



COUNTERPART

Promoting Effective & Active Citizen Engagement (PEACE) in Egypt



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The three day Internal Policies and Financial Manual workshop allowed for collaborative communications among NGOs that resulted in all program staff and Directors gathering to discuss and produce a standardized, draft Financial Policies and Procedures Manual.



At a PEACE partners meeting this month, the three partner NGOs expressed their wish to continue working with Counterpart, and to rotate the monthly meetings to encourage communication and networking.

PEACE program implements participatory institutional strengthening and program design approaches.

The PEACE program works actively to promote participatory processes among NGOs, and between NGOs and government. In an environment where there are limited mechanisms for inter and intra NGO participation, and where international NGOs are more often than not perceived merely as providers of grants and training, this month two events marked the beginning of a shift in the way the PEACE NGO work: internally and with other NGOs and INGOs (Counterpart International).

As part of their capacity building within the framework of the PEACE program, Counterpart's three partner NGOs identified the need to strengthen their financial management systems, and participated in a series of four financial training workshops. One of the four workshops focused on Financial Policies and Procedures Manual development. This workshop required that participants from each NGO (including both staff and Directors) work together as a larger group to jointly develop a set of formal Internal Policies and a Financial Policies and Procedures Manual that is up-to-date and inclusive of all staff at all levels in various departments. Two of the three partners NGOs had outdated Financial Manuals while one NGO was utilizing a basic government Manual. In all three cases, the Manuals had not been customized to meet either staff or programmatic needs. As one NGO staff member put it *"the three days together allowed us to discuss priorities and issues in a timely way. Normally it would have taken us months to be able to gather information at various staff levels, let alone have a real time discussion that leads to decisions on policies"*.

A separate event based on the same principles and spirit of participatory engagement, Counterpart staff invited the Directors from the three PEACE NGO partners to an open meeting to share and discuss concerns, challenges, and achievements related to PEACE program implementation. This allowed for discussion of some common concerns among partners (such as transfer of title to equipment purchased through grants) and facilitated clearer understanding among NGO partners and common agreement with PEACE program staff. By the end of the meeting, the NGO Directors and Counterpart staff had a clearer vision of their common plans and individual responsibilities. All three partner NGOs expressed their commitment to continue working with Counterpart in the future, and pledged their support to the upcoming advocacy campaigns that each NGO will launch. The PEACE program staff, working with the Directors, was able to identify specific areas of support that the Directors can provide to strengthen the advocacy campaigns (such as setting meetings with officials, using contacts with media, etc).