

## Arabic "Sesame Street" is a Hit in Egypt

### Challenge

In rural areas of Egypt, only 74 percent of girls attend primary school and less than 15 percent of children receive a pre-school education. Learners in the poorest communities obtain, on average, only three years of education. Egypt's low literacy rates, especially among women, continues to limit social and economic growth.



Photo: USAID/Egypt Becky Smith

**“My daughter loves your show and as a caring mother, I would really like to thank you.”**

### Initiative

USAID has provided \$8.4 million for the creation of "Alam Simsim," an Egyptian Sesame Street series. Produced by Sesame Workshop and Egypt's Karma Production, this highly popular show features a cast of beloved Muppets and human characters. Set on a typical Egyptian street, it also reflects the country's rich culture and traditions, modeling mutual respect and understanding.

"Alam Simsim" promotes girls' education while building basic literacy and numeracy skills. It also promotes desired health, hygiene, and environmental practices. The star of the show is Khokha, a four-year-old pink Muppet who wants to be a pilot, a doctor, and an engineer, all at the same time! She and her friends are changing attitudes on girls' education while helping all children better prepare for school success.

### Results

Millions of children all over Egypt are excited about and learning from "Alam Simsim." It is regularly watched by more than 99 percent of children under age eight in urban areas

and 86 percent of children in rural areas (more than 5 million children). Fifty-four percent of mothers regularly view the series as well. Research has shown that children's opinions about girls' skills are already changing and knowledge of health and hygiene practices is improving. New parent education training will bring these lessons to thousands of families in the poor communities. USAID also has successful Sesame Street projects in South Africa and Russia, and is exploring opportunities to develop it in Pakistan, Croatia, Bosnia, Serbia, India, and Bangladesh.