



SCHOLARSHIPS & TRAINING FOR EGYPTIAN PROFESSIONALS

Contract # AID-OAA-I-12-00009 (FORECAST IDIQ)

AID-263-TO-14-000001

Semi-Annual Progress Report

Submitted by:
Joseph Ghanem
STEP Chief of Party
Institute for International Education (IIE)
Date: October 30, 2015

Contents

I.	Executive Summary	3
II.	Program Highlights	3
A.	Official HEI Launch Event.....	3
B.	U.S. Congressional Visit – U.S. Embassy Cultural Affairs, Egypt	4
C.	USG Visits.....	4
D.	HEI STEM and MBA Cohort 1 launch ceremony	5
III.	Progress: Academic Programs	6
A.	Cohort I: Placement of 53 HEI MBA and 21 HEI STEM undergraduate scholars at US Universities.....	6
1.	MBA Scholars.....	6
2.	Undergraduate Students in STEM	7
3.	TraiNet and Visa Compliance for Cohort/Participant Processing.....	7
4.	Pre-Departure Orientations (PDO): July 28-31, 2015	8
5.	Orientation Upon Arrival to U.S.	11
6.	Status of HEI scholars at their university.....	12
B.	HEI Undergraduates in STEM-Cohort II: Recruitment and Selection Process	12
C.	HEI MBA Cohort II: Recruitment and Selection Process.....	14
D.	HEI MBA Cohort II: University Preparation Program.....	16
IV.	Technical Assistance Initiatives	18
A.	Youth and Adult Literacy Assessment	18
B.	Market Research /Assessment of Local Organizations (CSOs) working on Combatting Violence Against Women (VAW) and/or Gender Based Violence (GBV).....	18
C.	Mid-term Evaluation of University Career Development Centers (CDC)	19
V.	Professional Development/Training Initiatives	21
A.	Training on Prevention & Control of Viral Hepatitis.....	21
B.	Early Grade Learning (EGL) Teacher Training Program	21
VI.	Deliverables	23
VII.	Administrative	23
VIII.	Challenges Encountered, Actions Taken and/or Resolutions.....	23
IX.	Success stories.....	26
X.	Testimonials.....	26

XI. Documentation of best practices that can be taken to scale..... 28
ATTACHMENTS LIST:..... 30

I. Executive Summary

This progress report covers the period from April 1, 2015, to September 30, 2015. During this reporting period, IIE Cairo team and IIE New York and Washington DC offices worked closely on managing testing requirements and placements for Cohort 1 of the Higher Education Initiative (HEI) MBA and STEM undergraduate scholarships in various universities across the United States. A significant project achievement consists of the successful placement of 53 MBA participants and 21 undergraduates at U.S. universities identified as the best academic fit for each scholar. As of mid-September 2015, all Cohort 1 scholars had begun studies at their respective universities.

The IIE team also worked very closely with project partners AFS-Egypt (AFS), Education For Employment (EFE), Nahdet El Mahrousa (NM) and the American University in Cairo (AUC) for the outreach, recruitment and university preparation of Cohort 2 of the HEI MBA and STEM scholarships. USAID approved 50 MBA and 27 STEM undergraduate students to participate in Cohort 2 of the HEI scholarships program. IIE continues to coordinate closely with project partners on a regular basis; sharing feedback and lessons learned that can be applied to improve the overall implementation process.

Aside from the ongoing academic programs, STEP and its partners implemented five technical assistance and professional development and training assignments in support of USAID/Egypt's Development Objectives.

1. Assessment of Youth and Adult Literacy (Y&AL) programs in Egypt: ongoing.
2. Mid-term evaluation of USAID-funded University Career Development Centers (CDCs) in Egyptian Public Universities: ongoing.
3. Assessment of local organizations whose activities are focused on gender-based violence or violence against women: completed.
4. Training for Ministry of Education (MOE) professionals in Early Grade Learning (EGL), focusing on EGR reading and mathematics: ongoing.
5. Training Workshops on Viral Hepatitis –Ministry of Health: completed.

II. Program Highlights

A. Official HEI Launch Event

On April 26, 2015, the U.S. State Department, in cooperation with USAID and the U.S. Embassy, officially launched the U.S.-Egypt Higher Education Initiative (HEI) program. The event was hosted at the American University in Cairo, downtown Tahrir campus, Ewart Hall. The event was moderated by Mr. Ibrahim El Kerdany, an ex-TV presenter and an AFS Alumnus; it was attended by high level representatives, including the Minister of Higher Education, the Minister of International Cooperation, the U.S. Ambassador to Egypt, a U.S. female astronaut, and the USAID/Egypt Mission Director. IIE Regional Director, STEP COP and DCOP, and 40 Cohort 1 HEI MBA and STEM undergraduate scholars also attended the event.

An HEI STEM student and an HEI MBA scholar participated in a panel discussion with the above-mentioned dignitaries to share their experiences, their study objectives, and their hopes for the future, highlighting how the scholarship opportunity will contribute to realizing their long term objectives. *(Please see Annex I for the HEI participant speeches at the event as well as a link to the ceremony video).*

B. U.S. Congressional Visit – U.S. Embassy Cultural Affairs, Egypt

On May 3, 2015, Cohort 1 HEI MBA and STEM undergraduate representatives met at the U.S. Embassy with a congressional staff delegation (STAFFDEL) from the U.S. Foreign Affairs Committee visiting Egypt. The STAFFDEL asked to meet Egyptian youth benefiting from USG assistance and seen as “future leaders,” A USAID/Egypt Officer noted that the meeting was “poignant and compelling.” STAFFDEL representatives stated that the meeting with the scholars was “the best and liveliest [meeting]” of their four-day visit. During the meeting and as reported by a USAID/Egypt Officer, a USG-supported student expressed sadness that he seemed to be more accepted in the U.S. than in Egypt and wished to live abroad. HEI scholarship students questioned his stance and asked incredulously "who will be the change" to carry out the work that needs to be done in Egypt,

STAFFDEL Members:

Thomas M. Hill, Professional Staff Member, HCFA
Joan Condon, Senior Professional Staff Member, HCFA
Jessica Kahan Kelch, Policy Coordinator and counsel, HCFA

The following scholars represented the HEI cohorts 1 program:

- Dalia Galal Hussein Soliman Hassan, HEI MBA
- Eman Attya Fahmy, HEI MBA
- Katreen Sameh Mikhael, HEI STEM

C. USG Visits

1. Assistant Secretary, Foreign Assistance Resources, U.S. Department of State:

During a visit to Cairo, Assistant Secretary Hari Sastry met on May 18, 2015, with ten representatives of the HEI Cohorts 1 scholars at the American University in Cairo, Zamalek campus. As reported by a USAID/Egypt Officer, the visit was “... a success. Assistant Secretary Sastry was deeply moved and impressed by the promising women and proud that they got accepted into good quality universities.”

The meeting was attended by the following USG officials:

- Hari Sastry, Assistant Secretary for U.S. Foreign Assistance Resources
- Sherry Carlin, USAID/Egypt Mission Director

- Arturo Acosta, USAID/Egypt Education Officer
- Julie Fossler, USAID/Egypt Director of Communications
- Samah Eid, STEIP ACOR, USAID Egypt
- Konrad Turski, Control Officer, USAID Egypt

2. USAID Senior Advisor for International Education:

During a visit to Cairo, on June 4, 2015, USAID Senior Advisor for International Education, Christie Vilsak, met eight HEI MBA and STEM scholars. She later noted: “Visiting with the young women who will receive the STEP Scholarships was a highlight of my visit to Egypt...Thanks so much for making it possible for me to meet these determined young women. They are certainly the future of Egypt...I am having dinner tonight at the National Arboretum with a few hundred people. I will certainly let them know about some of the future Egyptian leaders I met last week in Cairo.”

The meeting was attended by the following USG officials:

- Christi Vilsak, Sr. Advisor for International Education, USAID
- Annie Harris, Special Assistant to the Sr. Advisor for International Education, USAID
- Katie Donohoe, Director Education Office, USAID/Egypt
- Arturo Acosta, Education Officer, USAID/Egypt
- Samah Eid, STEP ACOR, USAID/Egypt

3. USAID Assistant Administrator:

As noted in the previous report, IIE facilitated a visit by the Assistant Administrator, Paige Alexander, and by the USAID/Egypt Mission Director, Mary Ott, on February 9, 2015, with Cohorts 1 HEI STEM and MBA scholars. After the meeting, Assistant Administrator Paige Alexander expressed interest in a follow up meeting at USAID/Washington with Cohorts 1 participants upon arrival for their IIE orientation sessions in Washington, DC.

The follow up meeting took place in August 2015, as scholars arrived in the United States for their program orientations prior to departing to their respective universities. Ms. Alexander expressed interest in following their accomplishments as they move ahead with their studies. On the following USAID Facebook link, photos of the visit are on the third row:

<https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.192739464116920.48329.184480161609517&type=1>

Photos of USG visits can be viewed in Annex II.

D. HEI STEM and MBA Cohort 1 launch ceremony

On July 28, 2015, IIE hosted the launch of Cohort 1 HEI STEM and MBA scholarships at the Pyramisa Hotel, from 6 to 8pm. The event was held to celebrate the first group of students selected to enroll in U.S. universities. Attending the event were all MBA and STEM scholars and some family members, media representatives, IIE team members and the following dignitaries:

- Lamloum Moussa , General Director for Secondary Education, Egypt Ministry of Education
- Katie Donohoe, USAID Education Office Director
- Jana Wooden, USAID Education Office Specialist
- Samah Eid, USAID STEP COR
- Tara Simpson, USAID Education Office, Science and Technology
- Julie Fossler, USAID Department of Communications Director

Mr. Lamloum Moussa and Ms. Katie Donohoe were guest speakers. STEP COP, Joseph Ghanem, facilitated the event. An undergraduate student and an MBA scholar also shared their experience in the program to date, their thoughts on studying in the United States and their aspirations for the future. *(Please see Annex III for photos of the event and a link to the video).*

III. Progress: Academic Programs

IIE implemented the following academic program activities during the period of April 1–September 30, 2015, related to Cohorts 1 and 2 of the HEI STEM undergraduate and MBA scholarships.

A. Cohort I: Placement of 53 HEI MBA and 21 HEI STEM undergraduate scholars at US Universities

The IIE New York placement team and Washington, DC office have extensive academic and professional expertise in education, training and placement services. Building upon this base of experience and strong relationships with universities across the United States, the IIE team successfully placed participants in academic programs that best match their goals and USAID/Egypt’s objectives.

1. MBA Scholars

a. AUC University Preparation Program:

As mentioned in the previous progress report, 56 MBA scholars participated in the six-month bridge program at AUC. The program ended on April 8, 2015. During the last week, IIE, in coordination with the COR, dismissed two participants from the program due to lack of commitment. The final number of scholars qualified to enroll at U.S. universities is 54.

b. Placement at U.S. universities:

Despite challenges mostly posed by GMAT scores required for entry into universities, IIE succeeded in placing all 54 HEI MBA scholars at well-reputed universities. One of the scholars was nevertheless required to take several additional courses to make up for her low GMAT scores. The additional courses/credits meant the she would need to carry a heavy course load to

complete within the two-year scholarship limitation. With COR's consent, IIE did not process the scholar to travel with her colleagues. IIE advised the scholar to prepare for and retake the GMAT test. If she obtains an acceptable score, she will be able to join MBA cohort 2 participants in Fall 2016. The number of MBA scholars who are currently enrolled at U.S. universities is 53.

2. Undergraduate Students in STEM

a. AUC University Preparation Program:

Eight undergraduate students enrolled in the eight-month AUC bridge year and successfully completed the program on May 31, 2015.

b. Placement at U.S. universities:

IIE placed all 23 undergraduate students in U.S. universities in spite of low TOEFL or SAT scores of some of the participants. Upon release of the Thanaweya Amma scores in late July 2015, two of the STEM undergraduate participants failed to achieve the minimum grades required for participation in the program; in consultation with USAID, IIE disqualified both students from the scholarship program. The number of Cohort 1 HEI STEM participants currently studying in the United States is 21. (*Please see Annex IV for a list of the universities for both programs*).

3. TraiNet and Visa Compliance for Cohort/Participant Processing

a. Initial Meetings, HEI MBA and STEM - Cohorts 1:

On April 7, 2015 and May 2, 2015, the IIE team conducted initial meetings for the 54 MBA and 23 STEM undergraduate students to complete the medical examination forms, sign the conditions of sponsorship and stakeholder responsibilities. In addition, IIE team members conducted the Security Risk and Fraud Inquiry. During these meetings, the scholars signed the required USAID documentation including the conditions of sponsorship which stipulate the J1 visa rules and regulations, the two-year home residency requirement, all sponsor related conditions, and responsibilities of each stakeholder, the participant, IIE, and USAID.

b. Visa Application and Issuance:

IIE's R1 (initiator) entered participants in TraiNet followed by R2 verification, paying particular attention to data entry to ensure accuracy in the visa issuance process for all students. IIE submitted R3 packages in batches to USAID for approval, with the required documentation (e.g. USAID approved nomination letter, passports, training program information sheet, budget, signed conditions of sponsorship, medical eligibility form, HAC enrollment, Security Risk and Fraud Inquiry-SRFI, and stakeholders compact). Once USAID received the DS 2019 forms, the COR scheduled interview appointments for each batch of participants at the U.S. Embassy Consular Office. Thanks to the prompt actions by the R3 approval and the scheduling and

follow-up by the COR, the process succeeded in generating timely visas for all the participants.

c. Medical exams:

During initial meetings with participants, IIE began the medical clearance process for participants, providing them with medical examination forms, vouchers, and briefing them on the process. After the initial exam, the participants scheduled any additional, approved medical tests required. IIE reviewed the completed medical forms and confirmed that all the candidates were cleared to travel without any issues. Two candidates had pre-existing conditions that are covered by CISI, IIE's HAC insurance carrier.

4. Pre-Departure Orientations (PDO): July 28-31, 2015

The main objective of the PDO is to prepare scholars for their travel to U.S. universities. It provides guidance on studying in the United States and on various cultural issues they may face. The content of the PDO was divided into four sections: Leadership Training; Action Planning; Intercultural Orientation; and Administrative (clarification of travel arrangements, accommodation and financial logistics). In coordination with partners, Nahdet El Mahrousa (NM) and AFS, IIE facilitated PDO.

PDO outcomes:

- Participants had a chance to discuss their hopes and concerns for their two-year MBA program/four-year undergraduate program. Hopes as expressed by participants include new experience, networking for new contacts, learning U.S. education system:
 - Networking creates ties with two main groups: those from the home academic and business community that they meet at conferences, symposia, fora, etc., and the local business community, which can provide mentoring and internship opportunities while the students are still in the US.
 - Contacts from the home country prove useful upon the MBA graduates' return to Egypt since they are able to provide information early on related to specializations, and later on, related to job opportunities in Egypt and the region. The training session stressed the importance of making efforts to attend functions, open houses, conferences, and business forums to be introduced to leading academic and business professionals.
 - Learning the US education system refers to (1) the credit system (2) the socratic lecture (3) the learner centered classroom (4) the flipped classroom (5) the student facilitated class and (6) the team-oriented approach to solving case studies. All of these features of the US education system would be somewhat unfamiliar to the Egyptian students from national universities.
- Participants had space to consider and address issues related to being away from home, work and colleagues.
- Participants became more aware of how to meet expectations of two-year/four-year studies in the United States. The session focused a great deal on the expectations of a student in terms of contributing to class discussions, particularly with reference to being

the authority on the business culture and economy in Egypt. The participants also learned that, in the US, the grade will be based more on the student's contribution to the discussions, the class presentation, the case studies and perhaps, but not necessarily an exam. The courses will not be end-loaded as they are in Egypt, and therefore the students will need to put as much emphasis into the first month as the last. The participants also learned about diversity on US campuses, first amendment protected speech, public forums on campuses, co-curricular activities, volunteerism and community service.

- Participants became more aware of how this experience was an opportunity to network for the future.
- Participants became aware of challenges they might face upon their return including implementation of new ideas, policies or procedures.
- Participants are clear about their long term goals and are able to articulate them.
- Participants have a clearer understanding of themselves as leaders, agents for change and managers of change.

The PDO sessions provide the opportunity to review in detail all matters related to studying abroad, giving participants the opportunity to clarify issues before they depart to their universities. During the orientation, participants had ample time to raise questions and concerns related to USAID policies and procedures, cultural issues, their training program, or other issues. IIE provided a participant handbook which covers: sponsorship regulations including Stakeholder Agreements, responsibilities under ADS 252 and 253, Conditions of Sponsorship for J1 visa holders, and logistical arrangements for travel, insurance documents, airline tickets, passports, and per diem.

A summary of PDO sessions follows:

a. Leadership and Action Planning: Dr. George Marquis, Associate Dean, School of Humanities and Social Sciences at AUC, led separate two-day workshops for each of the MBA and STEM scholars on Leadership and Action Planning.

- A one-and-a-half-day Leadership Workshop focused on:
 - The main characteristics / skills related to leadership, and how each scholar can work towards building these skills throughout the duration of their graduate studies.
 - Provide the participants with instruction and guidance on the behavior expected while they are in the United States, and how each participant can best represent Egypt and help alleviate misconceptions or stereotypes.
- A half-day workshop on Action Planning focused on:
 - Overall instruction on the action planning process.
 - Explanation of different phases of action planning (Short, mid and long term goals).
 - In-depth guidance on action planning for short-term goals, with concentration on the first year of study (such as academic targets, extracurricular activities, community involvement, internships).

Participants started their action planning that will guide their professional development goals. It is a best practice for participants to develop action plans for what they intend to achieve after training, including a timeline and the steps they will follow to achieve their goals. Participants started with developing their long-term objectives; they will later work on their short and mid-term objectives.

b. Intercultural Awareness–STEM Undergraduates: in coordination with the IIE team, AFS led the implementation of a one-and-a-half-day session for the 21 undergraduate students and a one-day session for parents.

- The intercultural session for students covered the following topics:
 - U.S. values versus Egyptian values
 - Dorm life
 - Adaptation to change: this topic was covered through the following activities:
 - Adaptation cycle/curve exercise: the change model and how to adapt to change
 - DIE model exercise (Description, Interpretation, Evaluation): how to deal with day-to-day situations; the presenter covered this model through real life scenarios encouraging the participants to share their thoughts and ideas
 - Case studies/role playing (*please refer to Annex V for the case studies used*).

The scenarios covered the following issues:

- Hygiene
 - Personal space
 - Intercultural conflict and how to deal with conflict
- The one-day parents' session addressed concerns parents raised regarding the acclimation of their daughters at U.S. universities, logistics, program schedule, and objectives.

c. Intercultural Awareness – MBA Scholars: in coordination with the IIE team, NM led the implementation of a one-day intercultural orientation session for the 53 MBA scholars. The session was divided into two parts:

- Lessons of Passport to Success (PTS): This addressed cultural differences and provided scholars with tools to deal with conflict resulting from cultural differences. Topics covered in this section: stress management; assertiveness; and gender roles.
- Past experience: a panel of four Egyptian females, who had previously studied in the United States, shared their experience with the scholars. The panelists were: Rawiah Abdallah, MBA graduate from Harvard Business School; Monica Kares, Engineering student at Villanova University; Doaa Hassan and Asmaa Sharaf , two LOTUS scholarship students who participated in a semester abroad. The panelists discussed their experiences in living and studying in the United States, focusing on cultural context. The

session was interactive as the panelists were open to many questions posed by the scholars and were able to draw from first-hand experience.

5. Orientation Upon Arrival to U.S.

By the end of August 2015, all participants had received J1 visa approval and traveled to the United States in six groups between August 5 and September 13, 2015, depending on the start of their university programs. Each group attended a two-day orientation at the IIE Office in Washington DC upon arrival and before departing to their respective universities. In order to provide necessary program information to the scholars, IIE staff conducted orientation programs that used a variety of group work, discussion, and individual reflection methods to cover the following subjects:

a. Goal setting, Leadership, and Gender

- Goals for their programs and how these relate to USAID's goals
- Action planning
- Qualities of a good leader and their own leadership strengths and weaknesses
- Barriers to female leadership in Egypt and how the HEI program will contribute to breaking down these barriers

b. U.S. Culture, Culture Shock, and Support Services

- U.S. cultural norms and their stereotypes of U.S. culture
- Tips for making friends with Americans
- Symptoms of culture shock and what to do if they are experiencing difficulty with adapting

c. Academics

- Differences between Egyptian and U.S. academic systems
- HEI/USAID academic policies
- Academic support services on campus

d. Health, Health Insurance, and Emergencies

- When and how to see a doctor in the U.S.
- Understanding their HEI provided health insurance policy and how to use it
- What to do in an emergency

e. Allowances and Money

- Budgeting and using their MMA wisely
- HEI/USAID allowances (computer, tuition, books, tutoring)
- How to open a bank account and overview of banking and finances in the U.S.
- Taxes

f. Housing

- On-campus versus off-campus housing
- Tips for living with roommates
- Utilities

g. J-1 Visa and USAID Policies

Thomas Crehan from the USAID Middle East Bureau organized meetings for two orientation groups of scholars to meet with USAID and U.S. Department of State officials during their time in Washington, DC. On August 11, a group of 25 scholars in DC for orientation had a meeting at USAID with Paige Alexander, Assistant Administrator of the Bureau for the Middle East, Mary Ott, Senior Deputy Assistant Administrator for the Middle East, and Christie Vilsack, Senior Advisor for International Education, along with several other USAID staff members interested in learning more about the HEI program and interacting with the HEI scholars. Ms. Alexander gave a speech welcoming the scholars to the U.S.; the scholars had time to interact with the USAID staff. On August 17, a group of 20 scholars in DC for orientation had a meeting at the U.S. Department of State with Gerald Feierstein, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary at the Bureau of Near East Affairs

6. Status of HEI scholars at their university

A brief on the progress of each STEM and MBA scholar is attached as *Annex VI*.

B. HEI Undergraduates in STEM-Cohort II: Recruitment and Selection Process

The STEM Cohort 2 recruitment and selection process consisted of the following phases. The previous report addressed phases 1 and 2. This semi-annual report covers phases 3-7.

1. Phase 1: Revision of the application and scoring rubric
2. Phase 2: Review and scoring of applications
3. **Phase 3: Individual interviews**
4. **Phase 4: Home visits**
5. **Phase 5: AUC Placement test (SEPT)**
6. **Phase 6: Final selection camp**
7. **Phase 7: Identification of finalists**

HEI STEM Undergraduate Scholarship Selection Criteria

- Egyptian citizenship.
- Thanweya Amma certificate from public (governmental), official languages (experimental), Azhari, or charity schools (graduates from private schools, private languages, international, or national academies are not eligible).
- Thanaweya Amma diploma to be obtained in 2014 or 2015 with a total average of no less than 90% or Egyptian Secondary Diploma in Science and Technology with a grade of no less than 85% in each of the science and mathematics subjects.
- Active participation in community and volunteer activities.
- Evidence of applicant's financial need.
- Acceptable English language level, evidenced by the submission of a valid score in TOEFL-ITP test of not less than 450 (39 in TOEFL-IBT or 4.0 in IELTS). Test score must have been obtained no earlier than March 2013.
- Desire to study in a STEM related field.

Phase 3: Individual interviews

In total, 401 candidates from 27 governorates applied for Cohort 2 scholarships. The applicants included 53 students from the STEM School for Girls in Maadi. After initial screening of applications, 212 candidates (including 47 STEM School for Girls students) were invited to participate in an individual panel interview conducted jointly by the AFS and IIE teams as follows:

- 205 were invited to be interviewed on April 18 at AFS's premises and, April 24-25, 2015, at Rajac Language School in greater Cairo. 201 showed up.
- Seven, mistakenly omitted, were invited to be interviewed on August 29, 2015, at AFS's premises. Five showed up.

Three member panels interviewed and scored each candidate, approximately a one-hour process per candidate.

Phase 4: Home Visits

Based upon the results of the individual interviews, 147 candidates representing 24 governorates qualified for the next phase in the selection process: home visits. The home visits to each candidate are conducted by the AFS team, with usually two to three AFS team members visiting each candidate and her family at their place of residence. IIE sees the home visits as a critical part of the recruitment and selection process, as during these visits, the AFS team is able to confirm the information provided in the application, review and observe the financial status of each candidate and ensure that the parents are well informed of the scholarship and its requirements, and support their daughters' participation. AFS conducted 141 home visits; five candidates dropped out and AFS was unable to conduct one home visit in North Sinai for security reasons: IIE and AFS agreed to meet the parents in Cairo at a later stage, if the candidate is one of the finalists.

Phase 5: AUC's Standardized English Proficiency Test (SEPT)

As discussed in the previous progress report, Cohort 2 MBA and STEM undergraduates applicants were required to submit valid TOEFL-ITP (minimum of 450) or IELTS (minimum of 4.0) scores with their applications. Since the SAT/ACT, GMAT and TOEFL-IBT tests are mandatory for admission to U.S. universities, applicants unable to score higher than 450 on the TOEFL-ITP upon admission to the program are unlikely to achieve the required level of scores needed for U.S. university admission, even after completing a bridge program at AUC.

Based on the results of the home visits, 91 candidates were short listed for the next phase.

The GOE issued the Thanawya Amma results in mid-July. 70 candidates obtained the required scores and were selected to attend the AUC SEPT placement test as follows:

- 66 candidates were invited to take the SEPT test on August 9, 2015; 62 attended the test (4 candidates were no shows). Of the 62 tested, 43 passed and were eligible to move ahead to the final selection phase.
- Four candidates participated in the final selection camp and were administered the SEPT test on September 6, 2015. Only one obtained a passing grade in SEPT.

Phase 6: Final Selection Camp

IIE partner, AFS, held the final selection camp at the Pyramids Park Hotel on the weekend of September 4-5, 2015. COR Samah Eid, attended the opening session along with IIE team members.

(Please see Annex VII for the agenda). The final group of 47 candidates spent the weekend participating in various group and individual activities during which they were assessed based on various leadership and personality traits. *(Please see Annex VIII for a brief summary of each activity).*

Phase 7: Identification of finalists

Upon completion of all phases of selection and review of the results, IIE submitted a list of 27 finalists representing 12 governorates to USAID for review, with 10 of the 27 students from the STEM School for girls in Maadi. The COR provided approval on September 13, 2015. Eight of the 27 students will begin the University Preparation Program (UPP) at AUC on October 4, 2015. *(Please see Annex IX for a list of the finalists).*

C. HEI MBA Cohort II: Recruitment and Selection Process

The MBA recruitment and selection process consists of the following phases. In the previous reporting period, only phase 1 was addressed. This semi-annual report covers phases 2-6.

1. Phase 1: Revision of the application and scoring rubric
- 2. Phase 2: Review and scoring of applications**
- 3. Phase 3: Group activity camp**
- 4. Phase 4: Individual Interviews**
- 5. Phase 5: AUC Placement tests**
- 6. Phase 6: Identification of finalists**

HEI MBA Scholarship Selection Criteria

- Egyptian citizenship.
- Thanweya Amma certificate from public (governmental), official languages (experimental), Azhari, or charity schools (graduates from private schools, private languages, international, or national academies are not eligible).
- University degree with a minimum cumulative grade of Good from a government university.
- Active participation in community and volunteer activities.
- Evidence of applicant's financial need.
- Acceptable English language level, evidenced by the submission of a valid TOEFL-ITP score of no less than 450 (39 in IBT-TOEFL or 4.0 in IELTS). Test score must have been obtained no earlier than March 2013.
- Desire to study for an MBA degree.

Phase 2: Review and scoring of application

Based on the recruitment process for Cohort 1, IIE worked closely with EFE management to make significant changes to the MBA online application for Cohort 2. The online interface changed entirely, allowing IIE and EFE review teams easier access to candidate information, navigation

between sections, filtering of candidates according to criteria, streamlining supporting document uploads and additional fields for candidate financial reporting. The new application interface did not allow for submission with incomplete required fields, thus ensuring the applicants provide all the necessary information prior to review by the teams. In addition, the revised interface allowed the review teams to monitor in real time the number of candidates from different governorates and the status of each candidate in the application process.

Approximately 3,044 expressions of interest were received for the recruitment of Cohort 2. Approximately 2,364 completed the application forms of which 423 were submitted with the required documents and passed the initial digital screening. Between April 16-30, 2015, IIE reviewed and scored all 423 applications online through the electronic system created by our implementing partner EFE. Each application was reviewed by two team members to ensure consistency in scoring as well as to ensure the above noted criteria were applied. Reviewers also ensured that supporting documentation submitted by each applicant were appropriate and relevant. As a result of the review process, 295 applicants were short-listed for the next selection phase, the group activities camp.

Phase 3: Group activities camp

The group activities camp was held on May 22-23, and May 26, 2015, at EFE's premises in Cairo with the following results:

- 52 candidates did not show up
- 29 were disqualified for failure to provide valid TOEFL certificates from accredited centers
- 214 candidates participated in the group activities

IIE, EFE and Nahdet El Mahrousa (NM) team members served as assessors. A description of the process follows:

- Candidates were divided into groups of four
- Each room hosted two groups
- An evaluator assessed each group
- The first activity was a game that each group worked as a team to complete within a defined period of time
- The second activity consisted of a case study that each group had to discuss as a team and present to the assessor within a defined period of time
- Assessors in each room switched after each activity to minimize personal biases
- At the end of each session, assessors evaluated each of the participants in the groups they observed

The activity scenarios were changed in the afternoon session and each day

Attached as Annex X are the activity scenarios used during the camp.

Phase 4: Individual Interviews

136 participants were short-listed from the group activities camp to attend the individual panel interviews held on June 12 -13, 2015, at EFE's premises in Cairo. There was one no show, and one candidate was interviewed at IIE's premises on June 15, 2015. Each candidate was interviewed by a panel consisting of a member from IIE, EFE, and NM. Candidates were interviewed and scored based on a rubric to maximize consistency. Upon completion of each interview, the panelists discussed their individual scores to reach consensus. The interview and scoring process took, on average, one hour per candidate. After the completion of the individual interviews and the normalization of the scoring bias of the panels, 78 candidates were short listed.

Phase 5: English and GMAT Workshop at AUC

Because travel between governorates during the month of Ramadan is difficult, immediately after the individual interviews were completed and before the short list of candidates was developed, IIE and AUC held a two-day workshop to orient candidates before they took a quasi TOEFL-IBT test and a mock GMAT test to assess their potential. The candidates were divided into two groups: 68 candidates attended the workshop on June 14-15, 2015, and 67 candidates participated in the workshop on June 16-17, 2015.

Phase 6: AUC placement tests

Based on the workshop results, four of the 78 short-listed candidates were removed. AUC administered a SEPT placement test to the remaining 74 candidates on two occasions: 27 candidates from greater Cairo took the test on July 9, 2015; 46 mostly from other governorates took the test on July 26, 2015 (one candidate did not show up).

Phase 7: Identification of Finalists

Based on a combination of SEPT results and scores obtained during the TOEFL and GMAT workshops, AUC ranked 73 candidates. Candidates who scored less than 55 on SEPT were disqualified. IIE selected the top ranked 54 candidates and shared the list of finalists with USAID for approval. The number of MBA scholars targeted for enrollment in U.S. universities as of Fall 2016 is 47. Based on lessons learned from Cohort 1 and in coordination with USAID, IIE recommended a list of 54 to allow for drop-outs and potential dismissal of participants during the UPP. As of September 30, 2015, 50 HEI MBA scholars, representing 17 governorates, are participating in the six-month University Preparation Program at AUC. *(Please see Annex XI for a list of the finalists).*

D. HEI MBA Cohort II: University Preparation Program

AUC University Preparation Program (UPP)–Part 1 (September 6–December 31, 2015)

On September 6, 2015, 50 HEI MBA scholarship participants, representing 17 governorates, began a six-month UPP of English language skills, GMAT and TOEFL preparation, and pre-academic

training at the School of Continuing Education, American University in Cairo, Falaki Center in Bab El Louk. Since it closed its Zamalek campus in June 2015, AUC arranged for accommodation of 30 participants from outside greater Cairo at the AUC faculty housing (shared apartments) in New Cairo. AUC also provides transportation to/from the training site in Bab El Louk. IIE provides participants with a Meals & Incidentals (M&IE) allowance on a monthly basis as well as medical insurance coverage. The remaining 20 participants who reside in greater Cairo receive a daily transportation allowance to allow them to commute to and from the AUC Falaki Center where classes are held.

As approved by USAID, IIE had originally selected 54 candidates representing 19 governorates to enroll in the six-month UPP at AUC. On August 6, 2015, one candidate dropped out before the program started and was replaced by the next ranked scholar from a non-represented governorate. During the first week of the program four candidates dropped out or did not show up and accordingly were disqualified from the program. As reported in paragraph II.A.1.b above, with COR's agreement, a Cohort 1 HEI MBA scholar was not placed at a U.S. university due to a low GMAT score. The scholar is currently doing self-study and will retake GMAT and TOEFL IBT at their own expense for possible placement with Cohort 2. Scholarships at U.S. universities will be awarded to 47 candidates. The finalists in the UPP bridge program will be selected based on the following criteria:

- GMAT score: 40%
- TOEFL score: 30%
- Behavioral rating: 30%

IIE developed evaluation tools for each of the three criteria noted above as well as a description of each behavioral dimension on which candidates are evaluated. IIE shared the evaluation process with AUC management which in turn notified the UPP instructors so they are aware of the process. The evaluation process will include:

- Peer evaluations (students evaluating colleagues anonymously)
- Evaluation of students by instructors

In addition to being evaluated, the participants evaluate their instructors; this helps IIE insure the instruction is strong.

By the first half of September 2015, the 50 HEI MBA Cohort 2 participants had reviewed and signed the UPP policy and financial commitment letter approved by USAID. The letter outlines the rules and regulations for program participation and stipulates that if, upon completion of the UPP, participants decline to continue with the program, they will be required to reimburse the project for the expenses incurred to-date. (*Please see Annex XII for a template*).

Part 1 of the six-month UPP at AUC is divided as follows:

- TOEFL-IBT Test Preparation (120 hrs)
- GMAT Test Preparation including training on critical thinking skills (140 hrs)

These courses are delivered five days a week, five hours each day. Part 2 begins on January 3, 2016; it will cover effective research writing skills, research tools and techniques, and academic reading and critical thinking skills.

By September 30, 2015, the IIE team completed the GMAT test registration process for the 50 HEI MBA Cohort 2 participants. Participants will be tested on December 19, 20, 22 and 26, 2015.

IV. Technical Assistance Initiatives

The following is a summary of the technical activities covered during this period:

A. Youth and Adult Literacy Assessment

Activities continued during this reporting period with the Youth and Adult Literacy assessment requested by the USAID Education Technical Office. As reported previously, the request consists of assessing Egypt's youth and adult literacy needs, ongoing Government of Egypt (GOE) assistance, donor and non-governmental organization (NGO) programs; and best practices and gaps. In addition, the study assessed the capacity building needs of the Community Education Department (CED) under the MOE and the Adult Education Authority (AEA) as well as the capacity of the Community Schools and their potential of hosting Adult Literacy programs.

STEP submitted the draft report to USAID on May 31, 2015; it was reviewed by six USAID Education team members who, on July 8, 2015, provided collective comments and feedback. USAID requested significant changes to the report and provided extensive comments on areas of weakness and recommendations. At STEP's request, a follow up meeting with USAID Education team was held on August 5, 2015. Education Office team members, STEP and CDC Academy representatives attended the meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to clarify USAID expectations and ensure that there was a clear understanding of what USAID expected from the deliverable. As agreed during the meeting, STEP submitted the final report on August 20, 2015. As of September 30, 2015, STEP had not received feedback on the final report.

B. Market Research /Assessment of Local Organizations (CSOs) working on Combatting Violence Against Women (VAW) and/or Gender Based Violence (GBV)

As reported in the last progress report, on March 25, 2015, USAID requested STEP to temporarily suspend activities under this assignment until further notice.

On April 20, 2015, USAID notified STEP to resume the activity. At USAID's request, STEP and its subcontractor met, on May 5, 2015, with USAID to review the new timeline and re-confirm the requirements and deliverables. USAID representatives Taly Lind, Amira Radwan, Amira Taha and Jana Wooden, as well as a STEP representative and the technical expert attended the meeting and reviewed the progress of the task to date.

On May 14, 2015, STEP submitted a draft report to USAID for feedback; a revised report followed on May 21, 2015. STEP submitted the final report on June 2, 2015.

C. Mid-term Evaluation of University Career Development Centers (CDC)

During the last reporting period, STEP received a request from USAID for a mid-term evaluation to determine if the Career Development Centers (CDCs) supported by USAID funded projects, Linking Education & Employment Project (LEEP) and Employability and Career Development Centers (ECDC), are achieving the intended objectives and if the initiatives merit expansion into new public universities. The mid-term evaluation would also provide actionable recommendations of any mid-course corrections and further analyze the effectiveness of the CDCs and recommend the best geographic regions in Egypt for future CDCs.

In cooperation with USAID COR for LEEP and ECDC, Wafaa El Adawy, STEP submitted, on March 19, 2015, a Performance Solution Request (PSR) for this activity to USAID.

On May 12, 2015, USAID and STEP held a meeting to discuss the timeline and deliverables. USAID Education Office representatives Wafaa El Adawy, Arturo Acosta and Samah Eid as well as STEP representatives attended the meeting. The attendees agreed that the assignment would start on June 1, 2015, and end in mid-September 2015 (except for the Arabic translation of the final report).

On May 14, 2015, USAID requested STEP to revise the PSR based on some additional requirements by the USAID program office. By June 3, 2015, two days after the agreed-upon start date of the assignment, STEP had not received the official go-ahead from USAID. With this delay, STEP realized it could no longer conduct the assignment on schedule; and notified USAID. At USAID's request, on June 4, 2015, STEP proposed a revised timeline which established a start date of July 26, 2015. USAID approved the new schedule and, in cooperation with STEP, developed the following timeline:

1. Desk Review and training of data collection team, preparation for data collection tools (week of July 26).
2. Team planning meeting with USAID: Aug 6.
3. Submission of methodology and data analysis plan: Aug 9
4. Submission of a schedule of data collection interviews: Aug 13
5. Conduct data gathering, compilation and analysis: weeks 3-7
6. Debriefing session: week of Sept. 13
7. Draft Report in English (including an Executive Summary): Sept. 24
8. USAID to provide written comments to the Evaluating team as per the draft report peer review outcome: Oct 4 (7 work days from draft report submission)
9. Final Report in English in addition to Executive Summary translated into Arabic: Oct 13 (7 work days after receipt of feedback)
10. Final report translated into Arabic: Nov 15

With STEP's approval, USAID introduced a few modifications to the above timeline, without affecting the start and end dates. On July 13, 2015, USAID issued its official go-ahead to start the assignment.

Leading the implementation of this task was STEP's U.S.-based partner, KNO Consulting, represented by Steven Kelly, who worked in collaboration with STEP's local partner, CDC Academy. On July 26, 2015, both STEP subcontractors (KNO and CDC Academy) met and reviewed the scope of work, agreed on a working agenda for the duration of Steven Kelley's (KNO) stay and assigned roles and responsibilities.

On July 29, 2015, the evaluation team held an introductory meeting with AUC (ECDC project). Present in the meeting were: Maha Guindi – Career Center Executive Director; Maha Fakhry – Career Center Director, Recruitment and Employer Relations; Dalia Awad – Associate Director, Career Advising; Norhan El Badry – ECDC Project Manager; Rana Farag – Senior Finance and Administration Officer; KNO, CDC and STEP representatives. The attendees reviewed the assignment and agreed on the following:

- The task and its nature
- A proposed plan for activities
- Documents required from the implementing partners (WL and AUC)
- Site visits and assistance required from implementing partners.

On the same day, July 29, 2015, the evaluation team held a similar introductory meeting with World Learning (LEEP project). Present in the meeting were: Yasmine El Bendary – LEEP Director; Rania Rabie – Associate; Amr El Nagar – Helwan University CDC Master trainer; Fairouz Omar – Acting Director of Helwan University; CDC, KNO and STEP representatives. The team discussed and agreed upon the same implementation scenario noted above.

On July 30, 2015, the STEP team (IIE, CDC and KNO representatives) met with USAID Education office representatives Arturo Acosta and Wafaa El Adawy to kick off the activities and reiterate expectations and objectives of the assessment. USAID made the following remarks/requests:

- The evaluation team should look at each of the two grantees' performance separately in regards to objectives, indicators, and deliverables. They should not be compared to each other.
- Regarding the five CDCs, the team should seek to identify "best practices" in each that may have value in case of further funding and expansion of the program.
- To avoid a conflict of interest, USAID requested IIE and its partners to submit a Conflict of Interest (C of I) form committing not to bid on a potential USAID's Request for Proposal for the expansion of the Career Development Centers in Egypt. All three partners completed and submitted a C of I.

Following these meetings, IIE implementing partners (IPs), KNO and CDC, worked together on designing the evaluation tools which were subsequently approved by USAID in early August 2015. The data collection team began data collection directly after USAID approved the tools. STEP's partners closely followed the timeline and completed the field work as scheduled. A debrief session was held on September 17 at USAID. Both KNO and CDC Academy participated in presenting findings to USAID. On September 22, 2015, STEP submitted a draft report to USAID. By the closing of this reporting period, STEP received positive verbal feedback on the report and we are waiting for written comments.

V. Professional Development/Training Initiatives

A. Training on Prevention & Control of Viral Hepatitis

During this reporting period, STEP conducted four technical training workshops requested by the USAID Health Technical Office. STEP worked closely with USAID, the Ministry of Health and Population (MOHP), and the US Center for Disease Control (CDC) representatives on all logistical arrangements and requirements for the four workshops. Each group of participants was required to attend two workshops:

- Viral Hepatitis Surveillance, Epidemiology, Lab Training
- Infection Control

Workshops 1 and 3: Prevention and Control of Viral Hepatitis

In coordination with CDC and MOHP, STEP held the first workshop on April 5-8, 2015, at the Pyramisa hotel in Dokki, for Group 1. A total of 31 participants, 21 Male and 10 Female, attended the program; 10 were from greater Cairo and 21 from various governorates. Dr. Akmal Elerian, USAID/Health Senior Program Manager opened the workshop and introduced all stakeholders. Dr. Ehab Attia, MOHE's Director of Hepatitis Control Program, monitored the four-day workshop.

STEP held the second iteration of this workshop (workshop 3) for Group 2 on May 9-14, 2015, at the same location and 30 participants (11 from greater Cairo and 19 from various governorates) attended this training. The participants consisted of 21 Male and 9 Female.

Workshops 2 and 4: Viral Hepatitis Surveillance, Epidemiology, Lab Curriculum Overview

In coordination with MOHP and CDC, STEP held the second workshop, for Group 1, from May 31-June 3, 2015, at the Pyramisa hotel in addition to two site visit days to the Blood Bank and Nasser Institute. A total of 32 participants, 22 Male and 10 Female, attended the program; 10 were from greater Cairo and 22 from various governorates across Egypt.

STEP organized the second iteration of this workshop (workshop 4), for Group 2, from August 1-4, 2015 at the same location. The program included two site visit days to the Ahmed Maher Hospital and the Blood Bank. A total of 34 participants, 22 Male and 12 Female, attended this training, 5 from greater Cairo and 29 from other governorates.

B. Early Grade Learning (EGL) Teacher Training Program

During the previous reporting period, STEP received a request from the USAID Education Office for an Early Grade Learning (EGL) activity consisting of training MOE teachers in Early Grade Reading and Mathematics. This activity includes:

- 1) Training of master trainers;
- 2) Training of school supervisors;

- 3) Training of a school-based coach/mentor from each public school nationwide;
- 4) Training supervisors and senior teachers at district level on monitoring and evaluation of early grade training; and,
- 5) Orientation sessions for school principals to enhance their buy-in and support for early grade learning.

On April 1, 2015, STEP submitted a PSR-T based on meetings with USAID. The PSR-T went through several revisions before USAID signed it on May 6, 2015.

Due to the unique implementation structure of the EGL activity and multiple partners involved in the coordination, logistics, planning and implementation, meetings are frequent between USAID, the MOE and the implementing partners (PLP, STEP/ Keys). The stakeholders held several coordination and planning meetings during this reporting period; for the purposes of this report, only meetings resulting in major decisions or milestones are reported.

USAID Education office and the implementing partners held meetings on June 22, 25, 28 and July 1, 2015; they discussed and agreed on the implementation plan with regards to the EGL activities in coordination with the MOE.

Following is a summary of the discussions:

- Keys is the training entity responsible for training master trainers, monitoring and following up on training implementation at the Mudireya and Idara levels.
- PLP and Keys will use the cascade model to disseminate training to the early grade teachers throughout Egypt.
- The Professional Academy for Teachers (PAT) will review and accredit new training materials provided by PLP in July 2015.
- All trainers must be PAT certified. PAT also requires that trainers have to be specialized in the subject matter.

On July 14, 2015, USAID, PLP, PAT, STEP and Keys representatives held an orientation meeting at MOE to inform the MOE-EGL Unit of the objectives of the EGL training assistance provided by both projects, STEP and PLP, as one coordinated team. USAID, STEP, PLP and Keys also clarified the roles and responsibilities of all parties involved.

As a result of circumstances faced by MOE and their effects on its scope of work, STEP revised the PSR-T and submitted an amended version on July 30, 2015, along with a revised budget. At USAID's request, STEP and Keys representatives met on August 2, 2015, with USAID Education Office representatives and the COR to discuss the changes in the PSR-T and their effects on the implementation of various activities. Although changes are continuously occurring on the timing, scheduling and logistics of the activities, the attendees agreed that the modules, as approved in the original PSR-T, have not changed. As a result, USAID authorized STEP to proceed with the activities as planned until modifications to the PSR-T are finalized.

On August 26, 2015, the STEP management team met with USAID Education Office team members, the COR and ACOR in addition to Keys Program Manager. The STEP COP provided a brief overview of the structure of STEP project and funding mechanism. The discussions then moved to the implementation of the EGL assignment. After reviewing the additional requests made on a regular basis by the MOE-EGL Unit and STEP's efforts in accommodating these requests, the

USAID Education team clarified that, before they could approve/disapprove additional requests, they need to receive a revised budget. STEP committed to submitting a budget based on the last revised scope. Once approved by USAID, it would serve as a budget ceiling. Additional requests would then be accommodated if the budget would not be impacted, with the assumption that the revised budget would remain in the same neighborhood as the originally approved budget. STEP would keep the Education team aware of all requests based on which the Education Team may decide to cancel or downsize activities to accommodate others, within budget limitations. STEP worked with Keys to revise the budget accordingly and submitted a budget to USAID based on the last developed scope on August 26, 2015. On August 27, 2015, STEP followed up with a revised PSR-T and dissemination plan.

VI. Deliverables

During the reporting period, STEP submitted the following deliverables:

- Accruals report with a pipeline analysis on June 15, 2015
- Annual workplan with a pipeline budget through the life of the project on August 31, 2015
- Annual PMP on August 31, 2015
- Accruals report with a pipeline analysis on September 10, 2015

In addition, STEP submitted a final report on the assessment of local organizations working on VAW and GBV on June 2, 2015(*copy attached in Annex X*); and a PMP update on the results achieved in FY15 on August 31, 2015.

VII. Administrative

1. On April 1, 2015, Ahmed Emerah joined STEP as a Training Officer
2. On April 16, 2015, Ahmed Seif joined STEP as a M&E Coordinator
3. On August 1, 2015, Mayada El Tahawy joined STEP as a Finance Management Assistant
4. On June 15, 2015, Lamiaa Negm ElDin, Outreach & Recruitment Specialist, resigned from STEP. STEP identified a qualified candidate and obtained on July 8, 2015, the Contracting Officer's (CO) approval for her hiring. On August 30, 2015, two days before she joined STEP, the candidate withdrew her nomination. STEP identified another qualified candidate and submitted a request to the CO for hiring approval on September 21, 2015.

VIII. Challenges Encountered, Actions Taken and/or Resolutions

1. Mid-Term Evaluation of CDCs: Challenges and Lessons Learned

- **Timing:** the evaluation task primarily depended on conducting meetings, interviews and focus groups with various stakeholders, i.e. university presidents, professors, faculty members, students and employers. Choosing July and August to carry out these meetings

proved to be very challenging. The evaluation team was unable to meet with key individuals, at least for a suitable amount of time, or at all. Timing also prevented the team from an opportunity to see/measure student's traffic to the CDCs.

Response/Action: to overcome these challenges, the evaluation team held meetings with other officers including university vice presidents (instead of presidents) and conducted telephone interviews, when appropriate. As a lesson learned, it is not advisable to undertake similar assignments during summer vacation.

- **Conflict of Interest:** several days after the start of the assignment, USAID confronted IIE with a potential conflict of interest issue, apparently raised by an implementing partner in the activity. As a field competitor to AUC and Word Learning, IIE was perceived as being at an advantage if it conducted this study while authorized to take part in any proposal for a potential USAID request to expand the CDCs.

Response/Action: in response to this issue, IIE and its partners, KNO and CDC Academy, each submitted a Conflict of Interest (C of I) document committing not to be part of any bid on such a potential RFP. As a lesson learned, it is advisable that such C of I requests be raised before subcontractors are awarded projects.

2. HEI MBA Cohort I-7 Scholars at Webster University

IIE enrolled seven scholars at Webster University for their MBA studies, to be completed by May 2017. After the start of the academic year, Webster informed IIE Washington DC that completing an MBA degree with an emphasis might not be feasible within the two-year scholarship limitation. Depending on the field of study selected by the scholar, the number of required credits for core MBA program and for areas of emphasis, combined with Webster's per term credit enrollment limit, would, in most cases, require three years to complete the degree. Webster explained that it would take 55-74 credits to complete the areas of emphasis, therefore making it impossible to do within USAID-approved scholarship timeline.

This news was disappointing for the scholars. The IIE/DC office is working closely with the graduate advising team at Webster to provide an alternative program that will still provide the scholars with an excellent academic and professional development experience. Scholars will not be put in a less favorable position professionally by not completing the area of emphasis and they will still have the knowledge and skills necessary to advance in their careers with the traditional MBA. Below is the new plan of study proposed:

- Traditional MBA: enroll in the traditional MBA program
- Graduate Certificate: As an alternative to the area of emphasis, there is the possibility for all students to complete one Graduate Certificate in the area of their choice, in addition to their traditional MBA.
- Internships: In addition to the 6 credits they'll enroll in during summer 2016, students will have time to participate in an internship that enables them to gain professional experience in their focus area.

As part of any MBA program with Webster, all students are expected to complete a one credit hour career management course. The Walker School of Business and Technology has partnered with Right Management to provide all students with this required course focused on Career Success for the 21st Century. Once a student has completed the course, they also are eligible to utilize Right Management's 12-month program, which includes dedicated time with a professional career coach and a variety of online resources.

Response/Action: to help the scholars identify a proper course of action and at IIE's request, the Director of Graduate Academic Advising at Webster decided to conduct individual meetings, in early October 2015, with each scholar to share with them their options, discuss their graduation plan, and review their expectations for academic success.

3. Ad hoc Requests by Technical Offices

As reported previously, except for the HEI scholarships program, the technical offices do not have training plans. Technical offices submit urgent requests to STEP expecting immediate action without time for STEP to prepare documents required by our contract. STEP has not been receiving a signed Performance Solution Request (PSR), required under the FORECAST-II contract, from the appropriate technical office

Response/Action: to accommodate requests by technical offices, STEP has started preparation for assignments before receiving a signed PSR. At times, technical offices are holding STEP responsible to timelines even prior to the issuance of PSRs. We recommend that STEP and the COR work with the technical offices to insure STEP receives required documentation from USAID before implementing new projects.

4. Budget for Support Services

STEP was originally designed to assist a select number of USAID technical offices (TO) in the implementation of their respective training plans. At the start of the project, each TO would contribute funds to STEP to cover their training/technical assistance requirements, through the life of the project. During the project kick-off meeting, IIE proposed and the Contracting Officer agreed that support services (non-participant training costs), would be charged based on the contribution ratio of each TO. Currently, STEP has a challenge in that TOs submit requests for specific assignments and expect a budget that includes both participant costs and support services. STEP is able to provide a budget for the participant costs portion. Because STEP support services cover all activities, we cannot accurately estimate an amount for an individual activity. The COR has explained this challenge to the TOs. TOs' contributions to STEP for ad hoc activities may not incorporate adequate funds for support services, in which case a deficit in the TO allocated budget would emerge.

Response/Action: pursuant to a series of discussions, the COR was able to earmark the amount of \$2 million, originally obligated by Workforce Development, to serve as a buffer for STEP's charges against support services of various technical offices. This buffer will cover deficits in the respective

budgets contributed by each TO. IIE is using this fund as prescribed. When this fund is close to being depleted, STEP will advise USAID so another solution is developed.

IX. Success stories

EGL Teacher Training Program:

In cooperation with USAID’s Primary Learning Program (PLP), STEP is co-training Early Grade Learning Master Trainers through its partner, Keys to Effective Learning. STEP’s component consists of training on training (TOT) techniques. At the start of the program in early August, the participants were very interested and excited to receive the TOT session. Our trainers offered more TOT sessions to those interested; the additional sessions would be delivered early the next morning. Unless incentives are offered, it is highly unusual for Egyptian participants to show up for voluntary training programs. Surprisingly, the training room was filled at 8:00 am the next morning (one hour earlier than the scheduled training session) for the TOT techniques.

X. Testimonials

1. USAID Health Technical Office:

- *“I would like to thank you, and your dedicated team, for the excellent organization of the first USAID/CDC training workshop to the VHU/MOH staff, which started yesterday. I know you had many challenges and last minute changes/arrangements; yet you managed to organize the training so efficiently.”*
- *“...I would like to thank you again, and your dedicated team, for being able to support the training in a very professional and efficient way despite all these challenges and complexities.”*

2. USAID Education Office:

“... thank you once again for a wonderful lunch with the MBA and STEM scholars and for pulling the rabbit out of the hat and getting the women 1 1/2 hour earlier than planned ... you made it work and saved the day once again.”

3. Ministry of Education:

“... We at the General Directorate of the Secondary Education [at the Ministry of Education] greatly appreciate the efforts and hard work you exerted as well as the accuracy and transparency you followed throughout the selection phases of the students..... We confirm our help and support for the benefit of [Egypt] and our students.”(Translated from Arabic).

4. Applicants to the HEI MBA scholarship:

- *“I'd like to thank you all for your great efforts and your cooperation from the very beginning and till today. I had my interview today at EFE and it was pleasure to meet new lovely ladies from your team beside all the cooperative, smiling team we met before. Thank you all for your credibility, welcoming, patience in replying to our questions and for your instant replying to our emails and phone calls. Whether accepted or not, I'm totally satisfied with all the phases and dealings in this very well organized scholarship.”*
- *“I would like to thank every single person who works on this project and giving this opportunity to thousands of girls. Despite not being shortlisted at the third stage but I truly feel grateful for taking part in this experience. You are very respectful and helpful from day one in the selection process especially when I faced a problem during submitting my application on the last day and having your kind help which gave me this wonderful opportunity through the following stages. Knowing that being shortlisted in the first stage has doubled my enthusiasm and urged me to prepare myself as if I'm actually selected. Being so cooperative at the interview and giving me the opportunity to discuss my dreams and future plans with three enlightened and respectable individuals who I will always remember their kindness and encouragement to give and exert more, I did feel that I'm approaching to my dream. Unfortunately, my journey with your extraordinary team came to an end after the GMAT exam, which I believe wasn't among the selection process as described by your team. I trust your selections and I did hope being one of them, yet I'll always follow my dreams as previously said to my kind interviewers. I'll be following your programs and projects and hope I can be part of any of them through which I can support my career. I hopefully looking forward to another opportunity with such esteemed, organized and wonderful team like yours. I believe that someone will read these lines and I wish if he/she could thank every member for being a fruitful part in our life. Thanks for your kind patience and kindly accept my apologies for any inconvenience.”*

5. HEI scholars:

- *“I would like to thank you for all the efforts that you and your team made to us. You all dedicated time and efforts to reach such a stage. I am happy to be under a supervision of such a professional organization such as IIE.”*
- *“Whatever words will be said, it will never express my feelings and gratefulness to your good self... Simply you are the reason for making me a better person... For making me what I'm today.... Thanks from the bottom of my heart.”*
- *“... I am not sure how to best thank you for all the efforts and hard work you exerted since the start of this program... You made me particularly happy today.... I researched Webster University and it is a much better university than the other one. Indeed I am very very grateful...” (translated from Arabic)*

- *“...I feel grateful and thankful for offering me a chance to enhance my academic, professional and even personal perspectives and goals. This scholarship opportunity is an opportunity to invest to promote multiculturalism and cooperation between nations. Thanks a lot and I wish you empower more Egyptian women with such great opportunities to empower others eventually...”*
- *“... Now, I realize the importance of the bridge program...”*

6. USG Representative; full text sent by Ms. Christie Vilsak, USAID Senior Advisor for International Education, after a visit to Cairo as mentioned in Section I.C.2 above:

“Visiting with the young women who will receive STEP scholarships was a highlight of my visit to Egypt. Hearing Dalia say about her mother, “She knows it’s my future... I will achieve her dreams before my dreams” was memorable. I do believe she will work in the ministry of transportation some day and possibly become the Minister of Transportation. I can just see Yara reminding her grandmother that it was she who wanted her to apply for the scholarship. I can see her sitting next to her father trying to find Kalamazoo, Michigan on the map. I’m quite sure that Eman will accomplish her goal that in 15 years she’ll have established her first development company to provide technology institutions for children to improve their technology skills.

Thanks so much for making it possible for me to meet these determined young women. They are certainly the future of Egypt. Thanks for providing the opportunities for them to study in the U.S. and for pairing them with a good university.

Samah, I am envious that you will have the opportunity to get to know them and to shepherd them through their master’s degrees. Thanks for agreeing to do this good work for USAID. Please keep in touch. Let us know when the young women come to DC so we can say hello and hear their stories as they unfold or you can send us some updates occasionally. I will do my best to share these stories widely. I will start tonight. I am having dinner out under the stars at the National Arboretum with a few hundred people. I will certainly let them know about some of the future Egyptian leaders I met last week in Cairo.”

XI. Documentation of best practices that can be taken to scale

1. Feedback for improvement in the UPP at AUC:

Based on her experience within the first few weeks at Golden Gate University (GGU), an MBA-I scholar shared with IIE-field office the following feedback regarding the bridge year program:

- AUC instructors teach the Modern Language Association (MLA) writing style; at GGU, in business studies, we use the American Psychological Association (APA) style.
- Academic Writing Assessment (AWA) part in GMAT was not given as much importance as the GMAT quantitative part, during the bridge program. At GGU, MBA students are required to take a writing course, unless they obtain a score of 4.5 out of 6 on the AWA part of the GMAT test.

IIE communicated this constructive feedback to AUC which took immediate action to incorporate the APA style and AWA lessons in the UPP program for HEI Cohort 2 MBA participants.

2. Commitment by HEI Participants:

Based on the experience of MBA-I behavior during the Bridge Year program at AUC, IIE amended the commitment letter requested from each participant to include the following:

- Allow participants a maximum of six days absence for the whole period (one day per month), instead of a total of four authorized in MBA-I
- Specify the minimum score required in GMAT and TOEFL to guarantee admission at a U.S. university in the field of their choice
- Emphasize the importance of daily attendance as well as timely arrival and departure.

3. Introduction of 360 degree evaluation:

Based on lessons learned during the HEI MBA-I bridge program at AUC, IIE introduced the following additional evaluation process, separately than AUC's evaluation methodology:

- Evaluation of participants by instructors
- Evaluation of colleagues by each other (on an anonymous basis)
- Evaluation of instructors by participants

4. Advance notification:

Approximately 11 of 12 participants who dropped out from the HEI MBA-I Scholarship Program after enrolling at AUC did so because they did not have enough advance time to properly resign from their employment. The recruitment of Cohorts I started late and IIE did not have time to inform the finalists well in advance of their selection. To avoid similar drop-outs, IIE completed the process early enough and informed the MBA-II finalists of their selection on August 6, 2015, one month prior to the start date at AUC.

5. MBA group activities:

During the recruitment of HEI MBA Cohort 1, IIE and its partners selected one group activity to conduct with groups of short-listed candidates. The activity consisted of a scenario that helps assessors depict select behavioral dimensions. Though successful, IIE realized that some of the candidates, after undergoing the test, informed other candidates of the activity content. When recruiting for the MBA Cohort 2, IIE and its partners changed the group activity process. The revised version consisted of an activity and a game in which each group of candidates were asked to participate. For each activity and game, four different scenarios are available and administered at random. This change resulted in the following advantages:

- Candidates in each group are given two opportunities to demonstrate their skills
- With a variety of activities administered at random, sharing the content of activities with other candidates did not provide advance information to the candidates who had not yet participated.

6. STEM info sessions with MOE:

The success of the information sessions held in coordination with MOE during the outreach of HEI STEM-I undergraduate scholarships inspired IIE to repeat the same process during the outreach of Cohort 2 starting November 2015.

ATTACHMENTS LIST:

- Annex I: HEI Official Launch event – photos and speeches
- Annex II: USG visiting delegations - photos
- Annex III: HEI STEM & MBA Launch ceremony–Cohorts 1 photos and video link
- Annex IV: Cohorts 1-Host universities
- Annex V: STEM Cohort 1-PDO scenarios
- Annex VI: HEI Scholars progress updates at U.S. universities
- Annex VII: Agenda and photos –STEM cohort 2 final selection camp
- Annex VIII: Activity scenarios summary-STEM cohort 2 final selection camp
- Annex IX: List of STEM Cohort 2 finalists
- Annex X: Activity scenarios-group activities camp for MBA cohort 2
- Annex XI: List of MBA cohort 2 finalists
- Annex XII: Template of commitment letter signed by MBA cohort 2 participants
- Annex XIII: Assessment of local organizations active in GBV and/or VAW