

EGYPT

Enhancing Child Participation in Schools

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1. Introduction

This report covers the project “enhancing child participation in schools.” which is of great significance for the CRC Egyptian team batch 18. Its significance lies in the fact that children’s participation is a fundamental human right that most Egyptian children are deprived of. The child’s voice in Egypt is not heard or valued. Most teachers and parents in Egypt deal with children as passive citizens and do not involve them in making decisions that could help them build up their personalities. Also, Egypt witness nowadays vast political changes that would hopefully pave the way for a new era based on justice, democracy and freedom. These changes require adults to give the children the whole opportunity to practice their right of expressing their opinions freely and to help them participate in building up a new society based on democracy and freedom. Therefore, the CRC Egyptian team batch 18 has planned and took operational steps toward reaching this significant purpose “Enhancing Child participation in schools.”

2. Frame of Reference

Human rights are those rights which are essential to live as human beings – basic standards without which people cannot survive and develop in dignity. They are inherent to the human person, inalienable and universal.

Children’s rights are defined in numerous ways, including a wide spectrum of civil, cultural, economic, social and political rights. Rights tend to be of two general types: those advocating for children as autonomous persons under the law and those placing

a claim on society for protection from harms perpetrated on children because of their dependency. These have been labelled as the right of empowerment and as the right to protection¹. One Canadian organization categorizes children's rights into three categories:

- Provision: Children have the right to an adequate standard of living, health care, education and services, and to play and recreation. These include a balanced diet, a warm bed to sleep in, and access to schooling.
- Protection: Children have the right to protection from abuse, neglect, exploitation and discrimination. This includes the right to safe places for children to play; constructive child rearing behaviour, and acknowledgment of the evolving capacities of children.
- Participation: Children have the right to participate in communities and have programs and services for themselves. This includes children's involvement in libraries and community programs, youth voice activities, and involving children as decision-makers.²

Egypt was among the first countries to sign the United Nations Child Right Convention in December 1989 and ratified it in 6 July 1990. It further declared its first decade for the child protection (1989-1999)

We believe that the CRC has to be disseminated among parents, teachers, school admin, other authorities and stakeholders who work relating to child. There is a close relationship between education and democracy as education is crucial to the development of a democratic society, democratic culture and respect for human rights. Students' participation increase child rights at the school level and democracy at the national level.

The Child's voice in Egypt is not heard or valued. Teachers and parents are used to giving orders and expect the children and students to obey without further discussion because they think that they have more experience in life. Also there is no integration of the children rights and the curricula in the educational system, the parents, teachers and administration don't encourage the students to freely express themselves in classes or at home. Therefore, our team will focus on article 12.

The project purpose is to influence on our students' lives. Empowering the student participation, building up his/her personality, increasing his/her involvement in all school activities is the overall target that could promote the idea of considering the child an active citizen, who can practice democratic values effectively.

Our team is very concerned with sustainability and integration. We want to build upon the outputs and efforts of the previous batches who have been working in Port Said, Egypt. In order to have a strong sustainable network, we have planned to establish an institutional entity called the Community Development Association CDA which is going to be is an essential pillar of our project that will be a corner stone of CRC

1 Mangold, S.V. (2002) "Transgressing the Border Between Protection and Empowerment for Domestic Violence Victims and Older Children: Empowerment as Protection in the Foster Care System," New England School of Law. Retrieved 4/3/08.

2 "Respecting children's rights at home", Children and Families in Canada. Retrieved 2/23/08.

projects in Port Said that will enable all the change agents to have multiplier effect and build the capacity of new change agents.

3. Purpose

Improving Child participation in schools.

4. Methodology (Activities)

1. Planning Stage

a) Holding a team meeting to discuss the project plan and agree on a strategy to be adopted with the target groups throughout the project.

B) Designing and developing some CRC materials and tools e.g. manuals, questionnaires, brochures, evaluation sheets to be used throughout the training project.

C) Conducting orientation seminars for teachers, students, NGOs, university staff members, government officials, and school administrators to raise their awareness of CRC and involve them in our project.

D) Creating a Facebook group for the batch team to facilitate the communication between the team members.

E) Collecting official approvals necessary for facilitating the project.

2. Implementation Stage

A) Meetings:

To ensure the smooth and effective development of the program, a number of important meetings were held:

- The team members met in the first week of every month in order to monitor the progress of the CRC training project.

- Regular meetings were held with the principal of Nahdet Misr primary school and Alkhansaa primary school to agree on a training protocol of their teachers, students, and social workers.
- Regular meetings with the former change agents in Port Said to discuss the idea of forming and registering of community development association for child development. The name of this CDA that was agreed upon was” Blossoms” (or Bara’emin Arabic) which implies the children and youth. The mission, vision, activities, logo, motto, were discussed and written in a proposal.
- Five meetings were held with the Ministry of Social Affairs representative to register a CDA called “Baraam”.
- Three meetings was held with the dean of Port Said Faculty of Education and the head department of curriculum and instruction to plan for a CRC workshop which targets the undergraduate students (pre-service teachers), post graduate students (in-service teachers), and the faculty staff members.
- The network (Port Said change agents) organized a meeting between our mentors: Professor Ulf Leo and Port Said Governor. The meeting lasted for an hour and discussed the following:
 - Child Rights projects implemented in Port Said so far.
 - Number and names of schools targeted in the training project.
 - Registration of the CDA “Bara’em”
 - Support that can be offered by the Governor to such a project.
- A meeting with the Board of Parents and Trustees of Port Said International Schools including the President of Port Said University (Dr Atef Alam Aldeen). This meeting resulted in many great achievements that guarantee the sustainability of CRC projects:
 - Facilitating the registration of “Bara’em” that will integrate the efforts of change agents and guarantee the sustainability of their projects.
 - Emphasizing the role of Port Said International School in offering support to many schools in Port Said and how parents and students can help in this.
 - Integrating child rights in pre-service teachers’ curricula in both the Faculty of Education and faculty of kindergarten)
 - Signing a protocol (MOU) with the ministry of Education which aims at training and capacity building to a fixed number of teachers in public schools annually. This protocol is to be offered for free by Port Said International Schools.

B) Training Workshops and Seminars:

A number of seminars and workshops that promote the rights of the child were conducted:

1. Conducting “Educators as Change Agents” Workshop at Port Said International Schools:

Venue: Port Said International Schools, Multi Media Room

No of trainees: 28 teachers and university staff

Target group: new teachers from PIS, 6 teachers from Nahdat Misr primary school, 3 teachers from Alkhansaa primary school, 2 teachers from Lycee school, 5 members NGO (Alshanak Ya bady members) , 3 staff members from the faculty of Education.

Training procedures:

- A pre & post questionnaire was given to participants to check the training impact (see appendix 1).
- Group activities, reflections, posters, drama, discussions, games, role play, and many other activities were delivered in 9 hours training. The group was very motivated. The group joined our electronic platform to communicate after the training and know more about what have they tried in their classes.
- The group created a Facebook page called” Bara’em Association for Child Development”(see a screenshot of the interface of the group at appendix 2) that joins all the beneficiaries who received training with us. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/475405022567293/> The group joined our electronic platform to communicate after the training and know more about what have they tried in their classes. They were asked to fill in an evaluation form to give their feedback on the training. The evaluation form is available on the following link:https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1H4Vdxx61sc2XfbuokDTGZKG-tvW_TcdNLx8F-Vcuell/viewform.
- Also a website was a created to announce on our activities: **Bara’em.wikispaces.com”**

Resources kept for documentation: photos of announcement, flipcharts, illustrations, attendance sheets, sample of pre and post questionnaire and training, pictures of the training.

Follow-up:

The same group received another training in Dec 2013.



2. Conducting “Together We Learn” Training Program

This program was an inclusive program that provided the children of grades five and six skills of: Computer, English, Mental Math and Soft Skills. The team planned to have 50 students to join the program and luckily 57 students joined the program. In addition, teachers from their schools joined them to be with their students and to offer assistance to the trainers. The team divided students into three groups and had a roster. A few number of PIS teachers were recruited to help the team members in teaching Math, computer, and English. The aim of providing students with those courses is to motivate and attract them to be part of all the next courses that belong to Bara'em association for child development. The soft skills that were given to the students aimed at increasing their participation. It included: presentation, leadership, and communication skills, discussions about student council and team work, time management, and democratic values, and a lot of CRC exercises were applied with the children. The course were delivered in three days and ended by a sport day at the school court and many fun activities and talent shows performed by the children under the title” Bara'em Got Talent” in which they were supposed to present their different talents. The students received attendance certificates from Bara'em association to motivate and encouraged them to join the coming programs offered by Bara'em Association for Child Development.



3. Conducting “Educators as Change Agents” Workshop at the Faculty of Education

No. of trainees: 28 undergraduate students and university staff members

E platforms:

- The group joined the Facebook page that joins all the beneficiaries who received training with the team :<https://www.facebook.com/groups/475405022567293/> •
- Also a website was created to announce on our activities: Bara'em.wikispaces.com

Training summary:

- **Tools and Materials used:** A pre & post questionnaire was administered to participants before and after the training to check its impact on them, flipcharts, PowerPoint presentation, whiteboard and markers, a ball.
- **Methods used:** Group work activities, reflections, role play, discussions, games, role play.
- **Duration:** The training lasted for 9 hours with one break in the middle.

Follow-up:

- The same group received another training in Dec 2013.

4. Conducting “Critical and Scientific thinking” training Workshop in PIS

The training aimed at recruiting some students to be change agents and help them to discover how to avoid heuristics and fallacies in their judgement. The training started with a chart given to students to write down some notes when they watch a movie called 12 Angry Men which is available on the following link <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RelOJfFIyp8>. The movie tells the story of a change agent who changed

the point of view of jury and asked them to give more time and think deeper in the boy (18 years) they were sending to death.

5. Conducting Workshops about CRC in Vietnam

In the light of the team's visit to Vietnam, some training workshops about CRC in Vietnam compared to CRC in Egypt were conducted in both PIS and the faculty of Education, Port Said University. The workshops targeted PIS teachers, students, undergraduate and post graduate student teachers at the faculty of education, and university staff members.



6. Celebrating the “Together we learn” training program

We invited the school leaders of the two participants’ schools, the students’ parents, and the teachers’ to participate the end of “Together we learn” training program that targeted students of both Nahdet Misr and Alkhansaa schools. The celebration performed by students to show the audience the true value of child participation.



7. Conducting a Workshop in Nile TESOL Conference

In order to spread the issue of CRC and child participation, the team conducted a workshop entitled “Positive Discipline and Child rights” in Nile TESOL Conference in Cairo. The workshop was attended by 45 teachers from different cities in Egypt.



C-Conducting a play about Children's Voice

The children who acted in this play are a part of an NGO called "sonaa El-haya" or "Life Creators". They were 15 children (boys and girls). The children along with the director of the play "Hossam" participated in choosing the name of this play. They came up with the name "esma'ona" or "listen to us" for the play. The play tells about four children who suffer from the on ongoing disregard of their parents to their opinions and concerns. As a result, they sought the help of their school colleagues who decided to help them in collaboration with their teacher wh was a change agent. They started to make a plan that can help their parents change the way they think towards their children. The play was attended by more than 300 people (teachers- CRC team members- parents - kids). It was performed at the stage of "Port Said Secondary School for girls". The children were very proud and delighted to see that warm applauses they received from the audience.



Resources kept for documentation: Both the making of the play and its performances were documented by photos and videos uploaded on YouTube.

D) Monitoring the progress of our project with our mentor during his visit to the two schools: Alkhansaa School and Nahdet Misr School

In order to monitor the progress of our project, our mentor has visited the two schools we targeted in our CRC training: Alkhansaa's school and Nahdet Misr. There was a welcome arrival to the mentor and our team at 7: 30 am in the school playground. The mentor and our team had a welcome meeting with the headmaster in his office. Then, the mentor had a school tour in which he watched different classes: multimedia room, painting, and home economics. After that, the mentor had a meeting with Bara'em's

team, school council, and administrators in the school library. Finally, the visit was closed by a farewell meeting. The mentor has expressed his admiration to the vibrant and energetic atmosphere among school staff and students.

After visiting Alkhansaa's school, the mentor visited Nahdet Misr School. Similarly, there was a welcome arrival to the mentor and our team at 7:30 am in the school playground. The mentor and our team had a meeting also with student's council. Then, the mentor had a school tour in which he watched different classes and activities: multimedia room, science lab, painting, and home economics. After that, the mentor had a meeting with Bareme's team, school council and some of the trained teachers. Finally, the visit was closed by a farewell meeting.

5. Results



- Integrating the efforts of all Port Said's CRC change agents by registering for a CDA called "Bara'em" that will guarantee the sustainability and integration of all efforts.
- Adding the board of parents and trustees to Bara'em's Child Development Association. A board of parents and trustees is an elected entity by the school to help the school administration and to link between parents and the school. It was very important to get them on board and involve them in the new vision of the schools in which we are implementing the project.
- Creating an online network that connects all the new change agents by adding them to a Facebook group called "Bara'em's Association for Child Development".
- Training some teachers in Nahdet Misr and Alkhansaa schools in Port Said about CRC in general and Child participation in particular.

- Training some pre-and in-service teachers, school administrators, students, NGOs, about CRC in general and Child participation in particular.
- Changing perceptions and attitudes of most of the stakeholders regarding CRC and Child participation.
- Involving the students of Nahdet Misr and Alkhansaa schools in a lot of CRC activities that raised their awareness about their rights, increased their participation, enhanced their communication, presentation, decision making, and leadership skills.
- Recruiting the same students who received the training courses to be Bara'em's change agents.
- Serious steps have been taken in registering the NGO of Bara'em.
- Supporting Nahdet Misr School by sending useful books to the library donated by PIS and some teachers.

6. Discussion and Reflection

We believe that the dream of registering for “Braem Association for Child Development” which finally came true is our dear achievement that we are highly proud of and pleased with. Although that this growing entity is still under establishment, its name reached a lot of influential educational places in Port Said such as the Faculty of Education, and a popular NGO in Port Said “For you my Country” or “AshanekyaBalady”. Through this growing entity, we could unify all the efforts exerted in CRC field and arrange regular activities and programs under its umbrella. We are eager to expand the activities and programs that belong to this uprising entity.

We were able to attract the attention of a lot of teachers, NGOs, Faculty staff members to child rights in Egypt. The trained groups were very motivated and enthusiastic to know about the project and to provide solutions and recommendations that could help achieve the purpose of the project. Stakeholders also played a great role in facilitating and supporting our project. Without their help, this project would not have become a reality.

Through the various engaging CRC activities we implemented on children, we believe that we managed to attract the attention of a lot of children to an area they have never known or practised before. The teachers and NGOs who attended were very attracted to these unique kinds of activities. The other courses we gave to children also managed to persuade them to join any coming programs or events that belong to “Baraa'm”. In addition, the play “Listen to us” also managed to shed the light on a lot of NGO children's potentials. They become more self-confident and proud of being actors and have talents. The children through this drama also managed to draw the attention of the audience that included their parents to the importance of listening to them.

On the personal level, the project helped us to be more informed about CRC. It helped us also develop our leadership and communication skills. We felt that we have grown professionally and discovered our strength points, potentials, and abilities to make a real change in our society.

Despite the achievements the project has brought, there were some challenges that the team has faced. One of the biggest challenges is the resistance to change among some teachers and school administrators at the beginning of the program implementation. In addition, the eruption of 30th Revolution and the difficult procedures of registering for Bara'em association. However, the newly born Egypt that we hoped for gave us a strong desire and ambition to overcome all the challenges that faced us. We were eager to implement our change project and participate in creating our new society that we hope to be based on democracy and freedom of expression. We believed that our child-based project could help shape the future of many children by drawing the attention of many educators to activate their role in society.

7. Way Forward

According to the plan, the team still has a lot of activities that needs to be implemented. During the implementation of the program, we found some points that we need to focus more on. To target the child, family, school and community. The team will work on the following points:

1) **Targeting parents:**

We are planning to train parents on CRC and child Participation.

2) **Targeting more NGOs:**

We are planning to target more members from different NGOs at Port Said, those NGOs are working with children from different school. The good thing about NGOs that it is more sustainable to work with as the children they are targeting stay under the umbrella of this NGO for a long time .They have got a good access to the students and have many programs during summer.

3) **Targeting more teachers in the selected schools:**

We will target new groups of teachers to implement in the same schools. Actually those teachers who were trained with us are attracting a good number of teachers.

4) **Going deep with those teachers:**

We will deepen the training of the teachers we have already trained by giving them extra courses on CRC and child participation.

5) Conducting more workshops at Port Said faculty of Education:

More workshops on CRC and child Participation will be conducted with the pre-and in-service teachers and staff members of the faculty of Education.

6) Conducting a workshop at the Port Said Faculty of kindergarten:

The faculty of kindergarten in Port Said is an important place that we need to target for CRC training workshops.

7) Monitoring the progress of registering for “Bara'em”:

We still have to do many administrative procedures to finalize the registration of CDA. We are receiving a very good support from the former change agents in various dimensions. And with the whole team and the spirit of group work we think that we can target more and more children and teachers.

8) Activating the role Students Council

As most of schools are not activating the role of the students Council, we agreed with the school administrators we are working with that we have a dual program implemented with both students and Social Workers to let them both know how to get the most benefit out of Students Council and how to utilize. Exchanging visits with active School Council are planned.

9) Targeting the media:

A seminar is to be held on Port Said media center with mixed groups of parents, teachers, students, faculty staff members, and stakeholders. We plan to host the National T.V to report this seminar.

8. List of References

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9. Appendices

Appendix (1)

Questionnaire

Name.....

What's your definition of the child?	
What do you know about child rights?	
What's your definition of child rights particularly the right of Education?	
What's your view of corporal punishment? Are you for or against it? And why?	
How can you develop the following terms according to their importance to the child: Provision- Participation-Protection	
What do you suggest as an educator that can help increase child participation?	

Appendix (2)

Screenshot of the Facebook Group

