

After many months of work, the [KOLLENA](#) team is very excited to announce the launch of its online resource directory for families of children with special educational needs and disabilities. By pooling together information in one virtual location, Kollena's mission is to facilitate the search process for parents, families, and caregivers.

At Kollena, we recognise how overwhelming and excruciating the journey can be. It can be very difficult (and at times impossible) for a large proportion of our community to find information on what is available as help and support here in Egypt. Questions - like 'who is a good therapist?', or 'where do I go?' or simply 'where do I start?' - highlighted the need for a virtual space capable of providing answers to interested families.

The directory aims to provide access to a comprehensive listing of support services available all over Egypt, including centres, associations, and special schools. It also aspires to foster a trusting community where all participating members lend a helping hand to one another through synergy and collaboration. In addition to the directory, the website has a registration option for accredited professionals and associations to sign up with. After verification, their profile is uploaded and added to the listings available. Visitors to Kollena will be able to search by specialisation, age group, type of service and location.

Nazli El-Leithy, co-founder of Kollena, strongly believes that everyone needs to be confident that they can get to where they want to be with the proper support. "Anyone with a disability deserves to be reassured that every stage of the support journey will be manageable".

Kollena's online directory makes this possible by linking parents and caregivers to relevant service providers and specialists. "I have learnt that it is essential for everyone to come together and do better for individuals in need of support," adds Malak El-Batran, co-founder. "It is for all of us to do".

Hence, the name Kollena (Arabic for 'all of us') was born. It is the brainchild of two passionate special needs specialists, Nazli El-Leithy and Malak El-Batran.

Originally a PricewaterhouseCoopers Strategy consultant for M&A in the MENA region, Nazli shifted careers to the special educational needs and disability field in 2019. She is now a learning skills development specialist for children with developmental disorders and learning difficulties. Nazli created the online platform "A Different Story by Nazli" in 2020, as an attempt at promoting disability awareness and shifting society's perceptions of 'difference' from stigma-based language to acceptance.

Fuelled by an internal drive to create inclusive spaces and opportunities for children with learning difficulties, Malak dedicates her work towards supporting these children in a national language school in Egypt. Malak believes that it is imperative to bring all of us together to provide better support for parents raising children with abilities that are different from what our society knows.