



Christmas Education Support Project

As a group of seven classmates and best friends, we created the "Christmas Education Support Project - CES project". When we have started discussing the project in September, our team knew we wanted to focus on reducing inequalities in education. There were many ideas for achieving this lofty goal - a concert, exhibition, or other charity show. We did not know at all how the COVID-19 pandemic would develop, so we focused on a safer, but no less efficient way: selling handmade Christmas cards. At the beginning of October, we contacted with Magdalena Szrejder - the president of the local foundation "Mogę się uczyć", which has been co-running the Osimlai school for six years. Together, we set a goal: to help expand the school so that children can return to school in line with the restrictions introduced by the Kenyan government. We also wanted to unite and exchange experiences with Kenyan youth and make the community in our city aware of the existing problem. In our project, we pursued seven global goals:

1. No poverty.
2. Good health and well being.
3. Quality education.
4. Decent work and economy growth.
5. Industry, innovation, and infrastructure.
6. Reduced inequality.
7. Partnership to achieve the goal.



To make our engagement more efficient, we decided to divide work into two stages:

1. Fundraising: production of handmade Christmas cards - by our group and high school community in our city, followed by online and intramurally sales.
2. Collection of school supplies in primary schools in Poland and sending them to Kenya.

Our team started the first stage of work in October. We sent e-mails to stationery shops asking for collaboration and providing us with school supplies. Two companies responded positively: the wholesaler "Partner PIK sp. z. o. o" donate us four boxes of paper supplies and office articles, the "Pentel" company gave us 50 packages of pastel crayons. We decided to send all items to Kenya and make cards from the supplies we purchased. For about 3 months, each person in our group, together with family members and friends, made cards (at special meetings or during a shared dinner). We wanted to involve more people in the action of creating handicrafts - in this way we made it possible for those willing to reduce inequalities in education to do it. We have established cooperation with the community of ten secondary schools in Bydgoszcz and its vicinity. We sent emails to these schools with information, photos and a video recorded by us to promote the project. We also got into contact with our friends so that they and their classmates would join the action. In this way, we were helped by a very large community of people of our age who are aware of the problem of inequality. We were also contacted by the organization "OHP w Bydgoszczy", which wanted to help and provided us with handmade cards. In addition, we involved individuals from universities in Gdańsk, Łódź and Poznań and especially Bydgoszcz - because our campaign was under the patronage of "Wydział Technologii i Inżynierii Chemicznej Uniwersytetu Technologiczno - Przyrodniczego w Bydgoszczy".

Initially, we planned to sell cards at the urban Christmas market in Bydgoszcz. We were able to do this by the Municipal Office we contacted, but due to the pandemic, all Christmas markets in Poland were canceled. As soon as we received information about the cancellation of this market, we decided to sell cards online. We decided that we had to publicize the action in the media. Our event reached 6,282 people. Together with the supporting foundation we decided how online sales should look like. The first cards with numbers appeared on our Facebook and Instagram on November 16. Each post contained link to payment or transfer details (these were immediately transferred to the foundation's account) and further instructions. After selecting the card, sending us its number and confirmation of the transfer in a private message - we waited for the address data to which we should send the card. Over the next few days, we sent the handicraft. We were selling for 8; 10; 13; 15 zlotys. The price includes shipping cost - a stamp with a generated Christmas star. We added links on our social profiles - to donate in honor of the campaign. In this way, we collected about PLN 2,215. Despite numerous restrictions related to the pandemic, we were looking for ways to sell stationary. We contacted, established cooperation, and sold cards in: university "Uniwersytet Technologiczno - Przyrodniczy w Bydgoszczy", pizzeria "Farfalla", café "Parzemy tutaj" and beauty studio "Invidia". We also contacted the ecological fair "Frymark", which was held in the rules of safety - outside. The fair was held on Sundays and we were selling exactly on 6th, 13th, 20th, 27th December from 9am to 2pm. We also established cooperation with the soap museum "Muzeum Mydła" in Bydgoszcz, which organized a small Christmas market "Jarmark! O! Choinka!" We sold on weekends: November 27-19; December 4-6 and 11-13 from 10am to 6pm. We sold in so-called relay in both

places. There were two people from our group in each relay. The first pair was selling from 10am to 2pm, and the later from 2pm to 6pm – on market "Jarmark! O! Choinka!". At the Christmas market, each of us was on average in two relays. We kept a notebook in which we wrote down how much money we collected on a given day so that the entire amount was correct. When we were in two places (on Sunday we were at market and fair) - there were five people in the morning relay. We changed then between the individual points of sale, due to the low temperatures. Our team have very positive memories of every weekend in December when we sold cards. We were visited by many people to whom we not only sold cards, but also talked to them and made them aware of an existing problem that they did not know or simply did not think about. Most of humans wished us good luck and even thank us for doing this action. Each person in our group how many there are open to the world people. Every person we talked to convinced us that we are doing something good not only for the community from Osimlai school, but also for people in Bydgoszcz. We were also visited by a large group of our friends and family who helped in every possible way. We spent time not only with our team, but also with friends who selflessly joined the action. As a whole group, we are extremely grateful to them, because each of them has an invaluable contribution to this project. We also tried to publicize our action - we granted an interview to the radio station "Radio eska" and the local newspaper "Express Bydgoski". Our cards also appeared on news in local television. This stage of the action lasted practically until Christmas. In this way, we collected about PLN 6,540 (PLN 2,215 from online sales and PLN 4,325 from stationary sales). Initially, the purpose of the fundraiser was school desks, and the degree of success was number of them. Because we raised a much larger amount than our team and foundation expected, and our aspirations were growing, we received a proposal to allocate money to the classroom. Thanks to this, the results of our campaign are extremely durable, because we have built a classroom that will serve the students at this school for years. In the post-Christmas period, to raise additional funds, we organized online auctions - triptychs, wooden boxes and T-shirts signed by volleyball players. In this way, we collected another PLN 460. The total amount we collected was PLN 7,000. We also wanted to establish friendly contact and exchange experiences with students from another continent. We sent each other photos, videos, and sent "Good luck" letters to students writing exams (it is related to the Kenyan culture).

We worked on the second part of the campaign in February and March. It was a very difficult time due to the pandemic, but we conducted action in five primary schools and kindergarten. We contacted the schools and provided them with boxes for school supplies, posters, and each student received a small note to paste into the notebook. We collected a total of 166.5 kg of school supplies, including much needed ones: paper, chalk, pens, pencils, plasticine, crayons and glues, as well as music accessories. We are at the stage of organizing the shipment of school supplies to Kenya, but the pandemic situation is delaying our activities.

We went through numerous ups and downs during the project. Our group had to deal with many "closed doors" that resulted from the pandemic and the situation we found ourselves in. We worked on developing our skills in the field of art - we drew, painted, and glued elements of Christmas cards, as well as technical skills: we had to find ourselves in every situation - for example when we had to borrow a drill and screw the nails and hang posters on their own. Undoubtedly, we also developed computer skills - we created numerous videos and photo collages, as well as strengthened our strength in social media - we added numerous photos, carried out sales and encouraged people to take part in the campaign - we developed our language skills. Most importantly, we developed our personal skills - through conversation with people. We often crossed our own borders, the effects of which we noticed already during the project: we were not afraid of telephone calls and real conversation. We also learned from the project that nothing comes by itself and we must work very hard for everything. Our team learned planning, logical thinking and adapting to the situation. We also became more aware not only of the problems we are solving - inequalities in education, but also of the problems nearby in Bydgoszcz - the closure of some people to help others. We tried to make other people - our age but also the elderly, aware of global problems in line with the goals we have developed. We received many words of encouragement: "Good luck, I keep my fingers crossed for such an initiative :)", "Keep going" or "I am full of admiration and touched by this action. You are wonderful". What we can undoubtedly say about success is that the easiest way to work for it is to involve a large group of people. Without many words of support and help, we would not have been so successful. We were also motivated to work by the photos we received from Kenya - children sitting in the classroom we built and students reading letters from us. The project gave us an experience that will stay with us for years to come. Even though we are sending the report, we are not finishing cooperation with the foundation "Mogę się uczyć" and the Osimlai school. We intend to continue the project and, in the future, go to this school to see the classroom in person, meet the students, exchange experiences and culture. No one in our group expected us to be so successful and the project would bring so much to our lives. In retrospect, we are more developed and conscious young people who have made a real and lasting change in the world.

