



## SUCCESS STORY

# Helping Women Access Services

**Women in Upper Egypt obtain legal identity documents that allow them to access social services**



Photo: Abeer Refaee

Women attend the conference in Qena.

***More than 5,000 women in Qena have now identity documents — the first step to being recognized as full citizens and gaining access to rights and opportunities not otherwise accessible.***

Millions of Egyptian women lack legal identification documents, leaving them unable to fully access their social, economic and political rights. Without birth certificates and other identity cards, these women are powerless to petition local authorities for such basic social services. The lack of a legal identity also keeps them from voting in local and national elections, excluding women from the political process that affects their lives and shapes Egypt's future.

Working with organizations in Upper Egypt, USAID initiated a campaign that has helped more than 5,000 women obtain civil and legal documents that allow them to access services including social protection funds, credit programs, literacy classes, food subsidies, savings accounts and voting cards.

To ensure local participation, USAID and its partners rallied women to advocate for other women and involved local village leaders and government agencies. The campaign culminated in a conference in

Qena, where newly emboldened women petitioned local party officials to nominate more women for positions on local councils and national assemblies. A petition submitted by citizens — especially women — is a remarkable development, especially in Upper Egypt, where social and political participation is hindered by many cultural factors. The women also formed a committee to promote awareness of women's legal rights and the services available to them.

This effort critically influenced women's status in their communities. It not only facilitated their interaction with government agencies, but also boosted their involvement in local organizations. Since the campaign started, women's participation and membership in local organizations' general assemblies increased by 174 percent, and their membership on organizations' boards of directors increased by 65 percent.