

# ASSESSING LONG-TERM IMPACT: USAID/EGYPT HEI MBA AND STEM SCHOLARSHIPS FOR WOMEN

IIE undertook an independent study to assess the long-term impact of USAID-funded scholarship programs on scholars professional and personal lives upon their return to their home country. As part of this effort, IIE reached out to Alumnae who participated in the USAID/Egypt Higher Education Initiative (HEI) MBA and STEM Scholarships for Women.

- 55 survey respondents
- 8 long-form interviews



*HEI STEM Scholar in a research lab at University of Oklahoma*

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Further information and survey results available upon request.

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Through the USAID/Egypt Higher Education Initiative (HEI) MBA and STEM Scholarships for Women, USAID provided scholarships to 157 Egyptian women from 2015 through 2020. Scholarship recipients pursued Master of Business Administration (MBA) degrees and Bachelor's degrees in the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) fields at U.S. universities. Scholars also received training in English language proficiency, participated in internships in both the U.S. and Egypt, and received post-graduation support in career readiness and job placement. In these ways, the HEI MBA and STEM Scholarships for Women created a cadre of Egyptian women equipped with the academic credentials, professional experience and networks, and cultural competence to be effective leaders in their professional fields and communities in Egypt.

## Personal Enrichment

- 91% of respondents noted that the scholarship and U.S. educational experience had a positive impact on their personal lives.

## Professional Development

Personal skills gained or strengthened as a result of USAID scholarship:

- English language skills (91%)
- Self-reliance (84%)
- Leadership (75%)
- Research skills and techniques (73%)
- Communication and adaptability (73%)
- Critical thinking (65%)

Professional/life skills attributed to USAID scholarship program:

- Strengthened technical skills and knowledge (80%)
- Greater confidence in the workplace (62%)
- More motivation to pursue further studies (64%)

## Close Ties to the U.S.

- Remain in close contact with U.S. colleagues and counterparts (95%)
- Share American culture (food, language, etc.) in Egypt (56%)

## Giving Back to Others

Contributions made to community as a result of USAID scholarship:

- Empowering women within local communities (55%)
- Mentoring others (51%)
- Tutoring and sharing skills with others (47%)
- Bringing awareness to issues affecting local communities (47%)

## Life-Changing Experience Personally, Professionally, and Socially

Upon their return to Egypt, alumnae remarked that their job performance increased, and their degree helped them look more qualified to potential employers. The technical and soft skills they learned in the U.S. are utilized daily in their professions.

*“The program completely changed my life. I don’t think I would have ever gotten where I am right now professionally without it. I’m more open, I’m more positive, I can do whatever I set my mind to. It was a life-changing experience”*

– Zienab Badreldin, HEI MBA



2018 MBA Re-entry workshop

## Alumnae Feel More Independent

Alumnae learned how to be self-reliant and financially independent, which has been instrumental in helping them plan for their future. They feel more empowered as women and have made a point to empower other women in their communities.

*“When I left Egypt, I was the only girl in my family, community, society to travel alone. After that, many girls are starting to feel that it’s an achievable thing to travel alone. I became independent and I gained a lot of skills”*

– Heba Saleh, HEI MBA

## Experience Has Impacted Women’s Empowerment in Alumnae’s Communities

50% of scholars interviewed reported that families of alumnae are more open to the idea of women pursuing opportunities outside of cultural norms, i.e. women travelling and living alone.

## Experience Opened Doors That Would Have Otherwise Been Closed to Alumnae

Alumnae reported receiving job offers 2-3 months after returning home on average. 56% of HEI STEM graduates were accepted into Master’s or PhD programs to continue their education.

*“I make my contributions now by empowering girls in my life and in my life and my neighbors. I try to talk to them and make them believe in themselves. It’s more of a personal way and I feel that its more impactful.”*

– Rehab Elkhayat, HEI MBA

## Alumnae Feel More Inclined to Give Back to Their Communities

USAID scholarship alumnae share resources, help others seek similar scholarship opportunities, and volunteer in their communities.

*“There was also USAID call for community development initiatives. So I applied for it with 2 friends from the same program and we got a grant for a project we called it DREAM. The project is to raise the capabilities of orphans in slum areas and under privilege – or orphanages. So our beneficiaries were kids and teenagers from the age of 6 to 14. And what we did was we went every 2 weeks to a different orphanage, making some activities- storytelling puppet shows, about what does it mean to dream and the challenges they face in their position. That was a great experience”*

– Mary Abdelnour, HEI MBA



HEI MBA Alumnae implementing the DREAM project.