



## Cleaner Air Makes Breathing Easy

During the early 1990s, lead was one of the main pollutants affecting the lives of Egyptian residents. Diagnosed cases of lead poisoning and measurable levels of lead in the blood were more than twenty times higher than for adults in the U.S. In addition, lead levels in the air of Cairo neighborhoods were more than thirty times higher than world health standards.

Most of the lead in Cairo's air was coming from uncontrolled emissions of secondary lead smelters in the densely populated area of Shoubra El Kheima in the outskirts of Cairo. Faced with this pressing problem, USAID and the Government of Egypt developed the Cairo Air Improvement Project (CAIP) with a \$60 million grant.

USAID has funded programs to help Egypt address pollution problems for more than a decade. CAIP's ultimate objective was to assist the government in minimizing air pollutant emissions in Greater Cairo from lead and matter in the air. USAID assisted in the upgrade and relocation of the largest private sector lead smelter in Egypt. This facility was responsible for more than 70% of the lead pollution in the air of Shoubra El Kheima.



Photo: Larry Jiang

Upgraded lead smelter using cleaner technology and located in a dedicated and remote industrial zone.

USAID supports the Egyptian Environmental Policy Program (EEPP) which was created to tackle the severe problem of lead pollution in Shoubra El Kheima and ensure that the contaminated closed sites and materials are used with maximum control to avoid spreading the toxic materials in the neighboring areas. Guidelines are being developed with EEPP support for the clean up or remediation of these sites.

Using modern technology has enhanced plant productivity, and its capability to export. Moreover, the first environmentally-sound private lead smelter was inaugurated in a dedicated industrial zone. Airborne lead levels decreased by more than 75% in this area, and the lead pollution level in Shoubra El Kheima is expected to decrease even more. Residents of Shoubra El Kheima are being educated on lead pollution in the area, as well as on how to deal with it within their households.

***“I have lived next to the smelters all my life, and married one of my neighbors. While growing up, I vaguely knew that the smoke coming out of these factories was affecting my health. But now I don't see the horrible smoke anymore from my window and my children will be able to live a better and healthier life in this area.”***

***- Amina, 40-year-old mother***

Building on this success, USAID is funding the LIFE program to clean lead smelters which have been shut down in Shoubra El Kheima. A first of its kind in Egypt, this activity will initiate Egyptian professionals in the new business of hazardous waste management and remediation. The LIFE program will also encourage an active and positive involvement of the population in planning and decision making for a better future for themselves and for their children.

Success Story

