

Through this project, we aim to instill a mindset of entrepreneurship upon the children. Children in impoverished areas of China are not getting access to education about entrepreneurship and we believe that the mindset of entrepreneurship will allow the children to have the incentive to take agency over their actions and lift themselves out of poverty. Most charities only give children money and that, fundamentally, is now what they require in principal. What they require is the opportunity to lift themselves out of poverty and make something for themselves. We are giving them the opportunity to become little entrepreneurs. The issue is that the children do not have access to education about entrepreneurship and are not given set opportunity. What we plan to do is give them such an opportunity so that they will have a mindset in which they will want to take opportunities at entrepreneurship.

Our plan, in its essence, is very simple. The main problem with children in poverty is that they are not incentivized to take agency over themselves and become entrepreneurs as they are not exposed to such education. We believe they should be and as a result, we will give them the chance to succeed. What we are offering is the opportunity for children in remote areas to be able to become little entrepreneurs.

Firstly, we will collect LEGO from people within our school and people in other international schools of Tianjin (who are more fortunate than the children). Schools such as Wellington College International Tianjin, Tianjin International School, International School of Tianjin and Maple Leaf International School. The people who attend these schools are much more fortunate than us and we are able to contact them because members of our group used to attend these schools so it is easy to be in contact with them. Because we have a lot of LEGO, that LEGO becomes a storage problem if we do not actively play with it. We believe that people will be willing to donate LEGO as it is a storage problem and they may also do it out of the goodness of their hearts. Additionally, this solves the problem of recycling as LEGO would not be wasted or thrown away but instead recycled and put into better use.

Second, we clean and sort the LEGO according to color and bring it to children who are in need. The way we plan to contact with the locals is via a local charity called e+, which has collaborated with local schools and orphanages before. In rural schools and orphanages, children are not intact with The area we will be going to is called JiXian, where the curriculum does not touch upon entrepreneurship and the children are not encouraged to pursue set career path. We teach the children the basics of how to build LEGO and let their creativity take them wherever it may go. They would have to submit a business plan too, including a set of goals they want to achieve, a coherent plan on how they are going to achieve it and when they are going to achieve it by. They should also produce design drawings of the LEGO product they will make. After they finish building the LEGO, we collect it. There will be checks on their progress every fortnight so that they are on track.

Thirdly, we hold a fundraiser in collaboration with a charity organization (the charity organization we will be reaching out to is called e+). This organization is a local charity that helps with low income families in rural areas of Tianjin. People will pay for the LEGO the children built and they will receive any relevant income. As they receive the income, they are being rewarded for their own work and as a result, they are more likely to pursue set career path in the future.

This will incentivize children to want to create something and teaches them to become innovators and little entrepreneurs.

This project will continue in the years to come and we will give the children goals afterwards as to how to become effective entrepreneurs and innovators.

Now I am going to depict the process of how we collected the LEGO and how we used them with the children. Our first trial of collecting LEGO in our school (Wellington Tianjin) did not go as expected. Although we tried to encourage our schoolmates to donate LEGO for our project, we only got very few boxes. In order to get the adequate amount that can be used to help the children, we decided to use monetary reward as an incentive. After considering the activities that our peers seemed to enjoy the most, we arranged a sleepover in our school which required the participants to make a 50-yuan (about 6 pounds) donation. With these as our money source, we made a successful second trial in our school, as well as in other international school mentioned above.

The second step was trying to reach the primary school students. We intended to carry those LEGO toys to their schools but this was rejected because of various reasons, a part of it was that the teachers in Jixian seemed reluctant to allow us to occupy their students' class time which was going to be used as middle school entrance exam preparation. Therefore, alternatively, we used our leftover money to hire a school bus to invite the children here to Wellington, where they spent a experiencing day wearing Wellington uniform and had Wellington lunch. More importantly, following the guidance of our team members who are genius in LEGO making, they showed their creativity and even inspired many of us. Most of the students took their unfinished work back home and returned to us with many masterpieces that was ready to be sold in the e+ charity.

Before the students were introduced to the charity members and arranged their own business, we had a lesson together sharing our own basic entrepreneur skills in our opportunity of various business competitions. Basically, we borrowed the business template from our economics teacher and inspired them to fill the blanks in by themselves. Ideas about how to perform in different sections (such as advertising and making the booth) were gathered so that we almost made sure that they were ready for their first entrepreneurship experience.

After a whole afternoon of charity event held in the school, each and every children managed to sell at least one piece of LEGO to their buyers and according to them, the LEGO products reminds them of how inspirational children can be. Back to the topic, the children are now familiar of the whole process of earning money by making products from scratch and selling the products themselves by various advertising techniques. Almost all the children found that this event is beneficial for them and most of them would like to carry the project on or undergo other business programs if opportunities were given, which is exactly our intention – instilling a mindset of entrepreneurship to the children, make them get rid of the feeling that “entrepreneurship” is unapproachable and only suitable for the gifted few as they used to think so. Therefore, they are more likely to change the fate of their own, pulling their families out of poverty in the future themselves using this valuable mindset.

After our first event with the children from Jixian, we are planning to have a second event in May or June using the LEGO we have left with other junior school students who showed interests in our project during our program.

We have prospects in the future that, besides LEGO, we can get people involved with other forms of business, such as selling books or performing famous Chinese plays in the local theatres... Overall, both the children and we are grateful to the GSL initiative since it has inspired us to make so many changes on our lives and we are determined to keep making changes on more people's lives, to reward the society with equity and opportunity.