

Written Report

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Changing Cairo: A new playground for Neighbouring Public Government School

We live in Egypt; the land of the pharaohs and ancient pyramids, of the lost tombs and hidden treasures. At present, this great country is one of the fastest developing countries in Africa where its capital, Cairo, is home to 19.5 million people and welcoming 390000 people each year. This monstrous growth has brought many struggles to the growing city such as insufficient housing (leading to the rise of slums), poor basic infrastructure (clean water, electricity, sanitary), high levels of unemployment, and in all, an uncontrollable rising level of poverty. Furthermore, education and schooling is an issue the country has always been fighting with and due to this growing poverty, more and more children are forced into dropping out of school in order to help make money for their family.

As we had all been living in Egypt for several years now, we had all experienced and seen the striking poverty of the city and the many children running the streets when they should be in school. As we were students ourselves, we understood the value of school and knew how lucky we were to be receiving high quality education. We thought it was unfair that the children on the streets had been born in the misfortune of poverty while we had not and this was what motivated us to create this project. We wanted to address this issue of education and inequality and make a difference in the community we lived in. We had heard of a small government school about 5 minutes from ours and upon visit, we were struck by how poor the facilities of the school were, most strikingly the playground which consisted of merely cement and dirt. We were all shocked at how there could be such a big inequality gap between our school and this school (the Ahmed Zewail school) even though they were only minutes away from each other. We wanted to do something about this and as we knew it would be impossible to change everything about the school, we decided to focus our project on renovating the playground of the Ahmed Zewail School so that the children attending would be in a safer learning environment and hopefully have a better schooling experience.

In order to purchase a variety of sport facilities and games like basketball hoops and new footballs for the children, we had to find a way to raise money. We did this by organizing a Pizza Week at our school (which had never been done before) where students ordered the pizza they wanted and we would deliver it to them on 3 possible days. We thought that this was the most challenging part of our project as it required intensive planning. We had to design order slips and then ensure they were successfully distributed to all secondary students (approximately 300 students). Furthermore, we had to design posters to stick around school, advertise our project in assembly and morning briefings to make sure we would get the maximum number of participants taking part in the project to make the most profit. Collecting the money and keeping track of all the orders taken (hundreds) was a very challenging and required us to work very well collaboratively in order to get the tasks done efficiently. We learnt many new skills such as managing money and creating a profit, as well as working our way around problems we encountered collectively. Another thing we had to do was get in contact with the restaurant (we ordered from Papa John's) explaining the goal of our project and from this we managed to get a 20% discount so even more money would be raised. Despite the very hard work pizza week required and the hours of prior planning and organizing, it was very successful and over 6000 LE was made which will all be going towards renovating the Ahmed Zewail School.

Overall, taking part in this project made us grow both individually and as group as many valuable skills were learnt throughout. In total, the project lasted around one month and just recently finished 2 weeks ago. Although we have ordered the new items purchased from the money(two basketball hoops, basketballs, footballs, chalk, and a badminton set) they have not yet arrived and so we have not been able to see the children's reactions to the purchases- we hope to do so next week and that many of them will benefit from them. In all, the journey has truly been an amazing experience and we hope that as a group we managed to make an impact (even if just a small one) on the education and schooling in Egypt.