

# The Arab Origami Center

## Our Story

The Arab Origami Center (AOC) was founded in 2011 in Alexandria, Egypt, using origami as an interactive tool for education improvement and community development. The Arab Origami Center works through training and production, targeting teachers, children and women from different social segments.

## Our Vision

Using origami as the main interactive tool in education transformation, artistic creativity and social development to contribute to creating proactive and critical-thinking citizens that find new and creative solutions to ease their daily lives.

## Our Mission

The Arab Origami Center seeks to empower teachers and facilitators in Egypt to use origami for developing the formal and civic education curriculums, besides promoting creative thinking skills. The Arab Origami Center also works on combining origami with different disciplines coming up with creative artistic products that serve social values.

## Our Values

- Dialogue
- Diversity
- Inclusion
- Acceptance
- Transparency

## Our Goals

- Empowering teachers to use origami in teaching school curriculums

- Combining origami with different disciplines to produce various artistic products
- Deepening the community's understanding of the origami art as a tool for creative thinking
- Promoting human values as diversity, acceptance and coexistence through origami

## **Target Groups**

- School teachers, trainers and facilitators
- Children from all social segments
- Youth from all social segments
- Women and girls in marginalized neighbourhoods

## **Products and Services**

- Trainings: teachers, facilitators and children
- Production: curriculums, theatre, games and researches
- Design: décor, installations and curriculums
- Events: festivals, storytelling and fun-days

# Origami for Innovation, Diversity and Dialogue

We live in a world of rapid change, complexity and uncertainty. It is now increasingly difficult to thrive simply by doing what we have always done. Globalization is also causing profound changes in the way people live and in the way people want to live. Active participation and freedom of expression are now part and parcel of human rights.

A child born today will live his life in a faster changing world more than any other human in history; disconnected from the world of their parents. He/she will face complex situations and challenges as well as enjoy an abundance of possibilities. Everyone must be a creative participant to be heard and respected as a valuable contributor to the society, deepening the culture of mass participation and decentralization.

The Arab Origami Center believes that the participatory approach is the ideal way for transforming the society from being lead by rigid hierarchies and dominated by mere elites to a more open way where everyone has a place and a space to contribute.

We must build a generation of high-caliber leaders who are able to create a more positive future. Hence, we need a generation of changemakers to address the problems of their own lives that are constantly changing and getting more complicated every day. A generation that can see that the world we are living is suffering from poverty, inequity, hate, violence and discrimination and do something about it.

A child born today must enjoy leadership skills in order to survive our new world, to fit in it and to thrive. To help every child become a leader, we need to make big changes in the way we educate our children. The Arab Origami Center works on stimulating fundamental changes in teaching children to become changemakers. Equipping children with the essential skills to enhance creativity and innovation, believing in *active learning* and that every child holds a lot of potential; eventually an active contributor in the learning process. The AOC believes that everyone should be given the opportunity to become the kind of human being that is capable of changing the world for the better.

## Our Process: The Theory of Change

### Education

The Arab Origami Center is changing the way of education, using origami as an

interactive tool in teaching curriculums, which helps in promoting creativity and innovation skills.

The AOC is changing the way of raising children, using origami as a tool for inclusion, breaking stereotypes and promoting dialogue and diversity; aspiring to achieve all this via bringing the creative practice of origami close to the homes of children.

## **Poverty**

The AOC is changing the means of its profit by hiring underprivileged women in our artistic origami projects and products, offering them jobs to fight poverty in underprivileged neighbourhoods.

## **Environment**

The Arab Origami Center is committed to recycling used materials to decrease the overuse of natural resources, raising awareness on the need for smarter use of resources, recycling and environment protection.

Hence, the AOC believes that there are essential skills that every child must be equipped with, on top of which are the following;

### **Being Rational**

For the AOC, rationality entails thinking creatively and positively about the causes and effects of problems. Leaders think critically about life but engage creatively in it. They question social norms and ways of doing things.

### **Being Innovative**

Innovation and creative thinking became essentials in the modern world we are living nowadays. Leaders adapt their behaviours to fit in situations. Leaders involve imaginative and creative thinking about how the world could be changed to be a better place. Resourcefulness is often essential to finding effectively strategic solutions.

### **Being Proactive**

Leaders take positive action. They are prepared to put their own interests aside to serve the common good. They take risks in order to achieve this. They must have the skills to face difficult situations, overcome challenges and rise after failure. For this to happen, they must enjoy a huge deal of determination and resilience.

## **Being a Pioneer**

Leaders do not wait for permission to take positive actions. They take the initiative and responsibility. Leaders push boundaries and set new examples, empowering others.

## **Being Supportive**

Leaders often involve bringing people together to get things done. Leaders establish relationships of trust. They ask for help when they need it. They are good at communication and often work in teams to solve problems and make life easier.

# Next Three-Year Approach, Strategy and Objectives

## Approach

The approach of the Arab Origami Center is to create change in the educational system, to recognize and celebrate diversity and difference and to promote leadership skills.

Inspire more schools and teachers in the educational system to support leadership. Develop leadership skills throughout formal and non-formal curricula and also provide specific programmes using playtime that are explicitly designed to help the children practice leadership skills.

The AOC believes that sufficient tools should be used in curricula for the development of leadership skills in addition to changing the way teachers and school leaders are trained. It also believes that every teacher and school leader should be provided with continuous training to fully equip him/her to be an expert in delivering specific leadership skills.

Finding, selecting and supporting trainers in the field of education and learning will energise our network and drive change throughout the education system.

To maximize the impact of our teams, the AOC focuses on the art of storytelling via origami, changing mindset and behaviour. These impactful stories we create, live and share with others, add value to our theory of change and help our teams grow; inspire a wider range of people and change mindsets. Furthermore, the AOC pays special attention to public relations and media campaigns to share stories and propagate positive impact, influenced by the following quote;

**“When you fold, the ritual and the act of creation is more important than the final result.”**

–Akira Yoshizawa  
*Grandmaster of Origami*

## Strategy

The AOC team cannot reach every child itself, but by activating a network of teachers and schools, we will ensure that everyone understands that creative thinking is as essential to a child’s success as literacy. By this, we expand our limited resources to reach their maximum capacity and effect through a well-disciplined process, reaching what we seek to achieve.

Over the last five years, we have been carefully selecting and training our team, the catalyst members that will help lead positive change. We have trained over 30 trainers and designers not only in the fields of formal and civic education but also in the fields of art and architecture. We have worked with different schools and NGOs across Egypt, which are now acting as role models, showing what education can be like when it prioritizes creativity and innovation skills.

In the next three years, we must lead this team toward a far-reaching impact, reaching new networks and catalysing the uptake of our approach; origami as a critical tool for innovation.

In the next stage, we must expand the network to include more trainers. We also need to support our trainers to spread the approach within their own spheres and connect them with other educators, magnifying its effect to reach a larger group of education leaders and showing the importance of this approach in the process of education.

Although the previous stage has been focused on selecting the team, we also have been piloting engagement strategies that we believe will have the highest impact toward achieving our goals. These strategies are based mainly on our accumulated experience and knowledge, aiming at a wider impact.

While we will continue to engage the different units; namely educators, schools, and NGOs, in unique ways, we can no longer separate them by organizing events that deal with each of them independently. Thus, the strategy for the next stage requires creating opportunities that boosts collaboration and strong connections between the different platforms, establishing partnerships; eventually resulting in fostering values and increasing impact.

## Objectives

### Strengthen the Team

In this next phase, we must continue to invest in developing the highest quality of individual engagement of our team members, in ways that create clear mutual value and deepen our collective understanding of the approach by reaching ***30 new trainers and schools***.

### Mobilize the Team

The AOC wants to maximize the impact of its existing trainers. It will create opportunities to engaging people not only in schools and organizations, but also by creating ***partnerships with 30 different education and civil society platforms***.

## Communicate the Impact

The AOC needs to ensure that it establishes efficient communication strategies for all activities of the team, disseminating knowledge, by creating *30 media partnerships, storytelling talks and entrepreneurship summits attendance*.

## Towards a New Business Model

In pursuing our ambition and commitment to being a creative social enterprise fit for the modern world, we will establish a mixed income and sustainable model, ready to grow over the coming years. Our way of working will evolve to diversify sources of income to include alternative business tools as crowd/ match funding and/or sharing economy.

Our model will include empowerment, involving women to develop artistic products, training children and promoting values in marginalized neighbourhoods. This model will help in providing jobs and reducing poverty.

This mixed model of diverse sources of income reflects our identity of being an impact-driven entity that combines education transformation with art production.

