

Section A – Cover Page

1.	Reporting Period	July 1, 1997-June 30, 2004
2.	Organization	Sesame Workshop
3.	Grant Numbers	263-G-00-97-00081-00
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8.	Amount Funded	\$6 million + \$2.4 million
9.	Starting Date	July 1, 1997
10.	End Date	June 30, 2004
11.	Name of person preparing report	Jennifer K. Rupnik
12.	Date report submitted	October, 2004

Section B - Narrative

I. INTRODUCTION

The following final report summarizes Sesame Workshop's key activities from July 1, 1997 - June 30, 2004 under its grant from USAID to develop Seasons One, Two and Three of an Egyptian version of *Sesame Street* – *Alam Simsim*. USAID funds have been used to make this co-production culturally and educationally appropriate through the transfer of Sesame Workshop's trademark "technology" to Egyptian co-production partners - technology that encompasses television research, production, and programming to educate and entertain Egyptian children. USAID funds have also played an important role in leveraging support from corporate sponsorship such as Americana Foods and Unilever. *Alam Simsim*'s educational messages support the Ministry of Education's wider curricular goals and outreach materials have been designed to meet the Ministry's national ECD effort. As detailed below, Sesame Workshop achieved the following goals:

- Used integrated multiple media – television, radio and community outreach programs – to reach and educate disadvantaged Egyptian children and families
- Transferred technology to build indigenous capacity with respect to all aspects of Sesame Workshop's co-production processes for children's television, radio, research, ECD instruction, teacher training, and community; and,
- Increased support for families and caregivers through the provision of accredited and non-accredited training and information, thus enhancing the use of media as an educational tool and improving the quality of ECD provision in formal and non-formal settings.

II. ADVANCING USAID/CAIRO'S STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Central to both the television and outreach components of *Alam Simsim* has been the advancement of USAID/Cairo's two strategic objectives:

- Increased Female Participation in Quality Basic Education in Targeted Areas; and,
- Sustainable Improvements in the Health of Women and Children.

Strategic Objective One: *Alam Simsim*'s Approach to Girls' Education

In response to the critical need, *Alam Simsim* includes a special focus on girls' education. Woven into the fabric of all aspects of *Alam Simsim*'s television and outreach material are age-appropriate messages designed to promote literacy and other basic skills in a context that values women and girls and the contributions they make to society. The program makes a concerted effort to portray boys and girls as equals. The series does not single out girls or exclude boys. It strives to neither demean nor glorify either gender,

while at the same time endeavoring to counter negative attitudes and the significant gender gaps that have resulted from girls' limited education experiences.

Five fundamental values related to gender equity and girls education serve as a framework for guiding the approach to girls' education on *Alam Simsim*. In developing material that reflects these, the series aims to help viewers regard girls and women as competent contributors to society who have a passion and aptitude for learning. Through its live action, animation, studio segments and outreach materials, *Alam Simsim* promotes the following:

1. The belief that girls and boys have **equal rights** and responsibilities.
2. The belief that boys and girls should be proud of their talents and accomplishments and that they should be encouraged to experience and express feelings of **self-worth, pride and confidence in their abilities**.
3. The belief that boys and girls have **feelings** and that there are not gender-specific ways to express them (e.g., it is okay for boys and girls to cry when feeling pain).
4. The belief that **professions** are not gender-specific and that boys and girls can grow up to be what they would like to be.
5. The belief that household, community and civic **responsibilities** are not gender-specific (e.g., boys and girls can help around the house; women can hold government offices; all have an obligation to make a contribution).

Setting and Characters

To forward *Alam Simsim*'s girls' education aims, the producers paid particular attention to the context of the series and the development of its characters. Inherent in structural aspects of the series are key elements that are, by design, conducive to the series' educational aims. For example, learning opportunities abound in the program's setting which includes a store and a friendly library, which are both frequented by *Alam Simsim*'s characters. Furthermore, the program makes a concerted effort to highlight men and women in a wide variety of roles and, specifically, to present men and women in roles that could be viewed as non-traditional for their gender.

In accordance, *Alam Simsim* features a variety of female role models in studio, live action and animation segments and in outreach materials who serve to promote the series' fundamental gender equity values. The most prominent of these is Khokha, a vibrant and intelligent female puppet character who is one of the series' stars. Khokha, a "four-year-old" girl with a passion for learning, is inquisitive, curious and constantly seeks information about the world around her. She asks many questions and explores all aspects of her environment. Khokha loves to come up with solutions to problems and is often seen creating something in her pretend workshop.

Khokha's interests and personality characteristics are designed to promote girls' education in a naturalistic way. Girls and boys alike can see the power of a love of learning and discovery as they observe this engaging female. Khokha and the human girls and women that appear on the program, as well as the male characters who support them, provide positive strategies for coping with life's ups and downs and serve as role models that young viewers can emulate.

Explicit vs. Implicit Messages

As previously mentioned, the goals of *Alam Simsim's* girls' education curriculum are expressed throughout the series. Each segment of *Alam Simsim's* magazine format, whether studio, live-action or animation, is explicitly designed to present a single message from the *Alam Simsim* curriculum. In addition, important educational messages are implicitly modeled throughout the series. This use of both direct and indirect presentations of educational messages has proven to be an effective way to promote learning and is a strategy that applies to the presentation of the girls' education objectives. For example, one studio segment, which is designed to illustrate girls' limitless career opportunities, features Khokha imagining herself in different possible professions when she grows up — as an astronaut, a police officer, a doctor, etc.

This kind of direct learning about occupational choice is coupled with other segments that use a more indirect, implicit approach. For example, the very fact that Khokha loves books and reading implicitly forwards the message that reading is something that girls can do. Thus, even when a segment is designed to present another curriculum objective, the girls' education message is integrated in the context of the segment through Khokha's personality and/or the activities in which she engages. By modeling girls as active learners in a wide range of segments, the series presents girls' education as something that is obtainable and beneficial. Through its multi-pronged approach, *Alam Simsim* provides children with various ways to be exposed to positive messages related to girls' education and strives to help its audience members appreciate the importance of education in their lives.

Strategic Objective Two: *Alam Simsim's* Approach to Health and Hygiene

Alam Simsim has successfully conveyed targeted health messages to children and their caregivers, most notably through a successful outreach campaign designed to promote messages related to health, hygiene and nutrition that extend the educational goals of *Alam Simsim* beyond the television experience. Research conducted by the Social Planning, Analysis and Administrative Consultants (SPAAC) in Cairo, which included 300 parents and caregivers and 200 children in Cairo and Beni Suef, found that the outreach program had a substantial impact on the health, hygiene and nutrition knowledge and practices of the participants. The most notable changes occurred with respect to knowledge of good hygiene and health habits, such as the use of a personal towel (rather than a shared one), increased percentages of children that brush their teeth everyday, increased knowledge of vaccinations and general increased levels of cleanliness. In-home observations conducted by an anthropologist confirmed the findings

of the quantitative study and also found that the extent to which respondents modified their behaviors was, in some cases, limited by family income. Routines that required commercial items, such as toothbrushes, for example, were beyond the means of the poorest families. However, some households engaged in alternative, yet effective practices, such as brushing teeth with fingers. Overall, the research found that the *Alam Simsim* health education outreach initiative had a measurable, positive impact on the health, hygiene and nutrition habits of those who participated.

III. EDUCATIONAL CONTENT DEVELOPMENT AND RESEARCH

Research and Educational Content Development

Developing and refining educational objectives for *Alam Simsim* has been an ongoing process that has served as the backbone around which all of the television and outreach materials have been created. Research, likewise, has provided a crucial function in the development, implementation and evaluation of the project. The team engaged in several types of studies: background research (in the form of literature reviews and topic-oriented papers), production research (focused, small-scale field studies designed to give children a voice in the production process and provide feedback to enhance the quality of the production as it was being produced) and impact evaluation (more comprehensive longer-term studies examining the effectiveness of the program after it aired). Each of these activities is described below.

A. Background Research

Research for the preliminary phase of the project laid the foundation essential to making the Egyptian co-production both culturally and educationally appropriate. Studies were designed to provide practical information to producers.

Media Habits Research

Sesame Workshop commissioned Leo Burnett to manage a study of Egyptian children's television viewing habits. The survey, which was conducted by Directions Marketing Research and Services, Cairo included face-to-face interviews with 900 mothers from Cairo, Alexandria, Delta and Upper Egypt. It examined children's access to television and their viewing habits. The results gave the team a basis upon which to make decisions regarding factors such as the ideal time to broadcast *Alam Simsim*.

Commissioned Papers

Sesame Workshop commissioned a series of papers designed to provide practical information to the co-production team about five areas of special relevance to the project: language, health, girls' education, family, and religion.

The paper on language, written by Dr. Elsaid M. Badawi, Professor of Arabic Language and Linguistics, American University, Cairo, provided guidelines regarding the use of different levels of Arabic in teaching basic language skills on the series. The paper

offered the production team a catalog of ways to advance language skills. (Notably, this paper has been used by other Sesame Workshop international coproducers working in Arabic including our Palestinian, Arab-Israeli and Jordanian teams.)

Dr. A.S. Younis' paper explored issues pertinent to health, safety, and nutrition and provided suggestions concerning the selection of health messages for the program. Younis, who served as Consultant Pediatrician, E.A.F. (M.C.), Police Authority Hospital and Egypt- Air Hospital and Secretary General, Egyptian Pediatric Association, discussed specific ways to target health messages to Egyptian preschoolers.

A third paper, on girls' education, was written by Malak S. Rouchdy, Assistant Professor of Sociology, American University, Egypt. It was designed to move from simply surveying the issues associated with the notion of gender inequity, to a practical stance outlining ways in which the program can help to serve the educational needs of young Egyptian girls. It endorsed appealing ways to portray girls on the program highlighting engaging activities and images through *Alam Simsim* with the purpose of motivating girls to learn.

The paper devoted to family life, authored by Mohammed Shaalan, M.D. Professor Emeritus of Psychiatry, Al-Azhar University Cairo and Chairman, Shaalan Center for Human Relations, provided insight into how families should be portrayed on the series.

Dr. Saad Eddin Ibrahim, Chairman, Ibn Khaldun Center for Development, wrote the final paper on religion in Egypt, offering guidance to the team on issues concerning religious customs and the ways in which they should be reflected on the program.

B. Educational Content Development

Developing educational content for *Alam Simsim* entailed several activities: identifying educational advisors, conducting topical seminars, convening a curriculum seminar, and writing the *Statement of Educational Objectives*.

Topical Seminars

The *Alam Simsim* team convened a series of topical seminars on the five subjects areas covered in the commissioned papers (see above). Each seminar lasted approximately a half-a-day and examined a single topic: language, health, girls' education, family life, and religion. Using the information gained from the commissioned papers as points of departure, specialists in each field (who had authored the papers) met with the production team to help operationalize concepts outlined in the papers. The seminars gave the production team a chance to ask advisors questions concerning how each area should be practically portrayed on *Alam Simsim*.

Curriculum Seminar

In collaboration with the Egyptian co-producer Al-Karma Edutainment, Sesame Workshop identified a roster of individuals to attend a two-and-a-half-day seminar in

Cairo to brainstorm about the educational plan for the project. Drawing upon Al Karma and Sesame Workshop's domestic and international networks, the *Alam Simsim* team convened a seminar of experts to solicit advice about the educational messages *Alam Simsim* should forward. Experts attended the session from various regions throughout Egypt and from fields such as: developmental psychology; reading and language development, teaching and preschool education; science/mathematics/technology; the arts; sociology; gender studies; health; and ethics education. Appendix A highlights the list of individuals who attended the curriculum seminar. Mona El Sabaa, one of the advisors who attended the session, used results of the seminar to develop a *Statement of Educational Objectives* for the project.

C. Production Research

The *Alam Simsim* team conducted production research throughout the process to ensure appeal and comprehension of series' segments. A list of these studies is attached (See Appendix B). The publication of one of these studies entitled, The Tower in Red and Yellow: Using Children's Drawings in Formative Research for *Alam Simsim*, in the peer-reviewed academic journal *Early Education and Development (Volume 13, Number 4; October 2002)*, is a particular achievement of *Alam Simsim's* education and research team.

D. Impact Research

After the program was broadcast, researchers conducted studies to assess the reach and educational impact of the series.

Reach

MEMRB International (Egypt) conducted national door-to-door surveys in 2000, 2001 and 2002 in rural and urban communities in Egypt. These studies found that the viewership of the program increased dramatically over time, from November, 2000, when 40% of urban respondents and 30% rural respondents reported that their children viewed the program to January, 2002, when over 95% of urban respondents and 86% of rural reported that their children watched the program in 2002. The rate of adult viewership also increased over time from 25% who reported viewing the program in 2000 to 54% who reported viewing in 2002. The research conducted in 2002 also found that frequency of viewing was high. Eighty percent (80%) of the mothers who reported that their children watch the program, mentioned that their children watch it regularly.

Educational Impact

See page 4, "Strategic Objective Two: *Alam Simsim's* Approach to Health and Hygiene" for results from the Social Planning Analysis and Administration Consultants (SPAAC) research study on *Alam Simsim's* outreach program focused on health, hygiene and nutrition.

E. Distribution of Project Documents

The team made a special effort to make project documents available to individuals and organizations outside of the project who might benefit. In addition to the publication noted above, documents such as *The Statement of Educational Objectives*, "Promoting Girls' Education on *Alam Simsim*, Egypt's Sesame Street", a summary document on *Alam Simsim's* commitment to Girls' Education, (see Appendix C) and the topical papers have been circulated to interested individuals at conferences, informal meetings and via email.

IV. PRODUCTION

Consistent with our proposal to USAID, the following production activities were accomplished during the reporting period:

- A total of 170, 30 minute episodes were produced:
 - Season 1 - 65 episodes, launched in 2000
 - Season 2 - 65 episodes, launched in 2001
 - Season 3 - 40 episodes, launched in 2002
- Broadcaster: Egyptian TV
- August 2003, MBC (Middle East Broadcasting Corporation) airs *Alam Simsim* throughout the Middle East and North Africa potentially reaching 150 million viewers
- Thirty minute, prime time specials about "Health and Hygiene" featuring celebrity guest appearances
- Muppet Characters: Khokha (4 years old, pink furry girl monster – live hand puppet), Filfil (purple furry monster – live hand puppet), Nimnim (green monster – full body puppet)
- 521 Studio Segments
- 107 Animation segments
- 123 Live Action Films
- Series of 6 public service announcements on literacy, girls' education and health for Egyptian TV (literacy PSA with Madame Mubarak)

Sesame Workshop selected Al Karma as the television production partner. A thorough production assessment was conducted followed by an RFP process. Of the six respondents to the RFP, Al Karma clearly demonstrated the best ability to develop a *Sesame Street* program based on their experience and creative vision.

Training

Training was conducted in the following five areas of production:

1. *New York Workshop*
Five members of the Al Karma team were brought to New York for a comprehensive workshop detailing the *Sesame Street* format and curriculum model.
2. *Writer's Workshops in Egypt*

In-country training took place in the first few months of pre-production with Josh Selig (*Sesame Street* writer) along with 10 Egyptian writers in a 3 day workshop. Dina Amin, one of the original writers, is now the Head Writer of the series.

3. *Director's Workshop in Egypt*

A Director's Workshop was conducted by Lisa Simon, a *Sesame Street* studio director. It was an excellent experience and *Alam Simsim* has become a standard for quality in Egypt.

4. *Puppeteer Auditions and Training Workshop in Egypt*

Marty Robinson, Sesame Workshop veteran puppeteer, was sent to Egypt to audition and train the three puppeteers who have since been the stars of the show.

5. *Puppet Wrangler Workshop in New York*

Puppet wranglers came to New York, visited the studio and received additional training.

As stated in our original proposal to USAID, it was suggested that members of ETV travel to South Africa to be trained by SABC *Takalani Sesame* staff. Due to logistical and political constraints, this training did not take place and the funds were redirected to other project activities as approved by our program officer at USAID Cairo.

Major Milestones and Challenges

Khokha's puppeteer was asked to travel to Jordan to provide training for the puppeteers from the *Sesame Street* Jordanian co-production, *Hikayat Simsim*. This milestone demonstrates the successful capacity building of *Alam Simsim*'s puppeteers and the transfer of their skills to other *Sesame Street* international co-productions. In addition, *Alam Simsim* received a prestigious silver award for the World Media Festival in 2003. The script writing of the series is often times the most challenging aspect of producing a local adaptation of *Sesame Street*. Through intense collaboration over writing the studio scripts between Sesame Workshop's and Al Karma's production and research teams, the Al Karma writers mastered the format of writing short literacy and numeracy scripts. As the series progressed into the second and third season, Al Karma began to develop continuing storylines which is a much more challenging format. By the end of the third season, Al Karma wrote and produced a 30 minute prime time special featuring the Muppets and cast preparing for a health fair on *Alam Simsim*.

V. OUTREACH

Alam Simsim's outreach program was designed to enable Sesame Workshop to work in concert with Egyptian partners to develop and test training models and materials to extend the value of the overall project. Outreach activities were focused on helping families and caregivers use media as an educational tool and deepening the impact of the educational messages conveyed through television. The *Alam Simsim* Outreach Initiative promoted good health and hygiene practices by providing parents and caregivers with

materials and workshops focusing on nutrition, vaccination and health and hygiene. Season Three outreach activities focused on three target governorates, including: Greater Cairo, Minya and Bani-Swef. Four goals informed our work:

- Identify and select local outreach partners
- Develop training models
- Develop outreach materials based on assessment of local needs
- Create effective recruitment strategies

To oversee all outreach activities, a tender was developed and widely advertised. Mr. Akram Habib was selected as the Outreach Coordinator in the late fall of 2002. His primary roles included developing multiple media educational materials to reinforce and extend the goals of the series beyond the television viewing experience and providing training vehicles to help explain the content and educational values of the series to parents and caregivers to guide children's viewing and learning.

Listed below are the major developments that occurred during the Development and Implementation Phases. Mr. Habib facilitated these activities, under the supervision of Dina Amin, Head Writer for the series.

Development Phase

- Worked closely with Donna Maria Chandler, Vice President of Global Outreach at Sesame Workshop, to refine the outreach plan and to incorporate key information learned through an informal survey in the field and through conference calls conducted by the *Alam Simsim* research consultant.
- Met with potential NGOs to assess their partnership capacity and build a larger NGO base to extend overall reach.
- Recruited and hired key outreach staff with the approval of Sesame Workshop.
- Met with Donna Chandler in Egypt to provide technical assistance and transference of skills related to outreach and training. This trip also provided Mr. Habib and Ms. Chandler the opportunity to establish the framework for the training component and manuals, to visit two NGO candidates that would apply for the RFA and to meet with Michelle Ward Brent from USAID.
- Developed an RFA to be distributed to NGOs to provide training in their target area.
- Developed a rating criteria to judge completed proposals.
- Selected 20 NGOs to provide training to parents in their target area.
- Developed prototype materials for two kits which focused on health, hygiene and vaccination using research from the field. These materials were field tested by our research consultant and comments were incorporated into the materials prior to printing and distribution to local NGOs.

Implementation Phase

- Invited the 20 approved NGOs to an event in January 2003 during which contracts were signed and the *Alam Simsim* outreach program was officially launched.
- Conducted Management Training workshops for all NGOs to explain to the managers the importance of reports required by Al Karma (technical and fiscal), reporting timeframes and reporting format and content. Total attendance was 22. (10 from Beni Suief, 8 from Cairo and 4 from Minya)
- Produced 2 sets of outreach materials kits which focused on health and hygiene, vaccinations and nutrition. The kits included books, posters, a healthy habits calendar and flash cards.
- Conducted “Train the Trainer” workshops for all NGO staff involved in the project. These workshops focused on both training and technical skills. In addition, participants received follow up technical assistance from the Outreach Team through field visits and program monitoring. Attendance included 102 people representing the 20 NGOs.
- Graduated 10,474 caregivers from the rollout of the training programs. These caregivers included: 8,075 mothers, 828 fathers, 143 grandmothers, 41 older sisters, 22 nurses, 20 friends of *Alam Simsim*, 77 other family members, 457 school teachers and 411 K.G.
- NGO staff visited the homes of each of the caregivers who received training on the two kits.
- The *Alam Simsim* Outreach staff conducted financial audits of all the NGOs and an evaluation of the project as a whole.

***Alam Simsim* Outreach Program - Major Milestones**

- Our goal was to train 9,000 caregivers. We exceed this goal by training 10,474 caregivers. The success of our outreach program is evident by the large number of NGOs requesting partnerships and schools requesting training for their teachers.
- Graduation ceremonies were held by each NGO. For the majority of our caregivers, this is the first time they experienced a formal “graduation.” These ceremonies became community events that heightened awareness of issues related to health, hygiene, nutrition and vaccination.
- Developed a Resource Library which includes reference materials on topics related to children and their development.
- Although not a part of our deliverables, a few of the NGOs had Child Clubs. Outreach Staff worked with these NGOs to align key *Alam Simsim* outreach messages with their club activities. Through these activities many of our partners have incorporated Child Clubs activities into their own programs.

VI. PUBLIC RELATIONS

Alam Simsim's Public Relation campaigns for Seasons One, Two and Three focused on increasing brand awareness and support within the educational community and from

parents, driving tune in, and focusing on how the series is being locally produced with the advisement of local educators and child development experts. These activities were accomplished through events, interviews, and meetings with key media outlets.

Press releases were developed for the following events:

- The debut of each new season, emphasizing the localization of the program.
- Celebrity appearances on the show, including Montasser Bellah, Karima Mokhtar, Waleed Salah, and Hala Fakher
- Viewership studies and the impact statistics for the series. These releases highlighted the fact that *Alam Simsim* was meeting its goal of reaching young children who have limited access to education, with over 85% awareness of the series in rural areas and over 90% of children in urban areas viewing the series.
- The launch of Outreach initiatives.
- Character appearances at hospitals, schools, and libraries.
- Awards for excellence in children's programming. (*Alam Simsim* was a winner of the World Media Festival in the Children's: Learning Programs category. In addition, the series was nominated for a Banff Rockie Award)

In each instance, we generated significant and positive coverage. Stories appeared in major dailies and top TV programs throughout Egypt, the US, and many other markets making the producers and Muppets instant celebrities in their own right. In fact, Madame Mubarak, the official patroness of the series, referenced *Alam Simsim* as an exemplary children's television program in national remarks. She has even appeared on *Alam Simsim*'s PSAs to encourage literacy.

VII. CONCLUSION

Alam Simsim provides a model for using media as an educational tool for young children, for reaching children in rural areas through a targeted outreach initiative, and for involving parents in children's education in sustained and meaningful ways. Seasons One, Two and Three of *Alam Simsim* have made a positive and lasting contribution to the educational fabric of Egyptian society. With such strong local support, we stand poised to bring this project to the next level and to expand the reach of outreach activities to children throughout Egypt.

APPENDICES

1.	Reporting Period	July 1, 1997-June 30, 2004
2.	Organization	Sesame Workshop
3.	Grant Numbers	263-G-00-97-00081-00
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APPENDIX A

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31. Mr. Sameh Goubran
32. Mr. Amr Koura
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Curriculum Coordinator
Writer
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Studio Producer
Executive Producer

- 33. Ms. Dina Salem
- 34. Ms. Zeinab Mubarak

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Writer and puppeteer

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APPENDIX B **SUMMARY OF RESEARCH STUDIES**

Topical Papers on Egyptian Life

Spring 1998

The Workshop commissioned five papers based on a series of topical seminars held in Cairo in Spring, 1998. The seminars were conducted as part of the development phase of the project. The five resultant papers address the following subjects as they relate to modern Egyptian life:

- family
- language
- religion
- children's health
- girls' education

ALAM SIMSIM Formative Research

June 1999

This study examined the reactions of 60 Egyptian children to different elements related to the production of 'ALAM SIMSIM:

- *Viewing Habits:* All children reported watching television, mostly at home. High levels of parental co-viewing in Egypt suggested that the series be entertaining for parents as well; children's high incidence of watching adult programs suggested a strong need for quality viewing experiences geared specifically to children.
- *Character Names Development:* Most children could pronounce the proposed characters' names and recognize their gender, though 40% had difficulty labeling Filfil's gender (on the basis of looking at pictures).
- *Live-Action Pilots:* Virtually all the live-action segments that the researchers tested sustained children's attention. While most children understood the general subject matter of the segments, their comprehension of some of the specific educational messages was low. The team recommended clarifying the voice-overs and minimizing aspects that distract from the central educational aims.

Second Formative Study

September 1999

This study focused on the appeal and comprehension of an 18-minute mock episode of 'ALAM SIMSIM. The researchers also included a limited test of children's basic literacy and numeracy skills and gender stereotyping. Forty-eight boys and girls, ages 4 to 6 years in the rural region of Menya in Upper Egypt participated. The study found:

Appeal & Comprehension:

- Children were highly attentive to the episode (average eyes-on-screen was 90%).
- Ninnim was the most liked character, and children most often selected Ninnim to be their friend.
- Comprehension of the two studio segments tested was high, though comprehension of the tested live-action segment was more moderate.

Basic Skills & Gender Roles:

- Children exhibited relatively low literacy skills and some had difficulty using basic literacy tools, such as pencils.
- Numeracy skills were moderate, though children had great difficulty identifying numbers.
- After viewing, number and shape recognition increased and gender stereotyping decreased.

Children's Television Viewing Habits in Egypt

December 1999

Sesame Workshop commissioned Leo Burnett (Cairo) to manage a study of Egyptian children's television viewing habits (which they sub-contracted to Directions Marketing Research & Services, Cairo). The purpose was to explore the best time to broadcast this series. Nine hundred (900) mothers of children two- to six-years-old participated in face-to-face quantitative interviews in their homes. The mothers were from four different regions of Egypt (Cairo, Alexandria, Delta, and Upper Egypt). Equal numbers of mothers within each region represented three different socioeconomic levels (A/B, C, & D).

Children's Viewing Patterns:

- Across seasons, socioeconomic levels, and regions, children view large amounts of television.
- Slightly less than half of the children participate in additional activities while watching television.
- Children are the primary initiators of television viewing; mothers play a minimal role in program selection.
- Over half of the mothers said that their children view television with someone else in the home, primarily the mother and other children.
- The majority of children have direct access to television at home and almost all of the mothers (99%) said that home is the main place television is viewed. There is a low rate of viewing in daycare settings.

Impact of Four Mock Episodes—Beni Suef (Upper Egypt)

Spring 2000

This study examined the educational impact of four mock episodes of 'ALAM SIMSIM. Sixty 4-6 year old boys and girls from Beni Suef (Upper Egypt) participated. Researchers tested children's performance on a variety of basic literacy, numeracy and social

knowledge skills. In addition, this study included a comparative analysis of the academic skill level of the Beni Suef sample in relationship to a sample of children from Talah El-Menya who were tested in September.

Appeal:

- This study revealed that children are highly attentive to 'ALAM SIMSIM and find it appealing.
- As a group, the children who participated seem to like the characters (Filfil, Khokha, and Nimnim) equally well, though there was a tendency for girls to favor Khokha over other characters.

Educational Impact:

- Counting skills and knowledge of the specific hygiene practices viewed improved after watching.
- After exposure to the episodes, there were no changes in children's performance in the other areas tested, including literacy and gender role perceptions.

Research on Children's Basic Skills and Social Knowledge

September 1999 & Spring 2000

This study examined basic literacy, numeracy, and social skills and compared the Beni Suef sample's academic skill level [**Impact of Four Mock Episodes**] to the sample of children from Talah El-Menya tested in September 1999 [**Second Formative Study**]. Overall, these studies found a moderately low level of basic skills and social knowledge among the participating children, though skill levels of the children in Beni Suef were slightly higher than those of the children in Talah El-Menya. Specifically, this study found:

Cognitive Skills:

- Children demonstrated low levels of basic cognitive skills, including literacy and numeracy.
- Overall, older children tended to perform better than younger, and boys performed better than girls.

Social Knowledge Skills:

- Most children knew all four body parts tested, as well as information regarding basic hygiene and the environment.
- Only a third of the children, however, correctly identified a picture of a computer, with more boys correctly identifying it than girls.

Gender Stereotyping:

- Most children made strongly defined distinctions with regard to gender roles and these seemingly increase with age.

- Reading was the only examined activity that was clearly not overwhelmingly seen as the sole domain of only one gender.

A Review of 9 Sample Episodes

August 2000

Dr. Badawi evaluated 9 episodes of 'ALAM SIMSIM. Overall, Dr. Badawi found that 'ALAM SIMSIM was relatively comparable to other international coproductions of Sesame Street and the US version. In Dr. Badawi's report he noted that the most striking feature of 'ALAM SIMSIM is that it is a "courageous production," inasmuch as he found the crew willing to use aspects of Egyptian life as the source of material for the program. He commended the use of Standard colloquial Arabic in the program and recommended an increased use of the Educated colloquial (level 3) and Fusha (level 2). He also recommended that the series continue to address issues relevant to the fact that the majority of Egypt's children live in abject poverty and to accurately represent Egyptian life and culture. He noted that in some instances in the segments he reviewed, individuals who were not wealthy were shown as having an abundance of food. He cautions that this portrayal is misrepresenting their lifestyle and advises that caution should be taken to make sure that whatever groups are featured, are portrayed accurately.

National Omnibus Survey I

November 2000

MEMRB International (Egypt), a research and consultancy group, conducted a national door-to-door Omnibus survey among 1,006 men and women aged 18 and over in Egypt. Based on the survey's results, it is recommended that publicity of the series be increased, particularly among rural, low-SES, lesser-educated households and that factors which constrain viewing for these populations be identified further. In addition, adults should be encouraged to watch the program with their children. The survey included several questions to assess viewership of 'ALAM SIMSIM and found:

- *Child Awareness:* About one-third of these adults reported that their children view 'ALAM SIMSIM. Overall, children in urban areas watch more than those in rural. Of those children who watch, most watch "regularly."
- *Adult Awareness:* Almost one-quarter of these adults reported that they themselves view 'ALAM SIMSIM. Factors positively associated with higher levels of awareness included education and income. In addition, women tended to be more familiar with the show than men.

National Omnibus Survey II

February 2001

In February 2001 MEMRB International (Egypt) conducted another national omnibus survey in Egypt. 1,004 Egyptian men and women, aged 18 and over, representing both

rural and urban regions of Egypt, and predominately from the middle and lower socioeconomic levels, participated. Comparison with the previous omnibus study indicates gains in viewership among both children and adults. Specific findings and conclusions from this study include:

Series' Reach & Viewership:

- Over 60% of the sample reported that their children view *'ALAM SIMSIM*. The results reveal a rise of 25% in general viewership among children since MEMRB's November 2000 survey and a rise of 17% among the series' most regular viewers.
- About one-third of the adults reported that they themselves view the program, with almost half of these adults viewing regularly.
- Viewership increased (since the November survey) by over 25% for both urban and rural viewers, and a majority of urban (68%) and rural (55%) children view the series.
- Nearly one-third of the respondents were aware that *'ALAM SIMSIM* has a corporate sponsor and a majority of these participants correctly identified it.

Recommendations Based on this Survey:

- While adult viewing has increased, a campaign to promote co-viewing (parents with their children) could help maximize the program's effects.
- Although the proportion of low-income respondents viewing *'ALAM SIMSIM* has *'ALAM SIMSIM* doubled since the last survey, there remains a need to examine factors limiting access to the program, and to increase its impact with supplemental educational materials.
- The increasing popularity of the series presents an opportunity to boost the recognition of the sponsor.

Comparison of Appeal: *'ALAM SIMSIM* and *Bougy and Tamtam*

February 2001

This study examined the relative appeal of two popular children's television series, *'ALAM SIMSIM* and *Bougy and Tamtam*, by comparing children's reactions to four episodes of each show. Eighty-four 4-6 year old boys and girls from low-income families in Cairo participated.

- *Attention Level:* Although attention to both programs was moderately high, attention to *'ALAM SIMSIM* was slightly higher than attention to *Bougy and Tamtam*. Of the *'ALAM SIMSIM* segments, attention was highest for Karma Productions (Egypt) animation, live-action films, and the opening song.
- *Appeal:* Both *'ALAM SIMSIM* and *Bougy and Tamtam* had high name recognition. For *'ALAM SIMSIM*, studio scenes were the most frequently mentioned of the three formats (studio, live-action, and animation) when

children talked about what they liked about the program. The '*ALAM SIMSIM*' characters had high name recognition and appeal, with no single character emerging as an overall favorite.

- *Basic Skills & Gender Stereotypes:* The study revealed generally low levels of basic literacy and numeracy skills. As might be expected given the limited time between the pre- and post-tests, children demonstrated no learning gains in basic skills from viewing either '*ALAM SIMSIM*' or *Bougy and Tamtam*. The children demonstrated well-defined gender stereotypes.

Formative Research, Supplemental Materials: Commentary and Reactions of Nursery School Teachers and Children to Poster and two Worksheets

June 2001

To assist in the development of print materials to support and extend the educational reach of Alam Simsim, the research team pre-tested prototypes versions of an alphabet and number poster and alphabet worksheets with a group of teachers and children in a C-D SES private nursery school in Cairo. A group of 8 nursery school teachers and 12 boys and girls ages 4-6 participated.

The insights of the students and teachers helped the team to refine the materials so that the presentation was clearer and more comprehensible. Making the poster less crowded, enlarging the frame of the letter and picture blocks on the poster and placing the letters clockwise rather than counter-clockwise around the border were some of the changes that the producers instituted based on the results of the study.

A Preliminary Look at the Educational Impact of ALAM SIMSIM

August 2001

This study was designed as a preliminary assessment of the educational impact of '*ALAM SIMSIM*' on young Egyptian children. Researchers tested children on a range of basic educational skills before broadcast of '*ALAM SIMSIM*', and then again 7 months after the series went on the air. The research examined the basic skills of children ages 4 to 6 in three different areas of Egypt: Upper Egypt (Beni Suef), Delta (Banha) and Cairo. All 335 of the children who participated attended day-care centers and were from low-income families (estimated SES rating C or D).

The examination was designed as a preamble to a more extensive study of the educational impact of the program should funding for such research become available. Because this study did not include an experimental control group (that is, a comparison group of children who had not been exposed to the series), we cannot attribute learning gains directly to '*ALAM SIMSIM*'; the study aims, however, to identify those areas in which

children may have been affected by exposure to 'ALAM SIMSIM by including extensive comparisons of children's performance before and after exposure to the broadcast. Furthermore, the research has an important secondary purpose: to catalog Egyptian pre-schoolers' performance in a range of social and academic skill areas. Such a record may serve as an important baseline for future studies.

Our analysis revealed that children's performance on a range of basic skills was generally consistent from pre- to post-broadcast of 'ALAM SIMSIM, with a few notable exceptions: After viewing, children demonstrated apparent learning of a basic cognitive skill (**shape recognition**), greater awareness of **computers** and **increased knowledge about certain hygiene practices**.

ALAM SIMSIM Marketing Survey in Egypt - 2002 **January, 2002**

MEMRB International (Egypt), a research and consultancy group, conducted the third part of a study of viewership trends that began in November 2000. The researchers conducted the nation-wide, door-to-door survey in rural and urban regions of Egypt among a representative sample of 506 Egyptian mothers of children whose ages range from two to eight years old. This study found a continued positive viewership trend since MEMRB began tracking the program in November 2000, with 99% of urban and 86% of rural children viewing the program (compared to 68% of urban children and 55% of rural children in February 2001 and 40% of urban children and 30% of rural children in November 2000). The main findings of the research are:

Awareness and Appeal:

- Most of the mothers (92%) reported that their children are aware of the program. And 83% report that it is their child's most favorite program.
- A large majority of both urban and rural children view (99% urban and 86% rural). About half the mothers (54%) reported that they themselves view ALAM SIMSIM.

Viewing Frequency:

- Of the mothers who reported that their children view the program, most (80%) noted that their children view "regularly." (19% watch it from time to time and only 1% seldom watch it.)

Co-Viewing Habits:

- All the mothers reported that their kids watch ALAM SIMSIM at home. Almost half of the children (47%) watch it with their siblings and 36% watch it with their mother.

Character Appeal:

- In general, the puppet characters were favored over the human characters. The girl puppet Khokha emerged as the most favored character on a number of

measures. 54% of mothers reported that Khokha was their child's favorite. (Filfil and Nimnim received 27% and 17% respectively on this measure.) Khokha was also rated as "excellent" by 91% of the mothers (on a 5-point rating scale). Nimnim and Filfil each received an "excellent" rating as reported by a little more than half the mothers (56% and 54% respectively).

Ad Recall:

- More than half the mothers (59%) were not able to identify any commercials airing before ALAM SIMSIM. 16% of the mothers reported that they remember seeing Mrs. Suzanne Mubarak reading with Khokha and Nimnim.

Sponsorship awareness:

- A majority of the mothers who were familiar with the program (65%) did not notice that ALAM SIMSIM was sponsored by any company. Only 20% noticed there was a company sponsoring the program and the remaining (15%) of the respondents did not know or remember.
- About 1/3 (35%) of the respondents who knew the show had a sponsor were able to identify the name of the company (Americana).
- When the mothers were informed that Americana brands (KFC, Koki Chicken, Farm Frites and Heinz) sponsor ALAM SIMSIM the majority (57%) reported that it improved their impression of these companies.

Outreach Focus Groups: Testing appeal of ideas for outreach materials

October, 2002

This study, conducted in the governorates of Cairo, Beni Suef and Minya, was designed to gauge interest in and get feedback for ideas on outreach materials for *Alam Simsim* from parents. Feedback was solicited from parents, NGO leaders, school teachers and nursery caregivers through a total of ten focus groups (8-14 participants per group)-- 3 in Cairo, 3 in Minya, and 4 in Beni Suef. The study included six parent groups (three groups of mothers and three of fathers), two groups of local NGO leaders, one group of schoolteachers and one group of nursery caregivers.

Main Findings:

Participants expressed an interest in having health-related outreach materials. They also voiced a strong desire to have materials created specifically for them (not just child-oriented materials) and were especially interested in having training sessions and materials related to issues about child development and child-rearing. They also felt that it was important for training sessions to be tailored to the needs and interests of the training group participants. Mothers and schoolteachers voiced a preference for gender-segregated training sessions.

Participants expressed an interest in learning more about hygiene and cleanliness; doctor's check ups; how to cope with emergency situations such as burns, consumption of a poisonous food etc. Members of the NGO/CDA groups also expressed an interest in

addressing the importance of dissemination of information on health care related issues, raising awareness of healthy nutrition and vaccination-related issues.

In addition to health-related topics, participants expressed interest in a variety of other topics such as issues related to child development, discipline, sexuality, gender and parenting/teaching tips.

Focus Group Studies for Outreach Materials to test appeal and comprehension *November, 2002*

Research was conducted in Cairo and Beni Suef to assess the appeal and comprehension of outreach materials being created for *Alam Simsim*. A research team, commissioned by Al Karma, conducted a total of 11 focus groups (of 7-8 people each), which included a total sample of 89 individuals—47 parents (25 mothers; 22 fathers) and 42 children ages 5-6 and 7-9 (26 girls, 16 boys). The study included six parents' groups—4 in Cairo and 2 in Beni Suef-- and five children's groups-- 4 in Cairo and 1 in Beni Suef. The main purpose of this research, was to test the clarity of the illustrations in conveying intended educational messages and to test the language used in the texts accompanying the illustrations, specifically whether or not it is successful in conveying the intended messages to both literate and illiterate subject groups.

Materials Tested

In these focus groups, children were presented with **flashcards, hygiene and nutrition storybooks** in one of the Cairo groups and in Beni Suef and a **vaccination storybook** in one of the Cairo groups. When testing the books, the children were first presented with the illustrations and then were shown the illustrations with accompanying text. A **calendar**, which is intended to be used by parents and children together, was tested with children in one of the Cairo groups and with parents in one of the Cairo groups and Beni Suef. Parents in Cairo and Beni Suef also provided feedback on a **vaccination reminder card** and a **brochure for parents**.

Highlights/ Main Findings:

- There was **high appeal and recognition of Alam Simsim and its muppets** in both children and parent groups, in urban and rural areas with literate and illiterate viewers.
- The participants showed a **high degree of interest and enthusiasm for the materials** they were presented with. The majority of illustrations were easily identified by both children and parent groups and the language used in the text was clearly understood by children and parents, literate and illiterate subjects.
- The **language used in the texts was easily understood by both literate and illiterate subjects** (when the text was read to them). Participants made some

comments about some of the text descriptions (for example, that a specific sentence wasn't clear or didn't seem to accurately describe the related image) which are being considered in the revision process.

- The participants were, for the most part, **able to clearly identify the messages being conveyed through the featured images**. There were a few pictures for which participants made specific suggestions to make the images more realistic and to better convey their messages. These images are currently being modified based on the feedback received.
- They expressed a **strong interest in getting information about issues related to children's behavioral patterns and healthy child-rearing practices**, which the team is considering incorporating in the next stage of our outreach program.

Overall, the materials were well-received by the participants and for the most part, the feedback received in Cairo was similar to the feedback in Beni Suef. The one main exception to this, was the parent piece, which generated different reactions in Cairo (urban, mostly literate subjects) and Beni Suef (rural, illiterate subjects). The Cairo groups felt that the information provided in the parent piece would not be that useful to them, while the Beni Suef participants responded very favorably to the parent piece. Participants made some specific comments about some of the illustrations, which the team is using to guide them in revising the brochure.

These focus group sessions were very useful in providing the *Alam Simsim* team with specific feedback about which materials clearly convey intended messages and which need to be finetuned. Feedback from the focus group participants has helped to guide the team in modifying the materials to maximize their appeal and impact.

Impact Research for *Alam Simsim's* Health Education Outreach Initiative
September/October 2003 and February, 2004

Social Planning, Analysis and Administration Consultants (SPAAC) in Cairo, Egypt, under the leadership of Drs. Sarah Loza and Iman Soliman, conducted research to assess learning that took place after exposure to *Alam Simsim's* outreach initiative, which focused on health, hygiene and nutrition and which trained 10,474 parents and caregivers in Cairo, Minya and Beni Suef.

Researchers interviewed 300 parents and caregivers and 200 children (ages 4-7) from mid-low income communities in Cairo and Beni Suef, Egypt. Half were assigned to an experimental group that participated in the outreach program while the other half were in a "control" group that was not exposed. In addition, a cultural anthropologist conducted in-depth observations of five households in the experimental communities before and after exposure.

The researchers concluded from their comparisons of pre-post exposure interview responses and behavioral observations that the outreach program had a substantial impact on the health, hygiene and nutrition knowledge and practices of people participating in the outreach program. The most notable changes occurred with respect to knowledge of hygiene and health practices such as the use of a personal towel (rather than a shared one), increased percentages of children that brush their teeth everyday, increased knowledge of vaccinations and general increased levels of cleanliness. Parents and caregivers also reported that the program information they appreciated most and which had the greatest influence on their practices was related to food and nutrition. There was, for example, substantial evidence that households of parents and caregivers who participated in the outreach activities are now eating more fresh fruits and vegetables. In short, the Alam Simsim Health Education Outreach Initiative had a measurable, positive impact on the health, hygiene and nutrition habits of those who participated.

APPENDIX C
PROMOTING GIRLS' EDUCATION ON ALAM SIMSIM, EGYPT'S
SESAME STREET

Alam Simsim aims to provide young Egyptian children and their families with an entertaining, educational television experience that is designed to help prepare children for school. The series was developed using the Sesame Workshop production model,¹ which involves a close collaboration between producers, researchers and educators. All television and outreach materials produced for the series are guided by a *Statement of Educational Objectives* developed by Egyptian education specialists who determined the educational framework for the series. The document presents a range of educational objectives of specific relevance to young Egyptian children including basic academic (literacy and numeracy) as well as social, emotional and cognitive development goals.



The high rates of illiteracy and low levels of education of girls and women throughout Egypt highlight the need for widespread educational initiatives aimed specifically at Egyptian girls.² With its popularity and demonstrated wide reach even to the most disadvantaged areas,³ *Alam Simsim* is a practical vehicle for providing children with tools to help them develop literacy and critical thinking skills, as well as to model positive messages about the capabilities and achievements of girls and women.

Alam Simsim's Approach to Girls' Education

Woven into the fabric of all aspects of *Alam Simsim's* television and outreach material are age-appropriate messages designed to promote literacy and other basic skills in a context that values women and girls and the contributions they make to society. The program makes a concerted effort to portray boys and girls as equals and not to single out girls or exclude boys. It strives to neither demean nor glorify either gender, while at the same time endeavoring to counter negative attitudes and the significant gender gaps that have resulted from girls' limited education experiences. Five fundamental values serve as a framework for guiding *Alam Simsim's* approach to girls' education:

1. The belief that girls and boys have **equal rights** and responsibilities.
2. The belief that boys and girls should be proud of their talents and accomplishments and that they should be encouraged to experience and express feelings of **self-worth, pride and confidence in their abilities**.
3. The belief that boys and girls have **feelings** and that there are not gender-specific ways to express them (e.g., it is okay for boys and girls to cry when feeling pain).

¹ Fisch, S.M. & Truglio, R.T. (Eds.) (2001). *G is for growing*. (p. xvii). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

² Rouchdy, M.S. Girls' Education in Egypt. (1998). Unpublished Document, prepared for the Children's Television Workshop.

³ MEMRB (2002). *Alam Simsim marketing survey in Egypt*. Cairo: Middle East Marketing Research Bureau.

4. The belief that **professions** are not gender-specific and that boys and girls can grow up to be what they would like to be.
5. The belief that household, community and civic **responsibilities** are not gender-specific (e.g., boys & girls can help around the house; women can hold government offices; all have an obligation to contribute).

Setting and Characters

To forward *Alam Simsim's* girls' education aims, the producers paid particular attention to the context of the series and the development of its characters. Learning opportunities abound in the program's setting which includes a store and a friendly library that are frequented by *Alam Simsim's* characters. Furthermore, the program highlights men and women in a wide variety of roles and, specifically, presents men and women fulfilling jobs and responsibilities that could be viewed as non-traditional for their genders.



In accordance, *Alam Simsim* features a variety of female role models in studio, live action and animation segments and in outreach materials who serve to promote the series' fundamental gender equity values. The most prominent of these is Khokha, a vibrant and intelligent female puppet character who is one of the series' stars. Khokha, a "four-year-old" girl with a passion for learning, is inquisitive, curious and constantly seeks information about the world around her. Khokha loves to come up with solutions to problems and is often seen creating something in her pretend workshop.

Khokha's interests and personality characteristics are designed to promote girls' education in a naturalistic way. Girls and boys alike can see the power of a love of learning and discovery as they observe this engaging female. Khokha and the human girls and women that appear on the program, as well as the male characters who support them, provide positive strategies for coping with life's ups and downs and serve as role models that viewers can emulate.

Explicit vs. Implicit Messages

Alam Simsim's girls' education objectives are expressed throughout the series in a variety of ways. Each segment of *Alam Simsim's* magazine format, whether studio, live-action or animation, is explicitly designed to present a single message from the *Statement of Educational Objectives*. In addition, important educational themes are implicitly modeled throughout the series. This use of both direct and indirect presentations of educational messages has proven to be an effective way to promote learning and is a strategy that applies to the presentation of the girls' education objectives. For example, one studio segment, which is designed to illustrate girls' limitless career opportunities, features

Khokha imagining herself in different possible professions when she grows up — as an astronaut, a police officer, a doctor, etc.

This kind of direct learning about occupational choice is coupled with other segments that use a more indirect, implicit approach. For example, the very fact that Khokha loves books and reading implicitly forwards the message that reading is something that girls can do. Thus, even when a segment is designed to present another educational objective, the girls' education message is integrated in the context of the segment through Khokha's personality and/or the activities in which she engages. By modeling girls as active learners in a wide range of segments, the series presents girls' education as something that is obtainable and beneficial. Through its multi-pronged approach, *Alam Simsim* provides children with various ways to be exposed to positive messages related to girls' education and strives to help its audience members appreciate the importance of education in their lives.