



Project name: Reform the Norm

Project member names and Roles: Yara Chami: Team Leader, Nour Jeha: Social Media Manager, Marwan Uwaydah: Information organizer and analyzer, Serene Dbouk: NGO Coordinator, Lea Cortas: Head of Communications, Emesa Melki: Fundraising, Budgeting, and Design

Global Goals addressed in our project: Sustainable Cities and Communities, Responsible Consumption and Production, Climate Action, Life Below Water, Life on Land, Partnerships to achieve the Goal

Number of hours spent on project: 55-60 hours

Partners and Beneficiaries:

- The Lebanese community (as a result of the improved environment)
- Restaurants and markets like Fakhani Supermarket, one of the biggest supermarkets in Beirut which relies heavily on delivery services (they will cut costs by using reusable tote bags and get good publicity for eco-friendly choices)
- IC athletics (will organize a basketball tournament for fundraising through which students will re-engage with sports and athletic clubs)
- The local producers we buy ingredients from to use in our bakery “The Forbidden Alley” for fundraising (especially Bfresh, a new local, family-owned provides fresh produce)
- Suppliers of environmentally friendly materials in Lebanon (such as EcoSouks)
- Partnered with LiveLoveRecycle and Recycle Lebanon who agreed to provide containers and transportation of the sorted wastes initiated by recycling and composting in restaurants, to the American University of Beirut, where it can be properly treated.



Aim of our Project

In our project, we tackle the issue of irresponsible waste production in supermarkets and restaurants in Lebanon. Unfortunately, Lebanese citizens and therefore Lebanese companies are unfamiliar with sustainable methods of production. Lebanon has a long history of poor waste management, such as burning or burying waste. Therefore, taking the first steps to more forward-thinking and ingenious ways of decreasing waste will benefit the environment and society.

We will guide restaurants and supermarkets in the direction of sustainability by providing them with sustainable alternatives to wasteful materials, such as pasta instead of plastic straws. We will provide supermarkets offering delivery service with tote bags that they can reuse to diminish their plastic bag production. We are also supporting the suffering Lebanese economy by purchasing our eco-friendly products (tote bags, pasta straws...) from small local businesses interested in helping Lebanon’s environment. We hope to prove that sustainable methods of production can be economically beneficial as well as environmentally sustainable.

Our project will not only reduce the waste of local companies in the food business but will hopefully inspire others to take similar action and join the sustainability trend.



Main Experiences in our Project:

I. Successes and Failures

We were first planning on working with Palestinian refugees to provide the kids with suitable land to spend free time and to incorporate physical activity into their everyday lives. However, due to the very limited available spaces in Palestinian camps an due to many “ political” factors, we were only able to locate a couple of available lands, however, their owners were eventually reluctant for the project as they felt their small lands can be more useful to them in the coming periods, and so we were unable to secure a space, and thus we moved onto another project.

Similarly to most initiatives, we faced a few obstacles. Figuring out which firms were willing to work with us to replace wasteful materials with eco-friendly ones was rather tricky. With the current economic crisis, businesses’ main goal is to continue normal economic functions and are not really looking to expand or start new initiatives. Many of them are trying to avoid bankruptcy, and so we are limited to larger companies in our reformations who are not suffering as severely as smaller ones.



Nonetheless, we are determined to make a change in our community. The team possesses an outstanding dynamic. Besides being hard-working, we are full of excitement and great ideas that got realized through motivation. Communication has proven to be relatively easy; our WhatsApp group relays information and thoughts. A notable meeting was the first one we had with the manager of two “Fakhani” branches, a large supermarket chain in Lebanon. This first chance to partner with a company truly pushed our project forward as we now had an achievable goal as the first step to our project. We have learned that companies in our community are not as resistant to cooperation as we assumed. With clear goals and an appealing case, companies such as “Fakhani” were willing to work with us.

The biggest obstacle would be the current COVID-19 pandemic which, unfortunately, has put our project on hold due to the mandatory lockdown in Lebanon. After securing the money through “The Forbidden Alley”, our next step was to provide restaurants and supermarkets with sustainable alternatives to wasteful materials (such as pasta straws, tote bags..). However, we could not proceed with this step due to the current circumstances.

II. Main Achievements and Future Undertakings

- After contacting several possible suppliers to buy the cloth bags from, most of them were very expensive until we found Eco-souks which is an environmentally and economically friendly shop and secured them as our suppliers.
- We met up with the owner of two Fakhani branches, and he has agreed to substitute the plastic delivery bags into reusable cloth bags that would be returned to the delivery person.
- Our fundraising strategy was successfully initiated through our online bakery “The Forbidden Alley”
- Our project has been published in a reputable German newspaper, Süddeutsche Zeitung, in a section reserved for young activists to raise awareness for our project.
- We have received school permission to put on a friendly basketball tournament in which all proceeds will go to our project.
- To communicate our message, we will continue to contact individual firms and will work with them on a case-by-case basis, while promoting their changes on social media as soon as the pandemic ends.



I. Funding and Fundraising

We fundraised around \$1000 through our bakery, “The Forbidden Alley”, on Instagram where we sell cookies and pies with all profits going towards this project, using local ingredients to support our economy. We also planned a fundraising mini-basketball tournament in which students will pay to enter. We hoped to benefit the sports community through this, but the event was canceled due to COVID-19 and school closure.

Learning Outcomes

This project taught us the importance of resilience and determination to inspire change in our community; with the hardships from our first project, we knew the importance of pursuing another area that could benefit society. We also developed motivation through our second project, never giving up when restaurants opposed our suggestions. Lastly, teamwork was proven to excel throughout this competition; we realize that without the pitch of each individual of our group, the project would remain incomplete.

Final Thoughts

Our project tackles a common problem. Eliminating as much plastic waste as possible allows us to live in a more sustainable planet, ready to be passed onto future generations. We encourage anyone interested in preserving the well being of Earth, ourselves, and other organisms to combat the world's dependence on plastic. All it takes is to contact restaurants or markets and ask the owners if they are willing to substitute plastic materials with more sustainable ones. If they were to reject your offer, then at least you tried, which is better than deciding not to take part in an initiative aiming to stabilize our carbon footprint.

