


PERFORMANCE PROGRESS REPORT SF-PPR

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11. Other Attachments <i>(attach other documents as needed or as instructed by the awarding Federal Agency)</i>			
12. Certification: I certify to the best of my knowledge and belief that this report is correct and complete for performance of activities for the purposes set forth in the award documents.			
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12b. Signature of Authorized Certifying Official 		12e. Date Report Submitted (Month, Day, Year) 10/15/2020	
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USAID Scholars Activity

Cooperative Agreement No. 72026320CA00002

Quarterly Progress Report,

FY2020, Quarter 4

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Executive Summary:

This Quarterly Progress Report covers the period of June 30th – September 30th, 2020 as mandated by the Cooperative Agreement No. 72026320CA00002 and consists of highlights of the achievements, challenges, and action taken of the USAID Scholars Activity during FY2020, Q4.

This reporting quarter highlights the progress of the USAID Scholars Activity in various areas related to the progress of the program activities despite the prevailing unprecedented times in light of the COVID-19 pandemic which both USAID and AUC acknowledge. Most of the program team members have been recruited and started during the previous quarter with the exception of the Finance Manager and the Ain Shams University Program Coordinator.

The USAID Scholars Activity team has been working very hard to achieve key milestones on the different fronts; coordinating with service providers to ensure that the scholars are the best candidates given the selection criteria for different stages in the selection process, working with partner universities to guarantee smooth placement process for Cohort 1 with respect to the availed slots at each partner university, coordinating the different English language programs and their relevant design through an online modality, and English testing mechanism. Most partner's universities sub-agreements have been finalized and cleared from AUC Legal Office; including a comprehensive and clear description of the tasks required of each partner university under this agreement in addition to the scope of work for the assigned university Academic Facilitators. Scholarship terms, conditions, and Student and Parent/Guardian Agreements are also in progress and are expected to be completed during the next quarter. The First Technical Steering Committee Meeting and Cohort 1 virtual Selection Camp are underway.

During this FY2020, Q4, AUC was able to achieve the following;

- 4406 applications have been received 2201 of which are eligible.
- On Sep 4, 5, 11 and 12, AFS conducted Cohort 1 interviews for 529 out of the 560 shortlisted for this stage; 31 candidates did not show up.
- Second draft of USAID Scholars activity MEL plan was submitted on September 20th, 2020 after addressing USAID comments pending AOR approval.
- Drafted first year activities implementation plan with the redirection of activities in the light of COVID-19 situation and submitted to USAID on September 21st, 2020.
- Devised the English language component for the Pre Academic English Language and Cultural Experiences month, preparation year and supplemental English programs.
- Provided AFS with a capacity building session organized by AUC CSW on how to deal with students with disabilities during the interviews on September 2nd, 2020. A similar session will be scheduled for the Virtual Camp stage on October 6th, 2020.

- Conducted a meeting with J-PAL to discuss the implementation of the USAID Scholars Impact Assessment.
- Developed the USAID Scholars Activity Communication Strategy in addition to the USAID Scholars Activity's Factsheet.

FY2020, Quarter 4 Reporting against Annual Work Plan

#	Sub-Task Description	Outputs/Deliverables	Activities by Quarter		
			FY20, Q2	FY20, Q3	FY20, Q4
			Jan/Feb/March	Apr/May/June	July/Aug/Sep
Task 0: Program start-up and Management					
0.1	Come up with and suggest Arabic program names that best capture the USAID Scholars Activity to share with USAID	Suggested names were presented to USAID for approval		Completed	
0.2	Exchange contacts of NGOs/organizations to support outreach	List of contacts developed to support the outreach process		Completed	
0.3	Creating an online Landing page to host program Announcement/Application Form/FAQs/Contact Info	A page created that includes all program Announcement/Application Form/FAQs/Contact Info to be accessible by all applicants to disburse the USAID Scholars Activity information and application materials – and is continuously updated to keep stakeholders informed		Completed	
0.4	Submit the VAT letter to Taxation Authority to get the project's relevant exemption	The tax exemption letter was issued on June 30, 2020.		Completed	

0.5	Procuring office equipment	Office equipment purchased (in process after the receipt of the tax exemption letter at the end of the quarter).			On-going
0.6	Assign the project's office space	Temporary office space assigned within the AUC New Campus for key staff (Work from home modality under COVID-19 is currently applied)			On-going
0.7	Begin the recruitment process for the project staff and partner universities	COP and DCOP were hired during Q3. The hiring of the rest of the project's staff was completed by Q4, with the Finance Manager and Ain Shams University Coordinator to be completed in Q1.			On-going
0.8	Initiate coordination meetings with USAID and stakeholders (contractual, technical, communications, etc.)	Virtual meetings held with USAID and stakeholders to coordinate program's inception phase in light of COVID-19		Completed and On-going	Completed and On-going
0.9	Prepare for the project's first Advisory Board meeting	The Advisory Board Kick-off Meeting convened by the Chairperson of the Advisory Board and attended by partner University Presidents to ensure strategic support for the program.		Completed and conducted on 6/10/2020	
Task 1: Program Outreach, Recruitment, Selection					
1.1	Hold orientation meetings with AFS and Newton to familiarize them with the finalized selection criteria and	AFS and Newton staff are familiar with the finalized selection criteria and terms and conditions specific to the project student recruitment		Conducted and On-going	Conducted

	terms and conditions specific to the project student recruitment				
1.2	Initiate discussions with AFS and Newton to coordinate outreach activities	A series of regular meetings held with AFS and Newton to coordinate outreach activities in light of the evolving COVID-19 situation and absence of face to face information sessions		Conducted and On-going	
1.3	Design outreach materials for USAID's approval	Approved outreach materials used to disseminate information about USAID Scholars Activity		Completed	
1.4	Design USAID Scholars Activity application, financial assessment form, and rubrics	Student application and financial application screening rubrics are developed and ready for applicants and application reviewers		Completed	
1.5	Launching of Marketing/Outreach Campaign	Project's outreach campaign is developed, approved and launched		Completed and on-going ¹	
1.6	Disseminate information via Al-Ahram newspaper, social media channels, websites, ...etc	USAID Scholars Activity scholarships announced through Ahram Ad, social media channels, websites, etc... to spread the word about the program		Completed	
1.7	Deadline to receive applications	Applications received before the deadline and screened for eligibility.			

¹The launch is completed, but the campaign is ongoing

		Given the official holidays during the applications' submission time period, the deadline of July 31 st was extended to August 10 th to enable applicants to complete the official documents needed with the application.			
1.8	Receiving Thanaweya Amma Results	Thanaweya Amma Results are collected and submitted by students			
1.9	Screening of received applications	Applications are screened for eligibility		On-going	Completed
1.10	Tanaseeq Results out	Tanaseeq results are collected to place students in their respective target majors (with the exception of STEM students).			With the exception of STEM
1.11	Student Interviews	Eligible students are interviewed for selection			Completed
1.13	Home Visits for the short-listed applicants	Home visits are conducted to verify the financial information in the students' applications			Completed and ongoing
1.14	Identification of candidates for Cohort 1 in addition to alternates	Selection of Cohort 1 students and alternates completed			Ongoing
1.15	Scholarship terms, conditions, and Student and Parent/Guardian Agreements are designed and ready for signature by each Student and a parent or guardian.	Terms and conditions agreements are designed and finalized in Q3, ready for students' and guardians' signatures during Q4		On-going and will be completed by Q4	Ongoing

Task 2: Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting

2.1	Submit initial AWP for the first year of activities	Annual Work Plan finalized and submitted		Completed on 4/28/2020	Ongoing
2.2	Submit draft Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Plan within 90 calendar days of agreement award	Draft MEL plan submitted along with PIRS		Completed on 4/30/2020	Second draft was submitted
2.3	Set-up and maintain collaborative communication and data collection tools	Survey tools are developed and implemented to gather student feedback and program evaluation data. The baseline survey will be conducted for Cohort 1 students to collect baseline data			Ongoing
2.4	Submit Quarterly progress report	Quarterly progress report covering respective quarterly activities		Submitted on 4/14/2020	Submitted on 10/15/2020

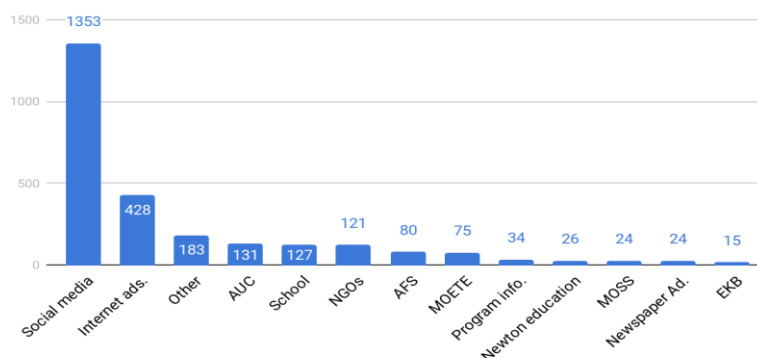
Highlights of Project Activities

Digital Outreach Results

During this reporting period AUC, USAID Scholars Activity with its service providers, AFS-Egypt and Newton Educational Services, managed to hold comprehensive digital and limited physical outreach activities for the recruitment of the Cohort I scholars. The digital campaign proved to be efficient especially during these challenging times of COVID-19 pandemic. The outreach and recruitment efforts resulted in receiving 4406 applications nationwide who found out about these scholarship opportunities through the following

- 14 million social media users
- more than 50 NGOs
- Masrawy, Youm 7 (27 million users)

How did candidates find out about the scholarship?



USAID Scholars Activity Applications Screening, Interviewing and Home Visits Processes

During this reporting quarter, the following activities have taken place in the applications screening, candidates interviewing and home visits.

Applications Screening:

The USAID Scholars Activity recruitment campaign which was launched on June 12th, 2020 has resulted in receiving 4406 applications from governorates all over Egypt. Immediately after the applications deadline, AFS started the screening process for the received 4406 applications which are classified as follows:

Table (1) Applications received from all Governorates

Governorate	Number of applications Received	Governorate	Number of applications Received
Alex	194	Ismailia	42
Assiut	235	Kafr El Sheikh	63
Aswan	131	Luxor	189
Beheira	110	Marsa Matrouh	18
Beni Sueif	249	Menofeya	231
Cairo	501	Minya	703

Dakahlia	124	New Valley	31
Damietta	57	North Sinai	20
Fayoum	111	Port Said	41
Gharbia	120	Qaliyobia	153
Giza	394	Qena	158
Sohag	222	Red Sea	75
South Sinai	36	Sharkeya	158
Suez	36		
TOTAL		4,406	

The review and screening process of the 4,406 applications resulted in eligible and ineligible applications as follows:

- 2,101 Eligible candidates; and 2,305 Ineligible candidates
 - 184 of which are Takafol and Karama and 84 students with disabilities.

The ineligibility of the applications was based on the following;

- 1- Incomplete applications
- 2- Incomplete essential requested documents
- 3- Type of school

Application Technical Review and Essay Assessment:

The 2,101 eligible candidates were filtered down to 560 candidates according to the criteria developed by the USAID Scholars Activity and approved by USAID. The criteria were developed according to the following metrics:

- Equitable gender balance; females constitute 50% of the scholarship shortlisted scholars
- Full country coverage, including rural areas and secondary cities from socio economically-marginalized sectors. (villages then marakez then cities)
- Governorates proportional distribution considering;
 - a. Population density. Source: <https://www.capmas.gov.eg/Pages/populationClock.aspx#> Accessed August 27, 2020.
 - b. Schools in the poorest villages or governorates according CAPMAS and Newton Thanawya Amma Research Study highlighted in the excel sheet.
 - c. Governorates with population density less than 0.5%, take a minimum of 4 eligible applicants. We have 9, 28, 13 and 17 eligible applicants from North Sinai, Red Sea, New Valley and South Sinai respectively. It was seen as necessary not to risk overlooking the frontier/border governorates.
- All eligible candidates with disabilities (32 applicants)
- All eligible Takafol and Karama students (78 applicants)
- All eligible orphans applied (2 applicants)
- Applicants who got the highest scores in all areas of; Application, Essay Review and Financial status.

The above selection criteria were primarily focused on the geographical distribution of the applications that the number of candidates who are eligible to be selected in each governorate proportioned to the population density in each governorate. The poorest villages and governorates as per CAPMAS and Newton Thanawya Amma Research

Study have been given priority. *Please refer to Annex (1) of this report for the Geographical Distribution of the Eligible Candidates.*

Interviews Phase:

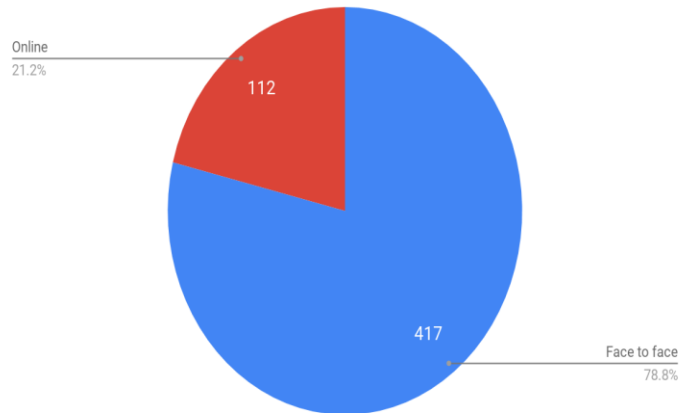
Based on the approved interview phase criteria, AFS-Egypt contacted the short listed 560 candidates, invited them for interviews and gave them the choice between face-to-face and online modalities. All the 560 eligible candidates received a Google form that allowed them to register for the interview with their preferred modality. Interviews were scheduled on four days; three face-to-face, September 3rd, 4th and 11th, and one day, September 12th was designated for online interviews, at AUC Falaki Academic Center.

AFS-Egypt conducted a total of 529 interviews classified (a per the applicants' documented preference) as follows:

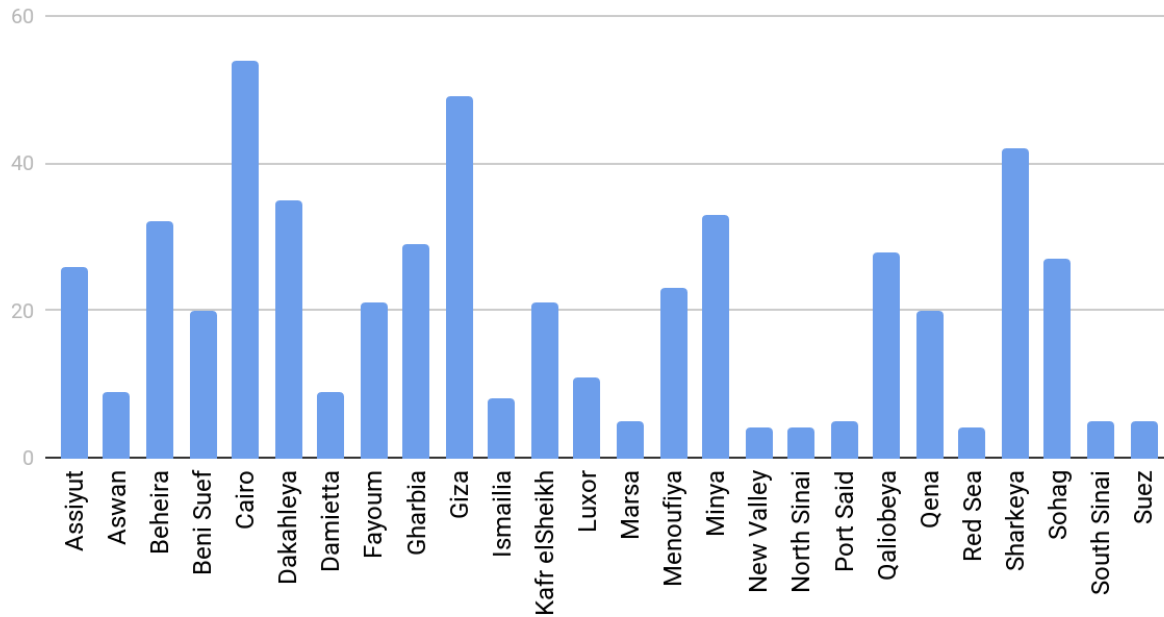
- 417 Face-to Face Interviews at AUC Falaki Campus
- 112 Online Interviews via Zoom (also used AUC Falaki Campus to host interviewers)

The remaining 31 candidates either declined the scholarship or did not respond to the Google Form, where they entered their preference for interview modality.

Method of Conducting Interviews (529 interviews)



Interviews per Governorate



AFS-Egypt Interviews Training:

On August 28th, 2020 and prior to the actual implementation of the interviews, AFS- Egypt conducted training attended by the volunteers who will participate in the interviews. The training was conducted by Manara Cultural Training Center² at AFS-Egypt premises on 6 of October and attended by approximately 35 volunteers who worked with AFS on several other projects.

The training was divided into two parts; the first part focused on orienting the volunteers on the USAID Scholars Activity and its objectives. Also, the application and the different sections it includes and the most important sections that the volunteers should focus on during the interview. The second part of the training was devoted to role play and simulation where young volunteers assumed the role of the candidates and the volunteers interviewed them. This simulation was followed by feedback and comments from the facilitators and other participants.

Home Visits:

The list of the 529 students who attended the online and face-to-face interviews was filtered down to 230 students who are eligible to receive a home visit by AFS-Egypt volunteers.

The 230 students were selected based on the following criteria;

First: Tanseeq Results

The colleges that the students got through el Tanseeq must match the majors that USAID Scholars Activity is offering.

Second: Applicants who achieved the interviews cut-off score and beyond

Cut off score is 20 out of 50

Third: All eligible students with disability who achieved the interview cut off score of 20 or more

All Takaful and Karama students who achieved the interview cut off score of 20 or more

Financial Need: *Cut-off score around 50 out of 190*

² Al Fanar is AFS training centers for volunteers

Fourth: Full country coverage

Fifth: Gender balance to the extent possible

The majority of the 230 Candidates received home visits by AFS-Egypt volunteers during September. Home visits for the rest of the candidates will continue during the first week of October with the exception of North Sinai which will be conducted online due to security reasons.

Table (2) Number of Home Visits Distribution by Governorate

Governorate	Students Selected for Home Visits	Governorate	Students Selected for Home Visits
Cairo	25	Beni Sueif	8
Giza	21	Kafr El Sheikh	8
Sharkeya	13	Qena	10
Dakahlia	12	Aswan	3
Beheira	13	Damietta	3
Minya	14	Ismailia	2
Qalilyobia	11	Luxor	10
Alex	17	Port Said	2
Sohag	11	Suez	2
Gharbia	7	Marsa Matrouh	2
Assiut	10	North Sinai	2
Menofeya	10	Red Sea	2
Fayoum	9	New Valley	2
South Sinai	1	Total	230

The schedule started on September 18th through October 3rd, some governorates will be covered over many days in the timespan of 16 days.

Home Visits Schedule:

AFS-Egypt is in the process of holding 230 home visits (both online and in-person) while observing all precautionary measures such as the use of face masks and sanitizers for the physical home visits. AFS-Egypt opted to conduct online home visits for North Sinai.

Table (3) Number of Home Visits and Schedule

Governorate	Number of visits	Start Date	Governorate	Number of visits	Start Date
Cairo	25	20/9	Dakahlia	12	19/9
Giza	21	18/9	Beheira	13	21/9
Sharkeya	13	1/10	Minya	14	23/9
Qalinyobia	11	20/9	Gharbia	7	23/9
Alexandria	17	21/9	Assiut	10	24/9
Sohag	11	27/9	Menofeya	10	30/9
Fayoum	9	25/9	Qena	10	24/9
Beni Sueif	8	23/9	Aswan	3	24/9
Kafr El Sheikh	8	29/9	Damietta	3	28/9
Ismailia	2	27/9	Suez	2	2/10
Luxor	10	24/9	Marsa Matrouh	2	22/9
Port Said	2	27/9	North Sinai	2	Online ³
Red Sea	2	1/10	South Sinai	1	20/9
New Valley	2	25/9			

The results of the home visits and the final selection of cohort 1 scholars and alternates will be reported during FY21, Q1.

AFS-Egypt Home Visits Training:

On September 7th AFS-Egypt conducted two online training sessions for the volunteers who will undertake the home visits. The entire AUC team participated in the two training sessions. The training included different scenarios that the interviewers need to consider while verifying the financial status of the candidates. During the second half of the training, participants were divided into groups to join the breakout rooms to evaluate real/authentic applications. Volunteers were specifically asked to observe the most catching notes from the application that would translate to different scenarios other than what is stated in the application.

The training was an eye –opener on the home visits’ protocol. It has served to explain where the visits fall on the timeline, their purpose, their ethic and dress code, and the importance of observing gender balance and hygiene. It was also highlighted not to improvise on behalf of the USAID Scholars Activity regardless of how much the family of the candidate wants an answer.

Different measures and precautions were explained in light of COVID-19 to ensure the safety of both the volunteers and family members visited.

³ Due to security reasons, AFS-Egypt will conduct this activity online - (to be scheduled)

Nursing Program

During the kick off meeting of the Strategic Advisory Board on June 10th, 2020, the members discussed adding nursing as a field of study to the majors offered by the USAID Scholars Activity. This was welcomed by all university presidents and there has been a proposal by AUC Counselor to introduce a new credit-hour, fee-based and English-medium program for this specialization to be run at all five public universities.

However, AUC encountered some challenges related to the process of obtaining approvals through the Cultural Affairs Committee at the Supreme Council of Universities. AUC team has been pushing through other means to speed up the process through AUC Counselor and there was a small window of opportunity to start this program this academic year which kept the AUC hopeful. However, AUC has been in close touch with the HE Nursing Sector Committee and several other endeavors that all resulted in a decision to postpone this program to the next academic year 21/22.

Zewail City of Science and Technology Update

Zewail City of Science and Technology, according to a decree from the Supreme Council of Universities, has become part of the Tanseeq system, and hence will be treated as other public universities has come as one of the challenges facing the program, given that this information was not available at the time of the scholarship announcement.

In addition, AUC is looking into the possibility of accommodating Zewail City students at AUC dorms, since Zewail City has announced that they would not accept resident students this year due to the COVID-19 situation.

English Language Component

Both the One-Month Pre-Academic Program and the Preparation Year (for nominated AUC and Zewail students) will be conducted online. The different available pre-test options include paper-based ITP TOEFL and IELTS, computer-based IELTS, and iBT TOEFL that all require physical attendance of the test candidates. Other online exams, such as the IELTS Indicator and TOEFL Home Edition are not feasible options because they are either not being offered in Egypt, do not allow group registration or will cease to exist after October 30. Given the directions received from USAID, no physical events can be arranged under any USAID activity at this stage AUC team has already been looking into other options that allow students to sit for a pre-test through an online modality.

Cohort 2 Online Application System

As per the Project Document, to develop an online system which we did not have the chance to do given the time constraints between award and launch of the project.

AUC is currently working on designing an online application system for Cohort 2, a digital database, to solicit adequate information on the applicants' community service and extracurricular activities, financial need data, and essays. AUC started to work on this project based on lessons learned driven from the Cohort 1 application system that AFS adopted. Too many challenges have been faced with the paper-based application that all necessitates working on that front and using an online application system to improve the quality of the process and decrease the amount of labor needed to collect and follow up on the application back and forth with the Post Office.

This online application system will be connected in a later stage with the USAID Scholars Activity database. Budget implications will occur as a result of this project which will provide a consistent and solid data management system that includes all scholarship recipients and protects the validity of the data.

Study Abroad Component:

USAID TEAMS Orientation

On August 18th, 2020 the entire AUC team attended “From TRAINET to TEAMS” webinar organized by USAID and conducted by TEAMS in Washington DC. The webinar tackled the TEAMS application and highlighted changes from TRAINET and new features in TEAMS through the presentation of the application itself. Following the meeting, USAID Scholars Activity requested a more in-depth training on the system which is new to the AUC team. USAID advised that the AUC team could watch the 10 tutorial videos associated with TEAMS which will share in due respect. Then, if there is still a need for further training, she could facilitate that.

AUC International Program Office (IPO)

The AUC team met with the Senior Director of International Programs (IPO) at AUC where they discussed the selection criteria they use for the selection of the students who are eligible to travel for the U.S. semester abroad in addition to the steps that the students must take to complete all the requirements to travel abroad.

The AUC Senior Director of International Programs stated that in order for the students to be eligible for the U.S. Semester Abroad they must have a minimum GPA of 3.2, they need to be in the sophomore year while applying, they need to be declared and English level RHET 10/20 to be completed or taken in the semester of the application

They also discussed also lessons learned with previous scholars including the most appropriate time to start working on the process of the semester abroad for the scholars.

Finally, the Senior Director of the IPO promised to put the AUC team in contact with the New York Office to better coordinate efforts in the coming period. She also promised to share the contact information of the 69 universities that AUC has partnered with in the U.S. to start the communication on that regard.

AUC Center for Students Well-being (CSW) Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)

AUC is currently finalizing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Center for Student Wellbeing, including their future role in supporting the public university disability centers. This MoU includes the following roles and responsibilities of the CSW to ensure that the scholarship recipients are provided with the needed support to continue progressing in their academics and social integration.

- Review and support the application process to ensure that it is user-friendly to students with disability.
- Orient and train service providers during the recruitment and selection process to ensure the provision of an inclusive environment for students with disabilities.
- Provide support to AUC USAID Scholars Activity coordinators in monitoring and following up on student’s well-being.
- Provide support to students that are considered at risk (2.0 GPA or below) of losing their scholarship and helping to put them back on track.
- Nominate/Provide access to a Psychological Advisor to support and lead students’ mental, emotional, and psychological health across all the partner universities. This Advisor will also participate in some student selection activities, such as the Final Selection Camp and On-boarding Orientation.
- Conduct Workshops with the aim of raising students’ awareness about maintaining their well-being, through the “Better You,” “Healthier You,” “Able You” series.
- Raise awareness through social media on the subject matter amongst the program SwDs as well as other interested students.

- Assess the need for and select the appropriate tools for partner university disability centers.
- Design and deliver Outreach Sessions to build partner university center staff, faculty and administrators' capacities.
- Train staff of the disability centers located in partner universities on the best practices and tools that promote the efficiency of those centers.
- Help facilitate a Study Tour at AUC to improve the partner university disability centers efforts in building their capacities.
- Help train partner universities' coordinators, facilitators, students, staff and faculty of the AUC USAID Scholars Activity on the Student Health 101 website and how to make the best use of it.

CSW Capacity Building Activities for AFS-Egypt teams

AUC organized two capacity building sessions for AFS volunteers facilitated by the CSW personnel. The first one which was conducted on September 2nd, 2020 focused on how to deal with the students with disabilities during the interviews. The second one is scheduled to be conducted on October 6th, 2020 and will tackle the techniques and messages that should be delivered during the online camp which is designed to include the students with disabilities among other students.

The Technical Steering Committee

AUC established the Technical Steering Committee to provide support and guidance to the USAID Scholars Activity throughout the lifetime of the project. This committee includes high profile experts and major stakeholders who support the implementation efforts and build strong synergies with major USAID projects while ensuring private sector collaboration to achieve program objectives.

During this reporting quarter, the USAID Scholars Activity interviewed six candidates of the USAID programs alumni nominated by USAID as per guidance from the relevant project directors. The evaluation of the candidates was based on a scoring rubric that includes all the metrics required to provide a fair assessment of the proposed candidates. *Please refer to Annex (3) of this report for the Scoring Rubric*

The interview panel decided on selecting candidates from LOTUS Program, HEI/STEP Program who were the best to express how they will contribute to the mandate of the Steering Committee and for their similar backgrounds to the program's anticipated scholars.

Having all the members on board, the first Technical Steering Committee is scheduled to be convened on October 7th, 2020. The TOR was shared and approved by USAID.

Table (4) USAID Program Alumni Candidates

	Title
1	LOTUS Program
2	HEI/STEP Program
3	HEI/STEP Program
4	HEI/STEP Program
5	HEI/STEP Program

Recruitment of Project Staff

During this reporting quarter, AUC was working diligently on the hiring process for the remaining project staff where remarkable progress has been achieved and the following staff will be on board starting the month of July 2020:

- Cairo University Coordinator – starting date August 9th, 2020
- Accountant – starting date September 1st, 2020

Additionally, the recruitment of the remaining positions will be finalized during the next quarter so that the full team is on board. It is important to mention that the AUC selection of staff ensured that all personnel have relevant previous experience and capacity to ensure program successful implementation.

USAID Scholars Activity Communication Plan

The work on devising the USAID Scholars Activity Communication Plan is initiated to communicate the USAID Scholars Activity objectives, achievements, and results. This will assist in promoting the concepts of equitable access to higher education and quality education for employability and economic development, in sectors of high economic priority. *Annex (4) for the USAID Scholars Activity Communication Plan.*

Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL⁴)

As per the MEL plan, the USAID Scholars Activity will call upon, to the extent feasible, AUC's long-established centers and units with proven track records in areas related to the Activity's MEL system. These include, among possibly others: IT; Strategy Management and Institutional Effectiveness (SMIE); Access to Knowledge for Development Center (A2K4D); Center for Learning and Teaching (with its expertise in formative assessment); and, the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL). AUC is now hosting the Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL) as the new regional research center in the Middle East and North Africa that focuses on alleviating poverty and improving lives through evidence-informed policymaking. One significant sector of J-PAL interest is to measure to what extent interventions/training and study opportunities make a difference in the lives of disadvantaged students. J-PAL showed interest in studying the interventions offered by the Scholars Activity program, while looking also at previous similar programs, such as LEAD.

On Wednesday August 26th, 2020, AUC team met with representatives of the J-PAL to understand more about their scope of work, and what kind of research and impact could be measured to evaluate the immediate impact that USAID Scholars Activity could have on the students in their post academic life and if they will be able to;

- 1- Contribute to their community
- 2- Impact their peers positively
- 3- Enhance their entrepreneurship skills through the start-ups/companies they created
- 4- Become leaders with enhanced leadership skills and assume leadership roles.
- 5- Improve their English Language Proficiency skills

⁴ The Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL) is a global research center working to reduce poverty by ensuring that policy is informed by scientific evidence. Anchored by a network of 227 affiliated professors at universities around the world, J-PAL conducts randomized impact evaluations to answer critical questions in the fight against poverty.

- 6- Benefit from Career Follow-up and Guidance reflected in their ability to join the job market
- 7- Qualify to Join the study abroad program

During the discussion, J-PAL team highlighted the fact that they are not a consulting agency. They do not charge money for their research studies and their professors volunteer their services. However, costs associated with data collection will need to be paid. The USAID Scholars Activity team filled out and submitted a match-making form to J-PAL in order to give them an idea on how best the Activity could benefit from their services.

Monitoring and Evaluation

USAID Scholars Activity MEL Plan

AUC submitted a second draft of the MEL plan after addressing USAID and SIMPLE comments and questions. The AUC team met with members of the Program Office, M&E and AOR on September 1st, 2020 to discuss these comments in detail and decide on the set of indicators that the Activity will report on throughout the lifespan of the Activity. The AUC team conducted a thorough review after which a second draft was submitted for approval on September 20th, 2020 on creating the relevant tools and systems to implement this plan.

Internal Observation Form for Physical and Online Interviews

In order to administer the Internal Monitoring process of the interview phase, the MEL Manager created an Observation sheet that includes all the areas of the interviewing in a holistic manner. The Observation Form was not created for the candidate’s assessment, but for to monitor the process and flow of the selection interviews and to ensure that interviewers follow interview protocols. The observations of different team members were recorded and communicated to AFS for corrective action. Another observation tool will be created to monitor the Online Selection Camp and will be shared during the next quarter. *Please refer to Annex (4) of this report for the USAID Scholars Activity Internal Observation Form for the Interviews Phase*

One-Year Activities Implementation Plan under COVID-19

Given the importance of highlighting the activities that, under COVID-19, will be re-designed and will require budgetary changes of any kind, USAID Scholars Activity drafted a one-year activities implementation plan under COVID-19 and submitted it to USAID for review. Budgetary implications are included in this plan to be communicated with the USAID for review and approval to be able to move forward under these unprecedented times. *For more details on the first-year implementation plan, please refer to Annex (5) of this report.*

Challenges and Action Taken

Challenges	Actions Taken
The current lockdown due to the COVID 19 is still posing several external and internal challenges:	

The unavailability of online testing for the newly admitted scholars	We are considering all exam options; TOEFL ITP and TOEFL IBT and IELTS with all its binding requirements; considering all challenges and availability of each exam and working on reaching a decision. Budget implications may occur.
Changes in Zewail University leadership	The sub-agreement is being revised to reflect the new changes in the leadership which might take more time to review again on the part of the new president
Zewail City has announced that they would not accept resident students this year due to the COVID-19 situation.	AUC is looking into the possibility of accommodating Zewail City students at AUC dorms.
The Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research has announced, blending traditional classroom experience with online courses during the academic year.	AUC was able to adapt very quickly to online learning. Other Public Universities are getting ready to work on the infrastructure to allow for social distancing when the face-to-face modality is used. Budget implications will occur to support the online learning modality.
Delay in the release of the STEM Tanseq results which presents a challenge in envisioning the prospective scholars majors.	AUC is still monitoring the Tanseq results and will apply the criteria for the selection on the shortlisted STEM candidates once results are out

Upcoming Activities

- Conducting First Technical Steering Committee Meeting
- Submission of AWP2021
- Submission of due reports to USAID; FY2020, Q4 Progress report and FY2020 annual Progress Report
- Finalizing the Home Visits phase
- Cohort 1 Online Selection Camp
- CSW capacity building training to AFS volunteers who will participate in cohort 1 selection camp
- Final Selection of 140 cohort 1 scholars in addition to 30 alternates.
- Placement of 140 scholars in seven public and private universities, 33 of which will start a preparation year.
- Onboarding Orientations by AUC for all the selected scholars
- Specific Onboarding Orientations by each partner university
- Cohort 1 Scholars enrollment in one-month pre-academic English Language and Cultural Experience program
- Finalizing the following project documents;

- Students Agreements are being designed and will be ready for signature by each Student and a parent or guardian.
 - Partner Universities Sub-agreements
- Finalizing the hiring process for the remaining project staff

Annexes

Annex (1) The Geographical Distribution of the Eligible Candidates

Governorate	Number of applications Received	Population Density Per Gov.	Recommended Number (based on the 560 applications we want to get)
Cairo	238	9.9	55
Giza ⁵	188	9.1	51
Sharkeya	78	7.5	42
Dakahlia	68	6.8	38
Beheira	50	6.5	36
Minya	241	5.9	33
Qaliyobia	71	5.9	33
Alex	100	5.7	32
Sohag	90	5.4	30
Gharbia	69	5.2	29
Assiut	85	4.7	26
Menofeya	105	4.5	25
Fayoum	45	3.8	21
Beni Sueif	104	3.7	21
Kafr El Sheikh	30	3.5	20
Qena	64	3.4	19
Aswan	53	1.6	9
Damietta	30	1.6	9
Ismailia	20	1.4	8
Luxor	95	1.3	7
Port Said	30	0.78	4

⁵ The highlighted cells are for the poorest villages and governorates as per CAPMAS and Newton Thanawya Amma Research Study

Suez	18	0.76	4
Marsa Matrouh	6	0.68	4
North Sinai	9	0.45	3
Red Sea	28	0.38	2
New Valley	13	0.25	1
South Sinai	17	0.11	1
Total	1945	100.81	565

Annex (2) Technical Steering Committee Evaluation Rubric

Steering Committee Member Rubric

Scoring based on Interview	Scoring (From 1 - 5)	Notes on Candidate
Please Introduce yourself - What program he/she belonged to - Which University did you graduate from and What major?		
How could the scholarship program you were on have helped us more and better? What was missing? What was not needed?		
How can the scholars better help themselves, their families and their communities?		
Past Experiences in USAID Scholarships - how has it benefitted/enriched you and how do you see yourself adding to the Projects?		
What other experiences have you had that would enable you to provide key planning and strategic decisions in the Technical Steering Committee?		
Tell us about a committee/project that you served on where you had a critical role - please provide examples and also any challenges you faced and how you solved them?		
Please tell us about your work experience and how this would help in your role as a potential member of this steering committee?		
What experiences do you have involving planning and how can you help in this area?		
Finally, what would you consider to be your greatest strength and how you see yourself within the Technical Steering Committee as an Alumni representative for USAID Scholarships?		
	Scored by:	

Annex (3) Interviews Internal Observation Form

USAID Scholars Activity's
Interviews Internal Observation Form

Interviewers:	1- 2- 3-
Data of the Interview	
Duration of the interview:	
Observation by:	
Name of the student interviewed:	
Application Number	
Governorate	
Gender:	
Mode of Interviewing: face to face or online	
Location of the Interview	

Questions asked during the interview

Points to remember concerning the student to be considered during the next step of the selection process

Recommendations for the enhancement of the interview process (to be communicated to AFS)

General Observations on the student

General Observations on the Interviewer

General Observations on the Interview

USAID SCHOLARS ACTIVITY

Cooperative Agreement No. 72026320CA00002

Communication Strategy

Phase 1

June 2020-May 2021

Background

The Scholars Activity Program is funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) with the support of the American people under Cooperative Agreement No. 72026320CA00002. The Program is managed by the American University in Cairo (AUC), a leading English-language, American-accredited institution of higher education and center of intellectual, social and cultural life of the Arab world. Its community of students, parents, faculty and staff, trustees, alumni and other generous sponsors represent more than 60 countries. The project is implemented through a strong consortium of public and private nonprofit institutions of higher education in Egypt.

USAID Scholars Activity Program offers comprehensive scholarship packages to 700 talented and deserving Egyptian students to obtain degrees from Egyptian public and private universities in fields of studies that are important to Egypt's current and future development. The Scholars Activity aims to accomplish the following:

- To identify and empower young women and men who have demonstrated academic excellence, leadership, and involvement in their communities;
- Creating a cadre of potential leaders and change agents who will contribute through innovations and scientific research to the key technical fields that are critical to the socio-economic and environmental development of Egypt.
- Enhancing the responsiveness of university graduates' skills to the needs of the public and private sector.
- Enhancing the demonstrated and potential leadership of participants to lead in their professions, communities, and country through paid and voluntary activities.
- Increasing English language proficiency amongst scholarship recipients, enabling them to perform confidently in English in academic, professional and social contexts, and to compete in the job market.
- Establishing early entrepreneurship training combined with experiential models for learning, students' internships and a study abroad component.
- Networking activities between students, businesspeople, faculty, and entrepreneurs to create, act or recognize commercial opportunities and/ or solving development challenges.

The Scholars Activity recipients will attend one of seven public and private universities participating in the Program:

- The American University in Cairo
- Cairo University
- Ain Shams University
- Alexandria University
- Assiut University
- Mansoura University
- Zewail City of Science and Technology

Activities of the Project:

A primary aim of the USAID Scholars Activity is to provide scholarships and support to 700 talented students from underprivileged families. Scholarship recipients will be referred to as Activity Scholars. To accomplish this, the following activities will be planned and implemented on the following main areas:

- Student Recruitment and Selection
- Screening Process
- Selection Criteria and Admission Process
- Criteria for Continuation of Scholarship
- Orientation and On-Boarding Program
- Student Support Services
- Housing

The program will then provide services to enable USAID Activity Scholars to succeed in their university academic life, to gain leadership and entrepreneurship skills and to focus on career development after receiving a university degree. To accomplish this, the following activities will be planned and implemented:

- Leadership and Skills Development
- Internship Opportunities.
- Entrepreneurship Training
- English Language Training and Appropriate Cultural Experiences
- Job Placement and Networking
- Study Abroad in the U.S.

And finally, AUC will be implementing capacity building activities for the team working at the Centers for Disabilities established at the partner universities. These activities include;

- Implementing outreach sessions with faculty and administrators to conduct training and improve the established centers for disabilities
- Providing training and coaching for center staff on management of different types of disabilities;
- Developing standards for the provision of reliable disability support services.
- Empowering and supporting universities' administration, staff, and students to embed inclusive practices.

Goal

Communicate the USAID Scholars Activity objectives, achievements, results and promote the concepts of equitable access to higher education and quality education for employability and economic development, in sectors of high socio-economic and environmental development priority that are included in the scientific majors of the scholarship.

Objectives

- Announce the program and publicize the activities, advantages and the positive impact on students.
- Outreach at least 51.5% of Thanawya Amma students over 27 governorates and get more applicants.

- Encourage stakeholders, partners, potential partners, business and industry support, through delivering the tangible benefits that the Activity scholars brings to workforce and labor market needs as well as, economic development. internships – Funding innovative project ideas....)
- Influence students through underlining the link between the scientific majors of the scholarship and the sectors of high economic priority (agriculture, energy, water and nursing) defined at Egypt’s plans, and how this will give excellence to graduates of those sectors as well as high employability opportunities.
- Highlight the collaboration between USAID and AUC that contributes to Egypt's 2030 Sustainable Development Strategy.

Target Audience

3.1 Primary Audience for the Activity include;

- Students who meet the criteria of the USAID Scholars Activity, along with their families and teachers.
- Stakeholders with interests in the program – including HEI officials, seven participating universities and other universities in Egypt, and the private and public sector institutions that will serve as potential internship hosts and employers for USAID Scholars Activity alumni.

3.2 Secondary Audience for the Activity include;

- Beneficiaries’ community at large, and the Egyptian people.
- Media
- General public

Key messages

The message will focus on the objectives of the USAID Scholars Activity making sure that all assistance funded under the program is from the American people. The following messages will be incorporated in written documents and presentations, as well as in electronic form and other modes of communications, as described below. It will also be conveyed orally at conferences and workshops, and when speaking with the media and project partners.

Key Program Messages

- USAID Scholars Activity offers a quality education that incorporates knowledge, experiential learning, research, entrepreneurship, labor market preparation, and innovation.
- USAID Scholars Activity leads to enhancing the responsiveness of university graduates’ skills to the needs of the public and private sectors.
- USAID Scholars Activity nurtures the students’ leadership, cognitive and social skills to contribute to their holistic character development as employable individuals, change agents, and future leaders.
- The carefully selected students will receive a full-tuition scholarship to one of seven prestigious and accredited higher education institutions in Egypt.
- Embed inclusive practices for students with disabilities to integrate it in all the Activity messages.

Communication tactics and tools

Branding

Set a theme for the Activity that connects all the outreach tools to ensure recognition, integration and image that creates credibility.

Collateral materials

Produce a set of printed marketing materials that include a folder, a brochure, flyers, rollups, posters and banners for visibility.

Inauguration event

Holding an event under the auspices of USAID and the Egyptian government (Ministry of Higher Education) to announce the Activity, pull attention to the program and engage stakeholders. This event should be attended by policy makers, stakeholders, partners, students, alumni and media.

Speaking events

Key persons speak to groups that represent the activity target audiences and deliver a presentation (it can be online) that covers the key messages in a way that will appeal to the audience of the event.

Videos

Share different versions of videos (created by volunteers or students) about the Activity and the experiment of students (scholarship alumni) as well as success stories. Videos can be presented at events and sent to key stakeholders.

Online pages

Create an interface pages on partner's websites to provide updated information about the activity and keep connected with the target audience. In addition, a fact sheet about the Activity can be posted on the website of the USAID.

Governmental organizations, NGOs and USAID Sister-Project Alumni:

- National council for Disabilities, National Council for Women, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Social Solidarity, the Minister of Education, Takaful and Karama and a number of workers' associations such as Engineers Association have made announcements of the program on their social media channels.
- A number of companies in the private sector have officially agreed to take students as interns from the Scholarship Program.
- Alumni from sister USAID projects have participated in a webinar created by AFS to share information about their experience to potential students. More alumni will be contacted to participate in future webinars.

Social media

Use social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn) to post ads, photos and integrated messages on a regular basis about all details, steps, process, benefits, activities, achievements, to engage the target market,

and meanwhile get the responses of the target market from their comments, which will help in the continuous development of the Activity, according to the suggestions and needs of the target market.

Direct Marketing

Contact potential applicants directly through university applicants, who apply to the universities and institutions through phone calls and messages to promote the scholarship

Invite targeted Thanaweya Amma students and teachers at each governorate, through the education directorate, to orientation sessions about the scholarship, components and benefits to use the word of mouth tactic in spreading the announcement with credibility.

Release an SMS campaign to all Thanaweya Amma students to publicize the scholarship and call them to action

Press Ad

Publish a press ad at Al-Ahram newspaper once per cohort.

Media Relations

Connect regularly with the press and media through press releases and Public Service Announcements (PSAs) in print, radio and television, media interviews, feature stories and advertorials.

Estimated BUDGET: LE TBD

Activity	Cost	Notes
Branding Create a theme		Will be prepared by the communication consultant
Collateral materials <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Content development ○ Graphic design ○ Printing 		Content and layout will be created by the communication consultant
Publications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Content development ○ layout ○ Printing 		Content and layout will be created by the communication consultant

Inauguration event		
Online Speaking events	Free	
Videos	Free	
Online pages	Free	
Social media		
Direct Marketing		
Sponsorship		
Press Ad		
Media relations	Free	The communication consultant or the AUC communication office will prepare the press release and it will be released to the media representatives of the AUC through the AUC communication office

Critical Time Path June 2020 – May 2021

Activity	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar	April	May
Theme	x	x										
Collateral materials	x	x	x									
Publications		x	x	x								
Inauguration event				x								
Speaking events												

Videos		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Online pages	x	x										
Social media	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Direct Marketing		x										
Sponsorship												
Press Ad	x											
Media Relations		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x

Campaign Evaluation

The campaign evaluation plan will take into consideration the impact of the campaign on the key publics measuring the outputs, outtakes and the overall outcomes of the campaign using different evaluation tools such as ongoing media analysis, surveys and questionnaires and outreach measurements.

Annex (5) USAID Scholars Activity First Year Implementation Plan under COVID-19

USAID Scholars Activity

Cooperative Agreement No. 72026320CA00002

First Year Implementation Plan

under COVID-19

September 20, 2020

Introduction:

The USAID Scholars Activity is commencing the implementation of its activities at unprecedented times, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. While AUC is working with partner H.E. institutions and service providers on concluding different activities related to the selection and placement of the first cohort, it is still unclear whether the implementation modality will remain as initially foreseen.

The completed stages of the outreach and recruitment activities for Cohort 1 students were implemented using a blended approach of online and limited physical modalities. During the interviewing stage, it was determined in accordance with the candidates' preferred modality. AFS-Egypt is currently preparing for the implementation of the home visits stage for the shorted-listed candidates who successfully passed the interviewing stage. Home visits will be conducted physically with all the health and safety measures taken by AFS to protect the candidates and volunteers/visitors.

The AUC and partner HE institutions continue to monitor the situation to mitigate the implementation challenges due to the current pandemic and will adjust plans, as needed, to ensure efficient and secure implementation of activities planned to assist the settling in for Cohort 1 scholars. However, opting to the online option for the implementation of the activities will incur budget implications

The following activities are planned to be conducted during FY2021:

Activities	Implementation Modality
Staff Computers	AUC will purchase laptops, instead of regular desktop PCs, to facilitate working from home. Budget implications will occur.
Steering Committee Meetings	Meetings will be conducted online until further notice.
Advisory Board Meetings	Meetings will be conducted online until further notice.
Students' Orientation by the Activity	Will be conducted online for all the Activity's scholars
Students' Orientation by each partner university	Will be conducted online by each partner university.
Signing of the students' agreements	This will be conducted online unless the students opted to the face-to face option
Pre-test for all students.	We are considering all exam options; TOEFL ITP and TOEFL IBT and IELTS with all its binding requirements; considering all challenges and availability of each exam and working on reaching a decision. Budget implications may occur.

Pre-Academic Program (1 month)	Will be implemented through an online modality. Budget implications may occur.
Education	A blended learning modality depending on the track selected at each partner university. AUC is working with partner universities for an update regarding each major. Budget implications may occur.
Dorms	Zewil City confirmed that they will not accommodate students given the COVID-19 situation. Cairo University also decided that only one student instead of two students will be accommodated per room, situation is being monitored for the rest of the partner universities.
Preparation Year	Will be implemented through an online modality. Budget implications may occur.
Supplemental English	Will be implemented through an online modality. Budget implications may occur.
Student Wellness Workshops	Will be implemented online by the CSW.
Cohort 1 Inauguration Event	This cannot be conducted online for the time being. AUC will continue to monitor the situation and will adjust the plan based on the evolving conditions of the pandemic. Budget implications may occur.
Leadership Activities	Will be conducted online. Budget implications may occur.
USAID TEAMS practical training	This will be attended online by the Activity AUC team members who will undertake the responsibility of administering the study abroad component
Outreach, recruitment and selection of Cohort 2 scholars	This will be implemented online unless the COVID-19 situation changes. Budget implications may occur.
Performance monitoring approach of the Activity implementation	Given the uncertainty surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, the Activity will continue to closely monitor the situation

	<p>and adopt an adaptive, blended approach to monitoring its implementation and activities. This approach will combine on-line and, where only safe and appropriate, in-person/on-campus monitoring. The exact monitoring approach will be decided prior to the implementation of every activity, following an assessment of the situation at the time.</p>
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