Assessing the Impact of Ishraq Intervention, A Second-Chance Program for Out-of-School Rural Adolescent Girls in Egypt

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REPORT

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Ishraq: Introduction

Egypt faces continuing and sometimes widening disparities between its urban and rural populations in key health, social, and economic indicators. Development programs often miss a disadvantaged population group caught between childhood and adulthood—rural adolescent girls. Ishraq is an intervention designed to address this problem. It is a non-formal second-chance education and social support program that takes place in rural Upper Egypt, the least developed and most disadvantaged region of Egypt. It is the region with the most significant gender gaps in education and along other dimensions. The girls Ishraq targets, rural out-of-school adolescent girls, represent the most vulnerable and disadvantaged target group in Egyptian society. One of the core philosophies of the Ishraq program is that in order to reach girls in these socially-conservative settings, we have to first break their social isolation and create safe public spaces in which they can gather, make friendships, learn, and play. Ishraq is part of the larger Population Council-wide “Safe Spaces” programs.

Ishraq aims to transform the lives of out-of-school adolescent girls in rural Upper Egypt by providing them with safe public spaces to meet, learn and play, giving them a second chance for education, and helping them acquire the skills necessary to become active members of their communities. The program is housed in village Youth Centers (YCs) that, although ostensibly open to all youth, had until the beginning of the program been exclusively male spaces. Its curriculum emphasizes literacy and life skills with special attention to reproductive health, livelihoods information, civic engagement, and sports. The program also works to develop a cadre of more educated young women from the same communities to serve as promoters and role models for the targeted girls. The project also works with other “gatekeepers” in these conservative rural communities, such as parents, brothers, and community leaders, to enable the girls to participate and change social norms concerning girls’ life opportunities.

Ishraq is a 24-month non-formal education intervention that is implemented in 30 villages with the purpose of reaching about 1800 girls in three governorates in Upper Egypt: Fayoum, Shouhag, and Qena. Figure 1, annexed, shows the location of these governorates on the map of Egypt. The Ishraq project aims to enroll 60 out-of-school girls aged 12-15 per village.

The project is currently in its fourth implementation wave. This is the scale-up phase. Building upon the success of the pilot phase, first implemented in Minya (4 villages) in 2003, and then expanded in Minya (5 villages) in 2006 and in Beni-Suef (5 villages) in 2007, the Population Council applied and received the grant from the Royal Netherlands Embassy to further expand the program to 30 new villages in Upper Egypt. PEP-PIERI
funds are supplementing funds received from the Dutch Embassy to implement the program and monitor its impact in 30 villages.¹

Because the pilot waves involved small samples, it did not allow for a very detailed assessment of the project’s impact. Moreover, the impact of a small pilot is often difficult to replicate at scale.

**Ishraq Components**

- Ishraq seeks to provide out-of-school adolescent girls in rural Upper Egypt with literacy, life skills, sports and financial literacy.
- The Ishraq intervention starts with the literacy component using the “Learn to Be Free” curriculum (this component continues throughout the intervention), followed by a life-skills component, and a sports component and a financial literacy component.

**Institutionalization**

- An important feature of the project is the ongoing efforts to institutionalize the approach of “girls’ spaces” in 30 youth centers in the governorates by building the capacity of the National Council of Youth NCY and local NGOs. The institutionalization component serves the following two main objectives: (1) maximizing the utilization of local youth centers facilities and capacities in providing safe spaces for girls within NCY at the national level even after Ishraq ends and (2) building a strong trained cadres at the local level who through intensive capacity building trainings would be able to sustain and scale up the project in new communities and new governorates;

**Partnership with the National Council of Youth (NCY)**

- Excellent cooperation at the local level from the youth Idaras at the district level and youth directorates at the governorate level has facilitated the start-up of the project activities in the governorates of Fayoum, Sohag and Qena.
- The NCY has gone through a new restructuring process that delayed the process. They suggested we approach the Ministry of State for Family and Population, whose mandate fits better with Ishraq goals. Nonetheless, the NCY indicated that they are

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¹ Initially, With funding from Exxon Mobile channeled through Save the Children (SC), Ishraq was to be implemented in 20 villages in the three governorates of Beni Suef, Minia and Assiut. This funding initiative only supports program implementation activities, with no funds allocated to impact evaluation. The Population Council experienced difficulty in monitoring the village selection process by the Save the Children’s team; delays in their implementation schedule and their lack of interest in a rigorous impact evaluation process. In the interest of achieving the project outcomes in a timely manner, the PC agreed with SC that the PC will assume responsibility for this component and while SC was no longer a partner under this grant. Programmatic activities were originally due to start in January 2009. However, there was a delay of more than 1 year as a result of the change of partners.
willing to cooperate with regards to the implementation of Ishraq in local youth centers under the auspices of the Ministry of State for Family and Population.

**Partnering with the Ministry of State for Family and Population**

- The MOFP Minister welcomed the idea of cooperation and signing a protocol with Ishraq partners.
- In May 2010, a tripartite agreement was signed with MOFP and the NCY.

**Implementation Steps/Challenges**

**Ishraq Launch Event**

- On July 1\(^{st}\), 2009, the Ishraq program was officially launched by the Council. The government was represented by the National Council for Youth (NCY), the General Authority for Literacy and Adult Education (GALAE), the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood (NCCM) and the General Federation for Egyptian NGOs. Moreover, the core Ishraq implementation partners: Caritas, Teaming for Development, the Egyptian Food Bank, were active participants in this event.

**Implementation Preparatory Phase/Activities**

- The Population Council team worked out the details of the preparatory phase of the project and laying the foundation for project implementation, such as recruitment of staff and promoters and their trainings:
  - A total of 120 literacy and life-skills/sports promoters (4 per village) were first locally recruited. A total of 8-day trainings were offered to all 120 promoters running the project at the village level.
  - Project staff recruitment at NGOs level: Interviews were conducted in the six local NGOs partnering with Ishraq for implementation. A team of NGO staff was recruited in each NGO as follows: one coordinator, one accountant, one M&E officer, one community mobilization officer and one class coordinator.
  - Financial capacity building activities for NGOs: This is an on-going process where the NGO grants monitor carries out the financial training and coaching for the financial and non-financial staff at the NGOs and youth centers level.
  - Sub-grant agreements were signed between the six local NGOs and the selected 30 youth centers who agreed to host the program.
  - Equipping 30 youth centers: Needs assessments to identify needs of youth centers in terms of furniture were conducted by the Ishraq staff at the PC and NGOs levels.

**Research Objectives**

- A program impact evaluation of the Ishraq project using a quasi-experimental design, including baseline and end-line surveys. In intervention villages, the surveys were
administered on a saturation sample of households having out-of-school adolescent girls who are 12-15 years old. In control villages, the surveys will either be administered to a saturation sample or in the case of large villages, to a random number of household clusters (sectors). The impact of the program will be assessed using a set of evaluation strategies by comparing end-of-program responses to baseline responses across participants (by level of participation), non-participants in intervention villages, and girls in control villages.

- The objective is to assess the impact of Ishraq on the program participants, the girls and on the communities in which they live.
- This assessment would serve to inform the continued implementation of the intervention and its expansion, as well as inform the design and implementation of other efforts to reach one of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged target groups in Egyptian society, namely rural out-of-school adolescent girls.
- Thus a main objective of the study is to gauge the extent to which the safe space approach actually manages to alter the course of an adolescent girl’s life by changing her knowledge skills and attitudes, as well as changing the attitude of those around her.
- The specific outcomes in which we are going to assess the impact of the projects are:

(i) functional literacy, cognitive skills and continuing schooling:
We have a simple test in the questionnaire to gauge the girls’ level of functional literacy and cognitive skills. We also have information about any prior involvement in schooling, including grade attainment, and repetition. We will monitor the level of success in passing government-sponsored literacy tests and rates at which girls are mainstreamed back into preparatory (middle) schools.

(ii) attitudes about marriage and childbearing:
We have data collected on attitudes such as ideal age at marriage and views about decision-making regarding marriage partners and timing of marriage. We also inquired about ideal family size and fertility intentions.

(iii) knowledge about nutrition, hygiene, and reproductive health,
A series of questions will involve basic knowledge about nutrition, hygienic practices, knowledge of basic bodily functions, reproductive behavior and family planning.

(iv)attitudes about harmful traditional practices, such as female genital mutilation/cutting: FGM/C is very prevalent in rural Upper Egypt, with prevalence reaching into the high ninety percent range. We will attempt to gauge the impact of the program on the girl’s own circumcision status, but we do not expect big changes to occur since circumcision usually occurs around the ages of eligibility for the program. However, we expect to see large effects with respect to intention to circumcise one’s daughter.

(v) social isolation, peer networks, and participation in group or community activities: typically, social isolation increases as girls transition into adolescence and approach the age of marriage in Upper Egypt. We will investigate the extent to which the program has contributed to reducing this social isolation by widening the girl’s circle of friends and the level of support
she is getting from peers, and the extent to which she participates in group or community activities.

(vi) gender norms, gender-based violence, mobility, and agency, including attitudes about participation in sports and recreation activities: we developed an index of gender norms based on attitudes about women’s work outside the home, traditional female roles, sex preference for schooling, decision making within the household, son preference, choice of marriage partners, and decision about spending. We have a series of questions about attitudes about domestic violence and the circumstances under which a girl “deserves” to be beaten.

(vii) nutritional status of girls. Since meals and take-home rations will be provided as part of Ishraq. It is important to see how they affect malnutrition. Anthropometric measurements (height and weight) will be collected in the baseline and endline. To take into account the fact that adolescents undergo changes in their height and weight related to puberty and not only nutrition, we will use the body-mass index (BMI) as recommended in WHO (1995).

(viii) financial literacy of girls.

- The study will also strive to measure parents’ and brothers’ attitudes about these issues and to gauge community changes in these areas.
- While the study period is not long enough to gauge the impact of the program on longer term outcomes such as ultimate educational attainment, age at marriage, fertility, child health and education, participation in economic activity, and empowerment in household decision-making, it will establish a database that can be used to undertake such studies at a later date by tracking respondents at a later date. We intend to go back and re-interview the girls included in the study five years after the completion of the program if resources can be obtained to do that in order to evaluate their long term actual outcome changes.
- The population to be studied under the evaluation consists of all out-of-school adolescent girls who are 12-15 years old at the beginning of the program including, participants and non-participants in intervention (treatment) villages and girls residing in control villages in which no intervention is taking place.
- One of the main problems we anticipate to encounter in evaluating Ishraq is the non-random selection into participation and also the non-randomness of the drop-out process as girls drop out of the program midstream. First, since this is a voluntary program, we expect that the girls that self-select into the program are more likely to have parents who are more motivated and committed to education especially that of girls. Second, an additional element of non-random selection may be related to the project recruitment process. The pilot phase of Ishraq used several recruitment techniques including word of mouth, public announcement, and household visits by Ishraq promoters. The latter was the most effective in attracting participants. However, this technique may have resulted in bias because the promoters may have been more likely to approach people belonging to their social networks of friends and
family\(^2\). Additionally, the promoters may have been more likely to approach households in the mother village (because of geographical proximity) and less likely to access the more-disadvantaged households in satellite villages. To overcome selection issues, we undertook various strategies corresponding to the different stages of the project implementation (recruitment, pre-program activities including baseline data collection and data analysis.

- Different measures were planned/undertaken to deal with the issue of non-random selection into participation. These relate to the recruitment process of program participants; the collection of data on additional variables and different verification techniques of data quality, and data analysis and estimation strategies. We discuss each of these measures separately. However, due to implementation challenges not all strategies were feasible (e.g., the randomization of village selection was not possible as will be detailed in the village selection section)

- **Recruitment Strategies to minimize self-selection**
  - More rigorous pre-Ishraq mobilization efforts so people are more likely to hear about Ishraq before it starts
  - Improving on our experience from the pilot phase, we adopted an improved Ishraq recruitment strategy to reach and mobilize local communities. For example, we used visual advertisements in high-traffic areas of the villages. More importantly, in the scale-up phase, we formed Ishraq village committees that include community leaders such as village mayors and religious leaders. Moreover, we are relying on local NGOs to implement the project at the community level with technical assistance and oversight from the Population Council.
    - In the pilot phase, girls were accepted into the program on a first-come first-served basis until the classes were filled. Some people came to know about the program and expressed interest in joining the classes after the start of the program. That is why randomization was not possible among the pool of applicants that were accepted as applicants arrived at different points in time including after the start date of the project. Also, as will be explained in the village selection section, the pool of girls was not large in many villages.
    - A registration event was held on specific dates prior to the start of the program. The purpose of this event is to reach a wider audience and to give more information to the community on details of the project including its start date. If people are informed about the nature of the program and the expected level of commitment, this may reduce the likelihood of future dropout from the program. It may also reduce the extent of self-selection into the program
  - Because the research team has been working closely with the implementation team, household listing as part of the data collection stage will be utilized to further publicize for the project. This is also intended to reduce the extent of self-selection into the program. The data collection team in charge of listing households with out-of-school girls in preparation for baseline questionnaire

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\(^2\) Since the promoters are educated young women, households belonging to their social networks may value girls’ education more than the average household.
administration will be recruited from the villages. Each household with a girl who is in the eligible target group received a brochure about the intervention. As noted earlier, the listing is done for a saturation sample of households with eligible groups in intervention villages. This strategy was to ensure that every household in the village with an eligible girl will know about the intervention before its start. Therefore, eliminating potential biases, where only families known to program staff or attending the registration events knowing about the intervention.

- **Strategies that were not feasible**
  - In the first version of our proposal, we proposed to randomize across control/intervention villages and to compare outcomes of girls in intervention villages (whether they participated in Ishraq or not) to girls in control villages thereby estimating an intent-to-treat model. However, this turned out to be infeasible. The issue we faced in the village selection phase of the project was that we did not find a sufficient number of villages meeting our criteria in order to be able to randomize the choice of control and intervention villages from.
  - It was also planned that in villages where we get excess demand and where the number of registered girls exceeds the capacity of the classes, then we can randomize the selection of girls from among the pool of registrants. This was not possible (with the exception of one village).
  - Waiting lists: the waiting list group serves as a good comparison group because it should be equivalent to the treated group in terms of motivation and valuation of girls’ education (since they applied for the program). However, this was not feasible due to insufficient numbers.

- **Other Strategies**
  - Randomized Promotion: a “randomized encouragement” procedure where households are randomly selected to be given a monetary incentive may result in other village residents wanting to get similar incentives. Also, randomized promotion can be in the form of extra information in the form of house visits is assigned to given households. Initially, we were worried that we cannot ensure random assignment is preserved because in village settings, people commonly share information through word of mouth and might wonder why some people got the encouragement and others not. However, we left a brochure about Ishraq during the household listing stage. Then, we randomly select, from listed households, a percentage of households with eligible girls that will be visited for a second time and given detailed information about Ishraq and its benefits to girls. Since all households would already know about Ishraq from the brochure left-behind, we expect that a second visit where only more information is shared will not pose an issue.

**Village Selection Process**

**District Clustering:**

Ishraq was to be implemented in 30 villages in three governorates (10 villages in each governorate). The 10 villages in each governorate had to be clustered in 2 districts within each governorate for operational reasons: it is very difficult for the local NGOs
implementing the project to manage the project in distant sites in these remote areas. Within each district, Ishraq was to be implemented in 5 villages.

Criteria for village selection

The criteria for village selection are the following: 1) sufficient number of eligible out-of-school girls age 12-15 who either have never been to school or dropped before completing the primary school; 2) existence of a suitable youth center that can accommodate two classrooms and which has a playground (with or without fence); and 3) community acceptance to adopt Ishraq.

Office village selection was followed field visits to villages satisfying the target group size criterion and youth center criterion to meet with community leaders to find out if the communities in these villages agree to host Ishraq.

The criterion related to target group size required that we get the data on the counts of out-of-school girls at the village level from the 2006 Egyptian Census (which required time because this data was not readily available). 42 villages (in the 3 governorates) met this criterion. To check for the youth center criterion, our implementing team had field visits to the 42 villages having enough eligible girls. It was found that a lot of the villages satisfying the number of girls’ criteria did not have an adequate youth center. Also, communities in some villages did not accept hosting Ishraq given that some of the curriculum content is sensitive.

The number of villages that met the minimum number of eligible girls’ criteria was also tight (even after lowering the threshold to 80 girls and then to 60 girls). We barely met our target of having 30 intervention villages.

Process

As described above, the primary criteria for village selection is first to identify villages with sufficient eligible girls. In doing so, the Population Council has prepared an exhaustive list of pre-qualified villages using different thresholds of 120, 100, and 80 and 60 girls who are out-of-school in the target age group for the 3 governorates. Based on the biggest number of villages per district, using a minimum of 80 eligible girls for the 3 governorates, the selected districts are Itsa and Tameyya in Fayoum; Dar El Salem, Tahta and Maragha in Sohag and Dishna, Abu Tisht, and Nag’ Hammadi in Qena.

During the village selection process, a youth center facility assessment was carried out in 67 qualified villages that have sufficient out-of-school girls. In addition, a series of community orientation meetings were conducted by the Ishraq field team. The overall objective was to raise—through dialogue—awareness for community participation and highlight the importance of girls’ education, and hence increase the enrollment of girls in the Ishraq program. The breakdown of youth centers visited by the Ishraq team is as
follows: Fayoum (26 youth centers); Qena (24 youth centers); and Sohag (17 youth centers). The purpose behind those meetings held in each village was to introduce the Ishraq project to representatives from the community (mayor, school-headmaster, youth center director, head of the local administrative unit, NGOs, health unit, etc.) and also to discuss their concerns vis-à-vis Ishraq and get their verbal commitment to host the project.

This selection process which consists of choosing villages with sufficient number of eligible girls (at least secure 70 eligible girls per village) and also having a suitable youth center, have together limited the pool of qualified villages from which we can randomly select intervention and control sites. Once the list of all villages with suitable youth centers was finalized, the project team composed of the Ishraq project manager, Ishraq coordinator at the NGO level, project officer, and NCY representative, asked the youth center director from each village to plan a meeting with community leaders/influential people.

It is noteworthy to mention that in some cases villages that were qualified refused to adopt Ishraq for the following reasons: lack of trust in literacy programs; girl-friendly schools being currently implemented in youth centers; financial compensation/incentives for adopting Ishraq requested by youth center directors; refusal to give up lucrative activities like table tennis activity; arguing that there were not enough girls in the villages, even though Census data related to out-of-school girls showed that there were enough to open classes.

Table 1: Names of the 9 districts and 30 villages where Ishraq is implemented

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Governorate</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>Village</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fayoum</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Qalhaana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Qasr al-Baasil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>al-Minya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>al-Mahmoudiya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Ank &amp; Abu Galayeil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Shadmuuuh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Tâmiyya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Sirsanaa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>al-‘Azeeziya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Mansha Jamaal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>al-Jumhuuriya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sohag</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>El Maragha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Al-Gharazaat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td>El Gezazra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Banawit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Dar El Salem</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Awlad Khalaf</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Issues:**

- CAPMAS data was based on the 2006 census and data on out-of-school girls was covering the age bracket (10-14) while our needed target group for *Ishraq* is 12-15 (in 2009).

- Youth center assessment: most of the villages with a sufficient target group did not have youth centers. For those that have youth centers, for most of the cases, the youth centers were not suitable, i.e., could not accommodate 2 classrooms, and did not have a playground. Interestingly, some existing youth centers did not even have drinking water or a toilet facility;

- During our field visits, some of the youth centers officers rejected hosting the project because its implementation would prevent them from earning a regular income that they already get from table tennis activity offered by the youth center;

- Qena Districts: Although the original plan was to target 2 districts, due to the lack of sufficient number of qualified villages available within a given district, the ten *Ishraq* villages currently selected are spread between five different districts instead of 2. The case of Qena poses a challenge because of the far distance between some villages and the location of the NGO responsible for the implementation which in some cases can reach 120 km.

- It is noteworthy to mention that in Fayoum, Ank and Abu Galayeil there is only 1 class due to the insufficient number of eligible girls.
Challenge: Not possible to randomize choice of intervention/control villages

- The original methodology involved randomizing the selection of intervention and control villages among clusters of qualified villages that fulfill the above-mentioned criteria.

Once the list of all villages with suitable youth centers was finalized, then the project team composed by the Ishraq project manager, Ishraq coordinator at the NGO level, project officer, and NCY representative asked the youth center director from each village to plan a meeting with community leaders/influential people. The purpose was to introduce the Ishraq program (philosophy, objectives, activities, its duration) and provide an opportunity to discuss the Ishraq project activities and its implementation and also to address any questions or concerns they may have.

The last criterion is to get a verbal commitment from the community, which again is a limitation in the village selection process. This commitment is usually achieved through conducting orientation meetings with community members including village mayors, school principals, NGO boards of directors, and youth center board of directors. Only villages that have already secured enough girls and have a suitable youth center were asked if they are willing to adopt Ishraq. Upon deciding that a community will adopt Ishraq the youth center director was asked to initiate a quick count of the number of eligible girls (with birth certificate whenever possible) living in the village, conducted by volunteers.

Recruitment Activities

Once the village is selected for the program, community awareness campaigns are implemented to promote Ishraq using a mixture of methods. Public announcements, banners at the youth centers, parents’ meetings, microphones, Friday prayers, home visits by potential promoters, and meetings in different venues like NGOs and health units, were organized to inform the communities and sensitize them on girls’ education and also convince families to register their daughters at the youth centers. In each community, the public announcements took between 3 and 7 days. A registration form was developed by the Council in order to collect basic information about the eligible applicants and was implemented by the youth centers.

Baseline Data Collection

Human Subject Concerns
The Population Council (PC) holds itself to the highest standards in treatment of human participants in research. The Council has an ethical institutional review board (IRB). The IRB seeks to ensure that all the research procedures follow ethical standards are ethical and correct. In our case, we must assure that: 1) the questions will not burden the girls in any way; 2) to check if the informed consents lucidly explain the purpose of the study, risks and benefits, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and length of interviews to both the girls and the parents before starting the interview; and 3) that the questions we developed are in accordance with the highest ethical standard and that we can ask our target group these questions.

We submitted the questionnaire and protocol to IRB in August 2008. The board met in September and requested some changes to the informed consent forms and some clarifications in the protocol. We submitted the protocol changes to the chair of the IRB on October 22nd and subsequently received full approval to commence with the work.

**Listing**

The household listing was undertaken in September 2009. The number of households listed in each governorate is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Governorate</th>
<th>Number of Households</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fayoum</td>
<td>26558</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Souhag</td>
<td>26872</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qena</td>
<td>48436</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The intervention villages had all their households listed to identify households containing out-school adolescent girls in the relevant age range. An innovation over the earlier impact evaluation experience is to use GPS devices and to record the coordinates of each household in the intervention and control villages. This information will be used in the analysis, looking at the distance of households to the youth centers where the intervention is implemented, and the village center. GPS coordinates will also be pivotal for reaching households in the endline data collection phase.

The baseline questionnaire was administered to a saturation sample of all the eligible girls in the village. With respect to control village, depending on the size of the control villages, we will either list the entire village or randomly selected segments that will yield the desired number of out-of-school girls for the control group. At the end of the intervention, the endline survey will be administered to the same sample interviewed in the baseline, irrespective of their participation in the program.

The household listing process was also useful for implementation purposes. Particularly, it was used to check if pre-selected village had enough eligible girls in reality. Upon the completion of household listing, 5 selected villages did not have enough eligible girls. These villages were replaced by other villages in the same governorates.
**Data Collection**

Baseline data collection in intervention villages started on December 16, 2009 in the governorates of Sohag and Qena and ended on January 16, 2010. Data collection in Fayoum started on December 27, 2009 and ended on January 31, 2010. 2 office reviewers reviewed the questionnaires during the month of February. Data entry is in process and will end within 2 weeks.

The questionnaires consisted of a household questionnaire, eligible girl questionnaire (for each eligible girl in the household), a questionnaire for parents’ views and lastly a questionnaire on brother’s views. Baseline data collection also included a tool for mapping community services and opportunities. The community questionnaire was administered for each village where the intervention will take place.

We collected data from all households in intervention villages to get information on the universe of eligible girls. This involved listing of all intervention village households. In intervention villages, all eligible girls were interviewed. In control villages, a random sampling of sectors may be undertaken if sectors are large. All girls in the eligible age groups will be interviewed in these randomly selected sectors. The endline data collection process will use the same lists developed during the baseline data collection process to visit the same households.

**Baseline: No of HHs and girls interviewed**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gov.</th>
<th>Markaz</th>
<th>Village</th>
<th>No. of HH</th>
<th>No. of Girls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Souhag</td>
<td>Dar El Salam</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Souhag</td>
<td>Dar El Salam</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>124</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Souhag</td>
<td>Dar El Salam</td>
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<td>Souhag</td>
<td>Dar El Salam</td>
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<td>Souhag</td>
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<td>110</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Souhag</td>
<td>El Maragha</td>
<td>81</td>
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**Qena**

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**Total**

|         |         | 781       | 841          |

**Fayoum**

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**Total**

|         |         | 933       | 1018         |

There are additional variables we included, some of which we plan to use as instrumental variables. The set of additional variables include: parents education, mother age at marriage, whether parents were child-laborers, distance (and time) to youth center (both based on self-reporting and GPS devices), distance (and time) to the center of the village.
We also collected information from community leaders on seasonal work. We also included questions on past attendance of literacy programs.

**Control Villages**

Based on a power analysis exercise, we should have 2 control villages for each 5 intervention villages.

On one hand, we can select villages in districts where Ishraq will be implemented. 2 scenarios are available in that case. First, we can choose villages that do not have an appropriate YC (i.e., do not meet criteria 2) but that meet criteria 1. Second, we can choose villages that did not meet criterion 3 i.e., did not eventually have Ishraq because the communities refused (these are relatively few). Under scenario 2, communities that were not open to host Ishraq may not value girls’ education as much as communities that agreed to host Ishraq (and/or they may differ along other unobservable characteristics).

On the other hand, we can select villages in districts where Ishraq will *not* be implemented. In this case, we have to decide on the characteristics of these villages. We did an exercise of selecting villages with similar characteristics to intervention villages. Characteristics include: number of out-of-school girls (i.e., we can choose villages meeting criterion 1), villages with YC, villages with appropriate YC, villages with similar percentage of out-of-school girls (compared to intervention villages), villages with similar population size (compared to intervention villages), villages with similar views about girls education and mobility (based on collecting a community questionnaire). It is worth noting the intervention villages all meet criteria 1, 2 and 3 by definition. However, there is some variation within intervention villages with respect to variables such as population size and percentage of out-of-school girls. We started by villages in intervention districts and moved to non-intervention districts to get a sufficient number of control villages.

We are currently doing preparatory work for control village data collection. Actual data collection will finish in July 2010.

**Data Analysis and Estimation Strategy**

**Preliminary Steps**

The first step we will take is to compare the baseline characteristics (i.e., prior to treatment) of control village and intervention village members to ensure randomization at the village level was successful. This could be done by looking at variables means and standard deviations and by testing if they are statistically different. Examples of variables to be compared include: parents education, wealth level (based on asset ownership), schooling status and number of completed years of schooling.

To get a feel of the extent of selection into treatment within intervention villages, we will compare the same set of variables across participants, waiting list members and

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3 This is not an uncommon step (see Behrman & Todd 1999, and Rouse 2004).
non-participants. In addition, we will fit probit models for participation into Ishraq to see which variables are significant.

As a preliminary examination of the program impact, we will compare the level of changes in outcomes across the following groups (treatment, waiting list, untreated in intervention villages and control village members). We will also carry out an intent-to-treat analysis by comparing all girls in intervention villages (irrespective of participation in Ishraq) to all girls in control villages.

Since participation into the program is voluntary and can therefore not be randomized, we will have to deal with potential biases from selectivity into the program in the data analysis.

**Estimation Strategy**

We will have data on both pre- and post- program characteristics in control villages and intervention villages (whether girls are participating or not). The quasi-experimental nature of our data will allow us to have the outcomes measured in the same way for the treated and untreated units. To deal with selection, we use instrumental variable and difference-in-differences models.

To use an instrumental variable approach, we need a variable that affects participation but that do not directly affect outcomes. We will use the distance between the girl’s home and the youth center (where the project is housed) as an instrument as it proxies for the costs of participation. Distance will be calculated based on coordinates obtained from GPS devices. We will additionally use the distance to the village center as an explanatory variable in both the participation and outcome equations to capture access to other services and the effect of the centrality of the household location. Identification will thus depend on the variability in the distance between the youth center and the center of the village. We will collect information on distance (or time) based on respondents’ answers and on mapping conducted by the data collection team.

The third model we use exploits the fact that we have longitudinal data. The difference-in-differences estimator can be easily implemented by using a group dummy, period dummy (pre- or post- program) and an interaction of the group and period dummies. We will combine the differences-in-differences with other methods in additional specifications. A “regression-adjusted” specification will control for observable characteristics in addition to the group and period dummies and their interaction. We are also considering combining difference-in-differences with the propensity score method. Heckman, Ichimura and Todd (1997) found this model to perform best overall compared to other models they employed.

To sum up, we will employ the following evaluation strategies:

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4 We cannot use the random growth model to avoid the time-invariance assumption the difference-in-differences estimator imposes. This is because the random growth model requires more data points.

5 There are user-written STATA codes to perform propensity score estimation (for example, “pscore” by Becker and Ichino).
1. Comparisons between intervention and (non-randomized) comparison villages

2. IV method (where the instrument is distance to YC)

3. Randomized promotion (limited sample: only in Souhag)

4. Difference-in differences and/or matching methods

**Dropout**

Drop out from the program can also be non-random. Girls whose parents want them to marry early; rely on the income from their daughters’ paid work, those who have a greater need for the girls’ participation in domestic chores, and those have less commitment to their daughters’ education might be more likely to drop out before the completion of the program.

All through the 24-month program, it is anticipated that girls’ attendance in the different classes (literacy, life skills, sports and financial literacy) will be closely monitored by the M&E field officers recruited at the NGO level to prevent high absenteeism, and dropouts that some girls may face. We are planning that whenever a girl is absent for more than 4 classes in a month the promoters will visit her family in order to understand and overcome the barriers the girl is facing during her enrollment in the program.

The nutrition component where girls in the *Ishraq* program receive snacks when they attend classes four times a week will help in this regard. In addition, to improving nutrition, this component is an incentive for poor families to attract their daughters to the program and maintain their attendance. In addition, take-home rations are distributed to girls’ families on a monthly basis and are linked to meeting attendance conditions. It also serves as compensation to poor parents for the loss of their daughters’ child labor income. We are observing that this linking of the food rations with attendance reduced absenteeism and dropout significantly compared to earlier pilots.
Annex I

Figure 1. Map of Egypt showing intervention governorates

FAYOUM: Northern Upper Egypt (closer to the Capital)


QENA: Southern Upper Egypt. Most conservative