

13 Villages Community Development Project

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Center of Education for Sustainable Development (CESD)

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“A real university for sustainable development should be from the community and to the community”

1. Introduction: What is 13 Villages Community Development Project?

By Mohammed Anwar

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is considered as the new paradigm of education that could prepare alumni in order to face sustainable development challenges. One major components of the ESD is the Community-Based Learning (CBL). CBL is an intended pedagogy that takes the learners out of classes to the community in order to link what they learn theoretically to the real life experiences. It is a step further from academia to the field in order to achieve positive change and development to the community and to the students reciprocally.

This we are going to implement in the target area of the 13 Villages in Belbeis, Sharkia. The 5 faculties of HUSD, The Alumni Association, Research Department, SEKM Schools and SEKEM Medical Center are collaborating together to achieve this promising goal. The project started officially in October 2019 by conducting a situational analysis study through many tools such as questionnaires, focus groups, direct observations and secondary data. The results of this data will figure the backbone of the action plan that we are going to collaborate with different stakeholders in order to achieve it on the ground.

HUSD student are the main catalysts for this project as all the work of the project will be done and implemented by them as part of their study and activities. This starting from data collection, data analysis, action plan and the implementation of the projects and activities in the target areas. In each faculty a team was formed to coordinate the work with the students in the 13 village project and the CESD is the entity that coordinate the project's work from Heliopolis university side.

2. What has been achieved so far?

By Elena Mieslinger

10 years ago SDF took the initiative for the first round of the 13 villages' project. Too much work has been done in the villages and many successful stories have been registered. In the last year of the second decade in the 21st century Heliopolis University decided to implement a new version of the project with support from the 5 faculties' students and staff. This will be part of the Community Based Learning approach as a vital part of the Education for Sustainable development. From the beginning of the project many activities have been conducting and this is a summary of the previous work until December 2019.

In October 2019, the project was introduced to the representatives of the 13 villages who are currently working with SEKEM by the team of CESD in the SEKEM School theatre. As a result, 21 key persons for each village had been chosen to be the key persons for the activities in the villages.

The first step of the project is the base line study in the 13 villages in order to formulate a clear picture of what we are going to do there. To be well prepared for the field work, the students of the 5 faculties of Heliopolis University got a 1-day training on the questionnaire and the cultural and traditional habits in the 13 villages.

In the pilot phase in the beginning of November 2019 18 employees of the SEKEM companies were hosted to answer the questionnaire. After this pilot phase the questionnaire had been revised again.

One week later, also as a part of the pilot phase, HU students were doing interviews with patients of the medical center and employees at SEKEM for the first time.

After that, 120 students started with the field work in the 13 villages by questioning the residents of the 13 villages. As an outcome, 650 questionnaires have been answered and the data has been collected.



Photos from the 13 villages

3. Japanese Students visiting Heliopolis University within the frame work of the 13 village project

By Elena Mieslinger

To achieve the goal of Sustainable Community Development exchange, international cooperation as well as sharing best practices is an important factor for success and it is a main component of the students' activities at Heliopolis University

In this realm, in December 2019, 12 students from Japanese university called Meiji Gakuin University visited Heliopolis University to get an experience of how Community Based learning is implemented in reality in Egypt. Before, these Japanese students had worked on similar projects in other Arabic countries such as Syria and Jordan. They visited SEKEM School and met with the team of the 13 villages' project in SEKEM. Later on they went to some of the 13 villages in a car tour facilitated by guide from the project. They shared with HU students their experience particularly during the focus groups they did in the villages before. As the second phase of the data collection will be the focus groups that will be conducted in the 13 villages.



HU students showing the Japanese students how they approached the 13 villages project



Spending a lovely time of cultural and experiential exchange with the whole group

4. Qualitative Data Coding Sessions

By Mohammed Anwar

After getting over 650 questionnaires from the 13 villages as a random sample for the entire households (around 17 % from the entire population), the students from the different faculties learned how to code the qualitative data they gathered. Dr. Ahmed El Sherpeeny; lecturer of rural development from the faculty of Organic agriculture who developed the last version of the questionnaire & Mr. Moamem Ghanem; trainer in Education for Sustainable Development conducted many sessions with HU students and staff in order to show them how to code the qualitative data in the questionnaires. The students realized how this process is really important in the data analysis of the questionnaire. Around 7 sessions were conducted in the Center of Education for Sustainable Development (CESD) premises.



Dr. Ahmed El Shirpeeny & Mr. Moamem Ghanem explaining the students how to code the qualitative data

5. Step 2: Focus Groups in the Villages

By Elena Mieslinger

There are different scientific methods to gather the data from the 13 villages in order to come up with a baseline study in these villages. The first tool was the quantitative questionnaire with some open ended questions (qualitative data) which had already been done by the HU students in the first step. These questionnaires were collected during 14 field visits to different locations in the 13 villages. The second one was the focus groups which will be conducted in December 2019 & January 2020. The third step will be direct observation which will be done by the Heliopolis University staff members.

In this phase of data collection, the focus groups will be conducted with the representatives from villages based on the families, locations, ages, jobs and gender balance. The same variables from the questionnaire will be the basis for open discussion with them. The plan is to do 10 focus groups, until now 4 were conducted in Basateen and Galfeena (2 in each village.)

6. 13 villages Schools' visits to SEKEM School's Theatre

By Elena Mieslinger

By now, there are six schools in the 13 villages; Ali Kamel Metwally (primary and preparatory, Nabeeh (primary), Abo Shaeer (Primary) and El Tahaweya (primary and preparatory). In this regard, SEKEM School at the SEKEM farm invited those schools and all of their students to come to the farm and gather at the school theater. It is the deep believe of SEKEM that by sharing best practices, they can enable the schools in the 13 villages to develop and improve the learning process for the kids living there. Having said that SEKEM School staff and students are actively involved in the project in cooperation with CESD in the field of schools' activities and capacity building for the teachers in the 13 villages' schools.

The students as well as their teachers from were fascinated by the theater performance and listened and watched carefully what the actors (students from SEKEM) were performing on stage. 2 Classes from Ali Kamel Primary School joined this visit and the administration of SEKEM School is planning to invite other classes from the other schools for more and more visits in the nearest future. On the other hand the 2 schools (SEKEM and Ali Kamel agreed that the CESD at Heliopolis university will provide a TOT for the teachers from both schools as part of sharing best practices. More information about the training and the plan of sharing best practices will be introduced in Jan 2020 newsletter.



Focus Group in Galfeena 2



Focus Group in Ezbet El Eslah (Basateen Barakat)



Teachers and students watch the theatre performance curiously