



STEP TOGETHER

Training Center

*Recognized by
Section for Inclusive Social Development, Dornach*

Final Report

Three-Year Collaborative Training Program

Supportive Education and Inclusive Social Development
Step Together (Lebanon) & SEKEM (Egypt)

2023 - 2026

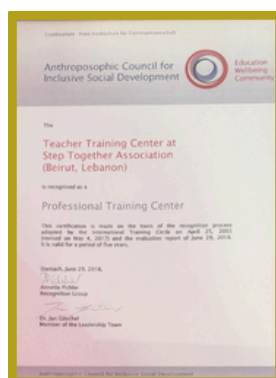


SEKEM

Introduction

This report presents the completed three-year collaborative training program between Step Together Community, Lebanon, and SEKEM Community, Egypt.

The training program was designed, delivered, and certified by Step Together, a training center accredited and recognized by the Section for Inclusive Social Development, Dornach, within its mandate to provide accredited professional formation in *Supportive Education and Inclusive Social Development*. The program was developed with a strong commitment to strengthening professional capacity and educational networks within the Arab world.



Through this collaboration, Step Together contributed to the development of regionally grounded training pathways that foster knowledge exchange, professional solidarity, and the sustainable growth of supportive education and inclusive social development across Arabic-speaking contexts. The training was implemented as a context-responsive, community-based program. All courses were specifically adapted to the educational, cultural, linguistic, and social realities of the SEKEM community and were delivered in Arabic to ensure accessibility, depth of engagement, and meaningful integration into participants' daily professional practice.



Institutional Context: Step Together Community

Step Together is a non-profit organization based in Lebanon that provides educational and therapeutic services to children and adults with special needs. Step Together offers an accredited professional training program grounded in holistic human development, reflective practice, and social responsibility. The program is based on a trinal approach that integrates theory, practice, and art as its three main pillars. As a training institution, Step Together combines internationally recognized holistic foundations with contextual adaptation, ensuring that professional formation remains responsive to local realities. Within this collaboration, Step Together held responsibility for program design, coherence, delivery, assessment, and certification.



Institutional Context: SEKEM Community

SEKEM is a well-established community-based initiative in Egypt, committed to sustainable development. Rooted in education, agriculture, culture, and social development, SEKEM fosters learning environments that integrate ethical values, community engagement, and human dignity. Within its educational framework, SEKEM includes a special education department that serves young children and adults with special needs. Within this collaboration, SEKEM served as a learning community seeking to strengthen inclusive educational practices within its classrooms and enhance the quality of its special education services. It functioned as a partner institution, providing the professional context in which educators engaged, applied, and reflected upon the training content.



Shared Vision and Rationale for Collaboration

The collaboration between Step Together and SEKEM was grounded in a shared vision of education as a transformative and socially responsible practice. Both institutions emphasized holistic human development, inclusion, and the cultivation of ethical responsibility within educational and community contexts.

Rather than transferring a fixed curriculum, the training emphasized universal human values such as empathy, responsibility, reflective thinking, and social cohesion. This approach allowed holistic principles to be explored and applied in culturally sensitive ways, respectful of linguistic, religious, and social contexts.



*Dr. Waltroud Merhej
Dr. Rim Mouawad*



*Dr. Ibrahim Abouleish
Dr. Hilmi Abouleish*

Program Leadership

Step Together was represented by Dr. Rim Mouawad, a member of the Training Council of the AISD, a Special Education Consultant, and Board Chair of the Step Together Association. In this role, she provided strategic leadership and pedagogical guidance throughout the collaboration, ensuring alignment with international standards in supportive education and inclusive social development. Her contribution focused on safeguarding training quality, supporting professional development pathways, and strengthening the integration of reflective and ethically grounded practice within the program.

This collaboration was initiated following a visit by Mrs. Mona Abouleish to Step Together, after which a first training session for teachers with Dr. Rim was planned and conducted at SEKEM in May 2022. Subsequently, a structured and comprehensive training proposal was developed, presented, and formally approved. During the three-year training period, SEKEM was represented by Ms. Regina Hanel, who oversees the educational work at SEKEM and played a central role in the successful implementation of the training program. She served as a key facilitator and consistent point of reference throughout all training phases, supporting coordination, continuity, and contextual adaptation. Her ongoing presence ensured that the training remained closely connected to the realities of the SEKEM community, fostering participant engagement, reflective dialogue, and the practical integration of the program's content into daily educational and community practices.



Training Team

The training team at Step Together, Lebanon brings together lead members with over 17 years of experience dedicated to supportive education and inclusive social development. Their work is grounded in holistic and inclusive pedagogical principles, including Waldorf education, supportive education, therapeutic practices, and community-based learning. Through their extensive experience working with individuals with diverse learning profiles across different age groups, the team supports educators in developing responsive, inclusive, and developmentally appropriate practices. Below is the biography of each trainer:

Abeer Hammoud is the Community Residential Lead at Step Together, where she supports the holistic wellbeing and autonomy of adults in a therapeutic community setting. She holds a certificate in Curative Education. She is also a certified Rhythmical Massage Therapist and certified School Health Practitioner from the United Kingdom. Abeer is a member of the Circle of Delegates of the Section for Inclusive Social Development. Abeer trains caregivers and educators in practices that promote healthy rhythms, holistic nourishment, emotional balance, and supportive relationships. As a local trainer, she guides teachers and caregivers in integrating holistic therapeutic approaches that foster dignity, inclusion, and quality of life.

Sandra Rouhana is the Educational and Cross-Sectional Lead at Step Together, where she oversees the implementation of high-quality educational services and supports the development of individualized learning plans for children and adults with diverse learning profiles across various programs. She works closely with educators to create responsive learning environments that nurture academic, social, emotional, and developmental growth. Sandra is currently completing her PhD in Special Education and holds Certificates in Curative Education and Emergency Pedagogy. She has attended lectures and workshops at the Goetheanum, Switzerland and in Kassel, Germany, and is a member of the Circle of Delegates of the Section for Inclusive Social Development. Sandra actively contributes to both local and international teacher trainings that promote reflective practice, inclusive methodologies, and child-centered approaches. Her work focuses on strengthening educators' capacity to support each learner's potential and foster meaningful participation within the school and the wider community.

Samar Boulos is the Vocational Lead at Step Together, where she develops and oversees programs that foster social, functional, and vocational skills for adolescents and adults of diverse abilities. She holds a BA in Sociology and certificates in Curative Education and Emergency Pedagogy. Samar designs individualized vocational plans that promote autonomy, dignity, and meaningful participation in community life. She has attended lectures at the Goetheanum, Switzerland and in Kassel, Germany, as well as craft workshops, enriching her capacity to support individuals through creative and experiential approaches. As a local trainer, she works closely with educators to strengthen teaching practices and support each adult's unique developmental path.

Carole Tedy is the Waldorf Kindergarten Lead and Teacher at Waldorf Beirut, where she supports the holistic development of children in a mainstream educational setting. She applies art-based, movement-based, and nature-centered approaches that nurture creativity, emotional wellbeing, and social awareness. She holds a BA in Psychology and a certificate in Curative Education. She also has a certificate in Waldorf Early Childhood Education. Carole previously worked with adults with special needs in educational settings, supporting their social integration and development across multiple domains. This experience has strengthened her commitment to inclusive education across different age groups and abilities. She has attended lectures and workshops at the Goetheanum in Switzerland and serves as a local trainer at Step Together, guiding educators in implementing holistic educational practices.

Program Structure and Design

The training was structured as a three-year accredited program, with each year consisting of five modules. Each module was intentionally structured around two interrelated and mutually reinforcing dimensions: **self-development** and **methodic–didactic** practice. This dual structure reflects a core understanding that professional competence in supportive education and inclusive social development arises from the continuous interplay between inner development and outer pedagogical action.

The self-development dimension focused on reflective practice, biographical inquiry, and the cultivation of professional self-awareness. Participants were guided to observe their own thinking, feeling, and willing, and to engage consciously with their personal and professional biographies as a foundation for ethical responsibility, presence, and pedagogical sensitivity. This inner work was regarded as essential for developing authenticity, judgment, and freedom in educational practice.

The methodic–didactic dimension addressed pedagogical, therapeutic, and inclusive educational approaches through concrete observation, planning, and application. Participants worked with developmental principles, educational strategies, and practical methodologies that support diverse learners in inclusive settings. Emphasis was placed on translating holistic educational insights into responsible, context-sensitive practice within classrooms, therapeutic spaces, and community environments.

Together, these two dimensions formed a coherent learning process in which inner development informed professional action, and practical experience, in turn, deepened reflective understanding.

In parallel, art classes connected to the training content were developed by art therapists working at SEKEM and/or Heliopolis University. Participants engaged in artistic practices such as form drawing, speech formation, eurhythm, movement, painting, and clay work. Art was approached both as a path of self-development and as a pedagogical method supporting professional practice.



Program Overview

Year I

Module	Methodic-Didactic Course	Self-Development Course
M1	Introduction to Waldorf Curriculum	The Six Fundamental Exercises
M2	Neurodevelopmental Disorders	Holistic Nutrition
M3	Child Observation	Understanding Holistic Biography Work
M4	Classroom Management and Positive Discipline	Understanding Human Development
M5	Assessment Approaches and Individualized Learning Plan 1	Therapeutic Work on the Twelve Senses

Year II

Module	Methodic-Didactic Course	Self-Development Course
M1	Holistic and Individual Learning Plan	The Microbiome and Nourishment of the Whole Human Being
M2	Harmonizing Home and School	The Healing Pathways
M3	Methods of Teaching in Inclusive Settings	The Four Temperaments
M4	Waldorf Curriculum 2	Philosophy of Freedom 1
M5	Supportive Education for Special Needs1	The Threefold, Fourfold, and Sevenfold Nature of Human Being

Year III

Module	Methodic-Didactic Course	Self-Development Course
M1	Multidisciplinary Work and Coteaching	Destiny Learning and Learning Processes
M2	Supporting Developmental Foundations for Learning	The Seven Conditions of Self-Development
M3	Supportive Education for Special Needs II	The Philosophy of Freedom 2
M4	Practical Advice to Supportive Curative Education	The Three-fold Social Organism
M5	Inclusive Educational Frameworks	Man's Consciousness and Evolution of the World

Program Requirements

Academic requirements included guided readings, written assignments, applied professional practice, peer dialogue, and formal presentations. Participants documented their learning through a cumulative professional portfolio spanning the full duration of the program. The program initially enrolled over 30 participants. Due to the sustained academic rigor and professional commitment required, participation gradually decreased. The program concluded with 17 participants who successfully fulfilled all academic, practical, and reflective requirements.



Digital Learning Platform as a Space for Continuous Study and Reflection

To ensure continuity, coherence, and depth of learning across the three years, the training was supported by a Moodle learning platform. The platform functioned as an integrative pedagogical space that brought together course presentations, selected readings, and reference books (in English) related to each module, structured assignments, and guided reflective practices. Clear assessment rubrics accompanied the assignments, supporting transparency, consistency, and depth in reflective and applied work.

The Moodle platform enabled participants to access learning materials throughout the training period, engage with content at an appropriate rhythm, and document their individual learning processes over time. At the same time, it allowed trainers to follow participants' progress, review submitted work, and provide informed follow-up and pedagogical guidance. In this way, the digital platform supported a sustained learning dialogue, bridging in-person encounters with ongoing study, reflection, and professional practice.



Pedagogical Approach and Methodology

Learning processes emphasized careful observation, artistic engagement, professional dialogue, and continuous reflection. Participants were supported in translating theoretical insights into daily professional practice within SEKEM’s educational and community contexts, ensuring relevance and applicability.



Assessment, Portfolio Work, and Certification

Assessment within the program was formative and integrative, emphasizing sustained engagement, reflective depth, and professional application. Participants completed written assignments, practical documentation, and reflective studies connected to their professional roles.

A central requirement was the development of a comprehensive professional portfolio documenting learning processes, applied practice, artistic work, and personal-professional growth. Participants also delivered a final presentation demonstrating integrative understanding and professional maturity.

Upon successful completion of all requirements, participants received formal certification issued by Step Together in accordance with its accredited training framework.



Program Completion and Recognition

The completion of the three-year training program was formally marked by a celebratory event held in February 2026, honoring the 17 participants who successfully completed the full training cycle. The event acknowledged achievement alongside perseverance, commitment, and inner development, bringing the training journey to a meaningful and respectful conclusion.



Professional Growth, Human Dimension, and Community Impact

Across the three years, participants demonstrated significant professional growth, including strengthened observational capacities, deeper pedagogical insight, and increased confidence in inclusive and supportive educational practices. The training fostered a professional learning community characterized by trust, shared inquiry, and mutual responsibility. Conducted in Arabic and rooted in the lived realities of the SEKEM community, the program strengthened both individual practice and collective institutional capacity.

Measurable objectives were clearly defined for each module and systematically assessed at its conclusion, with key performance indicators (KPIs) used to evaluate achieved outcomes and identify areas requiring further development. A comprehensive report for each module was prepared and shared with the SEKEM community, ensuring transparency and continuity.

In parallel, participants were invited to complete structured evaluation forms via Google Forms at the conclusion of each module. These evaluations provided systematic feedback on the relevance and clarity of the module content, the effectiveness of the trainer's delivery, and the overall learning experience. This process ensured that participants' perspectives were actively integrated into the ongoing development of the program, fostering a culture of reflection, accountability, and continuous improvement. The feedback collected informed subsequent planning and refinement, supporting the maintenance of high training standards and responsiveness to participants' professional and contextual needs.

As the first training of its kind conducted in the Arab world, this program served as a pilot initiative, laying a foundational model that invites further development, contextual adaptation, and expansion within the Arab educational context. For Step Together, as an accredited training center, this initiative represents a significant milestone in strengthening its role as a recognized provider of accredited professional training in supportive education and inclusive social development.

Building on this pilot experience, Step Together is well-positioned to replicate, adapt, and expand similar accredited training programs, thereby contributing to the long-term strengthening of inclusive educational practices, institutional capacity, and professional standards within the broader regional context.



Voices of the Participants

The following section presents selected reflections and feedback from participants, offering qualitative insight into their learning experiences and professional development throughout the training. These perspectives highlight the personal, pedagogical, and institutional impact of the program, as expressed in the participants' own words.

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There were many valuable elements in the training that we were able to take and apply directly with our students in the classroom, as well as in our work with parents. I am grateful to my colleagues for sharing their experiences so openly, which enriched our collective learning and deepened the value of the training. - **Abou Baker**

“

I have attended many trainings before, but this one offered an important opportunity to pause and reflect more consciously on what I had previously learned. What stood out most to me were the rich and meaningful discussions shared among the participants. The six basic exercises were profoundly important to me on a personal level and supported me greatly in finding inner balance and strengthening my self-awareness. - **Mohamed**

“

I have been part of this course for three years, and I can say with certainty that I am a different person today compared to when I first began. For me, the world feels like a better place now because I have gained meaningful knowledge on how to actively contribute to making it better for children. The trainers created an environment where I did not feel like a passive trainee receiving information, but rather an active participant capable of creating knowledge and developing my own understanding. - **Racha**

“

The training covered many important and meaningful aspects, and I found it deeply interesting. I especially appreciated the quality of the interactions between the trainers and colleagues, which created a supportive and inspiring learning environment. It opened new windows for me and created genuine opportunities for both personal and professional growth. The training addressed many topics. While some were familiar to me, what was new was the professional, practical, and engaging way in which the training was delivered, allowing for deeper understanding and integration. - **Hana**

Challenges and Growth Opportunities

The training initially began with 30 participants; however, due to the high level of commitment required, including extensive readings, written reflections, artistic engagement, and comprehensive portfolio documentation, the number gradually reduced to 17 participants. This process allowed a highly dedicated and motivated group to emerge, consisting of participants who demonstrated strong professional commitment and readiness for deep personal and professional development.

Limited internet connectivity and varying levels of technological proficiency among participants presented practical challenges, particularly in accessing materials, participating in online components, and submitting assignments. Despite these difficulties, participants demonstrated a strong sense of collegial support, assisting one another in overcoming technical barriers and ensuring that all members were able to complete the program requirements successfully.

The limited availability of relevant resources in Arabic, combined with participants' varying levels of English proficiency, required careful adaptation of training materials. The training team worked closely with SEKEM participants to translate, refine, and develop accurate Arabic terminology that faithfully conveyed key educational concepts, contributing to the creation of a more accessible and contextually relevant professional language.

The training was conducted during a period of regional conflict and war, which added emotional and logistical challenges. Trainers based in Lebanon continued their work while living under conditions of instability and uncertainty, demonstrating strong professional commitment to the program and its participants. During particularly difficult periods, the SEKEM community expressed sincere solidarity through supportive communication and extended a generous offer to welcome the trainers within their community if needed. This gesture reflected the depth of human connection and the shared values of mutual care and responsibility that underpinned the collaboration.

Sustainability and Next Steps

SEKEM and Heliopolis University have expressed a commitment to sustaining and building upon the foundation established through this three-year collaboration. In alignment with this shared vision, a proposal has been developed to support the professional advancement of senior participants who have demonstrated sustained engagement and dedication through their work at SEKEM and their participation in various training programs.

This next phase aims to prepare selected senior educators to gradually assume leadership roles in delivering the training program in supportive education and inclusive social development. With continued mentorship, guidance, and support from Step Together, these emerging trainers will be empowered to carry the program forward, ensuring its continuity and further adaptation to the evolving needs of their educational and community context. This approach supports long-term sustainability by fostering local ownership, strengthening institutional capacity, and cultivating a new generation of professionally formed educators committed to inclusive and holistic practice.

