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ENHANCING GOVERNMENT EFFECTIVENESS IN YEMEN: AN ASSESSMENT OF THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

DATE

This publication was produced for review by the United States Agency for International Development.

ENHANCING GOVERNMENT EFFECTIVENESS IN YEMEN: AN ASSESSMENT OF THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION



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Corporate Offices
600 Water Street, SW
Washington, DC 20024

Contracted under USAID Contract ID #: DFD-I-04-05-00221-00

Task Order #: DFD-I-04-05-00221-00

Project Name: Enhancing Government Effectiveness

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CONTENTS

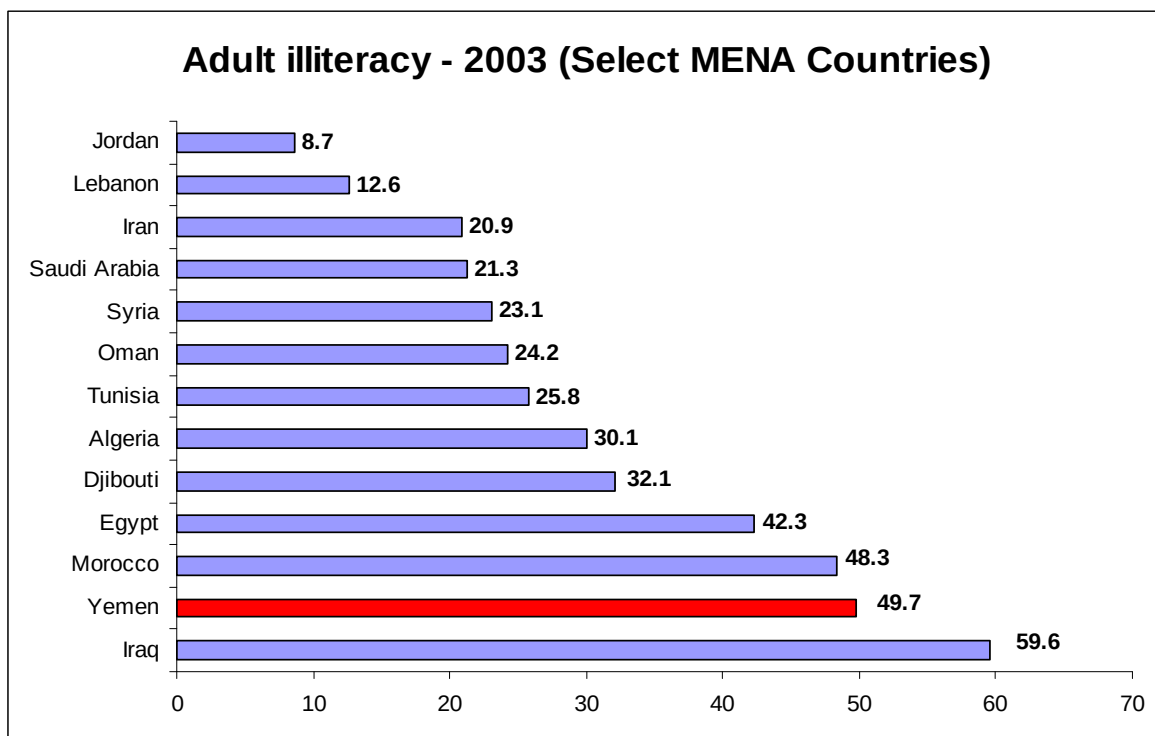
I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND.....	6
North Yemen.....	6
South Yemen.....	8
III. SECTOR OVERVIEW	10
The Role of Donors and International Organizations	12
IV. ASSESSING THE MINISTRY'S PERFORMANCE	13
Civil Service	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Procurement	15
Finance and Budget	17
V. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REFORMS	19
1. Provide Technical Assistance and Training for a New Human Resource Management Strategy	20
2. Provide Technical Assistance for a New Service Delivery Strategy Based on Civic Engagement	22
3. Establish a Remedial Program to Provide Neglected Adolescents a Second Chance.....	24
4. Launch a Program for Early Childhood Care and Education	25
REFERENCES.....	27

I. INTRODUCTION¹

Education is arguably among the most critical variables that can explain the trajectory of growth and development of any country. Without an educated workforce in the public and private sectors, the prospects for a country's political, economic and cultural advancement are limited. In fact, the relationship between development and education is arguably more than correlation, but causation. In this respect, Yemen is fundamentally challenged.

Yemen's education indicators rank among the lowest in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. According to a 2003 UNESCO estimate, nearly half of Yemeni adults are not able to read and write. Figure 1 shows a comparison of the percentage of adults, above 15 years of age, who are unable to read and write in a select group of MENA countries. It shows that 49.7 percent of Yemeni adults are illiterate. In the region, only Iraq has a larger percentage of illiterate adults.

FIGURE 1²



¹ This report is based in part on data gathered by Dr. Mohammed Hago who was a member of the EGE team that conducted an assessment of select Yemen government ministries in February 2008. The team was fielded by MSI for USAID's Enhancing Government Effectiveness (EGE) project.

² Adult illiteracy is defined as the percentage of people over 15 years of age who are unable to read and write. Source: UN Common Database (UNESCO).

External Impediments: From a macro-perspective, there are a number of major barriers to tackling the problems of Yemen's education sector. To begin with, the country's tribal networks and its rugged terrain bereft of infrastructure linkages pose serious obstacles to education reform. Yemen's central government has not been able to provide public services especially to far-flung regions of the country. USAID has found that "decentralized networks typical of poor mountainous societies have allowed people to cope with daily existence through local social structures in the absence of a central state able to provide for the population's basic needs".³

From the perspective of Yemenis, the lack of participation in the school system can be explained in great part by the lack of schools and teachers to begin with, followed by the lack of resources to support school attendance and the biases and fears related to sending girls to school. These were the findings of a National Poverty Survey (conducted in 1999) that interviewed respondents who did not send their children to school. The specific reasons, in order of importance, given by respondents were as follows (see Al-Sabbry 2002):

1. The unavailability of a school nearby.
2. Having to stay at home to help out with the family.
3. Lack of resources to afford school expenses.
4. The negative social attitudes towards education for girls.
5. The unavailability of teachers.

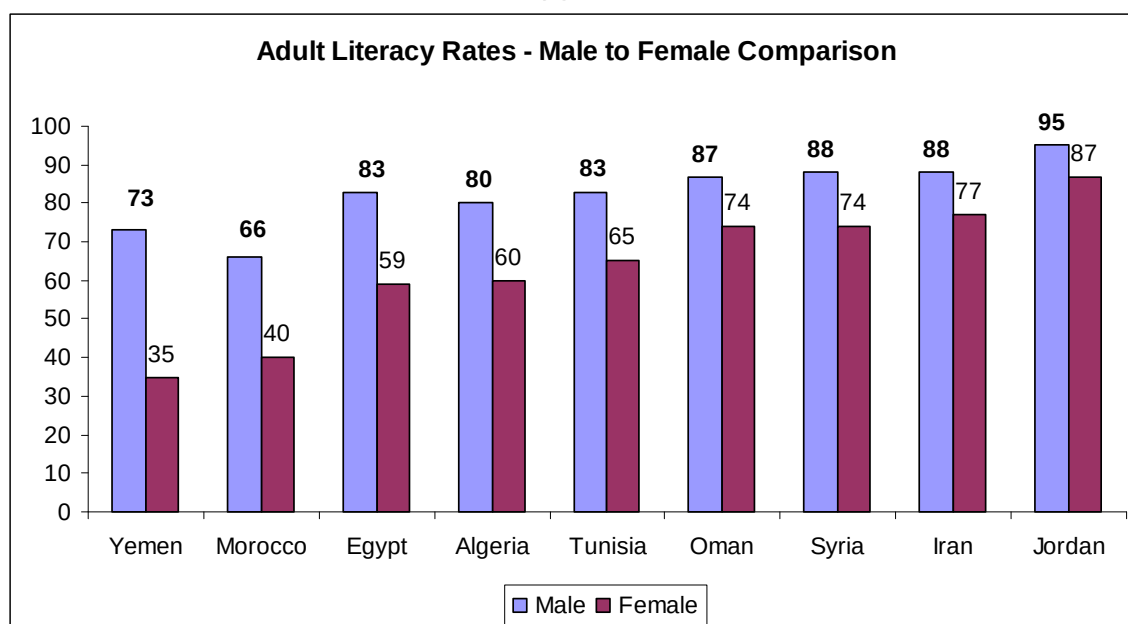
With regard to the lack of accessibility to schools, the problem is particularly acute in early childhood care and education. UNESCO reports that little has been done to provide basic education to children below 6 years (Kefaya 2007). According to the report, only about 2 percent of young children -- mostly from the urban areas -- attend kindergarten. Most of these kindergarten schools are operated by the private sector and charge fees. While the schooling of older children has been subsidized under the national government's educational policies and strategies, children under 6 are not. This is arguably a major reason for Yemen's child well-being indicators being among the lowest in the Middle East and North African countries (Kefaya 2007).

With regard to negative social attitudes, there is persistent widespread ignorance among rural communities of the benefits of education, particularly with respect to women. To this day the status of

³ "Democracy and Governance: Assessment of Yemen," USAID 2004, p.3.

women is low, especially in the highly traditional rural areas of Yemen. According to UNESCO, school enrollment and student retention are highly biased towards males. In 2003/4, only 76 girls were enrolled in the first basic class for every 100 boys. This gap widened with every successive year. By the 9th grade, it is estimated that only 44 girls remained in school for every 100 boys (Kefaya 2007). As figure 2 shows, Yemen has the biggest gender gap in the MENA region, with the number of literate females less than half the number of literate males.

FIGURE 2⁴

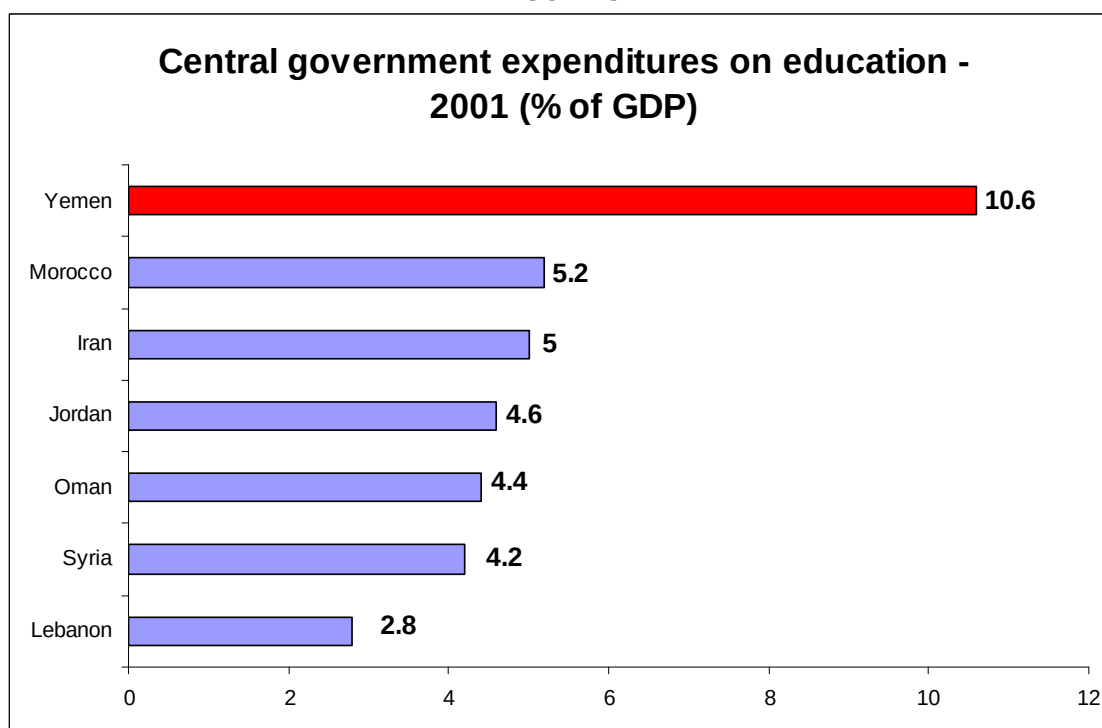


Interestingly, Yemen's expenditure in education as a percentage of GDP is among the highest in the MENA region (as shown in figure 3). The figures for 2001 show that it spent about 10.6% of GDP in education, compared to 5.2% in Morocco and 4.6% in Jordan. This level of Yemen's expenditure in education is reflected in the plethora of donor-funded initiatives introduced by the government to address the ills of the educational sector. Through the Ministry of Education (MOE), the government has adopted several initiatives aimed at achieving the UN's Millennium Development Goals on Education by 2015, including Education for All (EFA) and Universal Primary Education (UPE). In 2002, the government adopted the National Basic Education Strategy (NBEDS) to address educational sector issues more comprehensively and aggressively. The strategy outlined an ambitious plan (for the period 2003-2015) to improve educational indicators. The emphasis is on improving indicators of access and quality like gross enrollment ratio (GER). Since then, the MOE, through donor-supported projects, has made progress in

⁴ For more details please see <http://www.worldbank.org/education/edstats>.

enhancing the coverage of education in urban areas while making strides in rural areas as well. For example, USAID's EQUIP project has provided various types of support to community-based primary school activities, including training for over 1700 teachers and administrators.

FIGURE 3⁵



Nevertheless, despite the significant investments in the education sector and the introduction of various initiatives, the problems facing the education sector remain formidable. The persistence of these problems cannot be solely accounted for by external impediments. It is necessary to look at the internal barriers as well.

Internal Impediments: A significant cause of problems in the education sector is the lack of leadership and capacity in the Ministry of Education. As this report will describe in more detail below, interviews with ministry officials indicate that there is a serious disconnect between MOE policies and programs. One reason frequently cited was the lack of implementing guidelines at the level of the ministerial staff to carry-out the ministry's broader strategies. There was a mandate, yes, but no means. Although ministry staff were aware of new policy initiatives, the Ministry was unclear about how staff individual roles contributed towards these initiatives. It was also observed that these initiatives lacked

⁵ Source: UN Common Database (UNESCO estimates).

clear guidance within the ministry due to ambiguity of the ministry's organizational structure. In the first place, the ministry did not have an organizational chart defining the flow of authority. Also there is a continuing organizational dispersion of key roles and responsibilities -- particularly those relating to human resources -- among multiple ministries. This has reduced the Ministry's responsiveness and compromised accountability for results. For instance, the MOE has no control over the recruitment and remuneration of its personnel, leaving it with no incentives to apply to correct and foster performance. It is the Ministry of Civil Service that recruits MOE staff while the Ministry of Finance manages their payroll. In addition, issues of gender inequality in the educational system is not considered under the purview of MOE but the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Planning (Kefaya 2007). Such fragmentation of tasks has led to incongruence in the implementation of the new initiatives. Collectively, these problems have constrained the MOE's capacity to implement policies that are responsive to community needs.

In addition, the high percentage of Yemen's expenditure in education masks the complexity of the allocation of these resources. This is not a simple case of "throwing money at the problem". There is some "throwing of money" but it is not towards the problem. The EGE team's interviews found that 80 percent of the Ministry's budget is used to pay wages and that nearly 40 percent of the wage bill goes to "ghost workers". These "ghost workers" were reported to be appointments imposed on the ministry through informal interventions by notables who are pushing protégés based on social ties, not meritocratic means. In many ways, Yemen's civil service is being used as a "social safety net" designed to reward political allegiance and strengthen patronage networks (Payne, Moudoud et al. 2004). The pervasiveness of this practice has made the civil service balloon, inflating the public sector wage-bill beyond what the government can afford. The government has responded by underpaying its employees or by paying them irregularly, which has worsened the situation as civil servants are unable to draw a living wage unless they enhance their official income through corruption, side businesses, or "double dipping" (drawing salaries from multiple government offices). The Ministry, like others in the government, are therefore unable to retain or attract skilled employees, which further hinders the initiatives of the MOE.

Based on the foregoing analysis, the problem in Yemen is not so much a lack of resources but the appropriate deployment of these resources as a result of lack of leadership and bureaucratic capacity in the MOE. This report will discuss the nature of these problems based on the visits and meetings of the EGE team with MOE officials and staff. The report will then recommend ways and means that USAID can consider to enhance the effectiveness of the ministry. But before delving into the Ministry's organizational capacity, it is important to place the current state of the education sector in perspective. In this regard, the next section presents a brief historical overview and how political, economic, and social

patterns in the country's history continues shape the development of the sector as well as impinge on the viability and impact of developmental initiatives.

II. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The present foundation of Yemen's government is, in historical terms, very new. It was established only in 1990 when North Yemen and South Yemen were unified. Ruling elites in both regions fought to retain control over the new nation. A civil war erupted in 1994 which saw the North defeating the South and subsequently led to its dominant role in the unification process. The unification process itself was difficult as North Yemen and South Yemen were different in many ways. The North had a republican-style government while the South had a socialist regime. Historically, the primary unit of Yemen's social structure has been the tribe. However, the distinct political heritage of the Yemeni regions (North and South) impacted the social role of the tribe differently. The relatively weak central authority of the North reinforced the role of tribes while the strong socialist regime of the South marginalized tribal dynamics. At unification, the norms of the two societies contrasted widely, which contributes to persistent conflicts between the two regions. This societal disconnect between the North and the South adds an extra layer of complexity to the challenge of enhancing government performance. In this regard, when examining the evolution of Yemen's education sector, a distinction has to be made between the progress in North and the South. The following section provides a brief overview of the different developmental paths taken by the two regions.

North Yemen

Prior to becoming a republic in the 1960s the North was ruled by an Imamate (since 1918). During this period the educational system was primarily limited to schools run by the Islamic mosques

called *kuttab*.⁶ These religious schools, which could be found in most cities and towns, sought to teach the Qur'an to a handful of male students. Girls were excluded and, even among the boys, only a very limited number (mostly sons of religious leaders and wealthy merchants) were given access to the schools. According to various estimates, only about 5 percent of youth benefited from this system of education.⁷ Efforts to establish secular schools were quickly suppressed by the Imamate as un-Islamic. For instance, in the 1930s, Ahmad Nu'man was forced to seek refuge in Egypt, to avoid a government crackdown, after attempting to introduce subjects like mathematics, geography, and physical education into the school curriculum.⁸

However, towards the end of the Imamate, during the term of the second Imam (1948-1962), a handful of secular schools were introduced. But these were few in number and exclusively limited to boys between the ages of 6 and 15 (6 years of primary and 3 years of secondary school). To be sure, religious schools continued to exist while a few private schools were also established. But throughout the Imamate, most Yemeni's had to go abroad to get a secular or a tertiary education.

When a military-led coup deposed the Imamate in 1962, the succeeding government sought to establish a more secular educational system. A Ministry of Education was established in 1963 to oversee the public schools system. The regime, which was supported by Egypt, established over 50 schools across the country, including vocational schools. For the first time, a few schools for girls were also built, mostly in major cities. Meanwhile, the curriculum included subjects like mathematics, English, and natural sciences. The school cycle was extended and included 6 years of primary, 3 years of preparatory, 3 years of secondary, and tertiary education at university. Although a policy of compulsory education was never enforced, schools were able to attract nearly 50 percent of school-aged children by 1980, an increase from

⁶ Education Encyclopedia - StateUniversity.com: Global Education Reference: Yemen - History & Background, Constitutional & Legal Foundations, Educational System—overview. For details, please see <http://education.stateuniversity.com/pages/1687/Yemen-EDUCATIONAL-SYSTEM-OVERVIEW.html>.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

the 12% a decade earlier.⁹ In addition, this period saw a broadening of intellectual awareness in the North with the establishment of libraries, and associations for writers and intellectuals.¹⁰

Notably, the University of Sana'a was established in 1970 with the assistance of Kuwait. This remained the first and only institution for tertiary education in the North until unification. By the late 1980s the university had grown to accommodate over five thousand students.¹¹

The trend of secularization continued through the 1970s and the 1980s. However, the development of this secular-oriented education system was limited during this period by a lack of resources and over-dependence on external support as opposed to internal sources and demand. Thus, many problems persisted despite improvements, such as girls continuing to be largely excluded from the educational system. Only about 10 to 15 percent of school-aged girls had access to education by the early 1980s and total literacy rate remained low.

South Yemen

Before it became a socialist regime in 1967, South Yemen was under British rule. Britain had colonized South Yemen in 1839 to take advantage of the strategic port of Aden. British rule was therefore focused on its Aden protectorate. Britain set up public and private schools in Aden for the sizable British and Indian expatriate community. Although Yemeni students were given access to these schools, their numbers were low (and in fact the disproportionate participation of locals in the school system was one of the main complaints of the nationalists during the independence struggle).

After gaining independence in 1967, despite the difficulties in finding teachers following the departure of the British, the education system was expanded for local students. The schools were nationalized and the medium of instruction was changed from English to Arabic. Meanwhile, the school

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

cycle was changed (similar to the North), which featured 6 years of primary, 3 years of preparatory and 3 years of secondary school. However, this was changed in 1975 to 2 years of kindergarten, 8 years of basic schooling (primary and preparatory), and 4 years of secondary schooling. In addition, the University of Aden was established in 1975, which became the main center for higher education.

Education in South Yemen was provided free by the government. In certain regions textbooks and transportation was also provided. This led to widespread attendance even though schooling was not compulsory. However, like in the North, girls remained under-represented in schools. By 1980s, the enrollment rate for girls was only around 40 percent.

At the same time, the government in the South was more aggressive than the North in seeking to improve adult literacy rates, which was similar low as the North's. For instance, the school summer break was extended up to six months in 1985 to give adults (men and women) an opportunity to learn basic language skills and mathematics.¹²

Interestingly, while contrasting political and economic systems and social norms in the North and the South were complicating factors in the unification process, the merging of the education systems of the two regions was relatively smooth. This was partly because neither region had a highly developed education system. Moreover, similar problems plagued both systems -- including shortage of resources, qualified teachers, and poor infrastructure.

Following unification, textbooks and curriculum were standardized and the education cycle was restructured. The new cycle included 9 years of basic education (ages 6-14) and 3 years of secondary education (ages 15-17), with the academic year running from September through June. The medium of instruction at the primary and secondary level remained Arabic. However, some technical subjects were taught in English at the university level. In addition, primary education was made compulsory even as higher education was strengthened with the establishment of seven government universities and eight

¹² Ibid.

private ones. Despite these measures, severe problems persisted with regard to poor access in rural areas, and in persistently low female enrollment. At the same time, while secular private schools were being established in the urban areas, religious schools continued to predominate.

In the next section we provide a detailed overview of the conditions of the education sector.

III. SECTOR OVERVIEW

Yemen's education sector remains problematic across the board. Student enrollment remains deficient. Despite the government's goal of achieving full education by 2015, enrollment rates are still lagging behind this goal, especially in the rural areas and among girls (see Table 1).

TABLE 1: SCHOOL ENROLLMENT RATES¹³

Age Group	Urban			Rural			Total		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
6-11	84.6	83.7	84.1	70.3	47.9	59.4	73.2	55.5	64.6
12-14	89.3	83.4	86.7	82.8	41.4	62.7	84.4	51.0	68.2
15-17	74.3	63.5	69.2	66.6	21.0	43.7	68.5	30.6	49.7
Total	83.4	78.9	81.2	72.6	40.2	56.8	75.0	48.7	62.2

The main trend that stands out in Table 1 is the disparity between genders and between rural and urban areas. For instance, the total female enrollment is only 48.7 percent compared to 75 percent for males, with the ratio increasing in rural areas compared to urban. Only a difference of 4 percentage points exists in urban areas between male and female enrollments while in the rural areas the gap is 32 percentage points. A big gap also exists in terms of overall enrollment rates exists between rural and

¹³ This table has been reproduced from UNESCO's "Education for All by 2015: Will we make it?" Yemen Country Case Study (Kefaya 2007).

urban areas, with 81.2 percent of school age children enrolled in urban areas while only 56.8 percent are enrolled in rural areas.

The challenge of achieving education for all by 2015 is formidable, considering that almost 30 percent of Yemen's 19.7 million population falls within the school going age (5-17). Of this, according to Table 1, only 62.2 percent is enrolled in school. This means almost 2.2 million school-aged children are out of school. With Yemen's high fertility rate (6.2), and with the population expected to double in just 23 years, illiteracy is likely to increase further given this trend. The current adult illiteracy rate in Yemen (54 percent) is already far below the average for Middle Eastern and North African countries (72 percent) and for other low-income countries (61.7 percent).¹⁴

To be sure, despite these challenges, educational access has shown noticeable improvements. As Table 2 shows, there has been a notable increase in enrollment rates since the launching of the Basic Education Development Strategy (BEDS) in 2002, with marked improvements in the enrollment of girls, from 54% in 2000/01 to 64% in 2004/05. A major question, of course, is whether the improvements are sustainable and whether the trend will ensure the achievement of BEDS targets by 2015? To answer this question, it is important to examine the role and capacity of the Ministry of Education, as well as the support it is receiving from donors, to which we now turn in the next section.

TABLE 2: CHANGES IN ENROLLMENT RATES¹⁵

Gross Enrollment Rate	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05
<i>Basic Education (%)</i>	73	73	75	76	76
<i>Girls (%)</i>	54	56	59	62	63
<i>Boys (%)</i>	90	89	90	90	88
<i>Girl's share in Enrollment (%)</i>	36	37	38	39	40
<i>Average students per class</i>	29.1	30.5	31.0	31.8	32.0

¹⁴ For more details please refer to the website <http://www.worldbank.org/education/edstats>.

¹⁵ Based on MOE enrollment/CSO census 2004 and World Bank calculations (Kefaya 2007).

The Role of Donors and International Organizations

There are several international aid organizations and non-profit organizations working to improve Yemen's education sector. There is an Education Donor Coordination Group chaired by the Ministry of Education (MOE) that brings together various donors and stakeholders such as the United Nations Children's Fund, the World Bank, the European Union, the Japanese government, and UK's Department for International Development (DFID). This group is coordinating donors' efforts under the BEDS initiative. The main focus is to increase school enrollment rates and to increase girls' access to education. There are a number of international implementers and non-government organizations, most of whom are funded by multilateral and bilateral aid, that work on community-based programs targeting women and youth literacy, including Oxfam, Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), Academy for Education Development (AED), the Center for Development and Population Activities (CEDPA), and the Social Fund for Development. With donor support, these organizations work on critical issues, such as school construction, youth health, community development, and preventing child trafficking. These efforts have contributed to increasing the number of schools from 13,162 in 2000 to about 14,414 in 2005 (Kefaya 2007).

To coordinate the efforts between these multiple aid agencies a 'Communities of Practice' on MDGs, governance, and operations was established. The UN Resident Coordinator and the World Bank Country Manager co-chairs aid meetings among donors every two months. These meetings are intended to help reduce activity overlaps and leverage the resources of these different organizations towards collective goals (Kefaya 2007). However, it is unclear to the EGE assessment team whether or not these meetings are achieving their purposes. To be sure, coordination among donors that have different priorities and constituencies as well as different bureaucratic policies and practices is a tall order, especially in a complex environment like Yemen's. The situation is made more challenging given the relatively poor capacity and organizational weaknesses of the MOE, to which we now turn.

IV. ASSESSING THE PERFORMANCE OF THE MOE

The Ministry of Education (MOE) is mandated to oversee the education system in Yemen. The President appoints the Education Minister with the approval of the House of Representatives. In general, the MOE is in charge of broad policy directions and oversight. However, a series of reforms under the IMF's Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility during the period 1999-2001 saw the MOE's role being limited, as some of its tasks were reduced to enhance the role of the private sector. This expectedly led to greater private sector investments in the education sector, resulting in an increased number of private schools. Under the Structural Adjustment program, Yemen also agreed to establish per student current and capital expenditure accounts to remunerate teachers based on their qualifications and willingness to relocate to rural areas. Yemen also promised to reduce the number of foreign teachers in favor of increasing the involvement of local personnel.

Following the conclusion of the Structural Adjustment Program, MOE adopted the Basic Education Strategy (BEDS) in 2002. The objectives of this strategy was to achieve universal access and completion rates in grades 1-6 and 90 percent access and completion rates in grades 1-9. Improving the enrollment of girls and improving the quality of education were the other main objectives. To ensure the implementation of BEDS, the government signed partnership agreements with several international donors to help with the program's implementation.¹⁶ However, inquiries into the implementation of BEDS revealed that the efforts of the Ministry of Education have come under criticism for lacking clarity, integrity and coherence.

The EGE field assessment revealed several areas in which the MOE's performance was found wanting. For instance, most respondents criticized the Ministry and its branch offices in governorates for not having clear objectives, with general tasks rarely harmonized with subtasks. Departmental functions

¹⁶ Partners include UNICEF, the World Bank, the EU, the Japanese government, UK's Department for International Development (DFID), World Food Program, Oxfam, CARE, among others.

and authorities are not properly defined, leading to weak administrative communication and the dispersion of functions. As a result, there is a severe lack of congruence between MOE efforts and community needs.

The assessment also found that the capacity of the MOE is generally compromised by interference from external interests coming from tribal networks, political notables, and economic interests. Due to these external pressures, the processes of recruitment, assignment, and promotion are not conducted on the bases of merit and fit, but rather on the bases of political and social interests. These problems, it should be noted, emanated since unification, when the merger of the education ministries of both North and South was completed principally on political grounds without any consideration for administrative or managerial effectiveness and efficiency.

To understand the MOE better, the EGE assessment looked at several aspects of the MOE's organizational capacity, notably personnel, procurement, finance and budget. The following sections highlight the team's findings in these areas.

Personnel

Perhaps more than any organizational factor, personnel is the most critical to an education ministry. The quality of students and their depth of learning depend in great part on the quality of their teachers. Regrettably, in terms of its personnel and the teachers they supervise, the MOE has evidently prized quantity over quality. It has nearly half a million employees within its different directorates at different levels. However, it does not have control over its staff. The Ministry of Civil Service effectively controls recruitment and placement while the Ministry of Finance is responsible for compensation. In fact, the MOE's Director General for Personnel reports directly to the Ministry of Civil Service, while financial approval for all positions are authorized by the Ministry of Finance. This diffused arrangement concerning the MOE's human resources has led to institutional ambiguity and lack of accountability, including the set up and operation of payroll systems.

The reasons given by interviewees for this problematic state of affairs were common, notably the intervention of elites among tribes, parties, military, and business. It was not hard to derive the conclusion that the preferential process of recruitment, appointment and promotion is leading to problematic outcomes. Poor systems and procedures contribute to a problematic personnel registry populated with “ghost workers”. There is little use of IT outside of the Directorate of Planning and Statistics. It was evident that there were very limited IT systems in the directorates for planning and policy making.

Personnel issues also abound outside the central MOE bureaucracy. Notably there is a severe shortage of qualified principals and teachers, particularly in the rural areas. Among principals, it was reported that almost 80 percent of are not adequately trained, completing only up to the 9th grade. The problems of quality and shortages are partly due to limited funding and lack of coordination between teachers’ training institutions and the MOE. The severity of the situation is compounded by high absenteeism rates, which is officially listed at 19 percent although many interviewees claimed it would be much larger (in the range of 25-30 percent).

Procurement

Procurement is a critical function in any ministry, and certainly so in an education ministry that is responsible for the selection and supply of textbooks and other educational materials as well as the construction of schools and libraries. To get a sense of the state of procurement affairs at the MOE, the EGE team interviewed staff at the MOE’s office of Finance and Budget, which is responsible for procurement and storage of school supplies.

The team found that implementing regulations for the Procurement Law passed in 2007 have not yet been issued. In the meantime, the Ministry still adheres to previous regulations, which some interviewees argued was superior to the recent reforms. Among the views expressed was that the new laws are relatively less stringent in terms of preventing corruption as opposed to the old rules. For instance, it was noted that the new law gives the MOE sole discretion in appointing the members of

procurement committees. Compared to the old laws, procurement committees consisted of predetermined members including the ministry's own procurement and budget officials as well as representatives from the ministries of Finance and Planning. In this regard, it was said that the old rules provided more check and balances than the previous set-up.

A related criticism of the new procurement law concerns the stipulation that tenders over 125 million rials (\$625,000) be conducted by open competition and advance public advertisement. The process is supposed to play out as follows: a procurement committee conducts the technical review of proposals, selects the winning proposal, and documents the process. The documents, including all the bids, are then sent to a representative of the High Tender Board (HTB), who makes the ultimate decision whether to approve or disapprove the proposal. However, it is not clear if representatives of the HTB can realistically detect inappropriate procurement practices simply by reviewing the documents. One can assume that these procurement documents could easily disguise any inappropriate actions of the ministerial committee. In this regard, the team heard suggestions about having HTB representatives sit in procurement committee meetings as observers, to prevent committee actions that could undermine fair and competitive procurements. Also there were suggestions that a more rigorous bid-protest process should be put in place.

Meanwhile, tenders below the HTB threshold are conducted within the Ministry procurement committees without any external review. It was noted that this rule does not prevent “dicing” of large tenders (breaking it into smaller parts) to avoid the HTB.

At the outset, these criticisms would appear to be quite valid. However, until the implementing regulations are completed and issued, it is arguably premature to make categorical criticisms because the guidelines may provide clear instructions that address perceived loopholes. Nevertheless, we note these criticisms because they point to serious risks in the procurement arena.

Finance and Budget

Finance and budget are of course at the heart of ministry operations. To improve the Ministry's effectiveness in financial management, a Joint Annual Review (JAR) was adopted in 2007 that would apply a 'Medium Term Result Framework'. This results-based budget framework was used to prepare the 2007 budget in consultation with the Ministry of Finance. In this regard MOE has expressed its intention to pursue a results- and program-based budgeting process using the following steps:

1. Review the results and the proposed resource allocation from the Ministry of Finance and BEDS' partners.
2. Develop an annual implementation plan that will determine the relative roles in program implementation and resource allocation among the BEDS partners and their respective share of the budget ceiling.
3. Establish a financing and cash flow plan to enable Ministry of Finance and agencies to agree on the disbursement schedule in line with the implementation plan.
4. Establish an accountability system with appropriate financial and disbursement controls and implementation management systems that will enable all agencies to regularly report on the use of funds as part of implementation supervision.

In principle, a consultative process among MOE, Ministry of Finance and all partners implementing the Basic Education Strategy (BEDS) is supposed to be followed. The consultations take place primarily through the BEDS Task Force, with direct consultations between agencies as necessary. To improve the process, the MOE has expressed that it seeks to have a planning and budget committee composed of BEDS partner Ministries and agencies, to improve the preparation of the budget and to facilitate consultation throughout the planning cycle. The idea is to ensure a results- and program-based budgeting process. This process would be driven by a results-based reorganization of MOE, as well as by a results-based coordination system for BEDS' partners to effectively achieve BEDS results. At present, there is already a BEDS partners' coordination system established in 2004 through the BEDS Steering Committee and Task Forces. In addition, the May 2006 JAR approved an updated structure to coordinate

with BEDS' partners based on three result areas of access, quality and institutional capacity. The strategy is to work with the Task Forces and the Council of Deputies to coordinate the planning and budgeting in the three result areas starting with budgeting, implementation planning, cash flow and the implementation of a management system and controls.

To date, the planning process has resulted in considering new ideas for enhance enrollment and access, such as fee elimination, subsidies to poor households, establishment of classrooms close to households with appropriate furniture and equipment; and improving school level management with increased operating costs and greater community participation. Quality improvement is also being targeted by setting benchmarks for pupil learning standards in Grades 1-9. Other ideas call for reforming components that impact on quality such as teachers, learning materials, syllabus and curriculum, tests and examinations, and quality control systems on teaching and learning materials. To be sure, these ideas are presently more in the form of articulation rather than implementation.

Given the extent of the above reforms, it is clear that they will have to be managed skillfully, sufficiently resourced, and carefully coordinated with implementing partners. These are conditions that are arguably in short supply in Yemen. Indeed, however well-intentioned the above arrangements, there are major bureaucratic coordination issues. For example, MOE staff expressed frustration of with the Ministry of Finance's reluctance or delays in the release funds for MOE activities. They complained of inadequate funding even in essential activities such as construction of schools. It was mentioned that many of the nearly 140 schools that are currently under construction are having problems completing their work because of under-funding.

In this context of constraints, what reforms are needed that can help enhance the capacity of the MOE for improved organizational effectiveness? In the following section, we outline some recommendations for policy and program consideration.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REFORMS

In assessing the MOE, the BEDS framework has given educational reforms an appropriate focus. However, there is clearly much to be done to move towards the stated goals. The focus on results-based budgeting particularly has a high potential for a positive impact. In addition, if the implementing guidelines are able to operationalize the transparency and accountability objectives of the new law on procurement, then the prospects for reform are enhanced. However, until these regulations are in place to close current and future loopholes, the gap between reality and results remains vast.

Based on the foregoing review, our analysis of the MOE reveals the following driving and restraining forces operating within the ministry (Figure 1).

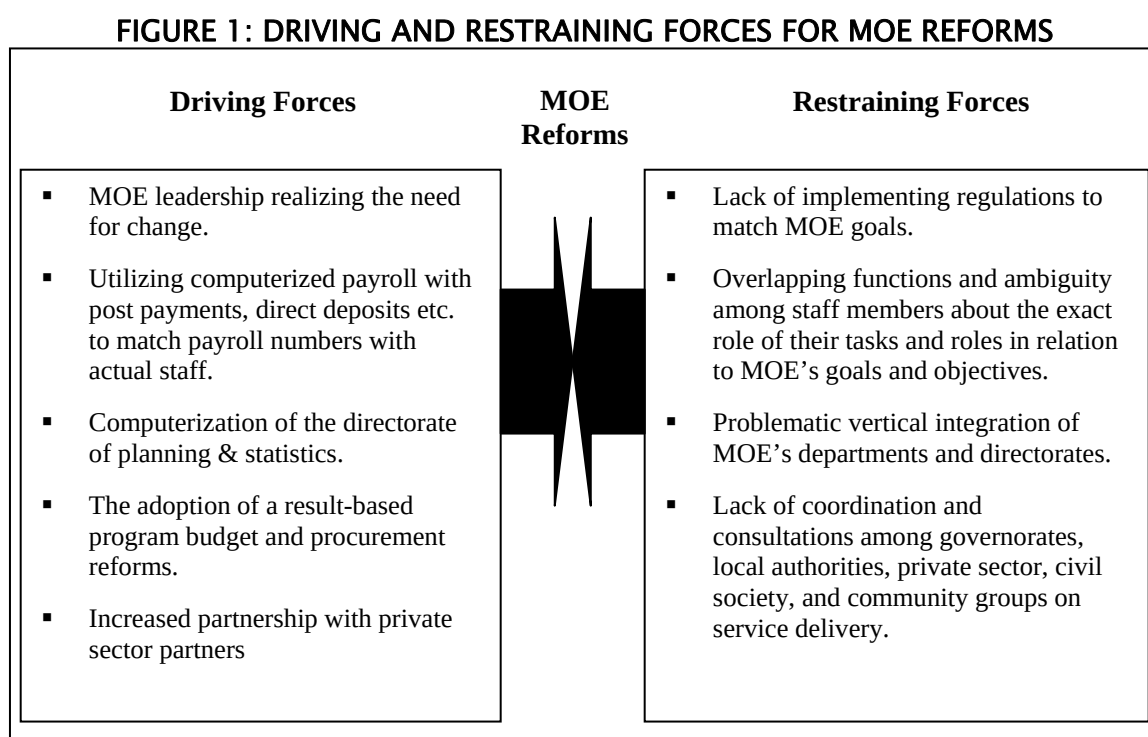


Figure 1 illustrates some of the major challenges facing reforms in the education sector. However, it also indicates the opportunities that can and should be tapped to drive the reforms forward. The

challenge in advancing reforms is to strengthen the driving factors and reduce the restraining elements that counter-act against the reforms.

The recommendations proposed here are targeted to address the problems highlighted in this report; notably problems of access (for girls and children under 6 years), discriminatory societal attitudes, and organizational weaknesses (particularly personnel quality and performance as well as problematic policies). These recommendations are complex and require managing multiple levels of reforms in the ministry, beginning at the top to ensure a desired cascading effect. It should be noted that these reforms are discussed at a general macro-level. For purposes of brevity, implementation issues, particularly with respect to regional constraints, are not analyzed.

1. Provide Technical Assistance and Training for a New Human Resource Management Strategy

As discussed, human resource management (HRM) is one of the biggest problems faced by the MOE. The ministry is overstaffed with poor quality personnel, placing not just a huge burden on its budget but also presenting a major drag on performance. There are continuing reports of “ghost workers” drawing salaries and of skilled staff members being replaced by low-skilled political appointees. These dysfunctional HR conditions severely undermine the goals of the MOE. In this context, it is critical that the ministry rethink and adopt a new HRM strategy. The development of this strategy should be done in a consultative manner involving stakeholders and donors. Donors could be tapped for resources in terms of technical assistance as well as for political cover of MOE reformers who are arguably few and inexperienced in fostering major reforms. A multi-donor effort, difficult to coordinate it may be, would be essential in developing a serious and meaningful HRM strategy.

In the team’s view, the starting point for this HRM strategy should be the payroll controls that MOE has already introduced. By using post payments and direct bank deposits, the ministry has made efforts to control wastage in MOE’s payroll. The success this effort has enjoyed so far should encourage

the expansion of this system to create a database of employee records. This would also directly contribute towards implementing other initiatives like performance-based remuneration.

The HRM strategy should also address the fragmentation of responsibilities in overseeing MOE's human resource management, namely among three ministries (MOE, Ministry of Finance, and Ministry of Civil Service). As mentioned earlier, this fragmentation is worsened by a lack of coordination and transparency. Part of the new HRM strategy should be to expressly bring all these different stakeholders under a coherent set-up that would be led by the MOE. To be sure, all three ministries should be part of the development new strategy, with their respective inputs and commitments considered and incorporated.

Under the new strategy, it is recommended that HR specialists should be recruited to help implement the strategy. To be sure, these specialists should be well-versed in implementing HRM in challenging settings, i.e. they should have strong understanding of the environment in which the Ministry operates and its constraints (budget, expertise, etc). They should also be capable of coordinating closely with the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Civil service. It is important to have these HR specialists work within the Minister's office and to directly report to the Minister. The ministry could either hire HR specialists from the private sector (who have public sector experience) or invest in training internal staff who have potential. In our experience, it may be advisable to utilize both types of specialists, to ensure a balanced and informed approach. International consultants with regional experience would be needed to provide sustained guidance on key issues that would be at the heart of an HRM strategy, namely selection and training, advising line managers on selection procedure, employee rights and working conditions, etc.

This new HRM strategy should ensure that performance expectations fit well within ministry goals and that they are reflected in individual performance contracts (especially at the senior management level). Managers and staff should be trained to communicate their expectations and performance. An objective framework should be designed to measure performance. While sufficient flexibility should be

allowed within the framework to account for unforeseen events, appropriate levels of delegation should also exist.

A merit-based appointment system will be a necessary part of the new HRM strategy. Rules should be created to ensure a transparent hiring process. This may involve drawing up an internal code of conduct for the HR specialists with details on advertisement procedures, scoring scheme, applicant short-listing process, and the final selection process. In addition, the new HR strategy should develop a pay policy geared towards attracting and retaining the best talent into the MOE. This may require bringing staff pay to be on par with private sector jobs and also evaluating employment and wage data periodically to monitor performance levels.

Finally, the new HR strategy should consider means of training staff and holding managers responsible for the performance of staff. Career building should become an emphasis of the initiative, ensuring that staff has potential for upward mobility. There should also be some feedback loops where the best fit for employees can be determined. Periodic surveys of employee satisfaction could also prove to be a valuable instrument to gather feedback to keep refining the strategy.

To be sure, the above contours of an HRM strategy are ambitious to say the least. Getting the government to agree on the need for a new HRM policy for the MOE, never mind getting it to agree on the details of the policy, will be challenging by itself. However, if there is no meaningful effort in this direction, then there is little chance that the MOE will be able to make a difference in the sector it is supposed to lead.

2. Provide Technical Assistance for a New Service Delivery Strategy Based on Civic Engagement

One big drawback that was found by the team in MOE was its failure to embed its service delivery programs in the social environment, i.e. to engage the community and secure its inputs and support for projects. As mentioned previously, there is a deep disconnect between community needs and

the ministry's activities. The tribal nature of Yemen's rural community and the inaccessibility of the country's terrain have created very diverse regional dynamics in parts of Yemen. In fact, even the prevailing laws (tribal laws) differ among regions (Carapico 1998). In dealing with such a fragmented society, the Ministry should design its programs to be responsive to the different realities on the ground. Thus, the MOE should attempt to be more responsive to the prevailing societal norms of regions by creating "...institutional channels for regular consultation and negotiation of objectives and priorities with various groups in society" (Helgason, Klareskov et al. 2005, 28).

In this respect, the MOE should aim for a closer partnership between the ministry and the community. The ministry needs to demonstrate responsiveness and openness to community participation and modify its central planning and direct provision approaches. In rural areas, the MOE should enlist local actors to promote self-regulation and community participation.

The MOE should also draw lessons from a similar strategy employed by the Ministry of Endowments and Guidance to canvass community support for issues of early education and girls' education. This strategy sought the help of religious leaders, tribal council members, mosque imams and female preachers to reorient social attitudes to female education. Community leaders and religious institutions were directly involved in sponsoring training and awareness workshops (Kefaya 2007). In addition to social awareness programs, civic participation could be sought in policy development, budgeting, service delivery and accountability. However, this would depend largely on the capacity of the community concerned. As necessary, capacity-building measures for the community should also be included in delivering this reform.

To be sure, the complexity and resistance to adopting community participation measures, across all regions, should not be underestimated. An alternative to incorporating input directly from community members may be to incorporate feedback from media organizations and NGOs working at a grassroots level in the region. In this regard, the formulation of a sub-national Human Development Report in

India's Madhya Pradesh region in 1993 could be an example of a successful effort. The report, prepared with extensive local and community participation, was used as a framework for planning and budgeting socio-economic programs in the region.¹⁷

In addition, this recommendation should be mindful that reforms under decentralization can lead to certain unintended consequences. Michael Kremer's (2006) study of Kenya's *harambee* system highlights the adverse consequences of education reforms in a decentralizing environment. The study found that "by financing teachers at the central level but allowing local communities to start schools, the system led to the construction of too many small schools; to excessive spending on teachers relative to non-teacher inputs; and to the setting of school fees and other school attendance requirements at a level that deters some from attending school..." (Kremer 2006, 86).

Moreover, it should be noted that regional differences should not be ignored when contemplating the level of community participation. It will be impossible to fit one model of community participation across other regions in Yemen. Therefore, recommendations should be implemented in the context of the norms prevailing within a particular region.

3. Establish a Remedial Program to Provide Neglected Adolescents a Second Chance

As discussed previously, there is a sizable cohort of adolescents in Yemen who never had the opportunity to get a primary education. This program will target out-of-school youth, especially girls, to enroll them in educational and recreational programs. The programs should attempt to provide them with vocational skills while also developing their basic literary and leadership skills.

A similar program has been successfully launched in the rural areas of Egypt called the "*Ishraq*" program (Barber and Weichold 2007). This program, which has been initiated by the Population Council

¹⁷ The Madhya Pradesh Human Development Report was first formulated in 1993 and currently in its third round.

and Save the Children/USA, in partnership with the Center for Development and Population Activities (CEDPA), targets girls around the ages of 13-15.¹⁸ This program is credited with creating a safe public space for girls to improve their functional literacy skills, while providing them with recreational opportunities, health knowledge, and opportunities for mobility and participation. The program's ultimate goal is to positively influence social norms concerning girls, while providing the participants with opportunities to develop their capacities.

This program could also be a model for certain regions of Yemen given the similarity of social backgrounds between Yemen and Egypt. However, without limiting the program to girls (as in Egypt), efforts could also be made to incorporate adolescent boys in a parallel program. Also incentives like food and educational materials would need to be provided to encourage participation. To extend the benefit, opportunities should also be explored to work with private and public sector employers to provide jobs for those trained under this program. However, this program should be implemented while being sensitive to the norms prevailing within the particular region. A pilot program should be implemented first to understand the full implications of such an initiative before implementing it broadly.

4. Launch a Program for Early Childhood Care and Education

As described in this report, early childhood education continues to be an area that has been neglected in Yemen in both rural and urban areas. Given the importance of pre-school education for a child's development, this specific area offers several opportunities for intervention. Such intervention could be in the form of extending subsidies to children under 6 years. This program could be a partnership with private sector kindergartens to subsidize children whose families cannot afford the expense. In Yemen, the pre-school system operates at a very rudimentary level. Thus, the opportunities for expansion are significant. However, this situation also means bigger challenges. A program starting in urban areas

¹⁸ Please see http://www.popcouncil.org/projects/TA_EgyptIshraq.html for further information.

where support factors are more available should have better prospects of implementation than one initiated in rural areas.

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