



IMPACT REPORT
Stories of change
Fall 2022



SWEET

Strengthening Women Entrepreneurs in Egypt



THIS PAGE: A scenic view of the community of Kalyoubya in Egypt.

COVER: A Egyptian student.

By the end of the second year of the project, you generously helped reach nearly 3,000 people, including:

- **2,000**
15-18-YEAR-OLDS
- **960 ADULTS**

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Champions of Change clubs raise awareness about the rights of women and girls in economic participation in the craft sector in Giza, Egypt.

HOW SWEET IT IS

Welcome to the second year of the SWEET project:
Strengthening Women Entrepreneurs in Egypt

In this report, you'll see what was accomplished in year two of the SWEET project. You'll read findings from a carpet-industry assessment and learn about the issues women in the industry face. You'll also hear from women and girls who took part in group training as the first step in their entrepreneurship journey. Finally, the program manager will share personal

insights on the changes your support is making possible.

There's still a long way to go, but women in Giza are beginning to weave their way into the workforce.

Thank you for being a consistent thread of support along the way.

THESE ARE THE MAIN GOALS OF THE FIVE-YEAR PROJECT:

- 1 Support women as they claim their right to make a living.
- 2 Help more women secure jobs in the carpet industry and access financial services.
- 3 Build women's ability to make financial decisions for themselves and their families.
- 4 Promote systemic changes in government and the private sector that support gender equality and women's right to secure decent work.

The Scene



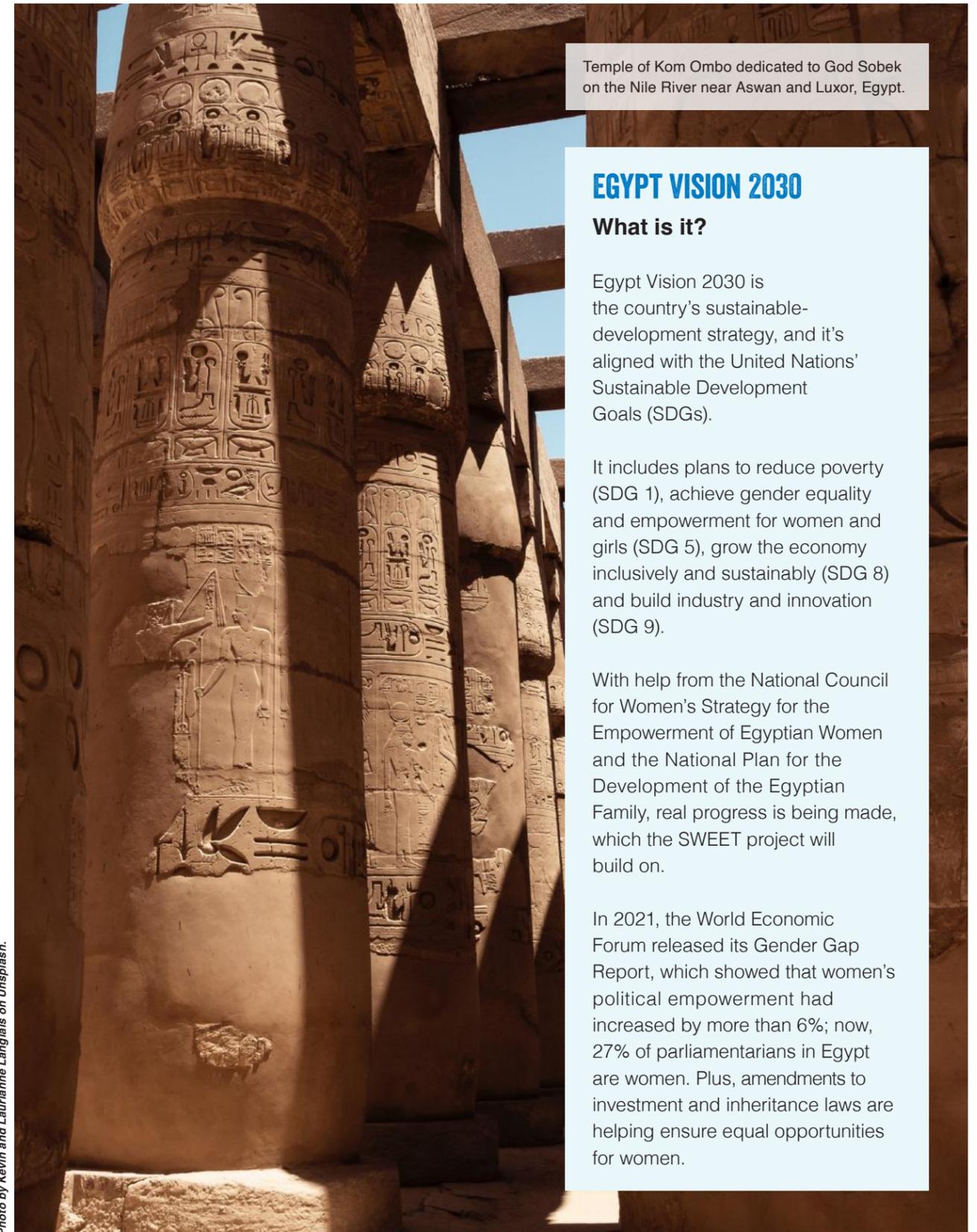
Peering into life near the pyramids.

THE GREAT PYRAMID AND THE GREAT SPHINX OF GIZA are two of the most famous wonders of the ancient world. For more than 4,500 years, they've stood supreme. While their structure is unchanging, the SWEET project is striving to knock down long-standing structural and social inequalities that prevent women from succeeding.

The program supports national efforts set out in **Egypt Vision 2030**. Launched by the Egyptian government in 2016, this is an ambitious agenda that aims to make poverty and inequality history.

Here are some key statistics that highlight the challenges and opportunities that exist for women:

- An October 2021 study by the *Egyptian Journal of Forensic Sciences* showed that 44% of women reported exposure to violence, a 6% increase compared to before the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Egyptian women's participation in the Egyptian labour force decreased from 24% in 2019 to 20% in 2021.
- Dahshour village in Giza will earn tourism status, bringing new customers and business to women working in the area.
- More than 31 million Egyptians (about one-third of the population) have been fully vaccinated against COVID-19. Egypt was the first country to provide a women-specific response during the pandemic.



Temple of Kom Ombo dedicated to God Sobek on the Nile River near Aswan and Luxor, Egypt.

EGYPT VISION 2030

What is it?

Egypt Vision 2030 is the country's sustainable-development strategy, and it's aligned with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

It includes plans to reduce poverty (SDG 1), achieve gender equality and empowerment for women and girls (SDG 5), grow the economy inclusively and sustainably (SDG 8) and build industry and innovation (SDG 9).

With help from the National Council for Women's Strategy for the Empowerment of Egyptian Women and the National Plan for the Development of the Egyptian Family, real progress is being made, which the SWEET project will build on.

In 2021, the World Economic Forum released its Gender Gap Report, which showed that women's political empowerment had increased by more than 6%; now, 27% of parliamentarians in Egypt are women. Plus, amendments to investment and inheritance laws are helping ensure equal opportunities for women.

Photo by Kevin and Laurianne Langlais on Unsplash.

Stories of change



A woman weaving a carpet in Egypt.

Photo by Jolyne D from Pixabay



Market in Cairo, Egypt.

Photo by Alex Azabache on Unsplash.

THREAD COUNT

In the project’s second year, you helped fund a carpet-industry value-chain assessment in Giza that highlights the best opportunities for women entrepreneurs. Here are its key findings.

SILK, COTTON AND WOOL CARPETS ARE BEAUTIFUL, high-end products that have been handmade in Egypt for centuries. The net profit of a silk carpet is roughly 4,875 Egyptian pounds (\$332), and Egypt’s carpet exports amount to USD\$324 million. It’s big business, but not for everyone.

More than 17,000 craftspeople work in the industry and are either

factory, or home-based. However, they depend entirely on the leading manufacturers to provide looms and materials for production.

“I often find myself in possession of faux silk – or ‘plastic silk,’ as we call it – because I don’t know how to source [real silk],” one craftspeople told us. Craftspeople usually don’t have access to the knowledge

and resources they need to sell their products, either. Instead, the manufacturers dominate sales and women are getting (rug) burned.

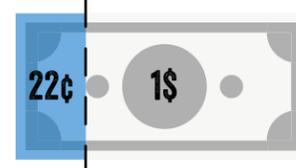
Women contribute 80% of the industry’s production value, yet, because of cultural norms that limit their activity outside the home, they are restricted to weaving, one of the most-poorly-compensated parts

of the value chain. Manufacturers wouldn’t disclose their wage information, but we know a gender pay gap exists.

Plus, the pandemic dealt a severe blow to tourism in Giza, which typically accounts for 90% of carpet sales.

Our carpet-industry value-chain assessment recommended two solutions, which you will support through this project:

The World Economic Forum estimates that in the Egyptian labour market, **WOMEN CURRENTLY EARN ON AVERAGE ONLY 22% THAT OF A MAN.**



In focus group discussions, men participating in this study agreed that they would hesitate to allow their wives to work outside the home. Meanwhile, the few women who work in factories experience challenges. “When we’re alone in the factory, we can prepare the loom together,” one woman said in a women’s focus group. “One [of us] will go up the ladder to fix it from the top, and the other will support it from the bottom. But we cannot do that when men are around – that would be improper.”

1. Help women identify market needs and trends so they can make more competitive, in-demand products.
2. Develop women’s business skills and connect them to services and new avenues through which to sell their products.

This assessment is invaluable to the project’s long-term success, and we’re excited to implement these learnings moving forward. **Stay tuned!**

CLIMBING THE LADDER

Cheryl Joseph, program manager at Plan International Canada, explains the SWEET “entrepreneurship ladder” approach.

“I REALLY ADMIRE THAT THIS PROJECT HAS A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH to addressing societal issues while also delivering in-depth specialized activities, training and support for women,” says Cheryl Joseph, who oversees the SWEET project. Cheryl has never worked on a project quite like this one. “It has the capacity to meaningfully change these women’s lives,” she says. “This project uses an ‘entrepreneurship ladder’ structure that takes women on a journey toward having greater control over their lives while also providing them with the skills they need to get there.”

STEP 1

The first rung of the ladder is women’s groups and Champions of Change clubs. In these settings, women and adolescents, like 15-year-old Radwa, learn from one another about gender equality and economic rights.

“I used to be an introvert – and alone,” shares Radwa, who was one of the 1,000 girls who participated in the clubs. “After attending the sessions, I started to express myself better and have better relations with my family. My family started to notice the change in my attitude and how I became more assertive. They even encouraged my sister to join the sessions.”

Cheryl adds that assertive communication is taught in a group setting so that women can learn together rather than from a professor. Take Sara, a 27-year-old mother who participated in the women’s group.

“I asked my husband to help me with the children,” says Sara. “I was really afraid that he would reject me. Surprisingly, he didn’t. He said ‘yes’ and started to help with their homework. This is mainly because of how I communicated with him. I asked him in an

assertive way.” Sara’s story demonstrates the power of women coming together to support one another, notes Cheryl. “Attending the group and developing connections with other women helps them believe they can change in their life and have agency. It’s also exciting how it shows that men in Egypt are willing to be allies.”

This step also involves working with men and boys as well as religious and community leaders to change mindsets and cultural norms that limit women’s freedom. “We’re meeting people where they’re at and bringing them on a journey toward gender equality at their own pace,” says Cheryl.

STEP 2

At this stage of the ladder, women are learning the financial-literacy and business skills required for the carpet sector.

THE TOP RUNG!

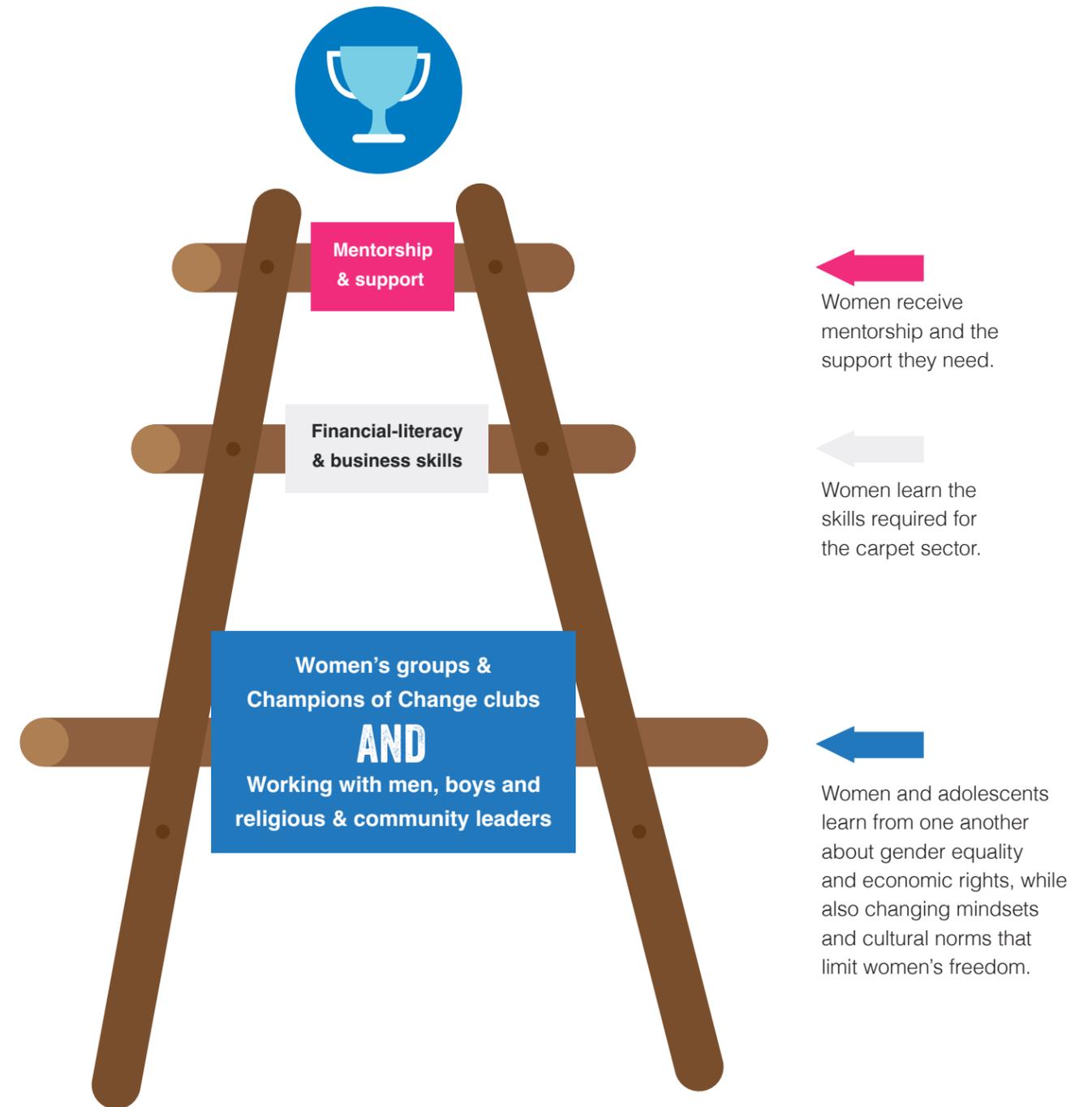
At this final stage, the women receive mentorship and the support they need to reach the top of the ladder and their ultimate career goals.



After attending the sessions, I started to express myself better and have better relations with my family.”

– Radwa, session participant

ENTREPRENEURSHIP LADDER



THE RUNDOWN

This past year was a foundational one. You helped change people's attitudes about women's roles in society. This shift is key in supporting women on their economic-empowerment journeys. **Here's what has been achieved so far:**



1,000 GIRLS

girls participated in Champions of Change clubs, where they learned from educators and peers about economic engagement and came together to build their leadership skills and self-esteem.*

1,000 BOYS

also participated in Champions of Change clubs, learning about gender equality – especially with regards to jobs and decision making – women's and girls' rights, preventing gender-based violence, embracing positive masculinity and splitting child care evenly.*

45 WOMEN'S GROUPS

were established to begin climbing the entrepreneurship ladder.

960 WOMEN

learned about gender equality, particularly equal economic rights.*



*Behavioural data about people's attitudes, thoughts and actions on subjects like gender equality are collected at the project's onset to form a baseline and inform the project's goals and activities. Data is collected again at the midway and end points of the project to measure its success. Data is also collected during learning sessions.



A Heroes & Champions of Change session, with girls, aged 15–17, discussing gender-based patterns.

“

At the forum, women will participate in advocacy training so they can talk to policymakers, which is pretty exciting. The training encourages women to raise their voices and explain their lived experiences to people in the private sector and ministry officials who can champion their cause within institutions.”

– Cheryl Joseph, program manager at Plan International Canada



Thank you!

Thank you for joining us in this effort to advance gender equality in Giza. Year three is on track to accomplish even more important work, including a women's entrepreneurship forum.

The SWEET project is funded in part by the Government of Canada.

A Heroes & Champions of Change session where girls aged 15-17 learn how to navigate gender issues and how to claim their rights.



The Boys' Guide outlines how to build safe spaces that value girls and women and strive to reduce all forms of socio-gender violence.



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