

# BROADER MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA MEETING OF LITERACY EXPERTS

Cairo, September 26-27, 2005  
Background Materials



*USAID's literacy programs target vulnerable populations, including women and girls. Under the Taliban in Afghanistan, women and girls were completely excluded from the formal education system. Today, USAID's large scale literacy program has helped 170,228 students, 58% of whom are girls, make up for lost years of schooling.*

## USAID's BMENA EDUCATION BUDGET FY 2002-2006

Afghanistan	317,242,000
Egypt	289,900,000
Iraq	166,000,000
Jordan	50,330,000
Lebanon	19,800,000
Morocco	31,996,000
Pakistan	197,900,000
West Bank/Gaza	24,700,000
Yemen	33,700,000
ANE Regional	10,000,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,141,568,000</b>

## OVERVIEW

Efforts toward achieving the Education For All (EFA) literacy goal have led to higher literacy rates, improvements in quality of life and education, and increased learning opportunities throughout the Broader Middle East and North Africa (BMENA) region. However, females in the region have not significantly benefited from allocated resources. In fact, women account for nearly two thirds of the Arab states' illiterate population, and in several BMENA countries, less than 10 percent of rural women are literate.

## THE USAID RESPONSE

USAID supports a twinned response aimed at both the formal and non-formal education sectors. Our formal education programs respond to the root causes of illiteracy by improving quality, access and retention for children of school-going age. Our non-formal education approach targets out-of-school youth and adults and provides them with basic literacy, numeracy and life-skills and functional skills training linked to employment.

## ILLUSTRATIVE LITERACY PROGRAMS

- In Afghanistan, the REACH/Learning for Life program is a health-focused accelerated adult literacy and learning initiative to prepare women and older girls for community health worker and community midwifery training. The program has provided **literacy training for 5,500 women**, qualifying them as community health workers.
- For students in Pakistan, access to schools and trained teachers does not necessarily equal quality education. Fifty percent of students drop out before reaching grade five. The reality remains that less than half of all youth and adults, and less than a quarter of all girls and women, are literate. The Education Sector Reform Assistance (ESRA) Program addresses the problem of illiteracy through the **development of national guidelines for adult and youth literacy**, thereby helping standardize literacy programs throughout Pakistan. In addition, the literacy program works towards furthering the capacity of Pakistan to deliver high quality literacy programs. A total of **19,781 adults and youth have completed literacy training** in selected districts of Balochistan and Sindh. The goal is to graduate more than **75,000 formerly illiterate people**.
- Through the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), and the International Human Rights Law Group, USAID/Morocco

## BMENA LITERACY BACKGROUND MATERIALS CONTINUED



*USAID works with the government of Pakistan to improve the lives of Pakistanis throughout the country. Improved preschool classes help prepare young children for primary school.*

### FOR MORE INFORMATION:

[www.usaid.gov/locations/asia\\_near\\_east](http://www.usaid.gov/locations/asia_near_east)

has worked with thousands of Moroccan women to improve their **legal literacy** and successfully demand that their rights are respected. The Morocco team convened a Legal Literacy Working Group comprised of fifteen women's advocacy groups and local development associations in order to create a comprehensive program manual on women's human and legal rights. Their collective efforts resulted in a training module with 74 parts (or sessions) and the production of a **420-page Arabic language legal literacy manual**. First published in February 2002, the manual is entitled "Making Human Rights Real: A Human Rights Education Program for Women in Morocco."

- In September 2005, the Asia and the Near East Bureau introduced the prototype BMENA Literacy Hub, a user-friendly database that assists literacy policy and programming efforts in the BMENA region by providing a **web-based retrieval system for sharing experiences, best practices, and links to relevant literacy models**.
- Like Sesame Street in the United States, Egypt's *Alam Simsim* is designed to make learning fun. It teaches **basic literacy and math, as well as good health and hygiene and environment-friendly habits**. Above all, it inspires young girls. In Egypt, only 74 percent of girls in rural areas attend primary school, and less than half of the women can read and write. In the poorest communities, students often only attend three years of school. Yet every day, children all over Egypt turn the channel to *Alam Simsim*. A 2003 study confirmed **more than 3.5 million children under age 8 regularly viewed the program**. A total of 170 half-hour *Alam Simsim* television programs have been created.
- The Yemen Adult Literacy and Lifeskills Education program, funded by MEPI, works in the Amran Governante to help local communities develop **functional literacy** programs for women. Themes include agricultural production, savings and loan clubs, environmental management, maternal and child health (including HIV/AIDS awareness), political participation, and women's rights. The project has formed and established **80 village-level, self-financing women's literacy associations benefiting nearly 5,300 females** using the REFLECT methodology (Regenerated Freirean Literacy through Empowering Community Techniques). In addition, the program supports **40 schools** in the **development of life skills materials to train teachers and literacy facilitators** on how to provide such trainings.