

## Establishment of Integrated Districts: A Tangible Step Towards IWRM

Over the past thirty years, the Ministry's role has widely expanded and today encompasses everything from managing a full range of water resources; to handling competing demands from industrial and municipal users; to tackling drainage issues; monitoring water quality; and addressing environmental concerns. This resulted in the creation of numerous specialized departments, sectors, and entities within the MWRI, each with specific mandates and expertise. While addressing specific needs this organizational structure and culture hindered cross-sector coordination at both central and local levels.

Today the MWRI acknowledges that water resources can best be managed with an integrated approach in which specialized entities coordinate among themselves and with competing users to solve complex, multi-dimensional issues that can no longer be tackled individually. To that end, the MWRI has decided to simplify by gradually dissolving the Inspectorate administrative level and by giving greater decision-making authority to newly established Integrated Water Management Districts (IWMDs) in which previously distinct irrigation, drainage and other MWRI District divisions are merged.



Between 2001 and 2003 four pilot IWMDs were established. Initial progress was slow, as is to be expected with any major institutional change, but now these pilot IWMDs are demonstrating benefits to both MWRI managers and water users.

- Shared resources, equipment and skills
- Streamlined channels of communication
- Decentralized, simplified decision-making

Encouraged by this experience, the MWRI requested USAID's continued support to extend this integrated approach over five entire Directorates. This challenge, of establishing 27 new IWMDs covering more than one million feddans or about 15 % of Egypt's irrigated area, began in October 2004 under the LIFE-IWRM Project.



In just six months, significant progress has been achieved.

- The organizational structure of IWMDs has been clarified, along with the roles and responsibilities of various sections.
- Boundaries of the IWMDs have been settled.
- Directors and section heads have been appointed for each IWMD.
- Staff has been reassigned from other MWRI entities.
- Offices and equipment have been allocated for the IWMDs.

The LIFE-IWRM Project provides on-going technical assistance and support to all 27 IWMDs in cooperation with various partners at Ministry headquarters, as well as through the project's two regional offices. This support encompasses everything from drafting and vetting dozens of Ministerial decrees; to supplying office, computer and water monitoring equipment; as well as providing staff training and performance monitoring for all 27 IWMDs.

