



## Storytelling Clubs in Egypt

Egypt is already in the second round of Storytelling Clubs. The first round took place in 2018 - 2019 and it was successful. In 2021 we have decided to make high impact in the lives of children specially after the third round of lockdown. We wanted to get to know their stories during this time. We have also decided to add new components to the program and to work with the children's parents as well. The new component is music. The reason why we chose to work with parents is trying to equip them with tools to love their children more.

Once we got the approval from our donor to sponsor the second round we started to search for partners and areas where we want to work. Finally, we agreed to work with three of the same partners we knew from the first round and we have added two new partners from different regions. Our partners were five NGOs in different places in Egypt: The Oasis Association in the garbage village in Cairo, the organization Beit Yakan in the weapons market area, the Deaf school in Maadi, Funtasia Luxor and Nawamis in Sinai. We agreed with partners to choose children from the age 8-12, balanced in gender and in religion. We have also agreed to have some info about the children, their hobbies, education and some info about their families and what they are known to be good at.

In September 2020, we conducted a Training of Trainers (TOT) for trainers and facilitators from each NGO. In the 3-day TOT we covered the curriculum of the STC and we discussed how to use it the best way within the context of each NGO and the overall culture in Egypt. We also had an online session with Dr. Maya Goetz on how to tell stories for children and she shared important points from the curriculum. We have arranged a half-day session with the music instructors to train the trainers and facilitators on how to help children to create their own musical instruments from waste and how to play some kind of music on it. On the last day we had a specialized meditation instructor to teach our trainers how to lead children in a simple meditation that helps them to become quiet and focused on the day they became strong. The TOT was very successful. The facilitators were very positive and engaged in all three days and sharing their experiences and knowledge from their side. One of the things that fascinated me during the TOT is the facilitator from the deaf school who is deaf but she was very active and happy and engaged during the training.

After long discussions we decided with the partners to have the workshops live, with high precaution procedures for the safety of children and facilitators and our team. We set a rule to wear a mask during the sessions and to clean our hands upon arrival and during the breaks every hour.

We were planning to do three workshops this year in three different places, but the workshop in Dahab/Sinai was cancelled for security reasons. So we ended up doing two workshops, one in the garbage village and the other one in Luxor. As mentioned above, we have added two new components to the program: How to play music using an instrument that children made out of waste; and a session with the

parents. We have been following the curriculum but in a different order, screening one short film every day and also keeping a balanced pace throughout the 5 days of the workshop. Our main goal is to keep the children engaged, interacting and not bored. This year we focused on the lockdown time because of the pandemic. The 5 days of the workshop were divided as follows:

Each day is divided into two parts. In the first part we do units from the handout. The second part is usually the artistic part divided between photography and music.

- The most important day is the first day where we focus on how to let the child love himself, be proud of himself by working on self-esteem and acceptance. This is a very important day and based on it children become very engaging. In the second half of the day we have done a photography workshop and we gave the children an assignment to take 5 photos of the most comfortable places they like to spend their times during the lockdown, and of the person they feel safe with.
- The music sessions take place on the third day and last for the three days.
- The session with parents took place on the last day for just one hour. We focus on how to accept their children and give them space to express themselves and not to suppress them or refuse them.

My main observation this year: The children were very positive and engaged and interacted with us and with each other. Many of them were very interested in painting, photography, sharing stories and the films. We didn't face any difficulties with children to engage and share their stories. I think the reason behind this level of engagement is the time of the pandemic. Children finally found a space where they can do some activities and feel safe and free. Also the level of creativity was really high. The children in Luxor impressed me by their drawings and photos.

*Report by Fadi Taher, Impact Media, Egypt*

### **A story by Maria, 12 years, garbage village, Cairo:**

Maria was displaced with her family from North Sinai because of terrorists. They had to move to live in the garbage village in Cairo. Her father is a plumber and her mother is a housewife. Maria has two younger brothers. The youngest one, 4 years old, is suffering from an eczema. Maria learnt from her mother how to save money. During the pandemic her father didn't have enough work to bring food to the table and to cover the expenses of the family. One day her youngest brother was suffering from the eczema and her mother didn't have money to buy him the needed medicines nor food. Maria took from her savings and gave it to her mother to buy the medicines and food. Maria felt proud of herself and responsible that she could save her family through the small amount she saved.

