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EVALUATION REPORT



TRANSTEC
PROJECT
MANAGEMENT

UDF-EGY-07-162: Building Democratic Spaces

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Disclaimer

The views expressed in this report are those of the Evaluators. They do not represent those of UNDEF or of any of the institutions referred to in the report.

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I. Executive Summary

i. Project Data

This report is the evaluation of the project entitled "Building democratic Spaces", implemented by EACPE, the Egyptian Association for Community Participation Enhancement, based in Cairo, Egypt, between 1 September, 2008 and 31 March, 2011. The project benefited from an UNDEF grant of \$230,000, with a project budget of \$325,000, plus a monitoring and evaluation component of \$25,000. The original project completion date was 30 April 2010, but the project received two extensions, the second of which was to provide for completion of activities in the wake of the "Egyptian Revolution" of January-February 2011, which led to a temporary suspension of operations.

ii. Evaluation Findings

Relevance: The development problem identified: the absence of "a critical democratic mass" is certainly relevant to the prospects for Egypt to move towards developing an effective, participatory and responsive system of governance, and hence to UNDEF's mandate. However, the problem defined is vague and insufficiently focused to give direction to project design. The stated priority of the project was to bring together different political and social groups, often in conflict or disagreement with one another, to develop a common position, or an agenda, for working towards a functioning democracy.

The following groups were identified as both beneficiaries and stakeholders in the project: Parliamentarians; Political Parties; Political and Social Movements; Trade Unions and Professional Syndicates (associations); and, Youth Organizations, other civil society groups and the media. However, instead of identifying a number of critical beneficiary and/or stakeholder groups and working with them throughout the project, *Building Democratic Spaces* dealt with groups separately through one-off activities. It then failed to adopt an approach to enable it to work systematically to bring these same groups together around a common agenda.

All activities were relevant to the project's broad objectives, but, since these objectives lacked clarity and focus, they did not provide the required overarching goal around which the project might be organized. While there were thematic connections among the activities across the three components, there were very limited linkages beyond this. There was a long list of participants in project activities, but little continuity of participants from one activity to others.

It must be concluded that the strategy adopted by the project was unhelpful as a foundation for taking action in making a difference in the building of "a democratic critical mass". A more focused approach to addressing a smaller component of this large problem, and consistent and active engagement with a clearly-defined beneficiary or stakeholder group, or groups, would have strengthened the prospect for EACPE to make a practical contribution to democratic development in Egypt.

Effectiveness: All activities presented by the project seem to have been well-organized and professionally-managed. A number of the individual events, viewed in isolation, seem to have been quite successful. They could have formed a basis for a stream of activities which might have enabled the project to deploy its resources in such a way as to work towards concrete results.

As it was, much of the effort was wasted, in that openings for working with particular groups of beneficiaries to address current needs and priorities were overlooked, as the project moved on to the next topic. The project scattered its resources in such a way that no issue and no social group received continuing attention. Further, for the most part, there was no effort to build on what had been accomplished in any of the activities undertaken.

The Project Document led the reader to believe that the Democratic Forums, which, together with the 2 Annual Conferences, made up the core of the project, would provide the hub for ongoing debates leading to the adoption of a shared agenda among a wide range of social groups. This did not happen.

One of the explicit concerns of the project was to bring together members of new social and political movements with existing secular political parties and civil society groups. However, it was not the new social and political movements, but (with a few exceptions) rather the existing leftist political groups and parties and established “public interest” NGOs, which dominated activities. The project seems to have taken place largely within this network. The Knowledge Production component of the project was also likely to have been of most value to the members of this network.

Efficiency: In considering the relationship between project resources and results, it must be concluded that the relationship between results obtained and resources expended was discouraging. This was, in large part, because of the inappropriate design, with the project unfolding as a series of separate, unconnected events, which reduced any prospect of impact. Secondly, the way project resources were employed did not suggest that the grantee exercised care in ensuring cost-effectiveness.

Impact: The compartmentalized character of the project makes it difficult to assess impact. Complicating this state of affairs further was the failure of the grantee to present any kind of baseline data against which progress might be assessed. While members of a number of those groups listed as stakeholders and beneficiaries participated in particular project activities, no effort was made by the project team to engage with them on a continuing or consistent basis.

The project’s Training Workshops were well-organized; yet, each was a “one-off” affair, with no follow-up. Such activities will probably have been of short-term value to participants, but are unlikely to have had broader impact.

The “Public Awareness” component of the project was merely an add-on to other activities. There was no plan concerning the intended audience for activities or events. No thought was given to how the “booklets” and other documents produced were to be distributed, and no consideration was given to providing guidance on how the documents were to be employed.

One sphere where the project might have been expected to have some impact was in **Gender Equality**, defined as a project priority. However, while women were present in

all project activities, the project's performance in terms both of women's engagement and taking gender equality as a cross-cutting theme was somewhat disappointing.

Overall, the project made a series of modest short-term contributions to meeting the organizational and knowledge needs of designated stakeholders and beneficiaries, and facilitated ongoing debates within civil society circles on democratic development. However, with only very small numbers involved in each case, and little continuity of participation from one activity to another, the difference made to any group will have been quite limited. It does not seem likely that the project will have had a catalytic effect in strengthening the "democratic critical mass", or in influencing broader events.

iii. Conclusions

- All project activities were *thematically relevant* to the core issues of democratic development and the strengthening of civil society in Egypt. However, fundamental deficiencies in project design were such as to minimize the overall **relevance** of the project as a practical contribution to addressing the development problem identified.

- The project was **ineffective** as a means to achieve the objectives specified. The key problems included: the lack of continuity among project activities, which were organized in compartmentalized fashion, the lack of continuous involvement of participants, and the failure to engage consistently with a broad range of social groups. These problems were compounded by the absence of any needs assessment, focusing on targeted beneficiary groups.

- **Efficiency:** The project's utilization of resources was ineffective as a means to achieving specified results. Resources were scattered across a large number of unconnected activities. Further, patterns of expenditure do not suggest that much care was given to ensuring cost effectiveness.

- The project had little **impact**, beyond contributing to ongoing debates on topics of relevance to democratic development and the appropriate role for civil society.

- To consider **sustainability** with regard to Building Democratic Spaces is problematic, since there were no lasting results to be sustained.

iv. Recommendations

If EACPE is considering applying for future funding to an International agency, which, like UNDEF, seeks to support efforts to make a difference in contributing in a concrete way to democratization and strengthening civil society, then, It is recommended that:

- It seeks expert advice on how to shape an integrated project design with both practical results and impact in mind;

- It prepares project budgets with careful attention to cost effectiveness and deployment of resources in service of results. Particular care should be taken in ensuring that project resources are not utilized to cover regular organizational costs;

- As a support to organizational learning, it includes in the design of all activities a process to enable participants to provide feedback on their experience

In order to live up to its name as the “Egyptian Association for Community Participation Enhancement”, ***it is further recommended that:***

- EACPE works with other organizations with expertise on methods for engaging actively and systematically with stakeholder and beneficiary groups;

- Particular attention be given to acquiring technical skills to enable EACPE to undertake participatory needs assessment research as a basis for defining project results and shaping programming.

II. Introduction and development context

i. The Project and Evaluation Objectives

This report is the evaluation of the project entitled "Building democratic Spaces", implemented by EACPE, the Egyptian Association for Community Participation Enhancement, based in Cairo, Egypt, between 1 September, 2008 and 31 March, 2011. The project benefited from an UNDEF grant of \$230,000, with a project budget of \$325,000, plus a monitoring and evaluation component of \$25,000. The original project completion date was 30 April 2010, but the project received two extensions (of 4 months, and 3 months), the second of which was to provide for completion of activities in the wake of the "Egyptian Revolution" of January-February 2011, which led to a temporary suspension of operations.

The project was implemented by EACPE, acting alone, but with the cooperation of a number of like-minded civil society organizations, academics and researchers, as well as representatives from political parties, organized labour and professional associations (syndicates).

UNDEF and EACPE have agreed a framework governing the evaluation process, set out in the Operational Manual. According to the Manual, the objective of the evaluation is to "undertake in-depth analysis of UNDEF-funded projects to gain a better understanding of what constitutes a successful project which will in turn help UNDEF devise future project strategies. Evaluations also assist stakeholders to determine whether projects have been implemented in accordance with the Project Document and whether anticipated project outputs have been achieved'."

ii. Evaluation methodology

The evaluation was conducted by two experts, one international and one national, under the terms of a framework agreement between UNDEF and Transtec. A set of project documents was provided to the evaluators in the weeks preceding the field mission. On that basis, they prepared an Evaluation Launch Note (UDF-EGY-07-162), setting out key issues and particular areas of focus, to be considered during the field mission, which took place in Cairo from January 22-26, 2011. Additional documents were obtained from other relevant sources (see list of documents consulted in Annex 3).

The field mission included meetings in Cairo at the offices of EACPE, as well as at the offices of key participants in the project, including those who were members of the informal Project Steering Committee. These included: NGOs, policy research centres and academic research centres. For security reasons, it was not possible for the Evaluation Team to travel outside Cairo. However, a small group of interviewees travelled from the industrial city of Mahalla (Al-Mahalla El-Kobra), 100 kilometres north of Cairo, to meet with them.

iii. Development context

The people of Egypt have endured decades of directionless, authoritarian rule, characterized by political repression, pervasive corruption and massive social inequality. In the years leading up to the Egyptian Revolution, public discontent with government had grown, and there had been a modest opening of political space, along with limited opportunities for civil society to debate social issues and explore new possibilities. However, nothing prepared the regime or outside observers for the dramatic events of January/February 2011, when, inspired by the toppling of the regime in Tunisia, people took to the streets of Cairo and other major urban centres in a massive and continuing wave of public protests.

After three weeks, with the acquiescence of the key actor in Egyptian politics, the military, an unpopular, dictatorial and out-of-touch President was removed from power. However, in the aftermath of the popular uprising, the military has reasserted its control, and the outcome of the huge popular uprising remains uncertain, despite the holding of national elections in recent months. The crackdown on urban civil society, with a series of raids by the security forces on human rights and democracy organizations, beginning in late December 2011, as well as the arrest of many activists, prominent in demonstrations and the alternative media, are troubling signs that the military has no intention of allowing advocates for democracy, and particularly those organizations with international funding, to operate freely.

The project, *Building Democratic Spaces*, took place in the years immediately prior to and during these dramatic events, and was actually concluded several months after the uprising of January-February 2011.

As matters stand, there appears to be an uneasy stalemate, with three centres of power: the military; the parliament, which is divided and, as yet, has very limited powers; and the informal, youth-led revolutionary movement in Cairo and other cities. In addition, independent of the military and the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), there are the remnants of the Mubarak regime, which continue to seek to reverse the gains of the Revolution.

The growing dynamism of civil society in recent decades was an important factor underlying the explosion of political energy on the streets in 2011. It emerged in the context of the weak performance of an ineffective and inflexible state, incapable of addressing the basic problems of poverty, economic decline, and massive youth unemployment, which beset Egypt. While NGOs had become more active in the years leading up to the Revolution, continuing restrictions on the scope of activities of political parties and NGOs made it difficult for such organizations to place themselves in the vanguard of movements for social change, or to be seen as channels for the expression of popular concerns. Accordingly, the role of such organizations in “the Egyptian Revolution” was limited. Instead, the politics of the street was influenced by new organizational forms, non-hierarchical, loose in form, with young people in the lead, and making effective use of social media as a principal organizing tool.

Most Egyptian NGOs focus on development activities and the provision of basic social services that the state cannot provide. A smaller number are concerned with advocacy and the effort to influence public opinion and public policy. Within this group, some, like EACPE, focus on democratization and human rights. A limitation of such organizations

is their lack of a defined constituency or membership base and dependence on international funding.

This makes them vulnerable to charges from the state and government-controlled media, as well as more socially conservative social groups, that they are agents of foreign governments. Given their remoteness from the concerns of ordinary citizens, as well as their perceived elitism, the charges levelled at this group of urban NGOs are widely believed.

The expansion of civil society has also led to a growing presence in the social and cultural sphere for Islamist organizations and a central place for Islamic perspectives on public life in popular culture. The success in recent parliamentary elections of the Moslem Brotherhood and its Freedom and Justice Party (gaining more than 40% of the vote) as well as the Salafists' Al Nour Party (with more than 20 % of votes cast) speaks to the power of religious faith in Egypt's political culture. It also reflects the strong presence, particularly in rural areas, as well as marginalized urban districts, of Islamist charities in such fields as basic health care provision and primary education. While government is seen as distant, corrupt and ineffective, the Islamists are viewed by a large percentage of ordinary Egyptians as close to the people and worthy of social trust.

For secular civil society groups seeking to promote democratic values, the developments of recent years, summarized above, pose a major challenge as they seek to remain relevant. The poor showing of the liberal and leftist parties in the elections revealed their weakness as political organizations, lacking as they did the strong linkages to local communities which was such a source of strength to the Islamist parties. Such problems are not resolved readily through conferences and debates, the natural arena for EACPE and its secular civil society peers, led by urban intellectuals.

III. Project strategy

i. Project approach and strategy

EACPE was founded in 2001 and registered in 2004 as an NGO with the Ministry of Social Solidarity. It is probably best-known for its organization of election monitoring teams and its documentation of infringements of election laws. It has four areas of focus for its activities: democratic development (within which the UNDEF project was situated); gender equality; human rights education; and, programming with workers and trade unions. It has a 7-member board and, according to the Executive Director, a permanent staff of 20, 14 of whom are professional and technical personnel. However, there is a high level of turnover among staff. The organization has received continuing funding for its work in democratic development and related fields from the European Union (EU). It has also received assistance from the Ford Foundation, the Embassies of Switzerland and Finland, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the Open Society Institute (Soros foundation), and the UN Global Fund for Women, among others.

The aim of the project, *Building Democratic Spaces*, as stated in the Project Document, was to bring together a diverse group of civil society organizations and to work towards building a consensus among them on the principles and contents of a “democratic agenda”. EACPE viewed the project as providing “a democratic space” where activists of all backgrounds would be exposed to, and engaged in, a consideration of emergent issues and key challenges to be addressed in building a democratic society in Egypt. The project also sought to strengthen the knowledge base of those civil society groups committed to building a democratic society and state, while also enhancing public awareness of the need for, and character of, democracy.

There were 19 distinct activities organized by the project between April 2009 and March 2011. These activities included:

- **“Knowledge production”** activities, including the publication of 24 monthly reports on events and developments relating to “democratic change”. The reports and associated analysis would also feed into and inform another component of the process, bringing civil society stakeholders together (described immediately below). In addition, there were two “annual analytical reports” concerning critical political, legal and institutional developments and their impact on democratic transformation.
- A series of seminars and forums for dialogue and shared learning among civil society actors under the title of **“Democratic Forums”**; the Forums (8 were planned; in practice, two were merged) were also linked to two Annual Conferences, where the emerging consensus on the democratic agenda and strategies to implement it were expected to emerge.
- A set of 6 **Capacity Development Workshops** were planned, designed to strengthen the knowledge and practical skills of civil society stakeholders. In practice only 3 were held, with a fourth, held after the Revolution, but prior to parliamentary elections, which was effectively a hybrid of a training workshop, a forum and a political planning seminar.

- A number of activities were aimed at raising **public awareness** of democracy through preparation and dissemination of a series of publications (“booklets”) and **public events**. Such activities were aimed primarily at “attracting young people.” There were two “ceremonies”: one to honour “figures who had defended democracy” (June 2010), and a second, to celebrate the “Revolution Victory” in March 2011. There was also a radio program for youth which was broadcast over a Cairo radio station during Ramadan in August-September 2009. Finally, there was a press conference “to present findings and (support) alliance building.”
- There was also a major seminar to discuss the First Annual Report (October 2010), and a launch event for the Annual Report, delayed by the events of January-February 2011 (March 2011). In addition, there was a preparatory meeting for the First Annual Conference (October 2009).
- Only one significant activity was held after the events of the Egyptian Revolution of January-February 2011: the “Training Workshop” on “Post-Revolution Organizational Structure” (March 2011).

The grantee emphasized the importance of attention to **gender equality** in all aspects of the project. The Project Document indicated the necessity to involve women’s organizations in activities, and emphasized the aim of taking gender equality (a priority area for EACPE) as a “cross-cutting element” in project activities.

In a brief reference to the management process in the Project Document, EACPE explained that the project would be managed by a Steering Committee, including representatives of other stakeholders, as well as the implementing agency. According to the Mid-Term Report, the project employed a Project Manager and Assistant Manager and 5 other staff members.

Assessment of the Strategy

As described in the Project Document, *Building Democratic Spaces* would be implemented through three mutually-supportive and integrated components:

- “Knowledge Production” (as described above);
- “Actions for Change and Campaigns”; this component included the Democratic Forums, capacity development workshops, annual conferences and press conferences; and,
- Public Awareness (and Public Events), as described above.

In practice, while there were thematic connections among the activities across the three components, there were very limited linkages beyond this. In general, whether across or within components, there is little evidence of an effort to link individual activities and their outputs in such a way as to contribute to the achievement of broader results, or outcomes. There is a long list of participants in project activities, but little continuity of participants from one activity to others.

According to the minutes, in the initial Steering Committee Meeting (February 5 and 16, 2009), held after project approval and before the first activity was held, questions were raised about integration of activities, both within and across components. However, such questions were not answered. It was agreed, following the lead of Dr. Magdi Ahmed Hamid, the Chairman, that the Democratic Forums, with a focus on discussion and dialogue, would be the central activity of the project. These would lead on to the

Annual Conference. The purpose of the Capacity Development Workshops would be to “simplify complex issues”, while the monthly reports and booklets would relate to the forums and workshops. This was as far as any strategy for integration of project activities went.

On paper, all activities had a clear purpose, and each set of activities was seen to contribute to a specific and separate development objective. In other words, each set of activities appeared to be a small project, linked to a distinctive result. While it has been possible to construct a logical framework along the expected lines for an UNDEF project (see below), the logic set out in the framework is implied only and did *not* direct the project’s strategy. All activities were relevant to the project’s broad objectives, but these objectives lacked clarity and focus. Consequently, they did not provide the required overarching goal around which the project might be organized.

Effectively, the UNDEF contribution funded a major part of EACPE’s Democratic Development Program and associated staff costs in 2009 and 2010-11. EACPE is an NGO which works with other like-minded organizations in putting on a series of seminars and similar events relating to the circulation of ideas concerning democracy and rights and the strengthening of democratic practice. It has a particular focus on the building of organization in civil society, and on strengthening trade unions and professional syndicates, and these interests were reflected in the UNDEF project. During the period of the project, other like-minded groups were also holding similar events, though perhaps without the distinctive focus of EACPE on organization.

The Project Document cites, as the core development problem to be addressed, the absence of “a democratic mass in Egyptian society which could promote, enhance and sustain the emergent political and social dynamism” [of civil society]. The project was planned and implemented at a time when new possibilities seemed to be emerging, but where leftist, social democratic and liberal political parties, as well as political and social movements and public interest NGOs, were divided on ideology and directions to be followed, and lacking in knowledge on democratic ideas and practice. The basic idea of the project: to work towards a consensus for a common direction based on shared knowledge reflects this situation.¹

¹ While there are other political parties, the focus of EACPE in the project was on the “progressive” secular parties, social and political groups. Given the position of its leadership on the left of the political spectrum, it might well have been difficult for the organization to have sufficient credibility with other political parties and groups to enable it to reach out to a broader range of political actors. Reportedly, Islamist representatives did take part in one or two activities, but, generally speaking, they were notable for their absence.

ii. Logical framework

The chart is based on information included in the project’s results diagram, as well as the initial and final reports. As noted above, the “logic” here presented is notional, to a degree, at least, in that the project lacked a coherent logic, linking activity sets as a basis for design and implementation. The results statements used are all taken from project documents, or are paraphrases of statements given.

Project activities	Intended outputs	Medium-term impacts	Long-term development objective
<p>Preparing and holding “Democratic Forums” and seminars, along with annual conferences;</p> <p>Continuing Participation by a broad range of social groups</p>	<p>Eight democratic Forums and 2 Annual Conferences held.</p>	<p>Achievement of shared understanding among participating civil society groups on a core democratic reform agenda;</p> <p>development of strategies to implement agenda;</p> <p>involvement of women in all activities and entrenchment of gender equality concepts in agenda and strategies adopted</p>	<p>Empowerment of major social actors, including women, to play a leading role in facilitating the process of democratic change in Egypt</p> <p>Public policy is influenced by joint civil society proposals</p>
<p>Monitoring and documentation of key developments in the political process and in civil society re: democratic change</p>	<p>Production of 24 Monthly and 2 Annual Reports; Expert documentation and analysis of political and social developments in Egypt. Analysis is fed into: -process of development of shared agenda among participating civil society groups; and, -efforts to formulate public policy proposals</p>	<p>Recommendations adopted as basis for public policy advocacy</p>	
<p>Planning and holding training workshops for social activists drawn from a broad array of civil society groups, with a strong representation of women</p>	<p>Training completed; Enhancement of knowledge and skills of civil society activists</p>	<p>Demonstrated capacity of participating civil society groups, including women’s groups, to play an informed and effective role in advocacy and decision-making, as well as in broader public debates on democratic development</p>	
<p>Preparation of publications and promotional materials aimed at the educated public</p>	<p>Dissemination of “user-friendly, gender-sensitive documents and promotional materials to a broad educated public</p>	<p>Enhanced public awareness of the core features of a democratic society</p>	<p>An active and engaged citizenry</p>

IV. Evaluation findings

The evaluation is based on a set of Evaluation Questions or EQs, designed to cover the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability; plus the issue of UNDEF value added. The Evaluation Questions and related sub-questions are presented in Annex 1.

i. Relevance

The development problem identified: the absence of “a critical democratic mass” is certainly a relevant concern in terms of the prospects for Egypt to move towards developing an effective, participatory and responsive system of governance. However, the problem defined is vague and somewhat abstract and is not sufficiently focused to give direction to project design.

The principal concern of the project was to bring together different political and social groups, often in conflict or disagreement with one another, to develop a common position, or an agenda, for working towards a functioning democracy. In practice, the range of political opinion represented in the project was limited mostly to secular forces, with those from secular leftist and social democratic parties and groups predominating.

The following groups were identified as both beneficiaries and stakeholders in the project:

- Parliamentarians;
- Political Parties;
- Political and Social Movements;
- Trade unions and professional syndicates (associations);
- Youth organizations, other civil society groups and the media.

Based on an examination of project documents, materials on individual events and lists of participants in them, as well as data collected from interviews, it is difficult to determine who the actual beneficiaries were. Members of the groups listed above were involved to some degree, with academics, public figures linked with leftist political parties, those from the trade union movement and others involved in the effort to form independent professional syndicates, and representatives from human rights NGOs, playing the most prominent roles.²



First Forum: Dynamics of Democratic Change

² An important feature of the “Egyptian Revolution” has been the assertion of independence by middle-class technical and professional personnel from state-supervised leadership in elections within national institutions, including universities and professional and technical associations, known as “syndicates”

The project did appear to broaden its outreach in 2010-11, most notably in the Second Annual Conference (July 2010), with more involvement of representatives of liberal political parties and a wider range of civil society groups, including some development NGOs, as well as guests from the Embassies of Australia, Canada and the Netherlands. Its final Training Workshop on *Post-Revolution Organizational Structure* also involved a broad spectrum of representatives of leftist, social-democratic and liberal political parties, as well as other activists and more participants from outside Cairo than had been the norm. However, taken as a whole, project strategy provided an inadequate guide to achieving specified objectives.

Given the urgent need to bring together a wide range of civil society groups around a shared agenda, the focus and character of project activities did not seem well-designed to enable stakeholders to engage with one another on a consistent basis and move towards concerted action. As noted above, there was little continuity among participants from one activity to another. This reduced the prospects for project impact and made it difficult for EACPE to achieve its objective of bringing together key groups in a “democratic political mass”.

Instead of identifying a number of critical beneficiary and/or stakeholder groups and working with them throughout the project, *Building Democratic Spaces* dealt with groups separately through one-off activities. It then failed to adopt an approach to enable it to work systematically to bring these same groups together around a common agenda. This not only reduced the project’s relevance to the needs of civil society in Egypt, it also reduced project effectiveness in the delivery of results.

In the situation analysis presented in the Project Document, EACPE indicated its general recognition of broad changes taking place in Egyptian civil society. While, in some of the activities of the project, an effort was made to involve those from new social and political movements, there was no consistent engagement with such groups. Similarly, despite reference to the importance of marginalized groups, outside one or two special events which did involve representatives of grass-roots organizations, their direct representation in project activities was limited. None were involved as participants in the two Annual Conferences.

The project made no effort to identify the major needs and priorities of the designated beneficiaries. Rather, it worked on the basis of its own priorities. This also served to limit the relevance of its contributions to addressing the concerns of the groups in question.

While an effort was made in several activities to include representatives from outside Cairo (for example, in the 3rd Forum on Student Participation, Forum 6/7 on Vulnerable Groups, and the final Training Workshop on Post-Revolution Organizational Structure), most of the organizations which, together, dominated proceedings throughout the project, were Cairo-based. None of these organizations had firm links with local communities, whether inside Cairo or beyond. A very real weakness of a project which sought to address the absence of “a democratic critical mass” in Egyptian society was the absence of any connection to ordinary citizens. This same weakness was to

(including, for example, engineers, doctors, journalists and tourist guides). EACPE took a keen interest in these developments, and considerable attention was given to professional syndicates, as well as trade unions, in project activities.

undermine the performance of leftist, social democratic and liberal political parties in the recent parliamentary elections.

ii. Effectiveness

As discussed above, if the intention was to achieve the results specified, there was a fundamental flaw in project strategy and design. This limited both its relevance and, as will be discussed in this chapter of the report, its effectiveness.

The examination of project effectiveness will begin with a review of what was described as the core of the project. As conceived by the leadership of EACPE and the Project Steering Committee, the heart of the project, to which other activities would be linked, consisted of the 8 Democratic Forums and the 2 Annual Conferences. Since only 4 “Training Workshops” were held, and their purpose seemed unclear in practice, these will also be included as a focus in this section of the chapter.

The first 3 **Democratic Forums**, which took place between April and October 2009, preceding the First Annual Conference (November 2009), dealt with the following topics:

- Forum 1: Dialectics of Democratic Change;
- Forum 2: Challenges for Syndicates and Democratic Change;
- Forum 3: Challenges of Student Participation in Democratic Change.

During this same period, there were two **Training Workshops**:

- Workshop 1: Building Negotiation Skills, for Teachers Seeking to Organize;
- Workshop 2: Building Negotiation Skills (Women’s Leadership);

The theme of **the First Annual Conference** was **the Dilemma for Associations (Civil Society) between State and Society**.

The First Forum provided an opportunity for selected speakers and panellists to review the current situation and to provide a scan of the range of challenges to be addressed in working for democratic change. This theme was picked again up in the First Annual Conference, with a greater focus, on this occasion, on organizational challenges, and there was some continuity of participants between the two events.

The other activities were aimed at more specific audiences: students involved with the student union movement; those concerned with the organization of trade unions and professional syndicates, and political parties and civil society groups for whom labour rights issues are a priority; and women from the public sector, unions, professional associations and NGOs, wishing to enhance their skills and self-confidence. The Annual Conference drew on some of the issues discussed in the preceding activities in its program. However, it could not be considered as an effort to sum up and build on what had gone before.



Women's Leadership Training Workshop

In the second phase of the project, from January 2010 to March 2011, there were 4 **Democratic Forums** and 2 **Training Workshops**:

Forum 4: Future of Syndicates in Egypt;

Forum 5: New Media and its Role in Democratic Change;

Forum 6 & 7: Vulnerable Groups in Society, between rights of Citizenship and Marginalization;

Forum 8: The Association Dilemma in Egypt;

Workshop 3: Blogging and Syndicates.

Workshop 4: Post Revolution Organizational Structure

The Second Annual Conference, on the theme of ***Whether Elections Could be a Mechanism for a peaceful Transition to Democracy***, was held in July 2010, after the Fifth Forum. Its timing was unhelpful, if it was to be a mechanism to build on other activities. Rather, its timing reflected what was perceived by EACPE as an urgent need to discuss the limitations of the value of elections under conditions current at the time.

As during the first phase of the project, there was little continuity across activities. The Second Annual Conference responded to an urgent concern of leftist, social democratic and liberal political parties, as well as “progressive” urban NGOs, regarding the prospects for furthering the cause of democratic development through elections to the Parliament, given continuing constraints (in 2010) on free and fair elections. This theme was picked up again, under more urgent circumstances, after the “Egyptian Revolution”, at the final Training Workshop on Post-revolution Organization Structure, held in March 2011, with a wider range of participants. The theme and message underlying both conferences and the final workshop, and less directly, the project as a whole, was the urgency for liberal and leftist social and political and social groups to organize and to try to build coalitions around a common agenda.

The final Workshop was, effectively, an organizing meeting, an effort to bring leftist and social-democratic and liberal groups together into a political coalition to contest the coming parliamentary elections. The effort was partly successful; while the attempt to build one party failed, two “umbrella” parties did emerge, one predominantly leftist and one social democratic. It was a practical response to events in the larger world, and it

spoke to the concerns animating the organizers of the project. Yet, it was a special, one-off activity. There was little in the project's foregoing activities which had prepared the way for such a meeting, and many of those who took part were new to the project.³

The list of activities undertaken by the project, listed above, reads like a menu of topics of interest to the stakeholders and beneficiaries listed above. Some topics for activities were very broad in character, while others were tightly focused on the more immediate interests of a particular group. All activities, whatever the range of their coverage, were relevant in a general way to the project's objectives, but were organized as entirely separate and self-contained events. The project scattered its resources in such a way that no issue received continuing attention, and that most activities received no follow-up attention. For the most part, there was no effort to build on what had been accomplished in any of the activities undertaken.

The distinction between the purpose of the Democratic Forums and Training Workshops seems to have been less clear in practice than in the project plan. Some of the activities listed above, for example, Forum 5 on New Media, Forum 3 on Student Union organization, and Workshops 1-3, on Teachers' Organization, Women's Leadership, and on Blogging and Syndicates, respectively, addressed practical needs of very specific groups for new knowledge and ideas. However, these activities occurred in compartmentalized fashion, with no connection among them and the participating groups, and with no follow up to any of them.

On the evidence available to the Evaluation Team, it appears that all activities have been well-organized and professionally-managed. A number of the individual events, viewed in isolation, seem to have been quite successful. They could have formed a basis for a stream of activities which might have enabled the project to deploy its resources in such a way as to work towards concrete results. As it was, much of the effort was wasted in the sense that openings for working with particular groups of beneficiaries to address current needs and priorities were overlooked, as the project moved on to the next topic. This reduced not only the effectiveness of the project, but also its impact and sustainability as well.

It is clear that a sub-set of activities, such as the Fifth Forum on New Media, Training Workshop 2 on Women's Leadership, and Workshop 3 on Blogging and Syndicates, were well-conceived, with a view to planning the event and selecting speakers and participants with some explicit outputs or learning objectives in mind. The final workshop, of March 2011, as discussed above, while very different in character, might also be placed in this group.

Others were more "academic" in character, where the discussion and debate was an end in itself. The two Conferences and some of the Forums, particularly Forum 6/7 on Vulnerable Groups, also aimed to attract the attention of the mass media and policy-

³ This initiative was shaped in the aftermath of the unanticipated political events in Egypt. It was not indicated in the Project Document that the project would be supporting the formation of political parties. Given the sensitivities of the authorities in Egypt (as in many other countries) to "foreign" involvement in domestic politics, this could have caused serious difficulties for UNDEF, as well as EACPE. It would have been advisable for the grantee to deal with this potential problem by holding a "post-revolution" dialogue on key issues for the coming elections among political groups under UNDEF project auspices on one day, and then to have held a separate activity on the following day, not funded by the project, on negotiations on party formation. Reflecting on this experience, UNDEF may wish to give some thought to providing additional guidance to grantees, setting limits on the purposes for which it's funding may be used.

makers. In other words, they had an advocacy role. However, if the aim was to influence policy, the effort was not furthered by the adoption of only the most vague and general recommendations at the conclusion of these events.



Social Media Forum

Such events may have been effective as judged by the standards of conferences and seminars organized by academic organizations, think tanks or research-oriented NGOs. However, it might be noted that, in the Project Document, the list of Democratic Forums and Conferences were placed in the category of “Actions for Change”. Despite this, as contributions to bringing about or encouraging social or political change, or as components of a results-oriented

project, they cannot be judged to have been effective.

Social Media Forum, May 2010: As became so apparent in the Egyptian Revolution, the emergence of Social Media has played a critical role in enhancing the dynamism of Egyptian civil society in recent years. New social movements have used Facebook, Twitter, blogs and websites, to debate and refine issues, build support and organize demonstrations, strikes and other mass public events.

The project’s 5th Forum focused on New Media. It brought together 30 participants, including activists, journalists, human rights defenders, women’s rights specialists and technical experts, several of whom had hands-on knowledge of effective use of new media tools in building public knowledge and awareness. The Forum took place at the time of “a great debate” concerning the use of New Media in covering the parliamentary elections of 2010, as well as an ongoing argument between proponents of the New Media and traditional media.

Interview with Mohamed Omran, Forum Convenor and Social Media Expert

The Project Document led the reader to believe that the Democratic Forums, together with the 2 Annual Conferences, would provide the hub for ongoing debates leading to the adoption of a shared agenda among a wide range of social and political groups. This did not happen.

For the most part, the project was isolated from ordinary Egyptians and from those who were most active in “the Egyptian Revolution”. It was not the new social and political movements, but (with a few exceptions) rather the existing leftist political parties and “public interest” NGOs, which were most prominent among those who took on the roles of speakers, facilitators and writers in the project. The project seems to have taken place largely within this network.

The Knowledge Production component of the project was also likely to have been of most value to the members of this network. **The Monthly Reports** (which continue to be published after the conclusion of the project: a positive point for sustainability) published over a 24-month period, performed a service for researchers, NGOs and political groups, in documenting current developments relevant to democratic development. Most of the material presented represents summaries of material found in the media, official reports, NGO documents and reports, on-line blogs, and papers and articles produced by researchers and academics. Nevertheless, the reports seem to have been (and remain) a useful information tool for those in the democracy and human rights community. One thousand copies of each report were printed and circulated. Additional copies were made available electronically.

The **Annual Reports** were regarded by EACPE as of some importance in summarizing critical political developments and conveying the key concerns of the project. Each of the two reports was written by a writer/researcher with close links to EACPE, who was commissioned for the task. As with the Monthly Reports, one thousand copies of each report were printed and distributed.

Finally, the project produced a set of "**Booklets**" on topics in democratic development. Unfortunately, while they were described as an important element of the project's effort to build public awareness of democracy, there seems to have been no plan to guide their preparation or utilization.

iii. Efficiency

In considering the relationship between the resources used in the project and the results achieved, it must be concluded that the relationship between results and impact achieved, on the one hand, and resources spent, on the other, was discouraging. This was, in large part, because of the inappropriate design, with the project unfolding as a series of separate, unconnected events, which reduced any prospect of impact.

Resources: Of the project budget of \$325,000, the largest portion, \$123,500 (38%) was devoted to salaries. A further \$77,400 (23.8%) was allocated to meeting and training costs, including fees and honoraria for presenters and trainers. "Advocacy", costs related to the preparation and distribution of documents, as well as public relations activities accounted for \$79,400, or 24.4 % of the budget. "Miscellaneous" costs amounted to \$24,000 (7.4 % of the total), "Project Equipment" costs added up to \$15,000 (4.6%), and travel contributed to \$5,700 (1.8%) of the total budget.

Given the relatively straightforward nature of the project, and the fact that all activities took place in Cairo, the managerial and administrative costs are out of line with what might be expected in a well-designed and well-managed project of this kind. This is particularly the case since the responsibility for much of the substantive content of the project was delegated to external speakers, presenters, facilitators, trainers and writers. Where members of EACPE's management team were involved in performance of these roles, they also received honoraria or fees at the same level as other senior experts involved. While the project did engage the services of some very experienced experts, In the Evaluation Team's view, the fees or honoraria paid to such individuals, mainly as presenters, were at a very high level, given normal practice for Cairo-based public interest NGOs.

In addition, beyond the issue noted above regarding salaries and fees, the practice of the project was to pay “allowances” to participants in activities. This goes against normal practice, and is normally not permitted by international donors. Another cost charged to the project is for translation of Monthly Reports. What was required of the translator in each case was only the translation of a short summary. Again, taking into account normal costs prevailing in Cairo, the charges for such modest efforts seem excessive. More fundamentally, the appropriateness of the charges to the project seems questionable.

One other issue which might be mentioned is the relatively high rate of turnover of project staff members. While the senior members of EACPE’s management remained in place, there were three separate Project Managers from 2008-2011. It is not clear what the impact of this lack of staff continuity was on the project, since major decisions were made by senior managers in consultation with the members of the Steering Committee.

In summary, EACPE succeeded in utilizing its resources to present a long list of stand-alone events. Each activity was of interest to small numbers of participants drawn from one or more of the social and political groups listed in the Project Document as stakeholders and beneficiaries. However, since activities were compartmentalized and lacked in integration and continuity, and since few participants took part in more than a few activities, at most, it must be concluded that resources were not deployed in such a way to achieve project objectives or produce a developmental impact. Further, the way resources were used does not suggest that project management was sufficiently concerned with cost effectiveness. Hence it must be said that the project does not measure up well to the tests of effectiveness used in the evaluation of UNDEF projects.

iv. Impact

The compartmentalized character of the project makes it difficult to assess impact. Further, no effort was made by EACPE to conduct simple end-of-event evaluations to enable participants to provide their response to what they had gained from taking part in any project activity. In addition, no attention was given to tracking utilization of documents produced and distributed by the project. This complicates further the effort to track results and assess impact.

As discussed above, the project lacked strategic direction. While the Steering Committee met from time to time, there was no apparent effort by EACPE to build action plans on the basis of what had been decided.

Prospects for impact were seriously diminished by the project’s failure to forge connections among beneficiary groups and across activities. As noted above, while members of a number of those groups listed as stakeholders and beneficiaries participated in particular activities, no effort was made by the project team to engage with them on a continuing or consistent basis. Although others took part, the larger Democratic Forums and the 2 Annual Conferences were dominated by prominent figures from the Cairo-based civil society and political network in which EACPE and its leadership was already involved.

At the two Annual Conferences and some of the larger Democratic Forums, typically, the final session was given over to consideration and adoption of recommendations.

However, the wording of such proposals was always vague and general in nature. As such, they did not serve as a guide for action, nor did they provide inputs or advice which might have influenced public policy or the programs of political parties or advocacy groups, or even attracted the interest of the mass media. Hence, the impact of these recommendations on democratization in Egypt, or on the strengthening of democratic forces in civil society, was insignificant.



Social Media Forum

The Training Workshops were intended to contribute to the “empowerment of social actors” (civil society activists). The three conventional workshops which were held seem to have been quite useful for the small groups of participants (20-40) in each case. They provided training on new skills, and/or offered new knowledge or ideas, or new approaches, of relevance to the interests of the members of the group in question. Yet each was a “one-off” affair, with no follow-up. Such activities were undoubtedly of short-term value to participants, but, in the view of the Evaluation Team, are unlikely to have had broader impact.

The “Public Awareness” component of the project was merely an add-on to other activities. There was no plan concerning the intended audience for activities or events. There was no plan to direct the production of materials. No directions were given as a guide to writers on the level of education and literacy of the intended audience. Topics selected for publication appear to have reflected the particular interest of the writer and did not reflect a systematic approach. No thought was given to how the “booklets” and other documents produced were to be distributed, and no consideration was given to providing guidance on how the documents were to be employed. The design employed for this component, such as it was, was not conducive to producing impact.

The project’s final Training Workshop, held after the Egyptian Revolution, was not really a workshop, but rather an effort by EACPE as a neutral convenor to facilitate political coalition-building. Over 3 days in March 2011, a meeting was convened to bring together leftist and social democratic party leaders, as well as others, drawn from new political and social movements, to build a common platform and a new party to contest the coming elections. As noted above, this effort was a partial success in that 2 parties were formed, instead of one, once it was recognized that some ideological differences could not be bridged in the short term. EACPE staff acted as midwives to the process of establishing the two parties. This outcome can certainly be counted as a success for the project. However, it is not a result which reflects the culmination of a broader process supported by the project. This was a one-off event, and, in this case, there was a short-term payoff.

Source: Interview with Sharif Abdel-Azim, Project Manager

Overall, it might be said that the project made a series of modest contributions to meeting the organizational and knowledge needs of designated stakeholders and beneficiaries. However, with only very small numbers involved (around 25-30 in

Workshops and 30-60 in Forums) in each case, and little continuity of participation from one activity to another, the difference made to the group in question will have been quite limited.

One sphere where the project might have been expected to have some impact was in **Gender Equality**, defined as a project priority. There is no doubt that EACPE is committed strongly to gender equality. Its CEO, Dr Afaf Merei, is well-known for her work as an advocate for gender equality and a supporter of women workers through EACPE, as well as women's organizations. However, she was the only prominent woman involved consistently in project operations, and the project's performance in terms of women's engagement was somewhat disappointing.

The Project Document also referred to the importance to the project of the involvement of women's NGOs, "to ensure that women have their own voices in the project." In practice, women's organizations did not play a prominent role in project activities, except in the consideration of Vulnerable Groups in Democratic Forum 6/7.

In the First Annual Conference, 17 of 102 participants were women, For the Second Annual Conference, 27 of 99 participants were women. In a Forum focused on Challenges of Student Participation in Democratic Change, only 12 of 52 participants were women, while women make up at least 50 per cent of students enrolled in major universities. In the 8th and final Democratic Forum, on Dilemmas for Associations in Egypt, women accounted for 11 of the 56 participants, and 6 of these were journalists, a profession where women are strongly represented. The project was more successful in engaging with women in its final workshop, held shortly after the Revolution, in March 2011, where there were 28 women among 73 participants. In addition, there was one activity dedicated to women, a training workshop on Women's leadership, which involved 28 women.

Women were involved as speakers and panel members at some major activities, and gender equality concerns were raised in some of the Democratic Forums, most notably the combined 6th and 7th Forum, which focused on *Vulnerable Groups in Society, between Rights of Citizenship and Marginalization*. Further, the monthly and annual reports did devote attention to relevant developments concerning women's rights.

Women were present in all project activities. However, it cannot be said that gender equality, or women's priorities, received consistent attention throughout the project. Accordingly, it must be concluded that the project had no impact on strengthening the degree of attention to gender equality in public life or in democratic discourse in Egypt.

While women were heavily involved in the Egyptian Revolution, the prominence of their role was not reflected in the project. Further, it might be noted, few women were put forward as priority candidates for the Peoples' Assembly Elections by the political parties most closely associated with the project.

v. Sustainability

To discuss sustainability with regard to *Building Democratic Spaces* is problematic, since the term is not readily applicable to a project which supported a series of Forums, Conferences and Workshops, plus monthly and annual reports on broader developments. There are no lasting results to be sustained. The project did not provide

any additional impetus towards democratic development at a time of political upheaval, where others were taking the lead in pushing for regime change.

The grantee has continued the publication of the Monthly Report, and continues to publish an Annual Report, funded by the EU, which, in part, at least, duplicates the Report supported by the UNDEF project. EACPE is an organization which has been successful in the past in raising donor funds, and may well be able to continue to organize activities such as those undertaken through *Building Democratic Spaces*.

In terms of financial sustainability, like all the other Cairo-based public interest NGOs, and unlike Islamist organizations, EACPE remains entirely dependent on support from international donors.

vi. UNDEF Added Value

EACPE valued the UN label which came with UNDEF support. At a time when funding from other donors is coming under scrutiny by the state, being able to point to support from UNDEF may have been helpful. Beyond this, there was no particular benefit derived from UNDEF support. Despite the promise of the topic and relevance of the timing (in terms of broader developments in Egypt), the project did not enable UNDEF to benefit from its special position or comparative advantage in relation to other funding agencies.

V. Conclusions

All conclusions are derived from the findings of the Evaluation, presented above.

i. The development problem identified: the absence of “a critical democratic mass” is certainly a relevant concern in terms of the prospects for Egypt to move towards developing an effective, participatory and responsive system of governance. However, ***the problem, as defined, was not sufficiently focused to give direction to project design.***

ii. The principal concern of Building Democratic Spaces was to bring together different political and social groups to develop a common position as a basis for working towards a functioning democracy. However, the focus and character of ***project activities did not seem well-designed to enable stakeholders to engage with one another on a consistent basis*** and move towards concerted action. Rather, the strategy adopted directed project resources to supporting EACPE in contributing to broad, open-ended debates in civil society on democratic development through a series of conferences, forums, and workshops, as well as through production of a series of documents and reports.

iii. There was little continuity among participants from one activity to another. Instead of identifying a number of critical beneficiary and/or stakeholder groups and working with them throughout the project, ***Building Democratic Spaces dealt with groups separately through one-off activities. It then failed to adopt an approach to enable it to work systematically to bring these same groups together around a common agenda.*** The project scattered its resources in such a way that no issue received continuing attention. For the most part, there was no effort to build on what had been accomplished in any of the activities undertaken.

iv. The project made no effort to identify the major needs and priorities of the designated beneficiaries. Rather, it worked on the basis of its own priorities. This also served to limit the relevance of its contributions to addressing the concerns of the groups in question.

v. A number of individual events organized by the project, viewed in isolation, were quite successful. They could have formed a basis for a stream of activities which might have enabled the project to deploy its resources in such a way as to work towards concrete results. As it was, much of ***the effort was wasted*** in the sense that openings for working with particular groups of beneficiaries to address current needs and priorities were overlooked, as ***the project moved on to the next topic.***

vi. Prospects for impact were seriously diminished by the project’s failure to forge connections among beneficiary groups and across activities. The Project Document led the reader to believe that the Democratic Forums, together with the 2 Annual Conferences, would provide the hub for ongoing debates leading to the adoption of a shared agenda among a wide range of social groups. This did not happen. Members of a number of those groups listed as stakeholders and beneficiaries

participated in particular activities, but no effort was made by the project team to engage with them on a continuing basis.

vii. A central concern of the project was to bring together members of new social and political movements with existing secular political parties and civil society groups. However, **it was not the new social and political movements, but (with a few exceptions) rather the existing secular leftist and social democratic political parties** and “public interest” NGOs, which were most prominent among those who took on the roles of speakers, trainers and experts in the project. The project seems to have taken place largely within this network.

viii. The Knowledge Production component of the project was also likely to have been of most value to the members of this network. The Monthly Reports (which continue to be published after the conclusion of the project) published over a 24-month period, performed a service for researchers, NGOs and political groups, in documenting current developments relevant to democratic development.

ix. In considering the relationship between the resources used in the project and the results achieved, it must be concluded that the relationship between results achieved and resources expended was discouraging This was, in large part, because of the inappropriate design, with the project unfolding as a series of separate, unconnected events, which reduced any prospect of impact. Secondly, the way project resources were employed did not suggest that the grantee exercised care in ensuring cost-effectiveness.

x. The effort to track and assess impact was further complicated by the lack of interest by EACPE in conducting simple end-of-event evaluations to enable participants to provide their response to what they had gained from taking part in any project activity. In addition, no attention was given to tracking utilization of documents produced and distributed by the project.

xi. At major project events, typically, the final session was given over to consideration and adoption of recommendations. However, the wording of such proposals was always vague and general in nature. As such, they did not serve as a guide for action, nor did they provide inputs or advice which might have influenced public policy or the mass media, or the programs of political parties. Hence, they had minimal impact on democratization in Egypt.

xii. The project’s final Training Workshop, held after the Egyptian Revolution, was, in practice, an effort at political coalition-building to bring together leftist and social democratic party leaders and others to build a common platform and a new party to contest the coming elections. **This effort was a partial success in that two parties were formed, instead of one. However, it is not a result which reflects the culmination of a broader process supported by the project.** Further, the organization of political parties in Egypt is an exercise best undertaken outside a project supported by an international donor.

xiii. The “Public Awareness” component of the project was merely an add-on to other activities. There was no plan concerning the intended audience for activities or events, nor any plan to direct the selection or dissemination of materials. The design employed for this component, such as it was, was not conducive to producing results.

xiv. One sphere where the project might have been expected to have some impact was in **Gender Equality**, defined as a project priority. However, while there were women participants in all activities, **the project's performance in terms both of women's engagement and taking gender equality as a cross-cutting theme was somewhat disappointing.**

SUMMING UP

xv. Overall, it might be said that the project **made a series of modest contributions to meeting the organizational and knowledge needs of designated stakeholders and beneficiaries.** However, with only very **small numbers involved** (around 25-30 in Workshops and 30-60 in Forums) in each case, and **little continuity** of participation from one activity to another, the difference made to the group in question will have been quite limited.

xvi. It **does not seem likely that the project will have had a catalytic effect.** In principle, EACPE may have provided a useful facilitating role in bringing together like-minded civil society and political groups around common interest, but project activities were not formulated in such a way as to work systematically towards a consensus on a common program. Further, although there was periodic participation in project activities of both those who might be linked to new social and political movements and members of "vulnerable groups", **no strong relationships were forged** with these groups. **Hence, there is little to suggest that the project succeeded in broadening the network of like-minded groups** in strengthening the "democratic critical mass", or in influencing broader events.

xvii. Building Democratic Spaces does not stand up well to examination as a project, focused on the production of a set of concrete results focused on addressing the development problem, as defined above. Despite the stated objectives of the project, the strategy adopted was not directed at producing a project along these lines, but **rather at using resources to enable EACPE to simply share ideas and contribute to broader debates in civil society. A more focused approach to addressing a smaller component of this large problem,** and consistent and active engagement with a narrower target group or groups **would have strengthened the prospect for EACPE to make a practical contribution to democratic development** in Egypt.

VI. Recommendations

If EACPE is considering applying for future funding to an International agency, which, like UNDEF, seeks to support efforts to make a difference in contributing in a concrete way to democratization and strengthening civil society, **It is recommended that:**

i. It **seeks expert advice** on how to shape an integrated project design with both practical results and impact in mind; *(based on Conclusions i-vi, x, xi and xvi-i).*

ii. It **prepares project budgets with careful attention to cost effectiveness and deployment of resources in service of results.** Particular care should be taken in ensuring that project resources are not utilized to cover regular organizational costs *(based on Conclusion ix)*

iii. As a support to organizational learning, it includes in the design of all activities a **process to enable participants to provide feedback on their experience** *(based on Conclusion x)*

In order to live up to its name as the “Egyptian Association for Community Participation Enhancement”, **it is further recommended that:**

iv. **EACPE works with other organizations with expertise** on methods for engaging actively and systematically with stakeholder and beneficiary groups *(based on Conclusions ii, iii, vii and xvi)*

v. Particular attention be given to **acquiring technical skills to enable EACPE to undertake participatory needs assessment research** as a basis for defining project results and shaping programming *(based on Conclusions ii, iv, v, vi and xvii)*

VII. Overall assessment and closing thoughts

Building Democratic Spaces was a disappointing project. There was a legitimate justification for an initiative which would seek to bring together the key players from civil society which opposed the Mubarak regime to consider a practical strategy for working together for a democratic Egypt. This task was a necessary one, and a careful and thoughtful effort to move in this direction would have been of value.

However, the project’s activities did little to bring together the broad range of social groups listed as stakeholders and beneficiaries around a common understanding of what was to be done. Further, for an organization with the term “community participation” in its name, it was disturbing to see how little there was in the project of

sustained participation by many of the groups identified as stakeholders. Beyond this, the project, which was Cairo-centric, made little effort to engage on a sustained basis with local communities or their representatives in Cairo or elsewhere. Overall, the project was an opportunity missed.

VIII. Limitations, Constraints and Caveats

Among the constraints and limitations with which the Evaluation team dealt were the following:

1. While the Evaluation Team was greeted in a friendly way by the grantee, the Evaluation did not seem to be a priority for EACPE. Consequently, the Evaluation Team did not receive the normal (or expected) level of support in arranging meetings and interviews. While the field mission took place at a time of general political uncertainty in Egypt, there was no sense that the organization was in crisis management mode. It was not, then, the circumstances of life for civil society organizations in Egypt after the “Egyptian Revolution” that accounted for what appeared to be a limited interest in the Evaluation.

2. The project was essentially a series of “one-off” events, linked by ideas, but with no continuity of engagement by specific civil society groups. There was *some* continuity over the period of project operations among the organizers and Steering Committee, but, even here, there was a steady turnover of project staff and little continuity in involvement of senior advisors. Consequently, most of those interviewees the Evaluation Team did meet could only speak to one, or, at best, a few, of the 19 separate activities organized by the project. Further, time has passed since the completion of many activities, and interviewees have difficulty in recalling what took place in a one-or-two-day activity which took place two years ago. In other projects, where there has been a sequence of events, where one activity builds on another, there is far more to remember, as well as more cues to memory.

3. The key thinker and mover behind the project, Dr. Magdy Abdel Hamid, the Chairman of the Board of EACPE, was not available to meet with the Evaluation Team, because of continuing health problems. (The team did meet with Dr. Afaf Marai, Executive Director of EACPE. Dr. Afaf is the professional partner and spouse of Dr. Magdy and the two are the co-founders of the organization.)

4. For security reasons, the Evaluation team was not able to travel outside Cairo. One group of 3 project participants from Mahalla (Al-Mahalla El-Kobra), an industrial city situated in the Nile Delta, 100 kilometres north of Cairo, did travel to Cairo to meet with the team.

5. The reporting on the project, while well-written, is very thin, with little detail on the project and its activities.

IX. ANNEXES

Annex 1: Evaluation questions

DAC criterion	Evaluation Question	Related sub-questions
Relevance	To what extent was the project, as designed and implemented, suited to context and needs at the beneficiary, local, and national levels?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Were the objectives of the project in line with the needs and priorities for democratic development, given the context? Should another project strategy have been preferred rather than the one implemented to better reflect those needs, priorities, and context? Why? Were risks appropriately identified by the projects? How appropriate are/were the strategies developed to deal with identified risks? Was the project overly risk-averse?
Effectiveness	To what extent was the project, as implemented, able to achieve objectives and goals?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent have the project's objectives been reached? To what extent was the project implemented as envisaged by the project document? If not, why not? Were the project activities adequate to make progress towards the project objectives? What has the project achieved? Where it failed to meet the outputs identified in the project document, why was this?
Efficiency	To what extent was there a reasonable relationship between resources expended and project impacts?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Was there a reasonable relationship between project inputs and project outputs? Did institutional arrangements promote cost-effectiveness and accountability? Was the budget designed, and then implemented, in a way that enabled the project to meet its objectives?
Impact	To what extent has the project put in place processes and procedures supporting the role of civil society in contributing to democratization, or to direct promotion of democracy?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent has/have the realization of the project objective(s) and project outcomes had an impact on the specific problem the project aimed to address? Have the targeted beneficiaries experienced tangible impacts? Which were positive; which were negative? To what extent has the project caused changes and effects, positive and negative, foreseen and unforeseen, on democratization? Is the project likely to have a catalytic effect? How? Why? Examples?
Sustainability	To what extent has the project, as designed and implemented, created what is likely to be a continuing impetus towards democratic development?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent has the project established processes and systems that are likely to support continued impact? Are the involved parties willing and able to continue the project activities on their own (where applicable)?
UNDEF value added	To what extent was UNDEF able to take advantage of its unique position and comparative advantage to achieve results that could not have been achieved had support come from other donors?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What was UNDEF able to accomplish through the project that could not as well have been achieved by alternative projects, other donors, or other stakeholders (Government, NGOs, etc.). Did project design and implementing modalities exploit UNDEF's comparative advantage in the form of an explicit mandate to focus on democratization issues?

Annex 2: Documents Reviewed

Al-Ahram Weekly

Amar, Paul, "Egypt after Mubarak", *The Nation*, 5 May, 2011

Amran, Mohamed, "The New Media and its Role in Supporting Popular and Political Participation", unpublished paper, 2011

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Annex 3: Persons Interviewed

January 22, Sunday

1. Preliminary meeting with Wafaa Attia, National Consultant, at hotel to review plan for week and discuss project documents and the issues listed in the Launch Report

January 23, Monday

Meetings at EACPE office with:

1. Sharif Abdel Azim, Project Manager; Dr. Afaf Merai, Executive Director; and Mr. Ahmad Fawzi, Program Manager

January 24, Tuesday

1. Dr. Yousry Moustafa, Regional Manager, GIZ, Member of Project Steering Committee
2. Mr. Mohamed Omran, Regional Program Coordinator, F. Neumann Foundation, and Convenor of Forum on Social Media

January 25, Wednesday

Anniversary of Egyptian Revolution; no meetings or interviews possible; scan and review of project documents in Arabic with National Consultant

January 26, Thursday

1. Meeting with activists from Mahalla:
 - Ms. Widad Dubredah, union activists, textile factory;
 - Mr. Hamdi Hussain, trade union member and activist
 - Mr. Walid Halim, Lawyer
2. Mr. Nagui Rashad, Forum participant
3. Mr. Medhat Al-Zahed, journalist and writer, keynote speaker and editor of the project's second Annual Report.
4. Mr. Pola Samir, EACPE Accountant
5. Mr. Sharif Abdel Azim, Project Manager

October 21, Friday

- Departure of International Consultant.

Annex 4: Acronyms

CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
EACPE	Egyptian Association for Community Participation Enhancement
EQ	Evaluation question
EU	European Union
GE	Gender Equality
GIZ	German Technical Cooperation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
SCAF	Supreme Council of the Armed Forces
UN	United Nations
UNDEF	United Nations Democracy Fund