BASIC EDUCATION

With more than 18 million students, Egypt is home to the largest school system in the Middle East. Students have near-universal access to primary education and boys and girls attend school at nearly equal rates. Due to rapid population growth, enrollment is rising steadily at both the intermediate and secondary levels, affecting the quality of the education system. With one-third of the population under the age of 15, the availability of schools and trained teachers cannot stay apace. Moreover, instruction has traditionally focused on exams rather than on developing critical thinking and practical skills.

In 2017, the Ministry of Education launched an education reform agenda to transition Egypt away from a system that emphasizes rote memorization toward a system that promotes skills and competencies through student-centered classrooms. USAID works closely with the Ministry as it implements these reforms and aligns the education system more closely with the needs of a modern economy, including the development of students’ critical thinking and practical skills. These reforms focus on (1) expanding access to quality early childhood education; (2) improving student assessment systems; (3) increasing the quality of instruction through professional development activities for educators and administrators; and (4) incorporating technology in the classroom to include more digital resources and improved classroom data collection.

In partnership with the Ministry of Education, USAID helped establish Egypt's first two Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) high schools in Cairo in 2011 and 2012. The success of these schools has resulted in the Ministry expanding the model to twelve additional schools, while still maintaining the high quality, inquiry-based education of the original two STEM high schools. USAID is now supporting the development of teacher education programs at five Egyptian public universities to develop a cadre of highly capable STEM teachers for the STEM high schools.

USAID works with the Ministry to improve reading and mathematics in primary schools nationwide through providing early grade reading and math materials to improve learning outcomes and to strengthen teacher professional development. Additionally, USAID is working to eliminate illiteracy among Egypt’s most vulnerable populations using an innovative, intergenerational literacy approach for mothers and their primary school-aged children in community schools in some of Egypt’s most rural regions.
ACTIVITIES

LITERATE VILLAGE: Literate Village is a four-year activity that focuses on 2,150 economically disadvantaged villages in the Sohag, Beheira, and Assiut governorates with high rates of illiteracy among mothers and low school attendance rates among children. Using an intergenerational approach to learning to eradicate illiteracy, this activity strengthens literacy among children in community schools and improves early grade reading instruction, particularly for remedial readers. The Literate Village activity works simultaneously with adult learners – namely mothers and women’s groups – to provide literacy classes and teach women how to engage their children in learning at home. The activity also works with community associations and leaders to garner support for literacy and encourage school attendance, creating an entire network that supports reading at every level. Implementing Partner: Save the Children Federation, Inc.; Life of Project: March 2017 – March 2021; Total Estimated Cost: $17 million; Governorates: Assiut, Beheira, Sohag

EARLY GRADE LEARNING: This government-to-government activity focuses on early grade learning in support of the Ministry of Education’s reform agenda. It builds on previous USAID programming to ensure that Egyptian students are able to learn the fundamental core skills of reading, comprehension, writing, mathematics, and English language by the end of their early primary school experience (grade 3). This activity also provides remedial learning for students in grades 4-9 who have difficulties reading at their grade level. More than 300,000 teaching manuals are being distributed, including scripted lesson plans for teachers. The activity will reach over 150,000 teachers and 7.2 million children in grades 1-9 in 17,000 schools nationwide. This activity is strengthening the Ministry of Education’s ability to provide demand-driven early grade teacher training and to implement decentralized planning and budgeting based on local needs and opportunities. Implementing Partner: Ministry of Education; Life of Project: September 2017 – September 2021; Total Estimated Cost: $15 million; Governorates: Nationwide

STEM TEACHER EDUCATION AND SCHOOL STRENGTHENING: This activity supports the introduction of pre-service teacher development programs in five selected faculties of education at Egyptian public universities. Future STEM teachers are receiving quality preparation for teaching in modern STEM classrooms, thereby providing a continuous supply of well-prepared teachers and raising the quality of teaching and learning at the secondary level STEM schools. USAID continues its support to the Ministry of Education to fully institutionalize the processes necessary to ensure the sustained quality of STEM schools, including supporting in-service training for teachers and administrators at the school, district, and governorate levels. Implementing Partner: 21PSTEM; Life of Project: April 2018 – April 2023; Total Estimated Cost: $24.27 million; Governorates: Nationwide

FABRICATION LABORATORIES FOR STEM SCHOOLS: This activity supports sustained quality STEM education by providing laboratory equipment to STEM schools and offering training in supply maintenance and equipment use. This includes science equipment for use in chemistry, physics, and biology laboratories as well as teacher training on equipment usage. Implementing Partner: Transcentury Services; Life of Project: December 2017 – June 2019; Total Estimated Cost: $4.47 million; Governorates: Beni Suef, Qena, Qaloubiya, Sharqia

REFUGEE EDUCATION: There are an estimated 200,000 refugees and asylum seekers in Egypt, more than half of whom are from Syria and 40 percent of whom are children. As part of the United Nations-led Refugee Resilience Response Plan, this activity works to ensure that vulnerable refugee children and youth, as well as their peers in the host community in Egypt, have access to quality formal and non-formal education services in safe learning environments. The activity strengthens community-based approaches to education to ensure greater enrollment of Syrian children. It improves quality of education through professional development opportunities for key education personnel from the target schools. It also works with Egypt’s Ministry of Education to ensure barriers to education for refugee children are systematically addressed and minimized at the policy level. Implementing Partner: UNICEF; Life of Project: 2017 – 2019 (managed by USAID/Washington); Total Estimated Cost: $5 million; Governorates: Alexandria, Cairo, Damietta