

# Female education in upper egypt

Profession, Teacher



Female education in Upper Egypt is very poor. Many females are illiterate and others drop out of school early. It is estimated that only thirty-eight percent of females in Upper Egypt are literate. Egypt is one out of 9 countries that is targeted for special focus in implementing the world-wide effort to provide " Education for All". Therefore, many worldwide organizations studied female education in this region. According to the UNICEF the literacy rate for women can in fact be as low as ten percent for villages such as Mallawi and Al Minya. They also estimated that 250, 000 girls quit school each year. The USAID indicates that 800, 000 girls are out of school between the ages of 6 and 15 and 600, 000 are out of school between the age of 6 and ten. The reason for the high illiteracy rate is mainly because girls and women are inferior in education access, because society shapes their role and underestimates their ability. Another reason is that they have to work at a very young age. Additionally girls are offered very poor education. Although, home is the place where they should study, the atmosphere at home is not suitable. Firstly, the families have many children so that the younger ones make a lot of noise that prevent the older ones from concentrating during studying. Secondly, the mothers do not allow their girls to study unless they complete their duties at home. After they finish their responsibilities at home, they do not only have very little time to study, but they also have no effort. They make so much effort in the housework so that they become exhausted and are not able to study. Thirdly, parents and teachers discourage girls to continue their education by overwhelming them with homework and responsibilities at home. One of the teachers in a village in Upper Egypt stated that there is no point in educating girls as they will not

work anyway. Girls are intended to marry and to become good workers at home. Fourthly, girls are aware that their parents cannot afford the school fees so they sometimes drop out of school. An example for girls that drop out of school in order to avoid financial burden on their families is a girl named Noura, who lives in Abnud -distict of Asyut. Noura once explained her feelings towards her school and her family saying: Next year I shall stay at home whether I pass or fail; baking; working, learning, and kneading (akhbiz, wa aqdi, wa at'allim, wa arrig). My father says that money paid for me at school is money wasted. My teachers say that I am not for school and I hate to study. I want to stay at home because then I can learn all these things and work. Another problem is that even those parents, who choose to educate their children, let them drop out of school early. Only very few girls attend middle or high school. They drop out of school at any level but mainly in fifth primary. That is again because girls in Upper Egypt are intended for housework and early marriage. Their parents and especially their mothers believe that it is enough for their girls to know how to read and write. After they have learned that it is best for them to stay at home and learn the housework to become later on good wives and mothers. The families believe that it is more beneficial for their girls to learn the housework. For instance they learn how to cook and feed the farm animals. They have to take the fodder and put water to the animals. They have to clean the hous. They also have to bake and cook. Additionally, they have to stay at home and help their mothers with their younger siblings. They have to look after them and feed them. The following graphs will emphasize the rate of girls who attend primary and secondary schools: The graph shows that only 75% of girls

attend primary schools in Upper Egypt. The graph also shows that this is the lowest rate when comparing the situation in Upper Egypt with the situation in the two other regions. In Lower Egypt and in Urban Governorates the percentage is higher. Approximately 85% of girls attend primary schools in these regions. Also when comparing with the other gender, one can see that boys attend primary schools more than girls. This is the case with boys in the three regions illustrated above. The second graph will show the rate of girls attendance in secondary schools in Upper Egypt: This graph further emphasizes that many girls drop out of school after they finish their fifth grade. The percentage of females attending secondary schools in Upper Egypt dropped to 57%, while 75% were attending primary schools. Although the number of girls attending secondary schools in the three other regions also decreased, the drop is not as significant as in Upper Egypt. The drop in Lower Egypt was only in 11% and in Urban Governorates was only in 12%. The comparison between the two graphs also shows that girls tend to drop out of schools more than boys do. Dr. Nicholas Hopkins emphasized another point in his book " Upper Egypt: Identity and Change". He explained that although education in Upper Egypt is sometimes important for the families and their children, the reason is not because of the qualifications they get. Parents send their children to schools for other purposes. They believe their children will become polite, well-mannered and intelligent. Other families believe that their boys should be educated, so to get better jobs and consequently higher salaries. But almost no family sees a point in educating their girls. Girls are sent to schools either to avoid fines or to become well-mannered and literate, literate in the sense of reading and writing.