



Request for Information (RFI): Women's Empowerment

Reference Number: RFI-263-19-00005

Project Title: Nosf Misr - Half of Egypt

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TO ALL DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS AND MEMBERS OF THE DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY:

The United States Agency for International Development in Egypt (USAID/Egypt) is in the process of designing a new five-year, \$30-40 million activity to support gender equality and female empowerment, with a concentration on advancement of the enabling environment for women's empowerment; economic opportunity; and, prevention and protection from gender-based violence (GBV).

The proposed activity, Nosf Misr (Half of Egypt), responds to the U.S. Government and the Government of Egypt's (GOE) shared policy priorities on gender equality and female empowerment, as well as USAID/Egypt's desire to increase inclusive economic governance; combat gender-based violence; and, improve the public participation of females. It recognizes that Egypt's broader economic and social development requires the removal of barriers to participation of women – 50% of the population – and supporting them to achieve their full potential.

This is a Request for Information (RFI) which intends to provide public information to parties interested in USAID's support in Egypt, as well as to collect any information and suggestions about USAID's planned programming in this sector. Information collected is intended to help in the Mission's activity design and development for an intended future solicitation.

Requested Action:

At this time, USAID is seeking any feedback on the draft Project Description. Please note USAID is not seeking technical or cost proposals at this time, and in accordance with FAR 15.201(e), responses to this notice are not offers and cannot be accepted by the Government to form a

binding contract. Responses to this RFI are voluntary and USAID will not pay respondents for any information provided in response to this RFI.

While we welcome any comments you may have on the attached project description, we are particularly interested in the following:

1. Based upon the information presented, as the project is envisioned, are the cross-sectoral objectives achievable and mutually reinforcing?
2. USAID is considering a co-creation process for this activity to blend expertise and approach across sectors; would you be interested to participate?

The following is information related to co-creation:

Collaboration and co-creation refers to a range of activities that bring people together to design and create something that offers shared power, shared decision-making and shared value between the involved participants. Co-creation allows for a range of stakeholders—funders, implementers, partners, potential users, and beneficiaries—to holistically debate and generate a specific shared outcome. examples could include a richer understanding of a problem, a strategy, ideas or specific plans for action, OR lessons and insights from past actions.

CHARACTERISTICS AND BENEFITS OF CO-CREATION

By creating new partnerships and tapping into a range of skill sets and resources, co-creation's outputs reflect diverse perspectives and broad buy-in. People from across a technical area, geography, and demographics can contribute, evaluate, and refine ideas and concepts. Together, they test assumptions and build consensus around critical problems, barriers, and potential solutions. Co-creation is flexible and can take many forms, including: one-on-one with an outside expert; in collaboration with small group; or in a large group of stakeholders focused on a particular challenge.

3. What could USAID consider doing at a co-creation conference that would help to facilitate creative approaches to addressing the three objectives, or that would help you understand USAID priorities?
4. USAID seeks to create new pathways to collaborate with local organizations, civil society organizations, religious organizations involved in women's empowerment and private sector entities such as businesses in sectors that employ women (such as food processing) and business development centers, incubators, and accelerators that are

instrumental in creating economic opportunities for women. Are there successful examples of this that could be scaled to meet the stated objectives in the project description?

Instructions for Submitting Responses/Comments:

Please send all responses to this RFI via email to Abeer Rizk, arizk@usaid.gov with a copy to Dina ElMotei, delmotei@usaid.gov, by the date indicated above with the title “**RFI-263-19-00005.**” Responses must include the organization’s name, address, and point of contact, phone number and email address.

You will receive a confirmation acknowledging receipt of your response, but will not receive individualized feedback on any suggestions. While USAID will not share your responses publically, please do not respond to this RFI with any proprietary information or data.

Thank you for your assistance and interest in USAID programs.

Sincerely,

Robert Claussen
Contracting Officer

ATTACHMENT 1: DRAFT PROGRAM DESCRIPTION/STATEMENT OF WORK

Nosf Misr - Half of Egypt

I. OVERVIEW:

In support of the [Women's Global Development Partnership](#) (W-GDP) Initiative, USAID/Egypt seeks to support gender equality and female empowerment, with a concentration on advancement of the enabling environment for women's empowerment; economic opportunity; and, prevention and protection from gender-based violence (GBV). USAID/Egypt anticipates a maximum amount of funding of \$30-40 million over five years, subject to the availability of funds. USAID/Egypt will consider single and multiple awards to U.S., international or local organizations and/or consortiums (of local and/or international organizations) to meet the needs identified in the program description/statement of work below.

The proposed activity, Nosf Misr (Half of Egypt), responds to the U.S. Government and the GOE's shared policy priorities on gender equality and female empowerment, as well as USAID/Egypt's desire to increase inclusive economic governance; combat gender-based violence; and, improve the public participation of females. It recognizes that Egypt's broader economic and social development requires the removal of barriers to participation of women – 50% of the population – and supporting them to achieve their full potential. USAID/Egypt, in collaboration with its GOE counterparts, seeks to accelerate inclusive economic growth, consistent with USAID's overall mission and values. USAID's policy on gender equality and women's empowerment supports this overall goal by directing resources to reduce gender disparities in access to, and control over, resources, wealth, opportunities and services. This includes employment and income-generating opportunities. Women in Egypt experience direct and indirect barriers to many types of employment due to explicit discrimination as a result of negative cultural beliefs, or due to lack of workplace policies to address their specific concerns.

Nosf Misr seeks creative approaches to addressing the three objectives outlined below with the understanding that gender equality concerns women and men, and it involves working with men and boys as well as women and girls to bring about changes in attitudes, behaviors, roles and responsibilities at home, in the workplace, and in the community. Furthermore, for the purposes of this activity, USAID quantifies female empowerment as having been achieved when women and girls acquire the power to act freely, exercise their rights, and fulfill their potential as full and equal members of society.

Finally, USAID notes that GBV is both a cause and a consequence of poverty and gender inequality. At the household and community levels, threats, harassment or physical violence in and around homes, schools, markets and workplaces limits women's and girls' mobility and overall well-being, livelihoods, access to education and health services as well as participation in political processes. GBV also has a substantial economic cost (family, community, country and global) in terms of services (health, police, legal, medical), and decreased productivity with flow on effects to family income, mental health and food security. Nsf Misr seeks to provide a comprehensive and mutually reinforcing set of interventions to advance female empowerment, promote economic opportunity and counter gender-based violence.

II. BACKGROUND

Women's Global Development Initiative

The Women's Global Development and Prosperity (W-GDP) Initiative is a global, interagency program of the U.S. Government (USG). It is based on the knowledge that when women are economically empowered, they re-invest in their families and communities, producing a multiplier effect that spurs economic growth and contributes to global peace and stability. In February 2019, President Trump, established the W-GDP Initiative, the first whole-of-government effort to advance global women's economic empowerment. W-GDP seeks to reach 50 million women in the developing world by 2025 through U.S. government activities, private-public partnerships.

The initiative consists of three pillars, each with a mutually supportive goal:

- 1) **Women Prospering in the Workforce:** Increase women's global labor force participation and advancement in the workplace by providing women with quality education, training, and support, so they can secure and thrive in well-paying jobs in their local economies.
- 2) **Women Succeeding as Entrepreneurs:** Increase the access of women entrepreneurs and business owners to financing, market opportunities, and training to establish and grow their businesses.
- 3) **Women Enabled in the Economy:** Promote an enabling environment that increases women's economic empowerment by reducing barriers and enhancing protections in policies, laws, regulations and practices (public and private) to facilitate women's participation in the economy.

Women's Empowerment in Egypt

Egypt's constitution provides for equal rights for male and female citizens and the Egyptian President and the Government of Egypt have been strongly championing women's cause. However, women face widespread societal discrimination, threats of violence, and workplace bias in favor of men that hinder their social and economic advancement. Taken together, the environment for Egyptian females is extremely challenging and will vary based on geography, education level, income level and religious background. Addressing enabling environment constraints and capitalizing on opportunities while concurrently attempting to increase economic empowerment and respond to gender-based violence is an extremely complex undertaking that, if done correctly, will reap positive development outcomes.

According to the Egypt Economic Cost of Gender-Based Violence Survey, which was produced by the UN Population Funding 2015, nearly eight million Egyptian women suffer from all forms of violence yearly. Women lose 500,000 work days annually due to violence. Annual costs to the Egyptian economy from all sources – children missing school, medical costs from injuries, lost work – totaled an estimated LE 6.15 billion. Increased economic opportunities can also help prevent GBV. The same study also noted the incidence of spousal violence to be lower when Egyptian women were less financially dependent. The implication for gender-based violence on women and men and girls and boys is life long and if not addressed, it perpetuates a cycle of violence and limited economic opportunity. Egypt ranks 139th out of 149 countries in the economic participation and opportunity sub-index of the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index 2018.

The unemployment rate for Egyptian women is 24.2 percent, compared with 9.4 percent for Egyptian men. According to Egypt's population census, women's labor force participation rate in 2016 was 22 percent while men's participation rate was 73 percent. Not only is women's overall labor force participation low, but women are concentrated in only a few sectors of the economy, whereas men are distributed more evenly across sectors and occupations. Entrepreneurship in Egypt is a growing market force, serving as a key source of innovation and job creation that is making Egypt a more modern and competitive economy. However, entrepreneurs, especially women, face many challenges when establishing and/or growing their businesses particularly in rural settings. Women entrepreneurs need access to critical services including market information, digital and personal services, networks, mentorship, and other resources that would enable them to overcome the obstacles of starting and growing firms. Dealing with these challenges requires new institutions, such as incubators, accelerators, and venture capital firms, as well as angel investors, to offer additional services to women entrepreneurs, particularly those outside of Egypt's major cities.

III. ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

The USAID/Egypt Mission seeks an award that will support gender equality and female empowerment, with a concentration on advancement of the enabling environment for women's empowerment; economic opportunity; and, prevention and protection from gender-based violence (GBV) in the geographical areas noted herein). Additionally, given the description below, phased approaches to achieving the objectives are welcome. The maximum award or the total amount of awards issued under this Activity shall not exceed \$39,000,000 over five years.

A. Theory of Change

USAID's theory of change for this program is:

- **If** the enabling environment including legal, economic, and social systems are strengthened on behalf of women and girls; AND
- **If** the economic opportunities for women and girls are increased; AND
- **If** the services and referral mechanisms are strengthened for women and girls;
- **THEN**, women and girls will be more empowered to live full economic and social lives.

B. Goals and Objectives

Nosf Misr seeks to support the National Strategy for the Empowerment of Egyptian Women 2030, the GOE's main strategy document outlining its priorities and approaches to women's empowerment under four pillars: political empowerment; economic empowerment; social empowerment; and protection.

The proposed USAID activity has three objectives:

Objective One: Strengthen Legal, Economic and Social Enabling Environments

Objective Two: Increase Economic Opportunity at the Individual, Household and Community Level

- **Sub-Objective 2.1:** Increase participation by women in the Egyptian (private sector) labor force
- **Sub-Objective 2.2:** Increase Economic Opportunity for Women Entrepreneurs

Objective Three: Strengthen Referral Mechanisms and Service Provision Platforms

These objectives are interconnected and mutually reinforcing. USAID/Egypt anticipates that they will be implemented as a cohesive and coherent approach such that the legal and regulatory reforms supported under Nosf Misr should encourage economic opportunities for women and facilitate greater access to improved protection services. Similarly, Nosf Misr should foster economic opportunities for victims of GBV who participate in supported protection services. USAID/Egypt does not expect that this will be to the exclusion of other beneficiaries.

Special Considerations

Funding Allocations: Portions of these activities must address combating GBV per the definitions provided in the U.S. Department of State’s Office of Foreign Assistance Resources Standardized Program Structure (<https://www.state.gov/f/c24132.htm>). A separate portion must address combating trafficking in persons, specifically seasonal marriages, as defined by the same document.

Creative Partnerships: USAID welcomes creative approaches with local government, civil society, educational institutions, the private sector and religious leaders to achieving the referenced objectives. Partnerships could include scaling up existing and successful program models addressing components of constraints to enabling environment; working with school teachers on removing gender stereotypes from classroom materials; and, leveraging corporate social responsibility funding to test pilot interventions.

Geographic Selection: USAID/Egypt anticipates that activities will take place in greater Cairo, targeted governorates of Upper Egypt and other governorates in Egypt identified in the offeror’s proposal or application. Site selection and target beneficiaries should be coordinated across all three objectives to represent a coherent approach to empowering women.

C. Activity Objectives

In the description below, USAID/Egypt has laid out illustrative examples of programming.

Objective 1: Strengthen Legal, Economic and Social Environments

Women in Egypt face widespread societal discrimination, violence, and workplace bias in favor of men that hinder their social and economic advancement. Under this objective, USAID seeks combined “top down and bottom up” approach to support GOE to implement their policies,

strategies and laws strengthening gender equality and female empowerment. Specifically at the national level, the program proposes to work with the diverse GOE entities such as the National Council for Women (NCW), the Ministry for Social Solidarity (MOSS) and others to address the overlapping coordination mandates necessary to implement the various laws and strategies. Further, USAID would like to support policies and regulations, and capitalize on the community and private sector initiatives to encourage women's participation in the economy and public life such as through removing barriers to women's mobility through safer transportation, and using innovative approaches to changing public attitudes towards violence against women and women's economic participation.

Egyptian laws and policies around gender equality and female empowerment are complex and not well understood or executed at the national or local levels. The GOE has presented a comprehensive law and policy formulation for the advancement of gender equality and female empowerment. However, knowledge and understanding of those documents and execution of the respective mandates is not well understood or enforced locally or nationally. Furthermore, responsibilities for funding and execution of the mandates of the laws and policies overlap between multiple ministries with varying capabilities and limited attention to the cross cutting nature of female empowerment.

Objective Two: Increased Economic Opportunity

Sub-Objective 2.1 - Increased participation by women in the Egyptian (private sector) labor force.

USAID/Egypt aims to improve the work environment for female employees in Egypt, working in partnership with targeted firms in at least three sectors, including sectors in which women in Egypt have not traditionally participated. Nof Misr may help improve gender equity and safety policies of targeted firms, increase awareness about gender equality in those firms, and improve the productivity of those firms through the adoption of women-friendly policies. Through cooperation with the advocacy and information campaigns of Objective 1, these efforts may also be used to encourage increased awareness throughout the Egyptian private sector of the benefits of establishing women-friendly workplaces.

USAID/Egypt has experience in identifying and addressing barriers to women's employment at the firm level. A particularly apt example is the activity entitled Women's Employment Promotion in the Agriculture Sector: Creating Safe and Women-Friendly Workplaces Program (WEPP), which was implemented by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) between 2015 and 2018. The overall objective of this

activity was to foster women's economic empowerment by improving the work environment for female employees in agribusiness firms, ensuring safe and women-friendly workplaces that addressed equal opportunity, work-life balance, sexual harassment, and safety and security, as well as promoting gender inclusiveness throughout the agricultural value chain. With Nofel Misr, USAID/Egypt intends to build on and scale up the success of WEPP.

WEPP demonstrated that the 10 participating agribusiness firms, as well as their female employees, benefited from interventions such as providing on-site childcare, arranging safe transportation, ensuring adequate facilities such as restrooms, offering equal pay for women and men working in similar jobs, and giving women employees a voice on workplace conditions. The main business benefits of investing in gender equality and women's empowerment reported by the participating firms included higher retention rates and reduced absenteeism; better communication between employees and management; increased workers' satisfaction; improved productivity; and enhanced corporate reputation and compliance with international market expectations.

WEPP Implementation Approach

Implement the Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs): Developed by UN Women and UN Global Compact, these principles will help the private sector focus on key elements integral to promoting gender equality in the workplace, marketplace, and community. The principles provide a "gender lens" through which businesses can analyze current initiatives, benchmarks and reporting practices. The principles include guidance on workplace equality ("Equal Opportunity, Inclusion and Nondiscrimination") and gender-based violence ("Health, Safety and Freedom from Violence"). Under the principle regarding equality of opportunity, guidance is provided regarding the importance of flexible work options and access to child and dependent care options. The activity will develop electronic training materials and manuals that will enable any company (including those outside of the targeted sectors) to translate the seven principles into concrete, detailed action plans for promoting women's empowerment through the establishment of women-friendly workplaces.

Partner with private sector companies: For focused impact, the implementer will select three specific sectors and specific geographical locations in Upper Egypt. All potential private sector partners with which the implementer will work directly should be operating within these parameters. Commitment and political will for addressing gender-related issues, including equality and safety at work, are key in the selection of firms.

Partner with other USAID and Donor projects to promote gender equity in the workplace and adopt WEP principles: Partnerships between donors and the private sector are highly encouraged. In addition, the impact of Nosf Misr will be expanded by collaborating with other USAID activities and those sponsored by other donors to promote the expanded use of WEP principles and materials.

Implement Gender-Sensitive Value Chain Analysis is (GSVCAs): Women and men are likely to be engaged in different stages of a sector's value chain. Women are more often involved in the invisible lower levels, working in low-skilled and low-wage jobs that offer few opportunities for increasing income and for strengthening their market position. Women's limited mobility and access to markets as well as prevailing social norms hinder their interaction with other value chain players. Gender inequalities contribute to inefficiencies in value chains. The systemic nature of inequalities requires a systemic perspective and the need to intervene at multiple levels. The GSVCA examines inequalities in a comprehensive and participatory way – rendering it a suitable instrument to prepare the ground for addressing shortcomings and changing them into economic opportunities for women.

Sub-Objective 2.2: Increased Economic Opportunity for Women Entrepreneurs

USAID/Egypt aims to empower women entrepreneurs and increase their economic opportunities by enhancing their access to acceleration services, financing (credit, equity, etc.) and non-financial services (markets, information, mentorship, technology, etc.) that they need to grow their businesses. To accomplish this goal, Nosf Misr seeks to support entrepreneurship-focused institutions that provide these needed services for women-owned startups. Accelerators are thought of as ideal institutions supporting startups that have already tested their business models and would like to move to the next level of growth and profitability. Some incubators also support startups with proven business models and assist them to grow.

Nosf Misr seeks to support women entrepreneurs outside of Cairo to receive training and services through sub-grants to participating Egyptian accelerators. Accelerators are typically privately owned, provide training and services to selected entrepreneurs, and partner with entrepreneurs to access additional equity funding to scale the business, either directly from the accelerators or through third party angel investors or venture capitalists.

Objective Three: Referral Mechanisms and Service Provision Platforms Strengthened

Community structures (places of worship, parks, community development centers, recreation centers and means of transportation) are essential to the social fabric of a country and a community. From a top-down and bottom-up approach, USAID/Egypt seeks to strengthen

national and local level referral mechanisms with associated service provisions for GBV victims and survivors (and families as appropriate) that expands upon referral mechanisms currently mandated by law and/or policy. The types of violence referenced specifically must be addressed, however, USAID/Egypt does not wish to limit the implementing partner's ability to address other forms of violence. At the national level, USAID/Egypt would like the implementing partner to work with GOE entities, civil society organizations, and other national stakeholders including the Prosecutor's office to establish a national level referral package for GBV victims and survivors that provides access to, as needed, immediate medical, psycho-social, and legal support, access to productive resources, shelter, reintegration and follow-up.