

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Supplement



# Acknowledgements

## History of the Curriculum:

The present publication represents a series of additional resources that can be used as complementary to the other Aflatoun International materials.

This resource has been built based on a consultation with partners.

All resources have gone through a process involving partners and stakeholders with expertise in pedagogy and curriculum development as well as thematic technical expertise in the focus areas.

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# THE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SUPPLEMENT

## Welcome!

Welcome to the Community Engagement Thematic Supplement. This supplement was created in response to the Aflatoun International's network demand for a specific material that focuses on engaging the community. This material is based on the vision that children, their families and communities have an important role in contributing to matters that are relevant to them. The goal of this supplement is to provide children, families and other members of the community with the tools to participate in their community, including home, school, educational spaces, neighbourhood and wider community.

This supplement is divided into two sections:

1. Activities that children can do with their families
2. Activities that facilitators can conduct with families

We hope that this curriculum takes you on a journey that you find stimulating and rewarding.

## Background

It is known that educational programmes are more successful when they are developed in consultation with all the relevant parties. In the case of the Aflatoun programmes, the most important parties that contribute to the success of programme implementation are children, young people, families, facilitators, teachers and the wider school community.

The right to information is instrumental to the realization of people's empowerment, and strengthened civic trust, and for promoting the equality of all groups in society, including women and indigenous peoples.

UNESCO, Brisbane Declaration<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/networks/global-networks/aspnet/about-us/strategy/the-four-pillars-oflearning/>

- Please refer to the introductory section of the supplements package for more details.

Ideally, school or educational spaces should have no boundaries with families and the wider community. All should try to inform and involve each other to improve the development of children and young people. To make this a reality, it is important to acknowledge the value of the input of each of the actors.

In order to contribute to the development of the necessary competences to engage in the community and considering the 21st Century Competencies that fall under the four pillars of learning, the Community Engagement supplement contributes to developing the following competences:

- **Critical thinking** – “Critical thinking involves accessing, analysing and synthesizing information, and can be taught, practised and mastered. Critical thinking also draws on other skills such as communication, information literacy and the ability to examine, analyse, interpret and evaluate evidence.”<sup>2</sup>
- **Problem-solving** – “To resolve a problem it is important first to define it and understand its constituent elements. Also, it is necessary to identify the resources and strategies needed to solve the problem (e.g., skills related to information literacy, scanning data and extracting relevant information). Critical thinking skills are fundamental to this process. Learners must also be able to apply the appropriate tools and techniques effectively and efficiently and persist in the face of obstacles. Flexibility and self-direction are therefore critical to problem-solving.”
- **Communication and collaboration** – “Strong communication abilities including the capacity to express thoughts clearly and persuasively both orally and in writing, articulate opinions, communicate coherent instructions and motivate others through speech, are highly valued in the workplace and public life. Additional positive outcomes (of cooperative learning) include reductions in stereotyping and prejudice, a greater appreciation of diversity, development of social skills and improvement in the quality of learning environments.”
- **Creativity and innovation** – “The capacity to ‘break new ground’, invoke fresh ways of thinking, put forth new ideas and solutions, pose unfamiliar questions, and arrive at unexpected answers further advance innovation and creativity. Successful individuals will be those who possess the creative skills to envision a strategy for making the world a better place for all.”

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<sup>2</sup> P21, 2007a; Redecker et al., 2011 as cited in UNESCO 2015, Cynthia Luna Scott, The Futures of Learning 2: What kind of learning for the 21st century?, p.4

- **Social and cross-cultural skills** – “Good social and cross-cultural skills are crucial to successful functioning both in school and life. These skills allow individuals to interact effectively with others.”
- **Personal responsibility, self-regulation and initiative** – “The high level of interaction and teamwork expected in the twenty-first-century workplace has heightened the importance of personal qualities among learners. The ability to self-govern is at the heart of twenty-first-century learning.”
- **Seek and value diversity** – “It involves respecting and valuing the concerns of people and cultures different from their own and acquiring the social and cross-cultural skills to seek out the views of others. It also involves building awareness of and appreciation for differences among individuals and communities.”
- **Teamwork and interconnectedness** – “Among the critical qualities in a diverse twenty-first-century world are the ability to foster interdisciplinary cooperation and the global exchange of ideas to counter potential discrimination due to the origin, gender or age.”
- **Intercultural competence** – “The ability to understand and communicate with each other across cultural barriers is a fundamental prerequisite for making societies work. All learners need to acquire intercultural competence. For this reason, intercultural education, which aims to develop and enhance this ability, can make an essential contribution to peaceful co-existence and inclusive learning.”

Overall, this topic brings the need to develop prosocial and interpersonal competences. Children, young people and communities should be able to interact with each other with understanding, and respect for diversity by being able to express their ideas and concerns in respectful ways. The key to being an active and effective participant in community matters is to know how to communicate and remain involved in community matters. This should guide the practice of the facilitators and teachers that implement this supplement.

## What is community engagement?

Community engagement may mean different things to different fields of work. According to the International Association for Public Participation, the core values for Public Participation are:

- Public participation is based on the belief that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process.
- Public participation includes the promise that the public's contribution will influence the decision.
- Public participation promotes sustainable decisions by recognizing and communicating the needs and interests of all participants, including decision makers.
- Public participation seeks out and facilitates the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision.
- Public participation seeks input from participants in designing how they participate.
- Public participation provides participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way.
- Public participation communicates to participants how their input affected the decision.

In the context of the Aflatoun programme, community engagement is defined as the means to have the participation of children, families, school community and wider community in the education of children. Aflatoun aims to involve all actors in the implementation of the programme as well as in decision-making processes that are relevant to them about the Aflatoun programme. Aflatoun strongly believes that community engagement should be used to improve Aflatoun programmes and the experiences of children and their communities.

Community engagement can have different levels of involvement, from being merely consultative to being engaged in decision making, to the ultimate level of partnership where all actors are involved in implementing the programmes.

## Who is part of our community?

The child or young person is part of a wider community. The different levels of development and interaction are directly related to the different spaces and individuals that the child relates to on a daily basis. Inspired by the bioecological model of Urie Bronfenbrenner, we have developed an explanation of the different ecosystems where children are included and what level of engagement is possible (see next page).

“American psychologist, Urie Bronfenbrenner, formulated the Bioecological Systems Theory to explain how the inherent qualities of a child and his environment interact to influence how he will grow and develop. Through his Bioecological Theory, Bronfenbrenner stressed the importance of studying a child in the context of multiple environments, also known as ecological systems in the attempt to understand his development.

A child typically finds himself simultaneously enmeshed in different ecosystems, from the most intimate home ecological system moving outward to the larger school system and the most expansive system which is society and culture. Each of these systems inevitably interact with and influence each other in every aspect of the child’s life.”

The Urie Bronfenbrenner model organizes contexts of development into five levels of external influence. The levels are categorized from the most intimate level to the broadest.

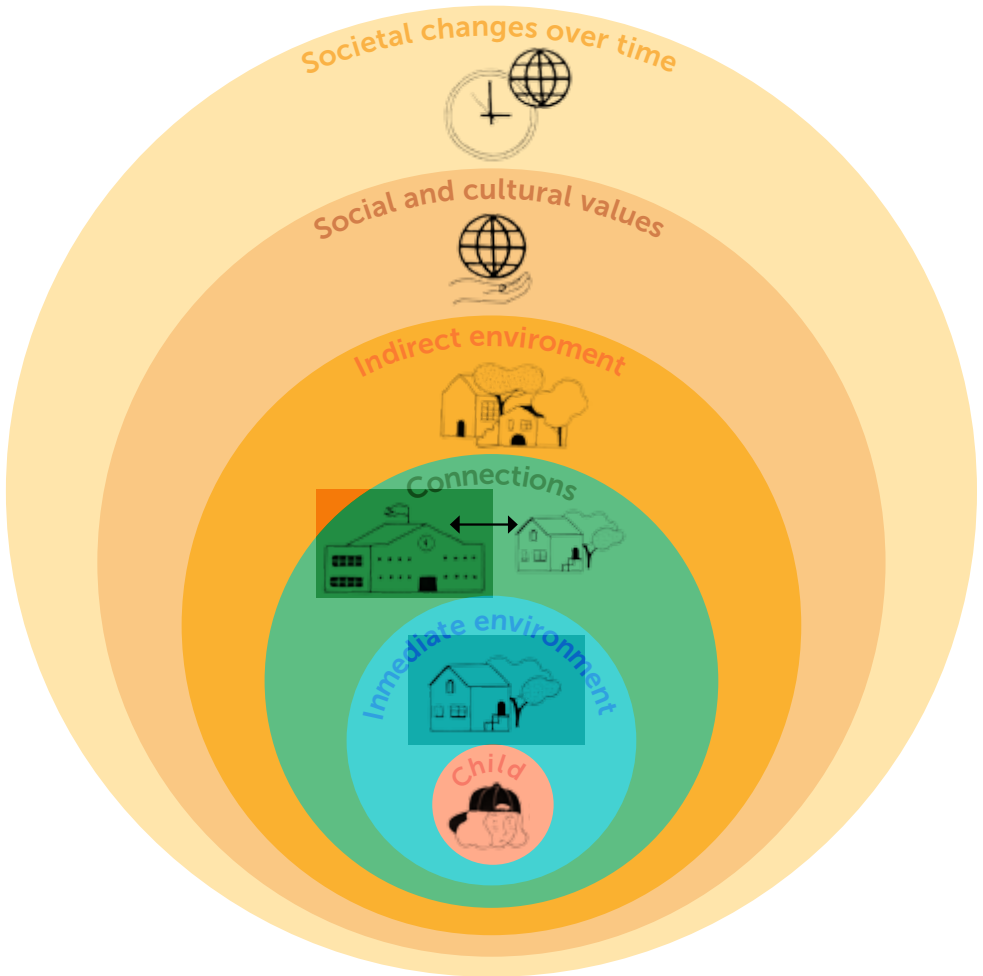
The ecological model of Urie Bronfenbrenner<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Psychology Notes HQ, What is the Bronfenbrenner Ecological Systems Theory?, 2013, available at: <https://www.psychologynoteshq.com/bronfenbrenner-ecological-theory/>



Ecosystems where the child is inserted and examples of community engagement <sup>4</sup>



<sup>4</sup> Diagram and explanation based on Psychology Notes HQ, What is the Bronfenbrenner Ecological Systems Theory?, 2013, available at: <https://www.psychologynoteshq.com/bronfenbrenner-ecological-theory/>

**Ecosystems where the child belongs and relevant individuals and institutions within it**

**Examples of level of engagement**

This is the dimension of time which influences change and constancy in the child's environment. For example, change in the family structure, address, parent's employment status, in addition to society changes (economic cycles, wars).

Changes overtime don't have a direct relationship with engagement of the child or community. It is simply determined by external factors.

Largest and most distant collection of people and places that still influence the child. For example, cultural patterns and values, beliefs and ideas as well as political and economic systems.

Government creates policies for education. They may create children committees and involve them in decision making. They may also involve families in the same committees.

Interaction between two or more settings. They may not be directly related to the child but affect him/her [e.g., parents' workplace, larger neighborhood, extended family, etc.).

The community listens to children and to families' opinions. Both boys and girls, men and women are welcome to participate equally in community activities.

Interactions between the different immediate environment settings (e.g., home and school; peer group and family; family and religious space).  
Individuals: Children, families, peers, school community.

Families and teachers/facilitators understanding about children's education. Families and teachers/facilitators develop solutions for children's education. Children's peers visit the child's home.

Home, school, daycare, peer group or community environment.

Children are consulted for decision making; Children are asked regarding the topics they would like to learn; Children organize activities for the community.

Child/young person with a specific sex, age, health condition, status, educational level.

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

## **Activities**



Part I.

Activities **for families:**  
Implemented by Children



Part II.

Activities **with the**  
**community**

## Part I.

# ACTIVITIES FOR FAMILIES: IMPLEMENTED BY CHILDREN

These activities require the facilitator or teacher to have a moment to explain the activities to children. The implementation of the activities will happen at home. After children implement these activities, some time may be needed to report back to the group with the help of the facilitator/teacher.

Keep in mind that there is no age range for the activities done by children with families as each child will implement it according to their level of development. If you consider the activity to be too easy or too complex, feel free to adapt it.

# 1. WHO ARE WE?



## OVERALL OUTCOME

Identifying what makes participants and their families unique.



## MATERIALS NEEDED

Flipchart paper and markers or blackboard to write notes if needed.



## DURATION

10 minutes



## INFORMATION FOR THE FACILITATOR

This should be one of the first activities to be done about Community Engagement. Note: This activity is important to understand the immediate environment of children. It will also raise awareness in themselves about the characteristics of their families and the things they like and dislike.

1. Ask participants the following

- If they know anything about their family when they were younger
- What habits they have
- Things they like or dislike

Do a quick brainstorm with their answers and note them on the blackboard or flipchart. Wrap up by saying that each family is unique, and we all have families with specific stories, habits, likes and dislikes.

2. Tell participants that they will do an activity related to the characteristics of their family at home. Ask them to collect information about the following from their family members:

- Their routines – for example, what time they usually wake-up, what do they do, who is around for each part of the day, etc.
- A famous family story – for example, during a special celebration one family member danced in a very funny way, and everyone remembers. If they don't have a story, they can also share a song they like to sing when they are together
- Likes and dislikes – what are the things that their family likes to do, and what are the things they don't like to do. For example, they love to tell stories to each other; they don't like to eat certain foods.

3. Remind the participants that they can note down what they discussed with their families because they may be asked to share voluntarily in the next session.

4. In your next session, ask a few participants to share what they discussed. Remind them that each one of us, each family is unique and that is a very special thing. Sometimes there are things we don't like or that we like, and that makes us unique as we all come from different families.