



A Guide for the Rehabilitation and Education  
of Children with Multiple Disabilities  
and Deaf-Blindness:

**“Ayadi Initiative” - A Model from Egypt**

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Model Implemented by



Funded by

**drosos (...)**



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

It all began in 2002, when a mother came to Nida, carrying her child who doesn't hear or see. Fear showed on her face, not to find a solution at Nida.

She needed to know how to communicate with her daughter, and she was questioning how she should deal with her.

Nida at that time, did not have sufficient experience in dealing with deafblindness, which is classified as a disability on its own....

Nida began its journey of research to find experts to train and educate its specialists to communicate with Deafblind Children, and they were able to contact Oslo University in Norway, and at the same year, representatives from the university came to Egypt to train Nida specialists on how to communicate and develop the skills of deaf-blind children.

Ten years after this incident, Nida's experience grew and it was time to disseminate this expertise, and enhance it.

Nida began to develop a new vision and is committed to support and empower children with multiple disabilities in the society. The first step was to communicate with Perkins International Academy in the United States to train Nida specialists to become certified trainers, and a cooperation agreement was signed between Nida and Perkins. This allowed Nida to train the training curriculum for other specialists, after it was translated and approved by Perkins.

The next step was to communicate with official institutions to support children with multiple disabilities to build their capabilities for rehabilitation and education.

One of the milestones of Nida's journey was including the hearing-visual disability in the Disability Law of 2018, as a single disability by itself... Then the successes continued with the signing of a cooperation protocols with the Ministry of Social Solidarity to train Specialists, and with the Ministry of Education and Technical Education to train teachers and establish equipped classrooms for children with multiple disabilities in special education schools - Al-Amal Schools for the Deaf and Al-Noor Schools for the Blind. These steps could not have been achieved without the conviction and adoption of DROSOS FOUNDATION for the cause of the deaf-blind and people with multiple disabilities, through sponsoring the project, "Insuring Quality of Rehabilitation and Education of Children with Multiple Disabilities and DeafBlind in Cairo and Alexandria".

Successes continued with these partnerships over a period of four years, until the achieved results exceeded the desired goals of the project.

One success preceded the other; and in this regard, we express our gratitude to all partners,

Perkins International Academy, the Ministry of Education and Technical Education, the Ministry of Social Solidarity, DROSOS FOUNDATION, and all other strategic and implementing partners, for all the support and empowerment offered to children with multiple disabilities.

This guide is a dedication from Nida to all other institutions who are concerned and committed to improving the quality of education and life for children with multiple disabilities.

**Ms. Magda Ahmed Fahmy,**

Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Nida Society for  
the Rehabilitation of Hearing Impaired Children and People  
with Multiple Disabilities and Deaf-Blindness



## ACRONYMS

Children with Disabilities - CwD

Children with Multiple Disabilities - CwMD

Community-Based Organizations - CBOs

Ministry of Education and Technical Education - MoETE

Ministry of Social Solidarity - MoSS

Monitoring and Evaluation - M&E

National Council for Persons with Disabilities - NCPWD

Non-Governmental Organizations - NGO

Perkins International Academy - PIA

Persons with Multiple Disabilities - PwMD



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## A Success Story

Tamer's story is an excellent example of what good teachers and facilitators can do to support and develop the skills of Children with Multiple Disabilities. It also shows the effect of the training received by his teachers and how it helped him achieve beyond expectations. The story is an inspiration, and it sheds the light on the value of early intervention, collaboration, as well as the value of practical and theoretical training of teachers, the value of partnership with parents, and finally, the importance of having Top-Down and Bottom-Up intervention.

**The Case** - Tamer, an active young boy, with two elder siblings, a girl and a boy. He was six when he was first admitted to "Nida Nursery" by Nida Society for Rehabilitation, Children with Hearing Disorder, Multiple Disabilities and Deafblind. Tamer was born with multiple disabilities, mainly visual impairment, and physical disabilities. Although his hearing abilities are intact, his language was somewhat delayed. Tamer started his rehabilitation journey with physiotherapy when he was two years old; he also went to a different rehabilitation center in Cairo for almost 18 months before he was referred to another specialized service provider (Nida) to receive adequate service for his condition. After seeking support from other institutions, his parents admitted him into Nida nursery in the hope to prepare him to enter a school for children with disabilities[YD2] .

**The Early Assessment** - Upon entry, specialists at Nida Society assessed his abilities in order to fully understand his needs and customize a program for him. At the time, Tamer did not recognize verbally any of the letters of the Arabic language and he had poor fine motor skills that made it impossible to teach him "Braille". In arithmetic, he verbally knew the numbers from 0 to 10, and could recognize the "circle", yet, he was unable to understand the numeric value of numbers or carry out arithmetic computations. His fine motor skills were very poor to the extent that he could not grasp anything. He had no knowledge of the English language. He had no knowledge of "Quran", the holy book, and his knowledge of description of space was restricted to "on, under, in front of, and behind".

**The Plan** - Having designed a suitable program for Tamer, the Nida teachers who had received intensive training by Perkins International Academy (PIA), delivered a specially made program which focused on developing his fine motor skills to get him to start writing using Braille. Also, the objective was to improve his ability in reading, arithmetic and English Language.

**The Progress** -With consistent sessions taking place five times a week over three years, as well as continuous communication between the facilitators and his family and their active engagement; Tamer has been able to make considerable progress in all areas. He knows all the Arabic alphabet verbally, he learnt how to write all the letters of the Arabic alphabet using "Braille". He now can read words of 2 or 3 letters, and can read a sentence made of 3 to 5 short words. He also manages to follow the sentences with his fingers. As for the geometric shapes he is now able to recognize basic shapes like a square, circle, triangle, rectangle and oval. He now understands the numeric value of

numbers 1 to 50, and he can read using Braille numbers from 1 to 100, as well as simple addition and subtraction. His fine motor skills developed considerably to the point of sorting beads, cards and inserting the dots in the Braille cells. The report mentioned that he acquired fifty English words, and became capable of answering simple English questions. In the Quran, he learnt to recite a whole “part”. Finally, in navigation, he was able to navigate the center and he could identify directions like right and left. He can also use the walker to move from one place to another.

**The Observational Analysis** - An observational assessment was conducted to document Tamer’s progress as one of the success stories by the efforts of the project. The observation confirmed the progress that was mentioned in the report. It became apparent that Tamer is able to put the dots in the different Braille cells with some support; he uses his less dominant hand, but manages to write the word “Baba”- meaning “father”. He was also observed during an English lesson and he was able to say more than 10 English words correctly (Father, Mother, Baby, Winter, Rain, Clouds, boy, girl, fish, elephant). Another observation took place in a music lesson, where Tamer was observed playing the “Organ” independently “Do, Re, Me” and in another instance playing the first part of the birthday song, again independently with some verbal prompt from the teacher. Finally, he was observed in a one-to-one session with a facilitator doing recognition of places of objects using sound.

**The Educational Path** - In 2022, Tamer was admitted to one of the Special Schools for Children with Multiple Disabilities (CwMD) - AlAmal Schools for Hard of Hearing and AlNour Schools for Visual Impairment - affiliated to the Ministry of Education and Technical Education (MoETE). The school was equipped with a class for CwMD, but because his academic and overall functioning was improving, he was placed in the class for children who are blind not in the classes for CwMD. Tamer can now, potentially, continue his education and improve his quality of life.

**The Model** - Tamer’s story is an excellent example of how qualified teachers and facilitators, when equipped with the right knowledge, skills, and tools can support CwMD achieve levels of skills - improvements that are considered far too ambitious. It also shows the effect of the training received by his teachers and how it helped him achieve beyond expectations. The story is an inspiration, and it sheds light on the value of collaboration, practical and theoretical training of teachers and facilitators, the value of partnership with parents, and finally, the importance of Top- Down and Bottom- Up interventions, which could be considered the main asset of this initiative.

**The Replication** - Because of the inspiring stories like the one of Tamer’s, Nida Society, with the support of DROSOS Foundation and Consultants, developed the guide that aims to identify the factors that contributed to Tamer’s success and all the other success stories of children who were impacted by the “Ayadi” Initiative. This guide is meant, not only to analyze the factors that contributed to the success of the experience, but also to facilitate its replication for the benefit of other children with similar conditions.

## A. Introduction

Teaching a child with disabilities is quite challenging and daunting and requires specially trained teachers, a suitable curriculum, resources and plenty of support. However, teaching Children with Multiple Disabilities (CwMD) requires many more resources, more specialized training, a curriculum that can cater for the different disabilities and many sources of support.

Nida Society, which is already a pioneer in the area of supporting and training children with hearing disabilities, decided to take the initiative of providing CwMD the much-needed training and education.

This guide aims at documenting the steps taken by Nida Society, through “Ayadi” to provide CwMD with educational opportunities. In addition to documenting the steps taken by Nida Society, this guide aims to analyze the factors that contributed to the success of the whole process. These identified steps will serve as guidelines that will facilitate the process for other Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) or Educational Institutions to adopt any similar initiative.



### What is this guide?

It is a documentation of all the factors that contributed to the success of the “**Ayadi**” in supporting Children with Multiple Disabilities in improving their cognitive and interpersonal skills.

### For Whom?

This guide is useful for anyone working in the field of disabilities whether multiple or single disabilities whether they are practitioners, policy makers, or parents of children with disabilities.

### Why?

It highlights the best practices, identifies the elements of success and the possible challenges to support anyone who wants to initiate change in opinion and practice.

## B. Nida Society for Rehabilitation of Children with Hearing Disorder, Multiple Disabilities and Deafblindness

Nida Society for Children with Hearing Impairment (Nida) is an Egyptian association registered in the Social solidarity Ministry under the # 4368/1997. The association is specialized in the provision of high-quality services for children with hearing impairment and children with multiple disabilities. Nida has an in-house team of experts and provides direct service to children with disabilities and their parents and specialized training and capacity building for various entities and specialists who work firsthand with children with disabilities.



## C. DROSOS FOUNDATION

DROSOS FOUNDATION is a private not for profit organization dedicated to supporting community development and committed to enabling disadvantaged people live a life of dignity. Based in liZurich, Switzerland, DROSOS seeks long-term impact through its projects in Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine, Switzerland and Germany. Its vision is a world where young people can reach their full potential and where they have equal opportunities and it supports young people to become economically empowered and resilient. In Egypt, DROSOS is operational and active since 2005 and has supported over 220 projects serving a wide range of beneficiaries including disadvantaged youth, women and children.

## D. Methodology

The information used in this guide was gathered by The Community Hub, a consulting company established in Egypt, that is specialized in conducting community assessments and evaluation, providing influencing materials and plans, and building capacities in different areas of focus, including disabilities. Dr. Heba Kotb, Inclusive Education Consultant, created the guide based on an analysis of the data collected. Data was gathered through phone interviews with some of the stakeholders; Ministry of Social Solidarity (MoSS) Officials, trained facilitators from different NGOs, trained teachers from Nida Society, parents of CwMD. Documents were also reviewed, Egypt's policy on the education of CwMD, Teachers' Training Curricula, the evaluation of the training conducted, and progress reports of the classroom preparation and equipment. In addition, classroom observations of children were conducted, through video analysis, to document firsthand how the trained teachers, the adapted curriculum, and the well-resourced classroom impacted their experience at Nida Nursery, in spite of their multiple disabilities.

## E. Objectives of “Ayadi”

Founded by DROSOS Foundation, the main objectives of Ayadi Initiative, which was launched in 2018, were to develop cognitive and skills, operational model for CwMD so they can improve their life skills, have access to education, and enjoy their rights to a quality of life, in Greater Cairo and Alexandria.

**There were also three specific objectives:**

**Specific Objective 1:** Developing the framework for creative skills-based programs for CwMD and implementing them in (10) model classrooms in public schools, affiliated to MoETE, supported by qualified teachers and facilitators from MoSS.

**Specific Objective 2:** Strengthening the capacity of the MoETE, in Egypt to integrate the CwMD, develop and maintain programs and build their capacity in monitoring and evaluating quality of learning.

**Specific Objective 3:** Raising awareness on multiple disabilities and available programs to reduce stigma in civil society and public opinion.

## F. Significance of “Ayadi”

In Egypt, in 2019, the National Council for Persons with Disabilities (NCPWD) was established by Presidential Decree No. 11 / 2019 to replace the National Council for Disability Affairs issued by Prime Ministerial Decree No. 410 / 2012, to which all its rights and responsibilities were assumed. The role of the NCPWD is to recommend the general policy for the rehabilitation, education, and empowerment of people with disabilities. It also aims to inform the national strategy that develops the health, labor, and education of persons with disabilities, in addition to early intervention. The law mandates that all ministries and public bodies should collaborate with the NCPWD. Thus, several efforts were made to meet the needs of persons with disabilities that resulted in the establishment of physiotherapy centers, speech therapy centers, special schools for the blind, deaf and those with intellectual disabilities, in addition to efforts at integrating children with disabilities into mainstream schools. In spite of all of those efforts and the increase in facilities targeting persons with disabilities, there was no mention of catering for the needs and the education of those with multiple disabilities.

All over the world, CwMD impose many challenges in terms of communication problems with peers, teachers and support staff. It is also difficult to create a setting that accommodates the students' needs. Assessment of CwMD is also challenging especially for those with visual and hearing disabilities (Deaf/Blind). In addition, there is an overall lack of ability to function in the classroom. “Ayady Initiative” by Nida Society, is a unique initiative, that was the first of its own to bridge the gap.

## G. The Anticipated and Actual Outcomes of “Ayadi”

In the inception phase of the initiative Nida Society conducted several meetings to prepare for signing protocols with the MoETE and MoSS, which was an important step that acted as a great kick-off and that facilitated the implementation of the planned activities to achieve the objectives. As mentioned above, the broad objective of this initiative was to develop the skills of CwMD, to provide them with educational opportunities, life skills and better prospects in life. The target areas were Greater Cairo and Alexandria. In order to achieve these ultimate goals, the intention was to equip 10 model classes in greater Cairo and develop a skills-based curriculum to provide CwMD with this opportunity. In addition to working with the MoETE to improve assessment and encourage their attempts towards integration of CwMD. Finally, the intention was to improve the prevailing attitude towards CwMD in society. However, upon the completion of this phase of the initiative, what was achieved surpassed what they intended. MoETE has adopted the decision to include CwMD in Special Classes in public schools for children with disabilities. A total of 400 children were trained in different NGOs in Wadi El Gadeed, 48 in Ismailia and Sharqeya. There were 57 children in MoSS nurseries. As for the number of children that were enrolled in classes at schools of the MoETE are 111 children, and the achievements can be summarized in the following:

- 1. For the first objective of equipping 10 schools with model classrooms and developing a skill-based curriculum, taught by skilled and trained teachers from MoETE and facilitators from MoSS, the following outcomes exceeded the initial target:**

- Leveled program curricula for CwMD.
- 14 model classrooms equipped to standard, in addition to 3 more classrooms funded by other donors such as, Embassy of NewZealand and Life Makers.
- Teachers training program certified by Perkins International Academy translated into Arabic by Nida Society.
- 124 certified teachers from MoETE and 143 facilitators from MoSS, 2 officials from MoSS, and 8 facilitators from Nida Society, 11 university professors, 2 graduate diploma students, and 1 parent from Saudi Arabia.

**2. Working with the MoETE to improve assessment and encourage their attempts towards the integration of CwMD, the following was achieved: Working with the MoETE to improve assessment and encourage their attempts towards the integration of CwMD, the following was achieved:**

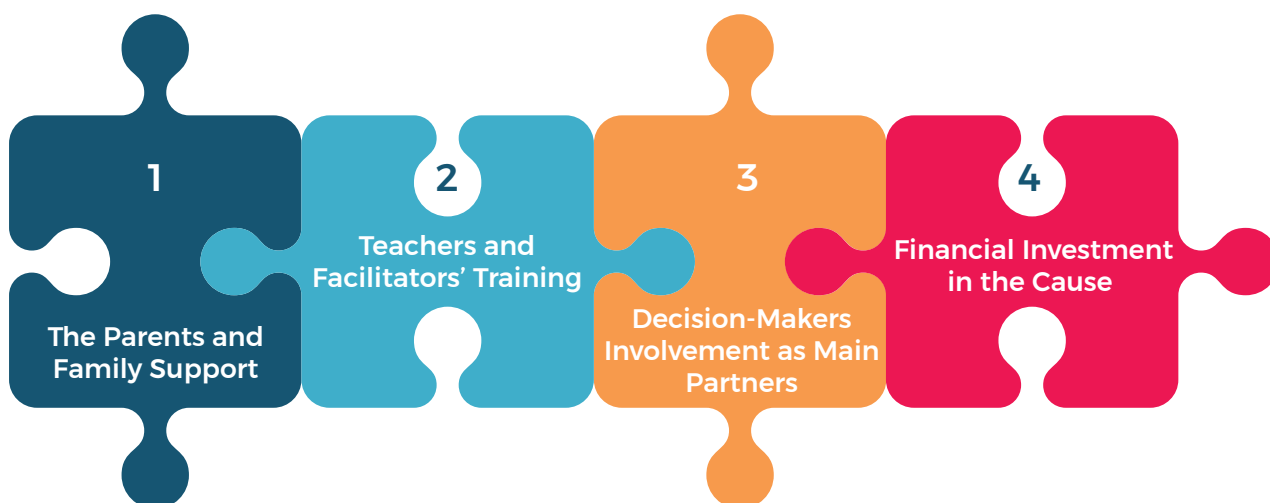
- A Policy framework document was endorsed by the MoETE on the integration of Children with Multiple Disabilities CwMD resulted in issuing the executive regulations of the Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities issued by the Prime Minister No. 2733 of 2018.
- Multiple disabilities diploma offered in Public University at the College for Special Education.
- Multiple disabilities Education Curricula, which ensured a quality standardized educational program.
- Assessment tools developed to assess the needs of children with multiple disabilities, through a committee of specialists.
- Compiled the criteria of children with multiple disabilities to make sure that those with multiple disabilities are the beneficiaries of this initiative.

**3. Raise awareness on multiple disabilities and available programs to reduce stigma of civil society and public opinion, the following was achieved:**

- The training guide was uploaded on the Egyptian Knowledge bank to disseminate knowledge. In addition, there were noticeable presence on social media platforms, transmission of knowledge via the Ma'an page, and Nida society's Facebook Page for multiple disabilities. In addition to that, several experts in Nida Society published their work on the "Egyptian Knowledge Bank".
- By the third year of project implementation, Nida Society has worked on branding the initiative, which developed into "Ayadi", meaning, hands in Arabic, and it represents the communicative method of CwMD through their senses. In addition, they documented the change that was created as a result of the project. The documentation resulted in this guide, and a booklet that tells stories of best practices by the trained facilitators of the MoSS. They further developed an influencing strategy to promote the work achieved by the project, and other planned work for future direction.

## H. Elements of Success

As demonstrated above, the “Ayadi” project developed and implemented by Nida surpassed all expectations and was instrumental in changing the lives of CwMD who were influenced by the initiative. It also serves as a promise to transform the lives of many other CwMD in different parts of Egypt and potentially, in the region. In the following section, the guide will analyze the elements that contributed to this success, not only to understand the factors that contributed to this success, but also to identify what needs to be done if “Ayadi” journey will be replicated with different children, with similar or different disabilities, with different challenges, and in different areas.



### 1. The Parents and Family Support

International research in the areas of disability, inclusive education and in the factors that promote best practice in catering for the needs of children with disabilities always stress the role of family support and always highlight the importance of involving parents in all aspects of their children’s education and training.

This project stressed the importance of involving parents in all aspects of their children’s education. This was an important aspect since if parents do not believe in their children’s capabilities and their potential, the children would never flourish or succeed in any setting.

Parents’ involvement proved to parents that their children can be educated, trained and that any effort exerted with them will definitely pay off and that nothing is wasted. This was very important since the cultural notion that prevails is that people with disabilities are incapable and that resources should not be wasted on them. The case of CwMD is even more complicated and the general attitude is that any money, effort or resources spent on them is just a complete waste.

One facilitator mentioned that this program served to increase their respect for parents and having empathy towards them: “it is important to acknowledge the parent and their point of view and to understand that they are in a difficult position and face many challenges”.

Another therapist was analyzing the factors that led to the success of the project and mentioned that parents’ involvement was the primary cause of success of the program,

stating: "two practices changed first that you include parents in the rehabilitation process, and this has been effective since parents are a primary partner".

Therefore, this project came to dispel these existing beliefs among parents since it focused on empowering parents by providing them with sign language training, family training of ways of dealing with their children, how to interact with them, and how to care for them. In order to make this easier, they also offered parents with online training, specially during times of COVID, which meant more accessibility and more reach to parents in remote areas, and in areas outside Egypt. The online training of parents spread to other parts of the Arab world like Tunisia, Jordan and Palestine. Nida reported working with parents in Saudi Arabia.

The training served to empower parents and give them the feeling that they possess important knowledge that could contribute to the facilitators' plan working with their children. One facilitator said: "...but we have learned to sit with the parents and hear everything relating to the child and his history from conception until now, and this includes all their experiences and previous rehabilitations. Previously, there was not much communication with the parents but we have learned to communicate".

Because parents started to be considered as partners it became important to provide them with knowledge; thus, a website was created which facilitated transmitting knowledge to parents and kept parents informed of updates from Nida.

When parents became more involved in the training of their children, they started to have more trust in the facilitators, and thus, their children benefited from the training since their parents were enthusiastic. The facilitators confessed that in the past they used to disregard the parents and were worried that if parents became more knowledgeable this would jeopardize their role as facilitators. After the training they started to understand that parents are important partners in the training of CwMD.

One facilitator explained the nature of the relationship with the parents and how it changed as a result of the training: "In the beginning there was a huge gap between therapist and parent but now they ask us for what to do and they implement because they have seen the positive outcomes, so they are participating with their children and their hope has returned even if it is minimal; they have hope".

To sum up, this initiative fostered respect for parents' wishes and views - more parental involvement and empowerment which is a key factor in the successful education of CwMD.



- Parents are more involved.
- The view of parents as partners in their children's education.
- Parents were given a voice.
- Parents realized that their children with multiple disabilities had potential.
- Parents are trained.

## 2. Teachers and Facilitators' Training

The Perkin's teachers and facilitators' training curriculum proved to be one of the main factors that contributed to the success of "Ayadi" initiative since it transformed teachers' and facilitators' perspective in regards to CwMDs. In addition to it being an accredited and credible training course, it had many aspects that guaranteed its success. One of those aspects is the fact that it was translated into Arabic. It also provided them with the very much needed theoretical knowledge, but what made it particularly special was the emphasis on the practical knowledge, the hands-on experience, and the know-how.

One of the aspects that contributed to the success of the program is that it taught teachers and facilitators how to use resources in the environment, materials that were available. It taught teachers and facilitators how to make their own teaching resources. It also trained facilitators to develop their own training materials and not to depend on bought materials.

A professor at a University who has vast experience in the area of disability described the training as comprehensive and complete; he said: "The training was complete, it was not short and it ended with practice. In the practical part we went and sat with CwMDs with the presence of specialists from all fields relating to disabilities such as occupational and speech therapists. I also saw art therapy and music therapy, there were many specialists present and we saw new things inside the training and I think the training was integrative and complete".

Therefore, teachers who used to feel powerless and helpless in the presence of CwMD felt empowered and learnt ways of communicating with them and also learnt ways by which they could teach them and open up future learning opportunities.

One social worker facilitator identified a significant instance in the training that he considered a turning point which was when they made the trainees experience what Persons with Multiple Disabilities (PwMD) feel to instill empathy within them.

"The first moment was when you were put into the place of PwMD, when we blindfolded our eyes and covered our ears, it was completely different and it was the first time that I was put into their shoes and got me thinking about how we will trust or deal with the facilitators. The experience was very beneficial since when you feel and understand the person in front of, you will better intervene with them. This was an important moment that shifted my perspective. And I particularly liked the tactile signaling, in the beginning I didn't know what to do with it but I started innovating certain signals based on the environment available around us and they started responding to it".

The training also empowered teachers and facilitators to work with parents and CwMD. They were able to empower parents and to show them that their children have potential in spite of their multiple disabilities.

Teachers also commented on how their attitude towards learners with multiple disabilities was transformed after they received the training since their lack of knowledge made them resistant to teach CwMD, since they felt incapable of communicating with them. However, once they received the knowledge, they felt confident of their skills, specifically, their empathic behavior, and through that they started to see noticeable improvement.

For the trainees from the MoSS, one of the important aspects was to choose the candidates for the training that possess certain characteristics like having the appropriate educational background, training and attitude, through an interviewing process.

The facilitators who received the training took the role of transmitting knowledge to their colleagues who did not receive the training. So those who received the training not only benefited, but also spread the knowledge to colleagues, which meant that the benefit of the training has extended to more service providers.

One important aspect about the training is that it is unique the University professor explained: "In Egypt, there is no entity that formally trains specialized calibers to deal with people with disabilities, except maybe University of Beni Suef and the first class was that of 2016, also in 2017 the department of special needs opened in Zagazig University. So these are the 2 universities that are capable of developing proper calibers to work as social workers or teachers with children with disabilities."



- Teachers were transformed both in attitude and techniques mainly through the Perkins' training.
- The Perkins training was accredited, credible, theoretical and practical.
- It provided teachers with the know-how and gave them confidence.
- It taught teachers to communicate with parents and treat them as partners.
- It changed the teachers' and therapists' view of the potential of CwMD.
- It taught teachers to seek and provide support to other professionals.
- One important aspect was the criteria of choice of those who received the training, that is why only those who would benefit were the ones who were included.

### 3. Decision-Makers Involvement as Main Partners

One of the key elements that ensured the success of the program was the fact that both the MoSS and MoETE became involved in the process. This was important since MoSS is the ministry responsible for nurseries and centers that care for children with disabilities in their early years to provide them with early intervention programs and to prepare them for education. The MoETE is also very important since it is the one responsible for schools that cater for children with disabilities, or will provide special classes on site of mainstream schools, or further provide inclusive classes and schools. It is also responsible for technical education, which serves as a potential educational and career path for CwMD.

The involvement of both ministries is considered a strategic move that ensures the success and the sustainability of “Ayadi” initiative. One of the important factors that ensured the commitment of the MoSS in developing the training of teachers, and thus, meeting the educational needs of those with multiple disabilities, was the ministry’s mandate that includes coordinating with Community-Based Organizations (CBOs). It was a cooperation protocol with binding responsibilities for each party and listed the role of each party and it is agreed upon and implemented through an action plan and this action plan has been upheld.

One initiative by the ministry was to create a digital platform to organize community work. It is a platform for digital recording and can be used for data analysis and research, to facilitate the creation of a database. This database could facilitate the ministry’s role as the management and orchestration of projects, and offering support to different NGOs.

This commitment to the training and to supporting different NGOs in the area of disabilities resulted in a significant shift in attitude, where in the past Ministry officials, used to view jobs in the areas of nurseries and centers that cater for children with disabilities, a job for the unemployed who cannot find jobs, but now people value those jobs and have witnessed the impact that well trained facilitators and teachers can have on the lives and educational prospects of children with disabilities.

In addition, the associate MoSS attended the training to understand more the job of the facilitators and specialists which made her understand the burdens and the challenges of their jobs.

Therefore, as one of the managing officials at the MoSS mentioned, the important starting point was signing a Protocol between MoSS and Nida Society, whereby it was agreed to provide training for 120 specialists; nevertheless, the project managed to exceed the planned targets and actually trained 145 facilitators. The second key element was the fact that there was a follow up period for the training that led to the idea that specialists who received the training could ask questions, get feedback and were supported by staff from Nida, through “WhatsApp” groups and virtual communication with the experts at Nida.

Other additional contributing factors for the success of the initiative was the fact that the Minister of MoSS became wholeheartedly in favor of providing teachers and specialists who deal with children with multiple disabilities with the best training.

Furthermore, the collaboration with the MoETE is also a key factor in the success of



the initiative. This collaboration resulted in the MoETE issuing decrees in opening the model classes and developing the criteria for acceptance of students with multiple disabilities. In addition to that, a decree of forming a committee to develop and design the teachers' and facilitator's guide. The signed protocol with MoETE stipulated training 150 teachers the Perkins' training level 1, training 60 teachers the Perkins' training level 2, in addition to training 10 teachers as a TOT. So far, 124 teachers across the country were trained in level 1 of the program. This collaboration also led to a vital initiative of enhancing the MoETE professionals' capacity in monitoring and evaluation, both very important in ensuring the success of any initiative.



- The protocol being signed to coordinate the collaboration with Nida ensured the commitment and reflected endorsement of the project
- Policy makers' involvement and endorsement of the training ensured that the initiative gained credibility
- A change of attitude amongst the high ranks in both ministries and also among the different level staff members transformed the view and expectations of children with multiple disabilities
- The collaboration with the MoSS ensured that the centers and the nurseries that provide the early intervention were included in the initiative.
- The collaboration with the Ministry of Education meant that the adequate educational opportunities for children with multiple disabilities was ensured in the model classes in the schools.
- The creation of the database for all centers and nurseries that provide services to children with multiple disabilities meant that the ministerial support will reach different regions.

#### 4. Financial Investment in the Cause

Training teachers and facilitators was a giant step towards achieving the goal of teaching CwMDs, but this goal would not have happened without the resources that make this training, and the education of CwMD happen.

One major resource, without which none of this would have happened, was the financial support provided by “DROSOS FOUNDATION”, who believed in the importance of the cause of CwMD and their right in accessing educational opportunities. A cause that very few entities would consider financing, knowing that it is a challenging cause and one that is not guaranteed for success.

It is worth mentioning that the acceptance of Ayadi to be funded by DROSOS FOUNDATION, as a proposal that is one of its nature serving CwMDs, came after several efforts and declined attempts by Nida Society from different entities, and with long history and years of working with Children with Disabilities (CwD).

In terms of resources, one of the main products of utilizing the resources was the creation of “multi-sensory” rooms in the centers that deal with CwMD. These multi-sensory rooms need expensive equipment but transform the learning experience of CwMDs.

Equipping 14 classes to be model classrooms to meet the needs of children with multiple disabilities.

Another resource that was vital for the success of the initiative was the human capital: those who received the training not only became catalysts of change but also became the trainers of other facilitators and teachers.

The focus on building capacity became an important resource and outcome of this initiative: 2 students of one of the National Universities enrolled in the training course and they were chosen because of their excellence. This means that there started to be an investment in university students to have a caliber of university graduates who are trained in education of CwMDs.



#### Resources that were Implemented:

- Financial support from Drosos Foundation
- Financial Resources: multi-sensory rooms, and model classrooms
- Human Capital
- Capacity Building

## I. Monitoring and Evaluation

One of the main factors that contributed to the success of “Ayadi” initiative was the very consistent and thorough M&E system that was put in place. One facilitator commented that he appreciated the fact that after the training ended, they could videotape any training session and send the video to the experts in “Nida” who would give feedback and advice.

Another important factor that contributed to the monitoring and evaluation is the creation of a support network that was instrumental in offering advice and feedback from different practitioners. Facilitators and teachers were also encouraged to engage in self-monitoring and evaluation by recording their own sessions and watching all the sessions at the end of month to identify what went wrong and what went well.

The fact that the Ministry of Social Solidarity includes monitoring as part of the plan for the education and training of CwMD, made the monitoring an integral part of the process. In order to make sure that there is regular M&E, a manager was appointed in each city to review on a monthly basis the work of the different centers. Of special importance is the M&E of the centers that received the training.

One facilitator mentioned that she seeks advice through a zoom call from the experts at Nida, they addressed the problems faced by children, who have multiple disabilities. They send over the data relating to the children, and they ask for advice and ask for suggestions that will facilitate the training of the CwMDs.

One facilitator commented, “currently, all of our sessions are recorded and at the end of the month we watch them all and go over them, because the specialists can have positive comments that we can generalize and begin incorporating or maybe negative comments that we should amend. This was something that we did before but now the attitude of the therapists changed. Previously, some facilitators viewed this as a personal attack, but now they see it as an opportunity for improvement”.

Another important aspect of the training is that it taught participants how to carry out needs assessment, and to plan intervention accordingly. It also taught them to monitor, evaluate, and thus, plan for the long term. In addition, it taught participants to “self-evaluate”.

The training modeled to the professionals working in the field how to evaluate the effect of the program through carrying out a pre-test and a post-test. It also taught them to conduct baseline studies to gather evidence to create a database to include all organizations specialized in a certain type of disability, also university professors, special education therapists, specialists, etc.

One government official said that after creating this database, the aim is to evaluate the services provided and the credentials of the therapists and facilitators, at the level of the nurseries and centers, the governorates, then across the country. They have an assessment tool that covers all levels, from management, infrastructure, competence of workers, intervention, and rehabilitation programs.

In addition to the M&E toolkit designed through the ministry, an internal framework in Nida Society was developed. At the beginning of the project, a baseline report was developed, along with the design of an M&E framework, a toolkit, and a software, to ensure progress, efficiency, and effectiveness are tracked and documented, overtime.

The development of the framework took 6 months, with a series of workshops with the Nida team, and facilitated by an external evaluation consultant. The participatory process of developing and designing the toolkit, was one of the key factors that made the tools relevant to the Egyptian context, that tailored tools for the MoETE and MoSS partners, differently.

**The toolkit included different tracks:**

- “Profiling”, such as Selection Criteria for Trainers Checklist, Interview Guide for Trainers, Introductory Form for Trainees, Ongoing Baseline Questionnaires for Teachers and another one for Facilitators, and a Self-Assessment Video Analysis Form.
- “Project Performance”, such as Training Satisfaction Evaluation Form, Classroom Follow Up checklist.
- “Project Documentation”, such as Meeting Minutes Form, Registration Sheets for Events.
- “Program Logic”, a space to document data collection tools, the project logical framework, and indicator matrix, with the different versions reviewed.
- “Reporting”, an Activity Report Format to make sure data is collected and documented consistently and structurally in events.



- Monitoring and evaluation is a skill that was learned after the training.
- Support groups and online methods were used to help teachers and facilitators evaluate their own progress.
- Supervisions from specialists post training is crucial for sustained change.
- The MoSS was prompted to create a database of all centers and nurseries that exist.
- An internal M&E system helped Nida document the change and progress that resulted in project activities.

## J. Attitude Change on all Levels: Top-Down and Bottom-Up

Facilitators mentioned that their whole attitude towards CwMD changed because they learned how to deal with them. Lack of knowledge makes facilitators feel ignorant.

They commented that the training caused short-term behavioral change. It can be said that attitudes change, involving service providers, families, community, and government.

On the part of service providers, they used to disregard CwMDs and not consider their abilities to be suitable for education or training. The training reversed their view of CwMDs since it was proven to them that there are means to communicate, to reach those children, and to train them.

As for parents, the training provided them with evidence that their CwMDs are capable of learning. Before this training, they used to take them to the center as a place where the children will spend aimless time in. After the training, parents were keen to take their children to the centers because they started to notice the impact that appeared on their children's experience. In addition, parents also felt empowered because the training not only improved their view of their children but also the training made parents important partners in their children's education.

Moreover, those who worked in the Ministry realized that the training provided CwMD with golden opportunities. Because of this evidence, they started to plan how to spread this experience to all centers and nurseries.

This also impacted University professors in some of the public universities where they adopted in their curricula areas that promote education and training of CwMD. Because of this, one University professor took the training and 2 students joined the training and made good use of the training. This in turn can encourage other students to go along this path, since it will provide good training that will open up many possible career choices. One University professor did not believe that the 50-hour training was not enough to change the prevailing attitude amongst teachers.



**Attitudes changed drastically and thus expectations of children became much more positive, this was noticeable in:**

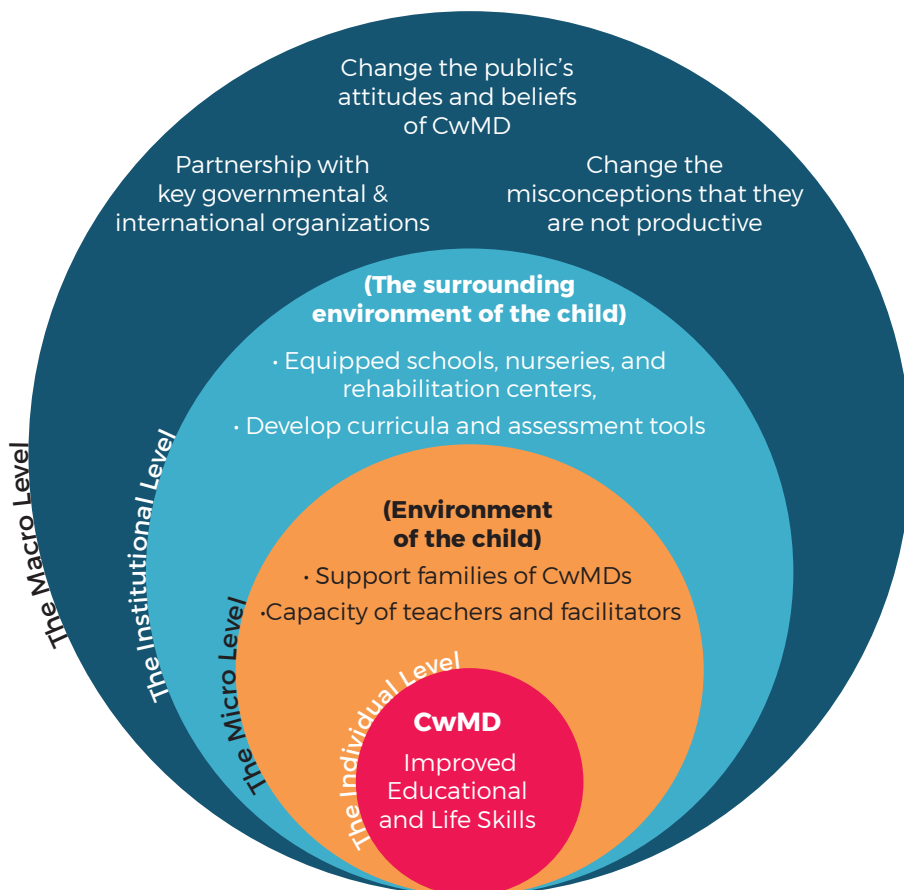
- Teachers, facilitators and service providers
- Parents
- Ministry officials
- University Professors
- Students

## K. Multilevel Interventional Model

Upon analyzing the factors that contributed to the noticeable success of “Ayadi” initiative, it became apparent that the approach adopted by Nida in their implementation followed a multilevel approach. An approach that is very close to “Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological approach”. This approach was an important and vital factor in the success of the initiative. At the center of the initiative and the main focus of it was the child with multiple disabilities. The main target was to provide this child with adequate education, and training. The main aim was to provide the child with multiple disabilities a chance to function in society, and potentially have a role in it.

“Ayadi” intervenes at multi-levels of the ecosystem to provide better access to education and life opportunities for CwMDs. At the individual level, is providing CwMD with improved educational and life skills; at the micro level, which is the direct environment of the child, with which he/she deals with on a regular basis, they offer support for families of CwMDs, build capacity of teachers and facilitators with theoretical and practical experiences, knowledge and skills to better equip them to deal with them. Moreover, at the institutional level, which is the surrounding environment of the child, “Ayadi” establishes equipped schools, nurseries, and rehabilitation centers, develop curricula and assessment tools to provide better educational opportunities and explore the children’s best potential. Finally, at the macro level, “Ayadi” partners with key governmental and international organizations to advocate for the rights of CwMDs, as well as working on changing the public’s attitudes and beliefs of CwMD, and changing the misconceptions that they are not productive and that they deserve better opportunities and quality of life.

### Ecological Model



## L. Unanticipated Outcomes

The “Ayadi” initiative proved to be an incredibly successful initiative that fulfilled its main objectives in an efficient way.

This was evidenced by the noticeable progress amongst CwMDs, the empowerment of parents and their growing belief in their children’s future prospects, also evidenced by teachers’ and facilitators’ changed attitude and newly gained confidence that they have acquired knowledge both practical and theoretical that will enable them to teach children regardless of the severity of their needs, and thus provide them with opportunities for their future. Policy makers and other professionals, University professors and students started believing in their abilities and in their future opportunities.

Furthermore, the Ayadi initiative did not only fulfill the objectives that it set out to achieve but managed to achieve other very important objectives. Of those unanticipated outcomes was that it created new job opportunities for the University students, for the facilitators. It changed the view of CwMDs to the extent that the inclusion in mainstream schools for CwMDs became a possibility, since they were given adequate intervention and preparation for literacy and numeracy.

The whole training procedure and the need for M&E created a concept of experts, transferring knowledge and evaluating the performance of fellow facilitators. This was done through using video recorded sessions, WhatsApp groups and any other means that would provide the feedback needed by the facilitators.

There was also outreach to parents and children who do not live close to Nida, and thus, would receive training even though they live far away. There was even a training for a child who lives in a faraway country.

Ministry professionals realized the importance of training for any person who is going to train CwMDs, to the extent that they started advocating for the importance of a licensing procedure that will require anyone working with CwMD to have a special license that ensures they are adequately trained.

One very important outcome that was not anticipated was the transformation in some of the cultural concepts; for example, children with disabilities do not have any future prospects and that it is not a waste of money or time to educate them. It was also apparent that there were no gender differences and that the training of children with multiple disabilities became a priority regardless. To illustrate, financial allocation almost became equal for boys and girls, for those with disabilities and those without disabilities, because they started to see the effect of an evidence-based type of training.



#### Unanticipated outcomes:

- Job opportunities for facilitators, University students.
- Possible inclusion of CwMD.
- Outreach to parents and children who cannot physically be there
- Monitoring and Evaluation became a norm when carrying out the training.
- Proposal to offer a license to anyone who is going to be working with children with multiple disabilities.
- Dispelling long held beliefs that are wrong and unfair.

## M. Directions Moving Forward

As outlined above, many factors contributed to the success of this initiative. The initiative's success was reflected in the success of the children with multiple disabilities who were trained and who were the focus of this whole initiative. Despite this great success and the huge strides that were taken, the mission to provide access to education and quality of life for CwMD has just started through the efforts made by Nida and with the support of all partners. In order to complement the efforts done, and to sustain impact, the following are key directions with the main partners of the Initiative:

- ◆ Scaling up with more equipped classes to be mainstreamed special schools, accompanied by trained teachers, on how to use the tools, assess the child, and having long-term plans for the children's development.
- ◆ Continuing with the advanced level training provided to facilitators, supported by continued follow up and supervision to provide the necessary technical support, is key to developing the capacities of service providers and caregivers.
- ◆ Expanding collaboration with universities and teacher training colleges to include more trained people at different levels and exploring offering a certified diploma for the education of CwMDs.
- ◆ Having plans for a clear educational path and potential career path to prepare for full integration into Society, and setting a benchmark for different kinds of disabilities and their potentiality with market value chains.
- ◆ Staying informed about the needs and status of CwMD and their families to be able to cater to their needs.
- ◆ Being part of coalitions and working groups to help with keeping CwMD on the advocacy efforts agenda.