

# Helping Orphans in Alwadi

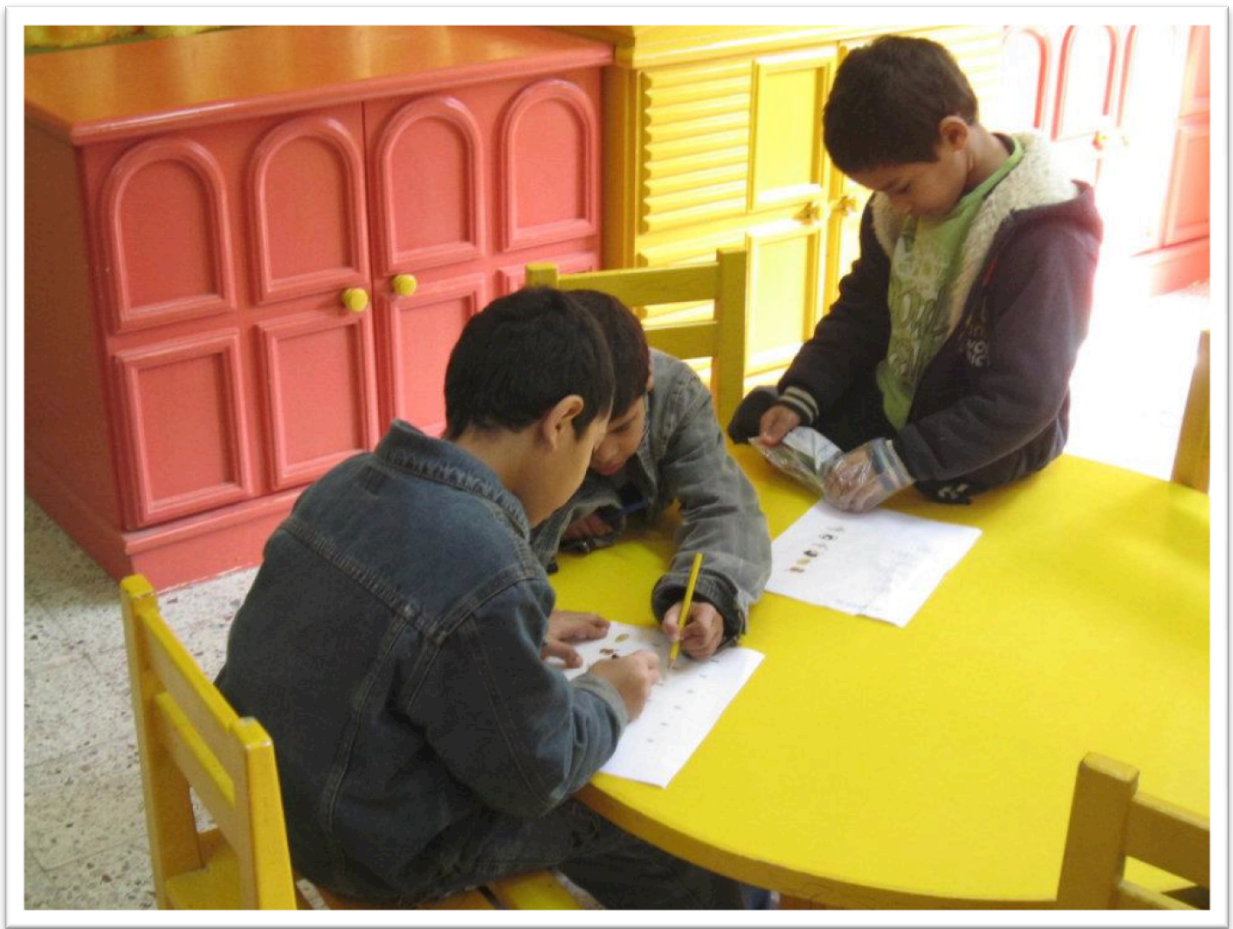
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## Service Learning Reflective Essay

The issue of orphanage is fast becoming a compelling issue, especially since countries are suffering from economic hardships and political instability. Orphanages face many challenges of finding their own identities. Egypt is home to about orphanages. So, I thought it was important for us as a Service Learning students living in Egypt, to be aware of their needs and challenges so that we can help them.

At the begging of year, I went to orphanage behind my house and school. I went there to have a general knowledge of how does such center look like, how do students behave, what those students wear...and so on. So, I just sat back of the room and helped other service-learning members. I tried to help other members by sitting next to kid who does not get the assignment. However, I only disrupted the class-learning environment, because students paid more attention to me rather than other members who were actually trying to teach kids with papers. They just randomly came to me and touched my straight hair. They treated me as if I am their Barbie doll. Even some students drew pictures of me and gave it to me. It was so sweet that these children actually care about my existence in their classroom. I was worried if these children would ignore me, but that did not happen. I also got opportunities to teach children, draw pictures, play soccer with little kids. I learnt that the orphanage lacked the art supplies and papers. So, we brought the printed handouts with art supplies like color-pencil and papers.

*Hard work is a combination of working smart and working focused. It's not about the hours you put in; it's about what those hours produce.*

After reading this quotation from somewhere, I asked myself if I was doing anything productively on the service-learning project. I mean I had some awareness of how the orphans live at the center, but was I improving the quality of service at site? Did I really make any differences in school? I mean yes I loved seeing kids and kids loved me. So, I asked Ms. Mazhar for help. She told me that perhaps I am craving for personal relationship with kids and recommended me to spend more time with those orphans. So, we as a service

learning group tried to come up with many activities that kids would actually wait every week for time with us.

We worked with the orphans from Awladi-Orphanage. Let me introduce me some of my students or perhaps my friends. Kids that I attentively worked with were Abdullah, Sophie, and Shreif. The first time I met them I was bit shocked, because they were different from what I expected them to look like. I mean one boy was wearing a colorful Adidas jacket. The other boy told me he had eaten a huge amount of chicken the previous day. I confess I was brainwashed by pictures in media depicting poor orphans on the street and poor public services in less economically developed countries. Of course, I later found out that many organizations such as CAC, our school have donated those clothes and food. I was very happy that our help was actually reaching to these children. Throughout weeks of working with them, I learned more about their lives in the center. Once we finished the lessons, kids would actually held our hands and lead us to their dorms. They would say that they sleep on this bed and show us the toys that they hid behind beds. The kids would also tell us how they had festivals with loud music on at the field.

Now it is time to explain what I taught them. I planned to teach English and Math, but we found out doing both at the same time was time consuming. So, we chose to do English and Art. Those kids did not have any Basic English exposure. Therefore, we started off with alphabets and simple vocabularies such as apple, banana, cat...etc. After teaching them some English, we always gave out handout with dots with numbers so that kids can draw lines along dots. After that, we gave out colored papers so that kids can make something out of it. After all these steps, we took out these kids to the playground and played soccer. Sometimes, kids from other rooms and ladies who were in charge of the kids came and played soccer with us.

I had around nine sessions with them throughout the year. I had a lot of fun. I learnt a lot about the life of orphans in Egypt. But I am not sure if we really improved their English. However, it was okay, because our main focus was more about having personal time with these kids. I learnt more about the

human relationship and I think kids got more awareness that some people out there actually care about them. Helping kids like these made me love Service. Most important point that I realized is that I learnt more than the kids that I tried to help. I learnt their cultural sides, their life, their education, and human relationship. This is why I love Service Learning! The CAC Service Learning program provides opportunity for us to witness, experience, and feel the impact of the lives of other. We learnt from the stories of other not from textbooks in a classroom.

*Asking why I do community service is like asking why I incorporate breathing into living.*

## **SMART GOAL**

### **Specific**

My goal is to be aware of needs and challenges of orphans in Egypt and help them. So, I am going to visit orphanage every Saturday to teach English and simple drawings.

### **Measurable**

It is hard to improve someone's language by simply meeting every Saturday. But, I will try to teach them with new lessons every week or at least have fun with the orphans. I will know that we had fun by observing how the children approach me or rather they feel comfortable being around me.

### **Achievable**

Yes it is something I really want to do. I was interested in orphan issues since last year, junior year, when I learnt about children through the National Council of Motherhood and Childhood. I think it will be challenging because of language barrier, but I am sure I can do it. Everything will work out if I approach kids with open heart.

### **Realistic**

Is it realistic? I am not sure. I don't think so, because how am I going to make a personal relationship by only meeting weekly. I will try my best. I will think more of fun activities that can actually bring kids and us much closer.

### **Timely**

We will meet every Saturday morning and always coordinate with the person in charge of the children.

## **FINAL ACTION PLAN**

TARGET PROGRAML: Orphans in Egypt

TARGET GROUP: Awladi Orphanage behind my school and house

PROJECT TITLE: Helping Orphans in Alwadi

### **GOALS:**

1. Improve basic English
2. Provide basic art programs
3. Build personal relationships

### **OBSTACLES:**

1. Motivating students
2. Getting attention of students
3. Building personal relationships

### **TASKS:**

1. Provide with diverse and fun activities such as songs and dance
2. Give colored papers after students complete their assignments
3. Play soccer in the field

## **Journal: February 4, 2012**

This was my first day to Alwadi Orphanage. I just joined the existing Korean group of students who helped with specific children since last two years. I was afraid I wouldn't be able to make personal relationships because these children already had relationships with these existing Korean students. However, kids greeted me with excitement and asked my name in Arabic. These kids were very open to strangers, which made me feel easier and feel confident in working with orphans.

Today we taught them the alphabets with words that start with those alphabets such as apple, banana, and cat...etc. These children would pronounce these words after us. Kids seemed to have fun. However, we immediately found out that these children did not understand the lessons when we told them to match the words with the pictures of cat, banana, and cat. As kids had no idea what to do with the matching quiz, they would actually look at the shapes of the words and then match with the pictures. Anyway, although these kids had no idea what the objectives of the assignment, they seemed to having fun. We also observed that children were not really paying attention to the lessons rather they were keep looking at my phone and watch. Once they found out that my phone had a touch screen, children started to play with it and repeated words like camera and photo. I got so annoyed that I just gave my phone to one of the boys so that I can go away with my phone. Although it was not right way of reacting to the situation, I had no idea what to do. Maybe, I should come up with better ways to resolve the situations.

After lessons in the classroom, we took kids outside of the classroom to the field. This is hardly a field, because it is just plain concert floor. We played soccer on the field with the kids. As we played football, girls from the other buildings that work for the orphanage came outside and asked if they could play with us. As a result, we got to play football with various people. It was entertaining.

I have to say it was a nice experience. However, I realized that we have to come up with more activities that would attract kids to the lessons. As a result, kids would actually pay attention in class.

## **Journal: March 17, 2012**

As we have observed that we needed better activities, we came up with dance movement with music. We planned to turn on music that is usually used in the kindergarten to teach words. One of the songs includes "head, shoulder, tale...etc" or "a dear a female dear...etc" (*Sound of Music*). So, on this day, we brought our radio and CD.



When we brought the radio into the class, we surely got attention of the kids. Children started to scream and grabbed our hands. Once we turned on the music, kids started to scream. We told them to follow our movements as they sing along the song. Unfortunately, children went out of control and started jumping around the classroom. We were bit shocked, because it was different from what we expected. They started to laugh at each other. As we could not continue doing this activity, we stopped the music and took out our original assignments.

After doing alphabets for four lessons, we continued with shapes and their English names such as triangle, square, and circle. Although we taught them with alphabets and how to pronounce the alphabets, these kids still did not know how to pronounce triangle, square, and circle...etc. Anyway, we kept doing what we were supposed to do.

As we have finished the learning, we went to the field again. This time, I tried to play with the kids who did not participate in football, but rather in play ground with toys. I did not want those kids to feel left out. This time the kids in the playground tried to sit on my shoulders and told me to stand up. I realized that these kids liked riding me. They had a lot of fun.

#### **Journal: April 14, 2012**

After a failed attempt to bring a new exciting activity, we came up with the idea to motivate the children. We were going to motivate the children by giving them colored papers after they finished working on their handouts. Then one of us would teach the children how to make animals with colored papers.

Today assignment was learning about the body words such as hand, leg and face...etc. We again prepared body words with pictures with matching quiz. Some of them could not even write their names in English. Unfortunately, we could not see any improvements in English. However, I noticed that we got much closer. Kids would just come up to me and jump on my back so they can ride on me. Again, we are losing control of the kids.

As we are doing our usual assignments, I found out that a bag of color pencil was missing. I observed that one of our boys named Nasser took a bag to his room. So, I chased him. He ran into his room and hid his color pencil somewhere. I told him to give me back our bag of color pencil and he gave me those looks that he does not know what I am talking about. Anyway, the woman in charge of the orphans saw us, just went in to his room and found a bag of color pencil. Then, Nasser was called into the office. I felt so bad, but I knew that if he did not fix the mistake now, it could be worse later.

After that incident, we could not see Nasser again in classroom and he

could not play with us. I felt bad and I felt it was my fault for his actions, because I did not take actions by myself to deal with the situation.

**Journal: April 28, 2012**

It was breaking my heart that our last meeting is coming up. I mean today is not our last meeting, but the idea that our last meeting was approaching broke my heart. However, when we entered the classroom, it was certainly different atmosphere. Kids usually greeted with screaming, but this time kids quietly sat on the table waiting for us. There was a presence of woman who was in charge of the orphanage. Kids seemed to be scared of that lady.

It was a nice and easy day, because children did not dare to ask to ride on our backs or screamed at us. So, it went very quick and smoothly. There were no special incidents so it was much easier for us to lead the class. However, kids got out of control when the woman went outside of the classroom and kids got back to their state of screaming and jumping on my shoulders.

Kids had more fun when we went out in the field playing soccer again. It broke my heart that we can't play soccer anymore in few weeks. As we were leaving, I saw Sheriff with a woman that I never saw before in the orphanage. I later found out that she was his mother. His mother was unable to raise him that she put her child in the center. Sheriff looked really happy. I feel like asking what does the relationship mean to them. I feel like my definition of relationship differs from their definition of relationship.





