



SUCCESS STORY

Komombo Schools Feel Election Fever

**Transparent voting,
clear roles encourage
parents to be involved**



Photo: Amer. Institutes for Research/World Educ.

Elected parents and community members attend a Board of Trustees meeting in Egypt, to determine, prioritize and meet the school's needs.

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It's not often that children are aware or even interested in their school's administrative matters. Not so in Komombo in Egypt's Aswan Governorate. If you want to know what is going on with a local school Board of Trustees (or BOT), just ask a five year-old.

Komombo has been gripped with BOT election fever, its effect seeping into everyday life.

Previously, the community held BOTs in low regard. Parents, wary of the constant appeals for donations, regarded the board suspiciously. Social worker and board member Mohamed Badawi said, “They were a completely marginalized entity whose hands were tied. Whenever we had a problem, the board would have to seek permission from the school district. By the time any decision was taken, we'd certainly have reached retirement age. We knew the system had to be changed.”

Community development agencies and school officials collaborated to promote decentralized school administration locally. Concurrently, Egypt's Ministry of Education adopted a national decree granting BOTs the autonomy to govern schools. USAID-funded staff held workshops for local community development organizations and teachers to prepare them for the massive awareness campaign ahead. Volunteers went door-to-door to raise community awareness. They covered the city in banners promoting the election. They distributed pamphlets explaining the new BOT structure, and students delivered personalized voting cards to their parents.

Their efforts paid off. Voter turnout was on average 70%, with many elections attracting upwards of 700 participants - a far cry from previous years' attendance.

Judge Issa Hussein, who oversaw the election process for a number of schools, was pleasantly surprised. “I would never have imagined the election process would be this successful. One of the main reasons for its success was its transparency. When people know the process is clear and organized, they will participate because they feel it will make a difference,” said Issa.