

**CARE INTERNATIONAL -
EGYPT**

An Evaluation to the Early Grade Literacy in Egypt Project



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An Executive Summary

A significant segment of primary schools' students in Egypt suffers from literacy-related problems. A clear manifestation of these problems is the availability of: a) spelling errors in the students' writings, b) the students' inability to structure sentences properly and c) their poor ability to analyze words or sentences and, accordingly, their inability to understand their meaning correctly. Literacy-related problems or illiteracy or can be traced back to a set of factors related either to the student, the teaching methods, social status, or unavailability of kindergartens in the neighborhood. Students' illiteracy has a negative impact not only on the student, but on the whole family and the community. Being aware of that, CARE International and (HSBC) Bank decided to implement the "Early Grade Literacy in Egypt (EAGLE)" multi-faceted project in order to improve the reading and writing instructions for grades 4-6, increase community engagement with schools, and formulate and promote policies and regulations that support improved reading and writing skills for primary school students.

This study comes within CARE International in Egypt and the HSBC Bank's interest in evaluating the EAGLE project. There is no doubt that final evaluations for projects play an important role in assessing the overall efforts and their success or failure in achieving the project intended objectives. In addition, they reveal any areas of weaknesses or deficiencies that require further attention or reform, especially if the project is replicated or scaled out to other governorates in the future. This study aims to evaluate the EAGLE project through explaining the following aspects:

1. Assessing the rationale of the EAGLE project;
2. Assessing the efficiency of the project in achieving the planned activities and results;
3. Assessing the impact of the project and identifying the unintended results achieved from the project;
4. Exploring the level of project sustainability and the possibility of scaling-up the project in the future;
5. Exploring the key challenges which the project faced or still faces;

6. Summarizing the strengths or areas of success in the project in addition to the weaknesses or areas for improvement in the project.

The study is divided into several sections starting with an introduction, background, and research methodology, then the project rationale, significance, the various aforementioned aspects of assessment, and ending up with the recommendations and annexes. The study depends on a qualitative methodology which included among its research methods reviewing the various project documents, in-depth interviews with the project team and some parents. In addition, it included focus groups discussions with the Arabic language supervisors, the literacy coordinators, teachers, school administrators, social workers, students, members of boards of trustees, parents, and representatives from education directorates and districts in order to identify the project's activities and their impact on students' performance and personalities and reveal the challenges met by the project and the areas for improvement.

The following are some of the most important findings of the study:

- The EAGLE project is a comprehensive project, in which each objective complements the other and supports it. In addition, the project's planned objectives or results are all-inclusive and diversified in their targeted groups which included schools' managers and deputies, Arabic language supervisors, the literacy coordinators, the teachers, the school administrators, the social workers, members of boards of trustees, parents, and representatives, some parents and students from grades four, five and six.
- The results of the literacy corrective program implemented by Care International are considered more effective and impactful than the results of the program implemented by the Ministry of education during the month of August 2015. This can be traced back to several reasons including, most importantly: a) the good planning, b) the effective and refreshing trainings offered for teachers and other participants in the literacy program by professionals from the directorates of education with the assistance of university professors, c) the provision of literacy requisites, such as books manuals required and activities' notebooks, and d) finally, the regular follow-up to the program.
- As a result of the literacy program implemented by Care International, attention was drawn to the difference in percentages of students' literacy according to the results of the diagnostic tests, which was carried out by CARE at the beginning of the project to measure students '

reading and writing skills, and the percentages of students' literacy according to the results of the prior year end of year school exams held by the Ministry of education. These records raised the concerns of educational districts and forced them to take serious measures to prevent cheating in schools and ensure credible results that reflect the students' accurate levels of literacy.

- It was noted at the focus groups' discussions that post to the implementation of the EAGLE's corrective literacy program, a clear shift occurred in the students' behavior and personalities which were characterized by lack of self-confidence, apathy, isolation and loneliness in some cases and were transformed into characters that are passionate to learn and read and are self-confident. In addition, the literacy program had a positive impact on the students' increased participation in school activities, in general, such as school broadcasting activities and competitions between schools.
- It was noted at the focus groups' discussions that a significant improvement occurred in the educational level of the students post to the implementation of the EAGLE's corrective literacy program, especially with regard to their levels of reading, writing, spelling and composition. Some of the students who could not read and write became the top of their classes. In addition, the improvement in the students' levels of reading and writing well reflected the improving their levels in sciences, social studies and even English.
- In General, during their focus groups' discussions, the students expressed full satisfaction with the literacy activities particularly the ones where unconventional methods were used to improve the students' literacy levels, such as splitting words into sub-words, reading stories, learning through sports and drawing, in addition to other various camping activities.
- The EAGLE program was able to reduce the possibility of students' dropping out from schools and initiate a substantial shift for the students' families which started to have more faith and became more attracted to education. A cultural leap also occurred also for the students who started to believe in education and literacy without feeling stigmatized or caring about what they might sacrifice in return for attending the literacy activities, especially the economic revenue as a result of their after-school school or summer work.
- In assessing the efficiency of EAGLE Project in achieving its planned objectives, it can be noted that the project results were mainly focused on the first and second objectives of the project in comparison with the third objective that had limited results, possibly due to its

long-term nature which will bring results in future with the accumulation of pressure and increasing interest of societal powers in changing literacy policies.

- The EAGLE Project implemented by Care international was particularly interested in the issue of maintaining sustainability and continuity through the formulation and implementation of the third objective of the project. Still, the project included other activities that assist in sustaining its goals and outcomes, such as teaching young students how to read and write which in itself one of the guarantees for rooting and sustaining literacy. In addition, the success of the awareness activities carried out by EAGLE project in arousing the interest of parents in literacy and the success of non-traditional literacy activities in intensifying such interest is one aspect of setting up the foundations of literacy within families and in society. Finally, the teachers' full use of the professional training they acquired which lived up to the rank of TOT (Training of Trainers) was a sort of a guarantee for the continuity and scaling-up of the project and for the sustainability of its outcomes even after the project completion date.
- The project was met with several challenges which it managed to overcome. Still, they continue to resemble impediment to literacy in general, including: 1) the existence of resistance from the side of parents and students themselves as a result of refusing the stigmatization of the children with illiteracy or weak reading and writing, 2) lack of sustainability of the trained teachers because of work transfers and promotion, 3) the striking deficit in the number of Arabic language teachers, 4) Not including the literacy classes formally within the teachers' schedules and accordingly not counting them in the share assigned to the Arabic language teacher, 5) Sending students to work after the end of the school day and in the summer vacation as a part of the cultural and customary habits in the village and due to the weak economic status of many families.

The Report Recommendations include:

- Paying attention to the early grades school teachers by devoting enough Arabic language teachers to students in those grades and providing them with material incentives, support and technical follow-up.
- The need to integrate the literacy class into the formal share or quorum of Arabic language teachers instead of adding them to the full quorum of the teacher, so that the literacy class

does not constitute an additional burden on the teachers threatening their ability to teach in an exceptional manner.

- Applying the strategies and activities used in literacy program -such as the phonics method- starting from kindergarten in order to set up a solid foundation for the students in reading and writing so as to avoid having large numbers of illiterate students in the following years, and for the prevention of the problem.
- The importance of exchanging visits with other schools especially from other districts to exchange experiences with them and become aware of the challenges they face and the innovative solutions they introduced to counter those challenges.
- Continue equipping and preparing literacy stakeholders with various trainings especially technical trainings and providing teachers with trainings on age characteristics, the related multiple intelligences and individual differences trainings, the "life values" educational training and the active learning strategies' training.
- Bearing into consideration the geographical distance between the teachers' residential villages and the training venues and providing "ToT" trainings instead of traditional trainings - especially that reality has proved the efficiency of the trainings provided and the quality of their content and that some of the trainings were similar to ToT- which will increase the potentiality of the project continuity and sustainability after its date of completion.
- Finding out clear and systematic lines of cooperation with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the activities they implement in addition to cooperating with a larger number of NGOs that are active in the governorate, since education is a public matter that interests lots of NGOs which the project could have capitalized on their efforts and cooperated with them during and after the end of the project. In addition, the project could have made use of the NGOs volunteers' database and built upon the roles and activities they perform within the NGOs.
- There is an urgent need to continue working religious institutions and expand that work for that Imams of Mosques and clergy play an imperative role in raising the awareness of parents and persuading them to send the children to the literacy summer camps.
- Taking better advantage of the input/role of parents in spreading awareness about literacy and obtain their suggestions over 'ways to spread literacy', using one or more mechanism, such as periodic meetings for instance. These periodic meetings – or any other mechanism

agreed to advance the role of parents- are considered also a means to follow up on the activities of the school and follow up on the improvement in students' levels of literacy in addition to being a means to hold school staff accountable for any deficiency.

- It is necessary for social workers and school management to cooperate with Social Affairs to identify and target needy families through social insurance programs that facilitate for those families to receive social security conditioned by the children/students' commitment to study and attend literacy activities so as to overcome the economic barrier to literacy and ensure further commitment to literacy activities.
- The preparation of a study to measure the impact of weak reading and writing abilities on the increase of students' dropout rates and vice versa. i.e. measuring the impact of better literacy on reducing rates of students' dropout from education. The purpose of that study is not only for scientific research but also to convince decision-makers in various relevant entities of the viability of improving literacy and its multiplier effect on education and the need to adopt specific strategies to institutionalize the literacy corrective program and introducing criteria for measuring the evolution of students' literacy level.

Introduction

Throughout the period from 2014 - 2015, Care International in Egypt implemented “Early Grade Literacy in Egypt (EAGLE)” in cooperation with ‘Better Life for Development and Training NGO in Beni Suef and the ‘Jesuit for Development’ in Minia. EAGLE is a project financed by the (HSBC) Bank and Care International that seeks to overcome the challenges to reading and writing in primary schools through endorsing ‘Literacy’ which is a method designed to improve the ability of students to read words. It relies mainly on linking the letter with its sound (the letter + the motion of the letter = the sound of the letter) and then linking between the sound of the different letters forming one word. The EAGLE Project aims to improve reading and writing skills for 4000 primary school children (from fourth to sixth grade) in 20 schools in four educational districts in Minya and Beni-suef Governorates, which are Malawy and Abu-qurqas in Minya and Nasser and Somosta in Beni-suef. Three specific objectives were identified for the project, which are: 1) improved reading and writing instructions for primary school children, 2)

increased community engagement in holding primary school accountable for improved reading and writing skills, 3) Formulate and implement policies and legislations that support improved reading and writing skills for primary school students.

The aim of this report is to evaluate the EAGLE project. There is no doubt that final evaluations for projects play a key role in assessing the overall efforts and their success or failure in achieving the project intended objectives. Evaluations also reveal any areas of weaknesses or deficiencies that require further attention or reform, especially if the project is replicated or scaled out to other governorates in the future. This evaluation report, hereafter, assesses the rationale and significance of the project and the project efficiency in achieving the planned activities and planned results and measures the impact and effectiveness of the project. Furthermore, it identifies the unintended results achieved from the project, the extent of its sustainability and the possibility of scaling-out the project in the future, in addition to identifying the obstacles and challenges faced by the project.

The Methodology of the Report

The Evaluation report relies on various research methods/tools which were used to evaluate the different aspects of the EAGLE project. These research methods include:

- A review of the different studies on the problem of weak reading and writing and its causes in addition to the objectives behind literacy.
- A review of the project documents, starting from the project proposal and logical framework to the detailed periodic reports or annual ones.
- Conducting 5 in-depth interviews with the employees responsible for the EAGLE project in Care international or partner NGOs in order to verify the information learned from the project documents, reveal any unwritten practices or challenges, and collect suggestions.
- Conducting in-depth interviews with 2 parents to identify the impact of the project on the educational level of their children and the change conceived in their personalities and reveal any unwritten practices or challenges and collect suggestions.
- Carrying out 9 focus groups (Focus Groups) from Somosta and Nasser; each one included from 8-10 participants with a maximum of 12 participants per group in order to verify the information in the project documents and collect the views of the beneficiaries and relevant partners from government with regards to the project methodology, the

trainings they received, the project practices, obstacles, challenges and suggestions and, finally, the impact of the project on the educational level of students and the change conceived in their personalities. The focus groups have included the following:

- Two focus groups with the Arabic language supervisors, the literacy coordinators;
- Two focus groups with teachers and school administrators;
- Two focus groups with the members of the Boards of Trustees, Parents, Teachers (BOTs), parents and social workers;
- Two focus groups with students;
- Two focus groups with representatives from the educational departments in Somosta and Nasser.

Project Rationale and Significance

The EAGLE Project is an important project given its interest in addressing a very timely and urgent problem, which is the problem of weak reading and writing among children in Egypt. A significant segment of primary schools' students in Egypt suffers from literacy-related problems. Clear manifestations of these problems are the availability of spelling errors in the students' writing and the students' inability to structure sentences properly or analyze words or sentences correctly which jeopardize, accordingly, their ability to understand their meaning in the right manner. The problem of students' weak ability to read and write has negative results not only on the student, but also on the family and the entire community. The continued weakness in the students' ability to read and write constitutes a burden on the educational institutions as those students remain in their seats leading, thus, to overcrowded classes and inflated numbers of students. Also, in case those students were transferred automatically to the next stage in education, they become frustrated given the increase in scientific information provided in the advanced stages. In addition, those students provoke problems, such as lack of discipline, irregular attendance and aggressive behavior and also make problems with their teachers and fellow students. Furthermore, because of feeling frustrated or being jealous of others students, students with weak ability of reading and writing may end up in abandoning the school, thus, increasing the dropout rates at the same time the state is working on eliminating illiteracy, reducing drop-out rates and enhancing the quality of education. According to the literature

review, the reasons behind the problem of students' weak ability to read and write can be, in general, summed up under the following four main reasons:

1) Reasons related to the students:

1. the general health of the student: the student's ability to read and write is often associated with his/her public health (in terms of hearing, sight, etc...) which impacts his/her performance, learning capabilities, regular attendance in school and participation in areas of activity that require reading and writing.

2. The individual differences among students: some students do not have the necessary requirements for progress in reading and writing, including: intelligence, attention, focus, experience or vocabulary because what the student reads is always interpreted in the light of past experiences.

2) Reasons related to the teaching methods:

Among the most important elements in the educational process are the teacher's method of transferring knowledge/expertise and the extent that method fits and learner's abilities. Hence, some practices regarding the teaching methods cause lag in accomplishing the educational goals. Such practices include:

1. The teachers' neglect to motivate the students in the reading classes which should increase students' activity and raise their desire to read.

2. Some teachers may rely in their classes on a one teaching method and may not be keen to diversify their teaching methods or address each class and each lesson using the appropriate method.

3. Some teachers do not try to link reading with other types of linguistic activities that require reading and knowing.

4. Some teachers are not sufficiently familiar with the mechanisms of dealing with educationally backward students.

3) Reasons related to the family and social aspects:

1. Low economic status of the family.

2. Low educational and cultural level of the parents or the society surrounding the student.

3. Family conflicts or fragmentation.

4. Wrong parenting methods.
5. Insufficient attention provided to children's educational attainment.

4) Reasons related to lack of kindergartens region

Kindergarten plays an important role in purifying children's experiences, providing diverse experiences for children and preparing them for school.

The Project Efficiency in Achieving the Planned Activities

Activities for Objective 1: Improved reading and writing instruction for primary school children

- 1-1 Train 100 teachers on active learning teaching methodologies and class management
- 1-2 Build the capacity of 100 teachers through training on new teaching methodologies for reading and writing for the grades from 4-6 and training on the corrective program.
- 1-3 Build the capacity of the Ministry of Education supervisors on the levels of directorates and districts on monitoring and evaluating activities related to reading and writing and provide technical assistance to teachers through training on supervision skills and using technical follow-up methods to enable them to follow-up the implementation of the corrective program.
- 1-4 Apply a corrective approach (during the academic year) to improve the literacy skills of children in primary schools ('Improving reading and writing skills for level A' program).
- 1-5 Capacity building of school administrations (schools' managers – schools' deputy managers) to encourage them to adopt and follow-up on the reading and writing activities in schools through providing them with training programs on leadership and effective school administration skills.
- 1-6 Train 60 social workers, librarians and activities' supervisors on innovative ways to encourage children to use the library, through competitions, reading projects or the use of extra-curricular activities in order to improve reading and writing skills.
- 1-7 Provide the library with materials suitable for children who suffer from difficulties in reading and writing.
- 1-8 Organize summer camps and use extracurricular activities to teach reading and writing in order to complete the learning activities.

- 1-9 Organize and hold regular coordination meetings with the Literacy Unit participating in the project at the level of the ministry / directorates / districts.
- 1-10 Build cadres of 50 individuals in the Literacy Unit at all levels and train them on the methodology of improving reading and writing for children (TOT)

Regarding the first objective activities, it has been confirmed during the different focus groups discussions that all participants in the project received intensive training such as the training on active learning and learning strategies and trainings on corrective literacy program, which included training on literacy techniques (phonics) to teach reading and writing in addition to other trainings that improve ways of interacting with and among children, such as the training on "Life Values" which Arabic language supervisors and literacy coordinators received, in addition to trainings on technical follow-up and evaluation in which the follow-up and evaluation forms were formulated in a participatory manner by Arabic language supervisors and literacy coordinators (on the school, Directorate and district levels) and members of BOTs and were trained on it. Furthermore, members of BOTs received trainings on the regulations governing the work of the BOTs, their roles and responsibilities, and resources mobilization for educational purposes. It is clear from the focus group discussions that the trainings were not only comprehensive and diversified in their content, but were also marked by comprehensiveness and diversity in the target groups. The trainings targeted all categories and groups involved in the project, including the school administrations (schools principals, deputies, etc...), teachers, Arabic language supervisors, literacy coordinators, social workers, members of the BOTs and some parents.

The various participants in the project have pointed out during the focus groups' discussions that the trainings, which they received, were quite useful and well reflected on the students to a large extent especially the training on "life values", which aimed to explain and apply values of positivity, tolerance and cooperation. The participants received that training for the first time during the project. They have, themselves, benefited from the training and applied it to their children, not just the students at the school. It inspired the participants to prepare plays, such as the play "nightingale sings over the tree" about the values of peace and freedom, and short stories such as the story of "the tree in the road" about the values of cooperation and self-reliance.

Teachers observed a change in the students' behavior in terms of their cooperation. The fruits of that training reflected on the students, who pointed during the focus group discussions with them to the benefit they gained from the values of cooperation and participation, in particular, which led to their further collaboration with their peers and younger siblings in studying, learning lessons and reading and writing. Participants in the focus groups also pointed to other trainings they received that had a great value in developing the capacities such as the training on "linguistic phenomena" which they received for two days by one of the faculty members in the faculty of Education. Participants also pointed to the important role of the summer camps in attracting students and advancing their educational levels. One of the camps which was attended by children in Somosta in Beni Suef managed to achieve a substantial leap in the children's level upon which 100 out of the 102 children attending the camp passed the literacy test successfully.

The teachers, Arabic language supervisors and literacy coordinators also pointed out, specifically, that they have largely benefitted from the professional training they received under the EAGLE project, especially that the trainers were characterized by a high degree of professionalism and skillfulness. They also reported that they transferred the trainings and knowledge they received to other teachers at the governorate level and not only the district level, as a part of their job in the literacy units in the Ministry of Education. Arabic language supervisors and literacy coordinators in the district of Nasser verified this fact and pointed out that the professional trainings they received -over the corrective literacy program- served as training of trainers for that it was were able to elevate the level of the teacher into trainers and not mere recipients of training.

On the other hand, social workers pointed out during the discussions of their focus group that they received trainings on the innovative methods to encourage literacy through competitions, reading projects, camps, etc..., which helped creating another player, who is the social worker, that is supportive and encouraging of literacy and supports teachers, especially during summer camps and upon delivery of incentive awards, etc... as per the discussions with the social workers' focus group.

However, on the other hand, the participants pointed to their lack of a training on multiple intelligences and individual differences, which allows the teacher to identify different types of students and deal with those patterns in the way that fits each pattern. In addition, they pointed to the limited training they received on active learning strategies. Therefore, participants suggested that teachers receive trainings on age characteristics and associated multiple intelligences & individual differences in addition to expanding the training on active learning strategies which paves the way for the corrective literacy program and supports it.

Participants also pointed to the influence of the geographical distance given the long distance between the teachers' residential villages and the training venues, which made the commitment of some trainees to the trainings and their timings very difficult and limited the number of trainees which could have been possibly doubled if the trainings were in the same district where the trainees lived.

Activities of Objective 2: Increased community engagement (BOTs) with primary schools as partners with schools in improving reading and writing

- 2-1 Support 20 BOTs to activate their role in supporting the improvement in literacy levels among children in schools through training them on planning, accountability, roles & responsibilities and participation in developing of action plans to improve reading and writing skills.
- 2-2 Meet with BOTs to discuss the results of the Early Grade Reading Assessment (AGRA) in schools, provide solutions, etc...
- 2-3 Organize and hold educational forums to support improving literacy among children in the communities.
- 2-4 Organize and implement local media campaigns to raise awareness about the importance of literacy and disseminate information on ways to raise the literacy levels in schools.
- 2-5 Produce a short video on literacy in order to use it in schools and educational forums. The video will be used in schools to raise the awareness of the community members about the importance of addressing the problems related to reading and writing in primary schools.
- 2-6 Produce a documentary video about the project activities.

With respect to the second goal activities, it is clear that the project activated the role of social workers and boards of trustees, parents and teachers inside schools. It appears from the focus groups discussions that social workers collaborated with the BOTs and the clergy to make a media campaign to raise the awareness of students and parents about the reasons that lead to weak reading and writing skills, the importance of literacy and real purpose behind the project, which is to improve students' level of reading and writing and not to stigmatize them which shall be reflected on the academic level of the student in all subjects and his/her character. The project awareness activities included preparing seminars/forums, hanging posters and announcements inside and outside the community and coordinating with the clergy to raise awareness in places of worship whether at the beginning of the project or right before the camps. In addition, social workers played a organizing role (in preparing classes schedules, arranging the literacy classes within the schedules, coordinating the various literacy activities) hand in hand with their supportive and encouraging role of literacy and supports teachers, especially during summer camps and upon delivery of incentive awards, etc...

The BOTs also played an effective role in monitoring the implementation of literacy activities and mobilization of resources to promote literacy and face and emergency challenges. It is worth mentioning that the role of BOTs and social workers in raising awareness about literacy and its goals and their use of different channels to do so (e.g. seminars, Friday ceremonies, religion classes in the houses of worship in coordination with the imams of the mosques) was the cause of overcoming some of the obstacles or challenges which the project faced in its beginning as will be shown later in the report. In their focus groups, some of the parents praised the efforts of school administration in collaboration with the BOTs in making them aware of literacy project and the EAGLE Project through seminars, gatherings, meetings, and finally school parties.

A director of one of the schools added that training BOTs and activating their role in the EAGLE project is a precedence that CARE achieved since no role for BOTs in literacy was available before the EAGLE Project. Participants in the various focus groups also stressed on the leading role of imams and priests specifically in raising the awareness of parents and convincing them to stop sending their children for work in summer despite their deteriorating living conditions - especially in Somosta District – and to join the literacy camps instead.

On the other hand, the participants in the focus groups pointed to the importance of cooperating with a larger number of NGOs that are active in the governorate, since education is a public matter that interests lots of NGOs which the project could have capitalized on their efforts and cooperated with them during and after the end of the project. Here, the Arabic Language supervisors and the literacy coordinators suggested cooperating with the NGOs on the village level (Community Development Association/CDAs) and the NGOs Department in the Ministry of Education (Community Participation Department) to ensure cooperation with the available NGOs in the village and the governorate.

Activities of Objective 3: Formulate and promote policies, legislations and strategies that support improving the reading and writing for primary school students

- 3.1 With the support of experts from the ministry, civil society and research centers, conduct a joint assessment (study) with the Ministry of Education on the strategies and legislations that promote or hinder literacy initiatives implemented in Egypt.
- 3.2 Conduct three round tables with the Ministry of Education officials and representatives of civil society and coalitions to raise awareness about the challenges and possible solutions to improve the literacy level in primary schools; work with the Ministry of Education to identify ways to address the gaps in the implementation of strategies; and propose clear criteria and measurements for literacy.
- 3.3 Meet with officials from the Ministry of Education and representatives of civil society and coalitions based on round tables to discuss the results and prepare working papers on the recommendations / outputs of the study.
- 3.4 Submit proposals, strategies and directions based on the recommendations resulting from the roundtables' discussions of the Ministry of Education and develop an action plan with solutions to improve the reading and writing skills.

With respect to the third goal activities, the project improved reading and writing through submitting a set of policies, proposals, strategies and directives which have been developed in a participatory manner with the representatives of the Ministry of Education and representatives of civil society in seminars and roundtables that aimed to discuss the literacy problem and the

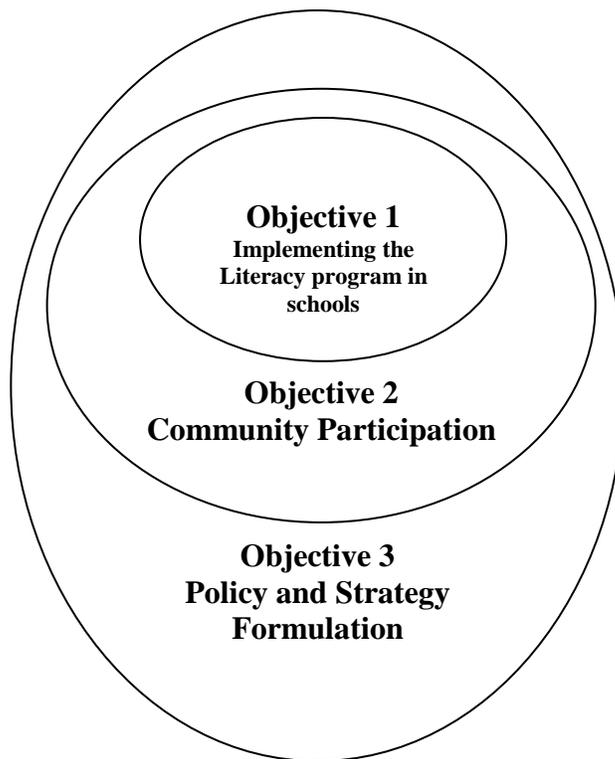
challenges it poses in addition to the solutions proposed to address that problem among primary school students and propose clear criteria and standards for literacy. Among all the EAGLE project goals, this is perhaps the goal that is most difficult to measure its impact due to the fact that adopting policy papers may take long and may also require the presence of pressure from various players who are convinced of the importance of literacy and its impact on education, which convince decision-makers at the end to adopt specific strategies institutionalizing for the corrective literacy program within the curriculum and classes' schedules, as well as adopt specific criteria to measure the evolution of the level of literacy among students. Perhaps the newly passed resolution no. 313 on optional activities can be seen as a gateway to institutionalize corrective program for literacy within the framework of the Ministry of Education, as it can integrate literacy within the optional activities. Students who are weak in reading and writing can be enlisted in the literacy class while the rest of the students can attend any other optional activities.

In overall, it is clear from the interviews with the team responsible for the EAGLE project in CARE that more regular interaction with the Department of Community Participation in the Ministry of Education is needed over the policies and recommendations. Here, the proposal of the director of the educational district in Nasser to prepare a study to measure the impact of the weakness of reading and writing on the increase in dropout rates and vice versa seems useful. This study shall convince decision makers of the usefulness of the literacy program and its impact on the achieving the learning outcomes and reducing students' dropout rates, and thus the viability of adopting a strategy or taking decisions to institutionalize the corrective literacy program.

The Project Efficiency in Achieving the Planned Outputs

The EAGLE project is a comprehensive project, in which each objective complements the other and supports it. For example, the project aimed to improve the literacy instructions for the primary school students in some schools in Beni Suef and Minya through training and onsite following up of cadres. All that required the participation of the community in the project, which is the second objective of the project, in order to support and enrich its activities, through: a)

integrating the volunteering efforts of community members and his groups, b) Gathering the views, recommendations and suggestions of stakeholders from the community and implementing them, c) activating the role of the community in the follow-up, oversight and accountability. This third and final objective of the project emphasized the formulation and implementation of strategies and legislation that support improved reading and writing skills of primary school students at the national level, which ensures setting further the foundation for literacy and transferring the skills and knowledge of the corrective literacy program to all other governorates - especially that literacy units already exist on the levels of the Ministry, directorates, districts and schools - which is vital to ensure the continuity of improved reading and writing skills among students.



In addition, the project's planned objectives or results are all-inclusive and diversified in their targeted groups which included school administrators (schools' principals and deputies), Arabic language supervisors, literacy coordinators, teachers, , social workers, members of BOTs

However, in assessing the efficiency of EAGLE Project in achieving its planned objectives, it can be noted that the project results were mainly focused on the first and second objectives of the project compared to the third objective that had limited results, possibly due to its long-term nature which will bring results in future with the accumulation of pressure and increasing interest of societal powers in changing literacy policies. Nonetheless, in General, during their focus groups' discussions, the students expressed full satisfaction with the literacy activities particularly the ones where unconventional methods were used to improve the students' literacy levels, such as splitting words into sub-words, reading stories, learning through sports and drawing, in addition to other various camping activities, which are all activities which students admire and made them feel attracted to literacy and that it is easily rehearsed as appeared in the focus group discussions with students. Also, the students expressed their need for more activities

of that kind and their willingness to deal with even more complex words and divide them into sub-words, which demonstrates the success of the literacy methodology adopted by CARE in delivering information to students easily.

An Assessment of the Project Impact and Effectiveness

The Ministry of Education adopted the literacy program in cooperation with the Girls' Improved Learning Outcomes (GILO) project funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in the period from 2008 – 2013. The project aimed to improve the quality of teaching and learning outcomes starting the kindergarten and up till the third preparatory year. Since September 2011, the Ministry of Education expanded the literacy program in the governorates of Fayoum, Beni Suef, Minya and Qena and included improving the literacy skills for students with weak literacy skill from fourth grade until the third preparatory grade. As a result, the literacy units were established on the Ministry, directorates, departments and school levels to follow up on the implementation of the objectives of the literacy program.

The results of the literacy corrective program implemented by Care International are considered more effective and impactful than the results of the program implemented by the Ministry of education during the month of August 2015. This can be traced back to several reasons including, most importantly: a) the good planning, b) the effective and refreshing trainings provided for teachers and other participants in the EAGLE project by professionals from the directorates of education and with the assistance of university professors, c) the provision of literacy requirements, such as books manuals required and activities' notebooks, and d) finally, the regular follow-up to the program, since as was previously noted in the beginning of the report, the "Insufficient attention provided to children's educational attainment" is one of the most important reasons that lead to poor reading and writing among students, so the effective follow-up on the project activities as a whole and on the improvement in the students' levels through periodic assessments under supervision of CARE is one of the necessary elements that contributed to the success of the literacy program. The camps prepared by the project were probably of the most important activities that were built on the results of the periodic assessments of the students' levels as they targeted the students who obtained the lowest grades in the assessment through providing them with an intensive summer program for around a month

where students attended on a regular basis and participated in a variety of literacy activities, such as drawing, playing and reading activities.

On the other hand, there is no doubt that measuring the impact of any project requires the passage of a period of time after at the end of the project in order to be able to assess the impact of the project on the beneficiaries, decision-makers or the surrounding community, at the local and national levels. Nevertheless and despite the passage of a short period since the completion of the project, the EAGLE project was able to put an impressive mark on the lives of beneficiaries and decision-makers, which can be summarized as follows:

- The corrective literacy program managed to transfer %94 of the students from Level A to B or C. It became clear from the discussions with the focus groups of the Arabic language Supervisors and literacy coordinators that post to the implementation of the EAGLE's corrective literacy program, a clear shift occurred in the students' behavior and personalities which were characterized by lack of self-confidence, apathy, isolation and loneliness, in some cases, and were transformed into characters that are passionate to learn and read and are self-confident. As explained by teachers during the discussions of their focus groups, weak reading and writing skills for some students led to their lack of discipline in

A Success Story: During their focus groups discussions, the Arabic Language supervisors and literacy coordinators were proud of a case of one of the students who the psychiatrist and neurology physician recommended that she sits between two active and hard-working students. Nonetheless, she remained silent among her peers and teachers and did not react to anything in the school until she was listed in the literacy program. Her teachers were surprised in the middle of the program to find her writing in a very beautiful handwriting which her teacher described as "better than my own writing". Then her personality started changing to become more confident and dependent on herself. In addition, she started to be more cooperative and intermingled with her peers in various school activities. This has not only been noticed by the teachers, but also by her parent who informed the teachers of the noticeable change they witness in the character of their daughter.

classrooms and lack of desire to learn or to leave other students or colleagues learn, which created an anti-education environment. Students have explained this issue further during the discussions of their focus groups, where they pointed to the bullying of their colleagues who know how to read and write to them - before they become enlisted in the literacy program - due to their inability to read or write in addition to their bad handwriting which inhibited them from volunteering to write on the blackboard or solve any question and shacked their self-confidence and prevented them from participating in any activities in or outside the classroom; a situation that changed completely after the implementation of the literacy program.

- In relation to the previous point, it appears from the focus group discussions with the students that the literacy program had a positive impact on the students' increased participation in school activities, in general, such as school broadcasting activities, competitions between schools in various scientific fields and in public speaking in particular. Students explained that they started to participate, for example, in the school radio/broadcasting by reading the daily News, the Quran, religious poetry, poems and songs in the right way and using the right formation. The students showcased their reading skills during the focus groups discussion. In addition, it became clear from the focus group discussions with the students that there is an increase in their participation in student activities, such

A Success Story: Teachers referred to a case of student called Asmaa who was very naughty, used to assault her colleagues in the classroom, and suffered from frequent absences, which had signaled the possibility of her dropout from education. However, with joining the literacy classes, teachers observed that she became quieter in the classroom, attended classes more regularly, and became more interested in learning, to the degree that she started to go to the teachers' room to accompany the teacher of the next class.

A Success Story: The teachers in a school in Nasser pointed to a case of one of the students called Ashrakat who could not read or write before listing her in the literacy program. However, after she was listed in the literacy program, she started to master of the Arabic language, which enabled her to write poetry in classical Arabic!

as the Student Union where some of these students were elected as heads of the scientific and social committees. In addition, some of them won the title of "class president" as their colleagues noted the improvement in their scientific level and the increase in their activity and participation in and outside the classroom throughout the year.

- It was noted from the various focus groups' discussions that a significant improvement occurred in the academic level of the students post to the implementation of the EAGLE's corrective literacy program, especially with regard to their levels of reading, writing, spelling and composition. Some of the students who could not read and write became the top of their classes. It was also clear in the focus groups discussions with the students that the literacy program had an impact on increasing students' in-class participation and their volunteerism to answer the teacher's questions and to explain their answer or write it on the blackboard in front of their peers, all of which are things that the students did not do it before because of the weakness of their ability to read or write. Most of the students also indicated during their focus group discussions their desire to become teachers of Arabic language, literacy and journalism in the future not only because their level of Arabic language improved, but also because of their

A Success Story: In El Shaheed Abbas school in Nasser, the teachers reported that some of the students completed the assessment test level in a very short time that did not exceed 10 minutes, and their answers were excellent and accurate, which made the teachers inquire from the students about their grades in the Arabic language to find that there is a marked improvement in their Arabic Language grades. This made the teachers feel the impact of literacy on the students and the value of their efforts in literacy.

A Success Story: According to the focus groups of the Arabic Language supervisors and literacy coordinators, the Arabic Language supervisors were surprised more than once during their visits to the schools to find the students enlisted in the literacy program correct some linguistic errors made by the teachers during the class. A student called Etemad managed to spot a very meticulous linguistic error in the assessment exam, despite the fact that the exam was prepared by a committee of Arabic Language supervisors, and the error was made right to the whole school!

attraction and passion for reading, writing and literacy activities, which their parents confirmed during the in-depth interviews with them.

- In general, the literacy corrective program was able to reduce the possibility of students' dropping out from schools. It is known that poor literacy level among students leads to their frustration with the increase in scientific information. In addition, it leads to their lack of discipline, aggressive behavior and provocation of problems with their teachers and fellow students, which increase the possibility of their dropout of the different stages of education. In that regards, through improving the reading and writing levels, the literacy program managed to

A Success Story: the Arabic Language supervisors pointed to the case of a student called Hazem Mohammed - who was met also during the students' focus group- who moved from his private school to a public school in Beni Suef. With the high density of classes in the public school and the difficulty of taking care of all students equally, Hazem's level began to strongly decline, which was going to lead to his drop-out of Education. However, with the start of the literacy program and his enlisting in the program, the student's level of reading and writing started to improve clearly. This also reflected in improving his level in the rest of the subjects and made his mother comes to the school on a weekly basis to inform the teachers about the rapid improvement she witnesses in the academic level of her son, who eventually became one of the first students.

create an environment attractive to the students and reduced the absenteeism and drop-out rates. School principals have pointed out during their focus groups discussions to some of the students who used to avoid classes and play in the play yard, but after they were enlisted in the literacy program and the social workers in schools helped them and monitored their progress, a change occurred in the students' personalities and they become more committed to attend classes and not to skip any classes.

- The literacy corrective program adopted by CARE was able to initiate a substantial leap in the students' families which started to have more faith and became more attracted to education. During the in-depth interviews with the parents, they pointed that their children transferred the knowledge and various activities they of the literacy program, especially the non-traditional and interactive activities such as splitting words into sub-words and reading stories,

which aroused the interest of parents in the literacy program. The Arabic language supervisors and literacy coordinators emphasized that some parents were interested in the literacy program to the extent that some parents in Somosta in Beni Suef asked to

A Success Story: Some parents whose children have been enlisted in the literacy program of their children insisted on attending and participating in literacy activities when they noticed the remarkable change in the academic level of their children and their personalities in order to transfer the skills and knowledge of literacy to their other children.

attend the literacy classes and activities in addition to the literacy summer camp out of their desire to learn literacy methods and transfer them to their other children.

- Drawing on the values of cooperation and collaboration which has been taught to the students in the literacy program within the ‘life values’ activities, most of the students pointed out during the focus groups discussions with them that they cooperated with their peers and their younger brothers and sisters and taught them reading and

A Success Story: it was clear in the focus group discussions with the students that they collaborated with their younger siblings in the family and taught them reading and writing using literacy methods, which was not only an application of the values of cooperation and reliance self they obtained during the literacy program, but was also influential on the students’ families and some kind of guarantee for the sustainability and continuation of the literacy through the students themselves inside and outside the family.

writing using the literacy methods, which multiplied the impact of the literacy program on students and their families and increased the attraction of those families to literacy.

An Assessment of the Project Impact: The Unintended Results Achieved

Although there has not been a long time since the end of the project, the literacy project had many positive unintended outcomes and consequences that can be summarized as follows:

- The literacy program implemented by Care International drew attention to the difference in percentages of students' literacy according to the results of the diagnostic tests, which was carried out by CARE at the beginning of the project to measure students' reading and writing skills, and the percentages of students' literacy according to the results of the prior year end of year



school exams held by the Ministry of education. The head of the educational department in Nasser pointed that these records raised the concerns of educational districts and forced them to take serious measures to prevent cheating in schools and ensure credible results that reflect the students' accurate levels of literacy.

- The weak levels of literacy among students has led not only to a decline in their Arabic language level, but also a decline in various academic subjects such as sciences, mathematics and social studies, all of which require the skills of reading, comprehension and expression using an inventory of vocabulary. In contrast, the improvement in the students' levels of reading and writing well reflected on improving the students' levels in Arabic in addition to sciences and social studies, which Arabic language supervisors and literacy coordinators reported were the subjects that improved the most as a result of improving Arabic Language, reading and writing. In addition, the students' ability to understand and solve mathematical problems improved as per the focus groups discussion with the students. Some of the participants in the focus groups discussion also indicated an improvement in the English Language level given that students were guided by the same literacy methods in studying English language (e.g. splitting the word into sub-words and using the phonics method).

- The literacy program adopted by CARE was able to achieve a cultural leap for the students who started to believe in education. An evidence on that is what the change which teachers witnessed in the students behavior as students used to their enlisting in the literacy program as a stigmatization for them and unworthy of sacrificing the economic revenue during summer - which could earn the student an average of 65 pounds according to the data of the educational department in Nasser in Beni Suef - for attending the literacy activities, to students who are interested in education and constantly inquire about any progress or new activities in the literacy program out of their desire to participate in the program, without feeling stigmatized and without caring about the economic return they may sacrifice. Their ambition to become doctors, engineers and teachers also increased. This cultural leap was felt and expressed by all participants in the program from teachers and Arabic language supervisors to literacy coordinators. However, they expressed their concern that the families may not all have the same degree of belief in literacy and most importantly, due to the poor economic conditions, may stop sending their children to literacy activities, or worse, withdraw their children from school.

A Success Story: It was clear in the focus group discussions that the project succeeded not only to remove the initial idea the students had in mind about the project that it stigmatized students with weak reading and writing, but the project was also able to establish a good reputation among students and their parents. The Arabic language supervisors pointed to the case of two friends Basmala and Esraa, where he Basmala was enlisted in the literacy while Esraa was not since her level was better than Basmala. Basmala initially was worried that the program will stigmaize her as weak in reading and writing, but after the Basmala was enlisted in the literacy program, her academic level in various subjects improved and surpassed Esraa's. As a result, Esraa asked for a meeting with the officer responsible for the project in the CARE and requested that she becomes enlisted in the literacy program to improve her academic level.

The Project Potential Sustainability and Future Up-scaling

The EAGLE Project implemented by Care international was particularly interested in the issue of maintaining sustainability and continuity. This was perhaps the main reason behind the formulation and implementation of the third objective of the project which is to “Formulate and promote policies, legislations and strategies that support improving the reading and writing for primary school students”, which aimed at proposing policies and key solutions to the problem of weak reading and writing among primary schools’ students that can be adopted nationally and institutionalized within the Ministry of Education activities and programs. Still, the project

included other activities that assist in sustaining its goals and outcomes, such as teaching young students how to read and write which, in itself, one of the guarantees of founding and sustaining literacy. The seeds of literacy sustainability can be found in the institutionalization of the EGRA. The newly passed resolution no. 313 on optional activities can perhaps be seen as a gateway to institutionalize corrective program for literacy

A Success Story: A student called saber Abdulmawgood in the sixth grade in a primary school in Somosta in Beni Suef explained during the focus group with students that he teaches his younger brother in Kindergarten the literacy principles and methods, including, for example, splitting the word into sub-words and reading.

within the framework of the Ministry of Education, as it can integrate literacy within the optional activities. Students who are weak in reading and writing can be enlisted in the literacy class while the rest of the students can attend any other optional activities.

Despite the fact that the third objective of the project seems, on the outside, the one that is most relevant to ensuring the continuity and sustainability of the literacy corrective program, however, the other two objectives managed in reality to plant the seeds of literacy sustainability and continuity in what could be summed up as follows:

- Teaching students writing and reading is one of the guarantees for the sustainable and continuity of literacy; an evidence on that, according to the focus group’s discussion with students, is noted in the students’ collaboration with their younger siblings in the

family and in some cases their parents whom they taught reading and writing using the literacy methods.

- In addition, the success of the awareness activities carried out by the EAGLE project in arousing the interest of parents in literacy and the success of non-traditional literacy activities in intensifying such interest is one of the aspects that set up the foundations of literacy inside families and society. An evidence on that is, as mentioned earlier, the parent's demand to attend the literacy activities and learn the literacy methods in order to teach it to their other children and their desire to hold regular meetings with them to inform them about the literacy suggestions and collect their suggestions.
- Finally, the teachers' full use of the professional training they acquired - which lived up to the rank of TOT (Training of Trainers) - was a sort of a guarantee for the continuity and scaling-up of the project and for the sustainability of its outcomes even after the project completion date. The teachers' transfer of the trainings and knowledge they received about literacy to their colleagues at the governorate level and not only at the level of districts – as a part of their job in the literacy units – can be considered some sort of a guarantee for the continuity of the project, scale out and sustainability of its impact even after the program ends. The literacy coordinators in Nasser center confirmed they transferred the knowledge they acquired to the other literacy units in the governorate.

Obstacles and Challenges Faced by the Project

The project was met with several challenges which it managed to overcome. Still, they continue to resemble impediment to literacy in general, including:

- 1) It appeared from the various focus groups' discussions that there was a resistance from the side of parents and students themselves as a result of refusing the stigmatization of the children with illiteracy or weak reading and writing, especially that a number of the students who were reported weak in reading and writing were among the best students in their classes in addition to the difference between the Ministry's illiteracy rates and the illiteracy rates according to CARE's assessment. The project has been able to overcome that obstacle through communicating with parents and providing

them with evidence on the low level of literacy among their children by showing them the results of the assessment made by CARE. The BOTs inside schools in collaboration with social workers also played a major role in overcoming that challenge by raising the awareness of students and parents of the real purpose of the project, which is to raise the level of students in reading and writing which would be ultimately reflected on the student's academic level in all subjects, his personality. In doing that, they used seminars, Friday's ceremonies, religion lessons and other communication channels and laid emphasis on attracting students through fun and engaging activities for students. During their focus groups' discussions, parents praised the efforts of the schools' administrations and BOTs in raising their awareness through seminars, gatherings, meetings and finally ceremonies. Also, in their focus groups' discussions, students praised the unconventional literacy activities, such as splitting words into sub-words, reading stories, learning through sports and drawing, in addition to other various camping activities, which are all attractive and pleasant activities for the students.

2) Another challenge that emerged in the beginning of the project and is linked to the first challenge is the lack of conviction and lack of knowledge of the project goal or the purpose behind its existence. The Arabic Language supervisors, literacy coordinators and teachers, however, overcame this challenge by preparing an equipped room - similar to the lab - and called it "literacy room" in order to introduce literacy to all students and staff in school, attract their attention to it and secure their support.

3) Another challenge was brought up during the focus groups discussions, which is the lack of sustainability of the trained teachers because of work transfers and promotion. The Arabic language supervisors pointed out that some of the teachers who the project trained and invest effort in their guidance were either promoted or transferred by senior administration to another place during the school year. The Arabic language supervisors dealt with the situation in a flexible manner as they filled the emerging gap through recruiting new teachers from disciplines other than Arabic language, such as social studies, journalism or libraries. The Arabic language supervisors transferred all the trainings and knowledge they obtained to those teachers through "on the job training."

3) It appeared from the focus groups discussions with the Arabic language supervisors and literacy coordinators that there is a striking deficit in the number of Arabic language

teachers, which leads to an increased burden on the current Arabic language teachers and ultimately affects the students' levels. The project by CARE has been able to overcome this obstacle by training teachers of journalism and libraries as per the agreement between the Arabic language supervisors and journalism supervisors at the level of the directorates and departments of education. The Arabic language supervisors explained during the focus

groups discussions that the fact that those teachers were not specialized in Arabic Language made them more enthusiastic, creative and willing to exert more effort in literacy. But the root of the problem remains to be the deficit in the number of Arabic Language teachers,



especially in the early grades of education, and solving it will reflect positively on the students' level in the rest of their academic life, not only in reading and writing, but also in various subjects. Thus, a priority should be give to the prevention of illiteracy problem by devoting sufficient number of Arabic language teachers especially for students in the first years of the study. Some parents, teachers and members of BOTs suggested to use the same strategies and activities of the literacy program - such as the phonics method - starting from kindergarten in order the build the children on strong foundation, whether this was under the name of literacy or Noor Elbayan way.

4) In conjunction with the previous challenge, another challenge that increased the burden on the teachers is not including the literacy classes formally within the teachers' schedules and accordingly not counting them in the share assigned to the Arabic language teacher. This has increased the burden on the teachers and made some of them less enthusiastic to teach literacy classes. According to the focus group discussions with the schools' administration, schools' principals attempted face that challenge by re-

distributing the classed fairly on teachers and trying to alleviate the burden on literacy teachers.

5) Another challenge is related to the culture of the village and the low economic status of many families. As a result, parents are used to sending their children to work after the end of the school day and in the summer vacation. Hence, the Arabic Language supervisors and teachers had to exert huge effort to convince parents not send children for work in summer and send them to the one-month literacy summer camps instead. The awareness campaign implemented by CARE and the partner NGO in educational department, mosques, etc.. in Beni-Suef early in the beginning of the project and before the summer camps helped to a great extent in raising awareness of the project goals and literacy benefits.

The Partnership between CARE and NGOs:

Perhaps one of the reasons the project was able to overcome the above mentioned challenges is the strong partnership between CARE and the partnering NGO “Better Life”, which the project coordinator in the Better Life described as based on transparency and openness whether in discussing problems or in reaching solutions together. In assessing the level of partnership between the two on a scale of one to ten, where one is the lowest and ten is the highest, the project coordinator suggested a grade that is up to ten due to the healthy climate provided by CARE for those in charge of the project in the partner NGO including trainings, cooperation, transparency and follow-up. The follow-up and continuous communication between the partner NGO and CARE enabled them to discuss the many challenges the project met, such as the students and parents’ resistance for the project, the deficit in the number of teachers and the transfer or promotion of trained teachers, etc... which enabled them to reach solutions in cooperation with the other participants in the project. The project coordinator also received all the training which were obtained by teachers and Arabic Language supervisors, literacy coordinators and members of BOTs, such as active learning, the corrective literacy approach and others so that she becomes fully aware of the project and qualified to follow up with all participants and beneficiaries. The project coordinator in the ‘Better Life’ NGO also referred to the large experience she gained through partnering with CARE in writing technical reports and success stories, especially that CARE was keen to provide her with a training on writing success

stories and on project management. Thus, when the project coordinator was asked if she prefers to cooperate and work with CARE in the future or any other entity, she expressed her full preference of working with CARE.

A Summary of Areas of Success

- One of the most important positive points in the project is the project's emphasis on raising the awareness of students and parents of the importance of literacy and the real purpose behind the project, which is to improve students' level of reading and writing and not to stigmatize them. The project awareness activities included preparing seminars/forums, hanging posters and announcements inside and outside the community and coordinating with the clergy to raise awareness in places of worship whether at the beginning of the project or right before the camps. However, the value of the awareness activities could have been multiplied if a meeting for parents was arranged prior to the declaration of the EGRA results, especially for the parents whose children will be enrolled in the literacy corrective program.
- The project also capitalized on the strength of imams and cleric in influencing parents in particular and convincing them to give up sending their children to work in the summer vacation despite the low living standards of families - especially in Somosta- and join the literacy camps instead. The various participants in the focus groups confirmed this role was distinctive in attracting a large number of students and compelling them to attend the summer literacy camps.
- The effective follow-up for the project as a whole and for the improvement in students' levels through periodic assessments – by teachers and CARE- in particular, and building on the results of the assessments to assign the students who obtained the lowest results in the assessments to an intensive summer program including variety of activities literacy are all factors that contributed to the success of literacy and the advancement of the level of literacy among students.
- The emphasis on teaching reading and writing to students through unconventional literacy activities and methods such as splitting words into sub-words, reading stories, learning through sports and drawing, in addition to other various camping activities are all attractive and pleasant to students.

- In general, the cooperation with local partners, including the BOTs and social workers, is a precedence that CARE achieved since no role for BOTs in literacy was available before the EAGLE Project. The director of one of the schools mentioned during the focus group discussion that BOTs did not have any role before the start of the EAGLE Project which revived the role of BOTs and social workers in raising the beneficiaries' awareness about literacy and the objective behind the EAGLE project in the beginning of the project, using different channels, such as seminars, Friday ceremonies and religion classes, which was the cause of overcoming some of the obstacles or challenges faced by the project at the beginning such as misunderstanding the project objective and the feeling that the project stigmatizes children with weak reading and writing. In addition, social workers played a organizing role (in preparing classes schedules, arranging the literacy classes within the schedules, coordinating the various literacy activities) hand in hand with their supportive and encouraging role of literacy and supports teachers, especially during summer camps and upon delivery of incentive awards, etc... the BOTs also played an active role in monitoring the implementation of literacy corrective program, mobilizing resources for literacy activities and facing any emergency.
- Perhaps the newly passed resolution no. 313 on optional activities can be seen as a gateway to institutionalize corrective program for literacy within the framework of the Ministry of Education, as it can integrate literacy within the optional activities. Students who are weak in reading and writing can be enlisted in the literacy class while the rest of the students can attend any other optional activities.
- Finally, one of the reasons for the success of the project is the strong partnership between CARE and the partner NGOs, which the project coordinator in the Better Life described as based on transparency and openness whether in discussing problems or in reaching solutions together. In assessing the level of partnership between the two on a scale of one to ten, where one is the lowest and ten is the highest, the project coordinator suggested a grade that is up to ten due to the healthy climate provided by CARE for those in charge of the project in the partner NGO including trainings, cooperation, transparency and follow-up. The follow-up and continuous communication between the partner NGO and CARE enabled them to discuss the many challenges the project met, such as the students and parents' resistance for the project, the deficit in the number of teachers and the transfer or

promotion of trained teachers, etc... which enabled them to reach solutions in cooperation with the other participants in the project.

A Summary of Areas of Improvement

From the overall discussions with the various focus groups and the respondents' response to a question about a project activity which they missed the most or prefer CARE has implemented in any different way or emphasized in order to improve the reading and writing skills of children, the following was evident:

- Participants in the focus groups pointed out the importance of exchanging visits with other schools especially from other districts to exchange experiences with them about the challenges they face and the innovative solutions they introduce to counter those challenges. The exchange of experience can be through the form of competitions and not necessarily the exchange of visits, during which participants can display their innovative skills.
- On the other hand, it became clear from discussions with the focus groups and the in-depth interviews with parents that some parties could have had a significant role in the literacy program such as parents themselves. The interviewed parents pointed out that despite the positive role the schools' BOTs had, but their membership and resources were limited after all in addition to their limited ability to reach every home. Therefore, parents suggested having regular meetings with parents to raise their awareness about literacy and collect their suggestions on ways to spread literacy especially that parents, through their discussions with their children, became more passionate about literacy and attracted to it. One of the suggestions which parents could have raised with schools administration and the officers in charge of the project is the parents' desire to learn literacy methods and transfer them to their other children and the students' ability to collaborate with their younger siblings to teach them using literacy methods.
- Participants in the focus groups pointed to the importance of cooperation with the largest number of NGOs since education is a public matter that interests lots of NGOs which the project could have capitalized on their efforts and cooperated with them during and after the end of the project. In addition, the project could have made use of the NGOs

volunteers' database and built upon the roles and activities they perform within the NGOs.

Lessons Learnt and Recommendations

Building on the previous information and the analysis of the various focus groups discussions and the suggestions included, the following recommendations can be concluded:

- It is important to hold a meeting prior to the declaration of the EGRA results with the school' general assembly, the different stakeholders in the project and parents especially the parents whose children will be enrolled in the literacy corrective program. Although the project carried out various awareness activities through conducting seminars/forums, hanging posters, making announcements and coordinating with clerics, however, the timing of the awareness activities should have been prior to the declaration of the EGRA results not after. This should have ensured the conviction of parents and non-Arabic language teachers of the positive impact of literacy on them and created more cohesion among all stakeholders and parties interested in supporting literacy. In addition, this should have ensured lack of resistance to the project and avoided misunderstanding the project after its initiation.
- Paying attention to the early grades school teachers by devoting enough Arabic language teachers to students in those grades and providing them with material incentives, support and technical follow-up. This shall reflect positively on the students' level in the rest of their academic life, not only in reading and writing, but also in various subjects. Thus, a priority should be give to the prevention of illiteracy problem by devoting sufficient number of Arabic language teachers especially for students in the first years of the study.
- The need to integrate the literacy class into the formal share or quorum of Arabic language teachers instead of adding them to the full quorum of the teacher, so that the literacy class does not constitute an additional burden on the teachers threatening their ability to teach in an exceptional manner. the newly passed resolution no. 313 on optional activities can be seen as a gateway to institutionalize corrective program for literacy within the framework of the Ministry of Education, as it can integrate literacy within the

optional activities. Students who are weak in reading and writing can be enlisted in the literacy class while the rest of the students can attend any other optional activities.

- The possibility of merging literacy within the current Arabic language quota of classes assigned already for Arabic language teachers.
- Some parents, teachers and members of BOTs suggested to use the same strategies and activities of the literacy program - such as the phonics method - starting from kindergarten in order to set up a solid foundation for the students in reading and writing so as to avoid having large numbers of illiterate students in the following years, and for the prevention of the problem.
- Continue equipping and preparing literacy stakeholders with various trainings especially technical trainings and providing teachers with trainings on age characteristics, the related multiple intelligences and individual differences trainings, the "life values" educational training and the active learning strategies' training.
- Bearing into consideration the geographical distance between the teachers' residential villages and the training venues. This shall improve the commitment of trainees to the trainings and can also lead to increasing the number of trainees if the trainings were in the same district where the trainees lived.
- Providing trainings on the basis of "ToT" instead of traditional trainings - especially that reality has proved the efficiency of the trainings provided and the quality of their content and that some of the trainings were similar to ToT- which will increase the potentiality of the project continuity and sustainability after its date of completion.
- The importance of exchanging visits with other schools especially from other districts to exchange experiences with them and become aware of the challenges they face and the innovative solutions they introduced to counter those challenges.
- Finding out clear and systematic lines of cooperation with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the activities they implement in addition to cooperating with a larger number of NGOs that are active in the governorate, since education is a public issue that interests lots of NGOs which the project could have capitalized on their efforts and cooperated with them during and after the end of the project. Here, the Arabic Language supervisors and the literacy coordinators suggested cooperating with the NGOs on the village level (Community Development Association/CDAs) and the NGOs

Department in the Ministry of Education (Community Participation Department) to ensure cooperation with the available NGOs in the village and the governorate. The director of the Department of Education in Nasser also proposed providing a maximum of one million pounds loans for NGOs from the Social Fund for Development, under the name of "Support Education". Such loans can be directed towards supporting literacy activities and funding camps.

- There is an urgent need to continue working religious institutions and expand that work given that Imams of Mosques and clergy play an imperative role in raising the awareness of parents and influencing parents to give up on sending their children to work in the summer vacation despite the low living standards of families - especially in Somosta- and join the literacy camps instead.
- Taking better advantage of the input/role of parents in spreading awareness about literacy and obtain their suggestions over 'ways to spread literacy'. Despite the positive role the schools' BOTs had, but their membership and resources were limited after all in addition to their limited ability to reach every home. Therefore, parents suggested having regular meetings with parents to raise their awareness about literacy and collect their suggestions on ways to spread literacy especially that parents, through their discussions with their children, became more passionate about literacy and attracted to it. One of the suggestions which parents could have raised with schools administration and the officers in charge of the project is the parents' desire to learn literacy methods and transfer them to their other children and the students' ability to collaborate with their younger siblings to teach them using literacy methods. These periodic meetings – or any other mechanism agreed to advance the role of parents- are considered also a means to follow up on the activities of the school and follow up on the improvement in students' levels of literacy in addition to being a means to hold school staff accountable for any deficiency.
- Given the fact that not all families may have the same degree of belief in literacy or share the same good economic conditions that enables them to send their children to literacy activities, or to school, it is necessary for social workers and school management to cooperate with Social Affairs to identify and target needy families through social insurance programs that facilitate for those families to receive social security conditioned

by the children/students' commitment to study and attend literacy activities so as to overcome the economic barrier to literacy and ensure further commitment to literacy activities.

- It is important to prepare a study to measure the impact of weak reading and writing abilities on the increase of students' dropout rates and vice versa. i.e. measuring the impact of better literacy on reducing rates of students' dropout from education. The purpose of that study is not only for scientific research but also to convince decision-makers in various relevant entities of the viability of improving literacy and its multiplier effect on education and the need to adopt specific strategies to institutionalize the literacy corrective program and introducing criteria for measuring the evolution of students' literacy level.