



Ishraq

Population Council



Region	MENA
Country	Egypt
Organization	Population Council
Name	Ishraq
Category	Skills development
Start date	2001
End date	2013
Partners	Population Council, Caritas Egypt, Teaming for Development, Save the Children, Ministry of Youth, National Council for Childhood and Motherhood, six umbrella NGOs and 30 local youth centres in 30 villages.
UN involvement	Non-UN
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1. Background and description

Adolescent girls, particularly in rural areas, continue to face entrenched gender gaps in school attendance. While significant progress has been made in Egypt in terms of schooling, with 87.9 per cent of young people attending schools, the level and type of schooling varies greatly, exacerbated by an urban/rural and a gender divide. Among the young people aged 10-29 years who have never attended school, the percentage of females, 11 per cent, is strikingly four times higher than that of males, 3 per cent. This gender disparity is further compounded in regions such as rural Upper Egypt, where the ratio of girls who have never attended schools is five times higher than that of males.²

This marginalization has effects on adolescent girls beyond their educational level. Indeed, studies have shown that girls who have never enrolled or have dropped out of school face higher risks of early marriage, childbearing, poor health outcomes and poverty.³ At the social level, these girls become isolated and are often confined to the family sphere, with limited opportunities for interaction and learning.

Despite the multiplicity of programmes targeting children and adolescents in the areas of education and health, very few development projects focused on the vulnerable group which rural adolescent girls represent in Egypt.

¹ Desk review, interview (23 September 2014); internal validation (18-25 November 2014); implementer validation (25 November-18 December 2014); Final validation (October 2015).

² Population Council (2010).

³ Brady et al. (2007).





In 2001, the Population Council, in collaboration with the Centre for Development and Population Activities (CEDPA), Save the Children, Caritas and local NGOs, launched Ishraq (Sunrise), a multidimensional programme for girls aged 12-to-15 years who are out of school. The programme sought to transform girls' lives by working with them at the individual level, providing them with safe spaces, functional literacy, life and cognitive skills and overall increased knowledge of their rights. At the community level, it worked with parents and community leaders to change gender norms and perceptions about the programme and about girls' roles in society, bringing them into the public sphere and raising awareness of issues that affect them. It also created an enabling environment for girls to join education and play an active role in society. At the institutional level, the programme sought to increase local and national policymakers' support for girl-friendly measures and policies. Implemented in three phases – pilot, expansion and scale up – between 2001 and 2012, the programme reached 30 villages in Upper Egypt and over 3,000 direct beneficiaries.

An evaluation of the programme showed positive effects on the participants and the community at large, demonstrated by the girls' increased levels of literacy, improved self-confidence, acquisition of skills and changes in attitudes and behaviours at the community level.⁴ The experience of Ishraq and its successful focus on out-of-school adolescent girls brought to the forefront the need to scale up to a national level these type of programmes. Among key lessons learned were the need to forge partnerships with all key stakeholders and at all levels – governmental and non-

governmental actors, the private sector, the community, parents and girls' themselves – to ensure sustainability and most of all, the development of a generation of girls equipped with skills and knowledge to exercise their rights as active citizens and members of their communities.

Organization profile

The Population Council's mission is to "improve the well-being and reproductive health of current and future generations around the world and to help achieve a humane, equitable, and sustainable balance between people and resources".⁵



4 Selim et al. (2013).

5 Population Council: Mission (www.populationcouncil.org).



2. Goal and objectives

2.1. Goal

The overall goal of the programme was to transform girls' lives by working with girls themselves, communities and the Government. By working with adolescent girls, it aimed to foster their self-awareness and build their self-confidence.

2.2. Objectives

The objectives of Ishraq were to:⁶

- Create safe spaces for girls where they can gather, network with other girls and learn;
- Improve girls' functional literacy, recreational opportunities, life skills, health knowledge and attitudes, mobility and civic participation;
- Influence social norms related to their abilities and life opportunities at the community level, changing gender norms and community perceptions about girls' role in society while safely bringing them to the public sphere;
- Improve local and national policymakers' support for girl-friendly measures and policies.

3. Target group

3.1. Age group

Out-of-school adolescent girls aged 12-15 years were eligible to join Ishraq.⁷ The girls were selected through orientation meetings with the community and on a first-come, first-served basis. The information for village selection emerged from the national census, indicating the percentages of out-of-school girls and enrolment and illiteracy rates. In each village, the programme was announced in religious settings – mosques and churches – and through community leaders. A committee was formed and the programme was explained to the village members, with information trickling down to the community. Registered girls had to present birth certificates or register under their parent's name. The final list of selected girls was based on two criteria: age (12-15 years); and girls who had dropped out of school or had never been to school.

3.2. Gender considerations

The programme was conceived especially to target out-of-school adolescent girls, a group identified as critically underserved by existing development programmes. The pilot phase targeted only adolescent girls, but the subsequent two phases included a component for brothers and relatives of the Ishraq girls, introducing them to life skills and gender equity. The age range of the boys was 12-18 years and the topics covered included communication skills, development and volunteer work, gender, feelings, values, personal relations, marriage and family, health and life skills, with classes meeting two days a week for six months.

3.3. Ethnic / disability considerations

The programme did not have any specific ethnic-sensitive criteria nor did it target adolescents with disabilities.

⁶ Brady et al., 2007.

⁷ Girls aged 11 years were accepted due to the issue of not finding a sufficient target group and the fact that these girls turned 12 during the life of the programme. Challenges faced by the programme were difficulties in finding sufficient number of girls. The problem is often compounded by lack of birth certificates for these people.



3.4. Targeting the most marginalized / most at risk

Adolescent girls who were out of school, illiterate and of low socio-economic status were identified as a particularly vulnerable group with specific needs.⁸ Although a multiplicity of programmes targeting children and adolescents have been implemented in Egypt, adolescent girls had been largely overlooked.

3.5. Human rights programming

The programme inscribes itself in a human-rights based approach, but no specific strategy was put in place. The programme promotes girls' empowerment, eradication of illiteracy and education of girls about their rights.⁹

3.6. Adolescent and youth involvement

No specific strategy for the involvement of adolescent girls in the planning, implementation or evaluation of the programme was registered. However, one of key components of the programme was the concept of 'promoters', Egyptian female high school or university students from the local community who led the classes and mentored the enrolled girls.

4. Strategy and Implementation

4.1. Strategies / theoretical approaches / methodologies

The programme was implemented in three phases between 2001 and 2012. The recruitment of female promoters and the involvement of communities, parents and families through regular community seminars were fundamental to the programme's implementation.

The Ishraq model is based on a partnership coordinated and technically assisted by Population Council, which involved six local NGOs – two for each governorate – and the Government. The NGOs were responsible for the daily implementation and supervision of promoters.

Pilot phase: 2001-2003

The pilot phase was launched in four villages of the Minya Governorate and was initially set to last 30 months. The selection of villages followed a series of criteria: the availability of a youth centre that could accommodate two classrooms; a minimum of 70 out-of-school girls between 12 and 15 years of age; and buy-in from the community. Additionally, 10 villages had to be clustered in two districts within each governorate to facilitate daily management.¹⁰ Field visits were carried out to the selected villages and meetings were planned with community leaders to introduce the programme and its objectives. Some of the communities refused Ishraq due to a number of factors: unease with the curriculum; concerns about the safety of girls attending the youth centres and traveling long distances; and previous bad experiences with literacy programmes. Once the final selection was made and commitment from the village received, the recruitment campaign was put in place. Strategies included public announcements, banners at the youth centres and public spaces, home visits and public meetings in NGOs and health units.¹¹ Registration of the girls took place in the youth centres.

In this phase, class schedules were decided in consultation with the girls to ensure they accommodated their other

8 Interview with Mr Khaled El Sayed, Former Programme Manager, Population Council Egypt (23 September 2014).

9 Ibid.

10 El Baddawy, A. (2013).

11 Ibid.





responsibilities. Classes were generally held in the mornings, four times a week. The community youth centres were used for this purpose. The girls' attendance was monitored by promoters and reported to the monitoring and evaluation field officers at the NGO level, who in turn reported to the monitoring and evaluation officer in Cairo. To mitigate dropouts, promoters conducted visits to the homes of girls who registered frequent absenteeism.

Expansion phase: 2004-2007

In the expansion phase, Ishraq was implemented in 10 new villages, five in Minya and five in Beni-Suef. While the structure remained the same, several adjustments were made to better address the participants' needs. The programme was shortened to 24 months to accommodate the rising demand. For this phase, the villages selected had a minimum of 120 out-of-school girls. A new component was a programme for boys aged 13-17 years, which sought to introduce life skills and gender-related topics.

Scale-up phase: 2008-2013

In the final phase, Ishraq was implemented in 30 new villages in Fayoum, Qena and Sohag as part of the efforts to institutionalize the programme. Core targets for this phase were the sustainability of safe spaces, building technical and managerial capacity of youth centres and local NGOs, and allowing youth directorates to replicate the programme for rural girls. In terms of curriculum, two components were added: financial education; and nutrition.

Promoters' recruitment

Female high school graduates and sometimes university graduates from the

community were recruited as promoters to lead the classes. Before the start of the programme, promoters were trained in teaching methods and facilitation skills. These skills were reinforced throughout the programme by attendance at regular workshops and meetings. Each village had four female promoters, two for literacy classes and two for life skills, sports and financial education classes. Coming from the same community as the girls and having faced similar issues, the promoters served as mentors, coaches and role models for the Ishraq girls. They were also a critical link between the girls, their parents and the programme as they followed the girls' progress and conducted household visits whenever there was absenteeism or an issue arising with one of the girls. Throughout the training, girls' attendance was monitored by promoters and reported monthly to the monitoring and evaluation field officers. Promoters worked under the immediate supervision of partner NGO coordinators.¹²

Community involvement

In order to strengthen the buy-in from the community and ensure girls' enrolment in the programme, staff organized community seminars with parents, siblings and leaders to inform them about the programme, its benefits and progress. When necessary, home visits were also organized.

4.2. Activities

The programme was structured around four mandatory components.¹³ A standard teaching package for all four components was produced, and classes ran for a period of 24 months at the youth centres. In the classes, girls received training in literacy, life skills and financial education and played sports.

¹² El Baddawy, A. (2013).

¹³ Selim et al. (2013).





Literacy: Caritas ‘Learn to be free’ curriculum

Based on Freire’s pedagogy, the Ishraq curriculum was participatory and involved active discussions between promoters and girls. The imparted lessons focused on grammar, vocabulary and mathematics, and active learning techniques were part of the learning process. This component was made possible through the partnership with Caritas.¹⁴

Life skills: CEDPA’s New Horizons

The curriculum was the first one in Egypt to present reproductive health information and basic life skills to young women. It included communication, team building, volunteering, negotiation, decision-making and critical thinking.

Sports and physical activity

The introduction of a sports component, an innovation in a context where girls traditionally do not play sports and are invisible in the public sphere, helped them to develop healthy values and attitudes. Prior to the launch of sports, Ishraq girls were given a free-of-charge medical check up to ensure they were able to play sports and link them to health services.¹⁵ Activities ran twice a week for 13 months, with each session lasting 90 minutes. This component focused not only on the physical aspect, but also on mental well-being, self-confidence and social interaction. Excursions were also organized for girls to visit touristic sites within their governorates.

Girls’ Club for Ishraq Graduates

During the first two phases, implementing staff noticed the obstacles Ishraq graduates faced after graduation, which included girls

no longer having access to the youth centres. In response, girls’ clubs were established in 2008 and provided with financial support for private tutoring to support the transition into formal schooling. The Ishraq graduates who attended these clubs were between 18 and 28 years of age. They received an eight-day training on legal rights and a four-day training on financial education and business skills with the aim of broadening their livelihood opportunities. The legal rights training addressed issues such as marriage, divorce and child laws and increased their understanding of basic official documentation and procedures. The financial and business skills training provided the girls with basic knowledge on how to start a new business and open individual savings accounts.

Preparation for formal schooling

The programme supported Ishraq graduates in taking the Adult Education Agency exam. Tutoring classes were held four times a week, four hours per day at the youth centres. Teachers who provided the tutoring agreed to receive only half of their fees as support to the girls. Information and awareness-raising sessions were held with parents and the communities as there was reluctance on the part of some parents to have the girls join formal schooling. For those girls who could not join formal schooling, promoters convened a weekly gathering at the youth centre to discuss issues of relevance to them.¹⁶

4.3. Innovativeness

The most innovative component of Ishraq was the creation of safe spaces for adolescent girls. While the concept in itself is not an innovation, its adaptation to out-of-school girls and implementation in the rural Egyptian context was an innovative

14 El Baddawy, A. (2013).

15 Population Council (2013).

16 Population Council (2013).





approach. The adaptation included the introduction of promoters, trained prior to the start of the programme to become mentors and teachers for the girls. Beyond teaching, they provided coaching and moral support. Belonging to the same community created an important linkage with the girls, their families and the community. Because the promoters were seen as role models, their connection with the girls had the potential to have an impact beyond the programme.

A related innovative element of the programme was the introduction of Ishraq classes and the girls' clubs for Ishraq graduates in youth centre spaces which although intended for both, had become a boys-only zone.

To ensure a sustainable change, the programme worked with families and communities, fostering a supportive environment for girls. Parents, brothers and community leaders participated in awareness-raising activities which introduced them to gender issues and other matters of relevance to adolescents. The availability and content were based on the particular needs of the community.

Another innovative element of the programme was the introduction of sports and physical activities, which was a first in this context.

4.4. Cost and funding

Financial support for Ishraq was provided by the Embassy of Kingdom of Netherlands, DFID (UKAID), Dickler Family Foundation, Egyptian Food Bank, Empower, Exxon Mobil, Ford Foundation, Gates Foundation and UK Sport and Population Council. In efforts to reduce costs, communities were encouraged to launch Ishraq classes using local resources and linking them with the

Adult Education Agency, the government entity in charge of literacy. As a result, 50 new classes were opened.

4.5. Sustainability

Ishraq had an institutionalization plan, the main goal of which was to transfer ownership of the programme to a government entity, which would include Ishraq in its roster of replicable programmes and potentially introduce it to new communities, benefiting a larger number of out-of-school girls. While this did not take place and only the 50 additional Ishraq classes were created by local communities with local resources, the use of existing youth centres ensured that the spaces would be available to the girls after completion of Ishraq. Furthermore, committees were formed at the village, governorate and national levels to create an environment that accepts girls' education, enabling active participation in the public sphere.

The village committees were comprised of parents and community and religious leaders who raised awareness of issues of importance to girls. The governorate committees met on a quarterly basis to support the Ishraq programme with administrative processes, i.e., birth certificates and medical check-ups. At the national level, memoranda of understanding were signed with the Ministry of Youth and former Ministry of Family and Population to align Ishraq with existing programmes and activities to prepare for a major scale-up. The Ministry of Youth provided support by facilitating the use of youth centres and helping to solve any problems arising with the youth centres' officials.

At the community level, and to ensure the maintenance of youth centres as safe spaces for girls and boys beyond the





programme, promoters were encouraged to join the boards of the youth centres in order to advocate for spaces for girls in the centres. As a result, two promoters in Fayoum were elected to their youth centres' boards.¹⁸ One hundred twenty promoters joined the youth centres as teachers for the Ishraq girls. Some youth centres were able to maintain the promoters and pay for them; however, the majority were not able to sustain this.

While the efforts to institutionalize Ishraq were put in place, the experience demonstrated that the replication and institutionalization of this type of programme requires close collaboration with local communities and the Government in particular, as well as the development of a holistic approach which can accompany the development of girls beyond programmes like Ishraq.¹⁹ Buy-in from the Government and the active engagement of governors and national-level ministry officials proved to be critical for effective implementation and support from other relevant governorates. For instance, the Governor of Sohag was the head of the community committee and participated actively in the meetings, resulting in stronger support for the programme's activities.

4.6. Replicability

The Population Council implements a programme for out-of-school adolescent girls in urban slums in Ethiopia, which uses the components of safe spaces and mentors. Known as Biruh Tesfa, it trains adult female mentors, who in turn reach out to girls aged 7-24 years by going house to house and inviting them to participate in a non-formal education programme linked to health services. Girls and mentors meet in safe, public but 'girl-only' locations where they receive basic literacy, life skills, financial

and reproductive health education. The programme has been scaled up to 18 cities and has reached more than 55,000 girls.²⁰

In line with the scale-up strategy, the programme aimed to build the capacity of ministries, NGOs and youth centres. Ishraq worked with 225 project staff in 30 youth centres, six NGOs and a group of cadres from ministries.²¹ The result was the development of a 'how to' Ishraq toolkit, workshops, a procedural manual and 15 'how to' manuals on the technical aspects, challenges and lessons learned.

As a prerequisite for the graduation of the participants, the project worked with NGO, youth centre and government staff to replicate Ishraq in one community in each governorate using community resources. Permission was granted by the Minister of Youth to include Ishraq in the series of projects with the potential for replicability. As a result, 50 new Ishraq classes were opened, four in non-Ishraq villages.²² The mobilization of local support required heavy investments in advocacy, awareness-raising events and meetings with village committees and local government. As a result, the General Authority for Literacy and Adult Education funded the activities by paying the salaries of the promoters for nine months in three of the governorates.

5. Evaluation of effectiveness

Results

Throughout the different phases, Ishraq directly reached 3,321 girls and 1,775 boys in 54 villages across five governorates. It also reached over 5,000 parents and community leaders.

18 Selim et al. (2013).

19 Ibid.

20 Population Council: Biruh Tesfa: <http://www.popcouncil.org/research/biruh-tesfa-safe-spaces-for-out-of-school-girls-in-urban-slum-areas-of-ethi>.

21 Ibid.

22 Selim et al. (2013).





Ishraq underwent an impact evaluation²³ with the aim of examining the extent to which the programme actually changes participants' knowledge, skills and attitudes, as well as the attitudes of those around them. The assessment looked at the achieved outcomes in five areas: functional literacy; mobility and access to safe spaces; acquisition of life skills; empowerment, knowledge and attitudes; and community attitudes, including parents and brothers' attitudes towards girls. Overall, the programme was found to have had a positive impacts on outcomes for girls,²⁴ with the most significant changes in literacy skills, access to youth centres, participation and attitudes towards sports, plans for continuing education and participation in decision-making.

Improved functional literacy and educational outcomes

In terms of literacy, the results revealed that 81 per cent of Ishraq girls passed the national literacy exam and over 50 per cent were enrolled in formal schooling. The reading and comprehension of Ishraq girls were significantly higher²⁵ than for the control group. When tested on reading and comprehension, Ishraq girls scored higher than girls in the comparison group. The test on multiplication demonstrated that over 50 per cent of Ishraq participants were able to correctly answer a multiplication question versus 30 per cent of non-Ishraq girls.²⁶

It was noted that Ishraq girls had a much more positive outlook for continuing education: about one third of them planned to continue their education, while only 5 per cent of the non-Ishraq girls declared the intention to do so.²⁷

Acquisition of life skills

The life-skills training the Ishraq girls received demonstrated positive results in financial literacy, the ability to plan for the future and health-seeking behaviours. Ishraq girls were more likely to save money for an emergency (17 per cent compared to 10 per cent) and more confident about starting their own business. In fact, over 50 per cent of non-participants deemed they would not be able to start their own business, compared to 24 per cent of Ishraq girls.²⁸ Participants were also more likely to seek professional advice when sick, know where a health unit was and were more likely to have a health card.²⁹

Creation of safe spaces and increased mobility

Organizing classes at the youth centres, which traditionally were attended by males only, created safe spaces for out-of-school girls where they gained the possibility to meet, learn and socialize. The simple yet very symbolic act of expanding girls' mobility and visibility enabled them to carve a place in the public space and create social networks beyond their relatives. Quantitatively, it was noted that nearly 50 per cent of Ishraq girls perceived the youth centres as safe spaces to play sports, whereas that perception was only shared by 2 per cent of the control group. Twenty-two per cent of Ishraq girls declared themselves to be 'pro-sports' against only 5 per cent of non-participants, and 15 per cent were practicing a sport at the time of end-line data collection.³⁰

In terms of peer networks, 71 per cent of Ishraq girls reported having a friend who was not a relative, compared to 44 per cent of girls in the control group.³¹

23 Initial plan was a pre- and post-programme randomized design, but this did not work as it was not feasible to randomly select control villages. Instead, a propensity score matching method was employed.

24 Ibid.

25 An average exceeding one compared to an average close to zero, El Baddawy, A. (2013).

26 Population Council (2013).

27, 28, 29, 31 Ibid.

30 El Baddawy, A. (2013).





Greater 'girl-empowering' knowledge and attitudes

When comparing the knowledge and attitudes towards certain social norms of Ishraq and non-Ishraq girls, a number of positive changes were registered. When requested to identify at least one contraceptive method, Ishraq girls were significantly more informed – 66 per cent versus 38 per cent of non-participants.³² With regards to female genital mutilation, Ishraq mothers were twice as likely not to have the intention to submit their daughters to this practice. Ishraq girls were also more likely to delay marriage and limit childbearing.

Eighty-five per cent estimated that the appropriate age for marriage was 18 years or older, versus 63 per cent of non-Ishraq girls.³³

As a result of the acquisition of life skills, Ishraq girls reported higher levels of self-confidence than non-participants: 65 per cent said they felt “strong and able to face any problem”,³⁴ and 15 per cent of girls had already started or had intentions of starting their own projects, versus only 5 per cent of non-Ishraq girls.

Changing attitudes and norms at the community level

At the community level, it was reported that parents felt more at ease with their daughters using the youth centres and had become more accepting of them pursuing an education and participating in the public sphere. The girls' improved literacy also meant that they were able to become a stronger support for their families and gain access to increased mobility in the community. Demand and community buy-in for the programme appeared to be high as demonstrated by some of the recorded activities in some governorates:

mobilization to build additional classes for Ishraq at the youth centres; in-kind and cash contributions; and decreased transportation fees for the girls.

Monitoring and evaluation

Qualitative and quantitative data were routinely collected for monitoring purposes. The analysis of the data helped track the programme implementation status and indicate any potential problems. For instance, if attendance rates were low in one of the locations, intensive home visits and awareness-raising for the parents took place to discuss the issue. The programme underwent a midterm review and an impact evaluation. The midterm review took place in the second year of the programme in six of the rural communities, including focus group discussions with girls and consultations with promoters, parents, youth centre directors, NGO representatives and government officials.³⁵ An impact evaluation of the programme took place using a propensity score matching method and control groups. The qualitative evaluation covered the impact of Ishraq on girls, including their aspirations, empowerment, self-confidence and mobility.³⁶

6. Strengths and opportunities

- Targeting of the vulnerable group of out-of-school adolescent girls and bringing to the forefront the critical need for enhanced and holistic programming.
- Creation of safe spaces for girls and enabling their presence in the life of the community and public sphere.
- Demonstrated positive difference for participants in terms of increased literacy rates, improved self-confidence and acquisition of life skills.

32 Population Council (2013).

33 El Baddawy, A. (2013).

34 Brady et al. (2007).

35 Population Council (2013).

36 Interview with Mr. Khaled El Sayed, Neqdar Programme Manager, Population Council Egypt (23 September 2014).



7. Challenges

At the individual level: irregular attendance and dropouts were observed, particularly as girls provide important financial support for families. Other registered challenges were early marriage and reluctance on the part of several parents to keep the girls in the programme.

At the community level: acceptance of the programme in the initial phases required significant work and information sessions with the community. Resistance from parents and brothers was one of the greatest challenges. Ensuring the maintenance of safe spaces for girls after concluding the programme was also a challenge.

At the institutional level: Beyond difficulties with adapting to the curriculum and in following up the new subjects, bureaucratic bottlenecks and lack of standardized systems for mainstreaming out-of-school girls into formal schooling were encountered. In the governorate of Fayoum, the girls were allowed to join as regular students while in Sohag or Qena they were only admitted as auditors.³⁷

At the programmatic level: Ishraq is a relatively costly programme. Adjustments and different schemes could be tried to reduce the costs, as well as shortening the duration of the programme.

8. Next steps and the way forward

Continued support to Ishraq graduates, particularly during the first year of transition to formal schooling, is critical. Ishraq graduates may drop out of school during the first year as a result of a lack of academic, financial and social support. They may

also resent and express frustration with the introduction and level of new subjects such as English, science and geography, and often cannot afford to take private lessons. In some cases, the girls may enter an unwelcoming environment where students and school administrators may perceive them as 'second class' students. While, the Ishraq programme has devised strategies to mitigate these challenges, such as providing tutoring and outreach sessions with school administrators and parents, more standard and coordinated efforts are needed to facilitate the girls' entry into mainstream educational programmes.³⁸

Broader dissemination and advocacy efforts are necessary to raise policymakers' awareness of the challenges of implementing programmes for out-of-school girls and to solicit their support in addressing those challenges.

In addition to continuing to expand Ishraq, for which community demand remains high, a new generation of programmes for girls, building on the lessons learned from Ishraq, also needs to be developed to support graduates in exercising their rights and becoming active members of the community.

The experience of Ishraq since 2001



37 Population Council (2013).

38 Email feedback from Mr Khaled El Sayed, Neqdar Programme Manager, Population Council Egypt.



has shown the need to adopt a life-cycle approach to effectively address out-of-school adolescent girls' needs. As Ishraq girls become young women, they need greater life and livelihood opportunities.

Programmes, governments and communities need to make long-term investments to see significant change at the village level. Over the past decade, Ishraq has sought to build the human capacity, programme infrastructure (systems and mechanisms) and institutions to promote its sustainability for past, present and future cohorts of adolescent girls and young women as they transition into adulthood.

Coupled with efforts to improve the technical capacity to implement Ishraq, NGO and CEDPA staff also need to be trained in advocacy, networking and fundraising to ensure that the programme can be scaled up by leveraging local and national resources. One promising source of support for Ishraq could be major corporations, through their corporate social responsibility activities.

Baseline data were collected from Ishraq girls before they opened their savings accounts to explore their understanding of the value of saving and their saving practices. The Population Council is seeking funding to conduct a post-test survey to understand the impact of opening saving accounts on girls' financial practices.

9. Lessons learned and recommendations

The Ishraq experience highlighted several key issues to consider during the replication, scale-up and institutionalization of programmes:³⁹

- Work with local communities and have

components which target stakeholders and 'gatekeepers'. In the case of Ishraq, committees were organized and met regularly;

- Programme flexibility to extend to new settings and adjust the scheduling of activities according to emerging needs. This proved essential for avoiding absenteeism and dropout;
- Foster partnerships between the communities, the Government, NGOs and the private sector to ensure sustainability of both the programme and resources;
- Create an enabling environment through community mobilization, particularly in settings where adolescent girls do not have a voice in the public sphere;⁴⁰
- Integrate strong advocacy tools to enable a social and political environment which supports these type of programmes;
- Secure the buy-in of government and senior officials for the institutionalization of programmes;
- Follow up programmes for those graduating from the initial project – plan for support both for girls entering formal schooling and those who do not;
- Organize rigorous evaluation systems from the onset to provide the basis for correction and adjustment of the programme throughout the process and also provide the evidence for scale-up;
- Sustainability requires a multipronged strategy which calls for close collaboration with communities, government, civil society organizations and the beneficiaries.

39 Brady et al. (2007); Selim et al. (2013); Abdel-Tawab (2014).

40 Population Council (2013).



10. Components to consider for scale-up in MENA

- Creation of safe spaces for out-of-school adolescent girls, combined with the use of promoters.
- Evidence-proven curriculum content and package for rural adolescent girls addressing functional literacy, attitudes, knowledge and skills.
- Community sessions and training for 'gatekeepers', parents, brothers and families to secure a favourable environment for adolescent girls' development.

11. Resources

Ishraq 'how to' toolkit

16 Ishraq manuals on the technical aspects of the implementation of the programme. The resources come in a CD which covers: implementation procedures; literacy; life skills; monitoring and evaluation; basic skills for promoters; new visions; organization at the youth centre level; effective partnership; resource mobilization; technical support and capacity-building for the resource mobilization staff; governance; organizational assessment; planning; youth centre selection; required skills of Ishraq employees at the youth centre; community needs assessment.

Ishraq monitoring and evaluation tools

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