

Country of Study 2009

Never underestimate our International work. That is the thought that keeps me sane as I watch and listen to the news coverage of the latest chapter in the Middle Eastern tragedy. As I write this, I am conscious that less than two weeks ago we were celebrating the “Season of Goodwill”, wishing family and friends across the world, peace and joy.

Now our newspapers and television screens are filled with the atrocity that is, supposedly, “the Holy Land”. And yet, in the midst of the turmoil and bloodshed, there was an Australian doctor being interviewed as she worked with the wounded in Gaza – a part of the Medecins sans Frontiers team. We actively support them, I thought, and, through our membership of the Associated Country Women of the World, we actively support the women and children so often ignored, powerless and helpless in wars such as this one.

Our Country of Study tradition also gives cause for hope: of greater knowledge, understanding and tolerance of cultures of which we know little sometimes; and it is that lack of knowledge that too regularly leads to fear and suspicion of others and breeds prejudice.

So as we study Egypt this year, my hope is that we will learn more about the Middle East (Egypt, after all, is inextricably caught in the present mess), about a culture and religion foreign to most of us, and about a civilisation that from the past still influences our own and in the present offers a challenge and a hope for understanding and the acceptance of differences.

Margaret Brown

State International Officer



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Egypt

The oldest continuously existing civilization in the world

Official Name

The Arab Republic of Egypt

Capital City

Cairo: Pop. 7.5 million (2003); Other Major Cities – Alexandria and Giza

Where is Egypt?

Geographically, Egypt is part of two continents, most of the country lying in north eastern Africa, while the Sinai Peninsula, the easternmost part of Egypt, is generally considered part of Asia. The country is divided into two unequal parts by the Nile River.



Language

Arabic, though English and French are also spoken and understood by many, especially the educated.

Area

997,739 sq km

Population

81, 713, 517 (2008 estimate), 42% urban, 58% rural (2005 estimate)

Religion

Muslim (mostly Sunni), 94%, Coptic Christian and Other, 6%

Monetary Unit

1 Egyptian pound = 100 piastres

Literacy Rate (2005 estimates)

Male – 69.4%, Female – 48.9%

Life Expectancy (2008 estimates)

Male – 69.3 years, Female – 74.5 years

Industry

Mining – petroleum, natural gas, phosphate rock, iron ore, salt, uranium.

Manufacturing – textiles, chemicals, metals, petroleum products.

Agriculture

Cotton, rice, tomatoes, wheat, maize, sugarcane, potatoes, oranges, livestock.

Major Exports

Petroleum and petroleum products, textiles, vegetables and fruit, clothing and accessories, aluminium products.

Major Imports

Machinery, transportation equipment, basic manufactures, food products, chemicals. Australia is a major trading partner.

National Symbols

The National Flag, Emblem and Coat of Arms of Egypt all depict the golden Eagle of Saladin. The Eagle of Saladin is the National Emblem and the Coat of Arms of Egypt, symbolising power, beauty and independence. It is also centred on the National Flag. The eagle looks towards the left and on the pedestal on which he stands the national name in Arabic appears, Jumhuriyat Misr al-Arabiya (Arab Republic of Egypt).

The Egyptian Flag:

The current flag was adopted on 4th October, 1984; it has three equal horizontal stripes, red at the top, white in the middle and black on the bottom. In the centre of the white band is the golden eagle of Saladin.





National Flower: The Egyptian Lotus, also known as the water-lily.

National Sport: Soccer

The Father of the Nation: Actually, there are a number of these:

- the Pharaohs, rulers who were believed to be the incarnation of the god,
- Horus;
- Saad Zaghlul, a former Prime Minister;
- Gamal Abdel Nasser, who led Egypt's break with Britain.

The Great Pyramids in Giza and the Great Sphinx of Giza are considered National Patriotic Symbols, of both Ancient and Modern Egypt.

Government

Egypt is a democratic, constitutional Republic. The Constitution was adopted in 1971, amended in 1980, and has its roots in the English Common Law and the Napoleonic Code. It declares Egypt as an Arab Republic with a democratic system. The creation of religious-based political parties is forbidden by law. The National Democratic Party currently holds the majority of seats in the People's Assembly.

The Executive Branch

The Head of the State is the President. Appointed by at least a third of the People's Assembly, approved by at least two-thirds of it and elected by a popular referendum, he is elected for a term of six years; he may serve subsequent terms. He formulates general state policy and is also the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces. The current President is Mohammed Hosni Mubarak. The supreme executive is the Council of Ministers, headed by the Prime Minister. The Ministers are jointly responsible to the People's Assembly. Parliament has the right to withdraw confidence from the Cabinet or from any individual Minister.

The Legislative Branch

The Egyptian Parliament is bicameral, consisting of the People's Assembly (Majis ash-Sha'ab) and the Advisory Council (Majis El-Shourah). The People's Assembly has 444 directly elected members and 10 members appointed by the President; they serve a 5-year term. It has the power to approve general policy, new laws, the budget and the development plans of the government. It can also undertake investigations and levy taxes, as well as appointing the Presidential candidate. It has the power to pass a vote of no confidence in the Cabinet. There are 140 Advisory Council members, of whom 70 are nominated by the President; it is a consultative body which also proposes new laws and regulations.

The Judicial Branch

The judicial system is based on English Common Law, Islamic Law and the Napoleonic Code. District Tribunals are the principal court system. The independence of the judicial system is guaranteed.



Tutankhamen

Local Government

Egypt is divided into 26 Local Government areas; Governors are appointed by the President.

History

Egypt has been a coherent political entity with a recorded history since about 3200BC. One of the first civilisations to develop irrigated agriculture, literacy, urban life and large scale political structures, it arose in the Nile Valley. The annual flooding of the river provided for a stable agricultural society. Its strategic location between Asia and Africa and on the route between the Mediterranean basin and India and China made it an important hub of international trade. From the fourth century BC, a series of conquerors brought new religions and languages, but Egypt's agricultural resources, pivotal commercial position and long-term political unity have resulted in a high level of cultural continuity. Modern day Egypt is overwhelmingly an Arabic speaking and Islamic country; nevertheless it retains important aspects of its past ancient indigenous,



Feluccas on the Nile River

Greco-Roman and Christian heritages.

Muslim Arab invaders conquered Egypt in AD 641 and Egypt has been part of the Arab and Muslim worlds ever since. The foundations of modern Egypt were laid by Muhammad Ali, a viceroy from 1805 until 1849, under the Ottoman Empire. In 1882, Britain occupied Egypt and ruled it directly for 40 years. In 1922 it became an independent monarchy, but a continuing British military force in occupation limited its independence. In 1952, military officers led by Gamal Abdel Nasser overthrew the monarchy and established a republic. By 1956 the British forces had left Egypt.

International Relations

Egypt led in the formation of the Arab League and was a charter member of the United Nations Organisation, both formed in 1945. She participated in the Arab wars against Israel in 1948-49, 1956, 1967 and in 1973 spearheaded an Arab economic boycott against that country. In 1979 though she became the first Arab state to sign a peace treaty with Israel, but was ostracised by the other Arab governments and forced out of the Arab League. During the following decade Egypt supported Iraq in the Iraq-Iran War and improved relations with Yasir Arafat and Jordan, so in 1987 diplomatic ties were resumed with most Arab countries and the head quarters of the Arab League returned to Cairo in 1990.

Egypt has played an ongoing role trying to broker peace between Israel and other Arab governments. In February 2005, she hosted an attempted peace summit on the Sinai Peninsula. Currently her ties are stronger with the USA, after USA facilitated the 1979 Treaty with Israel, whereas from 1955 – 1972 economic and military aid came from the USSR and other Communist countries.

In 1990-91 Egypt joined the multinational force against Iraq after the invasion of Kuwait. In 2002 she tried to mediate between the USA and Iraq; she opposed the USA invasion of Iraq in 2003.

Currently Egypt is again attempting to broker peace between Israel and the Gaza Strip. She remains an important political and cultural centre for the entire Arab world.



Egyptian Hieroglyphs

Women in Egypt

The Egyptian Constitution lays the ground for the promotion and protection of women's rights by adopting the principles of equality and equal opportunity between the sexes. The country has embarked on an ambitious plan to advance the status of women at all levels through institutional building, legislative reform and strategies and programs that target specific issues such as violence against women and the elimination of all forms of discrimination.

Institutional building

Several national machineries deal with the promotion and protection of the rights of women. Prominent among these are;

The National Council for Women – established in 2000 to plan, monitor and evaluate the implementation of programs and policies aimed at the empowerment of women and gender equality; and to propose programs and legislation to advance the status of women. Its successes include the integration of women's affairs; having the gender perspective taken into consideration in the development of the National Economic and Social Development Plan; and seeing for the first time the realisation of a gender-responsive national budget.

The National Council for Childhood and Motherhood – established in 1988 through a Presidential Decree. The Council is entrusted with policy making, planning, coordinating, monitoring and evaluating activities in the areas of protection and development of children and mothers. This body works in partnership with UN entities.

Political participation of women

Egypt was the first Arab country to grant women full rights to vote and to stand for election, but their political participation is still weak. Efforts such as public awareness campaigns continue to try to overcome the imbalance.

Factors mitigating against equal participation include the indifference of many women to the dynamics of political life; unwillingness to participate in it, preferring their traditional role in the family; unawareness of the impact of the role possible to play; and lack of training to create potential political women leaders.

To overcome these factors measures such as the “Quota” system have been examined; laws have been scrutinised to ensure there is no discrimination preventing women from holding decision-making positions. In 2007, the first group of women judges, 31 in number, was appointed; another 12 were appointed in 2008.

Economic capacity

Egypt is working for a supportive environment for women to pursue financial and economic stability while shouldering their responsibilities towards their families. Financial resources are allocated to provide for the specific needs of women; equal access to education and training; the provision of easy access to funding; all are aimed at improving women’s economic skills.

The Social Fund for Development (SFD) offers loans and free consultancy services to vulnerable groups in society, particularly women. It gives women, especially the poorer in rural areas, small loans to finance in-house projects. It also gives loans to female heads of houses to establish a small business. It has established a Women’s Business Development Centre through which it offers technical, marketing and managerial support to women setting up small businesses and to recent university graduates. Job counselling and training sessions are on offer. The Productive Families Project, operating since the 60’s, encourages families / women to be productive and self-reliant; it assists families to market their products in Egypt and abroad.

Education

Egypt faces challenges in education in general: low rates of enrolment, both boys and girls, in basic education in some rural and remote areas; changing curricula; providing quality education that meets the ever changing demands posed by globalisation. Nevertheless, there has been remarkable progress in the enrolment of girls at elementary, secondary and technical stages of education. Community Schools have proven successful against girls dropping out of education and the Egyptian model has been commended by UNICEF.

Women in the Workforce

The Egyptian Constitution stipulates that work is a right, a duty and an honour that the government must guarantee for everyone. Egypt adheres to conventions regarding equal pay, hazardous conditions and shift work. Women comprise 26.75% of government work positions; they hold just under 37% of leadership posts. While there are a number of business women and women entrepreneurs, there is still discrimination in the private sector, especially because of what are considered “privileged rights” regarding birth and maternity leave. The NCW has established an Ombudsman’s Office to receive complaints and to provide legal and consultancy services.



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Anti-discrimination Measures

Mothers and fathers are considered equal in terms of granting Egyptian nationality to offspring. Restrictions against the right of women to travel and to get a passport, without the husband’s permission, have been eliminated. Women too have the right to divorce and to practise khul’ (renunciation). New marriage contracts that protect the wife’s rights have been adopted.

Violence against Women

The National Council for Women is working with UNIFEM, UNDP, USAID among others, on a project against Trafficking of women and the general issue of violence against women. On 15th July 2007, the Council of Ministers approved a draft Presidential decree to establish a National Coordinating Committee to Combat and Prevent Trafficking in Persons. Female Genital Mutilation is not a religious practice in Egypt. It was officially outlawed in 1997 by the Ministry of Health. The government is working towards its eradication by 2010. Mrs Suzanne Mubarak, Egypt’s First Lady, is an active campaigner against the procedure.



Egyptian National Anthem

The Egyptian national anthem is a crystallization of its history. The anthem voices people's inspirations and beliefs. Egypt's current national anthem was based on an idea in the mind of one of Egypt's leaders. The first few lines of the anthem were obtained from a speech made by the great leader Mustafa Kamel in 1907.

Bilady

SAYED DARWISH

English Translation

CHORUS:

My homeland, my homeland, my homeland, My love
and my heart are for thee.

My homeland, my homeland, my homeland, My love
and my heart are for thee.

Egypt! O mother of all lands,
My hope and my ambition,
How can one count

The blessings of the Nile for mankind?

CHORUS

Egypt! Most precious jewel,
Shining on the brow of eternity!
O my homeland, be for ever free,
Safe from every foe!

CHORUS

Egypt! Noble are thy children,
Loyal, and guardians of thy soil.
In war and peace
We give our lives for thy sake.

CHORUS

Arabic Lyrics

CHORUS:

Biladi Biladi Biladi
Laki Hubbi Wa Fuadi
Biladi Biladi Biladi
Laki Hubbi Wa Fuadi
Misr Ya Umm Al Bilad
Inti Ghayati Wal Murad
Wa 'Ala Kull Il 'Ibad
Kam Lineelik Min Ayadi.

CHORUS

Misr Inti Aghla Durra
Fawq Gabeen Ad-dahr Ghurra
Ya Biladi 'Aishi Hurra
Wa As 'Adi Ragh-al-adi.

CHORUS

Misr Awladik Kiram
Aufiya Yar'u-ziman
Saufa Takhti Bil-maram
Bittihadhim Wa-ittihadi.

CHORUS

International Doll Competition

Conditions of Entry

- No entry fee
- Doll must be dressed by a member or members.
- Doll size - maximum height 35cms (excluding hat)
- When dolls are being judged, it is important to note the costume is the part being judged, not the doll
- Winning doll at State level to become property of the Association
- Branch and Group name to be sewn on undergarment and the doll stand to be clearly marked with Group and Branch name.
- Winning Group doll to be mailed or delivered to Head Office no later than the end of February
- First, second and third place getters will be announced during the State International Meeting at State Conference
- All Group dolls to be displayed at State Conference
- Group Officers to arrange for collection of dolls during last morning of State Conference. Dolls to be signed for when picked up.

General Guidelines and Judging Criteria

- Information on National costumes may be obtained from most libraries, or the state Library in Sydney. Pictorial or written reference MUST accompany the doll.
- Clothing does not have to be removable but underwear is included in the judging
- Clothing need not to be all handmade, but must be hand finished. It is easier, because of the small size, to sew by hand.
- Shoes which come with dolls are rarely suitable for National Costume, so shoes should be handmade.
- Stockings can be knitted or made from old stockings.
- Sewing points: neatness of neck and armholes, finish of sleeves and hems, pleats facing the right direction, buttons on the correct side.
- Group International Officers to arrange judging of Branch entries by a qualified judge (often a Handicraft judge)
- Dolls to be judged as follows:
50 marks - Authenticity 30 marks - Workmanship
20 marks - General appeal Total = 100 marks

International Book Competition

Conditions of Entry

- No entry fee
- Books on the Country of Study to be compiled by a member or members and they may be done collectively or individually.
- Books can be of any type - e.g. Art, sketch, project, display - whatever is most suitable and/or available. The maximum size of the page is A3 (42x30cm), the cover may be marginally larger. It must contain no more than 20 leaves (a maximum of 40 pages in total).
- The book is more than a scrapbook. Newsprint, typing, handwriting, drawing, and all forms of pictorial representation using any medium can be used.
- The book will be judged on Content and Presentation.
- Group International Officers to arrange the judging of Branch books.
- Winning book from each Group to be mailed or delivered to the State International Officer no later than 30 November.
- First, Second and Third prize Winners will be announced at the State International Meeting during State Conference.
- All Group Books will be displayed at State Conference.
- Group International Officers to arrange collection of Books during the last morning of Conference. Books to be signed for when picked up.

Note: Write Branch and Group name on the last page or inside the back cover.

Judging Criteria and Guidelines

| | | |
|----------------------|---|------------|
| Cover | | 10 |
| Contents | Listed by page numbers at front of book and/or index (listed alphabetically at back of book): Bibliography: Spelling: Neatness. | 5 |
| Government | | 5 |
| Geography | Including area, population, major cities and towns, topography, climate, flora and fauna. | 15 |
| Economy | Including agriculture, industry, tourism, natural resources, transport, housing, etc. | 15 |
| History | | 15 |
| Culture | Including language, education, religion, literature, art, architecture, music, performing arts, crafts, women and family life, cuisine, traditional festivals and customs, fashions, etc. | 25 |
| General Presentation | | 10 |
| TOTAL MARKS | | 100 |

International Primary School Book Competition

- This competition is open to all Primary School students (as individuals or as a school. The competition is particularly suitable for one or two teacher schools).

Book size: A4, maximum 20 pages.

Allocation of marks

- 5 Table of Contents and Bibliography
 - 10 Cover - should include title, arouse interest, and be attractive
 - 5 Spelling - check if uncertain as to any spelling.
 - 15 Presentation - includes neatness, setting out of information in whole book, setting out of each page, balance between information and illustrations, use of margins, general effect, variety of presentation.
- N.B. Each book is to be judged on its merits, therefore handwritten and computerised are equal.

Content

- 20 History - main events, important people, government
- 20 Geography - general information, capital and large cities, important rivers, mountains, agriculture, industries, flora and fauna.
- 25 Culture - education, dress, food and customs, festivals, language, arts, music, literature, religions, role of women and girls.

STUDENTS ARE FREE TO INCLUDE ANY OTHER ASPECTS THEY HAVE DISCOVERED. ORIGINALITY WILL RECEIVE EXTRA MARKS IN ANY SECTION.

Some advice for students:

Allocate your space carefully.

Be selective with information - do not try to pack in too much.

Use your own words. Do not copy slabs of information from the Internet, encyclopaedia, etc.

Do not over-use illustrations, Label all photographs, drawings or illustrations.

Group International Officers are to arrange the judging of books. The winning book from each group is to be mailed to the State International Officer no later than 30 September so the winner may be advised prior to the end of the school year.

1st prize for a winning individual child is \$20 with \$100 going to the child's school.

If the entry is from a school, the prize to the school is \$120.

Primary Product Booklet – 'Wheat'

Morisset Branch has once again put together their booklet on the Primary Product. 'Wheat', is full of ideas, recipes and fun. The cost is \$3.00 per booklet plus \$1.10 for postage. Up to 3 books can be sent in the one envelope. Please place your orders with Lynne Radley on 4970 5893 or write to Lynne at 14 Bailey Street, Windermere Park NSW 2264

Our newest member, Melissa Hopkins – who produced the Bush Tucker Baskets last year, has some amazing Egyptian themed products now available. There are Aromatic Soaps, Eye Pillows, Pot Pourri Sachets, Perfumed Cushion and Washable Wish Soap Cards, which can be purchased individually or packaged together for a raffle prize for your International Day. Please contact Melissa on 4355 1255 if you wish to be emailed a flyer or to order any of the Egyptian products.



Interested in travel to Egypt?

Egypt Reservation Centre is a specialist travel organisation formed in 1995 to cater for the needs of Australians wishing to travel to Egypt, Jordan and Dubai.

ERC is the only Travel Centre in Australia with its own office in Cairo, Egypt, ensuring that the tremendous service you will receive before you travel will be duplicated when you arrive.

For more information contact Mr. Safwat Elbanna – Owner manager of Egypt Reservation Centre & Harvey World Travel Egypt.

1300 362 640 or 02 9211 3630

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