

# The Creative Hub

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**Project Duration:** July 2014 – July 2016

**Population Served:** Egyptian and American university students

**Constituents:** Academics, students, religious leaders

**Geographic Area Served:** Egypt & U.S.A.



*Creating connections between Egyptian and American university students through online media*

## Background and Overview

According to UN statistics, almost half the world's population is under the age of 25, nearly 40% of which live on less than two dollars a day. However, by the end of 2013, mobile-cellular subscriptions reached a penetration of 89% in developing countries. Internet user statistics are also surging, with 2.7 billion (39% of world population) expected to be online by the end of the 2014. It is undeniable that youth access to information is unprecedented, regardless of social class or income. A 2012 census in India revealed that half of homes have phones but no toilets.

Despite this unprecedented connectivity, there still remains a tremendous gap between the East and the West; lack of information, misinformation, stereotypes and fear of the 'other' are omnipresent in our very globalized world. Almost half of Americans have no awareness about international affairs, and only 18% report speaking a language other than English.

As for Egypt, Internet access is generally cheap and available, even in the smallest and most remote villages. In 2011, the Internet became a powerful tool for political activism and civil society. However, it is only very recently that Egyptians started using the Internet as a means to discover the world and become familiar with other cultures.

## Problem Statement

*In 2012, 79% of Egyptians expressed unfavorable attitudes toward the U.S.*

*In 2013, only 36% of Americans had a favorable view of Egypt (a drop from 60% in the 1990s).*

We recognize that media, which largely reports biased political and government viewpoints, plays a crucial role in shaping our perceptions of other nations and their people. Without person-to-person interactions, everyday citizens lack fundamental understanding of everyday life in other parts of the world. The Creative Hub believes that access to the Internet can be used to bridge this gap in understanding between cultures.

## **Project Goal**

The aim of The Creative Hub is to mobilize discussions and scholarship, which have been localized within academia, and through various means, translate them to the vernacular. How do we get communities involved in these pluralistic issues of politics, aesthetics, and activism? Our video-based media campaign will engage American and Egyptian university students in a common dialogue that centers on contemporary issues spanning politics, media, culture, and human rights. Through ongoing interviews with students and by using social media as a platform, The Creative Hub's videos will add the authentic young voices that are distinctly absent from traditional media.

## **Main Objectives**

1. Create a connection between Egyptian university students and their American counterparts through access to online videos about day-to-day as well as controversial issues;
2. Provide a platform of self-expression that will be compiled and broadcast on various online channels;
3. Create a virtual dialogue among Egyptian and American young people through our online platforms such as Facebook and YouTube.

## **Project Activities**

1. Produce 10 videos per year, featuring Egyptian and American university students responding to questions on a variety of topics ranging from what they have for lunch to their take on generation gaps and gender disparity.
2. Manage our online platforms (website, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube Channel), facilitate discussions about the videos between Egyptians and Americans, and encourage viewers to submit their own questions and videos.
3. Hold viewing parties where university students gather to watch The Creative Hub's videos, share impressions and engage in critical discussion.

## **Expected Outcomes in Year One of Implementation**

1. 10 videos will be successfully edited and shared through The Creative Hub's social media outlets: YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, and website. Each video will feature one question that is asked of both American and Egyptian university students. Each video will feature 8-10 students, depending on the quality of recorded content;
2. 500 shares/likes of videos via The Creative Hub's social media outlets;

3. Hold 5 informal viewing parties in the US and Egypt to gauge interest in pilot videos and generate content; feedback will inform the production of future videos;
4. Presentation of The Creative Hub's video collection to 2015 Gabr Fellows via a viewing party.

## **Expected Impact on U.S.-Egyptian Relations**

- Increased engagement between American and Egyptian university students on a wide range of multidisciplinary and cultural topics;
- Greater understanding of cross-cultural youth opinions and experiences;
- Critical and open discussions of contemporary issues facing American and Egyptian societies.

## **Conclusion**

We believe there is a hunger for truth and connection among the younger generations in both Egypt and The United States. The Creative Hub will foster this desire by sharing their voices, opinions, concerns, questions, and hopes in an accessible, informative, and entertaining online community.