

Our Heritage

As a part of my Systems of Knowledge project, I decided to focus on Environment by performing voluntary work at 'Din L-Art Helwa'.

As I reflect back on my cherished experience held during these preceding months I can indeed reckon how valuable it was. During my participation with 'Din L-Art Helwa', I experienced solid values.

To begin with, I must express my great appreciation and gratitude to the volunteers of 'Din L-Art Helwa' for their tireless attempts to safeguard such inheritance, which is constantly under threat. Even though, the difficulties are considerable, the members of the association are never discouraged and this really impressed me.

The main values I have chosen to reflect upon are **Environmentally friendly behaviour, Cooperation & Team work** and **Responsibility**.

"This is a beautiful planet and not at all fragile. Earth can withstand significant volcanic eruptions, tectonic cataclysms, and ice ages. But this canny, intelligent, prolific, and extremely self-centred human creature had proven himself capable of more destruction of life than Mother Nature herself.... We've got to be stopped".

Commencing with a very significant quotation by, Michael L. Fischer, I have noticed, unpleasantly so that where man had set foot everything was destroyed. As an ardent admirer of nature, I do believe and emphasize that the tenet of respecting nature should be our most important priority as this will not only determine our future but will also affect the generations to come. As the Brundtland Report states **"Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs"**. More often than not issues regarding environment are decided in relation to financial considerations. This indeed has brought very harsh consequences on the environment. 'Din L-Art Helwa' battles to safeguard nature and puts pressure on the Government and MEPA to make them conscious of their decisions as development should not be at the expense of the environment. A recent example includes the campaigns against the development overlooking Ramla Bay.

We should also admit that even though there is still a lot of work to accomplish, it is undeniable that the concern for the Environment has increased in our modern era, an imperative issue that characterized these last two decades.

As stated above, awareness has increased these days, owing mostly to the media and the increasing popularity of NGO's. But from my experience, partaking in activities with 'Din L-Art Helwa', I can say that people are still not sensible enough about the need to protect the environment, this is clearly observable from the questionnaires that we distributed amongst 100 individuals. Environmentally friendly behaviour can be achieved through education by instilling an ecocentric attitude of life in children from a young age. Volunteers at 'Din L-Art Helwa', insist upon this fundamental reality, they told us that we are the future generations and we should bequeath this value to our children. However, we all know that education takes time and there is no guarantee that it will bring about a change in mentalities and attitudes, but nevertheless informed citizens are more able to seek a sustainable society.

“There is a sufficiency in the world for man's need but not for man's greed” said once Mahatma Gandhi. Thus seeking, sustainable development and adopting an eco-friendly attitude will give rise to a harmonious relationship with nature. Taking for granted the environment may lead to irreversible damage and no amount of action plans or noble intentions can ever bring the environment back to its former splendor when it has been totally neglected and abused by us.

An example that is impressed in my memory was our visit to Comino. Whilst we were walking and collecting rubbish that often people leave behind, tourists passing by appreciated our gesture and showed gratitude for our efforts and struggles. For the first time indeed I didn't feel disheartened as often happens, as sometimes people regard us as annoying watchdogs. This experience made me willing to persist with my efforts to conserve our inestimable treasure – the environment.

From my involvement in 'Din L-Art Helwa' I recognized how the values of teamwork and co-operation are decisive to any worthwhile achievement. Thanks to combined efforts we were able to succeed in shouldering the weight of conserving cultural heritage especially when it came to fundraising activities. Co-operation is an imperative value which was visible amongst the volunteers and thus a combination of strengths, a good variety of abilities, diverse fields of expertise and personality types emerged. Without this value it would not have been possible for us to collaborate in our duties efficiently.

During my visits, I was impressed by how the volunteers cooperated proficiently and were able to sit down and discuss around a table certain issues in order to iron out flaws. I realized that in

unity they were effective in highlighting pertinent matters that affect societies and the environment.

From this value many other values and skills emerge which indeed are essential for co-operation. These comprise; listening and using effective communication skills. Another important value is respect, it is crucial to treat others with respect and dignity as well as to support their ideas. Furthermore cooperation involves helping one's co-workers which is the basis of teamwork.

Team work and Cooperation were values that had an important role in my responsibilities, during the various events with 'Din L-Art Helwa'. We had to share many tasks, everyone having an important role such as helping with refreshments after lectures, opening towers for the general public as well as helping in fundraising. These activities required us to cooperate with each other and this without a shadow of doubt helped us to tackle obstacles that we stumbled across. Certainly, I do agree with Henry Ford who stated; **"Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success."**

Responsibility is another significant value. This is a valuable trait because it refers to the fact that others can depend on you. Being responsible is not an easy task and it is a characteristic someone possesses, that demonstrates efficiency when taking care of certain tasks. Responsibility means that the individual has to be accountable for his/ her actions and to fulfill assigned duties.

Responsibility was another imperative tenet during my involvement with the NGO. In the long run, throughout my contribution with 'Din L-Art Helwa' several tasks were assigned to me. I had the responsibility to send emails to my school mates and inform them with upcoming events. We also had the opportunity more than once, to open the Dwejra Tower alone with no supervision, which indeed was a sign of responsibility. We were accountable for the distribution of brochures to the public in order to make them aware of certain lectures that were being held concerning environmental and historical issues. In the words of Frank Crane, **"Responsibility is the thing people dread most of all. Yet it is the one thing in the world that develops us, gives us manhood or womanhood fiber"**.

Throughout the whole year, I had the great opportunity to witness, many dedicated volunteers offering their precious time and do more than their utmost best, no matter how the circumstances they come across. These are people who come from diverse areas of society but are united by the same feeling and passion for the environment. It is impressive to see that this NGO's operates like an excellent family organization. I did not only learn to take care of the environment but I learnt to reciprocate respect and value everyone as he/she is. All of the experiences I shared with 'Din L-Art Helwa', instilled in me a new way to look at life and to sustain solid values which I will surely cherish throughout my life. To conclude I agree with Albert Schweitzer when he said;

“You must give some time to your fellow men. Even if it's a little thing, do something for others - something for which you get no pay but the privilege of doing it”.

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