

Pick Work  
**PPICW**



# Education Support Program Guide



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## Introduction

The Education Support Program is one of nine interventions designed under the PPIC-Work project, a Canadian International Development Agency-funded project that was implemented in Egypt from 2002 to 2009. The Education Support Program's main purpose is to help children who are working within MFI client businesses to stay in school, improve their academic performance and improve their self confidence and self esteem. For those participants who have already left school, the program provides the opportunity for learning they may not be exposed to at home or in their workplace, such as literacy and numeracy.

This guide is designed to support development organizations and microfinance institutions interested in establishing an Education Support Program. It offers guidance on selecting partners and staff, and provides background on different pedagogical approaches appropriate to such programming.

This guide also describes PPIC-Work's experience in developing and adapting the intervention, with input from working children, microfinance partners and education NGOs.

The guide is not intended as a blueprint for establishing such programming and should not be followed rigidly. Rather, it documents one project's experience in developing educational programming for working children and presents recommendations for replicating such programming. PPIC-Work has had success in replicating Education Support Programming from its origins in Aswan to other regions in Egypt. Organizations wishing to adopt similar programming should consider necessary adaptations to accommodate differences in participants, geography and partner capacity, among other considerations.



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- Management and staff at our partner agencies:
  - Egyptian Association for Community Initiatives and Development (EACID) in Aswan and Kom Ombo,
  - Zenab Kamel Hassan Foundation in Cairo and
  - Association for Rural and Urban Women's Development (ARUWD) in Qena
- Caritas Egypt
- Community Initiatives for Development (CID) in Cairo

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## Glossary of Terms

ARUWD	Association of Rural and Urban Women's Development
BO	Business Owner
CEOSS	Coptic Evangelical Organization for Social Services
CID Consulting	Community Initiatives for Development Consulting
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
EACID Development	Egyptian Association for Community Initiatives and
ESP	Education Support Program
MFI	Microfinance Institution
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PPIC-Work Project	Promoting and Protecting the Interests of Children who Work
ZKHF	Zenab Kamel Hassan Foundation

# PPIC-Work Capacity Building Series

The PPIC-Work Project has developed training manuals and program guides for each of its main interventions. The interventions are organized around three themes: working conditions, learning opportunities and key processes that support children’s involvement in programming.

The specific interventions and accompanying training materials are:

<b>Improving Working Conditions</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Dual Purpose Loans Manual</li></ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Creating a Code of Conduct</li></ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Hazard Assessment and Mitigation in the Workplace Manual</li></ul>
<b>Improving Learning Opportunities</b>	
<b>This guide →</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Education Support Program Guide</b></li></ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Learning Through Work Guide</li></ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ba’alty Guide (Computer Based Learning)</li></ul>
<b>Key Processes</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Children’s Rights Manual</li></ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Gender Equality Manual</li></ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Programming with Children Manual</li></ul>

# Promoting and Protecting the Interests of Children who Work “PPIC-Work”

PPIC-Work improves the working conditions and learning opportunities of working children who are engaged in the growing micro and small enterprise sector in Egypt. Utilizing a gender-sensitive, rights-based approach, PPIC-Work is able to serve the interests of large numbers of working children by working with and through self-financing microfinance institutions (MFIs).

PPIC-Work was funded by the Canadian International Development Agency from 2002 to 2009 and implemented through locally owned MFIs working in collaboration with Canadian development agencies. Interventions that were first developed in Aswan have been adapted and adopted for use in other parts of Egypt by PPIC-Work partner MFIs. These institutions work through the lending methodology to upgrade production processes and business performance while improving the lives of working girls and boys.

PPIC-Work partners recognized that children worked in many of their client businesses for a variety of reasons, but the principal motivations were poverty and failures within the formal educational system. By developing interventions that support working children, MFIs have been able to improve the social impact of their programs while continuing to meet conventional microfinance best practice standards.

Working children, along with their families and business owners, have collaborated with PPIC-Work partner agencies to develop a series of intervention tools that can be integrated into microfinance programs. These interventions are organized around three main themes: working conditions, learning opportunities and key processes that support children's involvement in the project. The specific interventions are:

## Working Conditions

- Dual Purpose Loans
- Workplace safety assessments and hazard mitigations
- Code of Conduct

## Learning Opportunities

- Education Support
- Learning Through Work
- Computer Based Learning (particularly Ba'alaty, an interactive computer simulation)

## Key Processes

- Child participation
- Gender Equality
- Child Rights

Training manuals and program development guides have been prepared for each intervention to allow other organizations to adopt and adapt the PPIC-Work experience.

# Background to the Education Support Program (ESP)

## 1.1 *Origins and Goals of the Education Support Program*

The history of PPIC-Work's Education Support Program demonstrates how an iterative and participatory approach can lead to unexpected or unintended results.

In 2002, PPIC-Work staff began discussions with working children to identify key problem areas in their lives. Many of the children were working in the retail sector and a common problem raised during these discussions was mistreatment by customers. PPIC-Work staff drew on the development methodology of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, translating this "problem theme" of mistreatment by customers into a puppet drama presentation. When re-presented to the children in this format, the problem became depersonalized and they were able to analyze the issue more objectively.

Analysis by the children revealed that customer mistreatment occurred particularly during financial transactions and was often the result of the children's limited math skills. The children said they often made mistakes adding up purchases or giving change and customers accused the children of trying to cheat them, frequently resorting to verbal or physical abuse. The children identified lack of mathematical skills as a clear workplace hazard.

### Goals of the Education Support Program

- To help working children improve literacy and numeracy skills and attain a comparable skill level to non-working children of their age
- To support working children in their efforts to stay in school and reduce drop out rates
- To use Education Support classes to introduce other topics, such as health, teamwork and communication skills
- To help improve children's self confidence and self esteem
- To reduce hazards in the workplace associated with low literacy and numeracy, such as abuse from customers who feel cheated when given incorrect change

The program was named "Education Support" at the request of working children in recognition of holistic nature of the education provided.



During another discussion with the children, participants were asked to draw scenes from their working lives. At the end of the session, the facilitator asked the children to write their names on their drawings and was surprised to discover that though many of the children had completed primary school, they were unable to even write their own names.

Seeing a clear link between the mistreatment they were subjected to at work and their own skill gaps, the

children requested support in math and literacy.

The discussion process with the children, part of the participatory project design phase of PPIC-Work, is described in more detail in section 2.2 of this manual.

## 1.2 Children's Involvement in Design

To pinpoint the issues facing working children at the design phase, PPIC-Work staff organized discussion groups in which children described hazards and dangers they faced in their jobs. The children's stories were combined into a short drama which was presented back to them in the form of a puppet show, performed by PPIC-Work staff. In Freirian methodology, the presentation of a problem theme in this manner allows a depersonalized discussion of a set of shared experiences.

After the drama presentation, the children discussed whether the show reflected their own experiences at work and what solutions they could imagine to these problems. Though the children were amused by the play, the discussion was relatively limited, until the facilitators invited children to present the drama themselves. Two girls and two boys volunteered and became the first presenters. After their presentation, the children were more engaged in the discussion.



Then, all of the children decided they wanted to participate in staging the play, so they were divided into groups, each of which performed an adaptation of the puppet show. Though it was never explicitly stated, each group adapted the drama to illustrate some aspect of their own circumstances. The resulting discussion was extremely active and brought to the surface many issues the children were facing.

As previously stated, many children cited their weak mathematics and literacy skills as factors contributing to hazards in their workplaces. The Education Support Program was designed to support the development of these more academic skills and to reduce mistreatment from customers.

The PPIC-Work experience in engaging with children is documented in the "Children's Participation" manual, which can be downloaded from [www.ppic-work.org](http://www.ppic-work.org).

## 1.3 Solving the Problem: Literacy and Numeracy Classes

PPIC-Work staff contacted Caritas Egypt, an NGO known for providing adult education in literacy and numeracy. Caritas agreed to adapt their materials to the needs of working children and train the EACID staff in a methodology based on Paolo Friere's educational principles. (Please see section 3.4 for more detail on this methodology.)

After conducting an assessment of the children, Caritas found that about half could not pass the Caritas literacy test, which had been modeled on the government literacy exam. A clear need was established and EACID staff began receiving training from Caritas to run literacy and numeracy training.

Caritas conducted an initial training session with the EACID staff, and then provided regular, ongoing support over a period of about one year, with the EACID staff teaching literacy lessons with the children in parallel. As the classes progressed, the children began asking for help with their other school subjects, and teachers began to integrate geography, history and other topics into their lessons. The program shifted from literacy and numeracy to a broader education support program. Most of the participating children were combining work and school, and this program not only helped them continue their education, but actually improved their academic standards.

#### **1.4 Early Results**

About a year after the education program started, EACID was contacted by the Department of Education. Participants' teachers had begun to notice dramatic changes in the children's behaviour. Rather than being aggressive with teachers and students, the children were cooperative, more confident and performing better academically. PPIC-Work staff realized that the classes were accomplishing more than academic development: they were facilitating an important socialization process. The classes gave participants opportunities to meet with other working children, discuss their problems and realize that they were not alone in facing these problems. Working children are often teased and abused by other children and even teachers at school because they have to work. The ESP provided opportunities for these children to interact with others who were in same situation.

Reflecting on the children's progress, staff noted that initially, the ESP participants had displayed numerous behavioral challenges, breaking windows and fighting with each other. However, one year into the classes, the group had become very cooperative, working constructively with staff and other children and showing much higher self-esteem. PPIC-Work staff believe the initial aggression was rooted in insecurity and lack of social outlets.

The Caritas approach, rooted in Frierian principles, meant that literacy and numeracy were being taught through real life discussion, validating the experiences of the working children and instilling mutual respect. No corporal punishment or physical / psychological mistreatment of students was used. In addition, there was no fixed learning schedule for ESP: if children needed support on a specific topic for a school deadline, the schedule could be shifted to accommodate this. Though progress tests were held to measure the overall success of the intervention, the classes were not based on grades or comparative measurements of progress.

#### **Logistical Challenges**

At this point, there were approximately 50 children involved in PPIC-Work interventions and 30 expressed interest in attending literacy classes. EACID was faced with a number of logistical questions, including where to hold the classes and how to transport the children to the location. Originally, lessons were held in EACID's loan office, but this facility had not been designed to accommodate children's needs. Classes were moved to community centres and local NGO offices when rooms were free. However, EACID found that this system was too decentralized, making supervision difficult, and the facilities and resources varied too widely from office to office. The classes were brought back to the EACID offices and were scheduled for Fridays and Saturdays, when the children normally had time away from work and school. EACID was able to provide a child friendly space with games and computers, activities that attracted children and helped facilitate regular attendance at Education Support classes.



The Education Support Program was conceived during the PPIC-Work project design process as a way of reducing hazards in the workplace, rather than a specifically pedagogical intervention. Now classified as a learning program, ESP still has hazard reduction as an underlying principle. Children with access to Education Support are less likely to be abused at work because increased confidence and stronger mathematical and literacy

skills. In addition, these children are able to stay in school longer, a priority even in an imperfect educational system.

Some questions to consider if planning an ESP intervention:

- What are the education and learning needs and opportunities inside and outside the workplace for your clients and beneficiaries?
- How do they want to fill these gaps inside and outside the workplace?
- Do you have the capacity to provide education support internally?
- If not, would you want to hire staff to do this or should you form a partnership / outsource the training?
- What resources and logistical support would be necessary (e.g., appropriate space for classes, transportation, etc.)?
- Sustainability is a key question when assessing your resources for education programming. Will you be able to sustain the intervention in the long term? If not, are there other ways to conduct the work, for example forming a partnership?

### **1.5 Context: The Egyptian Education System**

The Egyptian State recognizes education as a right and has codified its approach to education in numerous articles of the constitution. Education is governed by the constitutional principles of equal opportunity (Article 8) and equality before the law, regardless of race, language, religion or belief (Article 40). Additionally, Article 20 states that education in state institutions is free and Article 21 defines the fight against illiteracy as a national duty. In 1999, Law N. 23 was passed, extending compulsory basic education from eight to nine years, covering the six-year primary education cycle and the three year preparatory cycle, normally completed between the ages of 6 and 15.<sup>1</sup>

Since 1991, the Egyptian government has made significant efforts to reform the education system, with initiatives focusing on improved in-service teacher training, curriculum reform,

<sup>1</sup> Reported by UNESCO online at <http://www.ibe.unesco.org/en/access-by-country/africa/egypt/profile-of-education/print.html>.

greater access to modern educational media and increased family participation in education through parents' councils.<sup>2</sup>

Despite numerous attempts at reform, however, significant obstacles prevent many Egyptians from obtaining a quality education. In "Youth Exclusion in Egypt," Assad and Barsoum make a link between access to quality education and a smooth transition into the labour market. Lack of access, or access to poor quality education, perpetuates the cycle of limited job prospects and low skilled employment.<sup>3</sup>

Limitations of the Egyptian education system can be roughly divided into problems relating to access and quality:

Access:

- Though access to basic education has increased significantly, many marginalized groups still face barriers in this regard. Problems of access persist in rural areas and among marginalized groups such as girls and women.
- More schools must be constructed to allow full enrolment and reduce class size.<sup>4</sup>
- Though school enrolment has increased dramatically in Egypt, early dropout and non-enrolment persist, particularly among females in Upper Egypt.<sup>5</sup>

Quality:

- The Egyptian education system was designed to prepare students for public sector jobs. Though university graduates are no longer guaranteed a government position (as they were between 1952 and 1989), the public sector remains a powerful draw for students and their parents. There is little connection between educational content in schools and the skills demanded by the labour market.
- Rote learning and repetition dominate classroom methodology and test scores determine educational advancement and ultimately access to prized public sector jobs. Critical thinking, creative expression and problem solving skills are all but absent.
- Though class size is officially limited to 36 students, only 20 percent of schools nationally comply with this, with one third of schools having classes of 45 or more students.<sup>6</sup>
- Even among students who complete the nine years of compulsory schooling, literacy and numeracy rates are alarmingly low: the Egyptian Demographic and Health Survey of 2005 found a literacy rate among girls who had completed secondary preparatory school or higher to be only 49.6 percent. This means that half of those completing the mandatory nine years of school remained functionally illiterate.<sup>7</sup>

Families attempt to bolster the poor quality of education through private tutoring, which places a significant financial burden on the household.

Education reform will require significant orientation of the school system on multiple levels, including curriculum and classroom delivery, teacher training, university admission processes and a greater focus on the skills needed in the labour market. For poor families

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<sup>2</sup> UNESCO, *ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Assad, Ragui and Ghada Barsoum. "Youth Exclusion in Egypt: In Search of Second Chances." Wolfenson Centre for Development, Middle East Youth Initiative Working Paper 2: September 2007.

<sup>4</sup> UNESCO, *op.cit.*

<sup>5</sup> Assad, *ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> Assad, *op. cit.*

<sup>7</sup> Reported in Assad, *ibid.*

in Egypt, private sector jobs will remain a dream but the education system should strive to provide these children with cognitive processes and skills that will help them to earn a living.

# What is the Education Support Program?

## 2.1 Overview of the Program

EACID, PPIC-Work's founding partner, was instrumental in developing the Education Support Program. EACID staff estimates that children who are in school and striving to catch up academically with their classmates would benefit from about seven months of education support programming. Children who are no longer in school would need approximately twelve to eighteen months to reach a level where they are functionally literate, depending on their level when they began the program.

## 2.2 PPIC-Work's Rights Based Approach and Education Support

The Education Support Program is one intervention in a series PPIC-Work developed to support working children both in and outside their workplaces. PPIC-Work is designed within a rights based framework, meaning that programming considers how all of a child's rights are interconnected and must be considered in support of the child's overall development. Many children must work, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child<sup>8</sup> supports children's right to support themselves and to participate economically in their communities. However, this often infringes on their ability to attend or stay in school, and many working children benefit from extra educational support.

Education is not restricted to the learning that happens in schools; in many countries, including Egypt, the education system has serious limitations which result in high dropout rates. The curriculum and teaching methodology do not prepare graduates for the reality of the labour market.

### Importance of Rights Training

EACID staff reported that discussing the concept of rights with PPIC-Work children was vital. Working children are usually keenly aware of many differences between themselves and their non-working counterparts. Family circumstances often require them to work, so they are aware of having less money than other children; additionally, working takes up much or all of their free time. EACID staff found that working children generally felt inferior, and partially to preserve their dignity, would often refuse to accept support or incentives, such as snacks, from the social officers. However, after participating in child rights training, they understood that such support was not charity and should not be perceived as demeaning.

PPIC-Work developed two learning interventions, one which supports learning in a non-formal classroom environment, the Education Support Program, and the other which supports learning in that happens in the workplace, or Learning Through Work.

At the same time, PPIC-Work is committed to improving the working conditions through safety upgrades and creates more time for school and homework through the code of conduct. This hazard reduction process supports the child's right to work in a safe environment. Please see the PPIC-Work **Hazard Assessment and Mitigation in the Workplace** Manual for more information on this component, available on the PPIC-Work website at [www.ppic-work.org](http://www.ppic-work.org).

<sup>8</sup> The full text of the Convention on the Rights of the Child is available on the website of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, at <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/crc.htm>

Ideally, Education Support programming happens alongside other interventions targeted at supporting children's other rights, maximizing the effects of all the interventions. ESP is directly complemented by child rights training and gender equality training, both of which bring groups of children together and provide safe spaces for them to share and validate each others' experiences. PPIC-Work conducted gender equality training in a retreat format, where children were taken to a camp for three days and were involved in an intensive course of activities and training. PPIC-Work has also developed an interactive computer module entitled Ba'alty, which means "my shop" in Egyptian Arabic. Computers at the children's meeting place are loaded with the game and it is available for them to use whenever the room is open. In addition to drawing children to the sessions, Ba'alty provides additional types of learning.



Children can work together in teams or individually at their own pace.

Some questions to consider if planning an ESP intervention:

- A rights based approach provides a framework for considering a range of children's rights. Which rights from the Convention on the Rights of the Child are applicable to your programming?
- What other children's rights might support the education programming you want to provide?
- PPIC-Work has found the Education Support Program to be most effective when linked to other interventions such as rights and gender training. Does your organization have the capacity to provide these activities?
- Many organizations have conducted training such as gender equality for adults. If this is true for your organization, have you considered ways to adapt the content and delivery of your training for young people?

### **2.3 Who is Involved in an Education Support Program?**

For a successful Education Support intervention, it is important to consider the different groups of people who are involved in planning, administering, delivering and participating in the program.

## Selecting Appropriate Staff

Selection of skilled and qualified programming staff is key to the success of an Education Support Program. While it is not necessary for facilitators to have training in the specific educational philosophies described in this guide, it is important that they have a background working with children and providing training or facilitation. In fact, given the relatively rigid nature of Egypt's formal education system, it is advisable to either hire new teaching graduates or people who are open to more innovative approaches. Patience and good communication skills are always necessary when working with young people, but are even more vital when programming with working children.

Delivering an Education Support Program requires a range of skills and abilities, and will necessitate the allocation of staff from different backgrounds. The following is an overview of the tasks involved in running a successful ESP. Though it is possible that new staff would need to be hired for such an intervention, it is also likely that many of the responsibilities listed below can be carried out by existing staff of an organization.

### Administration:

- Record keeping on participants
- Arranging and maintaining logistical support: transportation, appropriate venue, snacks (if appropriate), supplies
- Scheduling

### Programming

- Research the needs of the community, including the children and their families
- Identify learning areas (literacy and numeracy, but may also include gender training, rights awareness, health, etc.)
- Selection of appropriate participants
- Conducting "level tests" for incoming participants
- Administering and keeping records of regular "progress tests"
- Follow up with appropriate external stakeholders, such as families, teachers, etc.
- Planning excursions or trips

### Preparation and Training

- Involvement of children in identification of learning areas and needs
- Curriculum design or adaptation
- Regular lesson planning
- Delivery of activities with children
- Coordination with other trainers

Some questions to consider if planning an ESP intervention:

- How many staff members can your organization allocate to an Education Support Program?
- Can your organization allocate the necessary range of personnel (admin, trainers, monitoring officers, etc.)?
- Does your staff have experience working with children?
- Are there other programs in the community that could provide partnerships or will you need to offer the service independently?

## Characteristics of Working Children

As noted earlier, working children are usually keenly aware of how their employment status differentiates them from other children.

They are often teased or abused at school by teachers and fellow students alike and may feel inferior to other children because of their families' economic status which makes their work necessary.

When designing programs for working children, such as supplementary education, staff should keep in mind the following characteristics of this population:

- Limited time, due to long working hours or combining work and school
- Low energy because of multiple commitments
- Heightened sensitivity to their status and possible reluctance to accept what they perceive as charity

Many economically active children are able to combine work and school, but this is often increasingly challenging as they progress through the education system. Working children typically have very little time to study and fall behind their peers. They frequently experience abuse and ridicule because they cannot keep up academically and may lack basic literacy and numeracy skills. School becomes a place that they are ill-treated by peers and teachers alike and the combination of poor academic performance and mistreatment results in a high dropout rate.

### **Children Participating in EACID's Education Support Program**

**Aswan:** About 90% of the children working in EACID client businesses in Aswan are able to combine both their work and school duties. Maintaining regular school attendance, however, does not always mean that working children are able to learn and perform well. About a third (35%) of the working children in EACID's PPIC-Work program needed education support program as they were particularly weak in literacy, mathematics and other academic skills compared with their classmates. Some of these working children also pointed out that they were stigmatized in school because of their work and ridiculed or bullied by their classmates. In some instances, this led to children developing aggressive and anti-social behaviour towards their classmates and teachers.

**Doweika:** Where EACID has been operating in the Doweika (greater Cairo) area the majority of working children (about 85%) had already dropped out of school. The education support program in this context has been adapted to provide these children with some basic education in literacy, numeracy and other academic skills.

Some questions to consider if planning an ESP intervention:

- Who are the children you want to reach in your program? Are they working? In school? Combining work and school?
- When are the best times for them to attend classes?
- What activities and topics are they interested in learning about?
- What is their current literacy level? Are there many different levels in the group you want to reach?
- Will there be issues with different groups learning together? Will gender, religion or ethnicity play a role here?

## 2.4 Financing an Education Support Program: The Role of Microfinance

The Education Support Program presents implementers with a financial challenge because of the ongoing financial input required to run such a program. Funds must be allocated for instructors, training, materials and costs associated with children attending the program, such as transportation and food. Costs will depend to some extent with the number of children taking part. In comparison with other PPIC-Work interventions, Education Support



can be one of the more difficult programs to sustain financially. Training sessions and retreats for children on topics such as children's rights or gender equality require funding,

of course, but these are one-time costs that are easier for an implementer to absorb.

Central to the PPIC-Work model is the self-financing nature of the programming: a microfinance institution implements socially oriented programming either directly or through a partner organization, and pays for the programming through loan revenues, creating the possibility of long-term sustainability and wide outreach. Though there are ongoing costs associated with PPIC-Work programming, they are generally not high. Many programming elements are consistent with MFI core business and present few challenges in adding to microfinance activities; however Education Support programming does require specialized staff.

PPIC-Work microfinance partners have identified several advantages to taking on such socially oriented programming. In competitive markets, such programming can improve the MFI's standing in the community and becomes a positive marketing strategy for financial products. Additionally, such programming may allow the MFI to attract funding from more socially oriented donors.

Alternatively, organizations implementing Education Support Programs or other PPIC-Work interventions may wish to seek outside funding although external funding may be time limited, and will in turn limit the scope of the programming. Charging a small fee for participating families may allow the program to be self-financing without limiting the duration of the interventions.

## Educational Methodology

The Education Support Program can be delivered with any age- and culturally appropriate methodology, including Freirian and Montessori techniques. PPIC-Work staff originally received training from Caritas, an international NGO working in a range of sectors, including education, health and social justice. Caritas Egypt has developed expertise in adult literacy, and trains hundreds of professionals and volunteers in methodology developed by Paulo Freire. PPIC-Work delivery of the Education Support Program has evolved over time and staff have also received training in Montessori methodology from the Cairo-based social entrepreneurship firm CID Consulting.<sup>9</sup>

PPIC-Work staff emphasized the importance of identifying the children first, then looking for appropriate curriculum and methodology, rather than choosing curriculum and trying to make it fit the group.

An overview of both methodologies follows.

### 3.1 Overview of the Caritas System of Learning<sup>10</sup>

Caritas has based its literacy training on the principles developed by Brazilian educationalist Paulo Freire. Freire left a significant mark on educational thinking and practice, particularly on non-formal and popular education.

Freirian principles which are central to the Caritas methodology include:

- High level of student participation in lessons
- The importance of the students' lived experiences in classroom activities
- Classes based on dialogue between students and teachers, rather than knowledge imparted from instructors
- The extension of this dialogue from the classroom into community action (including modification of the PPIC-Work project itself) and increased social capital

The strengths of this method are the degree to which it can be adapted to accommodate a wide range of participants. It is flexible for both teachers and students and also allows for a high degree of support to teachers.

#### Literacy Training and Classroom Activities

The Caritas system of literacy training is based on phonetics. Students learn to analyze words, cutting them into pieces and sounding them out, rather than memorizing strings of letters. Non-literate adults learn sounds and discover phonetics from their experience of speaking a language. When they start reading, they see how the phonemes are written and recognize them as the sounds they say. High frequency sounds are taught first.

The program, including texts and discussions, gives students a system for learning to read and write, gradually adding new sounds and letters to their repertoire.

Exercises in the classroom include:

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<sup>9</sup> CID Consulting runs two non-formal schools based on Montessori principles for children working in what the ILO classifies as "worst forms of child labour." CID Consulting and PPIC-Work formed a successful partnership from 2008 to 2009, based on exchange of technical expertise. CID Consulting's educational programs predate this partnership.

<sup>10</sup> Based on interview conducted with Caritas staff in September 2008.

- brainstorming words with recently taught letters
- writing lists of words on the board and students circle the letters they know
- teacher reads lists of words and students say whether or not they contain a particular sound
- short dictations where students write words with a particular letter

Texts are also used, containing words with letters the students have been taught and adding selected letters each lesson. During lessons, the monitor does not correct students' written work. Students exchange notes and correct each others' work after the teacher writes answers on the board. This provides extra reading practice, as well as reinforcing the flat hierarchy of the class: students are authorities as well as teachers.

### Freirian Dialogues

Central to the Freirian methodology is the dialogue, which brings students' lived experiences into the process of learning to read and write. The teacher, called a *monitor*, must be able to identify issues that will resonate with the whole group. The monitor offers a variety of possibilities for discussion and builds a dialogue around one that attracts the interest of most or all of the participants. The ideas and discussions must be tailored to the groups.

A typical process for setting up a dialogue is as follows:

The monitor chooses an item such as water, and brings a picture or an example to class. When written, the name of the item will contain letters that have already been taught, with progressively more new letters to build on earlier lessons.

After showing the group how to spell the word and teaching any new letters, the monitor generates a discussion around the item, bringing up issues that the group might identify with. For example, if the item is water, the monitor might ask what problems are associated with it in the community, what happens when you don't have it, how pollution affects them. If many in the group share the same problems, the monitor will encourage discussion.

#### **Frierian Techniques and Participation**

The Frierian approach of drawing lessons from children's lives has been used different points in PPIC-Work, including during the original project design phase. Though the approach has not always been maintained during the project delivery, children were able to contribute meaningfully to shaping the interventions that were developed.

Analytical discussions allow the group to consider issues and accept or reject ideas or solutions, but no authority figure (i.e., teacher) actually disputes the students' ideas. The methodology reinforces the idea that learning is a tool to change lives, not just a document to show that courses have been completed.

### Social Effects Of Methodology

The dialogue structure allows the group to discuss real life problems at the same time as they are learning to read and write. They may explore a range of issues of high importance to the community or neighborhood, such as housing, resource management or transportation. There is a higher level of commitment and involvement in these discussions than there would be with a more academic debate.

Such discussions can create a sense of being active in society by increasing the participants' confidence in their ideas and their ability to solve problems. Illiterate people tend to be very marginalized and are rarely asked for ideas or solutions, particularly not by educated people like teachers. The exchange and dialogue is vital to increasing students' confidence both in and outside the classroom.

While monitoring the literacy groups, Caritas has found that many students try to teach family members and peers what they are learning. They often lack the skills to transfer this learning, so Caritas is developing a peer education system to make the process of transferring information more systematic. For example, they show students how to dictate clearly and to correct written work. Many students feel a sense of responsibility to transfer the learning to others and this makes them more motivated to understand the content of the lessons. This transfer can alter the relationships in families – children may be teaching parents or wives teaching husbands.

The Egyptian government has recognized that peer teaching and monitoring is an important element of the Caritas method. Peers are registered in literacy classes, though they might not attend in person, and they can write the government literacy exams.

### Training for Monitors

Monitors do not need any special qualifications, but important characteristics include patience, good listening skills and the ability to let others take the centre stage. They should be able to let others take recognition for ideas and successes within the group. It is advantageous when monitors are members of the same or similar population as their students so they can identify with the group and their problems. They should be someone who does not necessarily have the answers but who can help to solve the problems with the group.

Training for monitors typically lasts 3 to 4 days, with follow up training at regular intervals. Monitors usually receive three sessions of three to four days each. This has proven more successful than a longer initial training, as the follow up provides the chance to ask questions and solve problems that have arisen in the classroom. Follow up sessions are usually more of an exchange than a formal training session. Instructors come together to pick up their salaries and a day long meeting is organized to coincide with pay days so that issues and needs can be discussed. Caritas staff conduct regular classroom visits to support the monitors.

Monitors receive training in group dynamics. Their sensitivity to group discussions and their ability to bring people together are supported and developed. Group formation is an important element of successful Freirian teaching. Local customs and interactions must be respected, though groups are made primarily based on commonalities that can be forged, possibly among neighbours or colleagues. Classes can be formed with mixed ages and genders, as long as there are enough commonalities to create a level of “social coherence” in the group. Training includes practice teaching with other trainees to allow teachers to test out new techniques. They also receive training in choosing topics and developing discussions based on these.

A traditional classroom in Egypt is very hierarchical and this methodology can often be intimidating for both teachers and students, until they understand it more clearly. Graduates of classes often make excellent tutors.

## Transferring Caritas Methodology to Working Children

The Caritas methodology transfers best to people with life experience outside their immediate family sphere. Working children might be more able to participate in such dialogues given their different life experiences. Younger students might feel that the problems being discussed are not their own or that they do not have the experience to generate ideas.



To adapt the methodology, words and topics are selected to be relevant to the daily lives of working children. If possible, there should be more activities than an adult group would do and a strong element of play. Adult participants may not have time to do many activities, but literacy training can offer an important opportunity for working children to play.

In Aswan, the PPIC-Work children who participated in the Caritas literacy training were not completely illiterate, making it difficult to serve them with a purely Freirian approach. PPIC-Work staff decided to balance the Freirian methodology with the children's school materials and textbooks, as the purpose of the classes had evolved at the request of the children to help them stay in and perform better in school.

### **3.2 Education Support and Montessori Methodology**

The Montessori methodology is based on theories of child development originated by Italian educator Maria Montessori in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The International Montessori Index website ([www.montessori.edu](http://www.montessori.edu)) states that:



*Montessori* is not a system for training children in academic studies; nor is it a label to be put on educational materials. It is a revolutionary method of observing and supporting the natural development of children.

The method emphasizes self-directed activity on the part of the child and clinical observation on the part of the teacher, often called a director, directress or guide. Montessori

learning environments are adapted to the children's developmental levels and physical

activity is an important element in developing practical skills and absorbing academic concepts. Children choose from a range of developmentally appropriate activities and learn at their own pace.

### Principles of the Montessori Methodology

Montessori schools or programs are organized around the following pedagogical and psychological principles<sup>11</sup>:

- Multi-age groupings: children of mixed ages and abilities are grouped together for learning. Groups contain children with three or six year age spans (0 to 3, 3 to 6, 6 to 12, 12 to 15 and 15 to 18), allowing peer learning and support to take place.
- Respect for children's choice: children choose the work they wish to focus on and concentrate on the task as long as they require to complete it. The role of the teacher is to facilitate this process, rather than to make the choice for children.
- The three hour work period: days are organized into one or two three-hour work periods which are not interrupted by required group lessons. Older children schedule meetings or study groups with each other and with the teacher when necessary. Groups form spontaneously or are arranged ahead of time by participants.
- Work centres: the learning environment is arranged into subject areas and children can move around the room from one to another. At any one time, multiple subjects ranging from math to language to history, are being studied at multiple levels.
- Feedback and progress: no grades are given and assignments are not returned to children with red marks and corrections. Progress is measured through each child's portfolio and the teacher's extensive records based on observation. To encourage and support the child, teachers plan individual projects to target areas children need to improve.
- Integrated lessons: teachers strive to present topics with interwoven subjects, such as a lesson on the Renaissance which includes art, music, history and geography.
- Character education: along with academics, children learn to take care of themselves, their environment and each other through lessons focusing on cooking, cleaning, gardening, manners and community work.



<sup>11</sup> Adapted from [www.montessori.edu/info.html](http://www.montessori.edu/info.html)

Though there is an international committee that oversees production of training materials, there is no official “trademark” on the Montessori name. Institutions using the methodology may have adapted elements to suit the local context. Numerous websites and publications are available for those interested in more detailed information on the system.

### **PPIC-Work and Montessori**

PPIC-Work partner CID Consulting has been running a successful non-formal school utilizing Montessori methodology for children working in the brick factories of Arab Abu Saed, work that the ILO classifies as “worst forms of child labour.” CID Consulting also operates a Montessori school in a garbage collection zone in Mokattam, Cairo.

Both schools schedule classes around the children’s work schedules, frequently holding lessons during lunch breaks or in the evenings. Evening classes allow the children to attend for a longer instructional period. The non-formal learning program has been divided into 3 levels, which include basic literacy, health care, recreation, culture and the arts and science curriculum revolving around their work, either brick making or recycling.

Learning is structured around Montessori methods and focuses on construction or recycling principles, depending on the school. Learners acquire complex concepts by touching, feeling and using their hands with objects which are specifically designed to lead to the acquisition of these concepts. Bars of different sizes illustrate the concept of measurement by length, weights of different sizes and weights demonstrate the concept of measurement using a scale for weights, loose beads, strings of beads, wooden blocks and bars are used to acquire the concept of numbers, wooden blocks of specific shapes are used to acquire construction concepts of domes, vaults and other shapes.

### **3.3 Curriculum Overview**

PPIC-Work uses a 13 week curriculum with a set of lessons developed for working children. The materials were adapted from Caritas’s curriculum, which is geared towards illiterate adults in rural areas. PPIC-Work staff modified the content to reflect realities of working children’s lives and to include examples from micro and small enterprises, where most working children in the program are employed. There are two workbooks, one for reading and one for mathematics.



In addition, the trainers use textbooks from the participants’ school curriculum, as one of the main goals of the ESP is to help working children to keep up with their peers in school.



### 3.4 Sample Lessons in Two Methodologies

The following are sample lessons, one following a Freirian approach, the other using Montessori methodology. Both lessons are geared towards working children and deal with sale of products.

#### Freirian Lesson: Marketing Strategies And Product Pricing

Note: in a true Freirian lesson, the choice of topic itself would result from a discussion with the children.

#### Lesson Outline

- The instructor should bring two or three objects to the class that are typically sold by street vendors and begin a discussion on who typically buys these products, where are they often sold, etc.
- If it does not happen naturally, the instructor should move the discussion to the topic of price: how would you place a price on them, and what does price depend on?  
Brainstorm: factors that determine the price of a product in the context of street vending (e.g., location, target market, value/purchase price, time of day, weather, etc.)
- Discuss each factor with the group: e.g., why is the location important and how can changing it alter the selling price of a product?
- Discussion: what are the challenges faced when selling products on the street? What are the special challenges of being a child street vendor? How can you be more successful / overcome these challenges?

#### **PPIC-Work and Freirian Techniques**

PPIC-Work staff held a series of conversations and activities with working children in Aswan, modeled on the Freirian dialogue approach. The children raised the issue of their lack of literacy and math skills and how this often resulted in abuse by customers. This led to the development of the Education Support Program, which included development of literacy and numeracy skills as a hazard reduction strategy.

- The lesson may lead in a number of directions at this point – children may say that they have problems making change for purchases or that adults abuse them for being on the streets. A subsequent lesson might involve work on specific math skills for making change such as addition and subtraction.

### Montessori Lesson: Pricing Products

- The work station should be set up with a variety of items typically sold by street vendors in that area. There should be a range of products, some low value and some high. The station should also have photos of different locations in the city or a map showing the area and some paper money.
- One object should be chosen and placed in a location (map or photo) and the price determined.
- The child or group should talk about factors that can change the price of the object – location, but also time of year, clientele, weather, etc.
- The child or group working at that station should then practice purchasing the item, making change with the money. When this task is mastered, more complex transactions can be practiced, using whatever mathematical skills are appropriate for the child. Addition (purchasing two or more of the object) and multiplication (customer wants a larger quantity) are possible.
- For more groups with more advanced mathematical capabilities, multiple objects can be priced and sold together.

### **3.5 Monitoring and Testing Progress in Education Support Programming**

EACID, PPIC Work’s primary implementing partner, administers an assessment test to each child who enters the Education Support Program. The test covers a range of skills, including literacy and numeracy; by including written instructions, reading and writing skills are also tested.

Originally, staff grouped the children by age, on the premise that social factors would play a greater role than skill level. However, instructors found that the academic abilities varied widely among working children. EACID now creates groups by both age and skill level, ensuring that the groups have roughly homogeneous levels of ability, without encompassing too wide an age range.

The EACID test includes questions such as the following:

1. List the numbers from 0 to 10.
2. Numbers are given in text (fifteen, thirty, two hundred forty) for respondent to read aloud and then write in figures.
3. Put symbols > or < or = between sets of numbers
4. Put a set of numbers in sequence in ascending and descending order
5. Simple addition and subtraction questions, such as  $5+3=?$
6. Simple multiplication and division questions
7. Telling time with pictures of a clock face

#### **Assessing Working Children’s Academic Abilities**

When EACID began running Education Support classes for working children, staff assumed that any child – working or not – who is in school should be able to read and write. However, they soon found that this was not correct. Though the children’s abilities varied widely, many were unable to even write their own names.

As a result, EACID staff administer a literacy and numeracy test to all young people entering the Education Support Program. This test also allows teachers to assess progress over the course of the program.

8. Identify shapes – circle, triangle, etc., and write names
9. Draw a triangle with equal angles, triangles with sides 5 cm, different shapes e.g., circle inside a rectangle
10. Convert percentages to simple fractions  $\frac{1}{4} = 25\%$

For each participant, a literacy evaluation form completed that includes a summary of the child's level and other tracking data (age, name, address, workplace). A summary of the child's abilities are included: can they write their name, number of questions correct on test, and the overall assessment of the trainer.

EACID also conducts classes on computer skills and administers a similar screening assessment for these lessons. The assessment includes questions such as:

- What do you know about computers? What are they used for?
- What are the different components of a computer?
- What do computers do?
- Is the screen part of data entry? Is the mouse part of data entry? What is the function of a keyboard?

After a short evaluation, groups are established.

After children join groups, the instructor is able to monitor their progress in both formal and informal ways. Attendance is kept and the children work systematically through materials. The program lasts 13 weeks on average, at which point children are re-examined. An overall assessment is conducted and participants' reading and writing abilities are assessed on a sliding scale from weak to strong. Children who do not succeed at the test can enter another ESP group.

### Conducting Education Support Programs



EACID normally has three instructors working, each running 3 groups of 7 to 10 children. Classes generally meet twice a week. Usually there are three different levels running, including a very weak group learning literacy basics, a middle group and a third which is strong but benefit from receiving support in developing independent learning skills. To accommodate as many children as possible, EACID has

adopted a system of rolling starts: not all groups start and finish at the same time. When enough children at the same level are assembled, a group begins and runs for 13 weeks.

## Successes and Lessons Learned

The following is a list of lessons learned during PPIC-Work's establishment and ongoing operation of the Education Support Program. They are described here to provide guidance to organizations that wish to set up similar programs and to document and share PPIC-Work's learning and experience.

The lessons learned are organized into 3 categories: pedagogical lessons and effects on children; MFIs and implementing organizations; and organizational and logistical issues.

### **4.1 Pedagogical Lessons Learned and Effects on Children**

- Education Support Program is about more than reading and writing: ethics and attitudes are also important elements

The initial purpose of the ESP was to provide basic literacy and numeracy for working children to help them stay in school or to learn skills they would not learn elsewhere, if they had already dropped out. However, instructors soon found that the classes resulted in significant behavioural change among participants.

When the first group of children joined the Education Support Program, they stated that they felt isolated in school and in the community. EACID instructors found that the children lacked social skills and were generally perceived as awkward, difficult and rude. They were frequently subjected to verbal and physical abuse in school, both from their classmates and from teachers and they were stigmatized because they had to work.

In the ESP programming, the children learned in groups and interacted frequently with members of the opposite sex. They began presenting themselves more carefully, both in terms of their appearance and their communication with others, both peers and instructors. In addition, the curriculum was tailored towards the experiences of working children and encouraged them to discuss issues and problems from their own lives. This validation occurred in an atmosphere in which their status as working children was not only respected, but universal among those in the group.

Learning and practicing these social skills had a very significant impact on the children. As they learned to interact with others constructively, they developed a strong platform on which to build other skills and knowledge. They were able to make friends more easily and deal positively with authority figures, such as teachers and employers. Many of the children had few or no positive role models or teachers in their lives. Learning alongside other working children led to social skills which brought the children a higher degree of acceptance in school and in their community.

- Class formation based on ability rather than age

Initially, PPIC-Work staff split children into groups based on their age, believing that social interaction would be more difficult in groups with mixed ages. However, instructors found that stronger students dominated the group and weaker students became reluctant to answer questions in front of their stronger peers.

Groups were eventually re-divided by skill level. Instructors found that this improved discipline in class and that attendance increased at all levels. Age must be considered, but skill level was found to be a more important classifying principle.

- Successful in helping working children keep up with peers in school and avoid dropping out due to lack of academic support

School is obligatory until Grade 6 in Egypt, but many children quit before finishing primary school because they fall behind their peers and feel isolated. Helping working children stay in school was the main objective of Education Support when the program started. After refining the curriculum and methodology, EACID has found that the school retention rate of children in ESP is about 90%.

In addition, EACID staff have noted a marked behaviour change among participants in the Education Support Program, due partly to their increased self confidence and self esteem. In many cases, this was even more important than the academic progress that the children made. Children exhibit positive behaviour patterns that contribute to greater success in community and school.

Staff noted improvement in communication skills: children learned to speak with instructors respectfully and to interact with each other constructively and without aggression. They learned to work together in groups and to support each other. They also became more confident in speaking about their own experiences, as the materials in the ESP gave them the scope to talk about their own lives and work.

Factors that contributed to success included:

- flexible hours for classes;
- accessible location that is safe and known to their family (this is particularly important for female students);
- practical, interactive lessons
- atmosphere of respect and openness
- Safe spaces for children

The Education Support Program provides direct benefits in terms of academic support for working children, but the classes also provide important social benefits. Regular lessons are a venue for the children to meet in a safe space. The classes provide structure to the meetings, but a key feature is that all participants are working children and they share many challenges.

- Adult role models give children increased confidence

An externally conducted impact study found that PPIC-Work participants reported having increased confidence and ability to engage with their business owners on issues such as occupational safety and working hours. The children stated that having contact with adults they trusted who were external to their workplace gave them this confidence. Relationships with their employers and with the loan officers from partner MFIs were critical, but children placed a high value on their relationship with PPIC-Work social officers. Social officers are in the unique position of being connected to the MFI, an institution valued by the business owner, but unlike the loan officer, the social officer is primarily connected to the working child and can advocate for them specifically. PPIC-Work participants reported that they felt more confident negotiating with their employer, simply knowing that they had the support of this adult role model.

## **4.2 MFIs and Implementing Organizations**

- Education Support is more effective when participants are connected to loan clients

PPIC-Work interventions improve working children's lives most effectively when they are integrated. Many children participating in the program are accessed through the loan process, meaning that they work in a business which receives a loan from an implementing MFI. The child might be working in a business run by a family member or a non-family member, but the connection to the MFI deepens the impact of the intervention. The connection with the business owner means that the MFI staff has more leverage with the business owner. MFI staff can often use their influence to gain more flexible working hours for the child, a key factor in staying in school.

- Possibility of wide scope through implementation with MFIs

MFIs that take on social programming such as Education Support should be financially self-sustainable, so that their loan portfolio is not adversely affected by such activities. In these cases, MFIs offer a way to provide wide scale programming for difficult to reach groups, such as working children.

- Combination of business and social interventions create greatest change

The externally conducted impact study also found that the greatest change happens for children when there are influences from both the business side and from social side. The social side involves preparing the children and the business owners to embrace ideas like improved working conditions and greater gender equality. Education programming raises the children's confidence. Training and support in these areas prepares the children to ask for change. Business owners are exposed to the code of conduct, dual purpose loans and safety upgrades, mainly through regular contact with their loan officers. The business owners are prepared to accept change, but often do not initiate that change on their own. The impact study shows that change occurs most often when the children themselves initiate negotiation with their business owner. Each piece plays a role in the over all process.

- Partnerships are challenging

Coordination of a wide range of interventions across multiple organizations or even departments can be extremely challenging. These groups will likely have differing agendas, management styles and missions and they may be or may seem incompatible on the surface. Organizations that are primarily motivated by a social agenda may not understand the business approach taken by an MFI, and vice versa.

Partnering across agency types, rather than partnering per se, is the challenge.

## **4.3 Organizational and Logistical Issues**

- Trained and suitable staff

PPIC-Work staff are trained and experienced in working with children and can provide support on a range of topics, including gender equality, workplace conditions and children's rights, as well as literacy, numeracy and school subjects.

Organizations wishing to conduct an Education Support Program should consider hiring specialist staff or training existing staff who have experience working with children. Specific educational methodologies can be acquired through ongoing professional development but staff should have significant experience working with young people, preferably those coming from vulnerable situations.

- Role of loan officers in social programming

Loan officers are key figures in the PPIC-Work interventions, including Education Support. They are critical in attracting children to events and ongoing programming, negotiating with BOs for continued attendance when necessary, raising awareness of BOs on necessity for such programs, and acting as contact point whom the children and BOs see regularly. Loan officers generally have longstanding and positive relationships with their clients and this

- Role of longer term and older students as facilitators and resources

Education Support has been running at EACID for 7 years and many participants are now young adults who have received a great deal of training and facilitation. Many of these children have well developed skills. Sometimes they are offered positions as “instructor helpers”, supporting EACID staff in the classroom. The older youth can relate to the younger students very well and can interact with them in different ways than the instructors. In addition, they gain a feeling of importance and responsibility.

Having “graduates” of the ESP in the classroom gives younger children a clear role model with whom they can identify. Having a clear mentorship role for the participants gives the children greater ownership in the program, as they are not only participating but helping to lead the interventions.

For EACID, there are clear advantages. The helper allows the instructor to handle greater numbers of students and to give individual attention to those who need more support. Organizationally, youth mentors give EACID greater freedom to use staff for the new things and to concentrate on adaptation and new ideas.

- Adapting to new regions and new needs

PPIC-Work began the Education Support Program in Aswan, where most of the children involved were still in school and had functional levels of literacy. The ESP helped them to stay in school and to support their studies. In Aswan, the program was not able to reach those who had lower literacy levels, as they were a small minority and eventually dropped out.

When PPIC-Work expanded to Doweika, a region in greater Cairo, the Education Support staff found that they were dealing with a very different population. In Doweika, most of the children were out of school and the levels of literacy varied more widely. Program staff had to employ a range of pedagogical techniques to engage with different levels in the classroom.

## Conclusions

PPIC Work's Education Support Program grew organically in response to the needs of working children in the program. The program has had significant impact on the participants in a number of ways, including academic improvement but also behavioural change and increased self confidence.

The guide has described how one model of delivery – education classes delivered by the social staff of an MFI – can be successful. Other models may be equally successful in different contexts and interested parties are encouraged to experiment and learn from the PPIC Work experience.

Two methodologies – Freirian and Montessori – are outlined in this guide. They have been used by PPIC Work field staff in instructing working children and are appropriate for this target group. Other methodologies may be equally appropriate, given the context and capacity of the organizations.



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