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In celebration of International Women’s Day we hear from ten girls in Egypt on what matters to them

In December last year, [Zinester](#) worked with ten girls from Egypt to get their voices heard. Zinester aims to give marginalized groups a voice by teaching them to make DIY magazines and using these ‘Zines’ for social impact and to provide assets for campaigns.

All the girls had just graduated from Save the Children’s Youth in Action Program and were about to start their own small businesses. They wanted to

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— Arundathi Roy

create their own magazine as platform to share the experiences and challenges they and other girls like them face in their community in accessing decent work. But don’t take it from us: Watch and read what they have to say.

[WATCH THE VIDEO](#)

The Youth in Action program works with rural out-of-school girls and boys in five African countries to improve their socio-economic status and increase their livelihood opportunities.

What have you learned from the process of making the Zine?

“The Zine is very useful for us and for the community. It is useful for the girls. It is useful for women who don’t have a business as they can learn how to get started. It is useful for men who don’t let their wives start their own business. We learned many things from the zine workshop – cooperation, good manners and listening to each other. We learned tolerance of others and that it is necessary to respect the opinions of others. We also learned loyalty.”

Has it shown you how to make a product?

“We learned that we need to shop around for prices. If we go into a shop and notice that prices are expensive, we need to go elsewhere and find better prices. We need to check twice and maybe three times.

“We learned how to develop a design first, to organize our ideas and figure out what things come first. We do the things that come first to get the product done.”

How would you use zine format to market your business?

“For example, if I have a chicken business, I would take photos of the chickens and put it in zine. I would say “I would like to sell my product” “These are the photos of my business and these chicken weighs 2 kilos” or say “If you like the product you see in the photos please come to see it”

"I can take a photo of what my business offers and what am doing and can write down the details about my business."

Could you offer the service to other business?

"Yes – We would get their permission first of all and if they approve to have the information about their business in the zine then we would put it in. We would then tell them that by being in the zine it would make them popular in the community."

What kinds of businesses would be good to feature?

"Rabbits, grocery shop, chickens, ducks, sewing services, pigeons"

What could be the topic of next zine?

"Women's rights and duties could be next: Characteristics of women in the community (*good manners, tolerance, organization, hygiene*) How to handle and maintain the environment."

Zine as a way to have co-operative product

"Maybe we can be partners and start a collective business. I think it would not be a small enterprise big enterprise. If each one of us is working on a different one (sewing, in a shop) we could save the of our enterprises and build a big one together"

Impact on Community

"The community would be able to see advice and articles in the zine and it will be useful for them. There are enterprises we are doing and they will be useful for community. They can learn from them.

same age as us can start their own business. Girls in the community are going to ask themselves why they didn't start. It will be useful for them to use the information in the magazine.



but a profit

Girls

"If more girls learned to cooperate they can help solve a community problem. If a problem in the community, they learn how to solve it together. Identify how to select a leader and then can handle problems if we cooperate together.

"We may face a lot of problems alone but when together we can get advice and find solutions. If a leader is absent we can also problem-solve."

How would community change from having girl cooperative businesses?

"It will be useful for the community since people can sometimes be indifferent with each other. If they see how we cooperate it is an example for the community."

What examples of things that could be done differently?

"More information available in the community, sharing of ways to solve big problems.

"Our community can overcome problems of unemployment and the community will be developed. We are trying to find solutions for poverty. We all can make use of information available in the zine.



More information on the process:

After two weeks of intensive work, training, interviews, photography, stress but also lots of loud laughter and excitement, the ten girls presented their magazine at a Youth in Action graduation event in front of seven hundred people from their community including government officials and community leaders.

“At the beginning, we were confused and worried. We did not know how to use a camera or how to write a story. But at the end, we were so proud of what we have produced” said Isra’a, one of the girls who worked on Zine.

This process empowered the girls and enabled them to articulate livelihood related issues that are relevant to them through a platform they created themselves. It also enhanced skills they developed during their engagement in the Youth in Action program making them more marketable, such as basic communication skills, active listening skills and storytelling.

“We are also excited because now we are ready to start our own businesses. Youth in Action and the Zine process taught us not only how to establish a business but also how to feel confident to run it and make it bigger” Isra’a added.

What is Youth in Action going to do next?

As part of its robust learning and research agenda, the Youth in Action Program always seeks innovative and youth engaging tools to better understand the issues and barriers affecting youth livelihoods development, especially for girls.

We conducted a formative research building on topics that surfaced during the process of the magazine production and communities. The outcomes of this research provided the Youth in Action program team with a deeper understanding of how younger girls (12-14) in Egypt experience building economic assets in their households and communities.

A key findings from the research was that girls noted the top challenges they face are related to men’s views of women having businesses and spreading negative rumors on women’s businesses. In addition, girls perceive that the two key ways to deal with challenges are through use of soft skills and using business strategies.

Find out more:

- Watch the video again: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TtdAlOI63F8>
- Read the magazine ‘She Can Do’: http://youthinaction.savethechildren.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/ZINSTER_SHE_CAN_DO_YIA_ENGLISH_V2_web.pdf
- Find out more: <http://youthinaction.savethechildren.ca/>
- Ask a question: Contact Arwa Mhanna, Communications Specialist for Youth in Action amhanna@savethechildren.ca