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Egypt AOCJ Project

Summary Report of AOCJ Introductory Site Visits to Prosecution Offices for Automation

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¹ The opinions expressed herein are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the U.S. Agency for International Development or the United States government.

SECTION I. INTRODUCTION

The USAID Administration of Criminal Justice Project (AOCJ) began introductory site visits to the intended targets of automation activities in component one of the project on May 25, 2006. Prior to undertaking a detailed technical IT assessment of each target location, the AOCJ team, in coordination with representatives of the Prosecutor General’s Office (PGO), Judicial Information Center (JIC), and USAID, conducted preliminary site visits to each target office to gain an overview of the offices’ activities, staffing, and current automation environment.

SECTION II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introductory site visits were conducted at the following locations on the dates specified below.

General Prosecution Offices

- | | |
|--|--------|
| 1. East Alexandria Prosecution Office (Alexandria) | May 25 |
| 2. Al Raml Prosecution Office (Alexandria) | May 25 |
| 3. Montazah Prosecution Office (Alexandria) | May 25 |

PGO Offices and Departments

- | | |
|--|---------|
| 4. Office of International Cooperation (Cairo) | May 31 |
| 5. Technical Office (Cairo) | May 31 |
| 6. Assets Seizures Office (Cairo) | May 31 |
| 7. General Prosecution Department (Cairo) | June 13 |
| 8. Judicial Inspection Department (Cairo) | June 13 |

Specialized Prosecution Offices

- | | |
|---|-----------|
| 9. Tax Evasion Prosecution Office (Nasr City) | June 11 |
| 10. Financial and Commercial Affairs Prosecution Office (Nasr City) | June 11 |
| 11. Supreme Family Prosecution Office (Cairo) | June 13 |
| 12. High Public Monetary Prosecution Office (Heliopolis) | June 15 |
| 13. State Security Prosecution Office (Heliopolis) | postponed |

The primary attendees at each meeting varied slightly, but generally included the following people.

USAID and AOCJ	Judicial Information Center (JIC)	Prosecutor General’s Office (PGO)
Margaret Groarke, Rule of Law Team Leader, USAID	Counselor Ahmed Hany Mokhtar Director, JIC	Counselor Adel Zayed First Public Lawyer, Judiciary Inspections, PGO
Jasmin Samy Senior Judiciary Specialist, USAID	Mr. Nader Abdou Senior Technical Engineer, JIC	Mr. Mohamed Khalaf Chief Prosecutor, PGO
William Hallock Director, AOCJ		
David Selman Senior IT Advisor, AOCJ		

The overall general findings from the introductory site visits are summarized below.

- The Montazah Prosecution Office was originally contemplated as a target site but it has been replaced by the Al Raml Prosecution Office due to the fact that the Montazah office building will likely be demolished and rebuilt in the near future.

- There is general interest and enthusiasm on the part of the leaders of the target offices to collaborate with the project's efforts.
- The majority of the offices visited have little or no automation. A few offices have a limited number of working computers, but these are used mostly for typing and some basic record keeping.
- The Tax Evasion Office, Financial/Commercial Affairs Office, and High Monetary Crimes Office are already using some software modules that were created by the JIC. These should be investigated and reviewed for relevance to future case file automation solutions.
- A few offices have a working local area network and file-server functionality. These may be locations where users show more familiarity with solutions likely to be promoted by AOCJ and JIC.
- Some physical infrastructure changes are likely to be required to accommodate IT solutions at each target location, including specifically building cabling and wiring, electrical capacity improvements, and air-conditioning enhancements for server and computer rooms.
- Training will be a major task, both before, during and after installation of IT solutions to ensure that end-users, IT managers, and support staff are prepared to use and manage new HW and SW solutions.

SECTION III. SUMMARY OF MEETINGS BY DATE

A. Summary of Introductory Site Visit of May 25, 2006

The following field offices of the PGO were visited on May 25, 2006.

1. East Alexandria Prosecution Office (Alexandria)
2. Al Raml Prosecution Office (Alexandria)
3. Montazah Prosecution Office (Alexandria)

Attendees during this overnight field trip to Alexandria included representatives of the JIC, PGO, USAID, and AOCJ. On May 25, 2006, the delegation met at the office of the Chief Prosecutor of the East Alexandria Prosecution Office. The delegation proceeded to the Montazah Prosecution Office where we met the Chief Prosecutor of that office. Finally the delegation visited the Al Raml Prosecution Offices.

At each office the delegation followed the following procedure.

- Introduce the team and provide an overview of the project
- Explain the upcoming detailed technical assessment and the purpose thereof
- Conduct a walk-through of each prosecution office and its facilities
- View whatever computer equipment was present
- Examine the case file registry books and listened to explanation of the case flow process

In each of the three offices the delegation was received with enthusiasm, hospitality, and a willingness to collaborate. A summary of the overall findings from the site visit are presented below.

- The Montazah Prosecution office building is scheduled for likely demolition in the near future due to its poor physical condition. It has since been agreed by the PGO that the Montazah office would not be an appropriate location. Rather the Al Raml office was designated as the alternate location.
- The East Alexandria Office is in much better condition and with some infrastructure changes to accommodate wiring, etc, it can physically handle automation. Some staff are already familiar with hardware and software equipment and other staff would need to be trained to handle automation.

- The East Alexandria Office, with its various sub-prosecution offices, has some of the heaviest caseloads in the country. Montazah sub-prosecution alone handles above 120K cases with only 20 prosecutors.
- The East Alexandria Office has a total of 6 sub-prosecution offices beneath it that handle misdemeanor cases, while felonies are handled by the East Alexandria Office. Any automation that exists now is based on individual efforts and not a strategic effort by the offices, which currently lack the budget to automate.
- All case file information is now compiled in Registry Books. There are currently various registries as follows:
 - Felony Registry
 - Misdemeanor Registry
 - Contravention (Infraction) Registry
 - Administrative Registry
- Registries contain diverse information in summary form, such as case number, person's name, date crime committed, date judge made a decision, summary of decision, etc. The office agreed to provide the AOCJ with an uncompleted page from a Registry Book so we can translate the fields contained therein.
- The computer room at East Alexandria housed two IBM-compatible PCs running an internally-developed, custom-built application used to capture summary information on both felony cases and some misdemeanors from East Alexandria and its sub-offices. The software is run on a Linux platform.
- The Al Raml Office is in much better physical condition than Montazah and can support automation and networking with infrastructure adjustments to accommodate wiring, air conditioning, housing of servers, etc. The staff will require extensive training.

B. Summary of Introductory Site Visit of May 31, 2006

The following offices of the PGO were visited on May 31, 2006.

1. Office of International Cooperation (Cairo)
2. PGO Technical Office (Cairo)
3. Assets Seizures Office (Cairo)

Office of International Cooperation (Cairo). The meeting started promptly at 11:00am. The meeting's location was in the suite of Counselor Hisham Samir, Chief Prosecutor, Office of International Cooperation. Counselor Samir began by providing an overview of the various functions of his office. The primary functions of his office are two-fold: (1) to collaborate and exchange case related and other information with organizations such as Interpol, human rights organizations, and to share information with all prosecutor offices in Egypt; and (2) to address prisoner health-related issues, particularly the mentally ill inmates.

Currently his office shares information with his local and overseas counterparts via phone, fax and courier (diplomatic pouches for international exchanges). Counselor Samir emphasized the need for full automation in his office because of how awkwardly (and in some cases insecurely) he is collaborating with his counterparts. While his office does have some limited electronic capability, its use is restricted by the fact that the other prosecutor offices he needs to communicate with have absolutely no electronic capability.

Counselor Samir's staff is approximately 30 employees. The following table gives a breakdown and function of his staff:

Staff	Location	Function and Responsibilities
Six (6) employees, consisting of 1 public lawyer and 4 Chief Prosecutors and 1 admin person	operating on two floors within same building as Counselor Samir	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ subpoenas ➤ maintaining contact with foreign government counterparts and other international organizations (e.g. Interpol) ➤ mentally ill prisoner issues ➤ Human Rights issues
Twenty (20) administrative employees	Field offices in Cairo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ receiving applications of the family members of mentally ill prisoners, who are seeking the opportunity to visit their family member.

PGO Technical Office (Cairo). There are about seven legal professionals in the Technical Office. This office receives notification of all major crimes in Egypt, which it then reviews and presents to the Prosecutor General (PG). Cases are then sent back to their respective prosecution offices with suggestions and recommendations. The Technical Office has a heavy workload with diverse case types. They have contacts with every prosecution office and with all Egyptian ministries.

The diverse work load within the Technical Office includes all of the following activities:

- Maintaining and updating the travel ban list
- Complaints regarding case dispositions and administrative procedures
- Examination and review of death sentences
- Review and appeal of sentences
- Review and consideration of petitions and complaints submitted by agencies, organizations, or citizens

Assets Seizures Office (Cairo). Chief Prosecutor Essam Khalil gave an overview of the Assets Seizures Office. He spoke about the office's independence and about its ability to take provisional decisions to seize the assets of those who have been accused of crimes or if a financial penalty is levied against an accused. His department can also prohibit the disposition of property by the families of the accused in some circumstances. If a case is deemed very urgent by the prosecutor, he can submit it to the specialized court within 1 week or he can send an application to whichever court has jurisdiction to seize assets of the person and/or his family. The court will consider the application and approve/reject it. The Assets Seizure Office has:

- 4 rooms for asset seizures
- 8 administrative employees
- 3 Chief Justices
- 2 rooms for the Chief Prosecutor are located next to each other, while rooms of the administrative employees are in different locations within the same building

When a decision to seize assets of an accused is issued, the department will first alert the Public Notary (via phone/fax), then the Public Notary will notify all notaries in Egypt. However, the department will also notify other organizations (e.g. Central bank, commercial banks, etc) of the decision. These departments and institutions are all notified via letters from the Assets Seizures Department.

Mr. Mahmoud Fawzy, a Prosecutor within the department talked about a planned project to electronically link his department to the Public Notary. This project is a joint effort with the Ministry of Communications. Upon successful implementation of this effort it will then be the responsibility of the Public Notary to notify all concerned government offices that can prevent the disposition of assets. These include the Assets Seizures Office, the Social Prosecutor (affiliated with the People's Assembly), and the MOJ's Department for Illegal Acquisition of Funds. However, the PGO Assets Seizures Office will continue to have the major responsibility in notifying other organizations of a seizure decision.

The Ministry of Communication project to link the PGO with public notaries has thus far received 2 computers, 1 printer, and 1 scanner.. Mr. Fawzy stated that the current number of PCs is not adequate for his department and further, they are not satisfied with the pace in which the Public Notary project is proceeding. The stated completion date of the project is July 15th 2006, but this is highly unlikely.

C. Overview of Introductory Site Visits of June 11, 2006

The following offices of the PGO were visited on June 11, 2006.

1. Tax Evasion Prosecution Office (Nasr City)
2. Financial and Commercial Affairs Prosecution Office (Nasr City)

Tax Evasion Prosecution Office (Nasr City). The meeting was held in the office of Mr. Counselor Ehab Bakir, First Public Lawyer and head of the Tax Evasion Prosecution Office. Mr. Bakir began by providing an overview of the various functions of his office. The Tax Evasion Office has nationwide jurisdiction for all tax related offences. Due to the volume of financial information, the tax crimes case files are generally very large.

Mr. Bakir was very prepared for the meeting and provided to the team a list of necessary equipment that he deemed necessary for his office. He focused his presentation on the importance of automation for the tasks at hand. Mr. Bakir noted that two years ago the JIC attempted to setup and install a LAN in his office. It is not currently functional due to a variety of reasons. In any case, the building is wired for a LAN and some staff members have had basic computer training. Because the LAN is not functioning, the PCs in the office are all stand-alone. His office communicates with other prosecution offices via phone, fax, and post.

Mr. Bakir spoke about the importance of automation for his office. It was clear to all that he was very anxious for his office to be automated and suggested ways in which the AOCJ team can start assessment work immediately in his office. Director Hany and Mr. Nader explained that the assessment will be a very disciplined process and will follow a very organized tract.

Counselor Bakir then provided a breakdown of his staff as follows:

- 1 Public Lawyer
- 9 Prosecutors
- 35 administrative staff

The office consists of 11 PCs with 8 classified as in "good" condition and 3 in need of repair. There are 3 printers (2 HP 1010 and 1 LexMark which is out of order). 9 PCs are allocated to the prosecution members and 2 for the secretaries. The PCs are primarily used as typewriters and for storage of memo forms and statistics. There is no internet or connectivity. There is JIC windows-based custom-built application software in use to help manage cases.

Mr. Bakir pointed out that he would like to see the IT resources for his office organized as follows:

- One functional PC assigned to himself

- One PC for each Prosecutor
- One PC for each of the 2 secretaries
- LAN connectivity
- Electronic archiving system
- The PCs for each prosecution member should have DSL access so that they can access their work from home (remote access)
- Automated templates for the 90% of cases that have the same wording and are repeated regularly
- One PC assigned for each register thereby reducing or eliminating the need for manual books
- The Public Lawyer and prosecutors' PCs should be connected to the register PCs
- Custom built software for the registers
- A server to function as a common repository of data.

Financial and Commercial Affairs Prosecution Office (Nasr City). This office has nationwide jurisdiction for different kinds of financial and commercial crimes, including, for example, the following:

- Foreign and domestic currency forgery
- Stock Exchange crimes
- Criminal violations by investment companies
- Customs evasion cases

The location is in the same building as the Tax Evasion Office, so there is wiring already in place for possible LAN applications if hardware is made available. The approximate staffing of the office is 50 administrative staff and 10 prosecutors. The office has 9 stand-alone PCs. The machines have a JIC custom-built case administration application installed. The machines are classified as in "good condition". There is no LAN or internet access. Communication with other offices is done via, phone, fax, courier and post. There is currently no expressed concern about information getting lost during transfer of cases between and among offices.

D. Overview of Introductory Site Visits of June 13, 2006

The following offices of the PGO were visited on June 13, 2006.

1. Judicial Inspections Department (Cairo)
2. General Prosecutions Department (Cairo)
3. Supreme Family Prosecution (Cairo)

Judicial Inspections Department. The meeting location was in the office suite of Counselor Adel Zayed. Counselor Zayed began by providing an overview of the various functions of the office. The office has nationwide jurisdiction and a variety of important tasks. The tasks include

- Appointments of prosecutors, which involves interviewing candidates, reviewing their files, and making recommendations to the Supreme Judicial Council.
- Overseeing and supervising Prosecution Members Affairs, which involves maintaining all the prosecution members' files, records, statistics, and other relevant information about leave, career and promotional data, etc..
- Technical section, which includes conducting technical inspections, surprise inspections, and evaluating and assessing the skills of prosecution members
- Complaints, Appeals, and Grievances, which includes receiving and evaluating complaints regarding prosecutor performance, investigations, or actions

The Judicial Inspections Department, specifically the technical section, can and does develop and implement various training programs and curricula. Training programs are generally developed and executed in coordination with the NCJS. Other offices can design and develop training programs, but these are generally reviewed by the technical section before being implemented.

There is some automation in the office but it is limited to appointment of judicial staff and a program(JIC custom-built application) for Appeals. The latter is rarely operational. The technical section has some automation for PC data entry activities. The office has a limited dial-up connectivity to the internet. His office does have a client server LAN connection.

There are approximately 3000 prosecution staff nationwide. 800 are inspected annually. 50 members of the Judicial Inspections office conduct technical inspections in the field. There are 72 prosecution staff in the entire office (22 in the HQ and 50 conducting inspections in the field). There is a three-member senior panel of prosecutors with the office whose task is to review reports submitted by the 50 field inspection prosecution team. If necessary the three-member panel can amend and make suggestive changes to the reports.

Communication with other offices are done via, phone, fax, courier and post. There seems to be no concern about information getting lost during transfer between and among offices; the counselor was confident that the courier service he employs is very secure.

The team visited the computer room affiliated with the Judicial Inspection Department. There are two PCs and one file server, connected to a 16-port intelligent hub. 90% of the automation that takes place in the computer room deals with prosecutor appointment work.

General Prosecutions Department (Administrative Department). Counselor Mohamed Abdel Aziz Othman is the head of the General Prosecutions Department. The mandate of this office is twofold: 1) centralized management of all administrative matters for all prosecutors in Egypt; and 2) centralized management of all administrative personnel of the PGO. Some of the duties include:

- Management of salaries
- Budget/Financial control
- Prosecutor travel planning
- Collection of funds

The staffing of the General Prosecution Department is approximately as follows:

- 18,500 administrative staff nationwide (810 administrative staff for the entire PGO in Cairo)
- 3,500 Prosecutors nationwide
- 1 Office Chief and Deputy for the General Prosecution Office
- 490 Administrative staff in the High Court Building in Cairo

The office has a LAN. The counselor and his deputy has dial-up access to the Internet. Approximately 9 PCs are connected to the office LAN. There is personnel JIC customer-built application in use at the office. The application is designed for accounting and budgetary purposes.

Supreme Family Prosecution. The Jurisdiction of the Supreme Family Prosecution office is nation-wide and covers all cases related to:

- Disputes over possessions
- Custody of Children arising from a divorce proceedings
- Cairo Appeals
- Divorce rulings
- Family disputes (maintenance)

Since 2000 the office has had an automated system developed by the Ministry of Communications and a company called Ladis that addresses all functions related to the bulleted activities listed above.

The approximate staffing of the office is as follows:

- 12 Administrative employees (10 women and 2 men)
- 5 prosecutors
- 1 Public lawyer

The office has 8 PCs of which 5 are designated for the prosecutors and 3 for the Administrative staff. There is also a 6 PC Client/Server LAN.

E. Overview of Introductory Site Visits of June 15, 2006

The following office of the PGO was visited on June 15, 2006.

1. High Public Monetary Prosecution Office (Heliopolis)

High Public Monetary Prosecution Office. The meeting started promptly at 11:00am in the office of Counselor Hesham. Counselor Hesham provided an overview of the various functions of his office, which has nationwide jurisdiction. The mandate of his office is twofold: 1) investigate and supervise cases with a monetary value of over 1 million L.E. and, 2) investigate and supervise cases involving government officials accused of monetary or financial crimes.

There are seven affiliated prosecution offices in and around Cairo with several subdivisions and each office has specific books (registers) to record cases. The registers will track, among other things, the movement (ingoing/outgoing) of the cases between the High Public Monetary Office and the originating office for the case. If cases are incomplete or his office requires further information and other comments about the file, it is sent back to the originator to make the necessary corrections.

All correspondence between the High Public Monetary Prosecution Office and its affiliated offices is done via phone, fax, post and courier.

The current IT capabilities of the office are as follows:

- The office has 2 stand-alone PCs with no connectivity to the internet; they are used for typing and storing documents
- 5 years ago the JIC started to setup a LAN but was unsuccessful due in large part to a lack of technical expertise within the High Public Monetary Prosecution Office to maintain the system
- There is an enormous amount of information that needs to be stored electronically and the 2 PCs currently available are not adequate for such a task. Whatever files are stored on the PCs are usually not stored in their entirety
- PCs frequently hang and freeze during operations
- There is only ad-hoc file and data backup of the PCs
- There is a need for the office to electronically communicate with at least 7 to 8 courts daily
- The office believes there is a need for a document management system
- There is no electronic linkage to other prosecution offices

The office handles approximately 1,700 to 1800 cases annually, with about 400 to 500 case investigations per year. The approximate staffing of the office is as follows:

- 15 prosecutors
 - 1 Chief Prosecutor
 - 1 Public Lawyer
 - 10 senior prosecutors
 - 3 prosecutors
- 10 prosecutors in the field conducting inspections

- 150 Administrative Staff (including some police officers and investigators), but actual administrative staff ranges from 70 to 80.

SECTION IV. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

A. General Conclusions

After completing introductory site visits to the locations noted in this report, the AOCJ team has reached some general conclusions that were observed in numerous different locations. These conclusions will guide future implementation of AOCJ automation activities with the various offices of the PGO.

1. Focus on the basics

The locations visited have very little or no automation. Existing IT equipment, if there is any, is generally out of date and inadequate for the enormous tasks at hand. The AOCJ project should therefore focus on providing IT solutions that can allow targeted offices to begin to automate their activities, workflow, and communications in the near future. AOCJ and its partners should avoid overly complex solutions that will delay procurement, complicate implementation, or sacrifice usability by users.

2. Training is essential

Evidence from the introductory site visits suggests that some past automation efforts at PGO offices failed because there was inadequate training. Most offices visited specifically noted that any automation they had was generally managed on an ad-hoc basis by internal staff who had some basic IT knowledge. Two of the fundamental building blocks for successful automation efforts are 1) extensive HW and SW training of end users, and 2) training of the people who will be charged with managing and maintaining new systems on a daily basis. Failure to invest adequate time and energy in training is one of the major causes for failure of new IT systems. Therefore, it is vital that adequate resources be employed to train end users and system managers on new IT solutions supported by AOCJ.

3. Ongoing Support to the JIC to Manage a Growing Workload

The automation that exists within the PGO at the moment is there due in large part to the technical expertise and tremendous efforts of the JIC. The JIC does an admirable job with the resources it has on hand. However, the JIC staff is charged with managing IT systems at the courts, at the PGO, and at the Ministry of Justice, and both the courts and the PGO are currently undergoing automation. The JIC therefore has tremendous demands upon its limited staff and technical resources. To the extent that the JIC will be responsible for managing future IT solutions installed within the PGO, it would be useful to provide ongoing support to the JIC to ensure that it has sufficient technical personnel and resources (i.e. hardware and software) to manage all the automated systems it will be responsible for.

4. Timing is Essential

The extensive procurement of hardware and software planned under the AOCJ project in accordance with USAID procurement regulations will take considerable time. The JIC, PGO, USAID and AOCJ team will need to work together to accelerate the process and maintain it on track to avoid disappointment due to unanticipated delays in the future.

5. Establishing Inter-Office Connectivity (WAN)

Inter-office connectivity among and between offices is clearly essential. It will allow target offices to communicate the PGO headquarters electronically, eventually eliminating the need to transfer hardcopy case files from one location to another via courier or post. AOCJ's ability to establish WAN connections depends on the technical infrastructure available from Egyptian telecommunications

carriers that must provide the communications channels for the transfer of data. Initial indications are that this will not be a problem. There are obviously costs associated with establishing and maintaining communications channels between locations and the PGO must begin to consider incorporating these costs into its annual budget.

6. Phased Workflow Processing and Automated Case File

A comprehensive workflow processing system accompanied by an automated case file is a major undertaking which involves documenting existing workflow processes, deciding how to efficiently automate them, and then developing the software that essentially automates what is currently a manual process done with hardcopy case files. This process should be viewed in phases with automation of basic case file data occurring first, followed later by a more comprehensive document management system.

B. Next Steps

The next step in Component One is to undertake a detailed technical assessment of the targeted locations agreed on by the JIC, PGO, USAID, and AOCJ.

General Prosecution Offices

1. Alexandria Appeals Prosecution Office (Alexandria)
2. East Alexandria Prosecution Office (Alexandria)
3. Al Raml Prosecution Office (Alexandria)

PGO Offices

4. PGO Technical Office (Cairo)
5. Office of International Cooperation (Cairo)
6. Assets Seizures Office (Cairo)

PGO Departments

7. Judicial Inspections Department (Cairo)
8. General Prosecution Department (Cairo)

Specialized Prosecution Offices

9. Tax Evasion Prosecution Office (Nasr City)
10. Financial and Commercial Affairs Prosecution Office (Nasr City)
11. High Public Monetary Prosecution (Heliopolis)
12. State Security Prosecution Office (Heliopolis)
13. Supreme Family Prosecution Office (Cairo)

The AOCJ team prepared a technical survey instrument which has been approved by the JIC and the technical team is prepared to begin the assessment upon approval from the PGO. The assessment was originally scheduled to begin on July 16, 2006, but was postponed until August 5, 2006.