

Title of Egypt Change Projects

Batches: 15, 17,18, and 21

- Abuse in Kindergarten and primary schools
- The child Rights to freedom of expression
- Enhancing Child participation in schools.
- Infusing CRC in Teacher Education: Teaching / learning management

Change Agents of Egyptian network

Mustafa Mahmoud, Samar Mustafa, Mona Gad, Manal Alsehrawy, Sherif Imam, Maha Elkiki, Hossam Samy, Noha Ekram, YaraShokry , Omnia Nasr Allah, Reham Rabie ,and Mahmoud Mohasseb.

Introduction:

Egypt was among the first countries to sign the United Nations child rights convention (CRC) in December 1989 and ratified it on the 6th of July 1990. It further declared its first decade for the child protection (1989-1999). The promulgation of child law number 12/1996 is considered one of the most important accomplishments of the national council for childhood and motherhood in Egypt. In 2008 amendments were made to the child law, to adopt a rights-based approach for Egyptian children deprived of their rights to education, health, social care, and especially the right to family care.

The political situation in the Middle East has created instability over the decade, a situation that has affected Egypt in spite of the number of activities for development.

Egypt has made significant progress over the past decade toward achieving the millennium development goals with substantial gains in child survival rates, school enrolment, immunization coverage, and accesses to safety drinking water.

We believe that the Child Rights Convention has to be disseminated among concerned stakeholders; decision makers, parents, teachers, school admin, students ...etc.

Education is crucial to the development of good citizens, as there is a strong relationship between education and raising good citizens who practice their human rights and participate actively in the development of both their local community and country.

Child participation “Article 12, CRC” is the area that has influence on our students’ lives especially after the Egyptian Revolution that committed a change in all aspects of life of the Egyptian people. Empowering the students’ participation, building up their personality, increasing their 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. If we, adults, believe that we can change, we could change our attitudes, concepts and beliefs to see children as subjects, competent actors that are guaranteed freedom of expression, instead of looking upon them as objects. This will make them enjoy a better future where they will have space to build their society on principles of good citizenship.

It is through the development of participatory learning processes such as questioning, expressing views and having their opinions taken seriously, children will acquire the skills and competences to develop their thinking and to exercise judgment on various issues that will confront them as they play active roles in their community.

Based on the above-mentioned context, Egypt CRC projects focused on students’ participation to create a child friendly school environment, where student voices are heard. The following sections in this chapter will present the main implemented activities, results, reflections, and future plans.

Current status:

As we started the project, the awareness of the CRC on the formal (governmental) level was very little, it was only protocols and agreements but no real implementation on the ground and when it comes to people on the street this awareness is almost zero especially between teachers and parents, so it was normal at that time that our main concern was to spread the concept of the CRC. We started to plan how to approach the targeted groups (teachers, students and parents) under the 25th January 2011 revolution circumstances and the security issues by getting the necessary formal approvals and we used all of our connections to get them. And then it comes to the planning and setting strategies of how we will train our targeted groups and what to teach them. We decided that what our targeted groups need to learn was a general idea about the Child Rights Convention and its articles, they also needed to know that they don't have to accept all its articles and it's up to them as Egyptians to choose whatever articles that suit their traditions and needs. We also decided that they needed to learn new ways and be armed with new tools that will help them to implement the CRC with their students inside the classrooms and at homes with their children. Visits to the targeted schools were made, workshops were held and activities inside schools with students were conducted, a new spirit was looming.

Looking back to our journey we think that we took the first step but so many steps are still ahead. We had our ups and downs. If we want to highlight our ups they would be mainly that we managed to encourage teachers and school administrations to attend our workshops and convince them "for a certain level" to give a space (even if it is a small space) to their students to participate and express themselves through conducting different activities such as drawing, acting plays, morning broadcasting and also planting. It was also great to see the smile on the students' faces when they were participating, to see the surprise when they were listening to us as if we were opening a window to a new world or even when some of the parents came to us asking for advice or demanding to keep doing these activities with their children, it was really a rewarding feeling. We also consider the approval of our formal authorities on the program and their support (even if it is at a small level) especially for a central country such as our country, a success. Now a part of our community knows something about CRC and this is good. But we didn't go through the road without any obstacles, and the biggest one that we faced was the strong resistance from teachers and parents to the change as they felt that they are losing control over their children or misleading these rights by the children. We discovered that we can conduct workshops and bring people to listen to us but nothing was changing, we need to get to their hearts and their minds. We also discovered that change is a long way process that needs us to be patient and persistent. Other blocks on the road were regulations and curricula, it maybe important to work on a school level or even on a street level, but to legislate or to write new curricula speed up the change process.

The steps towards securing the CRC path in Egypt were gradual moves presented in a variety of activities designed and implemented by each batch building on the previous efforts. Some of these activities were:

Delivering training workshops and seminars on CRC in general with a focus on the right of children' participation and how to increase it at schools.

The target groups are: students, teachers, administrators from many schools, and staff members and student teachers from the University.

The network was very concerned with sustainability and integration. We wanted to build upon the outputs and efforts of the previous batches .we are proud to be a strong sustainable network that integrated the efforts of the batches. The network depended on utilizing the multiplier effect, recruit and build the capacity of new change agents to achieve the targeted dissemination.

One of the network achievement is forming and registering a community development association (NGO) for child development named Blossoms" (or Bara3em in Arabic). Bara3em is offering a lot of training sessions and activities to children and the involved stakeholders as teachers and parents.Through this growing entity, we managed to unify all the efforts exerted in CRC field and arrange regular activities and programs under its umbrella.

Conducting an International conference: "Towards A Child Friendly School" that aimed at raising awareness of CRC and introducing an implementation model of CRC in education since the core of batch 21's project is to encourage the implementation of CRC in teachers' education for which the major problem is that CRC is seen as merely a legislative package of laws, a starting point was to adopt an implementation model that introduces CRC in applicable form. According to the UNICEF definition, "*means of transporting the concept of Child Rights into classroom practice and school management* :*(a) participation of all children. (b) relevant education to children needs for livelihood knowledge. (c) healthy and safe for children emotional well-being (d)gender-responsive, fostering gender equality ,and (e)actively engaged with students, family and community.*

Thus, conference provides a central activity that creates a suitable environment for working with: (a) Faculties, as the conference was discussing a model for the educational implementations of CRC when adopted first and foremost will create ownership which is a core for sustainability, involvement in preparing, evaluating and editing papers for the conference bulletin would increase the targeted group awareness , motivate to produce more literature in this field , and would lead to infusion of CRC in teachers' education without breaking norms , (b) In-service teachers are invited to present workshops , to submit research papers or to attend for free, they are targeted by a promotional workshop on child friendly schools model giving them the opportunity to reflect on and evaluate their school and their practices against a criteria, and a targeted school was chosen to be developed as a child friendly school. (c) Pre-service teachers were also targeted by a promotional workshop on child friendly school as the topic of the coming conference held by the faculty, invited to

voluntarily participate and invited to attend for free. As the conference provided an opportunity to work with all the targeted groups, it was also a great opportunity for working together as a network of change agents and not as a separated team of three increasing our space of action, and catalyzing a change environment creating awareness of CRC and its educational implementation even to the local community through media coverage before, during and post the conference.

Dr Ulf Leo and Lena Andersson also attended the conference and participated on both tracks. All CRC batches from Cairo, Mansoura, and Port Said was represented in the conference as attendees or by conducting workshops.

- **Results**

The targeted faculties adopted "Towards a Child Friendly School" conference and all worked on the conference organization, the evaluation, editing and publishing papers at the conference bulletin, presenting 15 research papers and two workshops at the conference, and working on the conference recommendation and its application, and creating partnership with the ministry of education for the implementation of these recommendations. Moreover, some of the faculties added to their courses some topics on participatory approaches, right based approaches, child friendly schools, cooperative learning, and active learning and two PhDs and three MA proposals were approved on related topics – three of them attended the forum on writing a research proposal conducted by our team. Also, a postgraduate diploma entitled Child Educators was opened for registration this year upon the conference recommendations. The faculties are now engaged in organizing a new conference "Egyptian Schools in the 21st Century in the Light of International Educational Trends" that would be held on April 16th – 17th, 2016 at Portsaid International Schools in cooperation with our network.

Concerning the targeted pre-services the six groups submitted their evaluations of their schools and their plans and efforts to develop them into child friendly schools; some of them were introduced at the mentor's visit. A group of prospective teachers collaboratively wrote a one act play on child rights in education and child labor presented by their students at their last day on practice training as an extracurricular activity. They developed many strategies for avoiding corporal punishment using positive reinforcements, encouraging participation and providing a child friendly classroom what encourage us to create a Facebook page to publish and discuss their achievements, share and gain experiences among them especially that

twenty-seven of them are currently graduated and three new groups of twenty-six students who started their practice training this year are added. The students attended and some voluntarily participated at the last year conference and workshops and are encouraged to do the same this year.

There is also a group of additional results :(a) the media coverage of the conference spotlighted the CRC educational implementation principles and highlighted the child friendly school adding to the community awareness of CRC, (b) the ministry of education encouraged the in service teachers to participate in the conference and to develop their schools announcing a competition for encouraging them, (c) There were participation from five foreign universities and seven national universities participating at the conference (d) about seven hundred pre-service , in-service teachers , principals , postgraduate students , educators , faculties and child right advocates attended the conference.

Our network had an opportunity to work together at the conference sharing and gaining experience: participating in organizing the conference, preparing and conducting workshops which was an opportunity to introduce our network and to get some requests for offering workshops for in-service teacher training.

Although most of change projects were implemented and the two-year project was over but the network is still active in many activities related to the project and even initiating a new one, Recently , and in the light of Integrating and networking between the involved stakeholders to promote child rights especially participation, a new protocol between change agents and Directorate of Education was launched and implemented to train 70 teachers (secondary schools) annually on CR and Projects based learning. The good thing about this training that most of the 70 teachers are senior teacher who will have the multiplier effect on the teachers they are supervising.

Our network also targeted two kindergartens in two different cities: Port Said and Cairo. One with a prime focus one with focus on reducing violence in schools targeting schools at all levels that was adopted by the UNICIF and published on its cite and the other aiming at enhancing security and safety procedures as well as enhancing the communication with the parents and society .However, we are preparing to target kindergarten faculty in sorder to have more sustainable results.

Challenges:

Looking back to our journey we think that we took the first step but so many steps are still ahead. We had our ups and downs. If we want to highlight our ups they would be mainly that we managed to encourage teachers and school administrations to attend our workshops and convince them “for a certain level” to give a space (even if it is a small space) to their students to participate and express themselves through conducting different activities such as drawing, acting plays, morning broadcasting and also planting. It was also great to see the smile on the students’ faces when they were participating, to see the surprise when they were listening to us as if we were opening a window to a new world or even when some of the parents came to us asking for advice or demanding to keep doing these activities with their children, it was really a rewarding feeling. We also consider the approval of our formal authorities on the program and their support (even if it is at a small level) especially for a central country such as our country, a success. Now a part of our community knows something about CRC and this is good. But we didn’t go through the road without any obstacles, and the biggest one that we faced was the strong resistance from teachers and parents to the change as they felt that they are losing control over their children or misleading these rights by the children. We discovered that we can conduct workshops and bring people to listen to us but nothing was changing, we need to get to their hearts and their minds. We also discovered that change is a long way process that needs us to be patient and persistent. Other blocks on the road were regulations and curricula, it maybe important to work on a school level or even on a street level, but to legislate or to write new curricula speed up the change process.

Despite the successes the project has brought, there were some challenges that the team has faced after our last report. One of the biggest challenges is the bureaucratic procedures that we are facing to end the registration process for BARAEM (NGO). In addition, the resistance to change among some teachers and staff members whom we targeted in our training was another big challenge. However, believe that change does not happen overnight. We are still eager to proceed in our change project and participate in creating our new society that we hope to be based on democracy and freedom of expression. We hope 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.

Reflections:

On the national level, we managed to train some targeted groups of students, teachers, and administrators in almost 12 schools, students teachers and staff members at Port Said Faculty of Education of CRC in general and child participation in particular. 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.

As a result of networking and collaboration between schools and university to hold an annual conference in relation of child rights. The conference recommendations resulted in issuing the

Disciplinary Code by the minister which was a good step on the positive discipline road in Egypt.

We managed to focus more on the university level by targeting more faculty staff members and student teachers from the Faculty of Education.

- We can summarize the strength points of the Egyptian network are:

Dissemination, Networking, Scaffold Change and Sustainability:

In our perusal to expand our space of action, we learnt how networking and power delegation was a core for success. Convinced by scaffolding change and not insisting on leading change gave the room for the targeted groups to create ownership for the change projects, and to lead the change by themselves having us -the change agents of Port Said network- as a scaffold for change to help with resources and volunteering, this created new change agents having their own goals and motivations granting sustainability: a lesson we learnt back at Lund

Although many members of our community already know about the CRC, and some members are considered rather important as they occupy positions in the university and have the power to integrate the CRC in their colleges' curricula and other members work in the Ministry of Education which means they also have the power to talk on behalf of ourselves but still we have much more to do in spreading the awareness of the CRC and this includes recruiting more faculty members, adding more schools to our program, having more meeting and writing more letters to governmental employees, holding more conferences and inviting more people to present. Also it is very important at this point to focus more in our work NGO Bara3em it can spread the idea of the CRC on a different level which is the street level.

Since we work now as change agents in four Egyptian cities, then Networking is a keyword at this stage as union is power, so one of our concerns is to gather and integrate all our efforts and we hope that holding conferences and activating our NGO is going to play an important part in addition to any ideas that we may have in the future, this is for the national level. On the international level we know the importance of being connected to the change agents all around the world, so it is going to be a priority to come up with a way to stay connected with them to give them a picture about what we do and gain their experience.

(Way forward):

We have just started, and we still have many things to do if we really want to make a difference, but we can't make this difference alone, we need all the help that we can get. We intend to work on two parallel lines. The first line represents working inside our schools to strengthen the idea of the CRC, and this means more activities and workshops for teachers, students and parents inside these schools or by hosting these events. Inviting groups of these schools to Port Said International School (PIS) to see how teachers in PIS are teaching and PIS is implementing CRC in a typical school day. More drawing, playing music and writing will be offered for these students.

We learned a lot from the change agents that we met during the “Impact and Dissemination Seminar” in Cambodia 2016, we will try to implement some of these ideas, after all the slogan of the whole program was give and gain.

The other line is the dissemination line which means that we will continue in raising the awareness by including more schools in the program. We also intend to work on developing the content of the courses that will be given to teachers during their training with us. There is a dream that we don't know how long will it take us to make it come true, it is writing a paper about how we can integrate the CRC in our Egyptian curricula and send it to the Egyptian Ministry of Education, it is an ambitious dream but we know that for dreamers the limit is the sky.

- To target pre service kindergarten teachers at the faculty of kindergarten, portsaid university and to conduct our workshops there as we have so far indirectly targeted the faculties which participated by five research papers at the last conference and we'll target the in service teachers soon but the prospective kindergarten teachers were only invited for both conferences for free as all students , teachers and postgraduate students.
- Conducting a protocol between the faculty of Education and the Ministry of Education enables the Faculty to certify schools as child friendly and to offer suitable training for those who don't meet the indicators.
- Proposing a general course in child rights for all specializations of student –teachers.
- Having our city Port Said as a Child Friendly City.