



Egyptian Governate of Qena keeps its social and environmental promises

The Governate of Qena in Egypt's Nile Valley is setting a shining example of social and environmental development in programmes ranging from ISO 14001 implementation to the empowerment of women, eradication of illiteracy and care of homeless children.



by Osama El Meligy

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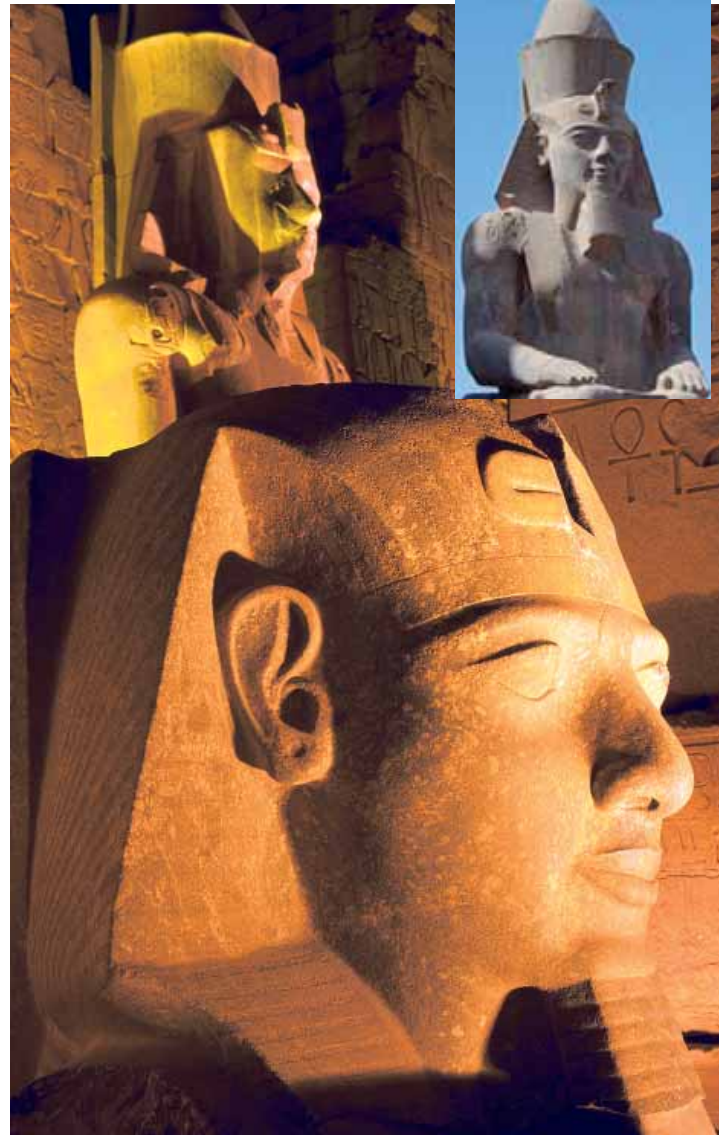
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For years, governments have been promising more than they can deliver, and delivering more than they can afford

Paul Martin,
former Prime Minister of Canada.

Fortunately, the notion expressed by Paul Martin is changing thanks in part to the adoption of quality and environmental management systems by local government administrations intent on better managing their activities, satisfying local community needs and expectations, and striving to *deliver* on their promises.

A good example is the Governate of Qena, comprising the historic city of Qena and its surroundings on the Nile, north of Luxor in Egypt, and famous for the ruins of the Temple of Dandara, and the Cedi abd Elreheem Alqenawy Mosque.



Although most people think of Egypt as the land of the ancient pharaohs, I want to share a modern success story about environmental management system implementation (EMS), culminating in Qena's ISO 14001 certification – something of a landmark in the development of this historic country.

Change from within

In 2002, the Governor of Qena decided to launch an ISO 14001-based EMS implementation programme in tandem with social development which would attempt to include “all unemployed citizens in a project to help create job opportunities, while encouraging people to maintain their own progress at the same time.”

However, to develop a good management system, the change had to come from within, so an inside-out approach was adopted. The starting point was to implement an institutional development programme for good government. This would provide a solid base from which to involve the community.

Qena focused on four areas of development:

- institutional development for good government;
- sustainable economic development;
- inclusive social development; and
- sustainable environmental development.



The Cedi abd Elreheem Alqenawy Mosque in Qena, a token of the city's Islamic and Arabic heritage, was renovated as part of its environmental and economic development programme, which included ISO 14001 implementation and certification.



The ruins of the Temple of Dandara near Qena, also known as the House of Hathor, the goddess of love, joy and beauty.

1. Institutional development for good government

This first phase took 18 months of hard work. The project focused on applying good governance principles and establishing clear new concepts for the Qena Governate.

These were transparency, rule of law, accountability, participation and, most importantly, a programme to strengthen citizens' confidence in local

administrative units and promote a sense of belonging.

The project has already benefited the local infrastructure. Improvements can be seen in sanitary water drainage and in the electricity and telephone networks. Large green areas have been planted with trees and shrubs, residences and government offices have been renovated, roads and alleys repaved and street lights added.

And some streets have been significantly widened with floral central reservations.

One can already see the changes at the entrance to the city in the shape of an impressive new statue of a woman holding a globe with the inscription “Welcome to Qena!”

2. Sustainable economic development

The next step was to focus on economic development. Two large industrial zones were established in Qaft Center and Nagaa Hamadi Center, in addition to many new factories, a Nile shipyard and a crafts compound in Al-Salhia. These initiatives are expected to create over 1 000 jobs.

3. Inclusive social development

Naturally, the development programme has had a significant effect on the community. One of the main achievements is enabling women to play a bigger role in society.

Qena became the first Arab city to obtain ISO 14001 certification

Now, women work and participate more actively in city life than ever before. More women are being hired by the governate, and a girls' sports centre has been built complete with gymnasium, swimming pool, sauna, basketball and volleyball courts, dining room, and billiard tables.

An illiteracy eradication project has also implemented aimed at eliminating the problem within three years. The first phase, completed in June 2004, saw 5 333 new classrooms opened, 6 000 teachers employed, and most remarkably, the eradication of illiteracy among 133 310 citizens. The second phase of the project is now underway.



Much has been achieved during Qena's institutional development programme, conducted in tandem with the city's ISO 14001 implementation. Among benefits to the local infrastructure, several main thoroughfares have been widened and made more attractive by the addition of floral central reservations.

The streets of Qena have undergone a transformation, with repaving, widening, lighting, floral displays and regular street cleaning. Above, a new statue welcomes visitors at the entrance to the city

public health. Although the project has been unique to Qena, it can be replicated in other Egyptian cities suffering from the same waste problem and lack of cleaning services.

The development programme has had a significant effect on the community

A survey of homeless children was conducted and measures implemented to address the problem. They are now cared for by a nongovernmental organization which supplies them with health, educational, entertainment and sports services, in addition to the basic pre-requisites for survival such as shelter, food and clothing. As a result, the phenomenon of the street children has totally disappeared from the Qena Governate.

4. Sustainable environmental development

Like many Egyptian cities, Qena suffered from accumulations of solid waste, producing toxic gases and substances harmful to public health and the surrounding environment.

However, the implementation of a system to remove all solid wastes and clean up the city has already helped to improve

In line with its ISO 14001-based EMS, Qena's waste management project has involved dividing the city into residential areas, establishing a fertilizer factory, monitoring and follow-up, identifying dumping areas, collecting and transporting household waste and cleaning the streets. The success of the programme has been supported by awareness campaigns, and of course substantial funding.

Arab Administrative Experience; Man of the 21st Century Prize for Qena Governor, Adel Labeeb, awarded by the International Centre of Biographies at Cambridge, England, and the distinction Man of 2001 awarded by the American Centre for Biographies in 2001.

Egypt's largest newspaper *Al-Ahram*, in its annual environmental assessment for 2001,



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Tribute to hard work

The results of this hard work are there for all to see. When on 24 March 2004, Qena became the first Arab city to obtain ISO 14001 certification, this achievement was a tribute to the endeavours of many people. Since then, numerous other awards have been made to the governate and the governor of Qena.

Notable among these are the 2004 Mohammad bin Rashed Al-Maktoum Arab Management Prize for Distinguished

nominated the governor as Man of the Environment, Qena as Governate of the Environment, and Houd 10 Street as The Most Beautiful Street in Egypt. Praise indeed!

ISO 14001-based EMS implementation offers a great opportunity to nations rich or poor, developed or developing. Qena, a small governate in a Egypt, is a shining example. •