



1. Project Data:		Date Posted : 09/22/2004	
PROJ ID: P005161		Appraisal	Actual
Project Name: Basic Education Improvement Project	Project Costs (US\$M)	74.5	69.4
Country: Egypt	Loan/Credit (US\$M)	55.5	51.2
Sector(s): Board: ED - Secondary education (40%), Primary education (40%), Tertiary education (12%), Central government administration (8%)	Cofinancing (US\$M)	0.7	0.7
L/C Number: C2476			
	Board Approval (FY)		93
Partners involved : UNDP	Closing Date	12/31/2002	12/31/2003
Prepared by :	Reviewed by :	Group Manager :	Group:
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2. Project Objectives and Components			
a. Objectives			
The ICR presents the Staff Appraisal Report version of the objectives, calling them "realistic and clear." However, since that version contains both objectives and the means of obtaining them, and there is a simplified and clearer version of them in the Loan Agreement, the version in the Loan Agreement is presented here, as follows :			
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improve access to basic education through a program of school construction and maintenance; 2. Improve teaching quality and curricula design; 3. Enhance the Ministry of Education's capacity in the areas of management, planning, and policy analysis; 4. Assist in the formulation of options for addressing priority basic education issues . 			
b. Components			
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. School construction and maintenance 2. In-service teacher training; 3. Institutional development in management, information, and planning in MOE; and 4. Related policy-oriented studies. 			
c. Comments on Project Cost, Financing and Dates			
IDA Credits of SDR40 million (US\$55.5 million) were committed, which covered about 75% of total Project costs. About 92% of the credit was disbursed during the Project (98% not counting unallocated funds). Given a favorable exchange rate between SDRs and US dollars, there was a surplus at the end of the Project, which, with Bank approval, was reallocated to expanding a school improvement fund, applying new National Education Standards to teacher training, and expanding the telephone grid for the Ministry's EMIS . In the end, about \$4.4 million were unutilized and cancelled from the Credit . Due to sharp increases in construction costs, based on a decision to earthquake-proof new school buildings, the Project had to scale down the number of schools built (from 240 to 146), but then developed new, more economical designs, allowing it to increase the number to 159. The Project lasted ten years, nine years planned plus one extension year .			
3. Achievement of Relevant Objectives:			
It is difficult to assess the achievement of objectives for the Basic Education Improvement Project (BEIP), since the staff appraisal report (SAR) only had performance indicators (targets) for objectives 2 and 3 and these were not tracked in the ICR. For objective 1, improving access to basic education, some outcome measures were reported . In about 80% of school districts, where schools were constructed by the Project, basic education enrollment significantly increased (in 81% there were increases for girls; in 78% for boys). The extent of the increase, based on national examination center results, was reported for two "catchment areas" -- 7% and 26%, respectively, but not for the others (the number of catchment areas was not specified), and there were no baseline data. The ICR also cites a 25 percentage point increase in the overall national gross enrollment ratio from 1991/92 to 2002/03, but appropriately indicates that the Project related enrollment increases accounted for only about 6.6% of this.			

For the Second Objective, improve teaching and curricula design, the Project did specify some performance indicators, but these mostly focused on the design, delivery and quality of the inservice teacher training provided (the means to improved teaching). The Project did reach a large number of teachers (over 125,000), largely through distance education, but except for a survey of 9000 students -- 88% of whom believed Project trained teachers performed better than those not trained -- there is no clear evidence that the quality of teaching improved as a result of the Project. (Best practice would use teacher observations or student exam results to show this). On curricula design, this part of the objective was not addressed fully, but the ICR and subsequent explanations from the region indicate that project-supported teacher training conveyed to teachers improvements in basic education curricula resulting from revisions made every two years during the project.

The Third Objective, enhance MOE institutional capacity for policy analysis, management and educational planning, was accompanied by performance indicators, but they were mostly input indicators (amount of training provided), except for those promoted by an improved educational management information system (EMIS); for this there were outcome indicators. The ICR maintains that management capacity was increased, but no evidence is given except that 1,800 managers received training; for the EMIS, a unified system containing all major educational measures was created and is: a) fully automated at the HQ, governorate, and district levels, b) updated frequently and available on CDs as well as online, c) used for planning and policy decisions (although not clear by whom and how often), and d) used as a factor in selecting managers (i.e., data on experience, qualifications and performance).

For the Fourth Objective, assisting in the formation of options for addressing priority basic education issues, again there were no performance indicators (how to know if the Project addressed priority basic education issues?). However, the Project had initially planned at least 2 policy-oriented studies, and eight were produced, showing that at least output was high. The ICR cites as evidence of influence on priority issues the Project's formation of a "comprehensive strategic framework for basic education."

4. Significant Outcomes/Impacts:

- The Project built lasting infrastructure for its computerized management information system which will facilitate data-based decision-making down to the district level throughout Egypt.
- In all reporting of student enrollment gains, changes for girls were higher than for boys; national statistics also show a substantial closing of the gender gap, to which the Project estimated the BEIP contributed at least 6.6% (to be confirmed).
- The Project pioneered the concept of school-based training, and now there are school-based training units in basic education schools throughout the country.
- The Project built up national capacity, infrastructure and courseware for teacher training through the cost-effective means of distance education.
- The Project helped the General Authority for Education Buildings (GAEB), a semi-autonomous institution, to become more efficient and innovative (it discovered a way to reduce school construction unit costs by 10%).

5. Significant Shortcomings (including non-compliance with safeguard policies):

- The Project failed to establish a monitoring and evaluation system at the beginning, and thus had few meaningful baselines or targets for judging progress. Particularly problematic was the lack of outcome indicators, meaning that the Project was good at tracking service delivery but not effectiveness (achieving Project objectives). Other "quality at entry" problems concerned the complex and unclear rendering of project development objectives in the SAR; this was improved by simplified versions in the Loan Agreement, but these version left out the "equity" goal of Objective 1 and rendered curriculum revision in Objective 2 ambiguous.
- The widespread use of distance education allowed the Government to reach vast numbers of teachers at a reasonable costs, but without data on outcomes it is difficult to know how effective the training was. Distance education is usually relatively effective for improving teacher knowledge but not their instructional skills; the latter requires practical training and school level follow-up, which do not appear to have been included. (Information provided subsequently by the region indicate that supervisors received face to face instruction on improving teaching skills, but it is not clear how much of this was passed on to the teachers.)
- Despite the fact that the Project was implemented over a nine year period and aspired to improve policy making, the document says relatively little (i.e., in a short list at the end of the write-up on "institutional development impact") about specific policy changes that were influenced by the Project.
- Despite the emphasis on equity of access to basic education in the SAR, this feature was dropped from the Loan Agreement, making the Project less poverty focused than originally intended. Although there was some reporting of and positive results on girl's participation, there was little indication as to how the Project affected other disadvantaged groups and the poorest communities.

6. Ratings:	ICR	OED Review	Reason for Disagreement /Comments
Outcome:	Satisfactory	Moderately Satisfactory	[the ICR's 4-point scale does not allow for a "moderately sat." rating]. Despite strong

			showings in delivering Project inputs (school buildings, training for teachers and managers, and information systems), there is insufficient evidence to confirm the accomplishment of major objectives, especially with respect to better teaching, and improved management capacity .
Institutional Dev .:	Substantial	Substantial	
Sustainability :	Likely	Likely	
Bank Performance :	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	The Bank's Quality Assurance Group evaluated Project supervision in year 2000 and found it to be satisfactory; especially commendable were its linkages to policy development in a second project which was jointly supervised with BEIP .
Borrower Perf .:	Satisfactory	Satisfactory	
Quality of ICR :		Satisfactory	

NOTE: ICR rating values flagged with '*' don't comply with OP/BP 13.55, but are listed for completeness.

7. Lessons of Broad Applicability:

- The establishment of a monitoring and evaluation system including baseline data and the tracking of outcomes indicators should be a part of any project, especially one that expects to improve quality .
- Documenting improvements in teaching quality requires more than teacher satisfaction with training and feedback by children taught by trained teachers -- it requires at least classroom observations and preferably also a record of student learning gains .
- Distance education for teacher training can be cost effective for some parts of professional growth, but there is a danger of its being overused for aspects of teacher education (e.g., practical skills) for which it is not well suited .
- The use of start up grants (like the one from UNDP in this Project) can be an effective to overcome endemic start-up delays in places like Egypt, which require clearance from parliament before a project can become effective .
- The use of Government agencies outside the implementing Ministry (MOE) for project monitoring, quality control, and review of financial transactions -- in this case the National Investment Bank -- can be beneficial to a project and help to assure fiduciary responsibility .

8. Assessment Recommended? Yes No

9. Comments on Quality of ICR:

Although basically clearly written and solid, the ICR could have elaborated further on Project design weaknesses in its "quality at entry" section. For example, it did not remark on the poorly phased Project objectives (substantially paraphrased in the Loan Agreement), and the absence of a good program monitoring and evaluation design and outcomes indicators for measuring fulfillment of objectives (only mentioned under the Bank performance evaluation). The ICR is also overly positive about the quality of outputs indicators for assessing Project components . Overall, it tends to use delivery of services (training) and physical improvements (better training and management facilities) as primary measures of Project outcomes .