
**Child museum in Heliopolis and transmission
Of intangible cultural heritage**

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Abstract

This research paper presents the Children Center for Civilization and Creativity “Child Museum” in Heliopolis as a case study for the creation of a heritage learning experience for young people aged from 6 to 12 years old to transmit the intangible cultural heritage to the new generations for the purpose of safeguarding and promoting respect for the cultural diversity of communities.

Key words: Intangible Cultural Heritage “ICH”, Children Museum, refugees, learning technique

The Notion and Purposes of Children’s Museums

Children’s museums, like any museum, are permanent recreational institutions open to the public that research, communicate, and display knowledge and materials in interactive areas for the purposes of education, creativity, study, and enjoyment, initially in the service of children, parents, teachers, and their personal development. Children’s museums are entertaining, innovative, and interactive gathering places for children.¹ The primary purpose of these museums is to educate and entertain young people. They are all welcoming, nonjudgmental spaces where children can be children, lifelong learning is encouraged, and childhood is cherished.

These one-of-a-kind, face-to-face entertaining and educational encounters cannot be replicated in typical museums. These visitor-oriented institutions, in contrast to traditional museums, are centered on the guest. Children’s museums collect information and materials for children aged 0 to 15 years old to educate them about history, science, art, and technology. They are one-of-a-kind playgrounds for children where they may explore their creativity via role-playing and discovery in engaging workshops. Playing is undeniably beneficial to emotional, physical, social, and cognitive development. It also contributes to the enrichment of their environment. As a result, we may claim that children’s museums prepare children for real life by providing hands-on experiences that enhance learning.²

¹ Desvallées, A., & Mairesse, F. (2010). *Key concepts of museology*. Kopie.

² Indianapolis Children’s Museum. (2021). *Indianapolis Children’s Museum*. <https://www.childrensmuseum.org/about/mission>. (Accessed 10 June 2021)

The Child Museum in Heliopolis was built and opened for the first time in May 1996. It continued for 11 years in fulfilling its role in presenting the story of Egypt through the ages to Egyptian children. With the tremendous intellectual and technological development in the field of learning for children, Suzanne Mubarak, the first lady at that time, decided to make a complete and comprehensive development for the Child Museum. The Museum reopened its doors and received children, schools, and families again in May 2012. It was a soft opening that lasted for 6 months, the official opening was in November 2012 in a big celebration under the title of “Africa in the Eyes of its Children”. The Child Museum differs from many children’s museums in the world in that it displays the Egyptian natural and cultural heritage, telling the story of Egypt through time, the history of people and land.

Child Museum in Heliopolis and safeguarding ICH

UNESCO General Conference, meeting in Paris, from 29 September to 17 October 2003, at its 32nd session, adopted the Convention for Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage. In this Convention, the intangible cultural heritage is defined in its first article as, all practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artifacts, and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups, and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity.

For the purposes of this Convention, consideration will be given solely to such intangible cultural heritage as is compatible with existing international human rights instruments, as well as with the requirements of mutual respect among communities, groups, and individuals, and of sustainable development.³

The intangible cultural heritage, as defined above, is manifested in the following domains:

- (a) Oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage
- (b) Performing arts
- (c) Social practices, rituals, and festive events
- (d) Knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe
- (e) Traditional craftsmanship.

Article 14 of the Convention emphasizes education, awareness, and capacity-building as one of the means of safeguarding the intangible cultural heritage at the local level. Each State Party shall endeavor, by all appropriate means, to: first, ensure that ICH is recognized, respected, and promoted in society. Second keeping the public informed of the dangers to this heritage and the activities carried out according to this Convention; To promote education for the protection of natural spaces and places of memory whose existence is necessary for the expression of the ICH.

³ UNESCO. (2003). Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. Adopted by The General Conference meeting at its 32nd session, Paris, from 29 September to 17 October 2003. UNESCO, Paris.

David Carr in his book “The Promise of Cultural Institutions”, enumerated the cultural institutions concerned with teaching cultural heritage for children both formal education institutions and non-formal education institutions which are; Schools, Public libraries, NGOs cultural centers and Museums.⁴

Accordingly, the Child Museum in Heliopolis as a non-formal learning institution and as a civil society institution responsible for safeguarding the intangible cultural heritage through transmission to future generations and raising awareness of its importance.

Since its inception, the museum has launched many and many programs aimed at safeguarding the Egyptian living heritage by transmit it to new generations, such as Antiq Program, which aimed to preserve Egyptian social practices. This program came to spread awareness about the importance of these practices as part of the Egyptian identity. The program included safeguarding the practice of celebrating the new born “Al-Sebua” with its Egyptian details from traditional songs performed during the celebration, Egyptian dishes specially made in the celebration such as kiosk, beans, mother and child clothes in the celebration and proverbs popularity associated with it. We note that in the learning experiences for the transmitting of heritage, not only transmit one element but many elements related to this element, this is what the Child Center for Civilization and Creativity "Child Museum" tries to emphasize on a permanent basis.⁵

⁴ Carr, D. (2004). *The promise of cultural institutions*. Rowman Altamira.

⁵ Heliopolis Association. (2020). *About The Child Museum*. <https://misrelgededa.org/ar/museum/>. (Accessed 10 March 2021).

The museum is also presently presenting one of the programs whose purpose is to urgently preserve the Egyptian cultural heritage, which is the Al-Aragoz program, as Al-Arjouz is one of the Egyptian elements registered on the Urgent Preservation List.⁶

In 2019 researcher developed an interactive hands-on toolkit for the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage in Egypt under UNESCO Regional Office in Cairo project "Strengthening National Capacities for the Safeguarding of the ICH in Egypt for Sustainable Development" to promote an effective understanding of ICH among Egyptian youths. This pedagogical learning tool is also based on article fourteen of the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, which recognizes education, awareness-raising and capacity-building as tools for the transfer of ICH from one generation to another.

Main Concept of Learning Experience: Raising awareness of Egyptian youths on safeguarding ICH by producing a practical, portable and interactive educational toolkit for trainers and teachers, to be implemented in schools, cultural centers and museums. A workshop to implement the toolkit in the child museum for two days, one day for educators training and the next day for implement with children. The toolkit hands-on covers the five main domains of ICH.⁷

⁶ زيدان إلهام. (2019, November 6). الأحد.. "عروسة المولد والأراجوز" في احتفالية متحف الطفل بمولد النبي. الوطن . Retrieved March 15, 2021, from <https://www.elwatannews.com/news/details/4409986>

⁷ Project. UNESCO. (n.d.). Retrieved March 15, 2022, from <https://ich.unesco.org/en/project-education/educational-toolkit-for-safeguarding-living-heritage-in-egypt-00456>

Child Museum safeguarding the cultural heritage of refugees:

Based on the operational guidelines of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the ICH, each Member States is obligated to safeguard the ICH located within its borders.⁸

Accordingly, the Egyptian state, represented in the formal and non-formal educational institutes, is responsible for safeguarding the heritage of the owners of other nationalities residing on its land by passing it on to the new generations. The Children's Museum, being a non-formal educational institution and a civil society, is responsible for contributing to the safeguarding of this heritage by passing it on to the new generations.

The research choses to work with the Sudanese refugees in Cairo for the following reasons:

- According to the UNHCR, Sudanese refugees are ranked second biggest refugee's number in Egypt after Syrian refugees.⁹
- Researcher explored Sudan heritage during two visits on 2019 and 2021
- Researcher worked for three museums in Sudan, Darfur, Kordofan and Umm Dorman museums.

Experience Concept: The learning experience raising students' awareness about the common heritage between Sudan, student`s home land and Egypt home they live. The experience applies multi learning technique.

⁸ *Basic texts - ich.unesco.org.* (n.d.). Retrieved November 22, 2021, from https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/2003_Convention_Basic_Texts-_2020_version-EN.pdf.

⁹ *Refugee context in Egypt.* UNHCR Egypt. (n.d.). Retrieved December 7, 2021, from <https://www.unhcr.org/eg/about-us/refugee-context-in-egypt>.

Experience Learning Objective: Raising awareness among Sudanese students residing in Cairo about the Sudanese cultural heritage. Safeguarding Sudanese ICH through extra curricula activities. Safeguarding of the important element of ICH, which is traditional agriculture for SDG. Help Child Museum as non-formal educational institution to fulfil its role in safeguarding ICH existed in Egypt.

The experience targeting Primary school students from Sudanese schools in Cairo and Children of the Sudanese community residing in Egypt from age 6 to 12 years old. The program was implemented in the month of December, when children were available in schools since they are the target group, as well as where the nice weather in the center's garden is where children work.

| Activity | Duration |
|---|----------|
| Ice break | 15 min |
| First assessment | 15 min |
| oral introduction | 15 min |
| Exploring common heritage exhibition | 30 min |
| Child museum visit | 30 min |
| Explore farming environment in the garden | 30 min |
| Farmers' stories and proverbs | 30 min |
| Explore Sudanese songs and tones | 30 min |
| Children's participation in performing some dances and arts | 15 min |
| planting activity | 30 min |
| Second assessment | 15 min |

Experience content

1- Oral Introductory:



The researcher broke the ice with the children through a simple game to get to know each other. The researcher conducted an interactive dialogue with students about heritage to clarify the meaning of intangible cultural heritage and its various domains.

2- Common Heritage Exhibition



The researcher presented a set of illustrative panels on the common heritage elements between Egypt and Sudan. Each panel represents an area of the intangible cultural heritage, in addition to displaying a few panels on the tangible cultural heritage in order to clarify the interrelationship between the tangible and intangible cultural heritage.

3- Visit to the museum

The researcher took the children on a tour inside the Children's Museum to visit the exhibits related to the program, which are the exhibits of the planting season and irrigation tools in the museum. The children learned and enjoyed a lot by exploring the interactive exhibits of irrigation tools "the saqia, the shadouf and the tanbour".



1- Explore farming environment

Taking the students on a tour of the rural area in the museum garden and getting acquainted with the elements of the rural environment from the clothes of the farmer and the animals he keeps in his home and helping him in the fields. They also learn about the shapes of farmers' homes and the contents of their furniture, and he sees ovens and traditional methods of making bread



2- Story Telling

A storytelling workshop carried out by one of the education staff in Al-Maif who was trained by the researcher. The storytelling workshop revolved around the Egyptian agricultural year and its months and included a song about the sayings associated with the months of the Coptic year as we call it in Egypt.¹⁰

¹⁰ Tzima, S., Styliaras, G., Bassounas, A., & Tzima, M. (2020). Harnessing the potential of storytelling and mobile technology in intangible cultural heritage: A case study in early childhood education in sustainability. *Sustainability*, 12(22), 9416.



3- Explore Sudanese songs and tones

An interactive dialogue between the researcher and students about the most famous Sudanese songs and musical instruments. In this activity, the researcher prepared an educational brochure on the various types of Sudanese drums and their use, and the use of technology was incorporated into this activity. Where the brochure included pictures of the types of drums and an explanation of their use accompanied by a barcode. When scanning it with a mobile, you can hear the tone issued by this type of drums.



1- planting activity

This activity is to ensure the sustainability of learning, where children plant in a small pot and learn how to take care of plants at home and learn the importance of having a plant in our homes. Also, children learn a new value, which is the value of caring and a sense of responsibility towards something which is planted by them and watching them grow.



Experience Evaluation:

The study applies structured survey for school student to determine the knowledge and skill range of the students and then repeat the same opinion poll after the students practice the activities of the learning experience, the common heritage between Egypt and Sudan. The difficulty of the questions ranged, as it included very easy questions for all children, such as the river that runs between Egypt and Sudan, to more difficult questions, such as the question of the heritage element recorded in Egypt and Sudan.

| No | Question | Before | | | After | | |
|-----|---|--------|----|-------|-------|----|-------|
| | | Yes | No | Neut. | Yes | No | Neut. |
| 1- | Do you know the meaning of heritage? | 12 | 17 | 2 | 27 | 4 | - |
| 2- | Do you know the name of the river that runs in Egypt and Sudan? | 30 | | 1 | 29 | 1 | 1 |
| 3- | Do you know the names of traditional clothes? | 27 | 4 | - | 27 | 4 | - |
| 4- | Do you know the names of traditional ornaments? | 11 | 19 | 1 | 23 | 8 | |
| 5- | Do you know traditional food and drinks | 29 | 2 | | 30 | 1 | - |
| 6- | Do you know the traditional handicrafts | 15 | 15 | 1 | 24 | 6 | 1 |
| 7- | Do you know the most important archaeological and historical sites? | 8 | 23 | | 24 | 7 | |
| 8- | Do you know the most famous musical instruments? | 16 | 15 | | 25 | 6 | |
| 9- | Do you know Sudanese songs? | 25 | 6 | | 25 | 6 | |
| 10- | Do you know the customs associated with weddings? | 20 | 10 | 1 | 24 | 7 | |
| 11- | Do you know the calendar that was used in ancient Egypt and Sudan | 2 | 26 | 3 | 23 | 8 | |
| 12- | Do you know the names of the herbs that were used in Egypt and Sudan for treatment? | 8 | 20 | | 27 | 4 | |
| 13- | Do you know the name of an inscribed as heritage element on UNESCO in Egypt and Sudan | 6 | 23 | 2 | 20 | 11 | |
| 14- | Do you know traditional folk tales? | 7 | 22 | 2 | 16 | 15 | |

From the table of the results of the previous questionnaire, it is clear the amount of knowledge that children gained during their experience about the intangible Sudanese heritage, This is what the Children's Museum in Heliopolis seeks, and we, the community of researchers, seek to publish it and follow it.

Conclusion

The Child Center for Civilization and Creativity “The Children’s Museum” is tasked with raising awareness among children and their families about the importance of safeguarding and preserving the Egyptian natural and cultural heritage, tangible and intangible. Through the paper, the researcher presents examples of learning experiences created at the Children’s Museum in Heliopolis to safeguarding the Egyptian intangible cultural heritage as well as the intangible cultural heritage of refugees as an important targeted community that the museum should integrate namely, as well as shedding light on an important role for member states within the scope of the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, which is the safeguarding of the heritage existed on their land. On the creativity side of the learning experience, during this experience many learning techniques were applied from the use of technology, storytelling, hand-on and narration. The experience fused students emotionally through arousing nostalgia and brought back childhood memories with grandmother's tales and talk about the motherland.