



## Fast Facts

**Country:** Egypt

**Duration:** June 2013 to May 2016

**Implementing UN Agencies:** UNIDO; UN Women; UN-HABITAT; ILO; IOM

**Other Implementing Partners:** Local NGOs; National Ministries

**Budget:** \$5,339,396 (UNTFHS: \$4,839,396, co-funding: \$1,282,585)

**Key Words:** Income generation; community empowerment; social cohesion; agricultural development

## BACKGROUND

Following political events in 2011, Egypt experienced an economic contraction due to diminished revenues from tourism and the service sector, reduced foreign direct investment, and rising inflation. The rural inhabitants of Egypt's Minya Governorate who face high unemployment and a poverty rate twice the national average were particularly hard hit. In addition, economic security was made worse by a lagging business climate and high commodity prices. Minya's 4.6 million people mainly rely on agriculture which has struggled with pestilence and crop failures resulting in an increase in malnutrition. Moreover, many households were deprived of remittances as

migrants returned from Libya and tourism-dependent areas of Egypt thus further shrinking household incomes. This deterioration in financial circumstances consequently led to higher crime rates and an increase in incidents of exploitative child labour. While a number of development programmes have been completed to date, previous interventions have been uncoordinated and limited in scope. In contrast, the vulnerable population of Minya need a multi-sectoral and comprehensive approach to effectively address the multiple insecurities they face and develop sustainable community structures that both protect and empower those at risk of being left behind.

## PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

### GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The overall goal of the project was to improve the human security of vulnerable households, youth, and women in Minya, Upper Egypt through an integrated a sustainable approach. Specifically, the project aimed to: (i) establish community-owned priority interventions through a Human Security Forum; (ii) improve local employment opportunities with alternative income-generating activities; (iii) augment the capacity of the local population including

returnees and unemployed youth through services to improve their employability; (iv) increase agricultural productivity by introducing enhanced farming techniques and veterinary services; (v) support entrepreneurship, training in business skills, and the improvement of access to financial services especially among women and youth; and (vi) strengthen social cohesion through community-based organisations including those catering to the most vulnerable.

### BENEFICIARIES

The programme directly benefitted 170,000 men, women, and children living in the Governorate of Minya located in Upper Egypt. Moreover, an additional 150,000 people indirectly benefitted from the programme through the revitalized local economy,

increased availability of skilled labour, the rehabilitation of infrastructure, and improved access to enhanced social services. Local businesses and Government institutions also benefited from improved human capital and capacity-building measures.



## NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS

(i) The flexibility and continued relevance of interventions throughout the programme's timeframe and beyond were assured through the establishment of a Human Security Forum, which allowed participating community members to identify and prioritize their needs. This led to the design and implementation of 24 demand-driven and locally owned initiatives through this network.

(ii) Increased agricultural productivity and profitability in local industries enhanced economic security through capacity-building, skills training, and new income-generating opportunities that included context-specific and innovative support schemes. This included the development of entrepreneurial skills, technical training in greenhouses and animal husbandry, improved production and marketing of dates, and assistance to the furniture industry. The programme also reached out to the most vulnerable including unemployed

youth and returnees from Libya by providing them career advice and assistance.

(iii) The programme also provided 8,500 poor women and vulnerable households with access to financial services with over EGP 2,000,000 being mobilized for home-based enterprises and the school tuition of children. Additionally, this network also served acted as a platform allowing women to exchange concerns and find solutions to personal and family problems thus giving them greater agency in identifying and addressing their needs.

(iv) The programme institutionalized volunteering among the youth through community activities and events to promote cohesion and inclusiveness. As a result, 10 youth-led social enterprises were supported to further address the insecurities in the community and the improvement of existing youth centres was mainstreamed with the cooperation of the Egyptian Government's Ministry of Youth.

## LESSONS LEARNED

The programme highlighted the effectiveness of combining top-down protection mechanisms with bottom-up empowerment measures. Through the Human Security Forum, the programme ensured the participation of the local population at the grassroots level, which encouraged societal buy-in and a good rapport between implementing agencies and the community throughout the programme. Accordingly, an empowered local population effectively addressed the gaps in social protection mechanisms that were under stress threatened to further undermine those left furthest behind. This was key in ensuring the sustainability of the initiatives as demonstrated in the

case of youth volunteering, women-led community action networks, and capacity-building measures. At the same time, involving the Government and the private sector enhanced the effectiveness of initiatives and were instrumental in the replication and scale-up of interventions that alleviated Minya's persistent poverty such as the access to financial services and improved agricultural practices. This also led to strong interest from neighbouring communities. Lastly, the programme serves as a successful example of a multi-sectoral approach to advance sustainable and inclusive development.