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Innovation through Education: Building the Knowledge Economy in the Middle East

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Supporting Higher Education in the Middle East and North Africa: IIE's Role and Work in the MENA Region

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Around the globe, the Institute of International Education (IIE) works to develop global leaders, internationalize higher education, and rescue scholars with the goal of encouraging peace, prosperity and scientific progress worldwide. Within this work, the renowned Fulbright Program, which IIE has the honor to administer on behalf of the U.S. Department of State, remains one of the most effective and responsive components of U.S. public diplomacy, continuously expanding to serve new academic and community partners.

In recent years, IIE has undertaken a number of strategic initiatives in the Middle East, made possible through public and private investments in higher education and training in such countries as Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Jordan and Egypt. Today, IIE delivers programs in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region that reach over 7,000 students, scholars, and professionals each year.

These opportunities translate into life-changing experiences for tomorrow's leaders, increase research and teaching capacity across the region, and encourage civic engagement and mutual understanding. They are critical to promoting workforce development, good governance, and gender equity; and they are utilizing social media to connect emerging leaders worldwide to forge solutions to critical problems.

In addition to implementing a number of strategic, large-scale scholarship and training programs in the region, IIE strengthens and links institutions of higher education, conducts research on student mobility to inform educational policy, and provides opportunities for joint learning and exchange of ideas, leveraging its worldwide network of experts and leaders in higher education. Through conferences, study tours and forums for higher education leaders, IIE brings leaders and educators together to engage students in international research and learning that will improve their knowledge of the world.

To cite a few examples of this work, last year IIE launched partnerships with NYU Abu Dhabi, the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Qatar Foundation, and the Higher Colleges of Technology in Abu Dhabi to bring global talent to the region, undertake new research, develop strategic higher education links, and engage leaders in dialogue on the role of higher education institutions as incubators of innovation, workforce development and international discourse.

The following sections provide a brief overview of the highlights and impacts of just a few of the programs implemented by the Institute's global network, including IIE's MENA Regional Office based in Cairo, Egypt.

Promoting Mutual Understanding: Scholar and Student Exchange Programs

A uniquely effective, global and flexible form of public diplomacy, the Fulbright Program enables participants from diverse cultural, ethnic and economic backgrounds to create ties of understanding and respect between the United States and other countries. The Program is sponsored by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) of the U.S. Department of State, with additional funding from foreign governments, higher education institutions, and private sector partners and donors. IIE and its Council for International Exchange of Scholars (CIES) have been proud partners in the Fulbright Program since its inception in 1946. Last year, the Fulbright Student Program granted over 100 awards for Americans to study in the Middle East/North Africa; 136 awards were granted to Foreign Fulbright students to pursue studies in the United States. In the Fulbright Scholar program, 55 grants were made to U.S. scholars to teach and conduct research in the Middle East and North Africa region; in addition, 64 visiting scholars and specialists came to the United States from the MENA region.

Since 2003, the Fulbright Visiting Specialists Program, *Direct Access to the Muslim World*, has helped U.S. higher education institutions and communities enrich their understanding of Islamic civilization and culture, as well as social, political and economic developments in countries with significant Muslim populations. Last year, 15 Fulbright Visiting Specialists were matched with U.S. institutions for a period of three to six weeks to lecture or teach short courses, assist with program and curriculum development, interact with students, and participate in public outreach programs.

The Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistant (FLTA) Program supports more than a hundred native Arabic speaking Teaching Assistants each year from fifteen countries in the Middle East and North to study, teach and serve as cultural ambassadors at higher education institutions across the U.S.

The Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship Program, funded by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the U.S. Department of State, provides a year of professional enrichment in the United States for experienced professionals from designated countries, including many in the MENA region. Each year approximately 200 Fellows are selected based on their potential for leadership and their commitment to public service in either the public or private sector, and engage in non-degree study and related professional experiences at selected American universities.

In summer 2010, IIE will bring Iraqi scholars for short-term visits to U.S. campuses through the Fulbright Visiting Scholar Program for Iraq. This program is administered by IIE's Council for International Exchange of Scholars (CIES) on behalf of the U.S. Department of State.

Promoting Study Abroad in the Region

By administering some of the world's most prestigious and innovative scholarship programs, the Institute is providing talent from around the world with access to leading institutions of higher education and the international experience that is critical to success in the 21st century workplace. These programs are vital in promoting international dialogue and mutual understanding. They provide opportunities for international students to study in the U.S. and other countries and promote study abroad for U.S. students, especially those who may lack the financial means. Central to achieving these goals are the Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarships, administered on behalf of the U.S. Department of State, and the David L. Boren Scholarships, administered on behalf of the National Security Education Program.

The Gilman Program offers grants for U.S. citizen undergraduate students of limited financial means to pursue academic studies abroad. Last year, nearly 100 students studied abroad in the MENA region with support from the Gilman Program, including in Egypt, Morocco and Jordan. The Boren Scholarships and Fellowships provide unique funding opportunities for U.S. undergraduate and graduate students to add an important international and language component to their educations, focusing on geographic areas, languages, and fields of study

that are critical to U.S. interests and underrepresented in study abroad. Nearly 100 Boren scholarships and fellowships were awarded for study in the MENA region this year.

The Ibrahim Leadership and Dialogue Project in the Middle East is another unique initiative, managed by IIE for the Ibrahim Family Foundation. The program provides U.S. undergraduate students of diverse backgrounds with the opportunity to participate in a 10-day study tour in three countries of the Middle East, including UAE, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Israel. Students interact with leaders and organizations who are working to promote dialogue and mutual understanding.

Recently, IIE convened senior educators from the United States and ten Arab countries at Al Akhawayn University in Ifrane, Morocco to discuss issues related to increasing U.S. study abroad in the region, including institutional capacity, academic standards, cross-cultural issues and perceptions of safety and security. The findings from the workshop were published in a special white paper that can be downloaded at www.iie.org. And in May 2010, IIE published a new directory of study abroad programs: *IIE Passport Study Abroad in the Middle East and Africa*. This directory was produced in collaboration with Lonely Planet and includes hundreds of study abroad program listings in the region.

Managing Scholarship Programs

IIE works with corporations and foundations to provide scholarships to talented individuals from around the world to study abroad in specialized fields that will build a skilled workforce in their home countries and contribute to local community development.

To train their petroleum professionals in health, safety and environmental protection and lay the foundation for future international cooperation, Libya's Waha Oil Company partnered with IIE to create a scholarship program that brings their employees to U.S. universities for intensive English language and advanced training in geology, petroleum engineering, oil production and business management at U.S. institutions. IIE also partners with Zueitina Oil Company and Petro Canada to deliver similar programs.

On behalf of ExxonMobil, IIE manages fully-funded scholarships for student leaders to receive graduate degrees in geosciences at universities in the United States. IIE monitored 75 students studying in U.S. and Europe from Russia, Indonesia, and over a dozen countries in MENA region including: Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, and the United Arab Emirates.

Driving Innovation in Higher Education in the Middle East

IIE is using its global network to administer scholarship programs and identify outstanding students for academic institutions in the MENA region. IIE is assisting New York University to find the first cohort of scholarship recipients for NYU Abu Dhabi. More than 100 of the finest graduating high school students from around the world are being chosen to join the inaugural freshman class when the new campus opens in the fall of 2010. This endeavor strengthens and advances IIE's goal of opening minds to the world by establishing a unique intellectual community that brings together students of different backgrounds, builds their leadership capacity, and develops truly global citizens.

Since May 2007, IIE has also worked with King Abdullah University of Science and Technology in Saudi Arabia to identify outstanding students globally to receive scholarships to pursue advanced degrees in science, technology and engineering. KAUST's first 368 students come from more than 46 countries. They are studying in 11 fields, including applied mathematics and computational science, earth sciences and engineering, and mechanical engineering. As a co-

educational, graduate level research university, KAUST is dedicated to inspiring a new age of scientific achievement that will benefit the region and the world.

Leadership Development

IIE believes that young minds are critical to bringing creative solutions and new energy to the complex challenges facing our world. Through leadership programs that engage students from schools, youth centers and undergraduate institutions in the Middle East and North Africa, IIE helps young people develop their leadership styles and prepares them for civic involvement and conflict resolution. These programs expose students to different leadership approaches; provide space for the students to explore their values and visions; and build critical skill sets such as team work, communication, creativity, networking, and project planning. Students also experience leadership through interaction with community leaders and service learning opportunities.

The IIE MENA Regional Office and Center for Leadership Excellence in Cairo works with individuals and institutions that recognize the critical need for leadership capacity building. The Center provides innovative leadership programs to diverse audiences including organizations, professionals and youth. Initiatives include the Discovery Program, the Youth Enrichment for Leadership Learning and Action (YELLA) program, the USAID Peace Scholarships Program, and the Entrepreneurial Leadership Program for Egyptian Women.

The Discovery National Student Leadership Program, a semester-long initiative sponsored by the Ford Foundation and the Stuart Foundation, is currently in its seventh full semester iteration in Egypt with over 160 alumni. Alumni who graduated are entering the workforce with employable skills and confidence and are pioneers in understanding new and effective leadership approaches. With support from the U.S. Department of State, the Youth Enrichment for Leadership Learning and Action (YELLA) Program provides some 15 Egyptian preparatory and secondary schools and youth centers with a curriculum of leadership learning lessons that builds the capacity of the schools to deliver youth leadership programming in the future.

The USAID-funded Peace Scholarships Program administered in partnership with World Learning provides leadership learning and U.S. study abroad opportunities to Arab students region-wide. Competitively-selected university students from Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, West Bank, and Yemen participate in leadership institutes through IIE Centers in Cairo and in Denver and attend U.S. universities for one year of academic study.

Professional Development

Building leadership skills and enhancing the capacity of individuals and organizations to address local and global challenges constitute a vital part of IIE's mission. The long- and short-term training programs arranged by the Institute connect students and professionals with peers and colleagues around the world to gain the skills and international perspectives they will need to forge solutions to global challenges.

IIE works with world-class trainers and facilitators to deliver professional development programs that meet the strategic and performance enhancement needs of institutions in the region. Over 20 corporations, foundations, and governmental entities based in the region currently benefit from IIE professional programs.

One example is IIE's recent work with the Jordanian House of Deputies. *The Role of Legislators in the Democratic Process* was a two-week program, sponsored by the Public Affairs Section at the Embassy of the United States in Amman, Jordan, that introduced 10 newly elected members of the Jordanian House of Deputies to the U.S. structure and process of legislating at the local, state, and federal levels of government, with an emphasis on the federalist system

and separation of powers. The delegation traveled to the U.S. to study legislative similarities and differences at the local, state, and federal level.

Women's Empowerment Programs

The Institute is committed to providing leadership training to underserved groups. Increasing women's effectiveness as leaders in the public and private sectors is critical to achieving wide-scale gender equity around the world.

Since its launch in 2005, Women in Technology (WIT) has impacted the lives of more than 7,000 women in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). With funding from the U.S. Department of State and Microsoft, and in collaboration with local partners in nine countries, IIE helped 60 women's organizations provide business planning, professional development and information technology skills to women in their communities. In 2009 alone, Women in Technology (WIT) trained more than 2,500 women in the MENA region through its unique model of private sector and government collaboration.

Sponsored by Susan G. Komen for the Cure, the Global Initiative for Breast Cancer Awareness works to create a global network of dedicated activists with the skills to play a strategic role in shaping their country's response to breast cancer. The first phase of the Global Initiative trained nearly 600 individuals representing 24 communities in 8 countries, including Jordan, Saudi Arabia and the UAE. With USAID support, the Global Initiative expanded to implement the Course for the Cure in Egypt in partnership with local organizations. The course trains women to perform community assessments and advocate for breast health and cancer awareness. In 2009, the program launched a community grants initiative that supported 37 innovative and collaborative projects, many of which were leveraged with financial support from local organizations in the host countries.

The Entrepreneurial Leadership Program for Egyptian Women is designed for women entrepreneurs and female high school students to build awareness and create linkages that will contribute to the growth of entrepreneurship for women in Egypt. The program, funded by the Stuart Family Foundation, is designed to provide linkages between these two target groups and opportunities for practical skill-building and exchange on themes related to entrepreneurship, leadership and other success factors.

Re-Building Higher Education in Iraq

The Institute is also committed to helping to re-build Iraq's higher education system, in particular through linkages with U.S. universities and programs to assist threatened scholars. Since 2007, IIE's Scholar Rescue Fund has helped relocate over 200 academics threatened in Iraq to host institutions in the region where they can continue their academic work in freedom and safety. An important part of this project is providing Iraqi scholars with professional development and e-learning tools so that they can enhance their skills and also keep in close contact with academic communities back home. The aim of the program is to keep threatened scholars safe, help them build their academic and professional skills, and assist them to return home so that they can contribute to re-building higher education in Iraq as soon as it is safe for them to do so.

The Institute continues to expand its work in the Middle East and North Africa, a region where international education and training programs promise great potential to benefit not just the fortunate but also the thousands of marginalized individuals whose talents are critical to their countries' development. To learn more about IIE's programs, please visit www.iie.org.