Company Profile

Cairo for Investment and Development (CIRA)

CIRA is Egypt's leading private education provider and is the largest K-12 school operator in Cairo with 23 schools and 21,000 students, under the name Futures Education System (FES). CIRA recently launched Badr University Cairo (BUC). CIRA's mission is to provide affordable high-quality education solutions to Egypt's middle Class. CIRA's vision is to reach 100,000 students from the middle and lower middle-income brackets over the next five years. CIRA aims to achieve its vision through scaling its infrastructure, evolving into a comprehensive education provider and extensive use of technology to empower the educational offering and expand its reach beyond the physical facilities. In addition to serving the capital city population, CIRA also operates in other areas of the country, including coastal areas of Suez, Hurgada and South Sinai.
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The Challenge

The quality of education in Egypt's' public schools have been declining with more and more parents looking for other options for their children's education. CIRA's schools, FES, have been very successful as they provide quality education to students belonging to middle and lower middle-income families in six governates (i.e. provinces) of the country. CIRA launched Badr University Cairo (BUC) as a landmark university in September 2014 and have enrolled more than 5,600 students in less than four years. In order to ensure that CIRA meets the growing demand, the company conducted an assessment to ensure that company's current management practices matched the implemented growth plan. The assessment identified the need for a new ERP system to improve the company's governance--management of its growing financial transactions due to the introductions of the university and the growth in the number of students. In addition, the assessment identified the need for a university management system, similar to the School Enterprise Management System (SEMS) system at the schools. The assessment also recommended reviewing and updating the company's Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). CIRA's Board endorsed the findings from the assessment plan and requested the company management to implement all the recommendations.

The Sustainability Innovation Grant (SIG)

In June 2016, CIRA was awarded a $80,000 CAD Sustainability Innovation Grant (SIG) from Global Affairs Canada through a project managed by Mennonite Economic Development Associates (MEDA). The company planned to invest $301,414,000 CAD of its own funds to implement the SIG activities.

The purpose of the SIG initiative was 'to make use of technological solutions so that the CIRA can better manage and service the rapidly growing student population in its schools and university'. The main SIG activities included:
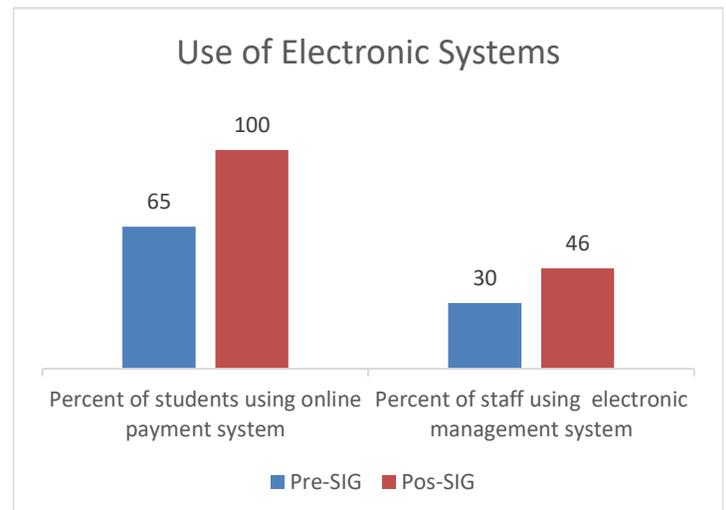
-   Integrating Power Campus systems at Badr University Cairo (BUC)
-   Integrating Microsoft GP systems in CIRA's schools (i.e. FES)
-   Linking the current School Enterprise Management System (SEMS) with the GP and Power Campus

CIRA believed that the technological improvements would enable the company to provide more efficient educational service whereby parent and students can pay their fee online. The SIG activities will also help the company meet its growth target of enrolling 100,000 Egyptian students in the next five years.

SIG Impact

CIRA implemented most of the SIG activities and achieved many positive results. As a result of SIG, 23 schools and BUC are implementing ERP and Power Campus Systems respectively. Preliminary results indicate that there has been 3% increase in students' enrollment (from 18,540 to 18,968) after the implementation of SIG activities. Overall, the SIG initiative produced the following main impacts.

Increased Use of Online Systems: Parents or students have started using the online payment system in all the 23 ERP implementing schools (from 65% to 100%). With increased technical skills, more number of CIRA staff are using the online management systems, especially the administration and finance department staff. Before the project, only 30% of the staff were using the electronic management system, which increased to 45% after the SIG contract duration.

Use of Electronic Systems

	Pre-SIG	Pos-SIG
Percent of students using online payment system	65	100
Percent of staff using electronic management system	30	46

Improved Service Quality: SIG contributed to improving CIRA's quality of service. As part of the SIG, CIRA's financial and administrative functions have been automated reducing the number of reconciliation errors from 10% to 3%. The process of paying tuition fees had been automated and students and parents reported fewer grievances than before. According to CIRA, after the SIG, the company received fewer complaints than last year from parents regarding payment issues.

> *We have had less than half of the grievances and complaints we receive last year regarding our payment system and issues with tuition fees with the parents of our students. (CIRA SIG Contact)*

Increased Technical Skills of Staff: CIRA conducted ERP trainings for its staff. Before the project, there were only four staff members (two female and two male) who had knowledge of ERP, however, as part of the SIG, there are now 18 staff (five female and 13 male) with increased ERP knowledge and skills.

> *Staff knowledge has improved greatly in terms of the integrated package of the accounting process and the automated financial system. (CIRA SIG Contact)*

More Efficient Processes and Decision Making: The ERP system improved the workflow of CIRA's processes enabling the staff to inform its management on financial health of the company regularly and accurately which has helped the management to make quick and informed decisions. With automation of financial reporting, the annual auditing has become much more efficient and accurate. The company's auditor, PwC has issued a 100% unqualified report for CIRA because ERP enabled the company to effectively manage its financial reporting systems.

> *The ERP system has improved work flow in processes of our management. Annual auditing is now much more efficient and takes a shorter time. There is a full picture for the top management about finances on a monthly basis. (CIRA SIG Contact)*

Improved Monitoring and Reporting: As part of the SIG contract with MEDA, CIRA identified a set of key performance indicators (KPIs) specific to the project. In addition, the company also reported on Sustainability KPIs related to job creation, quality of jobs, gender diversity, contribution to local economy and environmental sustainability. CIRA noted that SIG quarterly reporting helped to keep track of the project activities. The company also reported increased awareness and capacity in ESG measurement and reporting. CIRA intends to continue using Standard Sustainability KPIs beyond the life of the SIG project.

> *Having to report on social and environmental issues has improved our knowledge and skills and has raised the awareness of our top management as well as our staff. (CIRA SIG Contact)*

Sustainability

CIRA intends to continue scaling the SIG initiative. The company plans to integrate and automate its different operations to improve the way CIRA manages its human resources (HR), addresses its stakeholders, and manages its finances. CIRA is planning to expand the scope of SIG initiative and will make use of ERP to produce HR modules. The ERP system will also be used to track suppliers' balances and assessing employees' performance.

CIRA's sustainability initiative contributed to the Sustainable Development Goa l# 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth.
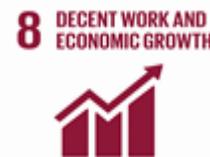
Lessons Learned

CIRA learned that creating an awareness among employees about the technological changes is extremely important before instituting those changes. The company realized that sustainability is a strategic driver for competitive advantage that can influence company's business performance. The company learned the importance of using Sustainability KPIs, not only for monitoring the progress of the project but also to create awareness among the staff and management. ..