KEY PRACTICES THAT CONTRIBUTE TO IMPROVED OUTCOMES OF LITERACY INITIATIVES IN EGYPT
(SUMMARY REPORT)

Education Reform Program

Community Participation and Adult Literacy Unit

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Abstract

This report summarizes key elements of a comprehensive January 2008 report of field investigations of improved practices and literacy outcomes in targeted idaaras in Cairo, Fayoum and Minia. The study is not an evaluation but rather a learning and stocktaking exercise based on capturing and analyzing the perspectives of key stakeholders. After outlining the situation of literacy in Egypt, the policy context and major program efforts, it presents 5 key practices that contribute to improved learner outcomes: creating public/CSO partnerships, strengthening literacy facilitators, adapting supervision and mentoring to varying conditions across the governorates, improving supplemental literacy materials and teacher training guides, and transferring capacities for scale and sustainability. It then explores the barriers to and reasons for increased enrollment, retention and pass rates that contribute to ERP's program innovations and key practices. For purposes of comparison, it also presents important features of Caritas' well-known literacy program in Minia. It concludes by summarizing learning and presenting possible next steps.

I.   Study Overview

This study emerged from the interests of representatives of the Economic Reform Program (ERP), the Adult Education Authority (AEA) and USAID representatives to learn more about the reasons for the improvements in adult literacy in specific idaaras in the seven governorates in which ERP is active. Its aim is to help inform the government's efforts to address illiteracy and ensure an efficient use of ERPs resources in the remaining months of program implementation (late spring 2009).[1] Its specific purpose is to clarify key practices that contribute to the success of literacy initiatives in targeted idaaras in Cairo, Fayoum and Minia. For purposes of comparison, the study also examined the literacy program of Caritas (Minia), a well-recognized local NGO that does not work with AEA but has achieved high pass rates on the official AEA exam[2].

The study is not an evaluation but rather a learning and stocktaking exercise based on capturing and analyzing the perspectives of key stakeholders. It used a combination of discussion guides, participatory rural appraisal and appreciative inquiry techniques to probe stakeholder perspectives with 368 respondents over a three-week period. The majority of respondents were organized into focus groups while a limited number of individual interviews were conducted with senior AEA and ERP staff.

1.1   Literacy in Egypt

According to official statistics, illiteracy in Egypt in 2005 was 26% (14% for males and 38% for females)[3]. However, there are a number of problems with this figure:

* It masks the fact that illiteracy rates vary by residence and geographic area so that rates for rural women living in upper Egypt are much higher.
* The rate of decline is slower than achievements in many other developing countries and does not necessarily correspond to the political commitment to eradicate illiteracy.
* The census year figures are based on a questionnaire asked to the household head whether particular family members above 10 years old are illiterate. In non-census years, the figures are based on the census year illiteracy figure minus the number of those that passed the official AEA literacy examination during the period from the census year to the year in question.

Official statistics thus only consider the level of illiteracy among those that may have passed the AEA exam and do not include all illiterates. For instance, they do not account for the **estimated one third of those that pass the AEA examination that fall back to illiteracy** or the continual flow to illiteracy that results from the poor quality of education or those individuals that may have never attended or dropped out of school. (National Planning Report: Literacy Assessment and Monitoring Programme (LAMP).

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[1] For information on ERP, see www.erpequip.org

[2] Caritas states that 75% of those that complete their initial 9-month course pass the AEA exam while 85% of those that complete the entire 18-month course pass the AEA exam.

[3] *National Planning Report: Literacy Assessment and Monitoring Programme (LAMP).* Social Research Center/AUC. Cairo, May 2006.

1.2   Policy Context

On August 23, 2007 President Hosni Mubarak noted that even though the illiteracy rate was declining, more efforts should be exerted as "those rates were not enough." Furthermore, "President Mubarak said governorates and localities will be responsible from now on for implementing programs aimed at eliminating illiteracy and securing the budgets for this purpose. The General Authority for Literacy and Adult Education (also known as the Adult Education Authority) will be in charge of setting the plans and targets." (Egypt State Information Service).

Views expressed by Dr. Raafat Radwan, Chairman of the Adult Education Agency (AEA)[4], align with those made by President Mubarak by emphasizing a comprehensive strategy of reform. This commitment from the highest level of the government also reinforces the efforts by a variety of institutions to combat illiteracy including those of the National Council of Women, academic institutions, local and international NGOs, and multi-lateral and bi-lateral programs including USAID's efforts through the Education Reform Program (ERP).

1.3   ERP's Adult Literacy Component

ERP's Adult Literacy component focuses on combating illiteracy in those idaaras in seven governorates[5] with the lowest enrollment and pass rates for literacy as measured by AEA. In just a short time, ERP has seen a dramatic increase in learner outcomes in terms of the number of learners entering literacy classes and passing the official literacy competency exam. In fact, in three of the seven governorates in which ERP is working – Cairo, Fayoum, and Minia, the targeted idaaras have achieved the highest percent increase in terms of enrolled learners and exam pass rates according to official AEA figures. Many of the other ERP idaaras have had equally impressive results. This is quite notable given the presence of contextual factors that often influence literacy class attendance and learning such as traditional gender roles, the opportunity costs of attending literacy classes and variability in AEA branch and idaara leadership.

In addition to the impressive increases in official literacy statistics, the three idaaras were selected because of innovative program features:

- Marg idaara and the entire AEA Cairo branch office is engaged in "second generation" programming which focuses on transferring technical capacity and learning to three other idaaras in Cairo[6];
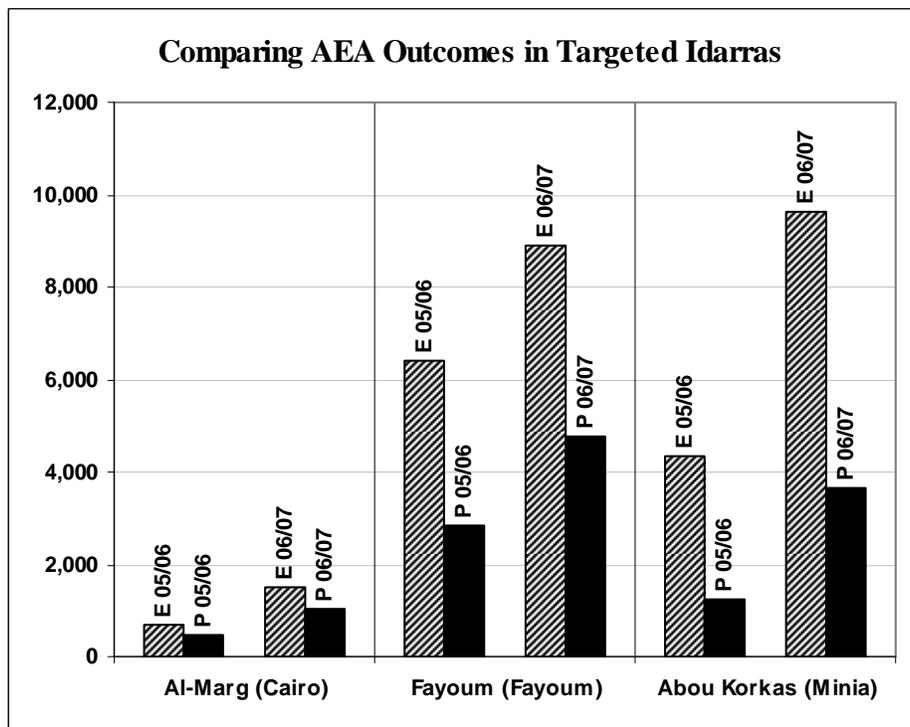
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[4] ERP staff meet regularly with Dr. Radwan to discuss AEA reform strategies. Many of these ideas are contained in discussion and planning documents for the reform initiative in Beni Suef.

[5] Aswan, Qena, Minia, Fayoum, Beni Suef, Cairo and Alexandria.

[6] Discussions were held with monitors, supervisors and mentors from the four idaaras but Marg was the focus of discussions with learners and literacy facilitators.

- Fayoum, along with Minia and Cairo, has introduced training cadres to address issues of scale and sustainability and has been a focus of in depth literacy research conducted by the American University of Cairo's Social Research Center (SRC) in collaboration with the National Council for Women (NCW) and with support from the Ford Foundation[7]; and,
- The ERP team in Abou Korkas in Minia has developed and tested a new literacy facilitator's guide that introduces phonetics into the official AEA curriculum and reorganizes specific lessons. Minia governorate is also home to a number of innovative and high performing non-AEA literacy programs.

Enrollment and pass rates in the targeted idaaras between years 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 are compared below.

Comparing AEA Outcomes in Targeted Idarras

	Al-Marg (Cairo)	Fayoum (Fayoum)	Abou Korkas (Minia)
E 05/06	~700	~6,400	~4,350
P 05/06	~500	~2,850	~1,250
E 06/07	~1,550	~8,900	~9,650
P 06/07	~1,050	~4,800	~3,650

II.   Key Practices Contributing to Improved Literacy Outcomes

Documentation indicates that there are five practices cited by key stakeholders that are major contributors to the recent improvement in learner outcomes in the targeted idaaras in Cairo, Fayoum and Minia.

Key Practice #1: Creating Public/CSO Partnerships[8]

ERP and AEA have promoted strategies for actively engaging non-governmental institutions and local government units and councils as critical partners in improving learner outcomes. Such strategies seek to devolve responsibilities for the implementation of literacy programs from Cairo to the governorates and from AEA to local institutions, especially CSOs and other types of community-based institutions. This has resulted in AEA actively consulting with Community Development Associations, local village councils, universities, businesses mosques, churches and school education committees about the literacy needs in their communities and incorporating them in the process of increasing the number and quality of literacy facilitators, classes and learners. .

Those that know the community best are now major partners in promoting literacy programs. Such institutional arrangements represent an acknowledgement by AEA of the potential programmatic and financial benefits of "outsourcing" key functions that contribute to increasing enrollment.

ERP's Partner NGOs (PNGOs) have played a critical part in these new institutional arrangements. All of them have long-standing credibility with the target communities, are highly experienced with various types of community development efforts including education and literacy efforts, and have trained and worked closely with local CDAs.

Under the ERP, the PNGOs worked with the CDAs to help increase the number and quality of literacy classes, literacy facilitators and learners through social mobilization and literacy awareness campaigns.

Learning from public/CSO partnerships includes:
* Mobilizing the energy and local and trusted relationships of CSOs has proved critical for improving recruitment, literacy facilitators and learners; improving learner enrollment and coverage; and, providing credibility and often times financial benefits for AEA in these areas.
* In addition to basic organizational development inputs, support for training has strengthened CDAs' effectiveness, including for social mobilization campaigns, community needs assessments and literacy classes.

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[8] We use the term "civil society" to refer to the totality of voluntary organizations and institutions in a community. In addition to community development organizations and NGOs, this would include any formal or informal voluntary body that supports development efforts for the social good including business associations, academic institutions, mosques, churches and others.

* Mobilizing other local institutions such as village councils, local administrative units, BOTs, mosques and churches has also proved critical to expanding the number of new classes, literacy facilitators and learners.
* Systematically responding to creative leadership from a governor has been a major factor in successfully promoting literacy efforts in a governorate.
* Partnerships with large, experienced NGOs have played a critical role in coordinating literacy efforts with the governor and local institutions, strengthening the skills of smaller NGOs and CDAs to support such efforts, and introducing program and pedagogical innovations.

Key Practice #2: Strengthening Literacy Facilitators

ERP has provided extensive needs-based[9] technical training and systems support to AEA literacy facilitators as well as AEA monitors, mentors and, in some instances, supervisors or community facilitators to enable them to strengthen the skills of literacy facilitators.

Upgrading the skills of the literacy facilitators began with the selection process. This was critical since prior to ERP there was no standard qualifying test for AEA literacy facilitators ERP thus provided a workshop for AEA and others on standards and qualifications for literacy facilitators and ensured that CDAs and other local organizations were central to the selection process.

The literacy facilitators in the three idaaras consistently ranked training in *active learning* sessions as one of the most useful with other training topics following closely behind. In fact, active learning is a foundation topic since it is intended to be integrated with the other training sessions. ERP training topics for the literacy facilitators are presented below:

Marg Literacy Facilitator Group #2 Ranking of Most Important Training Topics	**Fayoum Literacy Facilitator Ranking of Most Important Training Topics**	**Abou Korkas Literacy Facilitator Ranking of Most Important Training Topics**
* Active learning * Individual learner differences * Educational resources and aids * Supplemental health messages * Arabic and math skills * Classroom management * Lesson planning * Communication skills	* Active learning * Classroom management * Supplemental health messages * Educational resources and aids * Lesson planning * Arabic and math skills	* Lesson planning * Active Learning * Phonetics * Arabic and math skills * Communication skills * Adult learning

Respondents from all the stakeholder groups state that a) excellent literacy facilitators are a major factor in encouraging learners to enroll and persist in literacy classes; and, b) the training directly contributed to strengthening the skills of the literacy facilitators and those that are responsible for training and supporting them. It is clear that strong literacy facilitators are the lynchpin of any good literacy program.

Learning from activities to strengthen the learning facilitator includes:

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[9] ERP's needs-based training approach is based on extensive discussions with the literacy facilitators and others about their current challenges and possible gaps in AEA's pre-service and in-service training inputs.

* A facilitator that is well chosen, trained and motivated represents the backbone of the literacy program; often playing a mentoring, and socially and emotionally supportive role for her learners, as well as an instructional one.
* Assessing the knowledge and skills gaps of literacy facilitators and designing training to respond to those needs is critical to their improved performance and motivation in the classroom;
* CDAs, because of their local character, networks and information, are typically best placed for recruiting and training literacy facilitators;
* Pre-service training for literacy facilitators needs to be complemented and reinforced by individualized in-service training and support especially in such "new" areas as active learning, phonetics-based approaches and supplementary materials.

Key Practice #3: Adapting Supervision and Mentoring to Varying Conditions across the Governorates

No clearer example exists of the contextual differences confronted by ERP and AEA than that of the functions and roles of monitors, supervisors and mentors, which often vary widely between the governorates. This situation has resulted in a major challenge to attempts to organize and rationalize the training, supervision and mentoring process across governorates, and even within them. The differences between the systems supporting facilitators and classes, and the difficulties of homogenizing them, underline the value of a decentralized system, a flexible approach and the importance of encouraging the application of local solutions to local circumstances.

Based on these contextual, operational and historical differences, the three idaaras evolved different structures for training and supporting the literacy facilitators. This also meant that even though the monitors, mentors and supervisors were encouraged to attend the literacy facilitator training, their own training often differed depending on local conditions. As a result, monitors, mentors and supervisors assumed different roles in the three target governorates and supervisors, in particular, who were intended to primarily serve an administrative function assumed a much more prominent role in most locations.

Learning from adapting supervision and mentoring to varying conditions across governorates includes:
* Variations in functions and roles of monitors, supervisors and mentors between the governorates offer excellent opportunities for comparing good practice among and across governorates.
* Variations, however, also present a major challenge to attempts to standardize and organize the training, supervision and mentoring process of literacy facilitators across governorates.
* In some governorates, monitors and mentors have limited funding and human resources to perform their functions adequately. In some cases, as in Minia, facilitators have stepped forward to partially fill the gap, thus highlighting the value of adopting a flexible approach to supervision and monitoring among the governorates.

Key Practice #4: Improving Supplemental Literacy Materials and Teacher Training Guides

ERP and its partners have begun to fill critical gaps in materials by providing supplemental materials and teacher training guides. The supplementary materials include four integrated health and literacy books that expose both the literacy facilitators and learners to different materials that can reinforce learning and new literacy skills. The different stakeholder groups from monitors and supervisors to literacy facilitators and learners stated that the materials are an important reason for learners enrolling in and regularly attending literacy classes. The cost to reproduce the supplementary materials, however, is quite high since they are prototypes developed to test and promote integrated literacy methodologies.

ERP along with its partner NGO and academic institutions also took the important step of reconfiguring the AEA literacy facilitators' guide. The new Minia literacy facilitators' guide integrates phonetics, and reorganizes and expands lessons of the AEA curriculum. The Minia manual is, at present, only being piloted in Abou Korkas idaara.

ERP has also developed a "qualifying" or gap curriculum for those learners that pass the exam and wish to go on to preparatory classes. They developed the curriculum in recognition that completion of AEA's basic nine-month class and passing of the exam does not necessarily prepare a learner to enter into preparatory classes. For example, several subjects such as history, environment and science are not taught in the literacy classes.

Learning from the supplemental literacy materials and literacy facilitators guides includes:
* Supplementary materials that have been developed based on the local needs and realities of learners' lives have proved critical for learners' continued attendance at literacy classes and improved learner outcomes.
* Locally developed supplemental health materials best illustrate the value of an approach that fully integrates literacy with critical development topics such as pre-natal care and nutritional foods. These need to be distributed more broadly and systematically.
* The high cost of printing some supplementary materials has reduced broad use; mass-production of low-cost disposable workbooks merit high priority to ensure widespread access..
* A phonetics- based approach seems to be having an impact on learning outcomes, at least in the perception of the literacy facilitators and learners.
* Training manuals have been produced – such as the Facilitator's Training Manual in Minia-however for maximum effect, broader and systematic dissemination of such materials to those assigned to train and support literacy facilitators is critical to maintaining and expanding achievements.

Key Practice #5: Transferring Capacity to Achieve Sustainability and Scale

ERP is attempting to ensure that local institutions engaged in combating illiteracy have the capacity to implement, adapt and expand key practices through transferring such practices and innovations to those institutions. The ultimate purpose of this capacity transfer process is to

support the government's commitment to address issues of scale and sustainability of literacy program interventions and positive learner outcomes.

Capacity transfer begins by assisting branch and idaara staff to develop and monitor strategic and annual plans. At present, it primarily focuses on organizing and training cadres of AEA idaara and branch staff to train literacy facilitators, and transferring capacity and lessons learned between an initial ERP idaara to other idaaras in the same governorate. AEA's Cairo branch is the first to introduce this process of outward expansion and now has four idaaras engaged at various stages of implementing adult literacy best practices.

As noted by ERP staff, with planning and training systems and guides in place, the capacity transfer process could occur with any agency or group of institutions that has responsibility for wide-scale dispersal of adult literacy innovations and training and supporting literacy facilitators.

Learning from transferring capacity includes:
∗ It is important to first identify and test effective interventions and resolve the challenges of promoting them before transferring them to AEA and local institutions.
∗ Strategic and annual planning assistance, establishment of training cadres, and systems for outward expansion to other idaaras, such as by expanding public/CSO partnerships are important for sustaining program innovations but need to be complemented by interventions such as incorporating the more specific findings in this report to achieve wider impact.
∗ As in the case of all three of the target governorates, Cairo, Minia, and Fayoum, leadership from AEA senior levels, and from the respective Governors are critical for rapid and effective expansion to new idaaras.[10]

III.   Barriers to and Reasons for Increased Enrollment, Retention and Pass Rates[11]

Barriers to Enrollment and Retention

Barriers to enrollment and retention emerge from three main factors mentioned by the different stakeholder groups:
∗ uneven quality of AEA literacy facilitators, curriculum and examination system;
∗ restrictive social and religious traditions contributing to a lack of awareness about the benefits of education especially for girls; and,
∗ economic circumstances (poverty)

The ERP/AEA activities are directly addressing the first two issues while indirectly addressing or working with such groups as CDAs to address the third factor.

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[10] While only one idaara was initially selected for focus by ERP in each of the seven target governorates, currently ERP is actively transferring capacities in twenty-three idaaras in the seven governorates, including four idaaras in Cairo, three in Minia, and three in Fayoum.
[11] We are using the ERP definition of retention that refers to those learners that attend and complete the course rather than the AEA definition that refers to those learners that take the exam.

Sample Responses Concerning Barriers to Increased Retention from Stakeholder Groups (Cairo/Marg)	
ERP/PNGO: * Poor Literacy Facilitator and monitor (major reason) * Bad treatment by AEA staff and monitors of literacy facilitator and learners * Inflexible classroom times * Location of classroom * class sessions of three hours too long Learners: * Poor Literacy Facilitator (major reason) * Poor teaching methods * No respect from Literacy Facilitator * Math and Arabic curriculum too difficult * Class location * No social relations with other Learners in class * Literacy book is unrealistic * Household or job responsibilities * Husband refuses to let her continue.	AEA Branch and Idaara Managers: * Poor literacy facilitators * Students not actively engaged in learning * Topics not always relevant AEA Monitors and Mentors: * Poor quality of literacy facilitator * Bad relationship with literacy facilitator * Bored (no active learning) * Social circumstances (husband may forbid her to continue; he is not interested in her becoming literate) AEA Supervisors: * Nine-month course is too long for many learners if it is not interesting * Many learners have a personal crisis in their family (economic, social) * If a friend or relative drops the class, they will be influenced by her decision

Reasons for Increased Enrollment and Retention

The primary reasons for increased enrollment and retention are social mobilization campaigns, improved quality of the literacy facilitators and more relevant curriculum including the phonetics-based teaching methods.

According to different respondent groups, the commitment and high quality of the literacy facilitators is a primary reason for increased pass rates along with the use of active learning methodologies and encouragement by the literacy facilitators and CDAs to attend class. However, the official pass rates do not account for the number of successful learners that choose not to take the exam even after they had completed the course and passed the qualifying test.

Sample Responses Concerning Increased Enrollment and Retention	
ERP/PNGO (Minia): * Good literacy facilitator * Curriculum such as supplemental health lessons and literacy facilitators' phonetics guide * Social mobilizing through advertisements, community mobilization * Opportunity for peer group and friends * Incentives from the Governor concerning IDs and from the Agriculture Ministry concerning agricultural extension services Learners (Marg): * With a skilled literacy facilitator, they feel they can meet their learning goals. * literacy facilitators and others encouraged them to attend class. * Heard public announcements by CDA * Saw daily public service announcements on television about the literacy classes. * Wanted to learn more about the health messages (supplemental materials) AEA Literacy Facilitators (Fayoum): * Skills of literacy facilitators * Supplemental health lessons * Awareness building about the benefits of education * Income generation activities * House visits by literacy facilitator * Encouraged by increased number of learners that pass the exam	AEA Branch and Idaara Managers (Cairo/Marg): * Qualified literacy facilitators including strong facilitation skills * Attracting learners by telling them that if they are literate they can help their children * Using religious figures to encourage women's attendance at literacy classes and girls' education * Provision of health messages, enterprise skills and health exams in classes * Making direct appeals at home AEA Monitors and Mentors (Cairo/Marg): * Increased role of CDAs in recruiting literacy facilitators and identifying learners (most important) * Increased awareness about the importance of education and literacy through social marketing media and awareness campaigns * Positive relationship between AEA idaara and community * Incentives provides by CDAs including feeding * Positive relationship between literacy facilitators and learners * More timely delivery of certificates for those that pass exam * ERP qualifying curriculum to assist learners that pass exam to prepare for prep classes AEA Supervisors/Community Facilitator (Minia): * Relationship between literacy facilitator and community * Increased awareness from social mobilization * Location of classes in houses or mosques * Directly encouraged by CDA * Contacted by literacy facilitator * Economic and life skills of handcrafts, income generating and recipes activities offered in class * New approach of phonetics and active learning

Barriers to and Reasons for Increased Pass Rates

For those that fail the exam, the first set of reasons concerns poor preparation:
* Learner not prepared for actual testing process and model;
* There is too little math on the qualifying test;
* Exam samples not practiced in class;
* Dictation given to quickly;
* The nine-month curriculum is too short for learners to prepare adequately for the exam.

The second set of reasons concerns the different abilities of learners and irregular attendance while the third set is a mixture of fear of the exam committee from Cairo and actual test taking. ERP Minia staff also mentioned the pass quota system as a reason for learners failing the test.

Successful learners that choose not to take the exam are an unusual category since previously many people had assumed that any learner that completed the course and passed the qualifying exam would continue on to take the exam. That, however, is not always the case. Literacy facilitators in Abou Korkas (Minia) said that anywhere from thirty percent to fifty percent of the learners that complete the classes do not take the exam. They said that the variation was due to community differences and learner ages. They also mentioned that of those that take and pass the exam, approximately twenty-five percent to thirty percent continue on to preparatory classes.

> **Learners' Reason for Not Taking the Exam**
> * We come to class to learn how to read and write and not for the exam.
> * I do not need certificate
> * The exam place is too far from my house.
> * I am afraid to take the exam.
> * Why should I take the exam when there is such a delay in getting the certificate?

It is not surprising that the major reasons given for increased pass rates were the high quality of literacy facilitators, active learning methodologies and encouragement from both the literacy facilitators and CDAs for learners to attend class on a regular basis.

IV.   Caritas Literacy Program in Minia

Caritas has offices in Cairo and five other governorates including Minia where its office opened in 1987. It works in a number of different development sectors but along with other church-related groups has been a leader in developing innovative literacy programs.

As a member of the Ecumenical Committee for Literacy Programs, Caritas helped develop the well-known, phonetic-based basic curriculum, *Learn and Be Free*. They also developed a number of supplemental materials and books for new literates to complement the basic curriculum.

The main course consists of two nine-month phases for a total of eighteen months. The first nine-month phase includes the basic curriculum supplemented by discussions on health, women's enhancement and culture (the government, being a good citizen). The second nine-month phase includes supplemental books on culture, health and women. According to the

coordinators, the Caritas curriculum is slower-paced than that of AEA and the phonetics approach makes its easier for new learners to become literate.

In 1995, Caritas introduced a third phase targeted for those learners above fifteen years old. In 2001 Caritas Minia introduced a post-literacy program that is based on learner-promoted community libraries and reading clubs.

Learning from Caritas is as follows:
∗ They have identified different types of learners and developed curriculum to meet the needs of those learners. Categorizing learners into groups with different learning needs and interests and developing curriculum to meet those needs and interests has contributed to high learner outcomes
∗ Mobilizing sufficient financial resources to support operational and expansion costs are a constant challenge for non-governmental parallel programs such as that of Caritas.
∗ Human resource needs of literacy programs can be addressed by innovations such as Caritas' emphasis on moving learners to become coordinators (literacy facilitators) and coordinators to become monitors.

V. SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS AND POSSIBLE NEXT STEPS

Increases in AEA enrollment, retention and pass rates are the result of public/CSO partnerships at both the governorate and local levels that contribute to the enrollment and support of learners, the quality of teaching and learning, and the introduction of new and more relevant materials and teaching methodologies. Achievement in learner outcomes, however, does not address the issue of long-term dispersal and sustainability of program innovations.

As mentioned by ERP staff, the capacity transfer strategy will not actually address the problem of the limited time and resources for monitors, mentors and supervisors to provide consistent technical mentoring of the literacy facilitators. An additional challenge would be to clarify which practices to devolve to civil society, the private business sector and communities and which should remain within an official body.

For these and other issues to be addressed, those concerned with improving literacy in Egypt will need to learn from both their mistakes and successful innovations, of which there are many, and seek creative partnerships to pursue a dynamic new course.

To support such an undertaking, discussions with ERP staff and other key stakeholders have led us to suggest three next steps.
∗ The first step would entail continuing the high-level discussions with key decision-makers concerning the future of Egypt's efforts to combat illiteracy. The purpose of such meetings would be to set the groundwork for quickly convening and supporting a working group to map out a possible design and new institutional arrangements including decentralization of key program components to the governorates for future literacy efforts.
∗ The second step, which could overlap with working group meetings, would be to investigate key issues that could affect future literacy efforts. These include:

- clarifying those areas that may benefit from being centrally housed and those areas that would do best through devolution to governorates and different types of public and private institutions;
- clarifying current and future program costs and budgetary arrangements and decision making;
- examining the optimal mix of public and private institutions to support literacy efforts in the different governorates; and,
- examining other areas of literacy program innovation in Egypt so that any new program design can learn from such best practice innovations.
* Based on initial design and investigative work contained in steps one and two, the third step would be to secure resources and pilot a decentralized literacy program in select governorates.

It is clear that the Government of Egypt has committed itself to reforming its current literacy program. This commitment is critical to moving forward on building innovative institutional partnerships and securing the human and financial resources necessary to increasing and sustaining learner improvements.