

## **Threads for Change** - Girls for Global Gains

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Our project, which works on using recycled materials to assemble a kit which we can send out to elderly women, lonely women, and young children, who are often the most vulnerable within society, in order for them to assemble a small piece of fabric, or a large one with the materials we will send them, into a sheet full of different patterns, textures and colours of fabric, which we will then sew on to duvets in our school which would otherwise be thrown away, in order to produce a quilt which we would donate to a homeless woman, a woman who has recently found a council home, or a woman who has been a victim of domestic or sexual abuse. We would do this by contacting homeless charities such as 'Shelter' based in Reading, Women's Aid and Refuge. The aim of our project is to promote girls helping girls, and this is something we are planning on taking further and fostering internationally. In terms of the Sustainable Development Goals, we have chosen to focus on No Poverty, Good Health and Wellbeing, Gender Equality, Responsible Consumption and Production, Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions.

Through our project, we have all become more aware of those who are vulnerable both worldwide and in the local community. We have developed the skills to reach out to formal organisations and religious groups, and have fostered the necessary relationships and have discussions with different members of the community, such as the Head of Charities at our school, a local female bereavement group at a church, contacted all pupils and staff at our school to make donations of fabric, as well as smaller independent shops.

We have incorporated the different goals we chose to focus on in, our project in different ways:

Firstly, we have targeted Goal 1 – No Poverty:

We have targeted this goal by the donation of our quilts to those that are poverty stricken. The donation of the quilt free of charge saves these people from having to spend money purchasing a new one, increasing the amount of money saved in their pockets. The donation of something as sentimental as a quilt can also have a positive effect which shows either the homeless or vulnerable person that they are valued within society, therefore compelling them to view their self-worth as something which is more important than they think.

Secondly, we targeted Goal 3 – Good Health and Wellbeing:

We have primarily targeted the part about good mental wellbeing. We think that the sewing and quilting part of the project, which would have been sent to many young and old throughout the country by post, both in and out school and our community. Also, if COVID-19 had not prevented this, we would have contacted Shelter in Reading and ReadiFood to help identify those who would benefit. Certain places like care homes and groups such as the one at a nearby church could have been sent large orders. This will not only help improve the share of skills and spread joy through sewing, but the sparking of a new hobby will also help improve the elderly or lonely people's mental health, and also further down

the line our gift of a quilt will have a significant impact on those that receive the gift, reiterating my earlier point about the improvement in recognition of self-worth.

Thirdly, we targeted Goal 5 – Gender Equality:

Our target of impacting women directly, specifically those who have been stripped of their safety and human rights. We believe that through primarily targeting women, we can bring a sense of community and support for those women who need it most in society. By reaching out to both elderly and lonely women and through sending them a kit to complete and return to us, we believe we are helping to create a community of likeminded people who are working together in order to help others in situations worse than their own. We also hope that young children will be able to learn vital life lessons from others in our community as a result of being part of helping the most vulnerable in their society's.

The next goal we decided to target was Goal 12 - Responsible Consumption and Production:

We believe that by sourcing materials that would otherwise be thrown into landfill, we are helping to create a greener environment and more responsible consumption. Furthermore, we have planned to use recycled and recyclable materials to create the kits that would be sent to the elderly or lonely women and young children in order to produce responsibly. This means that we will avoid using plastic and non-decomposable materials. We believe that in this day and age it is crucial to both produce and consume responsibly as much as possible, in order to protect the environment and prevent landfill sites from overflowing.

Finally, we targeted Goal 16 - Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions:

We aim to create a community through our project which is welcoming and inclusive to all, no matter what background they come from. By joining together a quilt, made by elderly or lonely women, which can be donated to vulnerable women, who may be homeless or victims of sexual abuse, we believe we are promoting a nature of 'girls helping girls', protecting one another from abuse and discrimination at all levels. We hope that this will be a significant improvement in the wellbeing and mental health of many women and young girls.

In the development of our project, we have faced a number of challenges and setbacks, with the biggest by far being the outbreak of Covid-19 in the UK. Due to the nature of our project, working with the elderly and vulnerable has become near impossible for us. We are unable to make contact with elderly homes, but on a positive note it has allowed us time to reflect and improve on our ideas.

We would love not only to send out kits to elderly and lonely women, but to also host events which bring members of the community together to complete their kits whilst chatting to others and having a cup of tea. We believe this could have a massive impact on the mental wellbeing of many of these women. In addition, we would love to visit children at school and help them to develop crucial life skills through the completion of their kits, which can then be joined together to donate to a woman who is in desperate need; reminding her that she is supported by other women, at a time where she may be facing an all-time low. In addition, the outbreak of Covid-19 has dispersed us from school, which has

meant that we have had to work together remotely to continue the development of our project, which has at times, been extremely challenging.

In order to develop our idea into being the most beneficial possible - it can be for the whole of society; we have worked with several members of our community, including charity representatives who have close connections with elderly homes and homeless shelters to get a good grasp on how best to run our project. Through the feedback we have received, we have made modifications to our project, including the use of fully sustainable resources and incorporating the loneliest members of the community together to help with their wellbeing, as well as dispersing kits to help the homeless or vulnerable women. We have adopted a sense 'girls helping girls' as we believe it will help to create a sense of community and network of support.