



Etijah – Empowering Youth



2006–2017



About Etijah

Youth and Development Consultancy Institute (Etijah) was founded in 2006 aiming at empowering youth by providing them with the skills, know-how and aptitudes, as well as contributing in building the capacity of governmental and non-governmental youth-serving organizations. Etijah works toward enhancing understanding and valuing youth as one of the most important assets a country could have.

Etijah's primary concern is to create and tailor up-to-date and high quality development methodologies, research tools, applicable practices of youth development and training delivery models. Its role is to provide youth and marginalized groups with direct access to unconditional participation by providing them with practical tools and models for developing community-wide initiatives.

Since its establishment, Etijah has been striving to realize its vision. Etijah is working hard to promote and facilitate an equitable society in which all members (individuals, families and communities) have an equal opportunity to participate in building the social, political and economic infrastructure of Egypt. Etijah's projects are geared towards creating an environment, in which all community members have the opportunity for advancement and to improve the quality of life for themselves, their families and the subsequent society. In addition, Etijah strongly believes in and advocates for social inclusion of disenfranchised and under-represented groups that span across the social stratifications of race, sex, gender, age and religion.

Preface

The Impact report reflects on the efforts Etijah has done over the last 10 years, and to present the data collected from the field, and to showcase the organization's impact on the society.

This report serves to demonstrate the impact of Etijah's intervention across sectors and on various types of beneficiaries through "Impact Stories" where programs beneficiaries speak about the change they believe happened to them after taking part in one of Etijah's activities.

Data Collection was done by program officers, interviewing program beneficiaries using a tool developed to capture the change occurring on the project's beneficiaries. This is an internal evaluation of our projects impact and the collection of data was made shortly after the end of the projects, thus the data collected shows great change on the individual level.



Impact Data



Etijah's 10 years of endeavors have been both challenging and rewarding, we were faced by many obstacles which helped us revisit our approach and adapt it, to have a greater impact on the people.

The change we are striving to achieve is "Youth Empowerment", our primary concern is to empower young people representing valuable social and economic asset in the country to be involved in developing their communities.

We believe that it will be achieved through

a. Building the capacity of Youth and ensure they are involved in the decision making process.

b. Building the capacity of Youth led and Youth Served non-governmental organization .

c. shaping the development ecosystem.

All of our projects are evolved around these 3 main interventions, we believe this approach will help us reach "Youth Empowerment"

a. Building the capacity of Youth and ensure they are involved in the decision making process

1- Promoting Volunteerism Among youth

Since Etijah's inception, Etijah increased awareness, understanding and support of the concept of volunteerism in Egypt and the Arab world by building a network of youth led and youth served organizations, that have been trained on volunteers management training and trained volunteers on the concept of Volunteerism for development and how to start their initiatives. Also Hisham Elrouby published the first book written in Arabic on Volunteers management which is considered a powerful tool for organizations to build their volunteering programs and is used as a reference in many countries.

This is evidenced by:

1- First Volunteers Management book written in Arabic " over **25,000** copies sold and distributed in Egypt and other Arab countries"

2- Etijah aims to provide access to information for Youth. Etijah worked on mapping youth led and youth served organizations from (2007- 2014) in Egypt, Jordan and Tunisia. Number of organizations studies were **(240, 18, 71)** respectively.

3- Number of Volunteers trained and places in volunteering opportunities, over **7,000** Volunteers.

4- Promoting Volunteerism disseminated in Arab States. Trainings in "Morocco. Jordan, Palestine, Tunisia and Saudi Arabia"



2- Developing the skills of Youth, ensuring they obtain better employment opportunities

For over 10 years, Etijah has worked on the development of youth skills in various fields such as Entrepreneurship, employability and life skills. Which had a great impact on many young people's lives and ensured they have better employment opportunities.

Etijah's work was not limited to building the skills of youth but also to include multi-actors in projects implemented providing opportunit

This is evidenced by:

- 1- Number of Employment opportunities provided through Etijah: **1846**
- 2- Number of Technical trainings provided :**1317**
- 3- A survey conducted with a random sample of volunteers, showed that **87%** of our volunteers are students and **67%** of them believe that the volunteers trainings could help them to get a job after graduation.



3- The use of technology in empowering Youth

Innovation and communication technology is a powerful tool for sustainable development, which can cause a significant increase in employment , Etijah is using technology to promote volunteerism among youth and enhance their skills and employment opportunities through an online platform” Jiwar” , aiming to match volunteers with volunteering opportunities. And to provide Arabic educational content and community service opportunities for children at later stages.

From a youth perspective, volunteerism brings a strong sense of confidence and self-satisfaction and it enables young people to develop new skills such as leadership, creative thinking, and problem solving. In fact, volunteering empowers young people and expands their social networks. From a community perspective, volunteerism strengthens youth participation in solving community problems. The platform is currently under development.



b. Building the capacity of Youth led and Youth Served non-governmental organization.

Etijah's primary concern is youth empowerment, therefore we work with both segments: youth and youth led and youth-serving organizations.

We target non-governmental youth-serving organizations to build their capacities, enhance youth workers' professions helping them to improve their services, and to achieve efficiency as well as sustainable development.

In return, this leads to enhance Etijah's efforts and contribution in shaping the development ecosystem, so that we can provide a professional context for youth development in Egypt.

In this context, Etijah has organized and conducted the volunteers' management training targeting organizations all over Egypt introducing them to the concept of development in general, the concept of volunteerism and how to create a successful volunteers program, in order to guarantee appropriate and effective management of volunteers.

We also focus on building the capacities of youth focused organizations staff by dispersing development methodologies, to enable them to maximize their abilities to better serve youth in a proficient manner in addition to ensuring the sustainability of their programs. Therefore, Etijah has provided consultancy service to different organizations by offering capacity building trainings to the staff working in the development field.

This is evidenced by:

- 1- Through the volunteer's management training, Etijah has trained **362** organizations in **16** governorates to guarantee effective placements for the volunteers.
- 2- Etijah has been consulted to "Plan International" (2009-2010) staff offering training to its youth workers to enhance their capacities while working with youth groups in their local communities.
- 3- We have conducted training to "Care international" staff on 2008 on how to use the ABCD approach while working on developing the local community.
- 4- Etijah has also trained "UNICEF" staff on 2008 enabling them to reach community mobilization in Upper Egypt and Tanta.

c. Shaping the development ecosystem.

Etijah's role is not limited to supporting already established youth led and youth served organizations but it's also working on helping youth establish their own initiatives and organizations.

This is done through a continuous support, starting from ideation, incubation and till the project has started and in phase of implementation we mentor the projects. In phase of Ideation , we provide entrepreneurship trainings to start-ups, we also incubate initiatives and provide mentorship along the implementation.

In 10 years, we have been fostering great projects which have a great impact on many social issues we face.

This is evidenced by :

- We have trained 257 Start-ups in the idea stage, **51%** thought the training changed completely their perspective in work, **88 %** felt the training met their expectations and was relevant to their need, while **100 %** found the skills they learned is beneficial and useful for their projects.
- We have incubated many impactful projects in Etijah such as Harass map, Teen Club and Safarny.



Impact Stories

The stories reflect on the impact of three of our projects

- Pioneers of Egypt
- Active citizen
- Population Awareness club “Nawah”



Tamer Taha – Yomken

Creating Impact through Innovation

Yomken's vision is to transform fahlawa, the Egyptian word for resourcefulness into an economic value. They see themselves as driven by two major engines, innovation and challenges which are both in endless supply and simply need to be utilised. On this basis, Yomken's founder, Tamer Taha, developed a model of product-based crowdfunding, in the form of pre-selling products which provide a "low-risk financial solution for innovation," since producers don't need to pay for materials until they have already confirmed sales orders.

One producer is Adel El-Dib from Batn El-Baqar, a slum area on the fringes of the historic city of Al-Fustat, which was the center of the pottery industry in the middle Ages. In spite of this esteemed heritage, the lack of demand for traditional products led Adel to abandon this trade seven years ago in favour of fiberglass, despite the material being associated with dangerous carcinogens, in the form of inhalable glass wool fibers.

Yomken saw that the problem faced by Adel and his pottery community could be overcome with a new innovative solution. By introducing Adel to a designer, the pair were able to come up with a creative new design to Egypt's traditional clay water jar. By adding an extra layer to create insulation, and a tap for easy drinking, the new Clay Cooler can cool water and keep fruit and vegetables fresh. Through this innovation, Yomken helped generate demand for the product, allowing Adel to utilise his skills in this neglected craft.

Tamer believes that "innovation is very contagious", and Adel's community in Batn El-Baqar was no exception. Since Adel was able to sell his Clay Cooler through Yomken, other potters have been inspired to develop further innovations in their field. For instance, one wants to develop a clay water dispenser which can fit a large, 5-gallon water bottle. Adel himself now wants "to expand and conquer the global market", epitomizing Yomken's underlying conviction, that though people may think there are limits to what they can do, however, with innovation they can push beyond these limits.

As Adel's example shows, Yomken achieves these goals by bringing people together to solve challenges and fuel innovation, so it is natural that Tamer cites the network

effects as one of the major benefits of being part of Pioneers of Egypt Program. This is particularly evident in their ongoing cooperation with fellow Pioneer and innovator Mohammed Raffie, to crowdfund for Raffie's organization, CORD, which teaches science through robot-building. Thanks to the Pioneers Program, Adel and Raffie are just two representatives of an expanded Yomken network, which continues to create a ripple effect of impact through innovation.



Adel El-Dib, who used Yomken to return to his traditional craft, in his pottery workshop in Batn El-Baqar, Cairo, Egypt.

Sameh Seif – Together Association

Increasing exposure to increase impact

Sameh Seif's Together Association has long had a successful and efficient model for waste systems in rural areas. Word of mouth exposure about his successes have been key to the growth and social impact of his association. That was the case of Abd El KoweShaitan village in the governorate of Fayoum. This village of 1,500 residents lies in one of Egypt's poorest areas, with a mainly agricultural economy held back by poor irrigation systems due to both the region's salty groundwater and the lack of a sewage system.

Though Sameh hadn't previously worked in Fayoum, the Japan International Cooperation Agency, who had an office in the governorate, heard about Sameh's work and visited his projects in BeniSuef. They were impressed by his work, and invited Sameh to bring his local-level sanitation system to BeniShaitan.

True to its name, Together Association began in BeniShaitan as it always does, by engaging a local partner, who helped organize a local committee to drive the development of the project. Sameh understands that you can't work successfully in a community until they are convinced of and in are in serious need of your work. To that end, each of the 130 households in the village contributed 200 EGP (\$25), a payment more a symbol of engagement than aiming to cover set-up costs. In BeniShaitan, local engagement went even further, with a local man donating his land to build the treatment station, in exchange for receiving the clean water extracted from the process to irrigate his fields.

Following construction that was organized by a local contractor and supported by Together Association engineers, BeniShaitan now has a functioning sewage system. Houses connected to a pump and treatment station are maintained by a 10 EGP (\$1.40) monthly fee per household. Where previously sewage was emptied into the nearest ditch, resulting in severe pollution of the village's water supply, waste is now pumped directly from houses to a treatment station, which then produces sludge that can be used as fertiliser, as well as providing clean water for irrigation. The treatment station is large enough that Sameh already has plans to expand and connect the neighbouring village to it as well.

As the case in BeniShaitan shows, spreading the word about Sameh's work truly has the ability to scale his unique solution. It is natural then, that Sameh highlights the relationships and networks he has built as one of the biggest benefits from being part of Pioneers of Egypt program. Through this program, Together Association's exposure has spread to a global audience, opening dialogues with potential partners in places all the way from the United States to Singapore. Thanks to these new connections, Sameh's experience in rural sanitation systems can bring improved health outcomes to communities facing what is a ubiquitous problem in rural areas in Egypt and in developing countries.



Construction underway on the sewage system designed by Together Association in BeniShaitan.



Sameh Seif, founder of Together Association, gives a tour of the sewage treatment plant in BeniShaitan.

Mohamed Raffie – CORD (Competition of Robot Design)

Bringing practical experience and financial sustainability to education

CORD is a productive science communication company that aims to help people learn about the world around them in a practical and engaging way. True to its belief in the power of experimentation, the team had been working since 2011 using an ad hoc approach, but did not have a solid business plan to ensure both sustainability and impact. Over time it solidified its work, and by the end of 2013 had a clear vision of its short, medium and long term goals, and an awareness of which areas needed investment in marketing, research and development.

As a result, the team was well-poised to capitalize on Pioneers of Egypt program, by focusing more on establishing the sustainability of its work. Through the course of the past year, it has developed a number of revenue streams to ensure that its impact continues to be felt.

Foremost among these is Science Crafts, a series of practical science workshops run in schools and after-school activities. In these workshops, which cover everything from building robots to the science behind cooking, children get the opportunity to explore the world around them in a very direct and engaging way. Founder Mohammed Raffie believes that the formal education system in Egypt is very separated from its practical application, and CORD constantly tries to rectify this through its hands-on approach.

By giving people the opportunity to experiment and ensure that there is a positive, practical result in every activity they do, participants get the feeling that they can achieve anything themselves. CORD's experience in these workshops has shown the strong impact science education can have on people. According to founder Mohammed Raffie, "The more connected we are to things around us, the more we understand them and reflect them on ourselves personally. We're here to wonder and the less knowledge we have, the less wonder we're capable of."

This vision is also evident in an additional revenue channel CORD is developing. This channel involves creating a mobile advertising robot that can move around malls, promoting stores and brands as an engaging and innovative way of marketing. To maintain its educational focus in this endeavor, CORD has developed a unique model whereby each advertising robot will be built by engineering students working as interns with CORD.

The first version of this model was carried out in 2014, when four students from the mechanical and computer engineering faculties of Cairo's Ain Shams University joined CORD for two months. During this time, they received coaching and guidance from CORD staff, while also being given the freedom to experiment with building a robot with the materials available.

From the very first week it was clear the students were "very passionate" about the project. For the mechanical engineering students, it was the first time they had done any practical engineering work, as their studies are entirely based on theory and calculations. Through their experience with CORD, they began thinking in a different way. Instead of opening up their engineering design books to memorize theories, they actively looked for practical solutions to make a real-life robot function. One of the mechanics students, Omar Salah, was so enthralled with the project that he has continued beyond the two-month placement to join CORD on a permanent basis, part-time alongside his studies.



Children at Bedayia International School learn science through the Robotikya program offered by CORD (June 2014)

Being part of the Pioneers of Egypt program helped propel CORD forward towards increasing its sustainability. The financial award allowed it to build upon its existing work and develop further prototypes and workshop training materials to the point that it can ensure income alongside its social impact. In addition, the program has opened up new networks to Raffie, creating fresh opportunities to help further develop his business and sustainability. For instance, he is planning on using Tamer Taha's platform Yomken to help sell CORD's robot-making kits. CORD has also offered free workshops to the 'ambassadors' who make large contributions to the educational platform Nafham, run by fellow Pioneer Mostafa Farahat, helping CORD to give back to the educational community on a pro bono basis.

Mina Girgis- The Nile project

Progressing through curiosity, understanding, learning and empathy to create sustainable, collaborative change in the Nile Basin

The initial spark for the Nile Project was co-founder Mina Girgis' conviction that cultural curiosity drives understanding and learning, which in turn can drive empathy, for both people and the environment. To that end, the Nile Project takes a long-term approach, based around three key steps; inspiration, learning and action, with the ultimate aim of improving sustainability of the Nile Basin through cooperative action of all impacted countries and citizens.

At the inspiration stage, the Nile Project uses music as the "first gateway" to spark curiosity in cross-cultural issues and increase environmental awareness. According to Mina, the Nile Project uses music to make people think about the river that is so central to their lives.

Once that interest is piqued, pre- or post- concert workshops act as the learning stage, to help people understand what they can do to solve the variety of challenges facing the Nile Basin. What excites Mina is that the "multiplicity of challenges creates a multiplicity of opportunities for impact," so that through the learning process people see how their expertise, regardless of what it is, has a role to play in creating sustainability, be it political, cultural or environmental. In the final stage of the process, action begins, as a wide cross-section of people participate in Nile-related activities resulting from the Nile Fellowship and put into practice diverse solutions through the Nile Prize program.

For Mina, the greatest benefit of being part of the Pioneers of Egypt program has been the interaction with the organization, since they share a similar model for change. Both Etijah and the Nile Project impart change through the "U- Process"; an approach using human-centered design to build solid collaborations between stakeholders. Mina highlights that it was "very useful to find an organization more



1The Nile Project Minya Residency, November 2014. Kassiva Mutua (left) and Sophie Nzayisenga congratulate each other on a collaborative piece of music using Kassiva's Kenyan drums and Sophie's Rwandan inanga.

mature and with greater capacity" in this model, in order to ask practical questions and get specific advice about implementing the process within the Nile Project's work. Guidance from Etijah helped the team to "think more flexibly and expand the way we think about the Fellowship".

Throughout the course of the past two years, the Nile Project has seen the power of this approach play out through three musical residencies. In each residency, members of the 28-strong Nile Project Music Collective teach each other their local music styles and share their views of what it means to be a Nile citizen and East African musician. Through the course of the residency the musicians create unique compositions incorporating the diversity of styles and instruments from each of the 11 Nile Basin countries.

Mina effuses excitement at the positive results of the Nile Project's approach to bringing people together. "These people have become a family.

You can see the warmth and love between them." He describes how one particular artist, drummer Kassiva Mutua from Kenya, has found inspiration and support through the Nile Project community.

In Kenya, drums are considered a man's instrument and Kassiva has faced huge challenges within her community for being a female drummer. For her, the Nile Project allows her to "recharge her batteries" after the constant struggle to pursue her passion.

In particular, Sophie Nzayisenga, the first female player of inanga, a string instrument, in Rwanda, has dealt with similar issues with her family so the pair have emotionally supported each other to deal with gender-biases prevalent in their communities.

The collaborative approach used by the Nile Project has built extremely strong bonds between participant musicians, who then act as role models of Nile Basin cooperation. Kassiva describes herself as a "Nile Ambassador," personifying a transnational identity of cooperation and empathy. In another striking example, given a tense political backdrop of Egyptian-Ethiopian



2The Nile Project Minya Residency, November 2014. Ethiopian musician Dawit Seyoum playing the simsimiya, a traditional instrument from the northern Egyptian town of Port Said.

relations due to Ethiopia's proposal to build a new dam on the Nile, Ethiopian Dawit Seyoum has learned to play the simsimiya, a traditional instrument from the northern Egyptian town of Port Said. Images of a well-known Ethiopian musician playing a strictly Egyptian instrument provide an important counterpoint to the prevailing political means of confrontation.

Having raised international awareness about the Nile Basin as a cohesive unit and having built a wealth of practical experience through the musical program, the Nile Project is now taking this forward, along with input and advice from Etijah ' Body of Practice, to implement the Nile Fellowship.

The program will select student leaders from among key Nile Basin countries, bringing them together in the same residency approach, before each student returns to create Nile-based movements within their campuses, developing a series of workshops and activities to inspire students to create innovative solutions and a sustainable future for the Nile and its diverse surrounding communities.

AYA ABO SHAHBA

Beheira, Damanhour

International Study Visit country: Sri Lanka (2014)

Aya's journey in the Active Citizens programme started back in 2012 when she participated in the Training of Trainers. During the training she started with other volunteers three initiatives in Al-Rahmanya village in her home town "Beheira governorate"; the initiatives were about establishing a Public Library, raising awareness about the importance of Recycling for the environment that was also

accompanied by an Afforestation project. She was an active volunteer in these Social Action Projects then she joined the Water Campaign "No'tet Maya" that was followed by a closing event gathering volunteers from 5 governorates who have participated in the implementation of this huge initiative.

I have applied to the ISV opportunity to exchange knowledge and experiences as well as getting exposed to a different culture while sharing my experience in voluntary and community development work.



My experience during the visit was very enriching, it was a 10-days visit that started by a series of trainings related to the Active Citizenship and implement impact oriented projects. During the visit, I have share with my peers my dream project and I have also known their dreams. It was very inspiring to me getting exposed to small actions that are able to change people's lives and leave a trace. Among the places I visited was a school for differently abled persons, it was one of the most enlivening visits, we have learned how to interact with them, share with them their happiness and additionally we have designed some activities to hold there that suit each type of disability.

During the ISV, I have learned that smiling at each other's doesn't require a common language and that despite the different languages we speak, nationality, religion and color we still have in common our humanity, mercy, justice, cooperation.

I learned how a group is very simple, without the possibility to leave a mark and talk

change - learn Participate and learn about the culture of the local community and the most beautiful country and the good people and their cooperation. Additionally, I was determined that a small group of persons with no resources do have the ability to leave a trace and make a change. We have learned the true meaning of participation, besides we got to know about the community's local culture.

Certainly, participating in the International Study Visit was a great chance to exchange our knowledge and expertise. I have shared with my peers the project that I implemented in collaboration with Etijah and the British Council in Egypt that aimed at developing villages in need, promoting for recycling in addition to the Water Campaign initiative. I have also presented a project aiming at developing and improving Children's skills by learning through practice and games.

After I came back to Egypt, I started to transfer what I have learned back in Sri Lanka through organizing a series of trainings and I have also implemented the "Aware Generation" project that aims at improving the education in Egypt through conducting several awareness sessions to 6 schools' as well as some educational institutions, these sessions included team work, leadership skills and community participation.

MOSTAFA SEBAQ BESHIR

Red Sea, El Quseir

International Study Visit country: Egypt, Menya (2017)

Mostafa Sebaq, facilitator in the Active Citizens programme, he was part of the Red Sea volunteers and was leading the Red Sea in Colors Social Action Project that was implemented in Al-Quseir city. Currently, he has taken a step forward in conserving Al-Quseir culture and heritage by being a Co-founder in two initiatives aiming at realizing this objective which are: Al-Tatwiqa and El-Quseir Tales.



I have been part of the Civil Society since 10 years, I established with other volunteers the very first local NGO in Al-Quseir "Ro'ya NGO". During this period, I have been part of several local initiatives focusing on various topics such as: Education, Women empowerment, environmental awareness, heritage preservation and more.

For instance, participating in the Active Citizens programme was a great added value to my experience as a facilitator, I have delivered three trainings to more than 60 volunteers in both Al-Quseir and Marsa Allam where there is a lack of opportunities for youth.

After the great effort that we as volunteers exerted in cascading the training in Red Sea, we were enthusiastic to exchange our experiences with other Active Citizens that are working around the world.

I have always been excited by the idea of coexistence with people who have different race, background, language and I was obsessed by the idea of "What if we had these values in Egypt, our life would be much better"

During the International Study Visit, I seized the opportunity of being under one ceiling with people coming from various backgrounds and nationalities to develop my sense of coexistence; I was determinant in going through the whole experience and by the end of the visit I developed friendships with several persons. The Program was very beneficial, I got insights from my peers on how they plan and implement their Social Action Projects. Moreover, speaking of my point of interest which is "Reviving Heritage" I got the chance to know more about the heritage of other participating countries that I didn't know about before as well as the different social action projects being implemented there.

Furthermore, I seized the opportunity to exchange my experience in working in the civil society, I have also shared with them information about the Egyptian heritage and the way the Active Citizens programme is being implemented in Egypt.

By the end of the visit, I developed a clearer idea of the co-existence and realized that in order to build a healthier community the term “acceptance” must be more spread in the Egyptian community. Additionally, having lived the global experience with participants coming from different geographical areas (Asia, Africa and Europe), speaking different languages emphasized on my belief that people from different backgrounds can live in peace at the same place. Moreover, it was mind opening getting exposed to global Social Action Projects striving to solve different challenges facing their communities, it was eye-opening knowing that we have the same challenges in all over the world but what differs is the way we overcome these challenges which added a lot to my experience and on how I perceive things.

Before the International Study Visit, I have already started “El Quseir Tales” project since November 2016 aiming at documenting the period where Italians were living in El-Quseir for a long time that lasted for almost 50 years (1912-1963). They lived there all along with the Egyptians, made a revolution in all life aspects such as: Education, Industry, Social life and more. The project was about conducting interviews with elders who were living during this time, what was truly expressed was how they were living together in peace and they succeeded together in achieving their dream of building their city.

After the completion of the ISV, I became more determinant about the main objective of the initiative which is promoting for the co-existence and how it could be realized in a heterogeneous atmosphere in terms of Color, Culture and Race to achieve a bigger goal which I have learned through my experience in the ISV.

In order to pass on the knowledge I got in the ISV, I am planning to conduct several workshops for young volunteers in the summer for them to be exposed on new ideas and experiences and to get the most of their summer vacation in something positive that would make a benefit for the whole community.

Raise Awareness on Reproductive Health



Hala is an 18 years old girl from Hashim El Eseri village in Dar El Sallam in Sohag governorate. Dar El Salam is a city in North of Sohag. She is a student in the high school.

Hala belongs to Al Hawarah Tribe. Hawarah which is a major tribe that belongs originally to Amazigh, who came from Al Maghreb & Libya is distributed among Upper Egypt, mainly in Souhag and Qena. They are very proud of their origins, history and their vast agricultural lands from which they extend power and exercise patronage over their families. Al Hawarah has very strict rules when it comes to

marriage. Endogamy is the only approved form of marriage, yet men can occasionally marry outsiders.

At the same time, if a woman did the same she is exposing herself to punishment which could even lead to death. The most challenging factor in that group is the rigid mindset concerning customs and traditions. They become very sensitive when it comes to endogamy, FGM, child-marriage or any issue concerning women rights. Although Hala is about to get married, she was surprised to realize what she was missing before the RH training. She made fun of herself commenting on the training "I was unqualified for marriage before your training; it was my first time to hear like 90% of that".

"It was my first time to hear about it from a doctor. People only talk about traditions when it comes to explaining why we have to undergo this. The physiological and psychological changes for adolescents started to be logical and within a clearer context. She remembered how confused she was when she started this process few years ago and the unanswered questions she always had in her mind. "My mother thought it was impolite for girls to talk about these things" (referring to the physiological changes for girls). She kept thinking of how she can do anything. She got motivated by the establishment the PAC within "Hashim El Eseiry") Youth Center. She seized an opportunity to discuss with her Arabic teacher the training she attended and how important it is for her and it could also be useful for her classmates. The teacher gave her a hard time at the beginning with different level of debates when it came to FGM in particular with reference sometimes to religion, traditions, girls' protection ...etc. After a while, he was convinced to let her discuss these topics with her peers within the class time. He agreed with her that he will give her some time during his class and let her share this knowledge with her classmates. She gave 3 sessions to her classmates that covered Reproductive Health definition, FGM and The physiological and psychological changes for adolescents.

"Honestly, although, FGM happened to me when I was little, I was not sure what it is exactly. I only used to be told that it is to protect girls so they won't be bad girls, their behavior I mean" said Ekram one of Hala's classmates who attended the sessions. She continued, "Last year, Ms. Nora gave us a lecture about the importance of FGM which made me confused between what Hala said and what our teacher said, I couldn't tell where is the truth?"

Rasiya sadly commented "I do wish I could protect my daughter from this but I know it will be in vain efforts. I cannot stand against the wind alone, I cannot understand why they do not understand and see the point as we and you see it."

Hala agreed that she also cannot stand against the wind alone but at least she is contributing to putting a seed, "NAWAH" of knowledge and awareness around her.



