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INSTITUTE OF
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LOTUS
SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

Cooperative Agreement 263-A-00-10-00026-00

Annual Progress Report FY 2012

The Annual Progress Report for the period of 10/1/2011 – 9/30/2012 as required in Attachment A/Section A.5/2.C. of Cooperative Agreement 263-A-00-10-00026-00 consists of this summary document and the annexed M&E Matrix, as well as the four previously-submitted, detailed quarterly reports.

Comprehensive LOTUS Scholarship Student Statistics:

The LOTUS students represent all of Egypt's 27 governorates and two former governorates.

COHORT 1, CYCLES 1 & 2 Candidates (gender & governorate)	6th October	Alexandria	Assuit	Aswan	Behira	Beni Sueif	Cairo	Dakahlia	Damietta	Fayoum	Gharbia	Giza	Helwan	Ismailia	K. El Sheikh	Luxor	Matrouh	Menoufiya	Minya	New Valley	N. Sinai	Port Said	Qaliyoubia	Qena	Red Sea	Sharkiya	Sohag	South Sinai	Suez	Recruited
Female representation	2	3	1	2	2	4	2	1	2	1	1	4			3	1	2	2	4	1	1	2	1	1	1	2	3	2	1	52
Male representation	1	2	1	2	1	2	4	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	2	2	1	4	2	1	2	2	1	3	1	1	2	2	48
COHORT 2 Candidates (gender & governorate)	6th October	Alexandria	Assuit	Aswan	Behira	Beni Sueif	Cairo	Dakahlia	Damietta	Fayoum	Gharbia	Giza	Helwan	Ismailia	K. El Sheikh	Luxor	Matrouh	Menoufiya	Minya	New Valley	N. Sinai	Port Said	Qaliyoubia	Qena	Red Sea	Sharkiya	Sohag	S. Sinai	Suez	Totals
Female representation	1	2	1	1		2	3	3		1	1	1				2	1		2	1			1	1	2	1		1	1	29
Male representation			2		1		1	1	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		1	1	1		1		21

University Placements

University	# Students
Ahram Canadian University	31
British University in Egypt	27
Future University in Egypt	28
Modern Sciences & Arts University	39
Pharos University in Alexandria	25

Accomplishments during the Reporting Period:

October 2011 through September 2012 represented the second year of studies for the 44 students of Cohort 1, Cycle 1 and the first year of studies for the 56 students of Cohort 1, Cycle 2 and the 50 students of Cohort 2. The 106 students who entered in September 2011 were on a very steep learning curve. For most of them, it was their first time to live away from their families for an extended period of time. They were living in new cities and were transitioning from schools into new environments at private universities. Students had to acclimate themselves to living on their own and become more self-reliant very quickly. Most of the students integrated very well into the universities during their first semester and began to take advantage of the various opportunities that are offered. Some students took a little longer, however, by the end of spring semester the majority had acclimated to their new lifestyles and studies. A major indicator of successful selection and placements is that 105 out of the 106 new students completed the first year. One student dropped out in December and was replaced by an alternate candidate who joined MSA in the spring semester. All 44 Cohort 1, Cycle 1 students completed the second year of studies with no drop-outs.

Academic Performance

In terms of academic performance, the majority of the LOTUS students did very well during the 2011/2012 academic year as witnessed below.

GPA	Fall 2011	Spring 2012
4.00	14	6
3.5 - 3.99	61	41
3.0 - 3.49	40	47
2.5 - 2.99	13	27
2.0 - 2.49	10	15
1.99 and below (academic probation)	10	13
Leave of absence	1	1
Left program	1	
Total:	150	150

IIE provides support to students who are on LOTUS academic probation through regular contact and discussion about their progress. In addition, students are required to fill out a questionnaire to help identify the reasons behind why their GPA is below 2.0. The questionnaire also requires them to come up with a plan of action to improve their grades. Several students who are on academic probation take reduced course loads to enable them to focus on improving their grades. Some will be required to take summer courses or may need an additional semester/year to make up for failed courses or semester in which they took reduced course loads. IIE is in regular contact and coordination with the university coordinators to monitor student progress.

The LOTUS community average GPA for the spring 2012 semester was 3.08. We have challenged the LOTUS students to bring the fall 2012 community average GPA up to at least 3.30. The community average cumulative GPA is currently 3.20.

Leadership in Action Program

During the reporting period, the Leadership in Action Program consisted of the following:

- 31 Leadership in Action and skill sessions with the following themes:
 - Orientation and Settling In
 - Orientation to Leadership in Action Program
 - Study Skills and Time Management
 - Presentation Skills

- Academic Integrity, Research and Writing
- Community & Team Building
- Conflict Resolution
- Rights & Responsibility
- Values
- Wellness
- 21 Specialized sessions and meetings for specific purposes
 - Ibt TOEFL Preparation
 - Annual Workshop project planning, brainstorming, planning, committee meetings, etc.
 - Focus group meeting for Namaa Summer Program
- 2 Big Picture and Innovation sessions (Nahdet Mahrousa)
- One Namaa Summer Program attended by 32 students

English Language Enhancement Activities

During the reporting period, the following activities related to the students English language proficiency were undertaken:

- All Cohort 1, Cycle 1 students took the ITP TOEFL exam in fall 2011 to gauge improvement during after being in the Program for one full academic year
- All Cohort 1, Cycle 2 and Cohort 2 students took the ITP TOEFL exam to obtain baseline English proficiency data
- 69 students attended a four-week Summer Intensive English Program at the British University in Egypt
- English language proficiency assessments were conducted for all Cohort 1 student and Cohort 2 students who have not yet reached the 550 ITP proficiency level. Assessments will be used as follows:
 - To develop action plans for Cohort 1 students with self-study guidance to improve their language skills
 - To develop recommendation for which Cohort 1 students could benefit from an opportunity to attend an additional Intensive Summer English Program in 2013 should funding be available
 - To develop action plans for Cohort 2 students
 - To classify Cohort 2 students at ACU, FUE, and MSA for Supplemental English courses
 - To develop recommendations for which Cohort 2 students could benefit from an opportunity to attend an additional Intensive Summer English Program in 2013

Study Abroad

Seven students traveled to the U.S. on study abroad during this reporting period as follows:

- Ms. Saloumi Michele (Minya) – Computer Science student at ACU spent the spring 2012 semester at SUNY-Plattsburg taking courses.
- Ms. Nouran Adham Rabia Mahfouz (Minya) – Business Administration student at the BUE spent twelve weeks at Boston University taking courses and doing an internship.
- Mr. Hazim Emad Mahmoud Hafez (Cairo) – Petroleum Engineering student at the BUE spent two and a half months at Kettering University in Michigan taking a course and doing a research internship with a faculty member.
- Mr. Mohamed Medhat Mohamed El Naggar (Ismailia) – Electrical Engineering student at the BUE spent two and a half months at Kettering University in Michigan taking a course and doing a research internship with a faculty member.
- Mr. Yousab Fawzy Michael Abdel Malak (Red Sea) – Accounting and Finance student at PUA spent seven weeks taking courses at Western Michigan University.
- Ms. Sarah Admon Ibrahim Metry (Beni Sueif) – Pharmacy student at ACU is currently spending the fall 2012 semester at the University of Montana.
- Ms. Rana Ibrahim Ali Al Sakhaily (Port Said) – Computer Science student at MSA is currently spending the fall 2012 semester at Augustana College in South Dakota.

Karim Mohamed was placed at Kettering University where he was scheduled to take courses and do a research internship, but received a name-hit and was not cleared for travel. IIE has obtained a deferment from Kettering University and he is scheduled to travel in summer 2013.

Twenty-eight students were short listed for spring/summer/fall 2013 study abroad took the iBt TOEFL exam of whom 24 obtained scores higher than the minimum required score of 62. The students have submitted their common applications to the IIE NY placement office who is working on obtaining placements for them.

University Capacity Building Program

The **University Capacity Building Program** was launched last year. Branded as the **LOTUS Strategic Leadership Seminars**, the program offers staff of the five partner universities the opportunity to participate in a series of strategic seminars on themes related to leadership development and covering topics of particular importance to each university. The first seminar, which focuses on strategic leadership principles, serves as an opportunity for IIE to introduce participants to the fundamentals of leadership and to help identify topics of strategic importance for future seminars that could include but are not limited to leadership, management, scholarship administration, internationalization and partnerships, and accreditation.

The first Seminar (Strategic Leadership) was held for ACU administrators and faculty members On December 12, 2011. This first seminar provided each participant with various tools to look at their individual leadership and to discuss aspects of strategic leadership on the institutional level. Particular focus was given to identifying the overriding vision, mission, and values that support the decision making process. The seminar also explored other leadership frameworks to provide each participant with different ways of understanding and reflecting on their leadership effectiveness. Also discussed was the role of authority and influence and the distinction between transformational vs. transactional approaches. As IIE believes that leadership is a shared and group process, this first seminar included a number of experiential team building and communications activities, which served to bring each university group together, and to help identify topics and areas of development for future seminars.

Due to scheduling challenges and the availability of administrators and faculty members at the partner universities, IIE has decide to hold the seminars at wider intervals. The first seminar will be held at FUE in FY2013, Quarter 2 and the second seminars will be held at all universities in FY2013, Quarters 2 – 4.

2011 Launch and First Annual LOTUS Student-led Leadership Workshop

A large event was held on December 17 at the British University in Egypt to welcome and celebrate the 2011 intake of LOTUS students. Three 2011 intake students and three 2010 intake students gave remarks focusing on why they applied for LOTUS, what they have learned thus far, and their hopes and dreams for themselves and their country. The Honorable Anne Patterson, U.S. Ambassador to Egypt, Elizabeth Khalifa, IIE/MENA Director, and Dr. Ahmed Amin Hamza, BUE President delivered remarks. The LOTUS students also premiered a song that they wrote and recorded about their love of Egypt and how they can contribute to Egypt's development. The launch type event was an excellent opportunity to introduce the new Ambassador to LOTUS, to showcase LOTUS to the media and the Ministry of International Cooperation, and to celebrate the successful recruitment and placement of all 150 LOTUS students.

The second part of the event was the First Annual LOTUS Student-led Leadership Workshop. The Annual Workshops are an opportunity for LOTUS students to educate themselves on topics of importance to Egypt's development and youth. Students were responsible for the conceptualization, planning, organization, and implementation of the Workshops. Through participation in the Workshops, students gain valuable experience in event preparation, planning, and implementation, as well as in time management, problem solving, and teamwork. The Workshop planning and implementation process fosters an environment of collegiality and teamwork in which the students form networks with each other, with their peers in their universities, and with other Workshop participants so that together they can be a force for change and impact Egypt positively.

The Workshop was planned by the 44 students who entered the LOTUS Scholarship Program in 2010 and was attended by all of the LOTUS students, approximately 50 students from partner universities, IIE staff and alumni volunteers, partner university presidents, faculty and LOTUS coordinators, partner NGO staff and volunteers, and other invited guests. The total number of participants was approximately 200.

The LOTUS 2010 intake students chose Workforce Preparation and Challenges in Education in Egypt as the theme for the Workshop. During the Workshop, participants sought to understand and address the gaps that exist in Egypt's education system and the impact on the labor market. The aim of the Workshop was for participants to gain insight into challenges in the educational system, workforce preparation, and labor market needs.

The 2010 intake students did an excellent job planning and implementing the First Annual LOTUS Student-led Leadership Workshop. They faced many logistical challenges as they are studying at five different universities with different class and exam schedules located in different areas of Cairo and Alexandria. Several times in the two months before the event, clashes broke out in different areas of country that limited their ability to get together as a whole group to work on the workshop however they did not let this deter them. They utilized alternative communication channels such as Facebook and Skype. The students, particularly the committee heads, demonstrated extraordinary responsibility and maturity and worked collaboratively to produce and deliver a very successful event. IIE is proud of their efforts and looks forward to future Annual Workshops.

Challenges during the Reporting Period:

English Language Proficiency

One of the most significant challenges for nearly all of the students is **English language proficiency**. The majority of the students have very basic English language proficiency when they entered the Program. They are a product of the educational systems in which they studied with the Azhari graduates being the most challenged. In general, most LOTUS students have very weak English language proficiency compared to their university peers who are graduates of language or international schools. This is the first time that most of the students are studying all of their subjects in English rather than Arabic. Some of the students have experienced great difficulty understanding their classes and assignments. Reading and writing assignments take much more time for them than for their private school graduate peers, which limits the amount of free time that they have to study English independently through reading or watching films or to attend supplemental English courses. As detailed in QPRs and mentioned above English language assessments have been conducted and supplemental English language opportunities will be provided in FY2013 as follows:

- Self-study guidance to Cohort 1 students
- Opportunities for Cohort 1 and Cohort 2 students at PUA to take publicly offered English courses
- LOTUS supplemental English language courses for Cohort 2 students at ACU, FUE, and MSA
- Additional Intensive Summer English Program for Cohort 1 and Cohort 2 students (numbers to be determined based on funding and cost of program)

Study Abroad

IIE experienced a variety of challenges related to the study abroad component among which are the following:

- Student readiness in terms of English language proficiency
- University systems and regulations (specifically BUE as detailed in QPRs and correspondence)
- Maximum travel dates for students
- Late end date of fall semester at partner universities and early start date of spring semester in the U.S.
- Identifying and getting students registered for the courses that they are required by their home university to take while in the U.S.
- High cost share requirement for U.S. universities

IIE has worked closely with the universities, the IIE placement office, and USAID to find solutions to the above challenges as documented in QPRs and correspondence.

Leadership in Action Program

Originally, NM activities should have been initiated with three activities in FY2011 and 14 sessions/trips in FY2012. Ministry of Social Solidarity approval for Nahdet Mahroussa's involvement in the LOTUS Scholarship Program took longer than expected which resulted in a delay in the implementation schedule. As a result, only two sessions were held in FY2012. The Namaa Summer Program was held as planned in August 2012. IIE is currently working with Namaa on a revised implementation schedule that will appear in both the Annual Work Plan and the revised M&E Plan.

Security and Political Situation

Compared to the days of the revolution and the following months of routine flare-ups, we have had fewer challenges in terms of overall security in the country. IIE take security very seriously and monitors media and social media carefully to ensure that students are put at any risk. For example, IIE cancelled sessions on several occasions as a result of temporary flare-ups of violence, such as the November 2011 incidents on Mohamed Mahmoud and in Alexandria. Sessions were also canceled on weekends during which election and referendum voting was taking place to enable students who wanted to travel to their home governorates to vote.

Calendars and Scheduling

Scheduling sessions is an ongoing challenge for the following reasons:

- Ambitious number of sessions we would like to hold
- Variations in the partner university academic calendars and schedules including start and end dates, class timetables, mid-term and final exams, and mid-year and summer breaks
- Fluid exam schedules
- Delay in implementation of Nahdet Mahroussa activities (see above)
- General security situation which sometimes requires sessions to be canceled (see above)
- National and religious holidays on which IIE tries to avoid scheduling sessions
- Staffing – sometimes as many as three or four sessions are held on one weekend

IIE continues to be flexible and creative in scheduling sessions such as grouping students together whenever possible, offering alternatives for students when they have scheduling conflicts, holding evening sessions so as to not take up every weekend, and rescheduling if the security situation is questionable.

Staffing

IIE has experienced difficulties in identifying and hiring a Monitoring and Evaluation Coordinator. The pool of M&E professionals in Egypt is very small and it is difficult to find professionals at the coordinator level with experience in education. The initial recruitment process for the M&E position did not result in any suitable candidates being identified. The applicants with relevant experience were all over qualified for a coordinator level position. IIE originally requested that this position be at the manager level, but the request was declined. IIE reopened recruitment for the position in September and is hopeful to identify qualified candidates for the position.

Budgets Realignments and Modifications

For the past six months IIE has been involved in a comprehensive budget realignment exercise to reflect actual student placements (entry years, universities, and number of years required), cost share realities, actual expenditures for the first two years of the Program, unplanned (but necessary) expenses, and realistic projections for future years. It has been a very challenging exercise for a variety of reasons. One particularly challenging aspect has been cost share realities and the devaluation of the Egyptian Pound. IIE is working diligently to identify alternative sources of cost share and/or revisit expenses on which there is no cost share. IIE anticipates completing and submitting the budget realignment to USAID in FY 2013, Quarter 1. IIE will also work collaboratively with USAID to draft language for any/all necessary programmatic and fiscal issues that could require modifications to the award during the next quarter.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, the LOTUS Scholarship Program witnessed many significant successes and accomplishments in the second annual reporting period. Two cohorts of geographically and gender diverse students were recruited, selected, and placed in the five partner universities. The majority of the students have settled in well and are thriving personally and academically. Students who experience academic or personal challenges are receiving the necessary support. IIE works closely with the partner universities to identify and resolve any issues that arise. IIE continues to evaluate and tailor its Leadership in Action Program to meet the needs of the students and regularly introduces themes of importance to their personal and professional development.

IIE looks forward to a productive and successful Year 3 that will build on the accomplishments of and benefit from the lessons learned in Year 2.