The objective of the project is to empower local communities by setting up small-scale village enterprises that will produce furniture items, crina and poultry feed from palm midribs and palm tree residues. It aims to capitalise on the success of the pilot project that took place in the Al Qayat village in Minya governorate.

The inclusive business venture

In the last few decades, changes in the lifestyle and consumption patterns in Egyptian villages have lead to neglect of the secondary products of palm trees, which, among others, has contributed to un-employment and relocation of village youth. Palm midribs are generally treated as an agricultural waste and are disposed of except for a small portion that is used for manufacturing baskets.

EGYCOMs main objective with this project is to use residual products from palm trees, such as palm midribs, to help villages rediscover their own resources and create sustainable job opportunities. The project will focus on the production of a variety of furniture items and parquet boards in a small-scale industrial establishment using palm midrib mats, which will be produced in the households of the villages. The project will also produce carina and poultry feed in small-scale factories using other palm residues.

The production process when using the palm midribs for other products is labor intensive, which, therefore, helps create sustainable job opportunities in villages and limit rural-to-urban migration, while the equipment used is designed specifically for production in villages.
Commercial drivers
Among Egyptian middle class there is a growing demand for high quality furniture and parquet boards made from authentic local materials. The successful marketing of the furniture and parquet boards will rely on the competitive advantage linked to the uniqueness and novelty of these products in the market. The products from the palm midrib are expected to be ranked as a green line of products, adding to its attractiveness, also for environmentally conscious customers in Europe.

Given that no Arab country lacks palm plantations, the possibility for replication of EGYCOMs project, both nationally and regionally, is also significant.

Development impacts
The main benefits of the project will be the empowerment of low-income people at the village-level in Egypt by supporting the set-up of small-scale village enterprises, which will provide a chance for the poor, especially women and youth, to find sustainable job opportunities. This will, in turn, help reverse the trend of youth migration and enable people to participate in the development of their local communities. Making use of a plentiful palm tree resource that would otherwise be discarded or burnt also addresses important health and waste management challenges in Egyptian villages.

Innovation
Innovation lies in the fact that a neglected resource that is locally and abundantly available is used as a substitute for imported wood. In addition, industrial processes and machines have been invented to suit village-level production in Upper Egypt. This includes the use of appropriate technologies and machines that makes it possible to work at a small-scale in the villages beginning from the house hold.

Objectives of IAP engagement
The IAP project will focus on:

- Recruiting and training of workers and youth
- Establishing the furniture, crina and poultry feed factories
- Conducting workshops and seminars to raise the awareness of villagers
- Refining the manufacturing processes
- Designing furniture pieces
- Initiating production in the three factories
- Testing the products
- Sales and marketing activities

Innovations Against Poverty is funded by the Swedish Government as part of its Business for Development (B4D) programme, which contains proposals for new forms of dialogue and collaboration with industry. The purpose is to mobilise resources and encourage companies to develop their core activities so that they can contribute to better conditions for poor people in a more efficient manner.