

# EGYPT

## The Child's Right to Freedom of Expression

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### 1. Introduction

Egypt is one of the first countries that signed the convention on the rights of child; Egypt also was one of the six initiators of the first world summit for children. According to respected international organizations Egypt has moved from low to medium development group; however this improvement was not good enough to help people living below the poverty line or reducing the unemployment rate. This economic crisis had and is still having an enormous effect on the human rights in general and the child rights in specific, most of the poor families started to use their children as a source of income. Part of our project is to show the community that the child is a human being who is entitled to practice all his/her rights. The Egyptian government has taken several steps in the way to protect the child rights such as the establishment of many types of council such as the National Council of Childhood and Motherhood and The National Council for Women, the government also gave more freedom for the establishment of many NGOs that work in the field of child rights. These NGOs also work in helping children with special needs by preparing the surrounding environment for them to live as much as possible. By studying all the aids and efforts given by all parties involved in children issues we will find that all these aids and efforts were focused on provision and protection only and because of the poverty that our community is suffering from these efforts were not enough to

leave a mark or solve a problem. At the same time the one side that may have helped the community to speak for itself was intentionally ignored the freedom of expression and the right to have a decent education that is able to create personalities that can defend their rights. Our project main purpose is to revive the freedom of expression through better education in Egypt. Is there hope? Yes as long as we live there is hope. For example if a child is born for an Egyptian mother and a foreign father this child can never have the Egyptian nationality and he is treated as a foreigner in everything specially the tuition for schools and colleges in which sometimes he has to pay in US dollars but now in the 2014 constitution if the child is born for an Egyptian mother or father he can have the Egyptian Nationality which is a breakthrough for thousands of families and children. Now and for the first time in constitution it's mentioned that Education is a right for every citizen , aimed at building the Egyptian character , and the preservation of national identity , and consolidate the scientific method of thinking, and the development of talent and encourage innovation , and inculcate the values of civilization and spiritual , and the establishment of the concepts of citizenship , tolerance and non-discrimination , and the State is obliged to take into account the objectives in education curricula , methods , and supplied as standard international quality .

Education is compulsory until the end of high school or its equivalent (instead of middle school only), and the State guarantees free of charge at various stages of the educational institutions of the state, according to the law.

For the first time The State is committed to allocate a proportion of government spending for education of not less than 4 % of GDP, rising gradually until it is consistent with global averages and supervised by the state to ensure that all schools and institutes of public and private educational policies have.

(Article 20 from Egyptian constitution)

For the first time it is mentioned in the constitution that (Article 24 from Egyptian constitution)

Universities are working on the teaching of human rights and the values and ethics of various scientific disciplines

Yes there is hope and with our efforts in this project and all other projects implemented by people who loved this country all the dreams will come true.

## 2. Frame of Reference

Egypt, a country that is trying to create a new future for its nation, and the first building unit in this future is the child. Since the child is a human being then the community must guarantee that each child is entitled to exercise his/her rights. The child is entitled to provision, protection and participation in order to be able to grow and have role in building the future. Our team chose to address the child's right to freedom of expression because this issue has become a critical issue in our country after the 25<sup>th</sup> of January revolution. People after revolution were surprised that they can express their thoughts without any fears; this leads to massive chaotic discussions where every citizen is expressing his/her thoughts with certainty that his opinion is the only right opinion and all other opinions are totally wrong. This situation has been reflecting on children in school and at home where teachers and parents are used to giving orders and expect the children and students to obey without further discussion, and the reason for that according to parents and teachers that the child doesn't know what is for his/her best interest, we have experience in life, we know better.

According to the United Nation, Committee on the Rights of the Child 30 May – 17 June 2011, the committee welcomed some of the positive changes that happened in Egypt such as the child law 2008 which support the rights of the children in Egypt. Main while the committee is concerned that many of the steps which were taken by the state party remain weak and don't produce the desired results.

Regarding article 13: the committee thinks that the child law 2008 is protecting the right of child in expressing his/her view and also protects his/her right to be heard. Also the committee welcomed the existence of some organizations such as the Youth Network and the child/youth advisory board that aim at strengthening children participation and decision making skills.

Unfortunately and with all these steps the situation on land is seriously different. These organizations (Youth Network and others) are not working to their full potentials and they don't encourage the children to practice their rights and start to express their point of views. 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.

Although many of the schools have computer labs with Internet access many of the students don't know how to use it either because they don't have the appropriate training or because the Internet service is disconnected all the time, so the student can't share his views rather in the classroom or at home.

Since we joined this project and Egypt is going through major events such as what happened in 30<sup>th</sup> of June 2013 some people may think of it as another wave of the revolution other people may think it is a military coup, either way it is a major event that lead to a change in the political arena in Egypt, a temporary president a new constitution the terrorist events that we witness right now. Is it so bad? No not really actually it is expected after a revolution in any country. Do these events have any effects that will be reflected on our project? Of course because during all these events our people are learning, they started to realize that sometimes along the way they make mistakes but the good thing is that they can learn from mistakes, they learn that they can't get their rights by keeping quiet they learned that they must speak for themselves and express their thoughts. Did we learn how to do that in the right way? Of course not we still have a long way to go through but the point is that we started, the other point is that people like us the teachers have an important role in teaching the people and make them understand how they can express themselves.

### 3. Purpose

We target from implementing this project in Egypt raise the awareness of the CRC culture and to teach the students how to express their thoughts and opinions.

#### Stakeholders

*Parents' representatives:* they will be informed as they are decision makers inside the schools, also they will be invited to our meetings and training.

*Administration:* needs to be informed as we need their permission to work in schools – they have control over the educational process inside the school.

*Governor:* we need his official approval before we start implementing this project.

*Undersecretary of education:* we need his official approval before we start implementing this project.

*The school of education:* We will try to spread the awareness of the CRC culture and the importance of integrating the CRC in their curricula.

## 4. Methodology/Activities

As a team we have an advantage that is the previous team members from batch 14 are our friends who have connections with officials in different places and we have their complete support.

After we had come back from Sweden we had a meeting with the members of batch 14 to report them of what happened in our workshop in Sweden and.

We also showed them our project plan; we discussed this plan and the necessary steps to start implementing this project. Of course the starting point was to get the official approvals in order to have access to schools.

The communication between our team members and between us as a team and batch 14 team was important to us so we decided if we can't meet face to face we will use e-mails.

One of the strategies that we decide to use during our approach to students, teachers and parents in other schools is using our students as an example and to show them the effect of allowing children to express themselves on their personalities and how they grow up so we decided to inform our students inside our classrooms of what happened in Sweden, what we learned and the kind of help we want from them. Our students were very excited to help us as they wanted to feel that they are helping in building their country and helping other students and children.

We started by writing the official letter to the Undersecretary of Ministry of Education in our city for the approvals.

At the main time we decided to search for the schools that we will be working with before we apply for the official approval in order to write the names of these schools in the official letter and it turned out to be a hard mission, it wasn't enough to say that you want to spread the CRC in the school but we had to patience during our conversation with the school administration and staff members and convinced them that we will not demand extra work from them.

Half of the problem was solved by choosing Elghorfa Eltogaria Secondary school for girls which is the school of one of our team members.

We started another journey to find the other school based on some criteria such as the acceptance of the school administration and staff members to us, there is no private tutoring for money inside these schools (at least not a great deal).

After visiting some schools we agreed on choosing Elkadesia Experimental School.

We had a meeting with the school principle who listened to us with the school administration and she was excited and all what we needed to start was the official approval.

### **Planning our Training**

We had a team meeting to agree on the strategy that we will use in our training and we agreed to use the same technique that was used to train us in Sweden, the indirect approach lectures at the beginning to provide them with the necessary information and then the workshops, the acting and the brain storming.

We searched through the internet to find the materials, articles and videos that will support our training and we started immediately to translate all these materials into Arabic, we were amazed by how little information about the CRC and child rights in Arabic which lead us to understand how little we think of our children and how insignificant the freedom of expression to the people who rule.

Now we have the official approval, the training material and approval of the school administrations and we will start.

Manal started the training at her school while we had to wait for the other school as the administration changed.

Manal started by having a workshop for all the teachers in her school to raise the awareness of the CRC.



This training in this school was the last thing we did before we went to our workshop in Sri Lanka.

### **After coming back from Sri Lanka:**

We invited parents, teachers and students from both schools to attend a lecture about the importance of the freedom of expression. Three of our students in G 9 and G11 did this presentation. The importance about this training was:

- For the adults to have a training by trainers who are children, that was surprising to them, they had to listen to them as they represent the other point of view that they never listen to as it comes from children.
- They saw us the teachers working as facilitators to the students and the students were the leaders of the show which made them think: my kids can do that; they can be leaders as well.
- The timing of this meeting was very important as it was during a massive controversial debate between people who support Muslim Brotherhood and people who are Anti-Muslim Brotherhood, at the end of this meeting we managed to come out as friends with no hard feelings and continue the entertainment in the playgrounds.
- In this meeting our students raised so many important points about how children can practice their freedom of expression at homes and inside their classrooms – how parents and teachers can help them – are there any restrictions when practicing this right? And if there are restrictions what it could be and how can we handle it?
- Parents – Especially parents who were very involved in this discussion tried to find out if they were doing a good job in raising their kids and they agreed that they are following their parents' steps with their children and they admitted that it is a different time now and their kids need different methods.
- After finishing this meeting another event was waiting for them in the playgrounds where parents and teachers shared their children and students in playing different games.

### **Raising the awareness of the CRC in Elkadessia Experimental School**

This step –raising the awareness of the CRC- was implemented only in Elghorfa schools (Manal's school), due to security issue in our city, so it is time now to do the same in our second school Elkadessia.

We invited parents, teachers and members of Parents' Council to their first workshop. During this workshop the following took place:

- A survey about the child and the Child Rights Convention was given to them before we start our workshop. This survey revealed that they all heard about this convention but they don't know anything about the articles in this convention.
- A PowerPoint presentation about who is the child? What are the three Ps?
- A group work to read the main articles in the convention – which are articles that are easy to implement in Egypt? – Which are the articles that can't be implemented? Why? You can go through all the activities in the project plan table above.





### **Positive outcomes of this workshop**

Our trainees are familiar with the CRC.

They are aware of who is considered a child and that is a human being that needs protection, provision and certainly a child needs to be heard.

For the first time they realize that they don't own their children.

We discussed several topics regarding the classroom management – the positive discipline – new ways of teaching such as project based learning and problem solving.

### **Activities inside the schools to let the students participate**

#### *Planting trees*

To teach other students that all community members must have a role in making the surrounding environment better we went with our students to the two schools to plant some trees.

The planting process highlighted some aspects:

- It is very important to live in a beautiful clean place, beauty and cleanliness don't need money.
- During the planting we lectured the students about the importance of trees in our life.

- One of the teachers gave us a brief demo about the right way to plant trees and the tools that we should use.
- The students were able to see their teachers and school director working with their own hands and with them together to make their school better.
- The most important thing the smile on the children's faces.





*Expressing themselves through drawing*

For the children to express themselves by talking in our community is not that easy as we are still looking at the child as a private property, children don't understand, children are young and they can't know what is in their interest, so we decided to go through different road, to let the children express themselves by drawing.

It may look like this is so simple and common thing to do but if we know that art sessions almost don't exist in most of our public schools, if we know that most of the schools don't have art workshops, some parents can't buy their kids papers and colors only then we will understand how good this idea might be.

We went on a visit to the school with our students (as usual) carrying sketches, colors and other supplies and we started a workshop and we asked the students to draw what they want. With each group of students there is a student of ours not to draw for them but to brainstorm the ideas and how they can turn it into pictures.

(Please come more often) this is our reward and watching them smile.





One of the main problems that face our schools is the shortage of books, school books or books for the school library so we decided to help them with some books, English books (stories and grammar) and science books.

#### *Going on a visit to the College of Specific Education*

Because we believe that good education starts with a good teacher so we went on a mission to visit the College of Specific Education to talk to the Dean and group of professors about our trip to Sweden, our workshop there, what we learned and how it is related to them. We spoke about the possibility to integrate the CRC in their programs. (This integration is now mandatory according to 2013 constitution).

## **5. Results**

We succeeded to attract attention to the children rights and to the CRC. We have two schools now whose staff and parents' council know about the programme and its goals.

We opened a door for the children in these two schools to participate and speak aloud for themselves.

The parents now know that there are different ways to deal with their children.

It is a very small step on the road but with God's willing we will continue.

## 6. Way Forward

We will continue to work with the same two schools to finish what we started as we feel we didn't do much and so many activities and ideas weren't done due to the obstacles that we will explain later.

Some of the activities that we discussed with the school administration and couldn't be done due to obstacles were:

- The activation of the students' council.
- The change of the way of the students' council election inside the school.
- Launching some initiatives inside the schools and allow the students to participate in suggesting the names or designing the logo.

We will choose another school to work with.

We will continue to work with the school of education (all batches in Port Said and maybe other batches in other cities in Egypt) hoping to help in integrating the CRC in their program.

We are few steps to have a NGO (this NGO is the project of the batch that follows us) of our own it is called Bara3em or Blossoms. This NGO works in the field of child rights; the members are all batches in Port Said, all the batches to come and other teachers who are interested in working in this field. We intend to use this NGO to have a role in spreading the culture of CRC through several activities that involved all the stakeholders such as the children, the parents, the teachers.

### Obstacles and Lessons We Learned

The main obstacle that we faced as a team was the security issues, many bad incidents happened in our city, as a result of which parents were afraid to send their children to schools, the school day was 4: 5 hours only, and the academic term was so short.

The political situation in Egypt caused a delay in getting all the necessary official approvals.

We discovered how hard to make a change in people's mind, how hard it is to convince them to change their ideas or the way they think of life, how hard to get them to try something new for a change and how brilliant they are when they come up with all kinds of different excuses to avoid changing their life or their ideas.

We learned that we must be calm as much as we can because people we are working with in schools and inside homes are suffering from so many problems, inside the school there is the law that they are bound by it and sometimes a certain level of flexibility can cause troubles.

We learned that there is hope and this hop depends on how hard we will work.

The hardest thing to change in people's mine are the issues related to religion.

## **7. List of References**

Presentations and training materials from Lund University

The 2013 constitution

UNICEF website

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## Appendix I:

### **This is how we managed the teacher-parents training:**

In the first activity the plan goes as the following:

1. We start giving the teachers and the parents ideas about the training and the aim of this training on the long term:
  - a. The training is all about our children in the school or at their homes.
  - b. If we want to build the future of our country we need to start with building the personality of our children.
  - c. The child needs his/her rights in order to start taking responsibility. It is all about give and gain.
2. We start the training by presenting the teachers a survey to measure their awareness of the children's rights.
3. After they finish the survey we start our PowerPoint presentation about who the child is and what his/her needs are (group activity) after that the groups display their flip charts, the trainer starts to divide the answers into provision, protection and participation.
4. The presentation will display a short brief about the history of the CRC.
5. The teachers receive a translated copy of the CRC to work on it in groups to discover the convention and display and answer the questions in the PowerPoint presentation.
6. The teachers will take the survey for the second time to measure their awareness of the CRC.

Output 1.2:

1. The trainer starts to explain to the teachers that today we will talk about the change and the freedom of expression.
2. The trainer will distribute flip charts and ask the teachers to work on groups to define the word change.
3. The groups display their charts and discuss about the definition of change. A PowerPoint presentation will accompany this part to add to the teachers' information.
4. Another workshop where the teachers work together to define the meaning of the freedom of expression and what are the obstacles and limitations that they think it must limit the freedom of expression inside the classroom. A discussion will follow that to reach the lines for teachers and students.
5. The teachers will work in groups, each group will mention one thing that they want to change in their school – how they will change it – what are the obstacles – how they will overcome these obstacles.
6. Teachers again will work in groups to suggest activities that they can do inside the classroom to encourage the students to express their thoughts.
7. The teachers will work in groups to try to come up with new, decent discipline techniques to implement inside the classrooms in case the students use their power in an inappropriate way.

#### Output 1.3:

1. At the beginning of this output the trainer will explain that the main target of the following workshops is to explain the importance of allowing students to express their thoughts in an appropriate way.
2. The trainer will group the teachers and handover flip charts and markers to discuss and answer these questions: would you like to be able to express your opinions freely? Why? What will happen if all people stop expressing their thoughts?

3. The groups will display their answers and through these discussions they should recognize how important for the children to express their thoughts.
4. Now the teachers must examine for themselves if the freedom of expression can make a change to the child's personality by meeting some of our students, the PIS students (G 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12) to talk with them and after finishing a discussion about the personality of the students they talked with.

Output 2.1:

1. The trainer will clarify to the teachers that at this stage of the training they must reflect what they learned on their students and inside the classrooms by doing some of the following steps:
  - a. First: the students' council elections:
    - i. The teacher, the trainers and, the school principle and the social worker will talk about the possibility of redoing the students' council elections and try to facilitate any administration problems.
    - ii. The teacher will start to prepare the students to do the election in the right way first by making them understand the jobs of each position they want to be elected for - each nominee will come up with a programme of how to achieve his/her responsibilities – the election take place and the elected council start to implement its program.
    - iii. The students must understand that any elected student who can't implement his/her programme during the first term will be replaced with the student who came second in the elections.
  - b. The teacher must give the students a survey at the end of each month with questions to measure the satisfaction of the students and their opinions and suggestions about the subject that the teacher is

teaching. The trainer must show the teachers examples of these surveys.

- c. The teacher will give the students the chance to choose some of the curriculum activities or extra curriculum activities to do during the session.
- d. The students with the teacher will build a complaining box in where the students will put their complaints. The teacher must understand that at the beginning of this project the students may use this new power in a wrong way by filling false complaints so all the teachers must be patient and they must deal with all complaints seriously and with wisdom.

## Appendix II

### Project Plan

OUTCOME 1	Indicator/Monitoring	Time
Changing the behavior and the attitude of teachers – parents' representatives toward the freedom of expression.	The behavior of the teachers change and this can be observed and determined through the different kinds of activities that the teachers conduct inside the classroom – interviews with the students and the administration.	
<b>1.1 OUTPUT</b>	<b>Indicator/Monitoring</b>	
Increasing the awareness of the CRC in general and article 13 in particular.	The result of the two surveys. Videos of the discussions that will take place during the seminar. The flip charts that contain the participants' thoughts.	
1.1.a Activity		
A survey to measure the awareness of the participants regarding the CRC.		
1.1.b Activity		
A workshop about the identity of child and what are his/her needs.		
1.1.c Activity		
A seminar about the 3Ps, the CRC and its articles.		
1.1.d Activity		
A workshop to examine the translated version of the CRC and to find out which rights are implemented in Egypt and which are not, which rights can be implemented and which can't and why.		
1.1.e Activity		
A survey to measure the awareness of the participants regarding the CRC.		

<b>1.2 OUTPUT</b>	<b>Indicator/Monitoring</b>	<b>Time</b>
Explain the concept of the freedom of expression.	Flip charts and videos for discussions.	
<b>1.2.a Activity</b>		
A workshop with a PowerPoint presentation about the norms, the change and how it can be achieved.		
<b>1.2.b Activity</b>		
A workshop in which the participants work in groups to define the freedom of expression and discuss the limitations and obstacles that bounder the freedom of expression for all people.		
<b>1.2.c Activity</b>		
A workshop in which the participants work in groups to find ways to implement the freedom of expression inside the classroom.		
<b>1.2.d Activity</b>		
<b>1.3 OUTPUT</b>	<b>Indicator/Monitoring</b>	
Explaining the importance of practising the freedom of expression.	Flip charts and videos for discussions.	
<b>1.3.a Activity</b>		
A workshop in which the participants in groups will be asked "would you like to express your thoughts freely? Why? What will happen if all people stop expressing their thoughts?"		
<b>1.3.b Activity</b>		
A workshop in which the participants will watch a video for a child expressing his/her opinion or meet some students from other schools and work in groups to discover how the freedom of expression benefits this child and how it will affect his/her future?		