



THE VILLAGE'S TRAIN

END OF PROJECT EVALUATION REPORT

Location: Upper Egypt – Minya

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THE VILLAGE'S TRAIN PROJECT “AL QATR”

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Thanks for the support to build a world where we will all be equal and free to produce knowledge.

Ikhtyar Team.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	3
Summary of findings and recommendations	4
Methodology and Limitations	5
I. Introduction	7
II. Findings	8
III. The trainers and the groups	10
IV. The Documentation	17
V. Challenges	17
VI. Conclusion	19
VII. Recommendations	19
Annex I	22

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is an evaluation of the “Qatr Project”/Village’s Train (I will be calling it in both versions throughout this evaluation) that took place from January till December 2016 in different locations in the governorate of Minya in Upper Egypt. The villages were Barsha, Manhari, Abu Qurqas, Bayyadeya and Abou Ghreir as well as in the city of Minya and the town of Mallawi.

The aim of this evaluation is to question and understand the effectiveness of such a project and its success in achieving its goals and to listen to first-hand feedback of those who were involved in it. Moreover, throughout this evaluation I emphasize on certain points that might have recurred from the people I interviewed for this evaluation and are of importance for the project. Furthermore, I will discuss the challenges the project faced and give recommendations for further development.

According to the proposal submitted to the Drama, Diversity and Development Project¹, this project aimed to “create a self-sustainable theater group in eight small villages of Minya that has the artistic tools and conceptual knowledge to discuss gender based issues with a sectarian paradigm”. Throughout this evaluation I try through different methods to examine how far this goal was achieved.

This evaluation was carried out in the months of March and April 2017. The evaluation was based on interviews with different individuals or groups involved in the project. I conducted eight interviews on the period of five days; five of the interviews took place in the Government of Minya on March 24th and 25th, 2017 and the rest in Cairo on March 21st and 31st (the latter is a continuation of the interview from the 21st) with Shady Abdalla , the project Manager of the Village’s Train project and a lead trainer himself as well, and April 3rd with Noha Khattab, a trainer, and on April 8th with Salam Yousry, artistic consultant of the project and a lead trainer.

The interviews from March 24th and 25th were with the performance groups from Minya who are involved in the project. I conducted the interviews whether with the members themselves or with the coordinators of the groups or both, according to their availability. The interviewed groups were: Maestro from Minya, a group of four young men from Mallawi and Panorama El Barsha from El Barsha village. The coordinators were Raheel from Manhari village coordinating for the Manhari group and Hana from Abu Qurqas village responsible for The Upper Egypt Choir (Choral El Saeed) affiliated to the Upper Egypt Association. Moreover, I interviewed the

¹ **Drama, Diversity and Development** (DDD), a project funded by the European Union funded within the framework of the regional program **Med Culture**. This project aims to support the efforts of the Southern Mediterranean countries' in building deep-rooted democracy and to contribute to their sustainable economic, social and human development, through regional co-operation in the fields of media and culture. It supports activities fostering cultural policy reform and reinforcing the capacity of cultural policy makers, as well as promoting investment and the development of cultural operators' business capabilities. For more information check: <https://actfordiversity.org/>

executive director of Misr Association for Development and Democracy, Youstina and who herself is part of Panorama El Barsha and a co-director of the project.

In order to gain a better insight of the outcome and the development and interactions taking place within the period of the execution of the project, I have as well, examined the proposal of the project and the narrative reports created by the project manager, which was handed to DDD. Moreover, I watched the shorter as well as the longer version of the video documentation of the project and read the blog² that was created especially for the project and as a part of its documentation.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Effects of the project:

There are two levels or categories of the effect of a project, a personal one “direct effect” and an extended one. The personal effect is the direct effect, meaning it is how a project affects individuals like the ones who were trained or the smaller environment in which the project took place like the coordinators and everyone who was involved in the project in a way or another. The Qatr project fits into this category at this stage. This effect is as well a short term one because the duration of the project is quite short (10 months), which is not sufficient to build and focus on a structural change that can expand outside those circles of the “Direct Effect” to wider circles of people with a long term effect. The performances that took place affected this wider circle but only temporarily therefore it cannot be categorized into the extended effect.

Projects that achieve a long term extended effect are projects which duration is at least three years because it gives space to build the structure needed to create positive change, moreover, a long term project allows for the concept of multiplication, meaning it allows for its format to be repeated after the idea was given enough time to settle in the context in which the project finds place. Multiplication allows for the idea to spread on a wider range and by locals who were trained by professional.

Both the levels I mentioned above are equally important but for a project such as Al Qatr, whose goal is create change within a society that suffers sectarianism. The Qatr project has managed to work positively on the first level which was proven thorough the interviews conducted with the participants, but in order for it to move from this stage and enter the long term extended effect stage it needs to be extended for at least two years.

Although the project faced some challenges to comfortably and fully fulfill its goals due to difficulties it faced such as funding delay, managerial problems, logistics, etc, it was able to affect the trainers, the artistic groups and even the management team who was involved in it very positively.

² A separate internet domain was created for this blog under <https://www.alqatr.com>. after the domain expired it was not renewed for financial constraints of Ikhtyar group so all entries was moved under a special section on Ikhtyar website https://www.ikhtyar.org/?page_id=21051

All the performing groups and individuals who were part of the village's train besides gaining street performance skills and learning new theatrical techniques and methods, they became more independent and confident and had clearer visions of what they would like to reach and achieve as performers. Moreover, through the guidance of the trainers, they were able to create a real bond among themselves as a group. Furthermore, the experience gave them a space to freely and openly express themselves and experience their talents. The experience with the project exposed the trainees to new ways of thinking, seeing and interacting, contributed into internal changes in the members such as emotional and personal growth and above all joy and happiness.

One of the most important findings in this evaluation was the overall effect it had on the groups, the coordinators as well as on the audience, which was happiness. Happiness was one of the most recurring themes people in my interview mentioned. The happiness the experience gave them in working with Al Qatr project. A profound change that this project brings in general is that it puts people in a hopeful state. Many young people were asking to join one of the groups after they saw the performances on the street. Besides feeling happy watching the performance, they looked up to the people performing and wanted to become part of this extraordinary experience.

The last performance that took place in December 2016 was a collaborations between the village's train project , [Outa Hamra \(Red Tomato\) Group](#) and [Bnt Al Masarwa](#) who contributed into attracting more attention to the performances taking place in the street especially that Bnt Al Masarwa is an all-girls band singing about women's issues, which is uncommon in Minya, besides that the importance of collaborating with them and the work they produced is that they collected women's stories from the village and made them heard through their songs contributing into raising awareness about some of the difficulties different women face in Minya. Moreover, Outa Hamra was able to create joyful atmosphere through its performance and colors and music, which was quite entertaining especially for children and youngsters.

METHODOLOGY AND LIMITATIONS

This evaluation depended on desk review of the project repots, key informal interviews with the project manager and the lead trainers in addition to interviews of the groups in Minya.

Some of the limitations I faced while doing this evaluation:

- Delayed meetings for interviews whether in Cairo or Minya. Nonetheless, in Minya it was more remarkable as I had to go to different villages to meet people or even to their houses. The pace in the villages is much slower that in Cairo and sometimes waiting for someone could take some time.

- I could have spent another two days in Minya. To rework my findings and then go back to the people I interviewed for further questions, in case they arouse.
- Moreover, after my visit to Minya, and after having met with Shady, I came back with more questions and had to set another session with him. I strongly believe that the period of the implementation of the methodology used for the evaluation should have been longer with at least another visit to Minya.
- Not having a clear target of the aim of the evaluation from the beginning. Such as suggested questions and what the client would like to read or focus points.



I. INTRODUCTION: STREET PERFORMANCE

Throughout the evaluation I presented the question of “Why street performance?”

In villages in Minya no theater or performance spaces exist. According to Youstina Samir, the executive director of Misr Association for Development and Democracy and a member of Panorama El Barsha, “if a place was rented for a performance, it is usually small and a very few number of people would fit in such youth centers, or it would be usually in a church, therefore the number of attendees is quite limited or limited to a certain audience”. Therefore, street performance offers an alternative to the limitations Youstina mentioned.

Performing on the street brings together a wider range of people, female and male of different ages and religions, as an audience especially in place which suffers high sectarianism and discrimination based on gender such as in Minya, furthermore it reaches out to those less privileged.

The Qatr Project as a street performance project that was initiated by Ikhtyar, “Choice” for Gender Studies and Research in collaboration with Misr Association for Development and Democracy from El Barsha village, aims to engage and reach those mentioned above and discuss certain social topics aiming to create awareness and raise social consciousness, through some of the topics that were performed which carried a controversial content, for example the performance by Panorama El Barsha, which focused on marriage and early marriage in the village of El Barsha, portraying it as a negative thing especially for women and young girls. Moreover, the advantages of having a collaborator like Ikhtyar in this project gave a critical perspective to the produced work and its content or/and on the methods used to implement it. Furthermore, Ikhtyar is closely connected to the NGOs and cultural spaces and groups functioning in Minya, besides Misr Association for Development and Democracy, and is acquainted of their needs and problems within that sphere adding to it its own experience and expertise.³

Further advantage of street theater is that it is quite broad and involves different aspects of performing such as storytelling, improvisation, singing, interactive theater and clowning and acrobatic. All this besides contributing to raising awareness and presenting critical issues in the society, it allows some space for fun and play and is attractive for the youngsters as well as the elderly. The final performance the project carried out in December 2016 successfully included all those aspects.

Moreover, street performance is spontaneous, improvised and above all less costly, for both the audience and the performers as it has no entrance fee and the performers do not have to arrange for seating or stage and lighting, etc, which would allow them to work with realistic and smaller budgets, especially if they were relying

³ Ikhtyar team has been working in Minya since May 2014, where they worked with Misr Association in implementing a project titled “We Try....”. Ikhtyar has also worked closely with different artistic spaces in Minya as Megraya.

on smaller external funding. Moreover, all the performers in village's train project are young, between 10 and 30, and the advantage in this is that they encourage other young people to join in and consequently turning them into agents of change and not just recipients of ideas and information. Hana, coordinator of Upper Egypt Choral, told me that many young girls approached her after the performance, and asked to join in and sing with them.

Furthermore, in the context of Minya performing in the street is an alternative to the performances taking place in churches, which usually have a religious content and refuse to show anything outside of it, such as social content for example. Moreover, in Minya Street performances exist in the form of cultural traditions related to religion such as the Christian Moulid El Adra (Birth of virgin Mary) or Islamic Moulids (Birth of the prophet and other religious figures), moreover, local Weddings which take place in the street, at least a part of them, could be considered a form of performance as well. Weddings in village happen on the street in order to draw attention to the newlyweds and as a form of making the news publicly. Having a street performance outside of that context is almost non-existent, therefore, The Qatr Project has brought a new concept into the villages.

The experience of street performance was quite new for most of the performers as well as for the audience and it comes with its goods and bads. For example the reaction of the audience was extremely positive and they were very receptive of the performances and the content, moreover, many of the performers, in spite of their self-consciousness to perform in the street, found the experience to be quite new and very rewarding to them as individuals and a group.

On the other hand, at the early stage of the project, when some performers learnt that the performance is taking place in the street they quit, especially the group of girls from Manhari village who were mainly trained by Noha Khattab. This group consisted of girls all above 18, but then changed and new members were recruited, young boys and girls between the age of 13 and 15. Others, such as in the village of Bayyadeya refused to be filmed or photographed for the documentation of the project.

II. FINDINGS

This section will introduce the findings of the analysis phase where I looked at the process of implementing the project and the knowledge transfer from the trainers to the artistic groups that were involved in the project.

The process:

1) LOGISTICAL IMPLEMENTATION OF PLANNED ACTIVITIES:

From the proposal written and submitted by Ikhtyar and Misr Association for the DDD project, not all aspects have been fulfilled; this is due to different factors, mainly the time factor. Examining the narrative report

and the proposal and through the interviews I conducted, the schedule of the training sessions was not well planned, there was a gap of three months between the first workshop and the one right after it, it was explained to me that it was due to some official holidays, exams, etc, which should have been taken into consideration at the planning phase especially that some groups were affected by it and said that the time gap caused them confusion and they forgot everything they learnt from the session before.

Moreover, some coordinators from Minya lacked experience or some had their own vision on how and where the performances should take place, which caused some unease to them when the plans were changed, another point is the coordinators were not included in any change of plans coming from the team in Cairo and were told later. Moreover, some coordinators were informed quite late of the schedule of the sessions, for example in Manhari, Raheel told me that Noha often contacted her one evening before she came to tell her that there will be sessions the coming days. This reflects an interrupted and inconsistent communication between the team in Cairo and the coordinators in Minya. I need to make it clear here that the trainers agreed that they are responsible for dividing their time as it suits them and that not all of them needed to travel to Minya together.

2) KNOWLEDGE SHARING AND BUILDING:

Different methods were used for training the groups. Such as improvisational theater, song writing, story collecting, singing, methods of finding and creating an idea, experience sharing, emotional growth, voice, body language and presence, trust building, breathing and venting, openness in speaking of feelings, dealing with the audience, etc. This was a very successful part in the process of the training, and the groups were quite satisfied with what they learnt and they felt the progress.

What was not very clear was Noha's role with the group she was training, which she said there was not a group at all and one needed to be formed, which took a lot of time and effort. Nonetheless, her group did not come up with a performance; they rather had an interactive game with the people in the village.

Moreover, what I have concluded regarding "the passing of knowledge and experience" to the group members in order for them to become trainers themselves, was partially fulfilled with the ones who have been in performance for a while now, but with the newcomers it was impossible as they lacked the experience.

III. THE TRAINERS AND THE GROUPS

The three trainers of the project were Noha Khattab, Salam Yousry and Shady Abdalla. At the beginning of the project all three trainers started training the two groups that existed at the time – Panorama El Barsha and Maestro. This was in March 2016. Then a three-month gap occurred and the trainers only went back in June again, as mentioned above. As a tactic to save time, the trainers decided to divide the groups among them to save time and that each trainer focus on developing the skills of one to two groups only as the groups themselves were not ready to receive directions from multiple trainers. The groups at that stage lacked the self-confidence that they need to experiment and work with different trainers, some of them were actually in the process of creating a group and afterwards the process of building trust among them before even entering into the level of training and acquiring progressive skills, let alone becoming independent and capable of training other groups.

At this very current stage, those groups are established and actually had a performance (December 2016), although some of them lack the experience for it, but it was a good step for encouragement and confidence building. They still need to acquire further skills and knowledge as well as confidence before entering the last step of training others. Meaning, training other groups comes last after the group has obtained all the training it needs and has become independent, and at this stage of the project, it is far from that.

The groups were divided on the trainers as the following:

- “Shady Abdalla” was responsible for Panorama El Barsha, the group in Bayyadeya,
- “Noha Khattab” for the team in Manhari
- “Salam Yousry” for Maestro in Minya, the group in Mallawi, The Upper Egypt Choir, he, as well, worked with Bnt Al Masarwa from Cairo

Clearly, the groups were divided on the trainers according to their own experience as well as the experience of the groups they are training and acquaintance with the groups they work with.

Shady has already worked in theater especially on storytelling with feminist content and was able to work very well the group from El Barsha who share with him similar views. As for Salam, who has the longest experience and has worked in different forms of performance and with big groups of people was able to work with three groups on improvisational theater, singing and skill development as well as develop a performance with each of them. Noha was the one with the least experience as a trainer, and has gained most of it as an anthropologist and a researcher. Moreover, her group has not performed with the others but participated with a game as a public intervention, which she developed under the guidance of Salam.

SHADY’S GROUPS:

Shady has already worked with Panorama El Barsha previously as mentioned, nonetheless, the Bayyadeya group was a new experience to him, which as well came with its own challenges, such as the group

did not want to be photographed or be part of any documentation especially when they found out that one of the Cameramen had a Muslim name and were quite upset by that, nonetheless they accepted to be trained but did not want to perform because they were very concerned that someone might film them. But with time a trust relationship between the trainers and the group was established.

Shady had to take the approval from the church to train with the group on and talk about social issues in the society rather than religious ones, which they are usually used to. He said that he was rejected to work in another church in the same village when they knew the content was not religious. The connection with the church was established through Youstina.

SALAM'S GROUPS:

As for Salam, he has already worked with The Upper Egypt Choir some years ago and was acquainted with their work, moreover he worked with the group from Minya on previous occasions as well. The group from Mallawi and Bnt Al Masarwa were the new groups he worked with, which as well came with its own challenges.

The group from Mallawi had absolutely no experience in performance, and when the training moved from Mallawi to Abu Qurqas, the girls dropped out because they did not want to commute. As for Bnt Al Masarwa, a group of young women from Cairo performing songs in different styles on women and equality came with their own pre-conceptions on women in Upper Egypt. When Bnt Al Masarwa first arrived to Abu Ghreir they collected stories of women in the village, then they wrote songs on those women. After finishing the first draft of the lyrics they consulted with the trainers and the members of Panorama El Barsha. This was a very positive point because as much as this was a learning experience for the groups from Minya it was as well for the group from Cairo

Moreover, in one of the interviews Shady told me that Bnt Al Masarwa and Panorama El Barsha had very good chemistry between them and that group from Barsha was able to influence Bin El Masarwa in a positive way, encouraging them to go out on the street to perform and boosting their confidence as Bnt Al Masarwa was quite nervous. This was their first performance on the street ever. On the other hand, the ladies from the El Barsha Group were quite fascinated by the songs that came out eventually and learnt them all by heart and were very positively influenced by the ladies from Bnt Al Masarwa and their openness and confidence as performers. This was a mutual positive experience for both sides.

NOHA'S GROUPS:

As for Noha, as I mentioned, she developed the game with the children under the guidance of Salam and had an intervention with the children in the village engaging by that a big number of people and through that the group was able to promote for the performance of the other groups through going around in the village and playing with people.

I think that in order to develop a performance with the group from Manhari, she needs to work with another trainer very closely, such as Salam or Shady, otherwise she can focus on developing public intervention methods with the group she worked with.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TRAINERS:

The trainers of the project were able to develop a strong relationship based on trust and collaboration among them, moreover they succeeded in establishing a feeling of collectiveness. They considered themselves equal to one another rather than hierarchical, they have the same vision into what they want to achieve and are very communicative with one another and about their tasks, moreover, they exchanged their experiences together on regular basis throughout the project. The trainers worked on communicating ideas and sharing with the groups they trained, constantly opening a conversation with them on what they would like to do and the topics they want to talk about and express in their performance.

THE TOPICS OF THE PERFORMANCES:

The trainers developed the topics of the performances with the groups organically and through creative theatrical practices and methods, and avoided enforcing on them ideas they did not want to talk about, avoiding by that any classical and conservative developmental agendas which usually comes with methods of change from its own background without paying attention to the needs and backgrounds of the people (performers) or the context its performing in, or its audience, and consequently the outcome would not be authentic and will seem enforced, and the message would not reach the audience strongly and sincerely.

Sincerity is an important aspect in artistic expression and giving the performers the space to freely express themselves and develop their ideas in order to reach their audience is essential. The trainers made sure the young performers within the frame of street performance kept their agency and with their intense guidance taught them contemporary skills on how to express themselves better and how to perform their ideas to the audience.

The trainers avoided enforcing the content the groups were to perform and instead through working together with them and communication they came up with the theme that they felt they wanted to perform, nonetheless the role of the trainer was not minimized in any sense as he/she contained the content of the performance and directed it besides developing the performers skills. So besides the fact that this experience was on building skills and learning, it was about opening the performers minds to new ways of thinking and seeing and feeling, which contributed into their personal development besides their professional as performers.

The ideas the trainers developed with the performers included presenting topics that were related to the villages they performed in and using objects from their environments, they did not adopt any attitudes of

preaching their own ideas and what is right or wrong, they rather gave space for the performers to work out on their ideas or/and voice some of their concerns in public and used the performance as a way of communicating with the audience and building a bridge between them and the performers.

Throughout the trainings the performers did not only speak about their burdens and problems in their environments and societies, they as well spoke of their hopes and dreams, their daily lives and what makes them happy in the surroundings, and by tackling feelings of sadness or anger, feelings of joy and hopefulness which are just as equally important in a performance. Choosing to speak of what makes the performers happy is because they feel an urgency to talk about it and express themselves. The project created a space for free expression besides its other objective.

The groups:

As I mentioned, for this evaluation I met three groups, 2 young men from the Minya group named Maestro, the group from Mallawi consisting of four young men and the group from Barsha consisting of eight young women named Panorama El Barsha. Both Barsha and Minya groups existed before the project and the Mallawi group was formed during the project. It contained young women at the beginning but then when the groups had to commute to Abu Qurqas for the trainings they dropped out.

PANORAMA EL BARSHA:

As for the Barsha group, it originally consisted of fifteen members but was asked to minimize their number to eight only, in order to receive the training and perform consequently. This has caused a division in the group and created feelings of jealousy, especially after the performance on the street and the attention the group received.

On the other hand, this group of eight people (Panorama El Barsha), was able to establish a deeper connection among them than they had before through the guidance of the instructor, Shady. According to them they have not experienced such connectivity as a group before and they felt they really understood each other and consequently each other's pains as well as hopes and this contributed into creating a real bond among them.

Sitting with the group "Panorama El Barsha" I really felt the closeness and connectivity among them, as if they have had an "experience" together, a common concern or pain, as if they shared so much from inside them and the feeling of "the group" was very present, especially that they traveled together to perform the piece they developed together with Shady in Tunis at the Sfax Theater Festival. The project has facilitated for the traveling of the group, and they were accompanied by the trainer Salam.

The trip to Tunisia had a great impact on the group within their communities. They gained much respect from the people in the village and their families and were “taken seriously” according to one of the group members. They said that when they came back everyone was congratulating them and respected their work, which was a very important step in the future of this group and contributed to their conscience of their work.

Moreover, the rest of the groups heard that the girls from Barsha traveled to Tunisia to perform in the Sfax festival and they were encouraged to work further as they saw traveling outside their villages to perform to a whole new audience as an exquisite experience that they would like to be part of. But this experience did not only have a positive effect on the Brasha group, it actually had a positive effect on all other groups, who most of them expressed their wish to perform elsewhere.

MAESTRO:

As for the group from Minya. While talking to some of the members of the groups I interviewed I posed the question if they felt qualified to train, the more advanced ones, Maestro from Minya, said that they would do it as one of them has already been invited to attend the workshops with Salam in one of the villages to learn techniques and skills of training. Nonetheless he said that if he did a call for participants for a theater workshop in Minya independently he is not sure that many people will attend as they might not trust him, unless he was invited by a project, like The village’s train, to train in Minya, this will give him some weight as a trainer, according to him. They said that people need to feel that the workshop is important or that the trainers are important to a certain degree to be taken seriously. He suggested collaborating with a street performance group from Cairo who are quite famous and perform once in Cairo together and maybe once in Minya and through that the group will gain some fame and consequently its members.

MANHARI GROUP:

Raheel the coordinators suggested that the groups who were trained to be granted a kind of certificate of participation in the project and that they fulfilled certain criteria and are eligible as coordinators or trainers.

THE UPPER EGYPT CHOIR:

The group already existed before the project and who are quite established. Salam worked on developing their skills on writing and composing and asked them to think of ideas that they want to talk about and to write songs on them to sing them, which proved to be a very successful experience and gave them space to express themselves freely. Salam said that he was amazed from the group and how well they worked together.

I interviewed Hana the coordinator of the group and asked Her what she thought of the project and what the next step could to be, Hana beautifully phrased it that “when you go to a tailor and have a piece of clothes made for you, one usually has a first fitting, this first time is usually raw and the outcome is not a refined one, its patched, the second fitting would be better and the third even the best” she said as well “I could say the same about the group, we are still in the raw phase”.

The project is in its first stage and could be considered still experimental, although the groups were able to come up with a satisfying performance at the end, but it needs to become solid. The groups still need so much to work on in order to gain confidence in themselves as street performers and as trainers. She said there are many young people who have great ideas and that they need to be discovered and emphasized.

The Upper Egypt Choral, which consists of almost 50 people, can be considered a success story of the Qatr project. Right after the last performance, Hana started holding writing workshops in four schools with 500 students in each school, following the example of senior trainer Salam.

Hana the coordinator wants to spread this idea, she even suggested working with Arabic language teachers. She said that Salam let the girls think of words different, they deconstructed them and thought of so many meaning; she said it was an extraordinary experience to them. The topics they sang were of things that are relevant to them, for example: moments and experiences of happiness or sadness, problems they face or of their environments and society. She said this was not just a place to be creative for the youth but it was a place to vent form their daily lives.

Moreover, allowing the members to compose their own songs gave them the feeling of being creative besides talented as singers which is a big push for their self-confidence. Furthermore, as I mentioned earlier, they gained a real connectivity among each other and real teamwork in composing the songs.

The workshop with Choral of Upper Egypt opened new perspectives and possibilities for the group to perform that they were not aware of before. Hana said that she was terrified at the beginning, but once she went to the street and saw the positive reaction of the audience she felt very confident and was very happy to see how happy the audience was. The positive aspect of working with the choral was that it was a mixture of age, gender and religion, which makes it very interesting to working with and witness solidarity among groups of people who are usually in conflict.

THE MALLAWI GROUP:

A group of 4 young men who are very enthusiastic and have spoken only positively of their experience, they quite look up to Salam and wish to work with him again. Besides the training they received they were fascinated how the trainer asked them always to try to think outside the box and this was quite a new experience to them, because it allowed them to think and explore new ways and see different horizons, within performance and personally.

The Collaborations:

The collaboration with Outa Hamra and Bnt Al Masarwa especially in the last performance was quite important as it allowed for diversity in the program and introduced new elements of performance to the performers themselves as much as for the audience. Moreover, the colorful performance of Outa Hamra was able to draw much attention to the event and attract a big number of children.

The collaboration with Bnt Al Masarwa, besides what I have mentioned earlier, it gave a platform for the untold stories of women in Minya to be sang through the girls, which is a very rewarding experience to the women whose stories were shared and to the other members of the groups as well as the audience who heard unusual contents.



IV. THE DOCUMENTATION

The blog was quite rich, besides describing the organizational side of the project; it functioned as a diary and a documentation of it. There are texts and/or photos of all the places the project took place. Moreover, the texts provided by the trainers Salam and Shady, and Bnt Al Masarwa as well as Youstina give a deep insight not only to the external process of the project and the development of problem they faced, it has as well reflected the inner process the people went through, especially those who contributed to the blog which is a very rich complimentary to the project and very engaging for the reader.

Besides that, the shorter version of the video, which is the finished one, is very well done and the merging of the scenes and the music and songs is quite motivating and moving. It as well covers many aspects of the performance and I think the longer version through the interviews documents the process even better because it allows for the participants to speak for themselves and express their thoughts on what they are doing.

V. CHALLENGES

1. Change of the managerial team in the middle of the project, which caused a delay in the training schedule.
2. The change in the structure and plan of how the performing groups should be, for example there was a plan to choose from every village a couple of people in order to form a group of performers. This plan failed because of logistic and time plan failure reasons, which should have been taken into consideration in the planning stage for the project. If this idea is to be actually applied then a training camp/retreat needs to be planned for the chosen members, in which they can be and work together without distractions.
3. The change and inconsistency of the trainers of the groups at the beginning of the project. Noha went to Barsha only once to train the group on voice skills and did not go again then Shady took over and became their trainer, after having told the groups that they will get a training from all three trainers. The groups were not involved in this change and it was not explained to them, which creates a feeling of discomfort and possibly the groups might lose trust in the trainers. Therefore the groups, especially advanced ones, should to be involved in changes that might happen if they are expected to show commitment. The changes could be discussed internally with the coordinators of each group who can carry the information further to their group and collect suggestions.

Moreover, Late fund reception, which caused change in the training schedule and the urge to ask for an extension because the groups were not able to work in the period when there was lack of funds. This has,

consequently, affected the groups and the consistency and flow of work and caused confusion. Moreover, the groups forgot what they learnt the previous time.

4. In the case of Panorama El Barsha, the selection of certain members of the group to participate in the workshop that Shady conducted gave some the feeling of being excluded. It is suggested in such situations to train both groups separately by two different trainers and come up with two performances. The division should be based on what the members wish to learn, or the trainers could rotate between both groups for the first couple of sessions and then decide which of the groups they prefer to join, this allows them some freedom in choosing what skills they wish to develop or obtain in conversation with the trainers.
5. The short period of the project in general. A period of ten months, respectively one year, is not enough to work with such a big number of groups especially with the lack of consistency. Moreover, the period of time is insufficient to fulfill the goals of the project especially ones that come at an advanced stage, which is building trainers.
6. Not taking into consideration public, school and religious holidays, which consequently affected training schedule.
7. Sectarianism and security issues that might sometimes result into changing of plans such as the place of the performances.

VI. CONCLUSION

The project was quite rewarding to the groups, the coordinators as well as for the trainers, each group developed differently according to its needs in general or what the trainers thought was needed, although some parts of the proposal were actually not fulfilled but the outcome was positive for this stage. In order for this project to accomplish all the goals it was aiming for it needs a second phase and possibly a third one in order to build on what it has already accomplished and to push the groups further to become more independent and capable of passing their skills to others.

Moreover, the collaborations that took place between groups from Cairo and Minya were quite positive for both sides and a step to understand each other and break the wall and stereotypes built around women of Upper Egypt, through communication and acceptance. Moreover. The documentation was reflective and engaging.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

A) TRAININGS

1. A preparation period of two or three months with the groups before the actual training. The groups need to meet the trainers and get acquainted with them in order to build a trust relationship with them especially if the trainers plan to work with new groups whom they never worked with before. Trust is essential because the topics to be discussed are quite sensitive and often private so the groups need to feel comfortable.
2. Some of the groups have been already working in performance for a while, those groups or individuals could be invited to attend a one week intensive workshop in Cairo, away from any distractions, on how to train other groups. This could be done through a selection process in which the trainers review the qualified people and examine their skills. Then a one week retreat/camp could be set. Away from distractions from their daily lives and obligations, in which they can focus, connect and create. Moreover, this encourages the creation of a network among those new trainers in Upper Egypt who can collaborate in the future.
3. 2016 could be considered as the first phase for the project. Most of the groups who were involved in the project were amateurs, therefore, this phase could be seen as experimental as the groups as well as the trainers had to learn many things during the process and to get used to the people they worked with. A second stage is highly recommended if the outcome is to be more professional and complete.

4. Recruiting local young people to help with setting for the performance and spreading the word, etc on voluntary basis creates a feeling of empowerment and confidence that those young people are in a way part of this extraordinary event that is taking place in their village. Having a certain task to fulfill awakens the feeling of responsibility and belonging. Those young people will feel involved in the process of change even if indirect besides having fun.
5. Organize a tour in all the villages the performers come from, besides that this will allow for a bigger audience. This as well will support the performers to be taken seriously and treated respectfully in their own villages or towns. Moreover, organizing a tour in other villages where no groups were trained. This would encourage youngsters to want to join such a performance especially when they see that others from other villages and towns are actually part of it and not just a performance by a group from Cairo but a local one.
6. Emphasize more on shadowing the training by the new trained groups. Barsha for example, as mentioned in the proposal.
7. A 10-month phase is not enough to implement all the concepts and methodologies in order to reach objective, which the team has targeted. The performers and the groups besides the other problems needed to come out of their shells and overcome their fears and “open their minds” in order to move to the next stage. I think this is very clear in the groups in Barsha, Upper Egypt Choir and Minya.
8. Some of the more advanced members suggested collaborating with street theater troops from abroad, but this could be taken into consideration in the end of the second year and could start with Cairo, Alexandria and the Delta.
9. Create one performance of all the groups together which includes different things in one show.
10. Communication among management, trainer, coordinators and groups needs to be consistent throughout the project.

B) MANAGERIAL

1. There always needs to be a coordinator or contact person in the villages who is local and preferably active culturally and knows the scene and the dynamics of the village, and who is well connected and can reach different groups of people and facilitate the sessions.
Sometimes the coordinators from the villages lack a certain experience, which needs to be taken into consideration. At the beginning of the project this needs to be determined and decided whether the coordinators need training on professional management that could be provided to them at the very early stage of the project, moreover, they could be trained on how to develop their communication skills with the performers and the audience and to overcome problems efficiently. Furthermore, it is recommended that the coordinators are given a course on fundraising, budget management and a general cultural management course for small projects. Moreover, collaboration among those coordinators should be

encouraged in order to encourage and create a network of cultural coordinators and managers in Upper Egypt.

2. There needs to be a coordinator in Cairo who is coordinating with the trainers and the group coordinators in villages and creating schedules and booking facilities and arranging meetings and who is acquainted with Upper Egypt and the dynamics of work specifically and the society generally. This task should preferably be carried out by a person who is not part of the trainer's team. This would allow the trainers the time and space to concentrate on their work. A draft schedule needs to be written and presented to the manager, coordinators in the villages and the groups (when possible). Any revisions and suggestions need to be taken into consideration, such as, public holidays, school holidays, weekends, and public and religious occasions.
3. I highly recommend to prolonger the project for more than one year and consistence/sustainable in order to gain further important results such as train the groups to become trainers themselves, create workshops on gender issues led by Ikhtyar. Such as reading groups for women. Those reading groups could be given to the smaller group at the beginning, and who are interested.
4. The next stage is to train the trained to become trainers and how to start theatrical projects and how to manage them.
5. Create a platform where groups and coordinators connect together and keep up with each other's news and funding opportunities.



ANNEX I: INTERVIEWS PROTOCOLS

As for the questions that I posed in the interview, I started with a fixed set of questions but with each person or group the conversation automatically led to other questions, or the focus would turn into something that the interviewed had the urge to talk about and some of the questioned were answered without me posing the question, therefore, the questions below are the initial questions I prepared.

Name, age and occupation

SHADY

1. How was the idea of the project initiated?
2. What were the goals of the project?
3. What was the research done prior to initiating the project?
4. How do you describe the “Street theater” knowledge and background of the groups and the conductors you work with?
5. What does capacity building mean?
6. How often did they meet?
7. How does the selection process of who is to perform happen?
8. Did you have any feedback from the audience? The performers’ families and siblings?
9. Who works on the logistics in the villages?
10. How cooperative are the people?
11. Why Christian girls? Especially that they have the church that provides them with many cultural events?
12. What would happen if young Muslim women became part of the group?
13. What are the cultural events happening in those villages?
14. Were those stories or were they plays or what was the performance about and how did it the ideas come up?
15. Do discussions happen afterwards with the audience?
16. Do discussions happen with the other trainers? And the coordinators?
17. Are the girls having any difficulties because of their performance on the street?
18. Is the performance one of the highlights in the city?
19. What is the feedback you get from the groups? Do you feel that they advanced and do you feel the times you guys met are sufficient? Do you trust them to become capable instructors for street theater?

SALAM

1. What was your role in the village’s train?
2. Tell me about the group you worked with? Age, gender, religion.
3. Tell me about your experience of working with them .
4. What kind of songs did you write?
5. How receptive were the girls to the idea of working on the street?
6. What was the process of preparing them to perform on the street?

7. Do the dynamics in the village make it easier to perform on the street there or harder? And how is it for a young, Christian and unmarried girl?
8. Do you think that performing on the street is more effective than in closed doors or in a performance space or rooms?
9. In which part of the village did you perform?
10. Tell me about the experience of working in a village.
11. Did you catch any of the daily life there? How was it?
12. How were the performances?
13. Where did you conduct the rehearsals?
14. Who worked with you? Was there any from the crew from the village?
15. How was the public and how did they respond to the performance?
16. Would you work there again?
17. If you would choose who to work with would it be the same group? Or would you prefer having “other” new people?

WITH THE FACILITATORS IN MINYA:

1. How long does the group exist already?
2. How did the group start working in the project?
3. Tell me about the process of training?
4. Have the groups ever performed on the street before? How did it feel?
5. What was the feedback of the audience?
6. How did you choose the place of the performance?
7. How did you spread the word on the performance? What did you do?
8. What were the ages of the participants?
9. What did they perform about?
10. What were the positives and negatives of performing on the street?
11. How did the project contribute to teamwork and creating a bond?
12. How did the group feel performing on the street?
13. What do you think of the project within the context you worked in?
14. Can you tell me what happens in the training sessions?
15. What could have been better in this project and what do you think could be a plan for the future?
16. Do you think you need training as a coordinator of a group? Such as what?
17. What are your hopes for your groups within this project?

FOR THE GROUPS:

1. How do you feel about the project?
2. What is your role?
3. Tell me how do you feel when you practice?
4. How often do you practice?
5. What do you think of the topics?
6. Do you feel you changed after the performance or during the rehearsal?
7. How does this affect your personal life?
8. How does it affect the lives of those around you?
9. And what about your relationships?

10. Are you having difficulties with what you do?
11. Do you think you need to learn more in street performance?
12. Tell me of what you want to change in your life.
13. What do you believe such performance or the process of making it will bring you and the society around you?
14. What are your dreams?