



## Community Theatre against Gender Based Violence

### Safe Spaces Project for Syrians and Egyptians in 10<sup>th</sup> of Ramadan



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# I. Forward

“Safe Spaces for Female Syrians and Egyptians in 10th of Ramadan” is a project funded by UNFPA in cooperation with the Ministry of Youth and Sports and Etijah. The Safe Spaces are hosted by 3 Youth Centers (YC) in 10th of Ramadan, namely: Al Zuhor, Al Shams and 10th of Ramadan. Al Zuhor Youth Center hosted the theatre activity.

Theatre is one of the activities of the Safe Spaces in 10th of Ramadan. Etijah organized different theatrical workshops that aim at forming a “Hands on Model” demonstrating how to employ theatre as a tool for raising awareness about different community issues.

This has been achieved through forming a theatre team whose members are trained on using various drama and theatre tools in addition to managing teams and come up with their own sketches by the end of the workshops.

# II. About the Project

Etijah has selected a group of expert trainers to deliver a comprehensive theatre training. Zad Team for Art was selected to train a group of talented young Syrians and Egyptians to form a theatrical team to work on raising awareness on Gender Based Violence (GBV).

The training covered different workshops: improvisation, storytelling, décor, miming, music, acting, and team management. The output of the workshops was theatrical sketches raising awareness on Gender Based Violence (GBV) which was performed in public events. The performance is called “Dababis”- Pins.

The team formed gave themselves the name of “Nawah” which means “Seeds” in Arabic. The group believes that their team could be a seed for awareness and active contributions toward combating different community issues. The team launched a Facebook Page (NawahTheatreTeam) to promote for their activities and to outreach more audiences to deliver their messages.

The performance was delivered in 8 organized events in 10th of Ramadan and was attended by 880 Syrians and Egyptians, of different ages.

Etijah cooperated with Zad Art team to implement the workshops. Zad Art Team was formed in 2009 as an independent initiative by a group of professional artists. The main goal of the initiative is contributing to spreading awareness about community issues and showcase the role of art in development. Zad Art team implemented different projects with various NGOs and governmental organizations such as the ministry of Youth and Sports, Ministry of Education, Jesuit, EU and Al Mawred Al thqafi and others.

### III. Methodology

Etijah and Zad for Art Team worked together to employ community theatre approach to raise awareness on the impact of GBV within the community of 10th of Ramadan among Egyptians and Syrians. Community theatre is one of the strong tools toward sustainable development. It is the process of using drama to promote different values within the community or shed the light on some common issues.

Community theatre focuses on researching communal problems and try to proffer solutions to them. It is presented with the aim of presenting plays for entertainment or enlighten a community. The nature of effective enlightenment and communication makes community theatre very important in the socio-political and economic aspect of human life. It works on discussing and working out strategies for addressing certain community problems. It tries to present drama that can change, correct, expose and develop a given community.

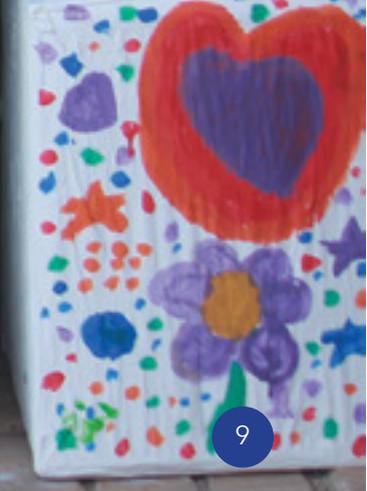
GBV is a common issue among Egyptians and Syrians. Community theatre is employed in this project to raise the conscious about this issue.

This will be the tool to induce change in knowledge, attitudes and practices around GBV and other harmful practices in the community of 10th of Ramadan.

The use of traditional artifacts like mime, music, dance, costume, make-up, drama to inform, educate, develop, manage and entertain the people are used. The team is capitalizing on the host community contribution and information to create their plays.



# IV. Project Phases:



### a) Team Formation and Building

A team was formed based on certain criteria. The selection adopted the following procedures:

- Priority was given to the participants of the previous performance “we are here” that was part of the same project of “Safe Spaces for Female Egyptians and Syrians”.
- An audition was organized to select new participants and to identify the talents to form the different groups within the team.

### b) The Workshops Manual development

Zad Art team and Etijah held different meetings and workshops to discuss the needs and the objectives of the project to select the appropriate workshops. In additions:

- A desktop literature review was included to learn about different examples and experiences of community theatre worldwide and its best practices.
- The participants of the previous performance, “we are here” were part of the discussion groups to set the objectives of this phase.
- External experts in the field of theatre for development were invited during the preparation phase of the manual.

**Section One:** Introduction about the role of theatre in the community, community theatre, the sustainability and the use of theatre.

**Section Two:** The 2nd section covers in details the workshops organized. Each group of workshops included different activities to:

- a) Identify the talents and the skills
- b) Enhance and improve the skills
- c) Application and practice

**Section Three:** This section goes through the process of building the final sketches



### c) Delivering the Workshops:

*The workshops covered different related techniques and tools to lead to building sketches to raise awareness against GBV.*

#### 1) Gender Based Violence- GBV

This workshop helps the participants understand the importance of the issue they are trying to raise awareness about and to make sure they understand the topic well. The workshop tackled the following topics:

- Sensitization of participants toward the meaning of sex and gender.
- Raising awareness around GBV.
- Discovering the most common GBV types in our community.
- Finding culture suitable solution to the most common GBV types, for example: Early marriage, Deprivation from education and Harassment.

#### 2) Introduction about Theatre in general and community theatre in particular

This workshop included the following topics:

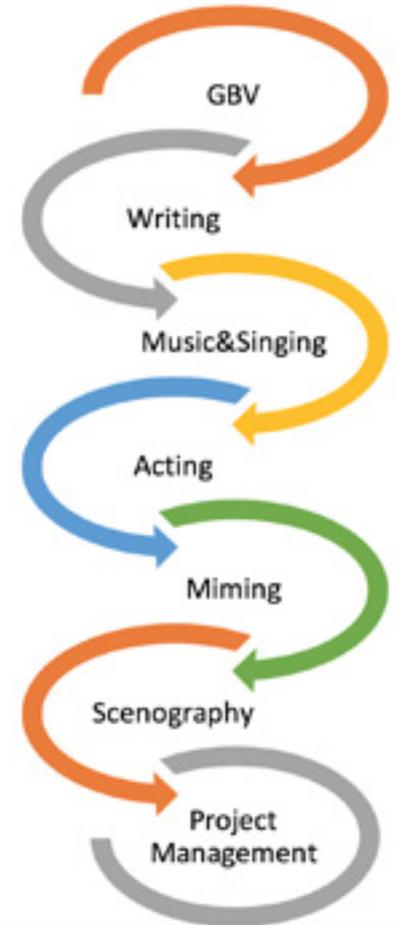
- Introduction about Art and Theatre
- Explaining the role of Theatre in communities in general
- Explaining how community theatre as a tool for addressing community issues.

#### 3) Creative Writing and Storytelling workshops

Different writing and storytelling workshops were organized to boost the confidence and the abilities of the selected participant in writing and storytelling. The workshops included:

- Introduction about writing and storytelling
- Introduction to dramaturgy, localization, adaptation
- Exploring the structure and the form of writing in various writing exercises
- Short exercises to inspire ideas
- Different genres of creative writing; drama, poetry, short stories etc.
- Reading some selected stories and analyzing them.
- Producing the full story: Plot, structure, creating characters and narrative

The workshops also hosted a professional storyteller, Rasha Nashaat, who gave a talk about storytelling and writing in addition to telling some stories to the participants.



#### 4) Music and singing workshops

Music and singing are essential tools employed in theatre. The program included different training in singing and employing music in theatre.

- Introducing different vocal techniques.
- Exercises on vocal techniques:
  - o Breathing
  - o Controlling the diaphragm muscle,
  - o Practice generating the force necessary to produce an adequate and controlled flow of air for voice production through the abdominal muscles, chest and lung
- Resonance and Imagination
- Flex the Facial Muscles: 1) Yawn 2) Jaw Stretch 3) The Pucker 4) Silly Smile 5) Eye Brow Lift 6) Eye Roll
- Breathing, voice and movement

#### 5) Acting

One of the most important workshops in the program is the acting workshops. These workshops helped the participants to explore themselves more and set themselves free when experiencing other characters' lives. The workshop covered the following topics:



- Exploration of movements and its basic components
- Understanding the use of the body and voice as a tool in performance
- Develop and build presence in performance, working with focus and clear intent
- Understanding the mechanics of sound and rhythm in performance, and learning to embody text

#### 6) Mime

Mime encourages confidence and awareness of self and of others. It encourages physical control, simplicity of thoughts and movements and more importantly it stimulates the imagination. Different

Mime workshops were organized that included:

- Introduction to mime and how to mime
- Practice expressing yourself through body and facial movements
- Improving non-verbal Communication: facial expression, posture, act every move very accurately to express the theme, word..etc.

#### 7) Scenography

The workshop offered a brief approach to the elements that surround scenography: ideas and images, illustration and plastic expression, intuition and craft, actor and spectator. It also reflects on the analogies and contrasts between scenography and architecture.

- It also focused on the foundations of scenography design in modest budget in alternative places, how to take advantage of the form, architecture and nature of the place to develop and implement ideas.

#### 8) Art Project Management: Managing Teams and leadership

The participants had a hands-on experience in managing and organizing the project. Throughout the workshops, a real theatre structure was simulated. Different roles were assigned and rotated among the participants. This included, a team leader, an assistant, a coordinator, time keepers, workshops leader, logistics...etc. Different team building activities were also implemented.



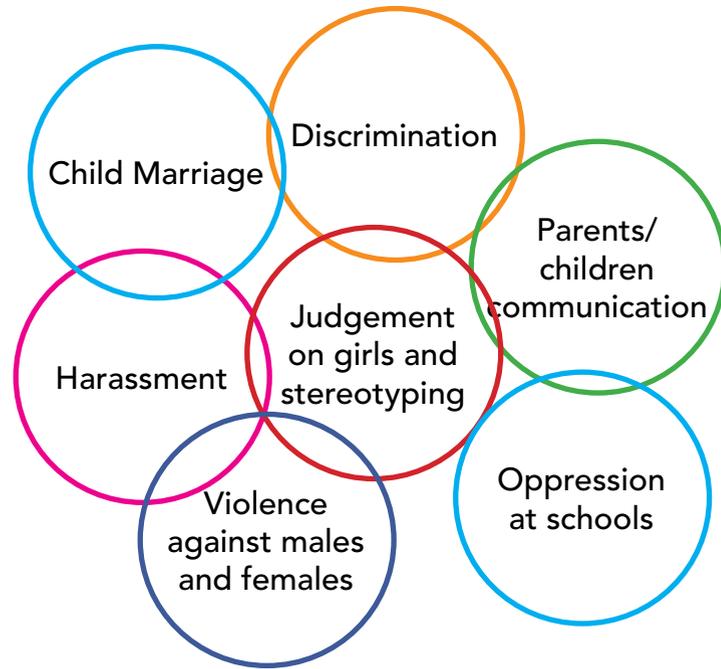


# V. Sketches building

The workshops included general introduction about the topics of the workshops in addition to handy and practical exercises that serve to demonstrate the impact of GBV. The outputs of the workshops were employed to build the final sketches.

**The Theatrical performance outline, "Dababis"- "Pins"**

**A light comedy show**



The performance is made of 9 sketches improvised by the team members. The performance is a light comedy show that covers different shapes of violence. Throughout the workshops, different in-depth discussions were facilitated and the participants shared their experience with violence. The participants talked about their experiences within their communities.

The sketches are linked with a comic run through line to connect them together for a better flow and to mitigate the intensity of presenting many shapes of violence. The performance starts with a director and the actors in a very intense mood expressing their worries from the performance and performing in public. They are mumbling that they did not have enough time to prepare for the performance due to their busy schedules with studying or work but they hope everything to be alright.

Then a child's cry is heard when she realizes that the audience arrived. The director and his assistant will then decide to let the actors come up with unprepared performance hoping the audiences won't be mad at them. The performance is then followed by the first cross cutting scene with 2 ladies gossiping all the time about their neighbors and badly criticizing everything which shows how people interfere much and judge others based on what they see only on the surface of matters. The performance includes 4 cross cutting scene that presents the pressure of the community on girls. The two gossipers talk about the girls who are not married although they are nearly 16 years old; the neighbor who married a second wife because his first wife did not give birth to boys; girls who go out a lot and claim they are at schools; expressing their opinions that education is useless for girls and talking about black woman and how her skin makes her disgusting.



The performance then moves to the street to depict another shape of violence- 'harassment' and how people have mixed feelings and reactions towards it. Moving from the street to schools with 2 scenes within a school to present different shapes of violence against girls and boys and how they are obsessed at young age. Children games also are steering different kinds of violence between children. The scene of the game shows two common games for boys and girls where boys game is violent and they cannot express their pain since they are boys and it is not right to cry.



Menna and Forate, two of the participants, then share their story with the audiences. They read a letter to their fathers expressing their anger toward them because of their abuse. Jimmy also expressed his unrest from his mother control and the lack of communication all the time.



This is followed by Khaled and Menna sketch who are fighting all the times because Khaled does not trust his sister Menna to be truthful to him. He tries to deprive her from her rights to manage her life by tracing her everywhere she goes and misinterpret all her actions and talks. Towards the end of the scene and with the help of a psychologist, Khaled realizes that communication could be a magical solution to all their problems.

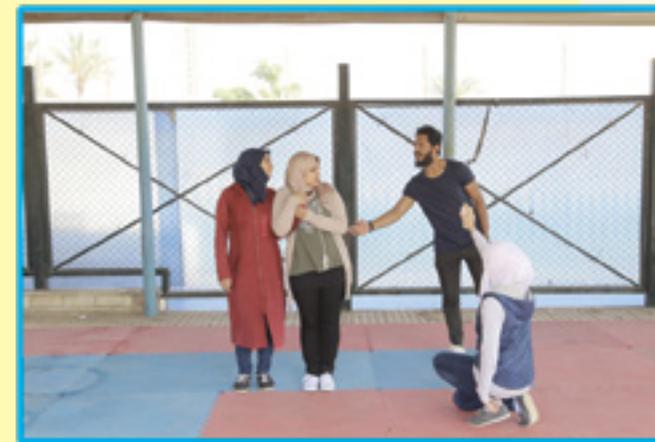
## Improvisation and building sketches

### "Dababis" song and performance

expresses the community confusion and unattained dreams. It depicts life is like a loaf of bread but full of pins while the dreams are hidden in an unattainable place but we are still striving.

The performance is built expressing the same, projecting on the violence spreading within our community. The performance of the song is the output of the miming workshop where all the participants asked to express how they translate the words into movement, thinking of the pins as the representations of violence.

After different exercises, the performance is made to present an image that expresses how violence is a vicious cycle that moves on different levels in a way that defeat our dreams. The image shows 3 levels: Children, women and men at the back. Men are violent against women who are in return practicing violence on their kids and those kids are being violent themselves toward each other's. This image was built during a discussion on where, why and how violence starts. The group discussed that it is a vicious circle that will never ends because it has different layers and few people think that it should start from themselves. The last part of the performance is presenting a hope to break the chains and to set ourselves free if we try.



### Harassment Sketch

The sketch presents how community members see the causes of sexual harassment differently. The sketch depicts different reactions of passers-by: people who offers help by calling the police or engaging in a fight with the victim, others who do not care, justifies, see the girl to be blamed for how she is dressed, make it worse, ignore, or people who are neutral.

This sketch was built during the Acting and storytelling workshop where everyone was asked to express what he thinks about harassment and

how the community sees it. The different reactions appeared in this image were what the participants always come across within their network.

### **Community Stereotyping for girls:**



Four cross cutting scenes were used to show the community stereotyping and judgement on girls. They talk about girls' marriage, polygamy, girls going out much. The scenes brings this through a common misbehavior in the Egyptian and Syrian community which is gossiping. Such action in real life affects how we behave and could consider changing a lot in our life and our children's lives to avoid the gossip of the people or to satisfy them. These four scenes were the outputs of the writing workshop. They are written by Forat. Forat demonstrated her skills in delineating the characters and writing through these 4 scenes by herself.

### **Violence against students at schools:**

The performance has two sketches reflecting spreaded violence at schools.

The first sketch shows how violence against girls and boys as well exists in schools which suppress the freedom of expression or to pursue the hobbies the children needs. The scene shows teachers assigning students by force to some activities: cooking, music, and sport. The teachers who are females as well are forcing the girls to join the cooking class thinking this is the only match for them, being girls, while male students were joining music and sports randomly as well. The students are not given the chance to express their wishes. During the workshops, each of the participants expressed their real experience



within the school that formed at the end the script of this sketch.

The second sketch depicts the lack of opportunities to question and to express oneself. It also highlights different shapes of violence in the community and how they are perceived by young students who are themselves undergoing violence within their small community, the school.

The scene adapts a Syrian joke one of the participants shared during a workshop then all the participants were invited to share real situations they face in real life within schools or in their day to day life to merge them in the scene. The scene employs sarcasm in a school assignment to write a letter to the uncle who migrated to other country, the participants describes their hometown as free of any violence or problems trying to convince this uncle to come back. The participants used as a chance to express what they dream to see in their home.



### **Violence among children**

The team discussed a lot that they see and experience violence not only against girls but also against boys. Violence is depicted in this sketch coming from children games that suppress the feeling of young boys to express feeling of pain or sadness because they are men and are deprived from this right. That may lead the young boys to become numb to violence, replicate it or show more aggressive behavior.





### Domestic violence and parents-children communication

One of the common problem the participants brought up many times is the difficulty of communicating with their parents and how the parents just turn to violence whether physical or verbal when they try to express themselves and their needs. That was represented in the performance through two sketches that showed the frequent conversation between the participants and their parents in real life. Forat and Menna wrote two letters to their fathers expressing their true sad and mad feelings that they never communicate without

yelling at them and that they never listened to them. The parents always claim they are busy to talk about trivial topics. Forat also faced her father with the reality she sees that the real reason behind the constant fights with her when she comes late sometimes after school or the theatre workshop is because he cares much about their neighbors' comments not out of worries.

Jimmy also wrote a dialogue between him and his mother who always fights with him when he tries to pursue the hobby he enjoys. She seeks all the time physical and verbal violence to express her objection.

### Male domination at home

This sketch presents another example of violence against girls and depriving them from living their lives the way they plan. Khaled and Menna are two siblings. Khaled sees that as a guardian he must control his sister and suspect all the time that she is only doing bad actions which made him chase her everywhere at university, at friends' house.etc. He also expresses his worries on her only through using violence. This sketch was developed by Jimmy with the support of other participants during the writing workshop.



### The black light theatre style: The hunter and the gazelle

This scene is using the black light theatre style demonstrating that violence is not a solution to face violence. The sketch narrates a story about a hunter and a gazelle. The story can be interpreted differently with reference to issues tackled in the sketches like harassment and the sibling's relationship and communication. For example: The hunter could represent the power and the authority that gives him always the chance to be violent against the gazelle that he thinks it can be easily hunted because she cannot fight back. In this story, the gazelle surprises the hunter that she does not get scared and ran away rather she stands strongly in front of his gun. That makes the hunter withdraws and feels embarrassed that he is trying to harm her.

The story is also a reference to the intense relation between the two siblings Khaled and Menna and how Menna, despite the violent brother, believes that he is a kind and loving brother but he just cannot communicate with her. She ceases any chance to tell him so to find a better way of communicating to become friends. This scene is an extract from a children book by Amel Farah.



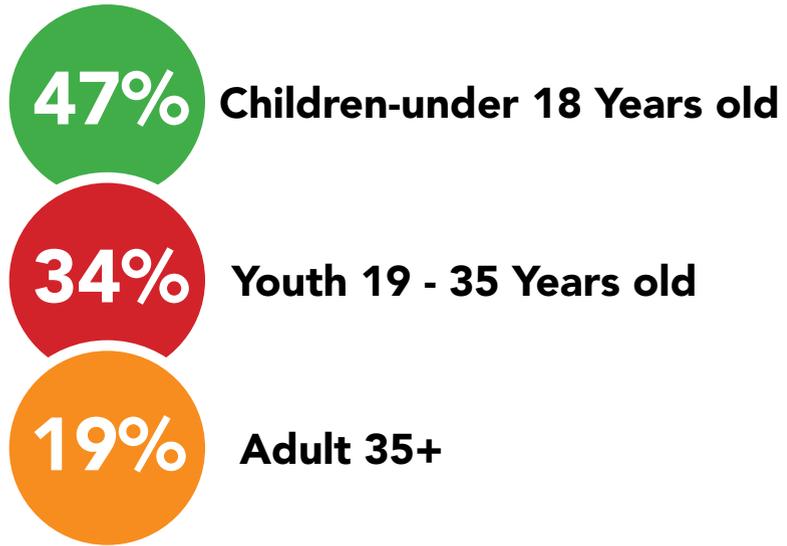
### Scenography: Décor

Different brainstorming sessions were organized to come up with a suitable décor for the performance using available materials around. Recycling is one of the techniques employed. The participants used empty bottles and cartoons to make up cubes. Then they used the 6 surfaces to deliver different messages with their drawings. The drawings included nature (flowers, sea, trees). Some surfaces also expressed the dilemma of not finding the right answers for many challenges we are going through which was represented by the symbols of "right", "wrong", "exclamation mark" and "Question mark".



# Final Performance

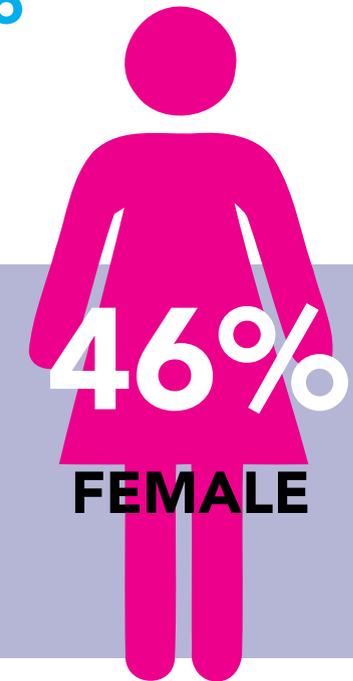
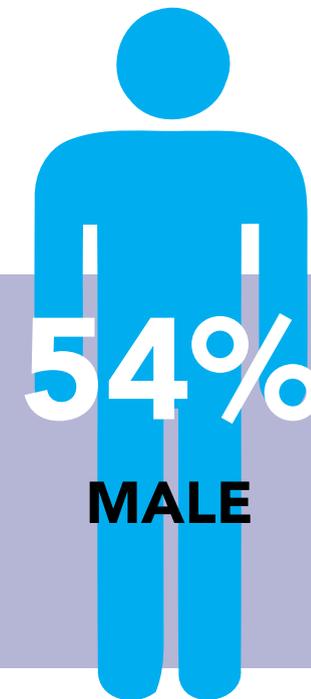
## The performance to the Pubic



The performance was delivered in 8 public events which were organized in 10th of Ramadan. Invitations were printed to outreach guests. The invitations were extended to Syrians and non-syrians and it was not limited to 10th of Ramadan only. The Events were attended by 880 audiences.



## Gender based Attendees Ratio





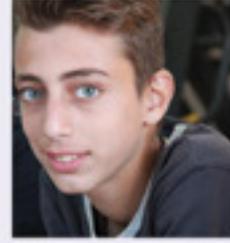
# Nawah Team Members



**Abdulla Baqia**  
Syria, 15 years old



**Amira Hisham**  
Syria, 12 years old



**Ayham Al Qadoor**  
Syria, 14 years old



**Enas Medalal**  
Syria, 12 years old



**Hadeel Zein**  
Syria, 16 years old



**Hamza Mohamed**  
Syria, 9 years old



**Haya Kamel**  
Syria, 16 years old.



**Hassan Sedik**  
Syria, 22 years old



**Odai Hisham**  
Syria, 15 years old



**Forat Ahmed**  
Syria, 16 years old



**Lana Mohamed**  
Syria, 15 years old



**Lilas Mohamed**  
Syria, 17 years old



**Hassan Samir**  
Syria, 13 years old



**Hussein Samir**  
Syria, 13 years old



**Rawda Mohamed**  
Syria, 12 years old



**Rama Al Qadoor**  
Syria, 16 years old



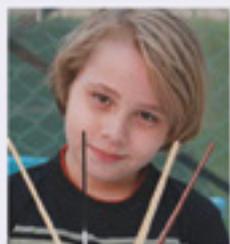
**Leen Feras**  
Syria, 17 years old



**Mohamed Belal**  
Syria, 16 years old



**Mohamed Gamal ( Jimmy)**  
Egypt, 26 years old



**Mohamed Taher**  
Syria, 11 years old



**Rama Baqia**  
Syria, 7 years old



**Ramy Salah**  
Egypt, 22 years old



**Mahmud Ali (Eltayeb)**  
Egypt, 18 years old



**Menna Saad**  
Egypt, 23 years old



**Nermin Mohamed**  
Syria, 16 years old



**Nour Osama**  
Syria, 16 years old

# Stories behind the scenes



**Community theatre does not only change communities but it leaves a significant impact on the doer of the theatre. These are some of the participants who took it far and we witnessed their development throughout the past 8 months. The few lines summarizes some of the changes witnessed during the workshops.**



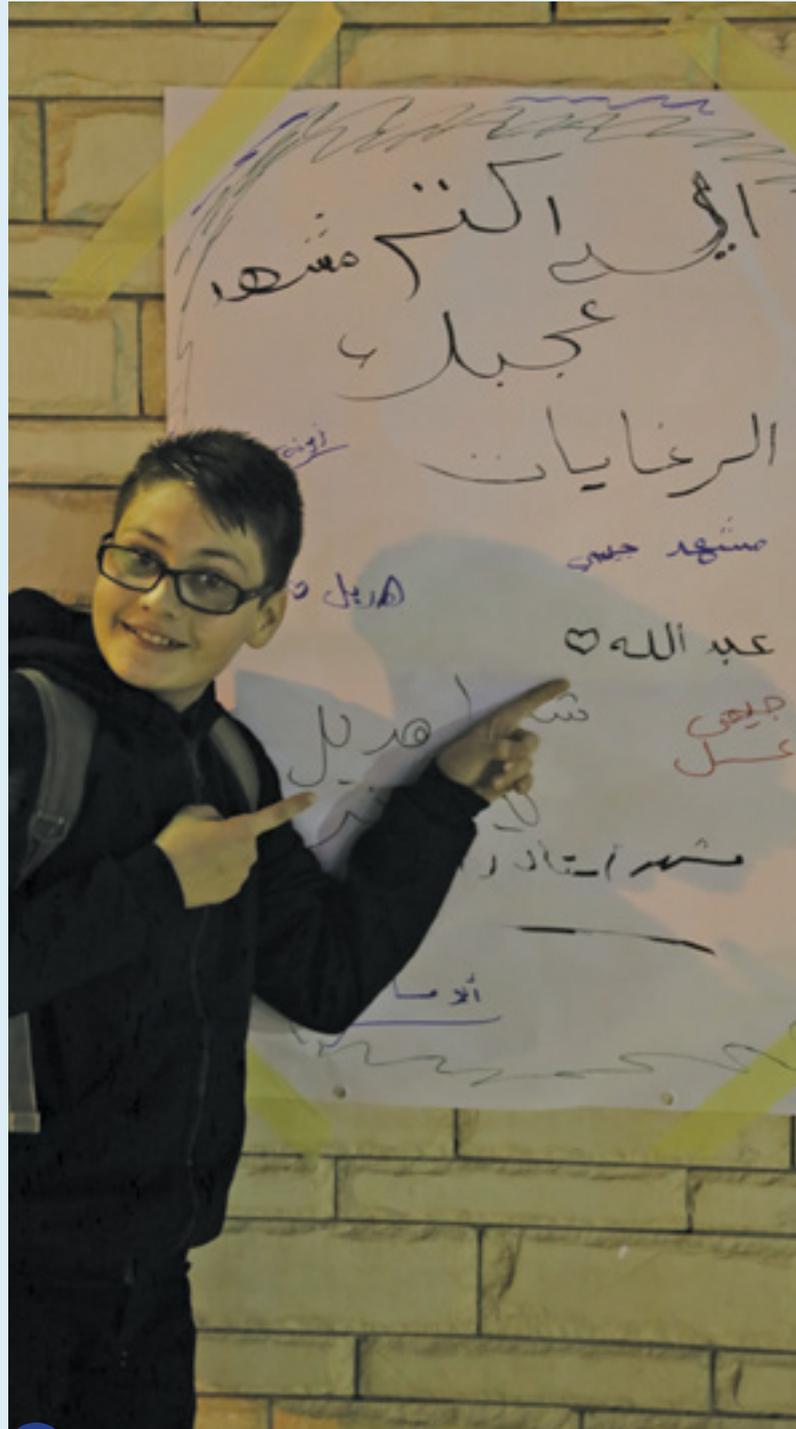
### 1) Mohamed Gamal (Jimmy)

Mohamed Gamal is 26 years old, from Sohag, Egypt. He studied engineering. Theatre is his great passion. He participated in different theatrical shows at university and social clubs. He believes that acting is an opportunity for him to experience different lives. Jimmy joined the Safe Spaces project in July 2017 when he participated in the theatrical performance, "we are here". Then, he joined "Nawah Team" in October. Through the workshops Jimmy enhanced different skills related to acting and writing. It was his first time to participate in writing workshops which was of a great help for him as he found out more about his writing skills. The performance included two sketches he wrote during the workshop, the mono-drama scene of the son, the mother and the father and the Siblings scene. Jimmy was selected to be the team leader of Nawah. He has been also selected by Zad Art Team to join them as a trainer.

### 2) Nermin Mohamed

Nermeen Mohamed is 16 years old. She is from Syria. She came to Egypt with her family 6 years ago. Nermin joined for the first time a theatre workshop in July and participated in the performance "we are here". She is now part of Nawah team. Throughout the past 8 months, Nermin has improved her communication skills significantly. She could also overcome clearly her shyness throughout the past 8 months with the project. With strong self-confidence, she wrote a short story and told it in front of her colleagues in the team. Nermin told the story of how they had a peaceful life in Syria before the war and her expectations and first impressions about living in Egypt. Thinking of the great ancient history of Egypt, she was disappointed when she first arrived the chaotic Cairo. Despite this, she is happy now in Egypt. The theatre workshops empowered her more especially with the coordination responsibility she was assigned as Nawah team member. Moreover, her mother shared with us that "Nermine was not able even to go out to school by herself, she was always afraid but I don't know how she gained such a self-confidence when she joined you. I was even surprised that she now takes care of organizing the transportation to the training venue for her colleagues".





### 3) Abdulla Baqia

Abdullah is 15 years old from Syria. He came to Egypt two years ago with his family. Abdullah joined the first performance of "we are here" in July. According to Abdollah, theatre gave him the opportunity to discover himself. He also noticed that the stuttering problem he used to have started to disappear. He is now part of Nawah team. Abdulla has been selected as Nawah Team leader assistant. During the workshops, not only he benefited from the workshops but he learnt a lot from being an assistant. He had the opportunity to practice different tasks like coordination and planning. Throughout the workshops, Abdulla got the chance to enhance his writing and acting skills greatly. In Dababis performance, Abdulla was assigned a major role that showed his improvement.

### 4) Forat Ahmed

Forat is a 16 year old. She arrived Egypt with her family 4 years ago. They had to leave Syria after her brother was kidnapped and their house was burnt completely. During the workshops Forat was happy that she could find a safe space to share her story and express her feelings toward her current situation. She showed how her family and herself were resilient towards the tough situation they have been through in Egypt. They had only tomato to eat for their first 6 months in Egypt.

She contributed to the final performance with 4 scenes, the gossipers which surprised everyone with her writing talent and skills in delineating the characters. She was happy to see her "writing moving on the stage" she said. Forat also managed to confront a serious issue she has with her family and talk about it in public which, according to her, empowered her and she discovered the strength within. She wrote a letter to her father telling him how much she is sad that he is not giving her the freedom to pursue her hobbies or express herself. She also told him in this letter that she is denying all the time that he cares so much about what the neighbors think of her as a girl while he should have more trust on her.



## 5) Hassan Sedik

Hassan is from Aleppo, Syria. He is 22 years old. He arrived Egypt with his wife and 3 brothers 10 months ago. At the beginning Hassan seemed to be less social and had resistance to interact a lot with his colleagues. He mentioned that he joined the activity because it was a way to pass the time without seeing the real value behind this. Only few weeks later, he said that "joining the theatre activity was very helpful to him to get over the hard time he has been through due to the war in Syria and the unstable situation in Egypt." He also discovered himself more through this experience. Hassan stated that a lot of his views about women and what is violence have changed drastically. Theatre made him envision how harmful men could be to women without even noticing.



