



## SUCCESS STORY

### “Carnival” Brings to Life Joy of Literacy

**Amid the whimsy, adults learn to read and acquire useful vocational skills**



Photo: ERP

Literacy learners make educational toys from local materials during a “Learning Carnival” in Cairo.

***“We now understand the power of education and the importance of sending girls to school,” said one student of a “learning carnival” in Egypt.***

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Literacy classes in the El Marg district in Cairo, one of eight districts where USAID supports education reform in Egypt, have taken a new turn. “Learning carnivals”, a concept developed in close collaboration between the national Adult Education Authority (AEA) and USAID, makes literacy classes more active and enjoyable for learners. Not only are classes more fun, the carnivals encourage newcomers to join integrated literacy classes, which teach both literacy and life skills, such as child nutrition, together.

The carnivals rotate among all literacy classes affiliated with the program in El Marg, coming to each class twice a month. A dedicated team of 15 volunteer college students or recent graduates receives training every three months. The volunteers help design, manage, and conduct the sessions. They start by meeting the learners to discuss what issues and topics they would like more information or practice on. Then, the volunteers design simple games and activities that respond to those needs, creating the “carnival”.

Class activities are learner-focused, and require their constant participation in exercises that reinforce practical lesson content and literacy skills on issues such as child rearing, early childhood development and environmental issues. Practicing new literacy skills through arts and crafts and acquiring vocational skills such as sewing are part of the events. Activities can also include making simple educational toys from local materials, and learning how to play these games at home with children. In addition, each carnival has puppet shows dealing with specific issues relevant to the learners’ lives, such as the importance of literacy and the issuance of ID cards.

The learning carnivals prove to be a strong motivating factor for both current learners to continue attending literacy classes, and for new community members to enroll in class. They help transform literacy classes from a traditional educational environment to one in which learners play, laugh and learn with others, while acquiring information and skills to share with others. As one student, Hana Ahmed, said, “We will be able to help our children with their education.”