

NEW SCHOOLS PROGRAM Mid-Term Evaluation

for

**U.S. Agency for
International Development Egypt**

Submitted to

USAID/EGYPT
Office Of Human Development And Democracy/ Education and Training
Cairo, Egypt

By

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This project assessment was conducted by Aguirre International under GEM Task Order #807 with USAID/Egypt, Contract Number FAO-1-99-00-00010-00, dated December 26, 2000. The findings, conclusions, and recommendations are those of its authors and do not necessarily reflect the views and/or policies of USAID/Egypt.

January 2003

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New Schools Program
USAID/Egypt
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CARE	Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere
CCIMD	Center for Curriculum Implementation and Material Development
CDA	Community Development Association
CEDPA	Center for Development and Population Activities
CET	Community Education Team
COF	Classroom Observation Form
DT2	Development Training 2 Project
EDC	Education Development Center
EHAF	EHAF Consulting Engineers
GAEB	General Authority for Education Buildings
GALAE	The General Authority for Literacy and Adult Education
GEAP	Girls' Education Action Plan
GOE	Government of Egypt
IELP-II	Integrated English Language Program – II
IIE	Institute for International Education
KSA	Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes
LE	Egyptian currency (pound)
LFE	Level Finding Exercise
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MGS	Multi-grade Schools
MIS	Management Information System
MOE	Ministry of Education
MTEP	Master Teachers Exchange Program
NSP	New Schools Program
OCR	One Classroom School
PA	Parents' Association
PRA	Participatory Rapid Appraisal
PTC	Parents Teachers Council
SC	Second Chance
SCE	Second Chance Classes
SIM	Supplementary Instruction Material
SO	Strategic Objective
TOT	Training of Teachers
USAID	U. S. Agency for International Development
WE	World Education

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Team wishes to express its appreciation for all the assistance made available by the SO22 team (Office of Human Development and Democracy/Education and Training) at USAID/-Egypt, in particular Hala El Serafy, Christina Adamczyk, Mona Zikri and Andrea Yates. The team relied heavily on the NSP Contractor team to assist with all aspects of the evaluation, including scheduling, accompanying the team to remote locations and logistics. With such a major contribution of time and resources on the part of both Cairo-based and field-based NSP staff, the evaluation team was able to achieve significant surveying of the target population and formulate its findings and recommendations. The team is deeply grateful to all NSP staff who went far beyond the norm to accommodate a tight schedule and the many requests for information. In particular, the team acknowledges the cooperation and assistance offered by Daniel O. Coster (Chief of Party, CARE) , Said A. Assaf (Education Development Center), Bill Potter (World Education), Samir El Sabagh (NSP Program Manager) and the three Area Managers, Ashraf Aid Abdou (Minya), Azza Shafik (Beni Suef) and Samir Fadel (Fayoum).

Finally, the Team expresses appreciation to the Egyptian Partners, especially from the three Governorates and senior officials in the Ministry of Education, whose familiarity with and support of the New Schools Program is a major reason for its achievements and a promising indication for its future.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The USAID-funded New Schools Program is an exceptional reform model that has made rapid progress in only 30 months in meeting its goals to expand educational access for girls, improve teaching and learning, and increase community participation in girls' education. After a month-long evaluation of this program conducted by a 5-person team of Egyptian and American specialists, we strongly recommend that USAID adopt the following recommendations.

General Recommendation No. 1. Extend the completion date to allow the Contractor team and its Egyptian counterpart institutions to leverage the achievements to date and consolidate the impact obtained.

Explanation. The fact that the NSP has made impressive progress in achieving impact in all three of its components in such a short period argues for an extension of at least two years to consolidate these gains and ensure their sustainability. That the NSP will have met its output goals of, *inter alia*, 69 new schools and 742 new classrooms realized in the framework of an innovative project design that called for a lengthy community selection and mobilization process, does not lead to a conclusion that the timeframe for this activity was adequate or reasonable. The critical period is ahead, where the forces released in this activity must be systematized and sustained so that the NSP, as a catalyst, can recede from front-stage smoothly and be sure that counterpart institutions assume their responsibilities. If no major additional funding is earmarked to increase educational access for rural girls (i.e., schools and classrooms), the evaluation team recommends extending the activity by two years. Year One would be devoted to institutionalizing the project's successes, especially in components 2 and 3 (improved learning and teaching and community mobilization). Much is left to be done to bring existing MOE institutions on board so that the knowledge, skills and attitudes transferred through training are applied in the schools and classrooms (Level 3 of Kirkpatrick's evaluation hierarchy) and that learning improves (Level 4). Concerning component 1 (building schools to increase access), maintenance issues can be resolved during this year. The last, second extension year would be devoted to sustainable transition and orderly close-out.

General Recommendation No. 2. Expand the rural-based program to replicate the successful model in other rural communities in the three target Governorates first, and if funding permits, to other Governorates

Explanation. Were significant additional funding made available, the team recommends expanding the existing model to other rural communities, employing the same successful implementation approaches. With such high demand for girls' education throughout Egypt, and the serious equity and retention issues confronting poor, rural girls, USAID should replicate this program elsewhere in Egypt. As the program expands, it will become more efficient and more effective in reaching its internal goals while assisting USAID in making a measurable impact on the Intermediate Results that guide SO22. The team believes strongly that NSP is a convincing example of a well-conceived, well-managed development activity that merits expansion and replication. In fact, the team hopes that this mid-term evaluation report, embellished by remarkable pictures of NSP schools, teachers and students that speak volumes about "impact", makes its way to educational and development specialists in other countries.

The NSP model merits careful analysis by the World Bank, USAID, UNDP and the other multilateral and bilateral agencies for replication and adaptation to other countries.

General Recommendation No. 3. Carefully consider the implications on the current program of a decision to extend the NSP, as currently implemented, to an urban-based program designed to achieve similar results.

Explanation. The NSP model, as currently implemented, works masterfully in its context – small, rural, impoverished communities in Upper Egypt. There are huge unmet needs in rural Egypt for this program. Likewise, Egypt's urban areas have similar needs for girls' education and programs to improve educational quality and increase retention and enrollment. The NSP methodology and strategies, with appropriate modifications, may very well be as effective in urban settings as in rural areas.. However, the evaluation team is wary of diluting or diverting a highly-successful program by encumbering the NSP contractor team with the responsibility of implementing the activity in a development context fundamentally different from rural Egypt. For example, selecting and mobilizing a poor, urban "community" in Cairo or Alexandria would likely require techniques and approaches significantly different from entering a remote village in the Minya Governorate. School construction would call for appropriate urban design and building strategies – perhaps acquisition and renovation rather than stand-alone construction. On the other hand, an opposing argument put forward suggests that the successes and strong track record of the NSP position it well to add value to any urban program with similar goals. Proponents of this view point to the applicability of the NSP's active-learning methodology training for teachers and administrators in urban areas to justify mingling rural and urban under one roof.

The team's concern that resulted in the above recommendation springs from its discomfort in risking a successful activity by blurring its focus. The team does not question an urban application of the NSP's (and USAID's) worthy goals to increase access by urban girls to quality primary education.

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What are the primary findings that have led to these three overarching recommendations, and the many other recommendations found in Section IV of this report? Below is a brief summary of these findings. After completing this Executive Summary, the reader is urged to read the Recommendations (and its supportive descriptions) in Section IV.

The NSP is a joint effort led by the prime contractor, CARE, in collaboration with the following sub-contractors: Education Development Center (focusing on primary school reform), World Education (community mobilization of parents), EHAF Consulting Engineers (building design and construction supervision), and the Salama Moussa Foundation (training).

From a statistical standpoint, the NSP accomplishments are impressive. By mid-2002, the project had designed, built, and turned over to the MOE, 33 beautiful and functional new buildings, meeting all GAEB specifications, costing significantly less and completed in half the time than other MOE schools. These schools, are located in rural areas and small towns in Minya, Beni Suef, and Fayoum. Twenty-six additional schools are under construction, with completion scheduled for the fall of 2002 or the spring of 2003. The NSP works in 69 Upper

Egypt communities. Over 18,800 students, 90% of them girls, were enrolled in NSP classes by the end of the 2001-2002 school year. Over 700 teachers, school supervisors, and administrators had been through NSP training, with the majority being placed in NSP class settings. The program is on target to have 742 New School classrooms, 160 Multi-Grade classrooms, and 80 Second Chance classes operating before its program completion date.

This report presents the evaluators' perceptions on both quantitative milestones, which the NSP appears to be completing in a timely fashion, and the qualitative judgments about the project. It is our belief that the NSP, under the direction of CARE, with substantial support from its partners, has put together an outstanding model, not only replicable in rural Upper Egypt, but with genuine implications for school reform and community development in other parts of the world.

The carefully designed process begins with the selection of communities, meeting the criteria of out-of-school girls, without adequate access to primary education. This is followed by application of an intensive community development model via numerous village meetings leading to the formation of Community Education Teams (CETs). The CETs lead the community through the difficult and lengthy process of obtaining land, forming task forces and supervising construction. The selected communities have raised over LE 8 million (nearly \$2 million) for land or to renovate classrooms. Rather than delay girls' education for months while the new schools were being built, the NSP proposed an ingenious solution – form temporary classrooms in which community members lent or rented rooms so that the girls could begin grades one and two immediately. Over 150 of these temporary classes, generally staffed by trained NSP teachers, have been functioning prior during the construction of their respective school. With the new school nearing completion, Parent Teacher Councils (PTCs) are elected in large, enthusiastic community gatherings. While the PTCs have long been legal entities in Egypt, the evaluators found them active and effective only in NSP settings. As neighboring schools and communities have seen the power of community involvement, however, social workers and others are beginning to replicate PTCs elsewhere.

The One Classroom School (OCR) has also existed for some time in Egypt, and the NSP has built on this tradition by starting 159 Multi Grade Schools (MGSs) for girls age 9-14 who are currently denied entrance to regular graded schools due to age restrictions. The NSP has received solid support from the MOE in the development of these institutions. The over 350 "facilitators" in these schools are local young women, generally with secondary diplomas, who have been trained by the NSP in many of the same topics given to regular teachers. These schools, like most of the temporary classrooms, were often in dark, dirt floored rooms but were among the most vibrant, alive educational spaces found in Egypt. The teachers/facilitators were involved from almost the beginning in canvassing their villages, recruiting students, and talking with parents reluctant to send their girls to such a "school." The close links to their community base appears to be a major factor in the success of the MGSs..

To respond to the need for a parent association similar to the PTC for the "specialized" schools, the NSP developed a Parent Association (PA) for the MGSs and is seeking legal status for these important community-based groups. The students in the MGS advance rapidly through the grades, often completing the five primary grades in 2 to 3 years, with summer tutoring, and pass Grade 5 exam at the same or higher rate than the students in regular, graded schools. In conjunction with The General Authority for Literacy and Adult Education

(GALAE), NSP also founded 21 Second Chance Schools for young women 14 to 19 years of age.

To meet its goal of improving educational quality, NSP has also trained over 700 teachers, supervisors and administrators for the new regular, graded schools. This coordinated approach of training both communities and teachers has been key to changing the classroom environment and providing teachers with support for trying new ideas. Regrettably, not all trained teachers have been placed in NSP schools, and some NSP schools have had untrained and temporary teachers assigned.

As an indication of training impact, the evaluation team could easily identify the NSP-trained teachers by the presence of small groups of students working together in their classrooms and the presence of teacher-prepared materials on the walls and hanging from the ceiling. The team saw the beginnings of cooperative learning, some forms of active learning and the use of mathematics manipulatives in a classroom atmosphere more conducive to learning than that in non-NSP schools observed. Student reading and writing still appear to be limited, and while students sit in small groups, there is still a predominance of large group instruction.

The NSP has developed a Level Finding Exercise to assist teachers in assessing their students, and offers regular full-day follow-up workshops, along with visits to classrooms by trainers, to assist the teachers. Working in close collaboration, the CCIMD and NSP have developed, and the MOE has published, a Supplementary Instruction Materials (SIMS) kit, filled with "active" learning games, a map, a music tape and other materials, which is now in use in the schools. It is too early for the kit to have effected any dramatic changes in teacher behavior, which the NSP staff realizes is a medium- to long-term prospect. But by creating innovative teaching materials, the NSP has promoted a model that will continue to provide assistance to teachers, supervisors and administrators leading to an improved primary classroom environment.

The team was impressed with the exceptional community development and school reform model developed by NSP and its achievements working closely with the MOE at the national and governorate levels to assure sustainability. School administrators, supervisors, school social workers and others from throughout the system have been involved in the NSP training programs. Governors and Undersecretaries are not only aware of the program, but highly supportive, and even previously-suspicious local community leaders have become, in many cases, active supporters of CETs, PTCs, and PAs. In order to influence future teachers, NSP trainers have also worked with the universities in the pre-service settings with many university professors participating in training, and discussions have begun to develop a prototype for professional development schools.

While there is evidence that NSP has lowered dropout rates between grades 3 and 4 by 15 percent and has improved students' pass rates on fifth year exams, it is too early to claim that a "major" reform of primary education has occurred. Changing teacher behaviors and improving instructional quality is a challenging and time-consuming task, and the NSP has made an excellent start by going about the process of gaining deep community involvement and commitment; developing well designed, thoughtful training and follow-up with teachers; and involving all school personnel in the process.

NSP has the real possibility of becoming a genuine, replicable model for countless other schools, and has already begun to have its impact felt in nearby villages and schools. It has an outstanding and committed staff, who work well together in their many and varied tasks. It needs and deserves additional time to consolidate the exceptional work it has been doing to date.



Anxious girls show off their counting skills

Scope of Work

The Scope of Work for the mid-term evaluation of the New Schools Program called for the team to ...

- evaluate the effectiveness of the NSP in terms of progress made toward program objectives,
- identify any required or recommended mid-term changes to improve the program,
- document "lessons learned" to enhance the on-going implementation of the program and its "planned expansion to Alexandria Governorate,"
- assess the reliability of the monitoring and reporting systems and the quality of the data reported to USAID, and
- provide lessons and models that could be applied to other programs in girls' education, community development, school management and teacher development.

The principal audience for whom the findings are intended include USAID/Cairo (its management offices and Strategic Objective Team 22 overseeing the education portfolio), the program's Egyptian government partners (principally the Ministry of Education (MOE) and its affiliated organizations such as the Faculties of Education, the General Authority for Educational Buildings (GAEB), and the Governors and local-level authorities in the three Governorates affected), and non-governmental organizations and community groups involved at the local level.

Team Composition and Timing

The research for this report was undertaken over a 4-week period in October of 2002 in Egypt and the writing completed in November. The team was comprised of the following consultants brought together by Aguirre International:

Maha Ammar, a training specialist with USAID project management experience

Andrew C. Gilboy, an evaluation and human resources/training specialist (Team Leader)

Barbara Hunt, a primary education specialist with a focus on school administration, policy and reading

Richard Kraft, an education scholar and recently-retired professor with extensive world-wide experience in primary school development and active learning

Maha el Said, a professor of literature with extensive experience in donor-funded educational training programs

Substantive and logistic backstopping was provided by:

Roger Rasnake, evaluation specialist and project manager at Aguirre International

Tom Judy, project management specialist at Aguirre International.

Report Format and Methodology

In reviewing the overall objectives of the mid-term evaluation, as stated above, and the many questions posed in the Scope, the team decided to divide its data-gathering along the same lines as the program's three principal objectives:

- Expand access to education for girls
(school construction, community involvement, types of schools, enrollment)
- Improve teaching and learning
(changes occurring in the classroom, training, assessment and testing)
- Increase community participation in girls' education
(role of community organizations, gender issues)

The Table of Contents was then structured along these lines to give clarity to the data search and presentation of findings. To this was added a section on Program Implementation so that the team could expand on the contractor's approach to managing the activities to reach results.

The team opted for two unconventional approaches to enhance the report's readability and promote creative consideration of new ideas. First, the Recommendations section is nearly "stand-alone" with comprehensive explanations that accompany each idea. In this way readers with little time available can quickly browse through the proposed changes and understand their rationale and context, without having to refer to the more detailed Findings section. The Recommendations section also is a *forum* where ideas from all sources – Egyptian counterparts, USAID and the contractor team – were included for consideration and debate. Second, the Executive Summary presents the report's findings and recommendations in a fresh way without repeating paragraphs contained in the report. Again, the team's intent is to offer busy readers with alternatives so they can rapidly grasp the team's major findings and recommendations.

The "Lessons Learned" section differs from the Recommendations by focusing on a few elements that were noticed while gathering data and analyzing results that were noteworthy. Reflection on these "lessons learned" led the team to its recommendations to modify the program

The team has included a number of Annexes that might be helpful in considering a broad range of changes to the program. Team members offered articles they had written on related topics that are included, in addition to the more standard items (Documents Reviewed and Persons Interviewed). In some instances, details supporting or expanding on a finding have been moved to the Annexes so as to avoid encumbering the body of the report.

Regarding the methodology employed, the team adopted an approach that can be characterized as "more qualitative and anecdotal and less quantitative." This decision was made early on due to the limited time available (2 weeks for all data-gathering) and the geographic spread, size and diversity of the target population. A random or weighted sampling that

would lead to statistically-significant or representative findings was not realistic given time and other limitations.

Instead, the team employed other techniques to ensure that the information gathered was comprehensive, thorough and based on respected approaches to classroom and teacher observation. The evaluation tools used included:

- review of program documents;
- site visits to all types of NSP-funded schools that included structured field/classroom observations;
- guided focus group discussions with community members (CETs, PAs, PTCs, and CDAs);
- semi-structured group and individual interviews with NSP personnel and participants (NSP/MOE teachers, MGS facilitators, SC Coordinators, students, principals, and supervisors);
- meetings with Governors, MOE officials in Cairo and with FOE staff in the field.

Interview guides for each of the field-based data sources were developed: CETs, PTCs, PAs, teachers (including facilitators and coordinators) and supervisors (some of which are included in the Annexes). Team members also developed interview questions to use with the Contractor team and senior education officials.

The team worked closely with the Contractor to identify in the most objective way possible the communities in each Governorate that would be visited. The Contractor team had already prepared their classification of all communities into three general categories: Excellent, Good, and Weak. The criteria used were the level of community participation as judged by the NSP staff most familiar with the village, and the perceived quality of teaching that was occurring in new school. Based on this list, and on the logistics of covering a large area in a short time, the evaluation team selected its communities from the three categories randomly but weighted to ensure visits to all types of schools. Also included were several visits to non-NSP schools (MOE regular primary schools) to gather anecdotal information. No control group could be organized of non-NSP schools in order to make comparisons that would stand up to statistical scrutiny.

The team visited 34 schools of all types in three Governorates (Minya, Beni Suef and Fayoum) of which 18 (or 45% of the total) were SGS (15 completed and 3 under construction) representing the bulk of the NSP-dispersed funds. In the process, the team observed 101 classrooms in session of all types and interviewed scores of principals, teachers, facilitators, coordinators, senior educational officials and even some students (in groups). At the community level, the team met PTCs, PAs, CETs and attended four PTC elections.

The team visited Faculties of Education in the Governorates where professors were involved in training and classroom observation. The team attended a number of training programs organized by the NSP for teachers and supervisors. Finally, the team interviewed or interacted with nearly all of the professional-level NSP staff in the field and in Cairo, met with officials from other USAID partners (IELP-II, MTEP/IIIE) and interviewed staff from each of the Contractor team institutions (CARE, World Education, EDC, EHAF and Salama Moussa Foundation). (Additional details on the methodology are included in the Annexes.)

Although a statistically-significant, random sampling could not be undertaken, the team was able to cover all corners of this complex activity and apply time-tested professional observation techniques throughout the data-gathering phase. Since most interviews were conducted in Arabic, which was spoken by only two of the five team members, any bias that emerged through their interpretations was managed through post-interview discussions and analysis, and by the fact that the Egyptian team members were education and training specialists doubling as consecutive interpreters, an option the Aguirre organizers believed strongly would enhance the evaluation findings and recommendations.



Proud mothers showing off the accomplishments of their daughters

I. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

A. Background and Context

Although designed with fundamental differences, the New Schools Program begun in 2000 took into account some of the lessons learned from a USAID-funded activity a decade earlier that constructed schools in rural areas in Egypt. That program focused on infrastructure (building schools) without the critical components that distinguish the NSP today: community participation (in the building phase), focus on increasing access for girls, improved learning in the new classrooms, and communities mobilized to ensure that all components are working and can be sustained. The earlier program was seen as deficient in a number of aspects, among them the "turn-key" nature of the school-building effort. Schools were designed and built without appropriate linkages to Egyptian institutional systems and communities and have not been maintained adequately.

The recognition that Egyptian schools needed to be built according to standards emerged as a valuable "lesson learned" and apparently was one of the elements leading to the establishment of GAEB. Unlike the earlier USAID project, NSP today requires that all schools comply with GAEB standards prior to their being handed over to the MOE. This and other design elements have ensured that the NSP's outputs are achieved with more linkages with, and input from, the Egyptian institutions charged with primary education.

The NSP also built on experiences gained from other activities in Egypt, in particular those dealing with what this evaluation calls "specialized schools" (Multi-Grade, One-Room classroom, literacy, etc.). These were funded by USAID and other donors, such as the Swiss and UNESCO.

The context within which the NSP is being implemented in Egypt is challenging. The need for girls' education, especially at the primary level, is acute and the reasons for low enrollment are many. Access to education for girls is inequitable as well, making rural impoverished areas among the most inaccessible. In contrast, university education has a far higher representation by women than is noted at other levels. With this context in mind, USAID's focus on improving opportunities for rural girls at the primary level is appropriate.

Were the NSP to achieve all its objectives, the level of demand for quality girls' education in Egypt would not be significantly abated. The need for both increased access and improved teaching for girls is immense. This does not, however, diminish the significant impact that would accrue from NSP reaching its objectives on the 70 communities affected and through replication of NSP successes through the MOE.

B. Goals, Components and Outputs

The goals of the NSP are:

- Expand access to education for girls
- Improve teaching and learning
- Increase community participation in girls' education

The first goal is to be reached by increasing the number of schools (and classrooms) so that an estimated 28,000 girls from the ages of 6 to 14 who would otherwise be left out of the system can attend schools of various types (primary, multi-grade, literacy, etc.). The second goal is to be reached by a) improving the knowledge, skills and attitudes ("KSA") of teachers (and facilitators, coordinators and auxiliary personnel, such as supervisors) who will then apply their newly-acquired KSA in the classrooms to improve teaching and learning, and b) improving and creating "curriculum" materials to be used by the teachers. The third goal is to be reached by creating new community organizations, or reviving existing ones.

The specific projected outputs that were originally intended to achieve these stated goals are:

- Construct 75 new single-grade schools with 738 classrooms
- Establish 160 Multi-Grade schools and 80 Second Chance Schools
- Provide training for teachers, facilitators, administrators and community members
- Develop new Supplementary Instructional Materials (teacher aids, wall maps, etc.) initially for grades 1-3, then for grades 4-6
- Mobilize communities to build local support.

Following an older development approach, a contractor team could implement all the activities indicated above but achieve few of the goals. Seventy-five schools could have been built on land identified by the community but might have remained empty or underused due to refusal by community leaders to send their daughters to school. The girls might have attended the schools without learning much or, worse, might have had negative stereotypes about themselves reinforced in an "educational" setting. The contractor might have trained hundreds of teachers destined for the new schools only to find that despite the training, their behaviors in the classroom had not changed (due to many factors). Finally, even if the entire effort were successful in the first few years, while the USAID-funded NSP contractor team was active, it could wither as funding dried up.

Sensitive to the challenges of implementing an ambitious "school-building, behavior-changing and community-mobilizing" activity in a complex social and political environment, the evaluation team sought to determine the impact that would occur *beyond* the outputs listed above. Questions such as "how were communities involved in school building?" "were teachers applying their new skills and knowledge in classrooms and if they were, what were the results," and "what role were community organizations playing" drove the evaluation far more than quantifying the inputs.

C. Relationship with USAID Strategic Objectives

The Office of Human Development and Democracy / Education and Training (Strategic Objective 22) is implementing a \$111 million basic education assistance program, of which \$27 million is designated for the New Schools Program. One of the cornerstones of SO22's portfolio, the NSP addresses the primary goal of SO22: *Greater percentage of primary and preparatory school children, especially girls, acquire basic skills*. It also responds directly to two Intermediate Results of the recently-revised USAID strategic framework: *Improved instructional quality and learning environment* (IR 22.1) and *Increased availability and accessibility of schooling* (IR 22.2). The NSP also addresses in a more limited way IR 22.4, "Improved

institutional capacity to plan, manage, assess and deliver educational services," by modeling a number of measures that can feed into policy reforms at the Ministry and local level.

A particular emphasis is on providing access to girls' education in impoverished communities (with high out-of-school rates for girls) in three rural Governorates (Minya, Beni Suef and Fayoum) in Upper Egypt. Of the four activities funded by SO22 aiming at girls' education, the NSP represents the largest effort.

D. Contractor Team

The NSP is implemented by a Contractor team comprised of five organizations, each with a identifiable role to play within each of the three major components. The prime contractor is CARE, which in addition to its responsibility in overall financial and programmatic management of the NSP, oversees directly the school construction effort, with support from EHAF Consulting Engineers, and the community mobilization component. CARE is also responsible for managing all MGS and SCE activities, with technical training support from Salama Moussa Foundation and CEDPA. The Education Development Center (EDC) focuses on improving learning and teaching in NSP-associated schools and classrooms through training (with additional training support from the Salama Moussa Foundation) and materials development. World Education provides technical guidance and staff training to NSP field implementation staff, focusing on the community mobilization component.

Although all NSP staff work for the program, each organization recruits and provides its employees to carry out the work under the supervision of the CARE Chief of Party. The NSP currently has a staff of 109, of which 84 are employees of CARE, 20 of EDC, 4 of World Education and 1 of EHAF. The project maintains four offices in Egypt.

To implement such a complex program, three field offices with staff from each of the implementing partners handles their respective responsibilities locally. A field office coordinator manages these cross-cutting outputs and communicates with the home office and as needed, with other field offices. The field-based activities are intensive, with site acquisition, construction engineering, community selection and mobilization, teacher preparation and training, school supervision and follow-on all presenting significant challenges.



NSP-funded primary school under construction in village

II. FINDINGS

This section is organized according to the three components of the NSP (access increased, teaching and learning improved, and communities mobilized) with the addition of "Program Implementation." Some issues cut across these divisions, such as community participation. In these instances, the issue is discussed in relation to the component to which it applies. For example, community participation in land acquisition and school construction is notably different from the role played by Parent Teachers Councils in school maintenance. Both types of community participation merit analysis by the evaluation team.

The team recognized early-on that the NSP differed from straight-forward, donor-funded infrastructure projects whose deliverables were physical facilities (university campus, research laboratories, primary schools, etc.) that could be evaluated against quality standards or increased access to education for a particular cohort. Instead, the NSP *integrated* the infrastructure improvements into the reform elements to attempt to create synergies across activities often considered distinct (school building vs. classroom learning techniques). Below are three "pitfalls" the team concluded that the NSP largely avoided:

- To build "turn-key" schools to hand over to the MOE and GAEB

Faced with a donor-driven timetable, many contractors neglect whatever innovative aspects might have existed in the project design in order to meet deadlines and "get the job done." This often satisfies the donor, and meets contract/cooperative agreement requirements, but limits positive impact the construction process might generate and reduces sustainability of the facility. Although delays occurred, the NSP resisted the pressure to find short cuts that might have limited impact, and USAID accepted its reasoning transparently presented in semi-annual reports.

- To deliver generic training modules to teachers

Contractors can more easily make use of "time-tested" training modules that have worked well in other places and deliver the training quickly and cost-effectively. This is a standard development approach that, in the view of the evaluation team, often results in little impact. It encourages "input counting" (number of teachers trained) and fails to focus on the results obtained from the training. In the case of the NSP, great effort was made to tailor training according to the context, need and desired outcome, and to provide refresher and in-school follow-up activities on an ongoing basis. Even though more time is needed to deliver non-generic training, and to follow Best Practices for results-oriented training, the effort can lead to significant and measurable impact.

- To rely solely on outside experts to provide standardized educational materials.

Some development specialists take materials that "have worked well elsewhere," translate them and use them in the new environment. This speeds up the slow and costly process of creating new materials. Unfortunately, it also cuts short the learning process, ignores significant cultural and contextual realities in which the materials will be introduced, distances teachers from creating their own materials and limits sustainability and replication of the en-

tire effort. Fortunately, even though the NSP incurred sometimes-significant delays by working closely with its Egyptian counterparts, in particular the Center for Curriculum Implementation and Material Development (CCIMD), the patience and effort produced fresh and appropriate materials in Arabic to be used by NSP teachers.

The discussion that follows provides further details on each of these areas that form the basis for the Recommendations and Lessons Learned presented in Section IV.

A. Expanding Access to Education for Girls

Had the goal been to "increase the number of schools for girls in rural areas," the project designers would have dangerously skewed the activity and raised the alarming possibility for failure. Instead, it was recognized that a combined effort needed to be made to involve communities at the outset, prior to even selecting school sites, to determine whether girls were likely to attend the school. This occurred long before communities were mobilized (NSP's third component) to formulate a PTC. By raising the simple but critical question, "Should NSP build a school in this community?" the project insured against the risk that once the schools were built, they would be empty, or filled with boys.

1. Community selection

We were very suspicious of the process at first, but as we came to know and trust the NSP staff, we became enthusiastically involved and were delighted when our community was selected for a new school.

Member of CET.

The community selection process used by the NSP team was carefully designed and implemented to meet the three major goals of the program. The main activities in the process were the following:

- development of a community educational profile and establishment of community education teams (CETs);
- development of girls' education action plans (GEAPs);
- formation of task forces (TFs);
- establishment of parent teacher councils (PTCs);
- awareness raising about improved girls' education; and,
- construction of schools, and establishment of Multi-Grade schools and Second Chance classes.

The initial community selection criteria used were:

- 1) percentage and number of out-of-school girls
- 2) the commitment of the communities as indicated by the number and level of enthusiasm of attendees at the village meetings;
- 3) community willingness to support the project indicated by the number and availability of community volunteers, with special emphasis on women; willingness to find land,

availability of land for construction of schools; willingness to find rooms to be used for temporary and Multi-Grade schools; and willingness to raise cash contributions; and

- 4) community enthusiasm and interest in the issues around girls' education.

The community profiles included a wide range of issues to be confronted including preferences for boys' education and traditions against girls' education; lack of birth certificates for many girls; poverty; school fees; illiterate parents; early marriage; and the need for girls to work at home and in the fields. The early recognition of specific problems in each community led the NSP team to work with each towards creative solutions in obtaining girls' birth certificates, awareness campaigns through signs on village walls, numerous meetings to get input on land, building design, school fees, and other issues. Many communities had initial fears and even hostility, believing that the project was a foreign plot to change their basic values or impose an unapproved curriculum or program on them. NSP staff were effective in alleviating these concerns in most of the initially targeted communities to such a degree that they are now enthusiastically received in every location visited by the team. The Program has also been successful in bringing large numbers and percentages of women into all aspects of the process. In the PRA (Participatory Rapid Appraisal) women even constituted a majority in working on some aspects of the development process. This is a major accomplishment for which the NSP staff should be commended.

The fact that not all communities that began the process were selected for final participation suggests an objective selection process with little apparent political influences. Criteria were carefully thought out and fairly applied throughout the three Governorates. While similar designs have been used in other community mobilization activities around the world, the staff of NSP is to be commended for the careful and patient implementation of their plan. The validity of the process is evidenced by the high levels of enthusiasm found in the many newly formed PTCs and PAs. The persistence of the communities in obtaining donations of land from individuals or the government or raising local funds and then going through up to 17 different steps, organizations and signatures for permission to build was truly extraordinary. The fact that 35 new schools have already been turned over to the MOE with 24 more under construction; 150 primary temporary classrooms have been functioning along with 159 Multi-Grade schools; and 21 Second Chance classes; and that 16,924 girls have been enrolled, most for the first time in their lives, are strong indications of the success in the community selection process.

Some communities where leaders at first rejected the idea of supporting a new school for girls subsequently changed and sought cooperation with the NSP. There appears to be no lack of communities anxious to fulfill the selection criteria for the NSP. In fact, the more schools built, the more previously reluctant communities want to participate.

2. New school construction

The school construction component alone would have been a challenge to any USAID contractor specializing in development. Building complex and innovative schools in impoverished villages required intensive contractor management, site inspections, dealings with local counterparts and strong financial accountability, transparency in tendering and attentiveness to schedules.

Below are detailed findings of the team concerning the school and classroom construction component:

Process

- Building schools with community input is challenging and innovative;
- Community involvement included site selection, land purchase and many aspects of design and construction (selection of colors, name of school, site management, non-technical labor, provision of some community-produced services/supplies);
- NSP benefited from lessons learned in earlier USAID school construction project and in Swiss-financed school construction currently underway;
- Although the interaction with GAEB and MOE bureaucracies was time-consuming and frustrating, there may be considerable NSP impact on the GAEB regarding design features, construction process and cost effectiveness that may influence future GAEB construction of other schools;
- Development of detailed specification documents, transparent tendering systems to assist bidders and pre-qualified short-lists of construction firms helped ensure quality and timeliness, although the original completion targets could not be met;
- That schools are built in conformity with GAEB systems reduces the classic syndrome of the "parallel project" outputs. Each NSP school is handed over to the MOE after GAEB approval so that ownership and accountability are ensured.
- Delays encountered in construction were carefully detailed in NSP semi-annual reports, solutions identified and applied and the process improved from the outset. NSP built up over time effective systems for site inspections, approvals, waivers and payments that were continually refined to meet the context.

Design, quality and effectiveness

- Significant time was spent on developing several architectural models with similar exteriors and floor plans that would reflect the NSP philosophy of community ownership/use of each new school and would conform to a variety of sites and community needs;
- The design is respectful of Egyptian traditions yet new, colorful and bold;
- The challenge has largely been met to upgrade traditional MOE school design yet remain within local parameters in order to pass ownership to government;
- Some new features of NSP schools have been noted and will be used by others (ceramic wall tiles in classrooms to avoid wall damage, separate girls' bathrooms, movable desks, reinforced, longer-lasting plumbing fixtures, etc.);
- Despite some innovations, the school floor plans and anticipated use remain relatively traditional and similar to classic schools: immovable walls, few common areas for display of student work, angular floor plans. It is too early to assess the effectiveness of the school design in terms of promoting the other objectives of NSP: active learning, community involvement, "quality" education. (A special assessment could be conducted that considered the relationship between active learning and the NSP school designs in antic-

pation of additional schools being built.) The NSP made considerable efforts to introduce modern design modifications but ran into resistance at GAEB in some instances;

- The building quality from a non-technical standpoint appears high: NSP site supervision and approval systems are highly developed and appear to be effective in ensuring quality, reducing waste and theft and avoiding excessive delays.

Sustainability and maintenance

- By working so closely with GAEB and MOE, the NSP has increased the possibility that the new schools will be adequately maintained. However, given the low level of maintenance of non-NSP schools, without other efforts, the NSP schools will likely follow the same course of disrepair and decline;
- The NSP has undertaken supplementary activities to ensure a higher level of maintenance, such as the creation of a school-based maintenance endowment/fund, involvement of the PTCs directly in school repair and maintenance, and inclusion of student awareness-raising in training of teachers. Maintenance of school buildings in developing nations one of the most intractable problems facing school systems. The endowment funds can serve a critical role in improving maintenance, but only if the PTCs, Boards of Directors or other responsible groups develop multi-year plans to maintain and upgrade facilities. Also imperative is to create pride of ownership in their school by the children, teachers and community, perhaps by introducing elements from the Japanese model where children clean and maintain the building.
- Finding innovative ways to improve maintenance preoccupies NSP at this stage, as the new facilities are handed over to the MOE.

Overall Finding

- High-quality new schools have been completed that contained some design improvements to enhance educational learning and did provide access for girls from poor communities
- The contrast between the striking NSP school set amidst impoverished villages raises issues related to the best allocation of program resources given the burgeoning demand for girls' education. Are there lower-cost options that GAEB and MOE would consider (that NSP has not already raised) that would allow for more schools serving more communities?
- Although community involvement in school construction was unusual and positive, it is too early to know whether the schools *become* a community resource or remain government-managed schools standing in their midst, off limits to the community due to myriad crippling MOE rules and regulations.



Villagers attending a meeting to learn about upcoming Parent Teachers Council election

3. Community involvement

Land and financial contributions

In our community, one landowner not only contributed all the land for the new school, but he is also contributing the land and money to build the MGS right along side.

Member of CET

While the team did not examine the nature of land acquisition and local financial contributions in every community, the NSP staff is to be commended for holding countless meetings with appropriate government officials in numerous agencies and at all levels. By June 30, 2002, it had succeeded in obtaining full approval for 53 sites in 69 communities, with others brought on line since then. The complexity of this process is indicated by the large number of regulations on building size, land size, the use of condemned schools, shared land on existing school property, variable land values, controls on the use of agricultural land, access to water and electricity, prolonged governmental procedures, and the poor economic conditions in the selected communities.

Interviews in every community visited spoke of the large number of official signatures needed before construction could begin, and all commended the NSP staff for their assistance and persistence in the long and arduous process. NSP worked closely with GAEB in meeting all requirements on land acquisition and soil quality, with the result that, despite initial delays, the NSP is back on course to finish construction of all its schools by the end of the project.

Community Education Teams

Following the development of the community educational profile, the next step in the NSP process was the establishment of community education teams (CETs). These teams were set up and functioning in all 69 communities in which NSP is working. The members of the CETs are representative of their communities; men and women, educated and illiterate, wealthy and not so wealthy, and young and old. Over 950 community members have been involved in CETs to date, with many going on to become members of PTCs and PAs.

The basic roles of the CETs were to study the community educational status and needs; analyze the factors that prevent girls' education; plan for community girls' education activities; mobilize the community to support and participate in implementing the plan; facilitate the establishment of education opportunities such as constructing the primary school, securing places for MGSs, and SCE; and finally to provide sustainable support for the educational activities in the community. Task forces on awareness, single grade school, Multi-Grade school, and life skills classes were then formed, followed by the development of a girls' education action plan (GEAP). Team members were uniformly impressed with the skills evidenced by the NSP staff in this process and the training and materials provided to each CET on the topics of problem-identification and analysis, training of trainers, developing the GEAP, community development and resource mobilization, educational needs assessment through participatory rural appraisal (PRA), communication, negotiation and persuasion, and girls' educational awareness campaigns. CET members were also extremely positive about almost every aspect of the process, training, materials and staff. More detail on the CETs will be provided later in the section on increased community participation.

Parent Teacher Councils

With the establishment of a new school, the next step is the formation of a Parent Teacher Council, and here again the NSP staff developed and implemented a carefully designed process involving a five step training cycle with a series of resulting activities. While few of these new PTCs have long histories, the team found a very high level of interest and even excitement among their members. Parent Teacher Councils (PTCs) already exist in Egyptian law, rules and regulations, but the team found no instance in which a regular MOE school had a functioning PTC. There is now positive evidence that neighboring schools, often through social workers, are attempting to revive the PTCs in MOE schools. Using the NSP development models, they are bringing them back as functioning organizations in traditional schools. The PTCs are an important component in the development of democratic values in many of Egypt's poorest, rural communities and are inspirational to observe in action. More details about them will be provided in section C of this report on increased community participation.

4. Specialized schools and classrooms

In order for NSP to expand access for girls it had established schools that cater to the different needs of each community. NSP creates educational opportunities for girls between the ages of 6 to 18 in a variety of educational settings appropriate for different age groups.

Single Grade Schools:

NSP has constructed regular primary schools to cater for girls ages 6 – 12. School size is determined by the size of the community and the number of girls these schools will serve. Accordingly three school models were developed: model A 14 classroom schools, model B 7 classroom schools, and model C 21 classroom schools. All schools were designed to create an environment that induces student centered activities, conforming to NSP educational philosophy. Thirty five new schools were handed over to MOE, while 24 schools are still under construction.

The ratio of girls to boys in most of these schools is four to one, with a few exceptions in which the NSP schools serve only girls, or where there was a demand for boys enrollment, such as the case in Beni Suef. All of these schools are supervised by MOE inspectors and are governed by MOE rules and regulations. These schools are intended to be model primary schools, where the ministry's set curriculum is taught in a student-centered approach. There is a difference in the teaching methodology in these schools as most of the NSP teachers and principals have been trained in active learning methodologies.

Classroom furniture has also been designed to facilitate student-centered approach with colorful, movable desks and chairs, in contrast to the regular MOE schools where classes are furnished with regular wooden desks set in rows. The new schools are well lit (when electricity is connected!) and ventilated.

However, some of the schools do not have water or electricity. School libraries remain poorly supplied, with no classroom libraries. MOE support for science, art, music, physical education, and computers is minimal. They are not provided with the daily meal provided to other MOE schools. Although students in NSP have the MOE health insurance, there is no medical care regularly provided in the school. The NSP schools have not yet been well integrated into the MOE bureaucratic systems. There is a general sense in these schools that they are being ignored by the MOE as they are "CARE" schools.

Temporary Schools

Due to the long period required to get land approvals and finish school construction, NSP opened 155 temporary primary classes to teach 4,292 first and second grade students. These schools have been established at the start up of NSP activities in a community, to provide school access until the regular schools are built. They are affiliated to the nearest primary school, and are supervised by regular MOE supervisors. However school logistics and administration remain a challenge that burdens the teachers in these temporary schools.

Temporary schools are housed in rooms donated and renovated by the community, but furnished by NSP. Therefore, classroom size and condition are not always adequate. Teachers in temporary schools have all been trained by NSP and appear to be more motivated than regular MOE school teachers. The reason is possibly due to the fact that many teachers refused to work in temporary schools, and only those who were truly committed accepted the challenge. Due to the limited space in these schools many school activities are not being implemented and thus school day is shorter than regular schools.

Temporary schools are an excellent addition to the NSP program. They have given many girls the opportunity to be enrolled in primary schools before they go beyond the enrollment age for primary education. In addition, they have been useful in “keeping the momentum” of communities as they struggle to obtain land and get the new school built.

Multi -Grade Schools

One hundred fifty-nine Multi-Grade Schools that cater for out-of-school girls aged 9-14 have been established. These schools are housed in houses and government buildings in the community. Each of these schools initially has two facilitators, who were selected and trained by NSP. (A third is added as the girls move to 4th and 5th grade.) These schools are a modification of the regular OCR as they admit more than 7 students and do not divide the day between basic education and vocational education as do regular OCRs. The NSP insists on close to 100% of girls in each classroom (35 students) and more emphasis on basic education. Facilitators working at these schools demonstrate an exceptional enthusiasm and motivation, in spite of the fact that they have no job security or tenure. Although these schools are directly related to the MOE-OCR department, they have had little support from the MOE.. Inspectors from OCR often seem to feel that these schools belong to CARE and thus are out of their mandate. Many of these classes are overcrowded, lacking almost all basics such as ventilation, flooring, electricity, water and toilet facilities.

It is important to note that while the MGS facilities are very basic, they do mirror the communities in which they are located. Since many of the facilities are loaned or rented at low cost, the space is not of the quality found in regular MOE schools. The disparity between the two types of schools, however, is striking, and every effort should be made to ensure that the girls attending these schools are not treated as second-class citizens.

The flexibility of the schedule of these schools seems to have contributed to their popularity in most of the communities. NSP has also introduced an acceleration program by means of which girls can be promoted to third grade in one year.

Second Chance Education

Twenty-one Second Chance education classes have been opened to provide girls aged 14-18 with literacy and life skills training. In addition to a literacy program, the curriculum covers essential topics of health, environmental education and women’s rights. Each of these classes is conducted by a coordinator who was selected and trained by NSP. Girls in second chance schools demonstrated functional literacy in many cases and very high motivation. Many of these classes run in the evening yet attendance seems to be very high.

Although SCE classes were supposed to be held in NSP new schools some are still housed in homes and community-donated rooms.

Finding coordinators for these classes remains a challenge as in some cases there is a lack of educated girls to teach in them. Although, GALEA’s support to these classes is minimal, NSP has made use of approved material and material developed by other NGOs and CEDPA.

5. Enrollment and attendance

We love to come to school. We never miss, not even when we're sick.
(Multi-Grade Student)

Regular attendance is an essential underpinning for successful learning. Yet, it is commonplace around the world that children do not attend school regularly for a wide variety of reasons: their need to help at home, work in the field, take wage earning jobs, etc. A case study completed by NSP staff of the first NSP programs in Kom El Raml, a Bedouin community in Beni Suef, provides some additional interesting reasons why some children attend school irregularly or drop out. There had never been a school in the community, and most adults had not been to school; thus, schooling was not seen as necessary or desirable. The children were used to being in the fields, and felt uncomfortable being required to sit still in a classroom. Teaching initially was quite traditional, and unrelated to the children's lives or interests. Unaccustomed to sitting passively and memorizing meaningless material, many left school after the morning recess, and soon dropped out. With subsequent training in active learning methodology provided for the teachers, the children became more interested in school and now they attend regularly. Continued awareness raising efforts by NSP staff also contributed to create a more supportive climate for education in the community.

NSP M&E staff have produced a detailed document outlining the way in which attendance, retention¹ and drop outs are defined, and NSP staff in the three governorates now are maintaining records according to these standards. Unfortunately, data kept by the MOE is compiled differently and is not always considered reliable, so it is not possible to present comparisons between MOE and NSP schools. Annex E presents data on attendance and retention of students, indicating that in 9 NSP schools in Minya, 93.77 percent of students passed first grade in the 2000-2001 academic year and enrolled in second grade the following year, while 97.04 percent of those students passed second grade in the 2001-02 school year and continued on in third grade. At the end of third grade in the 2002-03 academic year, the first NSP cohort will take the official government examination; data as to how many of that group continue in fourth grade will be of considerable interest.

It is common, especially in the MGS schools, for the girls to leave school temporarily when a certain crop is to be harvested. The great advantage of the greater flexibility in Multi-Grade schools permitting accelerated promotion (see next section) is that these girls can re-enter and continue with their schoolwork without having to miss a whole academic year just because they have missed some weeks of school. Annex F shows data for the MGS, showing that of 4179 students enrolled in September, 2001, 3561 (85%) continued in school the following year. Attendance is encouraged by facilitators, who sometimes go to homes or right out into the fields to find out why girls are not attending and when they'll return.

Overall, the team observed impressive levels of student attendance, retention and promotion, and careful efforts to track attendance and enrollment by NSP staff, as well as particularly persistent and dedicated efforts by facilitators to encourage retention of students in school.

¹ The term "retention" is defined here as the number of students who remain in school from grade to grade. This is in complete contrast to the U.S. use of the word "retention" to mean failing, being held back and repeating a grade.

Active learning taking place with model teacher interacting at pupils' level



B. Improved teaching and learning

1. Teaching

When we went to school we were afraid. Now the children love going to school.
(Parent)

Evolution in the Application of Active Learning

Beautiful buildings, and even good attendance, are no guarantee that a child will be actively learning and happy in school. NSP's goal is to encourage a change in teaching practice from traditional, rote learning to one in which children are working together, participating actively in their own learning. This is a very difficult change to make; teachers teach as they were taught, and changing behavior is difficult, often taking years. The change sought in Egyptian schools requires far more than providing a few new activities or materials to teachers; rather it is a change in a deep-rooted culture. Experiences in other countries suggest that there is a continuum of change that can be noted in teachers. These may be outlined as follows:

STAGE ONE: *No Form and No Substance.*

They almost have the lesson memorized. The louder the chanting the greater the learning

Teachers in this stage teach as they were taught, generally through rote memorization and group chanting of responses. Taking dictation from teachers or copying endlessly off the black/white board characterizes much of the classroom time for both teachers and students. The group is often evaluated on the basis of how well it can memorize and how loudly it can

chant the "correct" answers. Any questions asked of children are at the level of simple facts, and there is no diversification of instruction for different levels or different needs of groups or individuals. Teachers at this stage, if asked to change, often express a combination of fear and resentment. Some feel they "know" the right way to teach, while others, interested in the change, are fearful of trying unfamiliar, time-consuming new methods. Sometimes they fear the reaction by parents to new ways of teaching, and community and parent awareness of the reasons for change are particularly important at this stage.

STAGE TWO: *Form and No Substance.*

Now I sit them in groups for their dictation and copying in each subject

At this stage many teachers become conversant with the new jargon, and may begin to try some of the new ideas. Teachers learn the basic behaviors of a new form of teaching, but have difficulty going beyond that in which they have been trained. Students are placed in groups, but students do not do much real group work, and the teacher still dominates the classroom. Some active learning enters the classroom, but all teachers do the same activities with little or no variation. Evaluation and assessment is irregular at best, and often occur only at the end of a term or year. There is still little or no diversification of instruction for different groups or individuals. Teachers at this stage, who are trying to change, need ample support in-class as well as support from their peers, principals and supervisors. Without such support, they may simply try the new methods, find them difficult, and abandon them.

STAGE THREE: *Improved Form and Substance.*

My student groups are working on different aspects of an integrated unit on animals

Teachers at this stage begin to create their own learning materials and forms of active learning, with many new approaches to concepts being taught. They place students in groups, and do genuinely cooperative learning. Subject matter is often integrated and the teacher regularly assesses the individuals and groups on their progress. Teachers have a better understanding of the scientific method, underlying mathematical principles, and a more sophisticated understanding of the teaching of reading and writing. Teachers at this stage can begin to serve as trainers or mentors for their peers, helping to reinforce change in a school or cluster of schools.

STAGE FOUR: *Form and Substance.*

We as teachers are not satisfied with learning in our classes. My students and I are studying and working towards the elimination of pollution in our community

Teachers at this stage are never satisfied with learning in their classes, and they work cooperatively with their peers to improve it. Students play an active role in teaching and learning, and the subject is integrated to confront "real life" problems. Learning occurs not only in the classroom but also out in the community. This is the ultimate goal of any pre- or in-service teacher training program and these teachers are characterized as "Reflective Practitioners," who not only know what they are doing and how to do it, but are continuously asking Why, and How they can improve children's learning. They have a deep knowledge of subject matter

and of how children learn. They are constantly looking for new ways to assist children who are having difficulty mastering any concept, whether in reading, writing, mathematics, social studies, science or life skills. To observe a true master teacher is to see an artist at work; the class is a seamless web in which it hardly appears that the teacher is teaching

NSP School Classrooms

I learn better in this school than my brother in that other (MOE) school. Now I help him with his work.

Girl in a new NSP school

The team observed a notable difference between MOE and NSP classrooms. All MOE teachers observed were at Stage 1, with children seated in rows facing forwards, listlessly copying or taking dictation. In contrast, most teachers in NSP classrooms were at Stage 2, although many teachers not yet trained by NSP are still at Stage 1, and a few exceptional teachers were noted at Stage 3.

Although NSP teachers expressed pride in their approaches and acceptance of the idea of active learning, most at this time use only the jargon connected with the new concepts. They enthusiastically showed the team environmental materials used as counters in math or in spelling out letters but they are just beginning to apply active learning methodologies. Below are observations that support this view:

- Children are seated in groups, although lessons are almost always whole class and teacher led
- Climate is pleasant, and many teachers treat student errors in a supportive manner
- No original student writing is evident and students are not reading for pleasure
- Teachers do not read to children
- Little attention is given to comprehension of text, with most attention given to correct spelling and handwriting
- Virtually all questions are at fact levels, requiring no inferences or original thinking for the “correct” answer
- Teachers are not yet engaging in ongoing formative evaluation and providing different activities for different groups
- Most teachers in the temporary and regular NSP schools have only token opportunities to plan and work with other teachers on a regular basis
- Students observed are given few opportunities to make decisions. For example, in classrooms observed, they had not participated in the formulation of classroom rules, or in selection of units or topics that interested them
- No student governments or student councils exist in schools visited.

The team’s findings are consistent with those of the NSP education staff. The NSP staff has developed and refined an excellent observation form ("Classroom Observation Form:" COF) that includes the "Best Practices" of teaching. The COF differs from the standard teacher evaluation form used by MOE supervisors and principals, the latter emphasizing basics such as the presence of the attendance record and a plan book.

NSP education staff visit classrooms regularly, visiting each school approximately once every two weeks. The results of their observations for the school year 2001/02 were summarized, with classrooms placed into four categories on items such as lesson preparation, classroom management/organization, instructional practices, and student evaluation. In the three governorates, the vast majority of the teachers ranked in the lowest two categories, with most falling into category two.

In two instances preschool classes were observed, one in an NSP school and one in a MOE school. In both cases there was little in the way of toys or materials appropriate for use by preschoolers and an apparent lack of understanding of developmental needs and methods for encouraging the development of language and cognition in young children. (It should be remembered, however, that the provision of materials for pre-schoolers was not a planned output for the NSP).

Constraints to NSP Promotion of Active Learning

Teacher Placement Policy and Shortage of Teachers. A major difficulty confronted by NSP has been the fact that it has trained hundreds of teachers who are then not placed in NSP schools. For example, before the start of this school year, NSP trained 427 teachers for an anticipated 350 teaching positions. Yet, when the school year began, they were confronted with 150 new teachers placed in NSP schools who had not been trained. NSP is, of course, not in control of teacher placement, and many teachers do not want to move to the poor, rural environments in which NSP programs are located. (This problem has also been encountered in the placement of teachers from the MTEP, many of whom who do not live in or wish to be placed in project communities.)

This problem is exacerbated by a national shortage of teachers, such that there are many schools at the beginning of the year that do not have their full roster of teachers. The MOE is forced by budget constraints to hire many temporary (untended) teachers, who are paid by the lesson. In Minya alone, of the 328 NSP teachers, 90 are temporary.

Rigidity of curriculum and time allocation. A strength of NSP in terms of future sustainability is that it is using the official Egyptian curriculum. However, the curriculum is centralized, and in Egypt, every teacher in each grade level is expected to teach the same lessons in each month of the year. Furthermore, there is heavy curricular overload, so that teachers have no flexibility in their use of time—they must fit in all of the required subjects in the official time allotted each day. These two factors are major constraints making it very difficult for teachers to teach integrated thematic units, using their classroom time more flexibly.

The system of remedial classes. There is an official MOE policy permitting teachers to offer remedial classes after school for a small fee. Some parents complained that they found it difficult to pay this fee, and of course, the response from the teachers is that this is one of the few ways they have to supplement their meager income. The larger issue involved, however, is that some teachers are apparently trying to do activity-based learning during the day, and then using the after-school remedial classes to help students cram for the examinations. Thus, the system is one that negates the value of active learning, running counter to the NSP goals and suggesting to all involved that what really counts is the memorization of information for the examinations.

Differences in Use of Active Learning among NSP School Types

Most of the comments above apply to all of the types of NSP programs. However, there were some notable differences between them, most attributable to the basic structure of the programs. For example, a major factor in empowerment of teachers is the opportunity to work together in groups, designing their own materials and lessons. Teachers in the Multi-Grade schools have this opportunity built in, since either two or three facilitators are assigned to each class. The team observed a high level of cooperation between them in planning original activities and materials, and a flexibility in their schedule allowing them to be more creative.

In contrast to MOE OCR classrooms, the NSP Multi-Grade programs are allowed to use accelerated promotion, so that girls may move quickly through the grades. Differences were observed in this practice between communities. In some, girls had to wait a full year before taking the end of year first grade examination, whereas in others they were allowed to cover two or three grades in their first year.

In Second Chance Education, for girls 15 to 19, the focus is on literacy and basic arithmetic. These girls were the most notable in their understanding and appreciation of the opportunity to become literate. Along with the multi-age girls, many expressed their gratitude, stating they had never expected to be able to go to school. The atmosphere in these classes was warm and supportive, with students supporting one another.

2. Learning environment

There is a wide variety of learning environments in the NSP program, as outlined in Section III.A.4 above. Certain characteristics, however, are common to all of them: Most classrooms of teachers trained in NSP have attractive displays of posters and charts made by teachers or facilitators. The students are seated in groups, rather than in desks facing forward. The teachers trained by NSP are very proud of using environmental materials in their classrooms, and a visitor almost always sees a few corner tables set aside as interest centers. These are used primarily as centers to display or store materials related to subject areas such as math or reading, and are not centers to which children go in order to do activities. Thus, the math center usually contains small cards on which children have glued seeds or corn in the shape of numbers or letters. Teachers in NSP schools who have not been trained most often have much barer classrooms, although the attractive small tables and chairs are still most often arranged in groups even in those more traditional classrooms.

In two kindergarten classes observed, one in a MOE school and one in an NSP school, there were no toys or manipulative materials and the walls were completely bare. Children in grades 1-5 are all provided with the basic MOE textbooks and workbooks. However, the absence of other books in the classrooms and schools libraries is striking. Only in a few rooms did the team observe any books at all. Virtually no student work is displayed in the classrooms, and no original student writing was seen displayed in any classroom.

In other respects the environments are very different, and there is an unfortunate contrast between the beautiful new schools and the small, poorly-lit, dirt-floored, crowded rooms often

used by the Multi-Grade or Second Chance classes. The following are some characteristics of the different environments:

Temporary Schools

These are the precursors to the NSP schools. They are sometimes housed in MOE schools, where they then have access to normal MOE facilities. However, the NSP temporary classrooms in MOE schools are in striking contrast to the environment around them, since their teachers have arranged the children in groups, have decorated the rooms as described above, and have created a substantially warmer, more supportive classroom climate than that observed in the regular MOE classrooms. In other instances these temporary classes are housed in tiny, crowded rooms wherever such facilities can be found. Even in those quarters, they were notable for the attractive environment teachers managed to create. Such facilities, of course, lack all of the normal resources that would be provided by the MOE.

New NSP Schools

These are beautiful schools, with bright, airy classrooms. Although these schools have been handed over to the MOE, it is observable that in most cases the MOE has yet to supply them with the ordinary items provided to MOE schools, and some still lack electricity and water. For example, an NSP school may have an art room with no art supplies, a library with no books, a science lab with no equipment. Most of the MOE schools now have a computer, but only one NSP school visited had a computer, which the principal had brought with him from the MOE school where he had formerly been a principal. The schools are not regularly visited by nurses.

Multi-Grade Schools

These programs, which were some of the most creative observed, are typically housed in small, crowded, very poorly equipped rooms, some without electricity, water or toilets. These programs are not permitted to be located in MOE schools because they are not allowed to run in the afternoon. Since the Multi-Grade schools have a Life Skills component in their curriculum, student-made crafts (knitted or crocheted items, etc.) were usually on display, and the girls were very proud of these items.

Several equity issues were noted in connection with the Multi-Grade programs. The MOE typically does not provide them with the same kinds of equipment provided to the OCR schools. Examples mentioned to the team included ingredients for cooking, sewing or knitting machines, etc. Another issue mentioned by several PA members was the need for health insurance for these girls. Some girls reported having been held out of school until they were nine and could attend these programs, which are entirely free. Their parents do not have the money to pay even the modest school fees charged by the NSP schools. In one location, team members interviewed several girls of age 6, 7 or 8. They were in the Multi-Grade School because their parents could not afford the school uniforms or fees for extra materials charged by the NSP school nearby. Some of the girls make notable progress through the accelerated system, but they are not permitted to re-enter the MOE primary schools. They must wait and enter preparatory school as soon as they complete fifth grade. However, a case study prepared by NSP staff mentions an experiment in one community in which two older girls were

allowed to enter the first grade and were able to complete two grades of work in their first year.

Success Story :Collaboration Between NSP Programs

In a notable instance of cooperation, one Multi-Grade school is allowed to take its students to the neighboring NSP school for several purposes. The fifth graders visit weekly to attend a science class. The students also attend a computer class every week, and they are permitted to join in the field trips taken by the NSP school. The principal of the NSP school handles administrative matters for them (salary, procurement of textbooks, etc.)

Second Chance Education Programs

The SCE programs, like the temporary classrooms, are occasionally located in a MOE building. In one program visited the girls were very anxious because the MOE school housing them was having space problems and they'd been told they might have to leave. In other instances, these classes, like the others above, were housed in whatever small room might be found for them. These classrooms typically were the most limited of all in terms of materials, with a small blackboard sometimes the only piece of equipment.

3. Curriculum and materials

Can schools or teachers experiment within the national curriculum?

Question posed by an evaluation team member

Absolutely not

Response of two educational officials

The Egyptian primary curriculum is not the focus of this particular evaluation, but the team could not help but note the many instances in which the "appeal to the national curriculum" was used to say why any particular action could not be taken. When asked about flexibility in the timing of particular topics or the integration of subject matter, educational officials were quick to say "absolutely not." The time schedule with its 11 subject areas in grades 1-3 and 13 in grades 4 and 5 were also given as reasons by educators for their inability to try new approaches to subject matter or design project-based, integrated units. In an apparent contradiction, the same educational leaders and teachers gave strong support to the active, integrated, cooperative learning goals espoused by the NSP. The team could not help but feel that there are major unresolved curriculum and pedagogical issues, which are likely constraints to a more rapid MOE institutionalization of NSP goals.

Among the constraints is the perception on the part of teachers that there is no flexibility in when and how topics are to be introduced into the curriculum. While MOE policy calls for an integrated curriculum, curriculum guides are generally written by subject area, with few interdisciplinary topics or suggestions on how to teach. While a guide to active learning has been developed, teachers often use it as a "separate" subject to be taught each week, rather than as a tool to actually integrate subject matter. The curriculum remains overloaded with 11 to 14 separate subject areas to be taught each week, effectively preventing teachers from changing their pedagogy.

The original project design called for "a participatory approach to materials development, which will engage teachers and children in the process of sensitizing the central curriculum to the needs and context of local rural communities, while building on the already existing MOE materials and CCIMD efforts." These materials are expected to help teachers to introduce abstract knowledge to students in a more simple and concrete form, through the use of student-centered learning methodologies, that support individual growth and higher levels of academic achievement." It also spoke of developing modules on the value of girls' education and gender sensitive teaching; teachers' guides on student-centered active learning methodologies, and classroom management; student-centered self-learning packages of materials for grades 1 through 5, including resource kits with games, posters, readers and objects for manipulation.

Utilizing a "bottom up" approach to the development of these materials, NSP is training teachers to create instructional materials for their classrooms. While this is a slower process than developing materials centrally, it is more likely to stimulate teacher behavior change than traditional top-down approaches. In varying degrees as explained throughout this report, the NSP has fulfilled the original design objectives regarding materials development, or significantly modified them with USAID and partner support, to enrich the outcome and overcome constraints.

The NSP staff has taken the stance that teachers should be trained to develop most of their own instructional materials, and thus it has provided extensive training for hundreds of teachers in the development of active learning materials and the use of available local environmental resources in materials development. Some of the results of this training were apparent to the team in our visits to classes in which the concepts of "sweet and sour" and "rough and smooth" were taught in NSP classrooms and throughout all of Egypt in the two weeks of our visits to the three Governorates in October. While the active teaching and learning evidenced in tasting rather than discussing a piece of sugar and a bitter lemon (with minor variations), we saw little indication that teachers were going beyond the minimum in using new knowledge of active learning.

As illustrated in the stage theory of teacher development outlined earlier, it may be too soon for most teachers to have the confidence (and experience) to apply active learning. Their observed tendency to "parrot" the same lesson indicates that even NSP-trained teachers have not yet mastered the large repertoire of active pedagogical techniques and materials. The fact that facilitators in the MGS and teachers in grades 3 to 6 were concerned about not receiving new instructional materials to teach the more "advanced" curriculum subject areas, indicates that they were still reactive rather than proactive and unable as yet to use active learning techniques to design new teaching plans.

With the development of school clusters and the growing confidence of teachers in developing and utilizing their own materials and instructional approaches, we anticipate that in coming years there will be greater advances in active learning, and in the ability of teachers to use higher-order thinking skills. (Ideas for helping teachers move from lower to higher stages on the active-learning framework are found in the Recommendations section of the report.)

A major output from the NSP, in close conjunction with CCIMD, has been the Supplementary Instruction Materials (SIMs) Kit, now found in many of the MGS, and some Temporary Classrooms and New Regular Schools. While the approximately 1,000, recently-printed kits had only recently arrived in most of the settings, teachers who had used them reacted positively. They appeared to like the cassette with educational songs that contained music and lyrics appealing to young children. A difficulty observed was the lack of and quality of recorders available in the schools visited. The wall map of Egypt was already prominently displayed in several classrooms and is the only evidence of geographic information in most classrooms visited. The teachers who had used the game-board found strong student interest, and the storybooks were already being read to students.

Although not a major focus of the evaluation, the new kits add innovative and relevant teacher resources into Egyptian classrooms. However, the goal for NSP, and the MOE, should be that such kits, and other teaching materials, should be teacher-written, teacher-designed and teacher-produced.

Although the original project design called for student-centered, self learning packages, none were found in the classrooms. These materials have proven themselves, particularly in Multi-Grade classrooms throughout the world, as an indispensable way to meet individual educational needs, while promoting creative, cooperative small group learning. They can successfully serve to break the current dominant pattern of teacher-centered, large group instruction which continues even when children are seated in learning groups. The NSP staff is knowledgeable about student-centered, self-learning packages and has plans to introduce them in the coming months.

Educational, teaching learning corners appear to have entered the consciousness of NSP teachers, but in few, if any, cases did these "centers" contain much more than a poster, a book or perhaps 2-3 small plants growing in a jar. All teachers who had been through the training indicated their commitment to developing instructional materials from their environment, but very few had made an effort to actually develop any of their own. An important exception to this lack was in the MGS, where the team found not only considerably more in the way of materials and products on display in "corners" or separate rooms, but where there was also evidence that in some settings the facilitators were actually developing their own, creative new materials.

Rectifying this gap between awareness of a new method and its application, the NSP will need to experiment with innovative approaches that could highlight the advantages for teachers who take risks in trying new methods. Teaching behavior is difficult to change or modify. Teachers learn best from each other, and NSP through its training and professional development is building a cadre of teachers who can not only change their own classrooms but serve as mentors to fellow teachers in their buildings or school clusters. It is hoped that as teachers in the "regular" schools feel freer to change, that they, like the facilitators/teachers in the MGS, will do much more collaboration on developing new instructional methods and materials.

Without question, the most serious lack of instructional materials in NSP and all other classrooms observed is that of reading materials. While some libraries contained a few books which students were "checking out" to read at home, in only one classroom did the team ob-

serve a "reading corner," with only four books, all purchased by the teacher herself. No child in history has learned to read without reading. While the team applauds the presence of MOE textbooks and workbooks in the hands of almost every child, something seldom found in other countries, there is a desperate lack of age-appropriate, interesting, colorful children's books. Manipulatives for mathematics instruction and understanding are now found in all classrooms observed, and the team believes this is strong evidence of the value of NSP training, as these were seldom observed in other schools and classrooms. The next step is for teachers, children, authors, and community members to write and illustrate books geared to children's interest, not just to topics in the formal curriculum.

The team's observation of instructional materials and their use in NSP classrooms indicated that progress has been made in making instructional materials an important part of the overall reform effort, but that much remains to be done. As teachers master take themselves out of the center of the teaching-learning process, they will be increasingly able to concentrate more on children individually. With traditional large-group instruction, such quiet, private space is nearly impossible, but with active, small-group cooperative learning approaches, it is possible even in classes with 40 or 60 students.

4. Teacher, facilitator and coordinator training

We have learned so much in the NSP training, and the staff follows up in our own classrooms. We want much more training as we are just getting started.

Classroom Teachers in NSP schools.

One of the three goals of the NSP is "improving teaching and learning." As noted earlier, providing increased access to school in itself does not lead to increased learning. The effectiveness of NSP efforts to address what many believe is a feat far more difficult than school construction is key to having an impact on girls' lives. All other efforts (school construction, community involvement, supervisor training, parent awareness) being equal, nothing compares to the influence of a teacher on students. What they learn, how they master the knowledge and skills targeted, depend in large part on that quiet, private space between a teacher and student.

Among the key factors in teacher ability that affect student achievement are: a) quantity and quality of initial and in-service training; b) verbal fluency; c) subject matter knowledge; d) availability of books and ability to effectively use them; e) teacher expectations of pupil performance; f) time spent on classroom preparation; and, g) frequent monitoring of student progress. NSP has featured several of these factors in its training programs.

In terms of numbers of teachers trained, which gives no indication of impact and no assessment by Kirkpatrick's levels (see Annexes), the NSP has provided the following programs for 488 teachers destined to enter the newly-completed schools. In addition to this core group, 332 facilitators have been trained to teach Multi-Grade classes. Refresher training was offered in Minya in Year 2 to 352 teachers. The sessions have included the following topics:

Teacher training topics delivered in pre-service and in-service programs: materials use, student-centered learning, cooperative learning, multiple intelligence, classroom corners, lesson planning, active learning, story in teaching, drama in teaching, using projects, integration in

teaching, classroom management. (Principals and supervisors were invited into many of the sessions.)

Principals and supervisor topics: learning theories, academic rigor, accountable talk, learning community, support to teaching, supervisory skills, teaching styles and quality.

In Year 3 the NSP work plan calls for an ambitious program of pre-service, in-service and refresher training that aims to increasingly integrate "Master Trainers" (MTEP) into the program. In view of the many requests the evaluation team received from teachers and school administrators for additional training, a special list of these topics is included in the Annexes for NSP consideration.

Involving and empowering teachers in the reform of their own schools, curriculum, pedagogy, and classrooms are as vital as learning new skills. There is strong evidence from the New School Movement in Latin America that even teachers with minimal levels of formal education and training are capable of dramatically changing their teaching behavior, the classroom environment, and improving the achievement of their students. Conversely, when teachers are ignored, or when reforms come from above or are not connected to the daily realities of the classroom and local environment, even the most expensive and well-designed interventions tend to fail. Although positive attempts are being made by NSP to develop a Trainer of Trainers (TOT) model, involving NSP and MTEP teachers, it is the team's perception that much more can and should be done to involve classroom teachers in all aspects of the training, curriculum writing of textbooks and curriculum, development of learning materials and activities, and as peer mentors in their schools and school clusters.

One of the strongest points in the current training model is the excellent feedback mechanisms used by the NSP staff to ascertain the needs of teachers, provide initial training, give refresher courses and follow-up in the classrooms. The NSP is also to be commended for working with the Faculties of Education through inviting them to all workshops and beginning discussions on the development of Laboratory/Professional Development Schools, but it currently appears that initial preparation in the universities remains highly theoretical with little direct connection to classroom reality.

Master Teacher Exchange Program

The MTEP aims to provide support to improve the quality of training for teachers in NSP schools. The program has trained 80 Egyptian teachers in the US and 1000 in-country, who were selected from the Governorates where NSP schools were to be built. The program offered English language training as needed for each participant prior to their attendance in the 6-week program at California State University. The Faculties of Education in each Governorate participated in the training design.

Before going to the United States, each participant agreed to work upon return to Egypt as a "Master Teacher Trainer" in a teacher or supervisor role for two years in a rural school (presumably a new NSP school). The MTEP participants were to model the principles of the NSP regarding quality teaching behavior and skills through their work in the schools and through training programs organized by the NSP.

The respective Faculties of Education in each Governorate collaborated on training design and delivery with Cal State, in particular in supporting the in-country training that followed the return of the participants from the United States.

The principal findings regarding the MTEP are:

- Management. The MTEP and NSP activities were implemented as separate activities from the outset, with IIE (under DT2) being charged with procuring and overseeing a technical contractor (Cal State) whose deliverables were intended to support the NSP (managed by Care International). The coordination and planning needed to ensure that these independently-managed activities furthered NSP goals (and those of SO22 as well). Since MTEP started before NSP coordination did not materialize until the second year of MTEP and NSP. Since the summer of 2002 the respective contractors and stakeholders (USAID, MOE, FOE, MTEP returnees) have made significant advances in improved co-ordination in order to leverage the huge investment made in support of NSP (and SO22) goals.
- Teacher Assignments. Problems persist in ensuring that Master Teachers are assigned to the NSP schools in which they were intended to serve. First, assignments are made by the MOE which has not always taken into account the program's objective to support NSP schools, instead responding to MOE's needs. Second, some of the teachers have rejected being assigned to remote rural schools (despite their previous agreement) due to health reasons or travel requirements (some could not reside in the villages). Third, many teachers were initially selected from communities that were not subsequently selected by the NSP.
- Transfer of Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes. In terms of behavior change/role modeling approaches, it is overly ambitious to select young, rural-based primary school teachers (mostly women) from a variety of subject areas (math, science, language, etc.) to undertake a very short training program in the United States and to expect a significant transfer of knowledge, skills and attitudes to their peers upon return. Participants spent many months learning English prior to their departure. The transfer of KSAs is therefore made more challenging due by the resistance one might expect from Egyptian teachers who were not selected for the program. The classic "Been To" attitude ("I've 'been to' the U.S. and know more than you") – rarely articulated but often conveyed – can easily block the transfer of KSAs regardless of the quality of the training program itself overseas. The team witnessed some of this resistance during training sessions where Master Teachers intervened.
- Quality of MTEP teachers. Although the team gathered anecdotal information regarding the quality of MTEP-trained teachers with those not trained by MTEP, the data is not useful for many reasons. Some MTEP teachers were trained in Egypt and never traveled to the United States. The length, type, objective and content of the U.S. training program for the MTEP teachers differed so substantially from the NSP training programs for teachers and facilitators that any comparison of the quality of teaching would be inappropriate.

5. Assessment and evaluation

The most important kind of assessment of student learning, and the one that most affects how much children will learn, is formative evaluation. That is the ongoing, daily evaluation of each child's work that a teacher does in order to plan suitable activities and lessons to meet the needs of different individuals or groups of children. Such evaluation may be very informal, simply based on seeing a child write or watching him solve a problem. Some teachers keep track of such daily information by keeping notebooks with pages for each child, or checklists of the key things they see each child learning. Portfolios of children's work are another excellent way to keep a record of what children are understanding and learning, and they are also particularly useful for use with parent-teacher conferences. Children also enjoy looking back over the work they've done, and seeing with surprise how much they've learned during the course of the year.

The team observed little evidence of formative evaluation in any NSP classes, and only in one class observed were the children in different groups actually doing different activities. This is not to say that NSP teachers do not watch their students and know how well they're doing. In fact, the team noted in several classes that the slower students seemed to be placed near the back of the room, and the teachers tended to call more frequently on those in the front, (quite possibly because observers were present and teachers wished to make a good impression).. However, the general importance of ongoing, formative evaluation does not appear to have taken hold as yet in NSP classrooms. The NSP education team also lists evaluation as one of the key areas in which teachers need more training.

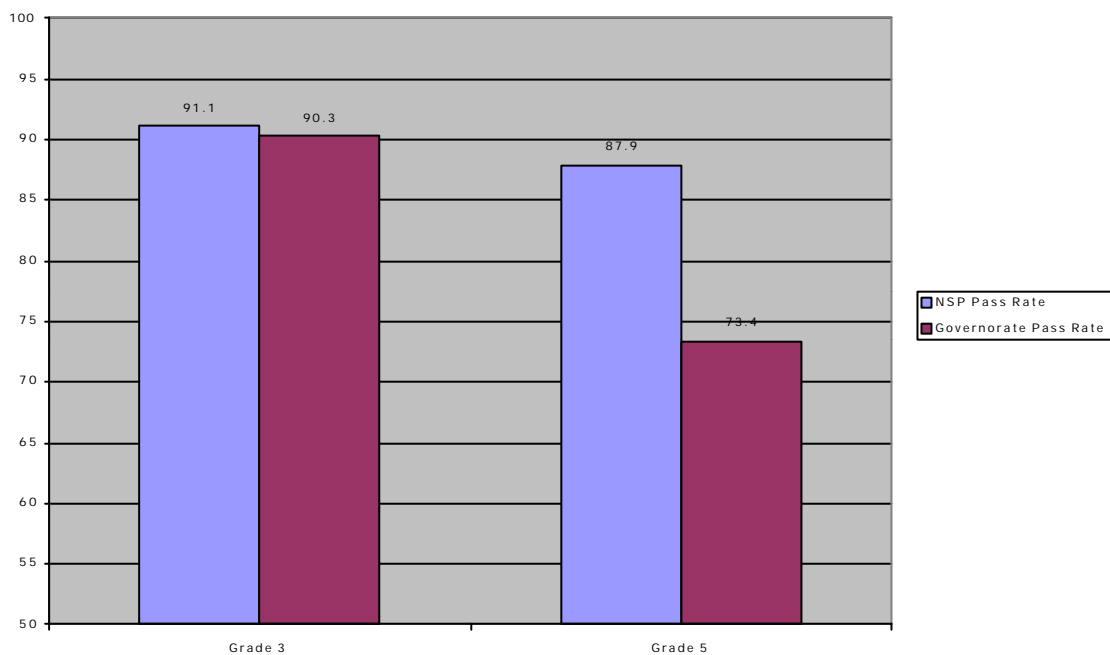
NSP has developed a series of assessments called the Level Finding Exercise (LFE) that are administered to students at the end of each school year. They are given in Arabic and Math in grades 1-3, and in Arabic, Math and Science in grades 4 and 5. These tests are closely based on the official MOE curriculum. The educational staff uses the results of this test to help determine training needs of teachers, and has found that teachers' assessments of their students' weaknesses match the results of the LFE quite well. To date the staff have not studied how well these tests correlate with the nationwide exams; it would be interesting to know whether they do accurately predict performance on the MOE exams given nationwide at the end of 3rd and 5th grade.

One very interesting finding from LFE administration at the end of the school year 2001/02 showed girls in the Multi-Grade schools scoring higher than first graders in single grade programs on the first grade LFE. Most of these differences, though not large, were statistically significant. Exploration of this interesting topic in interviews with teachers and students indicated some possible reasons for the differences. The Multi-Grade students, of course, are older, at least nine years old. Many of them told the team that they had previously attended literacy classes, while some had previously been in school but had dropped out. In response to a question as to whether facilitators thought the older a girl was the faster she would learn, the answer was, "Oh, no, the younger ones (within the 9-14 age range) learn much faster. The older ones have their minds on other things, such as marriage." This whole topic, of what the 6 and 9 year olds know when they enter and how fast they can learn, merits further exploration.

The LFE is an excellent tool to provide useful data on student learning, while the Classroom Observation Form created by the NSP provides additional data to assess teachers' progress towards active learning methodology. There do not currently appear to be any assessment instruments for higher-level comprehension skills or for student writing quality.

NSP has done one comparison of the performance of 3rd and 5th graders on the MOE promotion exams in Minya, as compared with students in all MOE schools in the same governorate (see Table below). It may be seen that the comparison is favorable for NSP students. However, these results must be interpreted with great caution since it cannot be determined whether the statistical differences are significant. Furthermore, there is not yet a cohort of students who began in NSP and have progressed through to 5th grade, thereby impeding an understanding of the nature of the previous school experience of the 5th graders in the NSP sample.

Figure 1
Comparison, NSP and all MOE Schools, Governorate of Minya, Government Examinations, Academic Year 2001/02



Source: NSP Education Staff

6. Administration and supervision

For success of the program as well as for sustainability, the active involvement and understanding of administrative and supervisory staff at all levels is crucial. However, in many countries experience has shown that even when the highest Ministry officials are supportive of a project, middle level administrators can effectively sabotage any attempts to make change in schools. They often have nothing to gain, and the changes proposed may take more work and be difficult to implement. NSP education staff, recognizing this, are targeting this group for training.

Research on effective schools has shown conclusively that the single key person for making change in an individual school is the principal. In Egypt the district supervisors also play a key role. Unlike supervisors in many countries, they do visit the schools and they are the ones who evaluate teachers; the principal signs off on the supervisor's written evaluation. NSP has provided training for the school principals and supervisors in two ways. First, they have been invited to attend all of the training provided for teachers. This is crucial, because those who are supervising teachers cannot possibly be supportive and evaluate positively if they do not understand what the teachers are trying to do.

The second type of training that has been provided to principals and supervisors is in the form of separate courses that deal with issues essential for supportive supervision and effective instructional leadership. Included in last summer's 4-day session were such topics as a model of instructional supervision, strategies for giving feedback, creating communities of learners, etc. On the fourth day of such training sessions, principals and supervisors work together to develop an annual school action plan.

Interviews with principals suggested that most of them, like the teachers, are at Stage Two in their understanding of the concepts of active learning. They use the vocabulary, and support the arrangement of desks in groups. However, many appear to lack a deeper understanding of the concepts, and most do not have a clear vision of what the classroom of a Stage 3 or 4 teacher would look like.

None of those interviewed mentioned the action plan, and no teacher or parent interviewed knew about the presence of a school action plan. It has been demonstrated that when parents, teachers and principals work together to develop a plan to improve their school, a more democratic school climate is fostered in which all the participants have ownership and care about the school's goals.

Some principals have contact with other principals occasionally, but none participated in regular working meetings with fellow principals. Since principals work in isolation (though surrounded by people), it is as important for them as it is for teachers to have collaborative relationships with their colleagues, in which they can exchange ideas, visit each other's schools, and even observe classrooms together.

A separate administrative issue was noted in the case of the temporary schools, Multi-Grade Schools and Second Chance programs. Some expressed the sentiment that these specialized schools were "orphans" in terms of administrative support. For example, Multi-Grade teachers often mentioned the difficulty obtaining their textbooks and salaries, even though each program is officially attached to a MOE primary school. In some instances such problems had been resolved with assistance from nearby schools or local district administrators or supervisors. A coherent policy on the part of the MOE to resolve these management needs appeared to be lacking.



Illiterate father proud that his daughter is able to read

C. Increased Community Participation in Girls' Education

1. New or revived community organizations

Community Education Teams

The new school has transformed our families, our daughters and our lives. If we could only have the same for our boys. Local Imam and Member of CET.

The community mobilization and development component of the NSP is extraordinarily effective. The team found near unanimous praise for the process and the NSP staff among informants in the many schools and communities visited. The process, as indicated earlier, involves the development of girls' education action plans (GEAPs) and the formation of task forces. It was at this point that many of the communities with the strong assistance of the NSP staff, selected the facilitators who would go on to become the "teachers" in the MGS settings, now found in many of the communities. These talented and committed young women from the community served as critically important members of the development teams as they assumed roles on the task forces.

The awareness task force conducted home visits to meet mothers and families to encourage them to educate their girls; conducted public meetings for the whole community on the importance and return of girls' education; worked with community leaders to emphasize the importance of girls' education; assisted families in completing required documents for enrolling their girls in the various educational programs; and conducted a variety of awareness activities that would ensure the enrollment of girls and help prevent dropouts. The stories from CET members and facilitators alike indicate that this task force was crucial in the eventual

development of successful regular primary schools, Multi-Grade schools, temporary classrooms and Second-Chance classes.

The single grade school task force undertook the arduous process of preparing the land for construction, including the bureaucratic difficulties in getting the many approvals necessary. For perhaps the first time in Egyptian educational history, community members participated in the selection of school designs and developed implementation plans. The pride in which CETs told of their involvement in selecting colors for the school, tiles, and other construction details was constantly referred to by focus group members. The task force also worked with construction engineers to follow the construction process and ensure timely implementation with high quality. The CET task force has also been tasked with good maintenance, but with schools only a few weeks or months old, it is too early to say how well this component is working. In an important process, the NSP has set up an endowment fund to assist in the maintenance of schools. Again it is too early to see how well these small endowment funds will function in maintaining schools, but given the pride of "ownership" in them, it is likely to be a promising strategy for keeping the NSP schools in generally better condition than in the other MOE institutions.

The Multi-Grade school task force identified appropriate places for establishing MGSs in the community. While the MOE has had one classroom schools (OCRs) for many years, the new MGS appear to have extremely strong community support. The evaluation team believe that this is due in great part to the Facilitators being involved in many parts of the community development process, including the finding and recruitment of out-of-school 9-14 year-old girls for eventual enrollment. The CETs, MGS task forces and NSP staff are to be commended for the foresight in selecting outstanding young women from the community to become facilitators.

The final task force on life skills (Second Chance classes) sought to identify appropriate places to establish these classes in the community for young women age 14-18. An additional duty of this task force was to participate in selecting a class coordinator, who, like the facilitators in the MGS, was to encourage young women to join these literacy and life-skills classes. In several observations of SC classes, the team found an exceptionally high level of commitment to literacy and life skills on the part of the coordinators, solid GALAE literacy materials, and the professed and evident need for additional literacy training for these committed community women.

While the Second Chance facilitators have received basic literacy training, it is imperative that they be given regular professional development, not only in literacy, but the range of life-skills that they are responsible for teaching. The MGS teacher/facilitators have developed excellent community development skills and work together well in developing lessons, designing learning corners and instructional materials. Second Chance facilitators appear to be more isolated, and thus opportunities to meet with and work together on literacy and life skills materials are critical for their development.

The NSP staff did a highly commendable job in all aspects of preparing the CETs to carry out their many complicated tasks, and the fact that they have led to the General Assemblies and formation of PTCs is a strong indication of that success.

Parent Teacher Councils

This is the greatest involvement we have ever seen in any election in our community. Many parents and community members want to be elected to the PTC.

Parent at a General Assembly.

As stated earlier, the Parent Teacher Councils are legislated by Egyptian law and regulations, but the team was unable to find examples of functioning PTCs in any of the other MOE schools visited, nor did any educational official, principal or teacher indicate to the team that they functioned in other settings. The "revival" of the PTCs is another of the successes of the NSP, to the extent that neighboring schools and communities are attempting to revive them, with the support of social workers, principals, supervisors and others who have participated in the many NSP community development workshops. The PTC Training Cycle includes the first Social Negotiation stage in which partnerships were formed with the MOE, design and planning also conducted with the MOE Staff, and a "Launching" seminar. The evaluation team commends the NSP staff for its continuous and clearly successful involving of the MOE at all stages of the process. This has led, in our experience, to almost unprecedented levels of commitment by the existing educational bureaucracy, and bodes well for replicability and sustainability.

The most "inspirational" component in the formation of PTCs is, without question, the General Assemblies held at the new school buildings, in which parents elect their own representatives. The team was privileged to observe two of these examples of local democracy in action, and was profoundly moved by the large gatherings of several hundred parents coming together, for the first time, to elect representatives to a body with responsibilities for "their" school. Many CET and PTC members spoke of the pride they felt in participating in these meetings. Once again, the team commends the NSP staff for the high level of organization and the process used in these assemblies. Numerous individuals, particularly women, indicated the importance of their participation, in the process. The NSP continues to seek mechanisms for greater inclusion of women not only in the process, but also in getting elected to positions on the PTCs, which still appear to be quite male dominated.

Several PTCs were begun in the 2001-2002 school year and have been through the much of NSP process as outlined in the (draft) Core Training Manual. An additional 29 new PTCs were elected in October, 2002, and NSP is to be commended on not only the excellent training manual, but on its constantly seeking to refine the process, improve procedures and training, and offer refresher courses. PTC members interviewed were unanimous in their praise of the NSP staff, the electoral process and the training provided. They were also unanimous in their desire for additional training, which has already been planned.

Recognizing that groups, anywhere in the world, do not "come-together" automatically, the NSP has included team building exercises as an important component of the training for PTCs. Also recognizing that many organizations "spin their wheels" for a long period of time and have difficulty working together, PTCs are equipped to train groups about organizational Vision, Mission and Roles and Responsibilities. Since the PTC is a legal entity, governmental texts are also studied. Each PTC is also trained in developing an annual activity plan and budget, and then in how to manage resources and finances. On one level, these various tasks appear to be rather mundane and obvious, but they have proven absolutely critical in the rural

Egyptian settings, and PTC members regularly spoke of the need for additional training. Parents throughout much of the world have often had a fear of schools, so training in parent-teacher communication has been a critical component of the training, with parents telling the team that they stopped in at the school every day to see how things were going and check up on their children in class. With the PTCs now becoming "quasi-school boards," they are receiving training on student academic follow-up, monitoring quality and equity indicators, support for girls' education, on developing an advocacy agenda for school improvements and on working with district and Governorate PTC and MOE officials.

While it is too soon to declare the model a complete success, all indicators point to a renewed institution, high levels of community involvement and commitment, excellent training and manuals, and the genuine empowerment of parents and teachers to affect their own lives and schools.

MGS Parent Associations

It is important for the MGS to have PA community support organization, like the PTCs in regular schools. We are not second class citizens.

Mother on local PA.

Recognizing that the new Multi-Grade schools needed some type of institution similar to that of the PTC, the NSP has carefully developed the Parent Association (PA), modeled, in part, on the PTCs. The staff is also working closely with the MOE/OCR Directorate to pilot the model in other similar communities related by the OCR. The PAs are designed to support the MGSs, deal with issues involved in the program, build and maintain relationships with the community, and assure the continuity of quality education for girls in the community. During a pilot period (not specified), the MGS-PA will function as an informal local organization, and only one parent association will function in a community, regardless of the number of MGSs operating in that community, until the OCR directorate issues a declaration or ministerial resolution for establishing MGS-PA. It is hoped that if and when the PA idea succeeds that it can be expanded to other community schools outside the NSP network.

The draft manual for PAs parallels many of the PTC procedures which have been successfully used to resuscitate PTCs. Information on the General Assembly, Executive committee, a Board, roles of facilitators, community members, and parents, roles and responsibilities, administrative procedures, financial management and training are included in the PA manual. As of June of 2002, 41 PAs had been formed in all three governorates, with a slight majority of 51 percent female members, although this includes the female facilitators. Parents at 52 percent also form a small majority of the members, as do members who are literate (56%). Given the traditional roles of rural women in most of the NSP communities and the fact that on most boards literate and wealthier members tend to dominate, NSP is to be congratulated on a process which is leading to broadly representative PAs. Since most of the PAs have only recently been formed, it is still too early to say they are an unqualified success despite high levels of parent, community and facilitator support for them.

2. Effect of education on gender perceptions

*My father used to be opposed to letting me go to school,
but now he has me get the newspaper and read it to him every day.*
Girl in multi-age classroom

We are sorry now for what we did,, not allowing girls to go to school.
Older man, member of CET

Reasons for Low Girl Attendance

Parents and students interviewed gave reasons that echo those heard around the world. The following are typical responses.

- The girls were needed to work in the fields or to help at home..
- Schooling costs money, and in large families the priority was to send boys to school.
- The schools were too far away and it was not considered safe for girls to walk so far.
- According to village customs and traditions, it was inappropriate for girls to walk to school with boys and be in class with them.
- The girls themselves didn't ask to go to school before. Now they want to.
- Early marriage for girls is very common.

Changing Perceptions

Not only have the girls' attitudes changed, but the team heard many supportive comments from community members regarding girls' education and the changes they noted in girls' attitudes and self esteem. Some commented that in the MOE schools boys took the lead, and girls were afraid to speak up. In the NSP schools, in contrast, the girls are now perceived as more self confident and assertive. In one school visited the fourth grade girls are "in charge"--they organize the morning line up of children, and are allowed to make the announcements on the public address system and lead the pledge of allegiance to the flag.. On several occasions the team heard variations on the theme that educated girls are more marriageable and will make better mothers. They will be able to read documents and follow directions on prescriptions, as well as assisting their children with their homework.

Students interviewed uniformly expressed pleasure at being in school, but the older girls were the most appreciative, often expressing the idea that they had never dreamed they'd be able to attend school. They know they almost missed their chance. Multi-age students often told the team that they plan to go on to preparatory school.. They dream now of going to college and some want to follow in the footsteps of their own teachers so they can teach other girls how to read and write.

It's important for us because we can be independent and we won't have to rely on our brothers or fathers or future husbands. And we can go out, and we won't get lost because we can read street signs and directions.

Multi-Grade student

Now I can help my daughter with her schoolwork.

Student in 2nd Chance program who is a wife and mother

My husband wanted me to learn to read and write since he works in Saudi Arabia. Now I can actually read the letters he sends and take care of other business and documents when he's gone.

Second Chance student

When you educate a girl you make her more appealing.

Twist on an old Egyptian saying:

“When you dress up a girl she is more appealing”,
said by an older man and PA member)

Although attitudes in NSP communities are now much more favorable towards the education of girls, some customs are slow to change. For example, the MOE regulations prohibit girls over 9 years of age from entering primary schools, even though many of the Multi-Grade students have shown they are capable of rapid acceleration through the grades. Substantial inequities were noted between the substandard facilities and resources provided for the older girls and those in the NSP and MOE single grade schools, and several interviewees mentioned that it would be desirable for Multi-Grade programs to be housed in the NSP schools in the afternoons. MOE regulations now require that Multi-Grade classes be held in the mornings. Although Multi-Grade students are permitted to enter preparatory school if 17 years old or younger, it is more difficult for many second chance students to complete preparatory school or even to aspire to attending secondary school or university. If a Second Chance student completes her literacy classes and passes a Certification Exam, she may enter preparatory school if she is still under 18. However, if persevering girls of 18 or older wish to complete the preparatory program, they must study at home and take the final exams at the end of each academic year.



Village woman learning about voting for the first time

D. Program Implementation

Although program implementation is not one of NSP's three goals, without effective management of the program's activities no results are likely to last. The way a USAID contractor implements a complex donor-funded activity in every way affects the outcomes. Will the "prime contractor" (to use USAID parlance) rely on local expertise, develop a team-based approach to problem-solving, integrate activities into local administrative systems, act with sensitivity to local cultural dynamics and gather information along the way to learn what works and can promote sustainability? This section summarizes the team's impressions of this important subject with a view toward offering ideas to fine-tune the implementation. Overall, the program is well-managed and staffed by competent and devoted employees.

1. Management approach and results

The Contractor team is organized by staff based in the field close to the stakeholder population. Although a "management audit" is not the purpose of this evaluation, the team was impressed with the level of understanding of respective roles and responsibilities on the part of staff. Teams are clustered around the three NSP objectives (briefly put, "access, learning, community").

While this organizational structure reflects a logic in that it mirrors NSP's three components (and USAID's Strategic Objectives for SO22 as well), it may not serve to promote as much synergy across teams as desired. Like so many findings noted by the team, this is recognized by the NSP staff itself and efforts are being made to increase internal communication (via retreats, focus groups, etc.). The need for cross-fertilization of ideas, sharing staff experiences trying out new approaches and monitoring and evaluation along the way is great. For example, ETOs working at NSP school "X" interact with CODOs dealing with PTCs while the school principal is dealing with the NSP site engineer regarding a repair issue still under contractor warrantee. Here are three levels of community-NSP interaction occurring simultaneously. Solutions to problems proposed by NSP staff should emerge from team work across the components. In this way, not only can the NSP staff create new ideas with the community, but they can model the "team-based management" approach to problem-solving for the community.

The NSP management has made adjustments along the way in its organizational structure as it fine-tunes the best way to orchestrate this complex project. This ongoing evaluation of internal effectiveness is a sign of health. The NSP staff is competent, highly-motivated and thoroughly versed in the particular methods and models being used in the three components. Although there is always room for improvement, especially in internal communications, the NSP has the technical competence to allow it to perform, if supported by an organizational culture that motivates and recognizes performance. Attracting the technical competence is only part of the challenge; stimulating performance relates to the organization's systems and work culture, not to the technical knowledge of its personnel. The contractor is aware of these challenges and has developed some internal solutions to try out.

The NSP project is known more by the name of the prime contractor than by its activity name. Governors, principals and teachers refer to the schools in this way, perhaps even after

their turn-over to the MOE. Whatever reasons explain this phenomenon (that the prime contractor has built schools in Egypt before and has a long presence in the country, or the difficulty of pronouncing "NSP" rather than "CARE" in Arabic, etc.), it can promote unnecessary divisions *within* the Contractor Team that work against the synergies needed for such a complex activity.

2. Progress and benchmarks

Over the course of approximately 30 months, the NSP has completed and handed over 33 new schools and 357 classrooms, is currently managing construction of 28 new buildings and 287 classrooms, is preparing to tender contracts for the final 8 schools and 98 classrooms, to total 69 new primary schools and 742 classrooms in the three Governorates.

This infrastructure achievement represents half of the NSP budgetary outlays and an enormous amount of staff time. Given the complexity of the process, the time allotted in the original agreement (42 months) is barely sufficient to construct 69 new primary schools (including design, site selection, materials and classroom furniture procurement) and other schools and classrooms.

The training outputs designed to support the second component (improved teaching and learning) and the third (community mobilization) are well underway and benefiting from internal review and an increasingly effective M&E mechanism. In contrast to a number of development project implementing organizations, the NSP contractor has not merely managed inputs following a project design in order to satisfy the donor. Although NSP semi-annual reports, as indicated elsewhere in this report, do present USAID with the number of "completed activities" (number of teachers trained, sessions held, etc.), there is no inference that impact has resulted solely because the input has been delivered. In fact, significant modifications and new ideas have characterized the evolution of NSP training, both for teachers and for communities, which demonstrates that program managers are looking beyond the "inputs delivered" level to induce change.

The team finds no inconsistency between the finding that NSP progress toward benchmarks is on course with the recommendation that the NSP be extended for two years, and expanded for perhaps more. Confronted with significant unknowns, in particular in constructing buildings in rural areas and selecting and mobilizing communities, the contractor has learned along the way and shared the experience with refreshing transparency in most of the semi-annual reports consulted. The NSP success in reaching most of the anticipated outputs should not be a reason to deprive it of additional time to consolidate those gains and spread more widely the NSP's impact on girls' education.

3. Relations with government partner institutions

The NSP interacts most closely with two Egyptian government institutions: the mammoth Ministry of Education (MOE) and the General Authority for Educational Buildings (GAEB), both in Cairo and in the field. It also interacts with local political leaders, such as the Governors of the three Governorates and community-level leaders. For the NSP to achieve its (and

USAID's) program goals, managers must find ways to work with and through local institutions, despite the challenges and potential for delays.

The team noted a high level of awareness of the benefits and goals of the NSP on the part of leaders at Egyptian government partner institutions interviewed. For example, Dr. Hassan A. Bilawi, first Undersecretary in the Ministry of Education, surprised the team by his intimate knowledge of the NSP, his solid support for its innovations and determination to find ways to replicate the model within his Ministry. This contrasts with the team's experience evaluating activities in other countries where senior officials often pay lip service to a donor's activity or respond in generalities to cover their ignorance of the project being evaluated. Nowhere in Egypt at any level of enquiry did the team observe anything but strong support for, and detailed knowledge about, the NSP.

A few of the subjects that provoke continued concern between NSP and its counterpart institutions are:

- School design and construction standards

The NSP and GAEB have had to negotiate with some difficulty innovations in school and classroom design, construction standards and the unconventional role communities play with NSP schools. Cost (with NSP schools being less expensive) and construction management issues (with NSP schools being completed in fewer months) are ticklish and always need to be dealt with carefully.

Two distinctly different organizational cultures (NSP and GAEB) will clash and require sensitive management as the program continues. Simply put, the NSP's interests are to ensure creativity and reasonableness in school construction standards, lower costs to allow for a greater number of classrooms to be built, and respect for building schedules to meet USAID's program and contract benchmarks. The GAEB's interests are to ensure basic conformity and standards for all Egyptian schools, promote innovation but not in the place of quality or meeting other interests, and to minimize liability (schools becoming safety hazards for children). The latter interest cannot be overemphasized, since it pressures GAEB functionaries to be risk averse and opt for safe solutions. It did not go unnoticed that during the period this evaluation was undertaken, a primary school in a small Italian village crumbled during an earthquake, killing over twenty children. The school, built to low or no standards in the 1950s, was the only structure to collapse, surrounded by buildings hundreds of years old. Since Egypt has endured major earthquakes recently, it is reasonable that government planners insist on standards for schools. The GAEB has built thousands of schools in Egypt, and builds them today for the World Bank. To what extent will it consider NSP's interests as superior to its own?

To the credit of NSP and GAEB, staff from both have worked through the countless roadblocks that at any point could have blocked progress with this project. This winding road has surely not been easy to maneuver, for either partner, and will call for continuing efforts to bridge what fundamentally are organizational differences. This finding leads to a recommendation that the NSP develop a new strategy with its GAEB counterparts to improve communication, identify points of converging interests and review mutual performance issues using facilitated training sessions.

The other critical intersection is between NSP and MOE staff. As mentioned throughout this report, the NSP design, and its informed implementation, promotes the integration of all program outputs into existing Egyptian institutional systems. To date the NSP has been noteworthy for the extent to which it has, in fact, collaborated closely with the MOE, especially regarding training. Both must now move rapidly to the next level where planning, design and delivery of training become increasingly led by MOE staff. By "systematizing" NSP activities, the program's gains can be effectively sustained, provided that the MOE, as a organization with interests to defend, considers NSP as added value to its organization. In view of the difficulty in obtaining teacher assignments by MOE of trained teachers to NSP schools, it appears that collaboration needs to be reinforced with the MOE and, as with GAEB, approaches be found to identify mutual interests so that the MOE can in the future make NSP's gains its own.

4. Monitoring and evaluation

Few development projects begin with a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system ready to roll out as staff are hired and program management begun. Often the M&E approach is carefully defined in pre-award proposals only to be re-cast a few months into project implementation with a view toward installing a system from the outset. With so many demands at start-up, not the least of which is staff recruiting, procurement and planning, it is no wonder that M&E takes a back seat despite the best intentions of managers.

Too often M&E becomes unnecessarily complicated, with far too many indicators to track and pieces to put together, all of which burdens staff with yet more information demands. It becomes neat on paper yet unrealistic to implement. A downward spiral develops with staff resenting the M&E person's intrusion into their "real work" to fulfill what increasingly is perceived as irrelevant paperwork. The role of M&E – to collect and support the analysis of critical information upon which program managers can reflect to increase impact, develop solutions to ongoing constraints and track movement toward achieving objectives – becomes lost in a flurry of activity.

Although M&E is universally claimed to be an essential component of every "successful" project and one that "must be integrated into program management from the beginning," rarely does this happen. The NSP is no exception, although not by choice or design. The M&E Plan was written in July of 2000, only months after program start-up, set out the overall conditions under which M&E should be integrated into the program, wrote the job responsibilities for the coordinator and MIS specialist and laid out the inputs and outputs that were to be systematized. It discussed data that could be collected to measure impact (at various levels – community, classroom, etc.) that would also respond to USAID's IRs. It promoted establishing a database of key indicators against which the program could be measured. All of this is standard fare for an M&E plan but characteristically remote from day-to-day activity needs.

Monitoring and evaluation did not subsequently take shape as hoped, from what the team could determine, despite the considerable efforts made. Personnel changes appeared to constrain the smooth evolution of M&E. Evaluations of the many training programs appear to have lacked an "evaluation framework," such as the Kirkpatrick Four Evaluation Levels, that

could provide consistency and assist in analyzing impact attributed to training. The NSP "sister" project, IELP-II, also had a slow start for M&E for the first half of its project life, but since last year, M&E has come into the forefront as the project's achievements become integrated into its Egyptian counterpart institutions. The IELP-II has effectively used Kirkpatrick levels to keep sight of its project objectives in evaluating the impact of the thousands of training programs. The NSP has, in contrast, continued to report training inputs in its reporting to USAID (although in fairness, USAID may be requesting this data) even though numbers of people trained, or training sessions delivered, clearly do not lend light on whether impact occurred. Is NSP's evaluation of training impact going beyond Kirkpatrick's Level 2? Although information from the excellent revised classroom observation form (COF) may be finding its way back to training designers, is it being analyzed to determine the project's impact at Level 3 or 4? (An explanation of Kirkpatrick's model, the standard throughout North America for 40 years, and an overview of Best Practices for Results-Oriented Training are included in the Annexes for NSP's consideration.)

M&E now appears to have taken root midway through the project, again not atypical of many development projects. Its principal challenge at this point is to design simple systems, or refine existing ones, that can collect data (input) and provide analysis and feedback (output) to clients without adding noticeable burden to NSP staff. A key issue is communicating how data is to be collected and used. If an NSP field agent does not understand the reasons a particular data set is significant, why will that employee take time from other pressing duties to respond? How does the M&E coordinator at NSP address USAID's need for data with the reality of collecting accurate information and analysis within the project? How can the M&E system be integrated and coordinated with the MOE systems to ensure that monitoring and evaluation continues after NSP funding ends?

Without having undertaken an in-depth analysis of the history and status of M&E at the NSP, the team is limited to articulating overall findings. The importance of emphasizing M&E in the second half of the project cannot be overstated. For example, to be able to point to measurable impact the NSP is generating and analyze the factors would assist the MOE in replicating successful features of the NSP elsewhere. Promoting a deeper understanding of the NSP achievements will enable others to consider the model for application in other venues.

5. Sustainability

Sustainability of the results realized through the New Schools Program is a theme throughout this mid-term evaluation. It is vital to each of the three components: sustaining the new schools and classrooms through active maintenance; applying the knowledge, skills and changed behaviors of trained teachers and others in classrooms, schools and FOEs; and supporting the impressive newly-formed community-based organizations as they go through the predictable organizational cycles of euphoria and eruption. How to ensure sustainability beyond the NSP completion date is a challenge that surrounds all activities, components and initiatives.

The CARE technical proposal for the NSP bases its approach to sustainability on this straightforward statement:

...The NSP single-grade classroom will fully support and enhance student learning of the MOE curriculum. Implicit in the CARE Team approach is the belief that NSP single-grade classroom instruction based on a scaled-up model of the methodologies used in Small Schools can be successfully integrated into MOE schools. NSP classrooms will be characterized by their interactive methodologies and teaching practices, while being a part of the MOE network and fully supporting its curriculum.... The MOE will have a model in which certain barriers to girls' enrollment and retention are lessened, while quality has increased; and the community will have greater access to education in a way that is linked into a formal MOE system, which provides resources and which ensures easier integration of community school students, especially girls, into mainstream institutions. (Technical Application, CARE, September 20, 1999, p.85)

Based on the findings in this evaluation, it appears that the NSP has arrived at the half-way point toward sustainability. It has built a superb model introducing interactive methodologies into the classrooms of NSP schools, although changed behaviors among teachers have not yet crystallized enough to become second nature. It has achieved this not by working parallel to government but by working collaboratively with it at all levels. But *working alongside* and *transferring responsibilities* are distinct phases leading toward sustaining the benefits of a development intervention. The NSP now has to ensure that these emerging practices become transferred and integrated into MOE schools and even its curriculum (and GAEB's practices as well) with a level of commitment by Egyptian counterparts so significant that they devote their resources towards replicating and spreading NSP objectives, as the program quietly winds down.



Overcrowded classrooms illustrating the inequities and inadequacies among one-room schools, temporary classrooms and "NSP" schools

III. RECOMMENDATIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED

A. Recommendations

The recommendations below flow from the findings identified in each section treated in Chapter III. However, rather than being arranged by the three goals of the NSP, they are grouped by topic to assist the reader in applying the recommendations across program areas. In some cases, policy recommendations fall under their pertinent topics, whereas in others they appear under "Policy Reform" below. The topics below are:

Community	School Buildings
Teaching and Learning	Policy Reform
Program Management & Sustainability	Research, Evaluation, Monitoring & Assessment

In reviewing these recommendations, the reader is reminded that some of the proposed actions the NSP may already be implementing, or planning to introduce. In fact, some of the recommendations originated with NSP staff, administrators and teachers themselves. They are included here regardless of their source to help program planners consider all improvements to the program. The list of recommendations is not exhaustive; nor could all of them possibly be implemented by NSP staff! They are assembled in one place, accompanied by explanations, as ideas to consider to enhance and sustain an impressive program achieving many of its intended results.

The overall program-level recommendations, repeated from the Executive Summary, are:

General Recommendation No. 1. Extend the completion date to allow the Contractor team and its Egyptian counterpart institutions to leverage the achievements to date and consolidate the impact obtained.

General Recommendation No. 2. Expand the rural-based program to replicate the successful model in other rural communities in the three target Governorates first, and if funding permits, to other Governorates

General Recommendation No. 3. Carefully consider the implications on the current program of a decision to extend the NSP, as currently implemented, to an urban-based program designed to achieve similar results.

Community

Selection. In considering additional communities for replicating or expanding NSP services, add criteria that determine the willingness of neighboring MOE schools to cooperate and collaborate in an educational reform cluster.

CETs. Rather than promote the end of CETs once PTCs become functional, consider helping CETs identify a new mandate or role to play in their communities not intended for the PTC. A redirected CET, given its proven track record of community mobilization, could become

the nascent "School Board" or community-based women's NGO handling micro-credit. In line with the evolution of new Boards of Trustees (BOTs), the CETs could involve the private sector in new ways thereby broadening its base of local support. The NSP staff could continue to invite CET members, not now members of PTCs, to training sessions and assist them in identifying new ways to participate.

Women. While women have taken an active role in all aspects of the NSP to date, take stock of the successes and shortcomings to re-energize efforts to ensure substantive women's participation, especially on PTCs (via election support) and on PAs.

Replication beyond NSP-selected communities. Given the success of the CETs, PTCs and the new PAs, and recognizing time and financial constraints, work with nearby communities to replicate the process and benefits of the NSP to other communities. Consider creating *school clusters* to promote exchange and replication. Where a new school cannot be provided, or a community was not selected earlier, try working with neighboring villages to spread the knowledge and skills applied by NSP-assisted community organizations to communities with no links to the NSP. Selectively include leaders from non-NSP communities (and from regular MOE schools), for example, in training programs and awareness-raising activities (these activities should not, however, negatively affect NSP's Annual Work Plans and benchmarks).

Influencing dormant PTCs. Through the formation of *school clusters*, collaborate with MOE staff in each of the Governorates to resuscitate the non-functioning PTCs in nearby MOE schools. As with the recommendation for replication above, NSP staff can consider its role as supportive and secondary, leaving the active PTC members to share with other villages their successes. This would enhance sustainability, and could be accomplished in ways sensitive to NSP's limited management capacity, such as providing PTC members with training in presentation skills to enable them to demonstrate to their neighbors their newly-developed skills and knowledge. With the development of school families/clusters under the Governorate reforms, NSP's role in Minya will be to assist neighboring schools in the reform clusters to develop PTCs at the same level as in the existing NSP schools.

Parent conferences: While the team is not certain to what extent parent conferences are used at NSP regular schools and MG Schools, further encourage and develop this tool through awareness-raising and training.

Schools as community resources: In light of the relatively limited number of hours each day that new schools are actually used, however calculated (e.g., 30 hours out of 144 hours in a 6-day week, or 30 out of 72 hours of 12-hour periods (8am to 8pm) in a 6-day week), introduce through community outreach the idea of locating many community "educational" activities at the school during off-hours. A "Community School" concept could slowly emerge where the school building houses activities promoting adult literacy, vocational skills development, libraries, art, sports, health care, etc. This recommendation may require (or inspire) a policy reform at the MOE to allow (or preferably, "encourage") community use of such a valuable resources for specific activities defined (in the regulations) as "educational."

School improvement. Consider developing the concept of School Improvement Plans that involve parents, community members, teachers and students. Developing this concept would

require intensive training, first for principals and district level personnel, and then for teachers and potential participants in the planning, such as PTC members. The scope of an SIP is broad and not limited, for example, to maintenance or provision of books or athletic equipment. With training, support and experience, participants will begin to focus more on improving educational quality in their school.²

Other temporary schools. Reinforce or initiate new awareness-raising efforts to encourage communities to establish “provisional” classroom or schools, to be supported by MOE, to meet demand for schooling at the preparatory level.

Community mobilization. Encourage communities to take the lead in identifying their school needs, using the "NSP community mobilization approach" mastered by the CETs, so that the MOE includes the community in its educational planning.



Parents actively involved and proud standing inside a primary school classroom

School Buildings

Cost. Now that NSP has strong experience successfully completing nearly 40 schools, efforts should be redoubled to identify areas where further savings can be found. This recommendation is made fully recognizing NSP's notable success in completing their buildings at less cost and time than those built solely by GAEB. (See below for recommendations on improving NSP-GAEB-MOE relations.) If the resulting cost-savings were sufficient, they could be used to build additional modified buildings to expand access to girls' education beyond

² A USAID-funded project in Jamaica, the New Horizons Project, has done considerable work on the involvement of teachers, parents and community members in the development of meaningful SIPs.

that required in the program. If cost-savings are insufficient to add any new buildings, funds could be used for the other two NSP goals.

Design. Recognizing that the NSP/GAEB/MOE school design is impressive and aesthetically striking, consider further modifications of the remaining schools to allow for more flexibility in use. For example, consider movable walls (with proper sound proofing) and other multi-use features so the building could be used as a community school, as proposed above, for "educational" purposes (meetings, small group work, audio-visual and computer centers, physical activities, life-skills classes, and science laboratories). This recommendation is made with the knowledge that since the beginning, the NSP has proposed many design innovations, a number of which were accepted by GAEB.

Turn-over requirements. Revisit whether schools should be opened and turned over to the GAEB/MOE before water and electricity are available, whatever the reasons might be.

Relations with GAEB. In view of the differences between the major parties (NSP, GAEB, MOE) that have complicated and delayed completion of the schools, design and initiate a new strategy that leads to better communication and performance. It appears that the organizational cultures and respective interests of the parties diverge at key points, which is not unusual when implementing a donor-financed activity. A new strategy that involves careful mapping of GAEB's organizational decision-making processes and the key interests of its decision-makers, and then analyzing the points at which NSP and GAEB differ and conform, would lead to "intervention solutions." Both parties have legitimate interests. How can these be addressed so that shared goals are met? In most similar situations, a series of facilitated sessions with senior decision-makers helps enormously to move forward common interests. This and other innovative communication strategies should be investigated.

Training

(Note: Although the training programs recommended below have been grouped in order of importance, the team considers all of them significant and open to simultaneous implementation. The NSP has already developed an excellent approach to training design and follow-up in which all stakeholders participate in the transfer-of-learning process.)

Administrators. To redress obstacles to achieving NSP goals of improved learning in the classroom, consider offering specialized training for administrative officials, such as principals, headmasters and supervisors, in a "Principals' Training Institute." Countless research studies throughout the world have highlighted the critical role played in supporting positive learning environments by headmasters, senior ("head") teachers, supervisors and principals. The "Institute" could be an informal, NSP-sponsored structure where trainees learn new administrative and supervisory skills and approaches.

School-based training. Consider innovations in training location and leadership. For example, use school buildings, classrooms and model teacher-trainers as much as possible to promote sustainability and replication of modern training approaches. The training units that are supposed to exist in each school could be the focal point of this effort. With training and support, these school-based units can gradually assume more responsibility for training.

Teachers as trainers. Model highly-effective teachers found inside MOE schools (whether NSP or non-NSP) as "Teacher Trainers" (not to be confused with "Master Trainers") to take the lead in promoting *teacher-based creative solutions* with other teachers. The teachers and schools appear ready for the next stage of training support, namely freeing up the creative abilities of teachers themselves to move far beyond designing a handful of pedagogies (for example, to teach "sweet and sour" or "rough and smooth") toward identifying hundreds of ways to teach every concept or topic contained in the national curriculum. Workshops can bring together a handful of truly exceptional, reflective teachers with on-going teaching experience to upgrade their training skills to become "Teacher-Trainers." Selected, proven Master Teachers (from MTEP) could also be included, or could be the peer trainers in these workshops. Moving from "professional" trainers towards "teacher-trainers" may help NSP jump-start active learning so that it takes hold in all NSP school classrooms and begins spreading in non-NSP schools.

Teacher clusters. Offer assistance in forming teacher cluster groups where teachers work together to improve teaching by sharing ideas and developing lessons and materials. Reinforce the role of the training unit to support teacher clusters and to provide opportunities for peer observations.

Principals and supervisors. Provide continued, intensive training and follow-up support for principals and supervisors on Instructional Leadership, to include topics such as effective supervision, supportive evaluation, work with parents, etc. In developing training modules, explore the successes and challenges of IELP-II in designing training for similar audiences.

MGS facilitators. Move beyond pedagogical skills training for these highly-committed young women, who need more training, particularly as so many of the students have rapidly passed grades 1-3. They appear to need substantive, subject-matter training in addition to increasing their repertoire of pedagogical skills.

Second Chance coordinators: Although the Second Chance coordinators are working with respected materials, continue collaborating closely with GALAE to provide new and refresher training. The coordinators have had limited training in teaching literacy or other life skills since most of these classes are only a few months old.

District-level administrators. Continue to provide training for middle managers at the district level, on the philosophies of active learning and on effective instructional leadership.

Institutionalization of innovations. Because training teachers who then are assigned to non-NSP schools presents an opportunity (unanticipated replication to regular MOE schools) while ringing an alarm (NSP devoting resources beyond the program's target population), establish new ways to "systematize" training within Egyptian partner institutions. Plan, design and implement future training through closer and closer coordination with MOE partners in order to build sustainability, strengthen non-NSP capacity and obtain partner "buy-in" to NSP goals and methods and multiply impact. Discourage training – however effective – that does not involve partners, even if NSP timelines have to be compromised.

Faculties of Education. Continue and reinforce positive working relationships with FOEs to ensure that new FOE graduates are fully trained in the new methodologies.

Use of Master Teacher Trainers. a) Continue recent efforts to improve coordination and planning among program contractors (DT2 and NSP) and stakeholders (MOE, FOE, MTEP teachers) to maximize the resources made available through MTEP; b) Clarify roles and responsibilities between DT2 and NSP and communicate these to MTEP teachers – frequently and using a variety of methods; c) Identify new creative mechanisms to tap the skills of returned teachers and assist in their transfer to peers. Even if the previous training included such elements as coaching, mentoring and ways to change behaviors through non-training mechanisms, these need to be reinforced among this returned group of "change agents" in an effort to identify the methods that work in Egypt to help the "Master Trainers" overcome peer resistance to adopting new ways.

Formative evaluation. Provide training for teachers in formative evaluation, and consider introducing the use of performance-based assessments and student portfolios

Cooperative learning. Provide teachers with further in-depth training in cooperative learning and in how to organize classrooms in which different groups of students are engaged in different activities.

Teaching and Learning

Teaching & learning enhancement. Investigate introducing the following components, in particular at MSG Schools in Egypt which offer a more experimental/flexible context, which are found in the highly-successful multi-model New School Movement in Latin America: student governments; flexible promotion; self-paced, cooperative-learning student workbooks; community-based learning; peer and cross-age tutoring; cluster schools; teachers as authors and trainers; teacher and student-made instructional materials; teacher- and student-written story books; student committees; nutritional food programs; service-learning, environmental projects; and, action research. Although the obstacles may at first be considerable, consider ways to test the waters locally through teacher-modeling and case studies.

Student empowerment: Consider a campaign illustrating the many functions in a primary school that can be managed by school children themselves. Where active learning is *de rigueur*, school children themselves manage many functions from which they have traditionally been excluded. For example, there are many instances where students manage libraries, assist in school health and nutrition, form class and school student governments, help teachers with learning issues and curriculum materials, promote the school in the community, help decide where to go for field trips, tackle school or community improvement issues, and improve the environment. In fact, there is almost nothing that students should not be involved in. By empowering students *from an early age*, democratic values and strong work habits can be nurtured while important management tasks are accomplished in the school setting. Adults, parents and teachers may remain skeptical until they see for themselves (with NSP assistance) how involved primary school students can actually be.

Space and active learning: Promote ways to create the "space" essential for active learning to flourish. The NSP-sponsored learning "kits" recently completed and being distributed are

very helpful in providing teachers with ideas, alternatives and some "space." However, the kits are only a beginning: creative teachers throughout the world develop and use literally hundreds or thousands of creative, active, game-like learning activities as part of their teaching repertoire. If given sufficient *creative space*, teachers will be able to use the kits and expand. Without that "space," teachers will fail to use the creative ideas and tools contained in the kit. The MOE classroom environment, with its rigid curriculum dictates, works against the "space" a creative teacher needs. (Introducing flexibility into the curriculum to provide for this "space" may also be a policy reform the NSP could consider.)

More specific teaching guides. Develop teaching guides that go beyond the overall attributes of active learning, cooperative learning, group learning, etc. towards guides with details on teaching every concept in the Egyptian curriculum. Specific teacher-designed, prepared, and published, guides, filled with games, activities, and inexpensive materials on how to teach concepts in the Egyptian curriculum (including reading, writing, arithmetic, science, life skills, art, music and social sciences) could be developed.

Training for "Corners". Strengthen training so that teachers understand how to use "learning corners" effectively, which instructional materials to include and ways to facilitate student use. Learning corners existed in many NSP classrooms visited but few were seen to be functioning as intended.

Innovate to produce more reading material. Consider conducting additional workshops in which teachers actually write and produce low-cost children's books and learn methods of assisting children and community members to write and produce their own books. In addition, high quality, low-cost children's books already in existence could be purchased for school and class libraries. The dearth of age-appropriate, interesting reading materials for young children in Egyptian schools must be addressed, at a minimum at NSP schools. As some educators like to remind others, "no child has ever learned to read without books or reading material." As a start, the attractive small books in the NSP "SIMS" kit could be reproduced in quantity to provide more reading materials in classrooms.

Experiment with scheduled "Reading Time". Suggest to teachers and others (FOE professors, principals, MOE supervisors, etc.) the internationally-respected, "out-of-the-box" approach to promoting reading sometimes called Sustained Silent Reading (SSR) each day (or every other day, or every Tuesday and Thursday, etc.) at a pre-determined time, every person in the school, including the principal, teachers, custodians and visitors, silently reads books, magazines and other materials they choose for 15 or 30 minutes. (Implementing this recommendation presumes the availability of sufficient reading materials.)

Student-centered, self learning packages: Review examples of self-learning packages created by students elsewhere for their applicability in Egypt. These materials have proven themselves, particularly in Multi-Grade classrooms throughout the world, as an indispensable way to meet individual educational needs, while promoting creative, cooperative group learning.

Curriculum. Despite the strong opposition to loosening the central hold on the Egyptian curriculum by educators, search for openings with the MOE – perhaps with field support from teachers or innovative supervisors – to combat the notion that control equals learning.

There must be some "space" for experimentation in order to better achieve stated MOE and NSP goals. Establishing a truly integrated, problem-based, cooperative and active approach to teaching and curriculum is problematic if teachers and principals fear they will be reprimanded for taking chances or experimenting. Experimental schools, professional development schools, and special curriculum waivers are possible mechanisms to create that "space" for experimentation while not jeopardizing the whole system.

Student expression. Introduce with counterparts at MOE and with teachers the importance of allowing (and hopefully encouraging) students to write on topics that interest them. Even within standard curriculum lessons, teachers can find ways to encourage students to use their vocabulary to describe concepts being taught.

Student questioning. Include in teacher training and introduce in other NSP-sponsored venues the notion that students can and should "think at higher levels." Instead of always focusing on the correct answer, let students form small groups to ask questions about a topic, for example plant growth ("why does the flower die but the tree stay alive?"). Small student groups can write up their questions or discoveries and present them to the others.

Life-skills training. Continue regular training in literacy techniques, adult literacy, and community, health and family education for SCE coordinators. As time and program resources permit, consider expanding to include revenue-generating activities and vocational skills for women.

Attendance. Continue to maintain careful records of attendance and retention and to conduct community awareness campaigns on the importance of attendance. Explore ways to work with the MOE to establish standard, reliable methods of tracking student attendance.

Policy Reform

Parent Associations. Work toward obtaining legal status for the PAs, which have been instrumental in crystallizing community support for Multi-Grade Schools. Obtaining official status could help spread the idea of PAs to other communities or types of schools (e.g., OCRs).

Facilitator job security and advancement. Work to obtain changes in the existing MOE system so that facilitators can obtain contracts, and if feasible, tenure. Facilitators provide critical services in community-based schools and classrooms and are under-recognized by the educational system. Beyond job security, facilitators could also be encouraged to obtain diplomas that would open up possibilities for higher pay and advancement as well.

Teacher remuneration. Initiate discussion with the MOE on the possibility of modifying the teachers' pay scale so that raises are based not only on years of experience, but also on training received, recognizing that this remains an incorrect performance indicator (training does not by itself lead to improved performance but is often indispensable in promoting improved performance). Teachers are civil servants and to suggest that the basis for their advancement be different from non-teachers may be seen as presumptuous. (However, this feature is commonplace in the contracts of school systems in the US, where the worth of professional development of teachers is unquestioned.) But by pursuing the idea with counterparts,

and suggesting small-step solutions, policies can indeed change over time. Introducing "training" or "application in the classroom of training techniques learned" as indicators, however inadequate as grounds for promotion, would be an improvement over the present system and could motivate teachers significantly.

Temporary schools and classrooms. Develop an awareness-building or PR campaign (in the local and development-related press, using videos, papers presented at scholarly conferences in Egypt or abroad, etc.) to spread the word about one of NSP's most innovative and successful components so that other communities receiving new MOE/GAEB schools consider using this approach. The temporary school solution can serve as a model for other Egyptian communities and even internationally, for other countries embarking on major school construction programs. The myriad benefits that the NSP and MOE have noted, beyond simply providing temporary schooling while awaiting school construction, offer fascinating possibilities for other communities.

Learning outside the classroom: Develop a strategy to clarify and/or modify existing MOE regulations, however well-intentioned they might be, that restrict teachers unnecessarily to classroom-based learning solutions. Active learning, by definition, should use the entire school and community environment as the "classroom." However, according to teachers, administrators at the local and governorate levels stated that children must be educated in classrooms and not in the surrounding villages (class trips had to receive advanced approval from various MOE authorities as they are considered "field trips" as part of a school activity that is pre-planned). Teachers have apparently been reprimanded for taking children on "field trips" outside the school walls to observe objects (birds, plant life, water systems, etc.) readily available within a few meters from the classroom. Expanding the "space," as noted earlier, is linked to promoting creativity, teacher-based solutions, involving the community and spreading active learning – all NSP objectives.

Integration of subject matter. Work toward more flexibility in the national curriculum in terms of the class hours that must be devoted to each subject area. Active learning is stifled by prescriptions from central authorities that the "rough and smooth" lesson must take X minutes and be presented in certain ways.

Role of non-teaching personnel. Broach the topic with MOE decision-makers and develop, if appropriate, some options for the use of non-teaching personnel in more creative ways to improve the learning environment. There are significant numbers of officials, from principals, deputy-principals, supervisors, health workers, inspectors, social workers, etc. who are present in full force in MOE institutions. Are there ways they could be better used to assist teachers encumbered with large class sizes? If so, this might help respond to suggestions that the "NSP model" (that is, active learning) cannot be tried in regular MOE schools due to larger class size and fewer resources.

MOE teacher assignment system. Review with MOE, and identify new approaches, to resolve the recurring problem whereby NSP-trained teachers are assigned to non-NSP schools. Genuine reform of classroom learning is constrained when new, untrained teachers are appointed to NSP schools. The policies related to appointments to NSP schools needs to be re-evaluated. Although the sensitivities are considerable, including the danger of encouraging two types of schools (better-staffed NSP schools are poorer MOE schools), ways need to be

found to institutionalize the staffing of NSP schools so as to help them contribute to change in regular MOE schools as well. As with GAEB, the MOE has legitimate interests to protect in the always sensitive area of teacher assignments; what are these, where do they conflict with NSP objectives, and how can the differences be resolved so that systems are sustainable after NSP ends?

Role of principals in teacher assignments. Develop rationale and approach to promote an increased role by principals in the recruitment of teachers. To replicate the high motivation of teachers observed in MGS and temporary schools, it is important to work more closely with MOE to influence the selection of teachers for SGS and increase the role of principals in teacher selection.

Health. Designate a NSP staff person familiar with health issues to formulate a strategy to ensure that NSP schools have access to health care and are obtaining it. The evaluation team observed many instances of serious health problems with the children that impede learning. What are the solutions and options? How can NSP schools be integrated into existing health care systems?

Nutrition. Designate a NSP staff person to develop options for a nutritional program appropriate to the NSP school environment. Like health, low levels of nutrition among the children – or lack of an adequate breakfast – inhibit learning significantly. What are some innovative solutions that could be identified (such as community-furnished healthy breakfast porridges using local products made by women or cooperatives)? What are the "nutritional biscuits" that MOE schools are supposed to receive? Could those be substituted by locally-produced alternatives? Would there be budgetary support for that? What are the risks and benefits that might accrue?

Grade acceleration: Consider challenging the existing policy that MGS students must wait a full year before being promoted to the next grade even though they have already completed the grade successfully. Again, rigidity in the MOE system works against NSP goals and must be looked at.

Admission of older students. Work with the MOE to change the policy preventing older girls from being admitted to NSP Single Grade schools. Encourage transfer after acceleration to the appropriate grade in single grade schools.

Extra schooling fees. Continue to highlight the negative impact of unofficial and hidden costs that poor parents are asked to bear, such as remedial classes, school uniforms or "special" fees and assessments. Egypt is not alone in confronting this thorny problem found in many countries where teacher salaries are low and living conditions difficult. What are the solutions? What is the impact on NSP schools and the model being created? How can incentives be changed so that pressures to impose extra fees diminishes?

Program Management and Sustainability

Relations with MOE. Develop new ways to involve and influence MOE decision-makers and middle managers so that NSP objectives attained become sustainable by the MOE. Although NSP has worked closely with MOE from the beginning, and the program design (e.g.,

handing over NSP schools to MOE) requires integration of NSP outputs to Egyptian systems, new efforts will need to be made over the last few years of program activity to ensure continued support, replication and sustainability.

Sustainability Plan. If USAID extends the NSP as recommended, formulate a plan whereby designated project activities agreed to among all partners are systematically turned over to their new responsible authorities by specific dates. Ensure that in this sustainability plan there are sufficient resources for follow-up and technical assistance after turn-over. For ideas and lessons learned, consult with the IELP-II contractor, currently in the process of transferring project responsibilities to Egyptian counterparts as that project closes out.

Internal synergies. Consider new ways to improve internal communication and promote synergies across NSP units. Recent staff meetings and internal re-organizations have helped promote cross-fertilization.

Public Relations. Build a new external image showcasing the "NSP" model rather than the "CARE" or "World Education" or "EDC" prototype. Other USAID activities are known by their activity name, such as "IELP-II" or "Cairo Air" rather than by their contractors' names (AED/Amideast or Chemonics). Identify some new approaches to building an "NSP" identity with counterparts and partners.

Internal organization. Consider further modifications to the organizational structure to favor (and reflect) a more team-based management culture. To the extent that the current organizational chart reflects reality, it is classical and hierarchical rather than team-based and community-focused. Performance-based organizational cultures, where teams work closely together (which appears to be the reality, particularly in the field), are enhanced by non-hierarchical structures.

Transfer of responsibilities: training. Work collaboratively with the FOEs and the MOE to gradually transfer training responsibilities to the MOE training units. Test ideas and approaches with the staff at IELP II, which has been implementing its end-of-project sustainability plan regarding training with considerable success. To ensure that training content is sustained and not merely the form, reinforce the close link between knowledge, skills and attitudes transferred during training and their application by teachers in classrooms.

Research, Evaluation, Monitoring and Assessment

Formative evaluation and classroom assessment: Re-emphasize, and find new training opportunities, to improve teacher ability to apply student assessment techniques. The LFE is an excellent example of NSP tackling this problem but emphasis must also be placed on ongoing, daily, in-class continuous assessment.

National testing: Collaborate with the MOE to review whether the tests for Grade 3 and 5 actually test students on what is being taught in the classrooms, and whether the tests measure higher level thinking and problem solving.. In many countries the national exams are not linked closely with the curriculum. In broaching the sensitive subject of national testing, investigate the approach used and progress made by IELP-II in its efforts to improve MOE testing in English-language instruction. Without reliable ways of knowing whether NSP students

are learning more or less than non-NSP students, neither the program nor USAID can measure impact, either quantitatively or qualitatively.

Performance testing. Attempt to move MOE thinking from testing to measuring student performance to determine whether and how the skills they are "learning" are being used.

Teachers as researchers. Work through the MOE and directly with NSP teachers to encourage them to research solutions to problems in their classrooms and schools. For example, the NSP could help form informal groups of teachers and let them compare different strategies and materials for teaching a mathematical concept or a scientific process, gathering information about how different strategies worked with different groups of students or at different grade levels. Consider promoting the concept "Teachers as researchers" in some new way to help spread the idea and engender confidence among teachers – perhaps a competition for "best teacher research project."

Baseline/longitudinal study for entering students. Conduct a study to compare knowledge levels of entering first graders and entering Multi-Grade students, then track their learning progress according to variables such as preschool experience, previous school or literacy class experience (for Multi-Grader students) and health and nutritional status.

Study to compare LFE with Grade 3 & 5 exams. Conduct a study to compare the LFE and Grade 3 and 5 national examinations according to selected variables. However, take care not to measure the level of teacher use of active learning based on the results of the study.

B. Lessons Learned

This section differs from the Recommendations by focusing on a few elements that were noticed and discussed while gathering data and analyzing results. Their mention is intended to promote reflection rather than for action leading to modifications in the program.

Attendance and enrollment

Low attendance rates and student dropouts are major problems in schools around the world. NSP has shown that five strategies can contribute strongly to retaining students in school:

1. Community awareness raising about the importance of schooling and regular attendance have achieved results.
2. Making school a place in which children are actively involved in their own learning causes the children themselves to want to come to school.
3. Visits by teachers or facilitators to homes, fields or other work sites of children make them aware that their teachers care. Such visits have contributed to better school attendance, helping to prevent school dropouts.
4. The flexible school promotion policies in the Multi-Grade Schools make it easy for girls to return after extended absences and continue with their work—they do not

have to fail a grade and repeat a year just because they had to help work in the field during an important harvest.

5. Keeping reliable records of enrollment, attendance and drop outs, provides essential data needed for improving programs to encourage attendance.

Sustainability and institutionalization

That the NSP works within the framework of the MOE has proven to be fortuitous. Not only are MOE personnel knowledgeable and involved in the project, but the fact that NSP programs are MOE programs as well and MOE personnel are being trained by NSP, should return substantial long-term benefits. This contrasts to donor programs in other countries that operate alongside, or in spite of, a counterpart agency. Although working with the MOE's prescriptive curriculum and burdensome regulations is challenging, the NSP program appears to be generating a positive impact on the MOE.

More efforts need to be made by NSP and MOE so that the MOE develops a stronger sense of ownership of what is still referred to as the "CARE School".

Community involvement

The impressive community participation inspired by NSP has undoubtedly been made much more possible by the fact that there was to be an enormous benefit to the community for the efforts they put in. There is an obvious contrast between the new PTC's in NSP schools and the failure of most MOE schools to establish viable PTCs. This shows that people are willing to give enormously of their time and effort if they have a reason to do so, but are understandably reluctant if there is no obvious return for their efforts.

Flexibility and educational programs

It is clear that, in spite of the inadequate facilities and resources, the Multi-Grade Schools benefit enormously because a certain amount of flexibility is built into their arrangements. The built-in opportunities to plan together, to see others teaching, to move students at their own pace are some instances of the flexibility that produces more creativity in these programs than in many standard school programs..

Collaboration between types of schools has emerged unexpectedly, bringing benefits to all involved. One NSP school is assisting a nearby Multi-Age program by permitting the Multi-Age girls to attend science and computer classes and go on field trips. This type of cooperation greatly enriches the school experience of these Multi-Grade girls. Similar collaboration between other NSP programs as well as between NSP and nearby MOE programs should prove equally fruitful.

Teacher motivation

The choice of teachers, facilitators and coordinators from the community resulted in a higher sense of commitment which is evident in classrooms.

C. Unresolved Issues

Lab /Professional Development Schools:

NSP has agreed to designate 4 schools to become Professional Development Schools (2 in Minya, 1 in Fayoum, and 1 in Beni Suef). These schools are close enough to the faculties of education in the three communities, in order to facilitate cooperation.

In Minya a substantial number of MTEP teachers were appointed at Abu Seilm in anticipation of it becoming a lab school. Also a steering committee that has representatives from both the MOE and FOE was formed. However, the concept of lab school does not seem to be well defined. A clear vision that includes the objective of developing the lab schools and an understanding of how it differs from other schools has yet to be completed. Although both the FOE and MOE agree that there is a great need for Lab/Professional Development schools, each has a different concept of what it entails.

In one of the meetings between the FOE and MOE it was agreed that the vision of a lab/Professional Development School is “an enabling environment for action research, that emphasizes quality education for children while sustaining quality improvement and providing opportunities for the professional development of all parties involved.” However, each entity sees the achievement of this goal in a very different light. The MOE is not willing to give any space for innovations or experimentation in these schools and FOE perceives it as another school where their students will be trained. The Lab/PDS concept requires flexibility in teacher placement, teacher training models, finances, and collaboration between teachers and faculty.

Issues

1. There is no clear understanding of the role, function and objective of a lab school
2. There is no shared vision of a Professional Development School
3. Collaboration between MOE and FOE is problematic
4. There is no flexibility built in the mandate of these schools

Recommendation

1. Explore different models. The Professional Development School concept is sound and models exist throughout the world that deal with the issues of equity, quality, and the in-service and pre-service training of teachers. Different models should be explored, to identify most appropriate model for the Egyptian context.
2. Facilitate and provide expert assistance to form shared vision and mission. There is a determined need to reach a shared vision and mission for the lab/PDS school. Identify specialized person to work with the two entities to set policy and formulate a shared vision and mission.
3. Separate the lab school concept from NSP scope of work. To avoid dilution of NSP’s mandate, the team does not recommend adding lab school activities to the cooperative agreement.



Boys and girls elated at the opportunity to be in primary school and to have their picture taken