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STREET CARNIVAL BY ELMADINA FOR PERFORMING AND DIGITAL ARTS

*ADVOCACY FOR MINORITY RIGHTS
AND WOMEN EMPOWERMENT
THROUGH STREET ART PERFORMANCES*

LOCATION

ALEXANDRIA, EGYPT

TIMELINE

2000 - present

TARGET AUDIENCE

Public authorities, local artists,
youth and women living in local
and marginalized areas

TYPE OF ACTION

Skills training, capacity building

KEYWORDS

Discrimination and sexual
harassment against women



ABOUT THE ORGANISATION

Through training, production, and management of cultural spaces, ElMadina has been working on promoting arts and culture and supporting artists and youth initiatives. ElMadina also seeks the creation of a culture market for artists in Alexandria as it is one of the main cultural centres in the Mediterranean.

To achieve this, ElMadina works on transforming public spaces and marginalized areas to spaces where people can freely express themselves, creating a cohesive social environment characterized by diversity and pluralism.

ElMadina believes that active citizens are those who contribute to art and hence they are the solo guarantee for the sustainability of this art. ElMadina seeks to restore art as an indispensable part of the lives of the people and the main parameter for sustainable human and social development.

Art comes as a determinant factor for democracy, human rights, and economic growth.

IN BRIEF

Name: ElMadina

Creation: 2000

Location: Egypt

CASE DESCRIPTION

BACKGROUND

Partnership is the key word to reach the target groups as well as the objectives of the project as the planning methodology depends on creating partnerships with a wide number of community based organisations.

This gives an added value as they plan to reach a wide audience from social and economic backgrounds especially in marginalised places which usually do not allow mixed genders. Thus, the organisation was successful in connecting with grass-root associations which gave it immediate access to perform in under-privileged areas.



The Street Carnival has trained artists for more than 50 performances, about Syrian refugees, displaced Nubians, African migrants in Morocco and women in Palestine, which were presented in 12 Egyptian cities; with the participation of over 150 artists and trainers from 9 countries. These performances were attended by approximately 40,000 people.

DESCRIPTION OF THE GOOD PRACTICE

STREET CARNIVAL

Street Carnival is an innovative project, initiated by ELMadina in 2013. The aim of the project is to facilitate, through street theatre performances inspired by the richness of the Displaced, Migrants and Refugees' cultures, the ability of minority cultures to integrate with the main majority culture of the hosting society, in order to overcome social challenges.

The carnival works with the artists and participants on presenting these different cultures but also minor examples of shameful social behaviour, without going into ambiguous or contentious areas. The performances also tackle women challenges such as discrimination and sexual harassment.

Their aim is to break prejudices and stereotypes, promote diversity and acceptance, and stress the overlap between the minority cultures and the majority culture.

Street Carnival project activities so far:

- March 2015: Capacity building workshop and the performance production
- April 2015: First tour 10 performances in Cairo, Giza and Qalioubya in Egypt
- May 2015: Second tour 10 performances in Luxor, Qena and Assiut in Egypt
- June 2015: Third tour 10 performances in Suez, Port Said & Damietta in Egypt
- August 2015: Fourth tour 5 performances in Alexandria
- September 2015: A two days partners evaluation meeting
- October 2015: Fifth tour training workshop and 5 performances in Casablanca
- November 2015: a film and a book about the project
- December 2015: Sixth tour 5 performances in Alexandria about Syrian refugees
- August 2016: Seventh tour 5 performances in Ramallah, Palestine.





MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS

- Training artists on developing and learning new skills. In Egypt, artists are still in traditional settings and need to be stretched on their skills beyond what established and conventional institutions can provide. By mixing theatre, dance, acrobatic, clowns and music the project was a way for artists to explore new possibilities and enlarge their skills (Handling and adapting performances to the venue, to the audience or to last minute unforeseen challenges; adapting the way of acting, taking position on stage, speaking and singing to catch the audience's attention). By the end of the initiative many artists had a new range of skills and the capacities to join other professional artistic projects; quite a few of them have been contacted to work on other artistic projects.
- Opening public spaces to artistic expression. Street performing and large gatherings have always been complex because of the security issues they pose and even more so since the 2011 Revolution. However, more often than not, the performances unfolded functionally and were warmly welcomed. They proved to be an authentic space for joy; from the very young to the elder, with often many girls and women, people could enjoy together an outdoor cultural activity which addressed society challenging points. The population's thirst for leisure activities explains the popularity and success of the performances. Moreover, most of the performances were deliberately held in poor and marginalised neighbourhoods where artistic events are rare.
- Addressing important issues for the society through arts (such as minority, gender but also religious issues): Breaking stereotypes, increasing awareness on racism to promote diversity but also awareness on gender issues.

STAKEHOLDERS AND PARTNERS

Street Carnival targets audiences in marginalised areas who potentially interact with minority cultures and have prejudices towards them. The artists/performers are also part of the main target groups as there is a focus on reinforcing their skills and capabilities.

This project is funded by the European Union under the Med Culture regional program, the Prince Claus Fund, and by the Swedish Postcode Foundation. Among the partnerships are Minority Rights Group International (London), Civic Forum Institute (Jerusalem), Andalus for Tolerance and Anti Violence Studies (Cairo).



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