies gain momentum in other sectors, cost recovery and realistic pricing policies could gain importance as an option for cutting wasteful practices and water demand; 3) financial resources will be required not only for expansion of the water system to new areas, but also to maintain and operate the existing and future water infrastructure in both new and old lands.

**Incentives to save water, curb pollution.** Some of the incentives that have been proposed to reduce water demand include the following. In the agricultural sector, crop production charges (for violations of regulations or for the entire cropped area), volumetric cost recovery by metering at the tertiary canal level (already in place in 2% of Egypt’s cultivated areas), effluent fees, taxes on farm inputs for water intensive crops, subsidies for farm inputs for less water intensive crops. In the municipal sector, a per building water tariff (metering up to the dwelling level, then adjusted for each household based on various factors), a per household water tariff (a meter in each household), subsidies for water-saving, in-house devices. In the industrial sector, introduction and enforcement of a “polluter pays” policy, effluent charges/permits, subsidies for internal reuse/treatment facilities, product charges for specified firms/outputs based on pollution impact and/or water usage, a tax on polluting input materials used by firms, subsidies for non-polluting inputs.

**Public awareness.** The MWRI has established a communication program to educate the public, particularly the farming public, about the realities of a fixed water supply. The program focuses on the need to make better use of water and protect it from pollution, how farmers can “make every drop count,” and the benefits of participation in water user associations. The communication unit also provides information about water issues to policy makers, managers, and MWRI field staff.

The final paragraph of the following section on Agriculture presents a summary of key strategies for sustainable use of land and water in the agricultural sector.

## 2. Agriculture

Agriculture is central to the Egyptian economy in at least three respects. First, the sector employs about 30% of the labour force. Second, despite impressive gains in the production of strategic food crops, Egypt remains one of the world’s largest food importers. Third, agriculture accounts for approximately 21% of exports. In fact, when downstream agro-processing industries such as yarn, fabrics, textiles, and clothing are also considered, the agro-processing sector accounts for just over half (53%) of exports. Moreover, with approximately 57% of Egypt’s population

living in rural areas, the performance of the agricultural sector is critical to poverty reduction efforts.

**Reforms.** The policy framework under which the agricultural sector operated up to the end of the 1970s was characterized by heavy government interventions in production, trade, and prices. These interventions had a negative effect on agricultural development and food security. In the 1980s, the agricultural sector began pioneering the economic and reform process that was extended to the economy at large in the early 1990s. Many of the distortions that hampered the sector were lifted during the 1990s; prices and trading of most inputs and commodities were liberalized and farmers were free to choose their cropping patterns.

**Strategy for the 90s.** The main objective for the 1990s was to increase agricultural productivity per unit of land and water through more efficient use of these limited resources, reduce unit costs of production, and thereby increase national output and farmer incomes. Subsectoral strategies were designed for: efficient and environmentally sustainable use of water and land; including free market considerations and promotion of the private sector in resource allocation; crop and livestock production based on Egypt's comparative advantages; export-based trade, marketing, and agro-industrial development; and development of support services (extension and research) and voluntary farmer organizations.

**Results.** Egypt is in the midst of a dynamic agricultural transformation, highlighted by dramatic yield and production increases. The average annual rate of growth of agricultural production increased from 2.6% in the 1980s to 3.4% in the 1990s and the "food gap" narrowed significantly. The value of agricultural exports increased from LE 471 million in 1982 to LE 2 billion in 1998. Credit facilities available to the agricultural sector increased from LE 1.2 billion in 1982 to LE 11 billion in 1998. Egypt now achieves some of the highest crop yields in the world, especially for sugarcane, rice, and wheat. The total production of cereals rose from 8.5 million tons in 1982 to 18 million tons in 1998. Wheat production rose from 2 million tons in 1982 to 6.1 million tons in 1998. During the same period, maize production increased from 3.3 to 6.2 million tons, and rice from 2.4 to 4.5 million tons. Sugar production increased from 649 thousand tons in 1982 to 1.2 million tons in 1998 and fish production increased from 200 thousand tons to 546 thousand tons.

Multiple cropping is common and land productivity is very high. Egypt has over 7 million feddans of cultivable land, but with a cropping intensity of nearly 200%, the total cropped area reached 13.8 million feddans in 1998. Currently, cotton, wheat, rice, maize, and berseem (clover) account for 80% of the cropped area. Wheat and berseem are the principal winter crop; cotton and rice are important cash crops in summer, while maize and sorghum are major subsistence crops. Sugar production is geared toward helping to meet the rising local demand resulting from a growing population.

**Progress.** The impressive progress described in the preceding section can be attributed to a number of factors including: the development of new seed varieties and other improved technologies; new production practices; liberalization of commodity prices; phase-out of mandatory "quota" requirements for cereals and other crops; expansion of the cultivated area through land reclamation from 6.2 million feddans in 1982 to 7.8 million in 1998; privatization of newly reclaimed

government-owned land; and implementation of production campaigns at the national level which require that research, extension, and other agencies work together to provide farmers with better technologies.

**Constraints.** A number of factors impede further development of Egypt's agriculture sector. These include limited water and land resources; limited skilled human resources; limited technology transfer (and its adaptation to local conditions); population pressures resulting in urban encroachments on agricultural land; inappropriate legal and regulatory systems; and lack of competitiveness.

**The future.** Government strategy through 2017 is summarized in the following points:

- ?? Increase the annual rate of growth of agricultural production to 4.1% through vertical and horizontal expansion; bring 3.4 million feddans of desert land under cultivation and ensure comprehensive agricultural development in new lands; encourage domestic, Arab, and foreign direct investment in agricultural production, post harvest, marketing, and export projects; provide raw material for existing industrial activities such as food processing and the spinning and weaving industries.
- ?? Make more efficient use of land and water, enhance agricultural research, and promote technology transfer through extension, credit, and marketing cooperatives, and NGOs.
- ?? Increase the value of exports from LE 2 billion annually to LE 5 billion, based on the quality assurance and product safety considerations which are the key to competitiveness; maximize the benefits of Egypt's comparative advantages.
- ?? Develop domestic livestock, poultry, and fish production to improve nutritional status through increased protein availability.

Egypt is becoming increasingly integrated with the world economy. Support for import-competing activities is likely to decline in the future as Egypt faces relatively lower trade barriers for its agricultural exports. Future agricultural strategy is therefore based on the premise that export-led growth will spur agriculture production to levels that will bring the poor into the mainstream of economic activity. Agriculture and agro-processing industries can play a significant role in achieving these objectives. Egypt has two critical assets in favour of an agro-export strategy: 1) excellent conditions for the production of high value products for export and 2) proximity to potentially lucrative markets in Europe and the Gulf.

For the economy as a whole, the goal of such a strategy is not necessarily to maximize the growth of production of any particular subsector, but to create the necessary conditions that will facilitate adjustment of the agricultural sector towards a more competitive environment. This implies that the production structure as well the agro-processing industry and inputs delivery system are allowed to adjust rapidly to changes in foreign market conditions and in technologies, through changes in cropping patterns and in farm structure. This requires flexible rural factor markets (labour, land, water, finance), as well as a competitive agribusiness sector, adequate infrastructure, technology development, and, last but not most important, more human capital (education and training). Overall, such a strategy would lead to faster agricultural growth, largely through

adjustments in the output mix towards higher value products, which should result in higher total factor productivity.

It is expected that such a strategy ? and a complementary policy orientation ? would result in the creation of a large number of jobs, a high volume of exports to complement domestic needs, significant increases in rural incomes because of the higher returns earned by these crops, and resulting poverty alleviation as increasing numbers of low income farmers become part of the growth process.

**Conducive policy environments.** While the agricultural sector constitutes Egypt's largest employer, the fact that its GDP contribution amounts to just 17% indicates the need to further encourage the agricultural reforms initiated in the 1980s and expanded in the 1990s.

A prudent macroeconomic policy is also needed. It is widely believed that a relatively rigid exchange rate is holding back the vast potential of Egypt's exports. Devaluations by competitors (i.e., Israel, Turkey, Jordan, Palestine) result in a loss of competitiveness. The overvalued exchange rate partly explains the erratic export performance of agriculture. A recent World Bank study indicates a 20-30% exchange rate misalignment. This discourages the export of agricultural tradables, constitutes an implicit tax on exports, and provides protection to Egypt's agro-industries (i.e., food processing, cotton spinning, rice milling.)

**Enhancing competitiveness.** Egypt needs to produce, market, and trade according to its comparative advantages. A recent domestic resource cost (DRC) analysis carried out by FAO in coordination with the Ministry of Agriculture and Land Reclamation (MALR) reveals striking results. Egypt carries a comparative advantage in some key commodities, which have strong domestic and external demand such as fruits, vegetables, cotton, and (at margin) rice. In most cases Egypt can compete effectively through high and stable yields, cheap water and labour, and exceptional locational advantage.

**Table 5: Competitiveness of Major Crops in 1998-99 (Based on Average World Prices)**

Crop	Net Return per Feddan*		Protection Coefficients		Domestic Resource Cost	
	Financial	Economic	Nominal	Effective	DRC	Ranking
<b>Importable</b>						
Wheat	706.55	289.95	1.15	1.22	.81	5
Maize	493.94	158.45	1.08	1.16	.87	6
Sorghum	514.14	-135.38	1.38	1.63	1.17	9
Sugarcane	1471.22	-383.43	1.15	1.48	1.15	8
<b>Exportable</b>						
Cotton	102.74	693.37	.70	.64	.66	4
Rice	1032.74	68.04	1.14	1.31	.96	7
Potatoes	2822.92	1475.37	1.22	1.42	.50	3
Tomatoes (new lands)	6004.19	9675.62	.77	.71	.26	2
Strawberries (new lands)	4439.40	43082.69	.363	.30	.23	1

Source: FAO 2000

The analysis reveals a strong comparative advantage (domestic resource cost <.7) for fruits, vegetables, and cotton. Falling international prices and high rental values for land have driven wheat, maize, and sorghum out of a range that ensures economic profitability. High consumptive use of water for sugarcane keeps it

economically unprofitable, as has been the case in the past. Attractive prices for rice make it economically viable, though only at margin. Wheat, maize, and rice also show comparative advantage at the margin. In the long term with rising input costs, especially rental value of land and water reflecting its scarcity value, it would be very difficult to justify growing low value crops (assuming similar world prices and cost conditions). In the “new” lands, the comparative advantage for fruits and vegetables, especially for some high value crops such as strawberries (DRC <.25), provides a policy direction to invest in creating the required infrastructure to enhance the export potential of these commodities.

**Fruits and vegetables.** Horticultural crops (i.e., fruits, vegetables, flowers, medicinal and ornamental plants) can be instrumental in paving the way for an export-led agriculture strategy. The value of horticultural exports has tripled from 1998 levels, making it one of the three strongest and fastest growing agribusiness subsectors in terms of investment, export value, and private sector job creation. There is considerable room for improvement as agricultural exports account for more than 20% of total exports, but only 5% of horticultural products are exported. Egypt produces over 40 different types of fruits and vegetables and over 21 million tons of produce per year. The value of horticultural production per feddan is very high, making it a major source of small holder income; fruits and vegetables are also becoming an increasingly important part of local diets. Horticultural development will be a key element of future growth in the agriculture sector.

**Export challenges.** Egypt’s success in meeting its objective of increasing agricultural exports, particularly horticultural products, will depend chiefly on addressing: 1) the shortage of transportation capacity for highly perishable products, 2) low quality packing and packaging material and insufficient cold storage and refrigerated trucking capacity that can result in post-harvest losses as high as 40%, 3) lack of access to the latest, most cost-effective technologies, and 4) the need for state-of-the-art market information which farmers, traders, exporters, and food processors can use to identify and develop domestic and international market opportunities. To be competitive, Egypt’s horticultural exports must meet the most exacting international standards. Environmental and food safety issues such as the use of agricultural chemicals and the quality of Nile water are therefore matters of growing concern.

**Cotton.** Egypt’s fine quality long staple cotton once dominated the world market but Egypt failed to take advantage of its very strong comparative advantage by overpricing its product and restricting exports to protect the state-owned, unprofitable spinning mills which consume about 70% of the country’s rapidly decreasing cotton production. At the heart of the problems faced by growers, traders, and the textile sector alike is a rigid and arbitrary pricing system. Policy measures to ensure more transparent and competitive marketing mechanisms are urgently needed if Egyptian cotton is to regain its preeminent position in the world market.

**Livestock.** The government places high priority on expanded development of livestock, poultry, and fish production to promote self-sufficiency and improve nutritional status through increased protein availability. Although Egypt does not have natural pastures, the low cost of inputs gives Egypt a comparative advantage in producing meat and milk. Currently, the emphasis is on improved breeding

technologies, higher milk yields, boosting the number of medium and large-scale livestock farmers who are naturally market oriented from the present level of 10% to 20%, and realizing environmentally friendly practices in the production of animal protein commodities.

**Rural poverty reduction.** The majority of Egypt's poor and 74% of the ultra poor live in rural areas. Increasing the productivity of agriculture remains an important prerequisite for increasing the incomes of the rural poor in a sustainable manner. In addition, greater emphasis on non-agricultural sources of rural employment and income will also be needed to achieve rural poverty alleviation.

**Strategies for sustainable use of land and water.** The Government of Egypt has already taken many steps to increase agricultural productivity and has formulated policies and programs to improve water allocation. Laws to protect against land degradation, control construction on agriculture land, and prevent pollution have been passed but not all have been implemented strictly. Additional steps are necessary to support sustainable land and water use policies:

- ?? Improve on-farm water management efficiency and reduce over watering.
- ?? Promote land levelling to increase water use efficiency.
- ?? Improve agricultural drainage systems.
- ?? Introduce new irrigation technologies (i.e., sprinkler, drip); outdated practices not only contribute to Nile water losses, they threaten the fertility of Egyptian soil.
  
- ?? Control salinity, water logging, and other soil deterioration problems.
- ?? Identify areas requiring high priority soil regeneration.
- ?? Continue to introduce crop varieties with lower water requirements.
- ?? Reallocate water within agriculture by moving gradually out of water-intensive crops such as rice and sugarcane.
  
- ?? Switch to more lucrative and water-thrifty export crops.
- ?? Develop land use plans for reclaimed areas.
- ?? Use reclaimed lands to grow ecologically appropriate crops.
  
- ?? Reduce use of chemical pesticides and fertilizers.
- ?? Encourage recycling of organic matter for use as a fertilizer.
- ?? Promote integrated, environmentally friendly crop and livestock systems
  
- ?? Move toward decentralization of and wider public participation in water management responsibility.
- ?? Devise more effective cost sharing/water pricing programs.
- ?? Encourage compliance with effluent discharge laws and enforce a "polluter pays" policy.

### 3. Environmental Concerns

Environmental issues moved up Egypt's political and public agendas following the 1992 Rio de Janeiro UN Conference on Environment and Development. Egypt enacted a law for the protection of the environment in 1994 and appointed a State Minister for the Environment in 1997. A national environmental policy has

been developed and its implementation is currently taking place through a number of programs and projects.

The priorities are ensuring public health and protecting Egypt's water and land resources. Four environmental challenges have been identified by the Government of Egypt as targets for immediate action: curb air pollution, stop contamination of the Nile, address solid wastes, and protect nature reserves.

**Air pollution.** Air pollution in Egypt comes from both natural and man-made sources. The former includes wind-blown dust from desert areas, sometimes in very large quantities. The latter, more important, man-made sources include industrial facilities, power stations, vehicles, and the burning of garbage and agricultural residues. Both types of pollution are hazards to human health. Air pollution in Egypt's major urban and industrial centres greatly exceeds international standards, contributing to high levels of respiratory illness and lead poisoning. In Cairo, the principal polluters are the power generating stations that use two million tons of heavy oil and "mazout" annually, the open-air incineration of 2000 tons of solid wastes daily, and small registered and unregistered foundries and smelters. Air pollution problems also exist in rural areas, primarily as the result of vehicles that cause air and soil pollution along trafficked roads, and the burning of refuse.

**Water pollution.** The principal polluters of the Nile, Egypt's main source of water, are agricultural activities and the discharge of untreated or partially treated industrial and municipal wastes. All pose risks to human health and the environment. The list of polluting substances found in the Nile (and therefore in irrigation water) is extensive. It includes pathogens, parasites, heavy metals, fertilizer and pesticide residues, and such navigational effluents as oil and grease. These and other substances are also found in agricultural drains and can leach into the soil and enter the food chain. Crops irrigated with tainted water can absorb contaminants through roots and soil or retain them on plant surfaces after irrigation water evaporates. Moreover, these substances and the salts in agricultural wastewater and drains adversely affect groundwater and soil quality. In Cairo and other cities, the municipal sewerage systems also serve industrial and commercial activities. High levels of toxic substances in wastewater are often reported.

**Solid wastes.** How to dispose of the garbage? Dealing with trash is a top priority issue. Estimates put solid waste generation in Egypt at approximately twelve million tons per year. Waste collection efficiency is just 65% in Cairo and less than 50% in small cities. In rural areas, organized collection of solid wastes is nearly nonexistent. Most waste is dumped on adjacent land where it left to putrefy or be burned; worse, it is often simply tossed into drainage and irrigation canals. Unfortunately, medical wastes are generally included in the regular municipal solid waste stream, a practice that poses grave health risks to the community. It is also estimated that Egyptian industries produce 500,000 tons or more of hazardous waste each year. At present, Egypt has no facility for the disposal of hazardous industrial waste. Currently, such wastes are deposited in unlined landfills. This may not contaminate groundwater in dry climates or areas with low water tables, but it does constitute a significant problem in the Delta region.

**Land resources.** A growing population and its concentration in the narrow Nile Valley and the Nile Delta are placing increasing pressure on the limited land and water resources of Egypt. One constraint on meeting the goal of producing more food to feed more people every year is urban encroachment on agricultural land. Annual losses are estimated at 15,000 to 30,000 feddans (prior to the issuance of a martial decree in 1996, these losses amounted to about 60,000 to 70,000 feddans per year). A second constraint is soil degradation. The use of traditional, inefficient irrigation techniques and the inadequacy of drainage systems has led to water logging and salinity; salinity now affects about 35% of Egypt's agricultural land. Similarly, wind erosion affects vast areas on the fringes of deserts where the topsoil is sandy and thin. Such conditions reduce the productivity of soil and lead farmers to use increasing amounts of fertilizers and pesticides, an unsustainable practice in agricultural production. Finally, Egypt's growing population will need somewhere to live. Land scarcity pushes up the price of land with access to proper physical and social infrastructures. This in turn increases the price of formally produced housing units. The net result is likely to be an acceleration in the growth of informal settlements.

**Nature reserves/tourism.** Egypt has established 21 national protectorates representing about 8% of the country's total area. The oldest and the largest is Ras Mohamed national park, which is well-known by divers throughout the world for the diversity of its marine life and coral reefs. Tourism is an important source of foreign currency and generator of employment in Egypt. Unplanned and uncontrolled tourist development can irreparably damage fragile Red Sea coastal resources, oases, and other desert habitats, as well as Egypt's cultural heritage. Clean air, clean water, and careful management of Egypt's natural and cultural resources will all be necessary if high levels of tourism are to be sustained.

**The challenge.** Policy making in Egypt is largely based on a sectoral approach. This sometimes results in fragmented economic, social, and environmental policies. Issues such as poverty, unemployment, health, and the environment (for example) are addressed separately, with little regard to the interrelationships between these issues and their solutions. Sectoral approaches have resulted in weak inter- and intra-organizational interactions and weak enforcement of existing environmental legislation. In the absence of an adequate framework for coordination and prioritisation of environmental concerns and limited access to timely and accurate information, environmental decision making to a large extent is highly political and crisis-driven.

**Institutional/legislative framework.** A new environmental policy was institutionalised in the 1990s with the creation of the Ministry of State for Environmental Affairs and its technical support arm, the Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency (EEAA). These organizations work within the legislative context of Law 4 of 1994 for the protection of the environment and its executive regulations. Egypt's environmental legislation focuses on emission/effluent controls and is enforcement oriented (the emphasis is on output rather than outcome). As noted in the earlier section on Water, compliance rates are low, but a program is in place to initiate compliance, even incremental compliance, at facilities believed to be causing the greatest problems, through a system of negotiated, site-specific compliance action plans.

The Ministry of State for Environmental Affairs (MSEA) was established to introduce and integrate environmental issues into national policies, plans, and programs. Local and regional activities are organized and implemented through the EEAA which has opened several regional branch offices as well as twenty-six governorate-based environmental management units. A number of partnerships have been established between the MSEA and other organizations: the Ministry of Interior (measuring vehicle emissions), the Ministry of Petroleum (energy efficiency and switching to cleaner fuels), the Federation of Egyptian Industries (promoting cleaner technologies), and the General Federation of Non-Governmental Organizations (community-based environmental initiatives). Environmental education is being integrated into school curricula and informal school activities.

**Achievements.** Initial steps to protect public health and Egypt's natural resource base have included the introduction of lead-free gasoline, controlling the untreated discharge of industrial wastewater into the Nile, and relocating lead smelters away from residential areas. An environmental protection fund has been established and a biodiversity strategy endorsed by all sectors of government. Environmental impact assessments are now required for new projects. Forty stations for monitoring air quality have been installed throughout Egypt, as well as 84 stations for monitoring water quality along the Mediterranean and Red Sea coasts.

**Relevant programs and policies.** The government has adopted a policy of encouraging the use of natural gas as a clean energy source and has accordingly increased production of natural gas. Policies in the sphere of agriculture include controlling and reducing the amount of fertilizers, pesticides, and other chemicals used in agriculture. New types of fertilizers and pesticides that contain fewer amounts of harmful chemicals will be introduced and farmers encouraged to use them. The government is implementing new projects and plans to fully utilize available land resources in an attempt to achieve the highest economic rate of return that can be derived from the agricultural sector. The objective is to cultivate high value products that meet global specifications for export and use the revenues this brings in to support strategic food imports. In addition, a portion of newly reclaimed land will be devoted to fulfilling national food-security objectives.

**Future priorities.** Despite the momentum created by donor assisted projects, the need still exists to support environmental advocacy and promote investments on the part of the private sector. On a policy level, the political will is well established but coordination between the myriad ministries and agencies involved is still slow. The integration of environmental considerations into development planning has been initiated, but limited capacity remains a hindrance to the process. The NGO sector is weakly organized and in the absence of a well-coordinated vision and a clear understanding and differentiation of their roles in relation to other stakeholders, the need arises for a national program to support the sector and capitalize on its potential.

**Data analysis.** Over the course of the decade, there has been a growing recognition that pollution is associated with health problems. Accurate data on the impact of air, water, and soil pollution on the health of Egyptians and reliable air quality data need to be developed, analysed, and widely shared for action.

**Energy.** Egypt has a long history of utilizing hydropower, a renewable energy source, and has recently encouraged increased use of natural gas. Oil, however, still dominates the energy market. Industry already consumes 50% of Egypt's energy and the demand for energy will increase in the future. The expanded use of renewable, cleaner energy sources – natural gas, solar, wind – can help diminish the flow of pollutants into the air. Increased use of environmentally sound technologies, increased energy use efficiency, and a national energy plan are also needed to assure sustainable development.

**Constraints.** Issues that must be addressed if Egypt is to stem environmental deterioration and encourage more effective environmental practices include the need for: an improved policy and regulatory framework that is proactive rather than reactive and has more realistic standards and implementation mechanisms, greater interagency and interministerial collaboration, strengthened capacity of public and private institutions, and enhanced public awareness and participation.

#### 4. Access to Water and Sanitation Services

Expanding access to water and sanitation services is a high priority item among Egypt's political leaders. Despite rapid population growth, the percentage of Egypt's population with access to piped water has increased over the past two decades due to large investments in the water sector.

According to the most recently completed survey (EDHS 2000),<sup>19</sup> the ratio of households with access to piped water has increased as follows: 70% in 1986, 83% in 1996, and 87% in 2000.

Nearly nine in ten households now have access to piped water, but service coverage varies widely by place of residence. Among urban households, 97% have piped water available in the dwelling or yard and 2% obtain water from a public tap. Among rural households, 65% have access to piped water in their house or yard and 11% obtain water from a public tap. Among the remaining rural households, most use well water. Households in rural Upper Egypt are somewhat more likely to rely on well water than households in rural Lower Egypt (24% and 21%, respectively).

Thirty-three percent of Egyptian households have modern flush toilets, and 61% have traditional flush toilets (with a tank or bucket flush). Urban households are somewhat more likely to have a modern flush toilet (59%). In comparison, the majority of rural households (78%) have traditional toilets with a bucket flush. Households in rural Upper Egypt have the highest percentage of pit toilet/latrines (10.5%). Only 3% of households have no toilet facilities. Almost all of the households without toilet facilities are found in rural Upper Egypt (9.6%) or the frontier governorates (8.4%).

While substantial investments have gone to urban wastewater management, rural sanitation and water pollution have remained relatively neglected. Only a fraction of households are connected to sewer systems and the regional variations in sewerage connections are profound. Wastewater collection systems, sewers, and

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<sup>19</sup> The source of all statistical information in this section concerning the source of water and type of sanitation facilities found in Egyptian households is the Egypt Demographic and Health Survey 2000.

treatment plants are often poorly operated and maintained due to shortage of financial resources and technically skilled staff.

## **G. Communications and Information Technology**

Egypt is serious about capitalizing on the opportunities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The Ministry of Communications and Information Technology was established in September 1999 to facilitate, coordinate, and speed the process of transforming Egypt into a globally competitive, information-based society.

**National plan.** The government intends to put information technology at the service of all its development objectives. The national communications and information technology (CIT) plan is, in many ways, a blueprint for Egypt's future. It encompasses a number of ambitious projects as well as measures to boost industry, exports, and career opportunities. The main objectives of the plan are to:

- ?? support the development of a state-of-the art national telecommunications network that provides an enabling environment for business and links Egypt with the rest of the world.
- ?? create a vibrant and exportable CIT industry.
- ?? increase employment opportunities in the CIT sectors.
- ?? develop CIT systems that will help improve living standards and the quality of life, simplify the provision of services to citizens, reduce bureaucracy, maximize productivity, and enhance competitiveness in international markets.
- ?? build an "information society" capable of absorbing and benefiting from multiple sources of information.

**Infrastructure, alliances, and incubators.** The cornerstone of the national CIT plan is a multi-phase, multi-year program to 1) upgrade the telecommunications network using the most advanced technology and equipment available, and 2) greatly expand the number and geographic coverage of fixed telephone lines. Additionally, alliances are being formed with a number of world-class information technology (IT) giants to launch training programs in areas such as software design and wireless applications, to manufacture microchips, and to develop similar mutually-beneficial partnerships. The plan also proposes creating "technology incubators" in "smart villages" that are equipped with all necessary infrastructure, tax breaks, and business development services.

**Human resources.** Despite an abundance of university and higher institute graduates, Egypt lacks the skilled IT engineers and other business-oriented professionals it will need if Egypt is to compete strongly in international and regional markets. In addition to the several IT training initiatives referred to in the preceding paragraph, Egypt has started to prepare its younger citizens for the information age in a variety of ways. Perhaps most important are the sweeping educational reforms described in the earlier section on Education. Ensuring universal access to basic education and improving the quality and relevance of learning are indispensable first steps. Introduction of computers in primary schools and reducing the cost of internet access will also encourage interest and participation. Additional steps are needed, however, to enhance wider public

awareness of the uses and benefits of information technology, particularly in social and economic development.

**Liberalization, privatization, and the regulatory environment.** Until fairly recently, Egypt's entire telecommunications sector was a state-owned monopoly. Deregulation began in 1996 when a few privately owned internet service providers were permitted to operate through a government "gateway." In 1998, steps were taken to separate telecom operations from regulatory activities. Telecom Egypt was incorporated as a joint stock company and a Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) was established. Some areas have been opened to private sector participation under the supervision of the TRA, including two licensed mobile phone companies and two licensed pay phone companies. Although Egypt has more than 50 private internet service providers (ISPs) today, approximately 70% of the internet traffic that flows between Egypt and the rest of the world is still in the hands of the national telecoms operator.

There is no doubt that private sector participation has increased the demand for telecom services. Egypt is one of the fastest growing information technology markets in the world (35% annually). Mobile phones are now ubiquitous in urban areas and liberalization of internet services has helped increase the number of internet users from about 25,000 in early 1997 to more than 500,000 today. The government's recent policy decision to cut the cost of leased lines by 50% sent the cost of internet subscriptions tumbling. The price fell from an average flat charge of US\$80 per month to less than US\$20. The introduction of prepaid internet cards and low-cost internet access that is paid per minute via the regular phone bill (rather than via a pre-paid subscription with an ISP) have also facilitated access to and use of the internet.

Further liberalization and greater private sector investment are essential if Egypt is to modernize and expand its telecommunications network and diversify the services it provides. Experience, both in Egypt and elsewhere, has shown that competition is essential for the information technology and telecommunications sectors to thrive, expand, and develop. Competition is the key to quality services, lower prices, and expanded access. Initial plans to sell 20% of Telecom Egypt's shares on local and international stock exchanges in October 2000 were postponed, reportedly due to a weak response from the market. The government announced in May 2001 that it hopes to sell between 20-34% of the state-owned firm to a strategic partner within six months, and will proceed with a public share offering only after a stake has been sold to a large partner.

Removing regulatory bottlenecks and fostering public-private partnerships should lead to new and better services and the expansion of Egypt's telecommunications sector. Real competition, however, will require political will along with a truly independent and autonomous regulatory body able to prevent anti-competitive, protectionist behaviour and monopoly formulation. Moreover, translating Egypt's vision of a vibrant and exportable CIT industry into reality will require an enabling policy and legislative environment (i.e., laws to facilitate e-commerce and protect intellectual property rights), as well as improved coordination with existing government bodies such as the customs authority to facilitate ease of trade.

**The challenge: reducing barriers to access.** An urban bias is conspicuous in both telecommunications policies and infrastructure. Telephone lines are

overwhelmingly concentrated in urban areas. Some isolated rural areas have just one line to serve an entire community, and the cost of obtaining a telephone line is high everywhere. Much of Egypt's ever-expanding population lives in rural areas that receive little attention from the government and have limited access to any form of communication other than television and radio. Furthermore, computer prices are relatively high in Egypt and the cost of setting up access to the internet is high in relation to Egypt's per capita income. These factors tend to exclude the rural poor from the benefits of both basic communication and information technology. The gap between the information "haves" and "have nots" will not be narrowed as long as the telecommunications sector focuses on providing its services to urban centres while neglecting those living in rural areas.

If Egypt is to use telecommunications and information technology as an instrument to promote social and economic development, it is imperative that telephone coverage reach the poorest and most remote areas of the country. In this context, the regulatory environment becomes vitally important: to provide greater connectivity at lower prices, it will be necessary to introduce greater private sector participation and increased competition.

**New opportunities.** The impact of information technology is profound. It has the potential to transform the economy, politics, business, culture, education, and health of a country. Efficient telecommunications and access to the internet open a new window on the world. Information and knowledge become instantly available, setting the stage for the empowerment of individuals and civil society. By eliminating distance and time, isolated communities can obtain critical information that was previously inaccessible. Health services will be able to communicate with Egyptian medical sites or gather information from medical libraries and archives throughout the world. The internet can be a medium for many types of distance learning. It can help people learn to read or educate and mobilize a highly skilled labour force suitable for advanced technological positions. The internet brings information about employment opportunities as well as news from the capital, neighbouring countries, and more distant lands. In the business sphere, a phone connection and the internet can enable small entrepreneurs to advertise their products on the web and facilitate their entry into distant domestic or even foreign markets.

**TACCs and tele-centers.** Technology Access Community Centres (TACCs) are introducing information technology to adults and young people who would not normally have access to computers because of income, education, or location. A TACC is similar to an internet café in that it has a phone, fax, computers, printers, and internet service. But there is a dramatic difference: the centres are located in remote spots where connectivity is usually a problem. TACCs inform civil society groups, the private sector, low-income groups, and individuals about information access, then provide training and assistance. Possibilities include long-distance education, telemedicine, e-commerce, assistance to small businesses, environmental management, and issues of interest to women and youth. Many of the centres' clients obtain information that can help improve their livelihoods. In addition, the TACCs are hubs for electronic content creation, especially in Arabic, responding to community needs and interests. The TACCs are a pilot project sponsored by the UNDP. The Ministry of Communications and Information Technology hopes to eventually expand the concept to include several hundred "tele-centers" around the country based on the UNDP model.

Several other initiatives aimed at providing children, youths, and businessmen with the tools and knowledge needed to interact efficiently with the computer age (i.e., 21<sup>st</sup> Century Clubs and IT Youth Centres) are also under way.

**Public awareness and distance learning.** As evidenced by the success of family planning, child immunization, and similar health-related awareness campaigns, television and radio are powerful tools for public education and attitudinal change in Egypt. According to the 2000 EDHS, 93% of all Egyptian women watch television weekly, 72% listen to radio, but only 25% read a newspaper or magazine each week. Even in rural Upper Egypt, viewership is high at 87%. The EDHS found that 89% of all Egyptian households have a television set and 82% a radio, but only 28% have a telephone. In rural Upper Egypt, 79% of households have a television, but less than 9% have a telephone. This compares poorly with the 45% of urban households equipped with a phone line. The Egyptian Radio and Television Union ? which has a monopoly on television and radio broadcasting and which now follows the direction set by the Minister of Communications and Information Technology ? may also have a useful role to play in the areas of distance learning, fighting illiteracy, and raising awareness of the benefits and uses of information technology.

**Priorities.** The government has requested UN agency assistance to integrate information technology into various fields and organizations in Egypt. Government priorities include strengthening the capacity of the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology through institutional support, assistance with needs assessments, business incubators, services for small and medium size businesses, and human resource development.

## H. Governance, Political, and Civil Rights

### Governance

**Governance and Modernizing the Role of the State.** The adoption of market economy approaches requires the modernization of processes and systems to create enabling environments for addressing citizen's needs through relevant legal frameworks and institutional development. While government officials in Egypt recognize the need to modernize the state, certain dimensions of governance need to be given priority, especially in the reduction of cumbersome old-style public administration procedures.

The role of the state has changed, a fact reflected by the various reforms aimed at streamlining government structures and procedures. Indeed, in statements, the Government reinforced its view of the need "to create the proper climate for refining and fostering national resolve, politically, economically, socially, intellectually and culturally".

To achieve this goal, the government of Egypt has acknowledged the necessity of "opening wider prospects for freedom of opinion and expression and by progressing gradually towards a well-established democracy". As a consequence, the Government has set objectives for itself that include, improving the capacity and efficiency of its public administration system, civil service reform, and the reinforcement of the country's legal and regulatory frameworks.

Several measures have already been taken to achieve these objectives. For example, vacant government jobs are publicly advertised to allow equal employment opportunity for all and promotions in the public sector are encouraged on the basis of merit, rather than seniority or personal criteria. The government has also streamlined approval procedures for new projects, in particular, those involving foreign investments and exports in an effort improve the efficiency of the private sector..

Despite the government's improvements in some areas, further measures are needed to strengthen the rationale and basis of government decision-making, particularly in regards to major national economic projects, the accountability of senior officials to elected bodies, and issues of transparency. Both transparency and accountability are vital components in policy implementation and follow-up, and serve to promote effectiveness in the delivery of government outputs, including services.

**Economic and Financial Management.** To attain the higher rates of growth needed to alleviate the unemployment and acute poverty necessary for continued development, the Egyptian society should attempt to generate more savings and mobilize more investments. This will increase financial and economic resources available the private sector for increased production. Egyptian society should use its resources judiciously by trying to increase the share of commodity sectors in the composition of its GDP, and improve the competitiveness of its products to narrow the gap between its imports and its exports.

Another challenge posed to economic and financial reform that has been identified by the government is the lack of an adequate system of accountability. The solution proposed is transparency in transactions and procedures.

In a recent study conducted on the Institutional Reform of Economic Legislation in Egypt, it was concluded that in the realm of economic and financial reform, the Egyptian Parliament "is lacking the infrastructure of information and the knowledge base that could allow it to contribute to the policy-making function effectively".<sup>20</sup> Based on this, it seems that while Egypt is embarking on economic and financial reforms, assistance needs to be given in formulating the necessary laws and policies with which to enhance labour productivity and economic development in order to provide a suitable environment with which to attract investors.

**Participation, Civil Society and Decentralization.** While figures on the exact magnitude of poverty do not perfectly correspond, there is little doubt that it is pervasive and that it affects millions of Egyptians. Moreover, wide disparities in terms of human development are observed along social class, urban-rural, and gender lines. The Government does acknowledge this problem and appears to be in the process of creating a suitable environment in which to deal with it, through its decentralization efforts of planning and allocation of resources, and its encouragement of the participation of civil society as a partner and supporter of development at the local level.

This is reflected, for example, in the Sherouk Program. Design to play an important role in identifying development priorities at the village and hamlet levels and the implementation of development projects, this Ministry of Local

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<sup>20</sup> El-Mikawy, N., Ibid. P50

Development program has gained considerable political support as well as state financing. The program is intrinsically linked to the policy of decentralization and popular participation in development decision-making. .

Partners of Participational Development in the Sherouk Program are functional agencies, sector ministries, regions and districts, the private sector, individuals and local communities. However, in order for the participatory development model of Sherouk, or others, to be adopted and expanded in rural and urban areas, institutional support, capacity building and reform of the Ministry of Local Development is a necessity.

Development is a process that empowers both society and the state. This is because successful development in turn enhances the State's resources, efficiency, and hence, independence. Ambitious goals are consequently more attainable. This does not imply that the state should utilize its coercive powers to ensure citizens comply with its directives. Rather, it means that the state should aim to enhance its legitimacy by illustrating to its citizens it is desirable and rational. In this way, the citizens will accept it voluntarily, and the mass majority will abide by its laws, rules and regulations. Furthermore, the reduction of illiteracy and the new potentials for educational attainment among the public serve to transform the society into a producer of knowledge, rather than merely a consumer. Additionally, an increase in participation in the decision-making process serves to augment the government's legitimacy, thereby benefiting the system as a whole and promoting stability and security. Sound governance is thus an indispensable aspect with which to ensure empowerment of the state.

Accompanying civil society participation en route to sustainable human development are areas of political participation, decentralization and legal institutional reform. The Government of Egypt is making concentrated efforts to increase private sector participation and develop participatory mechanisms from the central to regional levels. These mechanisms would also work towards reducing the disparities apparent along social, gender, and urban-rural lines, thereby reducing latent tensions and promoting long-term stability..

Legal and institutional reforms are underway to modernize and increase efficiency, augment technical capacity, and empower civil society. Therefore, decentralization, participatory development and planning, and support to local administration are very much needed, as is access to information generally necessary for development.

In order for Civil Society Organizations to fulfil their potential, a clearer definition of their area of intervention is needed, as well as an elaboration of the legal framework within which such organizations function. Furthermore, laws governing organization need to be reformed. Once the new NGO law is approved by the Egyptian Parliament, it can be expected that the Egyptian development landscape will witness the arrival and participation of new development actors. Consequently, the government will need support in creating the necessary conducive environment for NGOs to function in their various fields of expertise.

**Harnessing Science and Technology for Development.** The Government intends to maximize benefits from new global technologies and knowledge bases. Therefore, there is a need for an enabling environment to expedite access to communication and information through upgrading legal frameworks, developing

institutional capacity, removing impediments to e-government and e-commerce as well as providing policy options for enhancing the ICT industry.

To create this environment, structures for technology development and transfer are needed, as well as mechanisms to facilitate open access to information and communication applications. The appropriate legal and institutional frameworks for the utilization of space-based technology should be developed. These measures would help promote the creation of a local or domestic technological capacity, a fundamental component of the process of economic development.

**Mine Action.** Egypt remains one of the most heavily mined countries, with approximately 248,000 hectares of land remaining unutilised due to mines and Unexploded Ordnance (UXO). Therefore, removing technical and financial obstacles is a necessity to utilize this vast land area for development purposes.

**Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice.** The firm commitment of the government to improve the implementation of its national legislative provisions and to reinforce and restructure its institutional capacities offers an unparalleled opportunity to local authorities and the international community to work together in the field of crime prevention and criminal justice. A remarkably low crime rate, as reported in the 1999 UN Global Report on Crime and Justice, makes Egypt one of the best performing countries in terms of crime prevention both in the region and worldwide. The continuing efforts of Egyptian authorities to improve the statistical data reporting process constitutes an additional step in this direction.

Egypt's firm commitment to international crime prevention and legal cooperation was exemplified in October 2000, when authorities, upon the initiative of ODCCP, held technical consultations on Egypt's drug control laws, international judicial cooperation, asset forfeiture, and preventive measures against money laundering.

The Egyptian authorities are aware of the problems related to children in difficult circumstances, and the need to upgrade and expand children's residential institutions. The considerable efforts being exerted in some penal establishments to provide the social and educational environment necessary to re-socialize and re-educate juvenile offenders mark a first step in improving the treatment of juvenile offenders.

The Government of Egypt regards it as crucial that efforts contributing to the juvenile's welfare must be sustained and applied at the national level. Consequently, it has set itself the target of strengthening the implementation of its legislative and institutional capacities for juvenile offenders and minors at risk.

## **Political and Civil Rights**

Egypt is a party to most international human rights instruments. It has ratified all the relevant UN instruments since the beginning of the 1980s, with the exception of the two optional protocols to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, as well as the African Charter on Human and People's Rights. In addition, Egypt has a constitutional and legal base that guarantees safeguards of individual and collective rights, religious tolerance, political and social pluralism, and independence of the judiciary, as well as permitting a reasonable margin of freedom of opinion and expression.

**International Legal Commitments for Human Rights.** Since the early 1980s, the Government of Egypt has ratified all the UN documents constituting the international human rights instruments, with the exception of the two Optional Protocols to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). According to the Constitution of Egypt, these UN covenants and conventions have the force of national legislation, and should be applied directly before all national courts.

In practice, however, with the exception of the Supreme Constitutional Court (SCC), reference to Egypt's obligations under the different human rights instruments in Egyptian courts is not overtly detectable. This may also be due to insufficient promotion in the curricula of legislators and legal practitioners.

**Democracy and Participation.** The 2000 elections brought the National Democratic Party (NDP) an overwhelming three hundred and four seats, thus ensuring the anticipated two-thirds majority, whilst opposition parties combined gained only sixteen seats. The President of the Republic amended the law on the exercise of political rights to ensure mandatory full judicial supervision of parliamentary elections. This law was accepted by the previous parliament and went into force in the November 2000 elections.

The Political Parties Affairs Committee, has accepted only one of approximately thirty-nine applications for the establishment of new political parties. The ten parties that have come into existence since the creation of the Committee have achieved their legal status through Higher Administrative Court rulings. The low level of opposition representation in the People's Assembly consequently limits their role in the legislative process and in public life generally.

Of the 134 women that participated in the 2000 elections, political parties nominated only 31. The representation of women in the legislature is only six.

Rates of electoral participation in general are very low, and are much lower in urban areas than in the countryside. The Government also states that rates of participation in elections of the professional associations are quite low. Egyptian judiciary organs have nullified announcement of results of legislative and local elections on several occasions.

Under Emergency law, political activities, such as the distribution of political literature without authorization, are restricted, as can gatherings of five or more people. While the continuous renewal of Emergency law has been successful in weakening extremist activities; it has had its negative effects on some legitimate political parties as well, which has affected the process of democratisation.

**Freedom of Expression.** Despite constitutional guarantees of freedom of expression, there exist a number of restrictions that hamper the exercise of that right. The right to publish any independent newspaper or magazine requires the approval of the Cabinet of Ministers. Additionally, the government maintains control over the printing and distribution of all Egyptian based newspapers. The Government also has control over television and radio via the Ministry of Information, and all fields of communication, including theatre and film, which are subject to governmental censorship by the Ministry of Culture.

**Freedom of Association.** Civil associations in Egypt, apart from political parties, trade unions, professional associations and chambers of commerce, have been governed largely through Law 32 of 1964, under which they must first be

registered with the Ministry of Social Affairs. In order to register, the organization in question is required not to engage in political activity.

It is not currently clear whether all human rights organizations will be recognized under a new law of associations to be considered by the Government in the next parliamentary session.

Law 100/1993 on professional syndicates stipulates that election to the governing body of an association is valid only if 50 percent of its membership vote. This law was adopted largely to prevent radical opposition groups from using their efficient organizational skills to attain leadership of the professional syndicates.

As a consequence, low voter turn-out has left all major syndicates in the country at a stand still. Lawyers, doctors, pharmacists, and engineers have not been able to elect their respective board members for the past eight years. The doctors and lawyers syndicates are run by appointed councils following the dissolution of their elected councils.

The General Federation for Egyptian Labour Unions is formed of a conglomerate of sectorial unions that are each recognized by law.

**Administration of Justice.** The judiciary enjoys a fair degree of independence due to constitutional guarantees and tradition. The Supreme Constitutional Court (SCC) has set principles that further protect various constitutional guarantees of rights and freedoms.<sup>21</sup> Both the SCC and the Council of State have the power to declare laws passed by the People's Assembly and Presidential decrees as unconstitutional, or illegal, each according to its area of competence. The government has tended to abide by rulings of the SSC.

In 1993, with the rise in terrorism, the SCC ruled that the President may invoke the Emergency Law to refer any crime to a military court. This has resulted in the increasing trial of civilians in State Security Courts (Emergency Circuits) and military courts in the absence of an independent civil judge. Defendants before such courts do not have the right to appeal, and military judges are Ministry of Defence employees who are not comparable to civilian judges in terms of legal training and independence.

**Remedies.** A number of factors limit the effectiveness of remedies in the legal system. The use of the Emergency Law, the slow litigation process, and the various influences of the different legal systems (common law, French law, and Shari'a) contribute to this ineffectiveness. On average, a regular civil case will take 5 years to settle in court.

There are efforts by the government, supported by different international organizations, to improve the administration of justice in Egypt. These efforts include computerization of certain sectors of the judiciary, as well as training of judges and prosecutors. These efforts fall short of the actual needs of the judicial

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<sup>21</sup> Article 174 of the Constitution states, "The Supreme Constitutional Court shall be an independent judiciary body in the Arab Republic of Egypt, having its seat in Cairo. Article 175 states, "The Supreme Constitutional Court alone can undertake the judicial control in respect of the constitutionality of the laws and regulations and shall undertake the interpretation of the legislative texts in the manner prescribed by law."

The SCC most recent ruling on the Associations Law (153/1999) is a clear demonstration of the SCC's role in the protection of human rights. Even though the SCC's ruling was based on procedural errors, the reasoning of the ruling set clear principles on the issue of freedom of association citing the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

system. Computerization and training would need to reach enough facilities or practitioners to affect the process of administration of justice.

**UN Response.** Areas of response that will guide UN programs in Egypt, in collaboration with the government, are: participation, transparency, equity, rule of law, and human rights. Listed are a number of the potential intervention areas:

- ?? Continued provision of technical assistance, sharing from experiences from other countries and supporting for the development of institutional and human resources for key government ministries.
- ?? Support for the modernization of government institutions, including rules, procedures, productivity analysis, and ongoing activities in civil service reform;
- ?? Support efforts to decentralize planning and enhance mechanisms of participation at governorate level, and promote and facilitate access to necessary data and information for local and regional development. Encourage the participation of citizens in decision making, priority identification, and development projects;
- ?? Increase the use of space-based, communication, and information technology by supporting Government efforts to upgrade legal frameworks, develop institutional capacity, remove obstacles to e-government and e-commerce, and provide policy options for enhancing the ICT industry;
- ?? Work with the government to create a transparent and accountable funding arrangement, which would allow donor funding to be channelled for civil society empowerment activities, as well as to foster an environment that increases the effectiveness of civil society as a player in the development process;
- ?? Support efforts by the National Committee for Mines and other relevant governmental bodies by removing technical and financial obstacles to utilize this vast land area for development purposes. UN will also create a mechanism (trust fund) for supporting the Government's mine action;
- ?? Promote socio-economic management and assistance to assist the state to respond to a market oriented economy and foster integration into the global economy through negotiating partnership;
- ?? Create an enabling environment for private sector development, including the appropriate legal framework;
- ?? Support the reform process regarding juvenile offenders and children at risk;
- ?? Provide technical assistance to the Government with its reporting obligations, particularly to the Human Rights Committee, as well as the enhancement of human rights, while supporting the training of judges, prosecutors, police, and the media on human rights issues;
- ?? Propose a project to enhance the effectiveness of the parliamentary process and legislative procedures, as well as strengthening the electoral process and updating electoral lists, and also work with the Government on voter registration programs, and;

?? Work towards enhancing the administration of the court system, as well as modernizing and enhancing judiciary bodies.

## **X. Sources for the Assessment**

Egypt is a data rich country, with a range of sophisticated institutions and stakeholders responsible for data gathering and analysis. All the above thematic areas, with the exception of Governance, Political, and Civil Rights and Communications and Information Technology, have had substantial data available over the past decade.

Census, survey, and registration data exist in abundance. Egypt's national censuses date back to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. The two authoritative institutions of central importance to the Common Country Assessment are the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS) and the Information and Decision Support Centre (IDSC). CAPMAS is responsible not only for conducting periodic censuses and surveys, but also for managing the massive machinery and staff needed for designing and implementing large-scale information systems and for setting survey standards. IDSC performs the information advisory function for the Egyptian Cabinet and has developed an extensive set of databases that draw on all data collected by government authorities down to the village or hamlet level. Its information bases at the sub-national level draw extensively on registration data and are continuously updated.

The Egypt Human Development Report (EHDR) series, prepared by a national team of specialists and researchers based at the Institute of National Planning (INP), has been a vital secondary source for the Common Country Assessment team. Each year the report has focused on key development challenges facing Egypt, and is thus rich in data and analysis at both the national and sub-national levels on the selected development topics. The reports draw on national standard statistical sources, special surveys, and scholarly research.

The Egypt Demographic and Health Survey (EDHS) series, conducted since the late 1980s, has been an important resource for analysis and verification of the trends in key indicators over the past decade. The findings of the 2000 Egypt Demographic and Health Survey were available only in draft form at the time the Common Country Assessment (CCA) team completed its work, but were included where possible.

Egypt's Ministry of Health and Population, the ministry responsible for overseeing and releasing the EDHS survey results, has also been very helpful in contributing the health registration data essential to tracking service trends. We are grateful for their developing the data that enabled us to include the graph on polio reduction. This graph reflects not only the efforts against polio, but also the strengthening of Egypt's epidemiological surveillance and health service monitoring systems.

**The CCA database.** An abundance of varying estimates, rather than a dearth of information, has long characterized the discourse around Egypt's development trends, both within government, and among members of civil society at large and the donor community. Therefore, the CCA team set itself the difficult objective of agreeing upon the values for specific indicators that represented, in the view of the team, the most reliable, recent estimates. To do so, the CCA team entrusted the

expert review to those agencies and their national counterparts with acknowledged expertise in specific technical fields of development. Where disagreements could not be resolved, they were noted in the database. This process has contributed to bringing about more agreement on trends and to a better understanding of how to use various sources to get a “fix” on the course of change. The definitions and sources used are included in the CCA shared database and were available to all members of the team electronically.

In addition to the “core” set of indicators, the Egypt CCA team specified additional or “optional” indicators as deemed necessary by the technical teams to examine more fully specific thematic areas. All indicators are given in full in the Annex.

The UN Information Technology Team provided support to the CCA team throughout the assessment process, developing and refining the database so that it would be of high calibre and electronically accessible to all team members. The CCA team suggests that this database be maintained and developed as a rolling situation analysis by drawing key development stakeholders into active contribution and use. Rather than periodic publications of this nature, the CCA team proposes that the CCA database be mounted on the web in 2002 through the site of the United Nations in Egypt. The web site should provide the user with opportunities to view the indicators with their definitions and sources, create tables and graphs, and map the results.

## **XI. Conclusions and Recommendations**

Poverty and disparity reduction must concern the United Nations team more in the years ahead than in the past. Egypt increasingly views addressing population growth, reducing disparities, improving access to productive, remunerative employment, and promoting inclusion as essential for political stability and continued growth. The Egypt Common Country Assessment has highlighted the potential of Egypt’s human assets and the use of its environmental resources as strategic entry points for breaking cycles of poverty from one generation to the next, and for reducing disparities. It has found ample data to allow an assessment of the current situation against core indicators of human resources and the environment.

It has not been in the same position to present an up-to-date, consistent assessment of poverty. This Common Country Assessment (CCA) has only referred to previous studies of poverty, and has welcomed a new assessment in progress, while relying instead on indicators of disparity by geographical and socio-economic groupings to examine the situation of those who are falling outside the benefits of growth. The CCA team recommends that the United Nations system lend statistical support to the Government of Egypt to allow frequent, regular assessments of poverty levels, using standard indicators that will permit policy makers at the national, sub-national and local levels to track poverty and those groups that are most at risk. Among those indicators, those concerned with households most at risk would benefit from being able to find who are the people living on less than \$1 a day. Demystifying poverty into understandable measures will facilitate the identification of interventions that work. Policy makers should be in a position to track reductions from one year to the next in the proportion of people living in poverty, especially in extreme poverty.

Egypt's longstanding preoccupation with population growth, child health and survival, and basic education has produced a wealth of information useful for policy makers and the public alike. The data are available in many forms but often not well analysed or presented in easy to understand forms.

Counterproductive arguments between parts of government and between the government and the donor community over differences in estimates might be reduced if data were presented and examined in forms that engender understanding.

This Common Country Assessment aims to engender such a dialogue, drawing on Egypt's extensive data resources to sketch trends, present gender differences, analyse the components of change, and describe geographical variations over time. The Common Country Assessment team recommends that the United Nations and others give more support to developing those capacities needed to produce summary reports, from the national to the local levels, and to make them available on a frequent basis to policy makers and the general public. Special emphasis should go to:

- ?? Net enrolment rates in primary and secondary school for boys and girls.
- ?? Increased availability of comprehensive reproductive health and family planning information and services at the primary health care level, with indicators to measure access to basic essential obstetric care; coverage and quality of antenatal care, safe delivery and postnatal care; availability of choice of family planning methods; prevalence and management of RTIs and HIV/AIDS; screening of other reproductive health conditions; and levels of infertility and female circumcision.
- ?? Reduction in infant and under-five mortality rates, including public health indicators of general concern, such as polio cases, measles, maternal and neonatal tetanus, iodine deficiency disorders, vitamin A deficiencies, anaemia, malnutrition (especially stunting), and HIV/AIDS.
- ?? Gender equality and the empowerment of women, including the gap between boys and girls in school enrolment and continuation in school through secondary levels, adult female literacy rate and proportion of women parliamentarians.

The Common Country Assessment team notes with satisfaction the United Nations in Egypt's joint program support that assists Egypt's new National Council for Women to establish and develop regular monitoring of the situation of women in Egypt. It has enabled the analysis of gender in this CCA to be sound. Egypt's National Council for Childhood and Motherhood has a similar inter-ministerial mandate to ensure the identification and coordination of policies for all those under the age of eighteen. By supporting this Council as well in developing a capacity to analyse and present data for decision-making, the United Nations in Egypt will encourage more effective focus on investing in Egypt's young human resources and evaluating the returns on that investment.

In short, Egypt has the knowledge and capacity to address the development challenges it faces. Putting this knowledge together in appropriate forms for policy makers, donors, and the public, and making certain that it is effectively

shared for action, is where the challenge lies. Egypt needs to consolidate its information base and expertise and develop mechanisms that will help monitor progress towards reaching its social and economic development goals and fulfilling its commitments to the global conferences and conventions. We recommend that the United Nations in Egypt assist in developing that capacity.

The Common Country Assessment also identifies knowledge and measurement gaps. It found that there is a willingness on the part of Egypt to address areas that involve difficult, and sometimes sensitive issues. Examples include risk behaviours, from tobacco and drug consumption to those that may lead to STDs and HIV/AIDS. They also include identifying the extent and forms of child labour as well as other children who are at risk. This willingness must be met by a seriousness of purpose on the part of the United Nations and the donor community to enable measurement of these problems for appropriate action.

The opportunities for developing Egypt's human resources and the need to do so equitably across the country became more and more striking as the assessment progressed:

- ?? Egypt's population is healthier, better educated, and more youthful than ever before. Expectations, however, are expanding more rapidly than opportunities. Massive creation of new jobs is required each year to accommodate new entrants to the labour market.
- ?? Population growth remains a critical challenge. Efforts to curb population growth through a client-orientated and needs based comprehensive reproductive health and family planning programme should be continued, with emphasis on quality of care.
- ?? The quality of preparation for new employment opportunities is not keeping pace with the needs of a changing marketplace.
- ?? Girls are nearly as likely to continue in school as boys once they enter the classroom, but there are still parts of the country where as many as one-third of girls never have the opportunity to go to school.
- ?? The digital divide is drawing deep boundary lines between those with access to new forms of communication and learning and those without. Egypt has developed a highly sophisticated communication and information infrastructure, with increasing opportunities for access at reasonable cost. The opportunities are there for an expansive opening of these facilities to those who currently lack access.

The digital divide needed to be crossed by the CCA team itself. It has taken far too long to put the extensive monographs produced for the Common Country Assessment into publishable form for use by others. Meanwhile, the database has continued to evolve. It has become a shared asset for all the United Nations agencies in Egypt, accessible and useable through the United Nations Intranet, but not available to others. The CCA team recommends that this database be kept alive and expanded, opening it more widely through the Internet to data users and linking it to the producers of data through a web-based version.

The CCA team recommends that the Egypt UN Information Technology (IT) Team take on this role, and that each of the cooperating United Nations agencies identify a focal point for ensuring that knowledge links are maintained and

developed. The IT Team has the capacity to undertake this role, but only with expert support from the specialized agencies. The CCA team suggests that this database be maintained and developed as a rolling situation analysis by drawing key development stakeholders into active contribution and use.

Rather than periodic publications of this nature, the CCA team proposes that the CCA database be mounted on the web in 2002 through the site of the United Nations in Egypt. The web site should provide the user with opportunities to view the indicators with their definitions and sources, create tables and graphs, and map the results. It should permit queries and comments as well as links to other sites. The United Nations agencies must be ready to pledge staff time and resources to this end.

The CCA team recommends concentration on a small set of indicators. The Common Country Assessment used a core set of indicators for assessing development trends in Egypt nationally, sub-nationally, and by gender across the 1990s. The indicators also measure progress in implementing UN conventions and declarations, the action plans of UN conferences, and various agency mandates. Optional indicators expanded as the work progressed, virtually overwhelming the CCA exercise. Together they became too extensive to grasp easily.

The Millennium Summit, which brought the leaders of the world together in 2000 to review progress and set shared goals for the year 2015, has offered a solution. It has selected the most fundamental of goals from all the global conferences. These goals match well with Egypt's Vision for the Year 2017. The Common Country Assessment team recommends that the web-version of the CCA contain graphs and maps that allow the tracking of Millennium Summit goals by regularly highlighting changes in:

- ?? The proportion of people living in poverty and extreme poverty.
- ?? Enrolment rates of children in primary school, and who is out of school.
- ?? Gender disparities in primary and secondary education.
- ?? Infant and under-five mortality rates.
- ?? Maternal mortality ratios and births attended by skilled health personnel.
- ?? Access to reproductive health services, and contraceptive prevalence rates.
- ?? Environmental strategies for sustainable development, with an emphasis on water.

Indicators of women's wellbeing proved far less available and robust than other measures. Women appear to have fared far less well than expected during this period of relative prosperity. While the CCA was in progress, the Government of Egypt was conducting a national maternal mortality audit. Its results were not available at the time of this writing, but expectations are that improvements for women have lagged well behind those for their children. We recommend that the CCA immediately update its database when these results become available and that the United Nations in Egypt pay particular attention to supporting the Government of Egypt in the identification and tracking of interventions that save women's lives.

Government reticence to share primary data and use the data for its own policy making decisions, as well as its hesitation to share data with national researchers and with the donor community, has hampered progress in the past. The improved government readiness to share data and investigate new areas of policy concern with others, witnessed over the course of the preparation of this Common Country Assessment, augurs well for the future. The Common Country Assessment team believes that promoting this dialogue may be the most important outcome of the CCA process to pursue within the UNDAF, and beyond.



# Annex

## CCA Indicators