

OUR WORK
IN EGYPT
2011–12

WHO ARE WE?

THE BRITISH COUNCIL IS THE UNITED KINGDOM'S ORGANISATION FOR CULTURAL RELATIONS AND EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES. OUR PURPOSE IS TO CREATE INTERNATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE PEOPLE OF THE UK AND OTHER COUNTRIES AND BUILD TRUST BETWEEN THEM WORLDWIDE.

The British Council is the United Kingdom's organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. Our purpose is to create international opportunities for the people of the UK and other countries and build trust between them worldwide.

The British Council is on the ground on all six continents of the world, with more than 190 offices in 110 countries and territories.

The British Council's first representative overseas was sent to Cairo in 1938 and a network of English-teaching institutes was established soon after in Cairo, Alexandria, Mansura, Tanta, Assiut, Zagazig, Suez, Port Said, Mehalla and Minia. Today, the British Council in Egypt employs 270 full-time staff across its three centres in Agouza and Heliopolis in Cairo and in Alexandria and remains one of our highest-priority operations in the Middle East and North Africa region and globally.



WE WORK IN THREE KEY AREAS: **ENGLISH ARTS EDUCATION AND SOCIETY**

And we work with three main groups of people:

- **Society and community leaders** who can bring about changes in social, education and cultural policy and help us make wider connections
- **Influencers**, including career professionals, the media, educators, artists, scientists and business leaders – who we partner in order to help maximise the impact of their work and ours
- **Young people**, either in education or just starting out on their careers, who are opinion formers through their own social networks and are potentially the next generation of national leaders and influencers.

The British Council is driven by partnership, learning together and promoting positive change. Egypt is one of the 17 countries in the Middle East and North Africa

where the British Council operates, with regional hubs in Cairo and Dubai. We have been in Egypt since 1938.

The British Council was established in 1934 and incorporated by Royal Charter in 1940 to:

- promote a wider knowledge of the United Kingdom
- develop a wider knowledge of the English language
- encourage cultural, scientific, technological and other educational co-operation between the United Kingdom and other countries
- otherwise promote the advancement of education.

Our Patron is Her Majesty The Queen, and His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales is our Vice-Patron. The British Council is a registered charity in England, Wales and Scotland.



IN 2011–12 OUR WORK IN EGYPT REACHED:

93,308 people face-to-face including:

- 17,173 learners in our two teaching centres in Agouza and Heliopolis
- 41,221 unique examination candidates taking UK qualifications with us
- 34,914 people engaged in our other programmes in arts, English, education and society.

1.45 million people through digital and broadcast media including:

- 500,000 weekly listeners to our Selector radio show on Nile FM
- 498,000 website visitors to our Egypt pages
- 199,493 fans from Egypt on our regional Go4English Facebook page.

HOW WE MEASURE OUR PERFORMANCE

We use a corporate scorecard to analyse the impact, scale, scope and quality of our cultural-relations work.

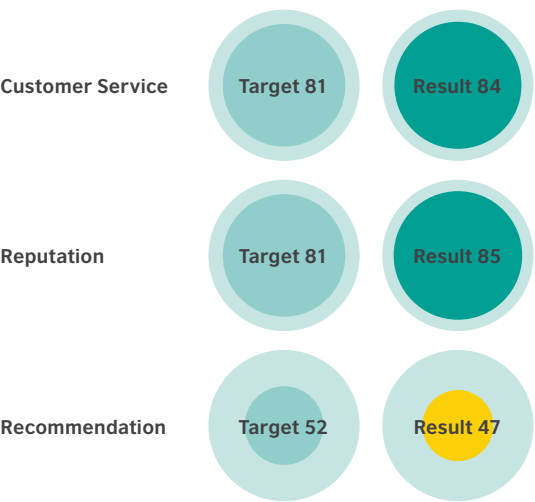
QUALITY

We measure the quality of our work by means of:

- a customer-satisfaction indicator
- a reputation indicator, which shows whether we are perceived as being a leader in our field
- a net recommendation score, which is a measure of the willingness of our audiences to recommend others to work with the British Council.

We use these indicators because they are the ones that research says are the strongest indicators of whether people will go on to help us achieve our outcomes.

QUALITY TRAFFIC LIGHT



EGYPT 2011–12

Our customer service, reputation and recommendation scores are compiled through the customer-satisfaction questionnaires that are collected from a wide range of our customers across our teaching, exams and programmes work. In 2011–12 we collected these questionnaires from over 10,000 of our customers in Egypt. The targets represent the standards we have set across the British Council globally. Customer satisfaction scores in the range above 80 are considered by the National Audit Office in the UK to be ‘good to excellent’. The net recommendation score percentage is calculated from advocates minus detractors, according to international criterion, of which a score of 49 or above is consistent with high-performing organisations and industries. We are working hard to improve our recommendation score to bring us up to the British Council global target.



FOREWORD

IN THE MONTHS THAT FOLLOWED 25 JANUARY 2011 WE SPENT A LOT OF TIME LISTENING TO PEOPLE IN EGYPT.

This was important to us because our work only has meaning when it is based on a real understanding of what is needed in the building of trust between Egypt and the UK. Many of those first months of 2011 were spent engaging in lively conversations with a wide cross section of Egyptian and UK partners. Some we knew already, and a good few were new to us. Artists, teachers, university leaders, emerging and established civil-society groups, business representatives and government officials have all helped shape our work in Egypt. I am delighted to share the results of that collaboration in this report.

Few of us could have predicted with any certainty the events that have unfolded in Egypt over the past 18 months; it has been a time of extraordinary change and uncertainty for many people here. It has also been a time of great passion for this country by the people who love it. For me it has been a great privilege to serve as the British Council's director over the past 18 months, helping to ensure that our efforts – whether in English, education and society or the arts – make a real difference in the lives of the people with whom we work. In the past year that has meant almost 100,000 Egyptians working with us face to face, and a further 1.5 million reached through our broadcast and digital programmes.

Many of you will know that we have been in Egypt since 1938. The events that followed 25 January 2011 did not change that; indeed on 11 February – the day former president Hosni Mubarak stood down, we delivered IELTS tests to 200 Egyptian students, with a further 200 sitting exams the following day. I mention this here because it illustrates the long-term nature of the British Council's commitment to Egypt – strengthened by the passion and resolve of its young people striving to create a better future for themselves and those that will follow them – as well as a determination by Egypt's young people to access education. Education that provides them with the skills they need to find and create work and to support the economic, social and political development of their country.

This report sets out the results of our work from April 2011 to March 2012. Despite a rapidly changing external environment, characterised by protracted periods of political uncertainty and significant economic challenge, we have seen considerable growth in all areas. The number of young Egyptians who took a UK examination in 2011–12 grew by 35 per cent. Nearly 42,000 young Egyptians took a UK qualification with us; a further 17,000 students – many of them children – studied English at one of our teaching centres. Both groups did so for the key skills and recognition they know they will need to be able to go on to further studies or find work in Egypt's fiercely competitive job market. It is essential that we support the aspirations of these young Egyptians by providing access to the UK's assets in English and examinations.

Partnerships are at the heart of everything we do. They underpin all of our work and you are unlikely to find a British Council Egypt project or activity that does not have an Egyptian partner.

Over the past year, through our partnership with the Ministry of Education, we provided opportunities for collaborative learning to more than 18,000 state-school teachers and students through our schools project, Connecting Classrooms. We linked schools in Egypt to the UK, supported the professional development of state-school teachers and provided help to those that wanted to achieve the International School Award (ISA). The International School Award recognises work done to

provide a wider global perspective in student learning. It was inspiring to meet some of the young children from the 11 schools who participated in this year's award and hear them talk about the things that matter to them: concern for their community and their country, and a curiosity about how democracy works in the UK.

In partnership with the UK government's Arab Partnership Initiative, our Skills for Employability programme provided work skills for young people directly linked to industry and business needs. It supported policy development, curricular reform and quality assurance, as well as institutional links with UK colleges – all core priorities for the 500,000 young Egyptians who join the job market each year. We continued to work in partnership with Shell, supporting young entrepreneurs across Egypt through the Intilaaqah programme. We also launched our own enterprise award for young people. In the coming year we will participate in the Young Creative Entrepreneur programme in recognition of the important role individual creators, entrepreneurs, artists and activists play in the generation of images, sounds, symbols and ideas that create new jobs and new wealth, and at the same time shape our ideas of culture.

Many of the young people we spoke to post-25 January expressed a desire to contribute to the building of a newly democratic and pluralistic Egypt. They asked for the skills and opportunities to participate and debate the issues that mattered to them. Our response – through a new collaboration with the Anna Lindh Foundation and support from the Arab Partnership Initiative – has been Young Arab Voices, a project that helps young people develop skills for public debate, provides platforms for young people from diverse backgrounds to meet and exchange views, and supports young bloggers to bridge the gap between virtual and public space. This year more than 3,000 university students and other young people worked with us on this project.

In the arts, too, we have taken steps to ensure our work supports dialogue between artists and communities in Egypt and the UK using the strength and diversity of our shared cultural scene. Through our Grants to Artists programme we've encouraged engagement with the arts and promoted wider creative expression – this year supporting more than 60 young artists and institutions. And in response to the flourishing of Egypt's artistic community brought on by the Arab Spring we participated in research commissioned to investigate the relationship between artistic practice and social change, examining the cultural and political changes that are occurring within and across four countries – Egypt, Tunisia, Libya and Jordan.

The results of this research will help shape the future direction of our arts work in Egypt.

Last but by no means least: International Inspiration, the legacy programme of the London 2012 Olympics came to Egypt this year making us the 20th participating country. Through International Inspiration and new partnerships with the National Sports Council for Egypt, the Egyptian Olympic and Paralympics committees and UNICEF, we developed an exciting two-year programme that gives young Egyptians the kind of access to sport both at school and in the community that they deserve. The wider positive effects that sports participation has on school attendance, behaviour and the academic performance of young children is well researched and I am delighted that we are working in this area. We are delivering International Inspiration with Helwan, Assuit and Alexandria universities as well as through community youth centres and schools across the country.

Egypt is a big country, important to the UK for a number of reasons and filled with people mindful of their past and hopeful for their future. Our mission is to develop strong and vibrant relationships that provide opportunities for young people in both countries, and to work with many more people in Egypt and in the UK to support our shared aspiration for a stable and prosperous future.



Mark Stephens
Director

WHERE WE WORK IN EGYPT



ENGLISH

**MORE WIDESPREAD AND
BETTER-QUALITY TEACHING,
LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT
OF ENGLISH WORLDWIDE.**



We supported learners by:

- Directly teaching 17,000 learners in our teaching centres in Agouza and Heliopolis.
- Opening up the world of opportunities that reading provides with the 'Kids Read' initiative for 6–12-year-olds, in partnership with HSBC bank. This will help the children to improve their performance in language and critical-thinking skills.
- Teaching English-language skills directly in the workplace with courses run by British Council tutors at some of the biggest businesses in the country, including the Bank Misr group and National Bank of Egypt.

We supported teachers by:

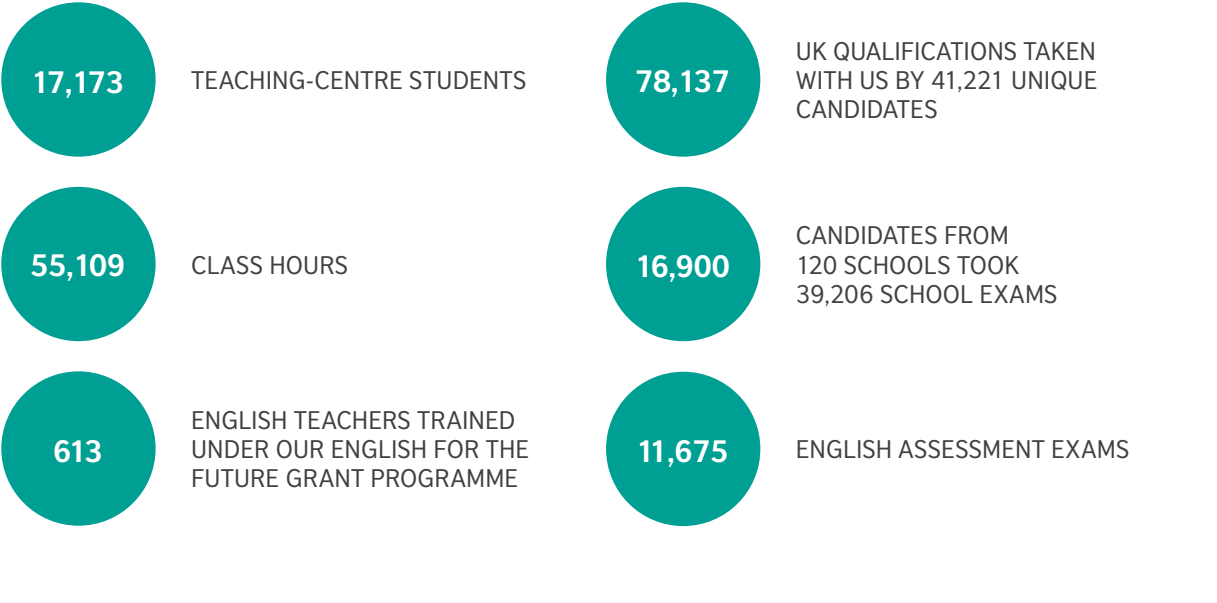
- Encouraging world-class English-language teaching (ELT) with new skills-based exams at Al Azhar University and the Al Azhar secondary schools in ten Egyptian governorates, which resulted in students graduating with improved language skills.
- Enhancing the business English skills of teachers in the Pathways to Higher Education project, which they use to help graduates from state universities succeed in their future employment.
- Developing English-language teaching at a new Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths school in Cairo, which will give students the opportunity to improve their technical skills and career potential with access to English-language resources.

We supported the development of English-language policy in Egypt by:

- Working with the government of Egypt's Education Development Fund jointly designing a project that aims to develop a vision and strategy for English at all levels of the education system in Egypt.

We promoted access to UK qualifications by:

- Giving 41,000 young Egyptians a passport to higher education with a UK qualification; the number of people taking an English-language qualification rose to 15,000.
- Creating partnerships with 110 schools and supporting them in achieving the quality standards needed for the International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) qualification and English-language certificates.
- Offering comprehensive support services including online resources, teacher training and curriculum development to candidates, exam centres, businesses and the Egyptian Ministry of Education.
- Delivering over 78,000 UK qualifications in Egypt in total, making it the British Council's fifth-largest examinations business worldwide.





ENGLISH- LANGUAGE TEACHING AT AL AZHAR – MAHMOUD EL-KORDY



After joining a new English-language teaching (ELT) project run by the British Council at Al Azhar University, Mahmoud El-Kordy realised how learning English could be the key to many new horizons. 'It was the experience of our lives' he recalls, 'learning the English language with modern methods allowed us to relate to Western culture and ideas in ways that would have been impossible without it'. Mahmoud's commitment and hard work was rewarded with a language-study scholarship at Leeds University and then, after graduating, a Chevening scholarship to study comparative literature at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London. 'I was a bridge between the East and West' he says. 'So many advances in literary thinking remained rooted in their own culture and I was able to begin connecting these very different worlds together'.

Mahmoud had already studied English in school prior to university, where the approach to languages was based on traditional methods of learning. 'The ELT course at Al Azhar University was completely different' he remembers. 'We were taught based on real-life situations and the exams

at the end of each month tested us on the skills we needed to communicate in English'. With a British Council scholarship Mahmoud went to live with a host family for six weeks while studying a language course at Leeds University. 'I'm sure I did learn some English in Leeds' jokes Mahmoud, 'but for me it was an incredible social experience. My encounter with UK culture and the really friendly host family made me challenge my preconceptions about life in the UK'.

After graduating from Al Azhar University, Mahmoud was one of only three students from his course to receive a Chevening scholarship to study in the UK. Having read classical and pre-Islamic poetry for many years in Cairo, Mahmoud wanted to see how these texts were seen from a Western perspective. 'In the way that literature is a mirror to the society it comes from' explains Mahmoud, 'I could explore the reaction of Arabic literature to meeting the West'. In this endeavour Mahmoud could follow a precedent, a fellow Al Azhar scholar called Refa'ah Al Thathawy who lived for six years in Paris during the 1830s. Al Thathawy wrote a book about his experiences that is still a point of reference

for learning about the encounter between the Arabic and Western worlds. 'When I went to the UK I felt like I had to be like him' enthuses Mahmoud, 'I was the second Al Thathawy'.

Since returning to Egypt, having passed his MA with a merit, Mahmoud has continued the cultural exchange. 'Many of the literary theories I learned about at SOAS are not available to Egyptian scholars because they are not published in Arabic' says Mahmoud, 'so I wrote about them in an article for Al Azhar's own newspaper'. Mahmoud is currently working as an administrator at Al Azhar University and is looking forward to becoming a professor some day so he can continue spreading the knowledge he has gained. 'The ELT course was a really different experience for students like me from Al Azhar University' remembers Mahmoud, 'it allowed us to explore different worlds and opened up many new horizons'.



PATHWAYS PROJECT – SAMAR MOHAMED

As associate professor at the Department of English of Ain Shams University, Samar Mohamed had always enjoyed helping students to achieve their full potential. Yet when she joined the Pathways to Higher Education project, part of the Centre for Advancement of Postgraduate Studies and research at Cairo University (CAPSCU) programme, Samar found she was able to reach even more students, especially those from socially disadvantaged groups. 'Whereas before I could teach perhaps 600 students per year at Ain Shams University' remembers Samar, 'I now get to have an impact on students from many faculties all over the country'. The Pathways project selects students and recent graduates who are motivated and want to learn, but cannot afford training that will maximise their access to postgraduate studies and employment opportunities. 'We focus on providing skills that will make a real difference to their futures' says Samar, 'and open new horizons'.

Samar was part of a group of 100 people who received training from the British Council in teaching English for business. After joining the CAPSCU programme Samar was able to use her expertise to teach language and professional skills through the Pathways project. To participate in the programme students must register online and complete a series of tests before they are invited for an interview. 'I really enjoy the interviews' says Samar, 'because you meet so many talented students who are enthusiastic and want to learn, and who we can help through the Pathways project'.

The English for business course combines live tuition with virtual classrooms and online self-study over a period of five months. During this time students are taught both practical skills, such as how to write emails and reports, and important professional social skills, including how to interact in office environments. 'This can be a surprise for many of the participants' recalls Samar, 'because they have never heard of English for business. We help them understand it's much more than just a language course, it's a new concept of using the English language to gain skills and positive attitudes'. At the end of the course the students are able to list their new skills on their CV, add the internationally respected certificate to their achievements, and also take with them an enhanced sense of their own abilities. Samar remembers how a student once told her that 'after I finished the Pathways course I discovered that I could deal with people at work in a new way, which gave me a lot of extra confidence'.

ARTS

NEW WAYS OF CONNECTING
WITH AND UNDERSTANDING
EACH OTHER THROUGH
THE ARTS.



We presented new British work and talent to new audiences by:

- Broadcasting The Selector radio show on Nile FM every Friday, playing the best of new British music to a weekly audience of 500,000.
- Sponsoring Egypt's first ever bio-art workshop where artists worked with live tissue, bacteria and living organisms to express their creativity.
- Bringing leading UK audiovisual performers Addictive TV to Egypt for the Disco Cairo 2011 music event.
- Showcasing the Composers Ensemble, one of the UK's most innovative chamber groups, who came to Egypt to perform the works of five Egyptian contemporary classical-music composers and held improvisation sessions with academics and students at the Cairo Conservatoire.

We presented and exhibited UK creativity and innovation by:

- Inviting Egyptian cultural leaders and promoters to UK global arts events such as the London Jazz Festival and the Edinburgh Festival. As a result, two UK companies participated in the Downtown Contemporary Arts Festival (D-CAF) in March/April 2012.

We built creative entrepreneurship and cultural leadership skills by:

- Offering the Culture Leadership International (CLI) programme, in partnership with the Ford Foundation, in order to facilitate leadership networking in the cultural and creative industries. The CLI programme enabled Abdalla Daif, Adel Abdelwahab and Elham Khattab to enhance their international networks of contacts, which will help to bring global opportunities for artistic expression and economic growth to Egypt.

We promoted international development and the empowerment of individuals and communities through the arts and supported new and emerging artists by:

- Launching the Grants to Artists scheme that reached 48 artists and 12 art institutions and increased their ability to engage with the wider Egyptian community through the arts. British Council grants made it possible for Noon Creative Enterprises to run theatre workshops for disabled actors; marginalised women in Alexandria to make and sell jewellery and screen-print pieces; Manar Moursi to design and build furniture made from palm leaves; and Adham Hafez to join the International Society for Performing Arts and push for greater representation of the Middle East and North Africa region.

500,000

WEEKLY LISTENERS
TO THE SELECTOR

48

EGYPTIAN ARTISTS
RECEIVED GRANTS FROM
THE BRITISH COUNCIL

4,602

PEOPLE ATTENDED
OUR ART EXHIBITIONS
AND PERFORMANCES



SUPPORTING UK ACTS INTERNATIONALLY – D-CAF – AHMED EL ATTAR



‘Culture is a motor for change’ explains Ahmed el Attar, the organiser behind the Downtown Contemporary Arts Festival (D-CAF), ‘and by showing international work we can raise the level of the Egyptian artists who will lead the changes in people and society’. With the support of the British Council, Ahmed visited performance festivals in the UK and picked two acts to perform at D-CAF. ‘It was a successful collaboration because the artistic processes are linked’ says Ahmed, ‘you must go to see shows so that you can then host exciting and original shows of your own, and this is something the British Council understands’. Ahmed wants to use the UK’s rich theatrical and performance traditions to inspire the arts scene in Cairo and reinvigorate Egypt’s long-standing reputation as one of the cultural centres of the Middle East.

Ahmed’s commitment to young artists in Egypt began when he established the Studio Emad Eddin in 2005. Situated in the heart of Cairo’s Downtown district, the studios provide rehearsal space and technical support for artists to develop their talents and skills. ‘Instead of just making productions’ says Ahmed, ‘we look at the whole cycle of developing artists and encourage others to go and make their own work’. Through creative workshops and technical-skills

programmes, young artists are given the tools they need to develop their own visions and ideas. ‘By working at the root level of the people making the work’ explains Ahmed, ‘we can lift the level of the performing arts-scene and attract more audiences. This will help us improve the cultural industries’.

The idea for D-CAF came from observations of artists’ development at the studios. ‘We always believed that the important thing missing in Egypt was being able to see a lot of new work’ says Ahmed, ‘it shapes your vision by liking and disliking other people’s work, it’s an integral part of artist formation’. D-CAF ran a programme over several weeks that showcased music, dance, theatre and performances. With support from the British Council, the theatre company Forced Entertainment and performance artist Ant Hampton, both acts Ahmed had spotted at UK festivals, came to Egypt to perform at D-CAF. ‘It was a success’ says Ahmed, ‘and we are already planning for next year’s festival’.

Other support provided by the British Council included inviting a UK playwright to run workshops in Cairo, and helping two young Egyptian directors to attend a development programme at the Young Vic theatre

in London. Ahmed explains the benefit of supporting the whole creative process, ‘It helps that the British Council understands the mechanism of linking people and performances rather than simply choosing UK acts and paying for them to appear in Egypt’.





GRANTS FOR ARTISTS – NOON CREATIVE ENTERPRISE – NADA SABET

Explaining her philosophy as ‘communicating through acting’, Nada Sabet says ‘it’s almost not important what you say on stage, as long as you get people talking and thinking’. She has used this idea for many years to challenge preconceptions about disability through performances and discussions. With the assistance of the British Council’s Grants to Artists scheme, Nada Sabet was able to form a theatre troupe of disabled amateur actors and put on three performances that challenged both the actors and the audience, including their families and disabled-rights NGOs, to re-examine the ways they thought about disability. Press coverage of the performances both raised awareness of issues surrounding disability in Egypt and helped Nada to further establish herself as an emerging artist.

Nada has worked on projects with the British Council for several years, beginning with a self-expression theatre workshop in 2009 and continuing with performances in Egypt and Syria. ‘Throughout this time’ remembers Nada, ‘I always joined forces with independent arts organisations to host my projects, which was always a creative experience, but it meant that I had to always look for new partners when the project was finished’. In order to create more lasting partnerships, in 2011 Nada formed her own company, Noon Creative Enterprise, with college friend and human-rights researcher Sally Sami. ‘It’s named after the Arabic character ‘ن’ (pronounced ‘noon’) explains Nada, ‘that is used as a prefix for collective words’. Nada’s first production with the Noon organisation was a participatory play called Hara TV that toured seven governorates. At first the audience are presented with a story about garbage disposal, but the play expands to include the audience in a discussion about solving communal problems through community action.

‘I was delighted to receive support from the Grants for Artist scheme’ remembers Nada, ‘because it meant I could make a performance about disability that drew directly on the real-life experiences of the actors themselves’. At the beginning of 2012 Nada hosted a series of auditions and chose a cast of nine amateur performers with different levels of physical ability. As a group, the actors pooled their experiences of living with disability, and then weaved a fictional story from the tapestry of their collective real-life events and challenges. ‘The key was communication’ explains Nada, ‘and in this we had some interesting challenges’. She remembers one

particular episode where three of the cast members, one blind, one deaf and one who could not use his hands, had to work together to create a scene despite having no medium of communication in common. ‘We faced a lot of similar difficulties’ remembers Nada, ‘but it meant that we really got to know each other and it also gave us the confidence to work as a team. Having to first overcome barriers between ourselves was in the end a very positive experience that then helped us to relate with the audience’. They decided to name the performance ‘samaa hos’, an Arabic expression used to hush people and prepare them to listen.

They staged the production twice in theatres and once in a youth centre, and followed each performance with discussions between the cast and the audience. ‘On the first night many of the audience were the family of the cast’ says Nada, ‘and afterwards they said it was the first time they had seen a realistic performance of the issues surrounding disability’. Nada also feels that the active participation of the cast made a huge difference to the debates. ‘Very often, talking about disabled issues in public is done by the parents or NGOs’ she says, ‘which is of course helpful but it can also serve to isolate the disabled people themselves. Our discussion raised a lot of questions about who represents who and why’. Looking back on the performances, Nada has no doubt that they were able to challenge a lot of people’s preconceptions about disability. ‘We switched around roles within the group so that the audience couldn’t tell who was blind or deaf in real life’ says Nada, ‘and once these labels fall away people are a lot more open to exploring the message’.



EDUCATION

ENHANCED UK LEADERSHIP
OF AND SHARED LEARNING
FROM INTERNATIONAL
EDUCATION.



We supported the professional development of teachers by:

- Providing teacher training through the Connecting Classrooms project and sharing educational expertise with visits to the UK by delegates from the Egyptian Teachers' Academy.
- Encouraging the education reform agenda to adopt a system for promoting teachers based on passing professional exams, rather than solely length of service.

We internationalised higher education by:

- Piloting a Leadership Centre of Excellence at Alexandria University to encourage innovative thinking throughout the Egyptian higher-education sector.

We improved the links between skills, industry and enterprise by:

- Helping harness the talent and energy of Egypt's young people with the chance to gain vocational skills and develop entrepreneurial talent. Education Training Partnerships forged international links between technical institutes and skills providers in the UK and Egypt, and the Intilaaqah small-business development scheme, in partnership with Shell, gave 868 young Egyptians access to entrepreneurial skills.

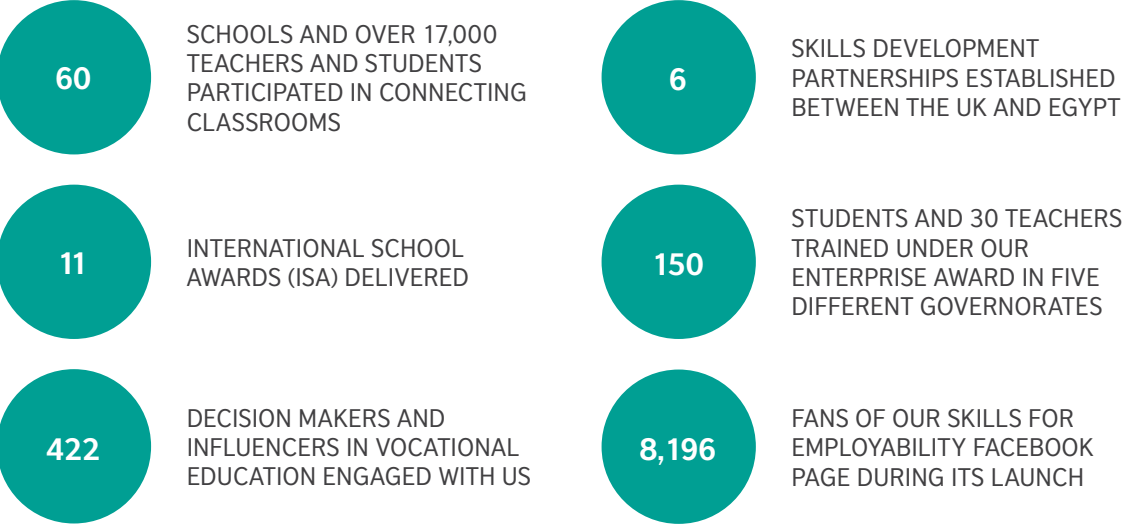
- Helping young scientists explain complex ideas in easy-to-understand ways with the FameLab competition. The project highlighted the important economic and social role that science plays and it gave the young participants an international platform to broadcast their ideas.

We increased the international outlook of young people by:

- Recognising and celebrating the best of Egyptian education with the International Schools Award, which rewards schools for applying international standards of education in creative ways.
- Developing Joint Curriculum projects between schools in the UK and Egypt and encouraging teacher visits between the two countries. Education professionals from both countries shared their experiences to create exciting projects that adhered to the best international standards and saw the spread of new approaches to education throughout classrooms in Egypt.

We developed collaborative learning by:

- Fostering a culture of cooperation and mutual benefit in international research projects, including collaboration between the National Research Centre in Egypt and Westminster University in the UK.





CONNECTING CLASSROOMS – MAYSA EL SHEIKH



'It was like magic' says Maysa el Sheikh as she talks about how the Connecting Classrooms project has allowed her to spread knowledge in ways she never before imagined. 'I always knew I wanted to make a difference to teaching in Egypt but I could never see a way to achieve this'. Yet since joining the programme Maysa has enabled a cultural dialogue to develop between students from Egypt and the UK, and has also developed her leadership skills and now aspires to be a force for positive change in the Egyptian education system.

Maysa's journey began at the Talaat Harb Experimental Language School in Alexandria, when in July of 2009 she helped them achieve an International Schools Award. Maysa went on to attend a British Council workshop on international education where her energy and dedication made recommending her to join the Connecting Classrooms programme easy. On her first visit to the UK in 2009 Maysa remembers 'it was a big challenge in many ways, but the other teachers were so friendly and helpful'. As well as exploring the technical side of curriculums and learning techniques, Maysa also had the chance to experience life in the UK and visit the family home of one of the partner teachers. 'It really had a big effect on me, I realised how

cultural differences fall away when people reach out in friendship'. Maysa continued to build on these friendships with two further visits to the UK in 2011.

One of the first partnership ideas was to set up sln2.net, a web-based portal that allowed pupils from the linked schools to communicate with each other. 'There were lots of technical challenges at the start', Maysa explains, 'but it was a good experience for the pupils to face the issues and learn from their mistakes'. Egyptian students designed Arabic classes and sent them via sln2.net to the classrooms in the UK, where pupils from the three original partner schools spread what they had learned to other schools in their area. 'It was wonderful to think how the work we did in classrooms in Egypt was reaching students in so many schools in the UK' recalls Maysa, 'and you could see how the Egyptian pupils became more confident in presenting their own culture to the wider world. They felt like ambassadors for their country'.

Through the programme Maysa gained valuable leadership experience and now works as co-ordinator for the ISA covering 54 schools all over Egypt. Her interest in helping other teachers develop their skills has led her to start a

translation course at Ain Shams University, after which she plans to make more English-language teaching resources available to Egyptian schools. Also, the Egyptian Ministry for Education has asked Maysa to become a teacher trainer at the governmental Technology and Training Centre. 'Connecting Classrooms gave me the opportunity to harness my skills and energy for the benefit of my students' reflects Maysa, 'and it created professional opportunities for me that didn't exist before'. Yet despite all the exciting prospects for the future Maysa remains focused on what she feels is the most important thing she learned over the past three years. 'It's about starting any new relationship with trust, so that you can inspire and be inspired by people regardless of cultural differences. We all have a lot to learn from each other'.





SKILLS FOR EMPLOYABILITY – EGYPTIAN BANKING INSTITUTE AND CRAVEN COLLEGE

Preparing young people for a career in the ever-changing industry of banking and finance requires a constant process of adapting teaching materials and techniques. To stay up to date and provide an international dimension to the training, the Egyptian Banking Institute (EBI) joined UK education provider Craven College in a Skills for Employability partnership. 'We're a professional institute' says EBI director Zeinab Abdel Razek, 'and support from Craven College helps us to provide the full range of skills that professional training needs'. However it was not just a one-way process explains David Llewellyn from Craven College; 'We realised that some teaching processes at the EBI are simpler and work better, so we applied them back in the UK'. It is through these kinds of partnerships that the Skills for Employability programme is raising the opportunities and aspirations of young people in Egypt and the UK.



As the Bank of Egypt's official training arm since 1991, the EBI has extensive experience of giving young people the technical skills they need to work in the banking sector. The Skills for Employability partnership offered the chance to compliment the established curriculum with a whole range of soft skills that are vital to modern businesses, including communications, change management and customer service. 'We already had the expertise' says Zeinab, 'the partnership was about upgrading, enhancing and developing our training programmes so they reflect current best practice'. To ensure a successful partnership, David explains how Craven College 'first of all listened to the Egyptian tutors, and because they have the local expertise we could tailor our support to their needs'.

One result has been the development of skills streaming, whereby students beginning new courses are placed into groups based on ability and support needs. 'This way the students benefit more' says Zeinab, 'and we can organise our teaching structure more efficiently'. Also, the emphasis that Craven College places on practical experience means that they only employ trainers who already work in banks. This approach means that the soft skills taught to the students directly help them find jobs and advance their careers. David is also enthusiastic about the practical benefits to Craven College gained through the partnership. 'Through working with the EBI we have gained confidence in our own abilities as an international organisation, and used the experience to provide training in the UK banking sector'.



SOCIETY

SOCIETIES WHOSE YOUNG PEOPLE, CITIZENS AND INSTITUTIONS CONTRIBUTE TO AND BENEFIT FROM A MORE INCLUSIVE, OPEN AND PROSPEROUS WORLD.



We developed community leaders and encouraged the spread of community action by:

- Creating partnerships with government agencies and local NGOs that empowered women in Cairo slums, established youth networks in Fayoum and supported the development of visually impaired community leaders in Alexandria.

We raised awareness of the role of women in democratic societies by:

- Sponsoring international debates to improve women's rights and lives in the region and promoting the participation of women in political and social life. Egyptian participants supported by the British Council have subsequently been chosen to join the National Council for Women.
- Piloting the Springboard self-development programme, used by the British Council to encourage women's personal development and connect them to a network of mentors and peers around the world.

We encouraged the media to develop a positive role in the transition to democracy by:

- Enhancing the skills of Egyptian journalists to enable them to write balanced coverage of elections, with training expertise provided by the Thomson Reuters Foundation, and supporting the creation of the Aswat Masriya news service, which gives Egyptian journalists the chance to syndicate their work through global media partners and encourages public scrutiny of election conduct.

We strengthened the voices of young people in the Arab world by:

- Supporting over 3,000 young Egyptians from across 17 governorates to debate the social and political issues of their choice and to engage in thought-provoking and constructive talks through the Young Arab Voices project.
- Enriching the lives of young people with sport and play through the official London 2012 sports legacy programme, International Inspiration, which will create a nationwide network of youth sport leaders.

1,918

COMMUNITY LEADERS TRAINED IN SIX GOVERNORATES UNDER ACTIVE CITIZENS

453

YOUNG PEOPLE TRAINED IN DEBATING SKILLS IN 17 GOVERNORATES THROUGH YOUNG ARAB VOICES

27

YOUNG ARAB VOICES DEBATES CONDUCTED AND ATTENDED BY 3,520 YOUNG PEOPLE





COMMUNITY LEADERS IN ALEXANDRIA – ATEF SORIAL, MAI FOUDA, MAHA FOUDA, RANIA MOHAMMED



‘Young people are a great power in society’ explains Atef Sorial, ‘but they can face a lot of difficulties in using their efforts positively, which society needs them to do’. After working with disadvantaged and disabled young people for over ten years, Atef is well aware of the challenges they encounter in daily life. However, he also knows how to help them overcome these difficulties. Atef helps run the Active Citizens project in Alexandria, where they teach new skills to young people and support them in spreading what they learn throughout society. ‘It is very important to start with the basics’ says Atef, ‘to bridge the needs of each learner and give them confidence. Then you can build the skills and make them concrete with practical experience’. This combination of classroom learning and practical exercises helped three young Alexandrian women to rise above the challenges of being blind and become community leaders through their work and volunteering.

Mai Fouda joined Active Citizens after graduating from the Faculty of Languages at Cairo University. ‘The programme gave me the confidence to express myself and become active in society’ says Mai. One of her favourite activities was a mask workshop where participants wore masks to express different viewpoints. ‘I myself wore the positive mask and my friend wore the pessimist mask’ remembers Mai, ‘and we talked about what we wanted to achieve, it helped me to think about how I could reach my goals’. Mai also recently started work as a French and English language teacher at a local school. As well as supporting her with the

skills and confidence to carry out her job, Mai believes the Active Citizens programme has encouraged her professional commitment. ‘I feel I have a message to give my students’ she explains.

Maha Fouda, Mai’s twin sister, attributes the success of the Active Citizens programme to how she learned to think in positive ways. ‘They helped me think about what steps I needed to take to become a computer instructor at the Noor Association for Girls’ explains Maha, ‘and now I can teach my students new skills and confidence’. The Active Citizens programme also taught Maha how to use a special screen reader computer programme that allows her to read and write MS Word documents. With this skill she was able to get a job with the local government translating documents between English and Arabic.

Rania Mohammed talks about the steps in life that the Active Citizens programme has allowed her to follow. ‘By learning how to trust in myself’ she explains, ‘I was able to set out my goals and work out how to achieve them. With this faith in my abilities I feel I can challenge myself to do anything I want to’. Support from the Active Citizens programme helped Rania study for a certificate in computer skills. Rania is continuing to work towards becoming a computer professional and is putting her new skills into developing audio programs for special-needs users. ‘When I realised how essential computers are to modern life’ says Rania, ‘I also thought that I must teach other people how to use them’.



YOUNG ARAB VOICES – HADIA SAEY



Like many young Egyptians, Future University in Egypt graduate Hadia Mohamed wanted to talk about what was happening around her but felt she didn't have the opportunity. She found a space for her opinions with the Young Arab Voices programme, which aims to involve Arab youth from all over the region and give them a voice to talk about their future. 'I gained a lot of confidence from learning the skills of debating' says Hadia, 'and it also pushed me to say what I really think'. The experience also showed Hadia the importance of being a good listener. 'You have to actively think about what the other person is saying, otherwise it's not a real conversation'.

Joining graduates from all over the region, Hadia attended a series of workshops in Jordan where they learned how to set up and co-ordinate debates, as well as how to engage the audience and use social media to get their message out. 'Of course we couldn't stop debating amongst ourselves' remembers Hadia, 'because we were an international group, and I was fascinated by the different perspectives people gave on the events of the year [Arab Spring uprisings]'. Hadia feels that the training and experience of learning among her peers introduced a new level of professionalism to their debating styles.

Hadia passed on her new skills to other students in Cairo. 'We started by learning the rules of debates: who speaks, who moderates and how to ensure it runs smoothly' says Hadia, 'and went on to talk about how to formulate ideas and viewpoints that could be presented within the allotted time'. Her group participated in the first ever inter-college debate with students from Cairo University, discussing the topic of religious figures running as candidates in the Egyptian presidential elections. 'The quality of the debate was very high, but I was most pleased by the reactions from the audience' Hadia remembers, 'you could tell they were really interested in the topic and I'm sure we got a lot of people thinking that day'.

Hadia attributes the success of the Young Arab Voices programme to its ability to create a safe zone in which young people can express their opinion knowing that they will be listened to. 'It would have been a success even before the revolution, but now we can really grab people's attention and talk about what we want'. Which, perhaps surprisingly, is not usually an overtly political subject. 'Some of our most interesting debates have been about cultural and social issues, like a recent discussion on polygamy that really engaged the teams and the audience'.

So do the debates affect people's opinions? Speaking from her own experience, Hadia remembers being assigned to speak on a topic contrary to what she already felt strongly about. 'At first it's a confusing situation because you have to have a debate with yourself before you can join the wider conversation' admits Hadia, 'but in the end it's a really positive process that forces you to look at your own thoughts and beliefs, and perhaps even change your mind'.



OUR TARGETS TO 2015

**OUR VISION IS TO MAKE A
REAL DIFFERENCE IN CULTURAL
RELATIONS BETWEEN THE UK
AND EGYPT AND TO ENGAGE
WITH 5 MILLION EGYPTIANS
BY 2015.**

We will:

- engage 200,000 people face to face and through exhibitions
- reach 4.8 million people through digital and broadcast content
- have 29,000 learners in our teaching centres, delivering 85,000 class hours annually
- reach 55,000 unique exam candidates taking 123,600 exams annually
- create new partnerships for our work, including with international donors.

We will do this by:

- building trust with the people we work with
- demonstrating that we are credible and responsive to the needs of Egypt
- focusing on employability and active citizenship of young Egyptians as the overarching themes of our work
- expanding our teaching centres in Cairo and in Alexandria
- introducing new websites in Arabic and English and expanding our social-media presence
- enhancing our services to customers.

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