

In the following lines I will introduce to you a member of the GUC staff we all have to be proud of: our Strategic Management TA Raghda El-Ebrashi. About her successful contribution to the development of the Egyptian society through the NGO (nongovernmental organization) she and other volunteers founded we talked and discovered what of a friendly, ambitious and down-to-earth person we have among our GUC community.

She talked very freely about.....

....the strategic history of “Ashanek Ya Balady”.

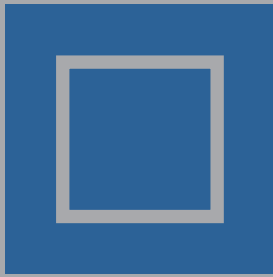
It started as a student club in the AUC in 2002 although they had the chance to start it as an NGO because they believed that the root of the problem was not in the existence of NGOs in Egypt. Statistics in 2000 stated that there are around 15000 NGOs in Egypt. The problem is that youth are not connected with these NGOs. The majority of them are totally not aware of the problems in Egypt and do not understand to what extent poverty and underdevel-

IT'S THE YOUTH WHO MAKE THE DIFFERENCE



opment are dominating a lot of places. And even if they know, they are reluctant to do anything and they just want to leave the country.

Consequently, the founders of “Ashanek Ya Balady” started to create a hub for youth, so to volunteer in community development and not in charity, as charity does not improve the situation. On the contrary, it may worsen it through creating dependency and the absence of any transformation. Development on the other hand makes youth do the transformation, they feel and love their country and they are then able to decide whether they seriously want to leave the country or not. In 2003 another student club was opened in Ain Shams Univeristy, in 2005



another one was open in Cairo University, one more was open in 2007 in the French University and in the next fall it is starting in the GUC.

The NGO started in 2005 after the student clubs had more than 200 volunteers who were already culturally aware to expand the scope of these student clubs everywhere.

...the operations of the NGO.

“Ashanek Ya Balady” is area-oriented and not budget-oriented. Its members are convinced that to change, one has to create a prototype in one area, then duplicate this model all over Egypt and then all over the world. The focus then is on Old Cairo with 2.5-3 mio. inhabitants. The NGO applies comprehensive development programs to whole families. It provides educational programs, such as computer learning courses, English Language courses and literacy revocation classes. Additionally, there are economic empowerment programs which are very strong.

Graduates are taught a lot of useful skills by professors from the private sector through lectures or courses. Then they have access to the market through the first employment office for the poor which was launched in January 2008; or they are given loans for micro enterprises, like a partnership with Etisalat to provide mobile phones for the poor to build an infrastructure and to create an enterprise for them at the same time.

Another development program is for children who lack informal education. They are provided with art, music and acting classes to express themselves in other ways than violence or drugs. And of course, health awareness is present through all these programs.

...the NGO's awards.

What makes this NGO different than any other one to deserve an award is the social entrepreneurship notion it follows. In other words, they do not depend only

on donations or pop-up funds, they run their own for-profit subsidiaries which compete in the normal market to provide the NGO with the money it needs. The first one is the Youth Leadership Initiative which competes in the Training and Consultancy market.

Core competencies such as the non-obligation to pay taxes and the franchises in many universities enable this project to enter the universities very easily to train youth or even only to advertise. The next subsidiary is “Cherry Curves” which once held a booth in GUC B1. Poor women produce high-quality products, like accessories, bags and scarves, and people buy them even before they know that this is a NGO, exactly like any other accessories outlet. So it is not out of pity or mercy that customers buy the products, on the contrary. They buy something of value and at the same time contribute to the development of the society. “Cherry Curves” is planning to open a permanent outlet in one of the malls in the end of 2008. The third project which will be fully launched in September 2008 is ScopelT, a company to provide IT consultancy services to organizations.

This model of the hybrid money is the main reason for the numerous awards the NGO was given:

- 2003 & 2004: award from the Ministry of Local Development for being the first student club in universities for community development & not for charity
- Oct. 2007: “35 under 35” (which stands for the best 35 entrepreneurs under the age of 35) from the World Business Magazine & Shell in London
- Dec. 2007: awarded in Malaysia as one of the “best 100 socio entrepreneurs around the world”
- Jan. 2008: awarded in Qatar as one of the “best ICT entrepreneurs” who use Information Communication Technology in development activities
- Feb. 2008: chosen from 25 consultants to implement development goals of the UN in Egypt to improve poverty
- April 2008: awarded in the World Economic Forum in Sharm El-Sheikh as one of the “best 4 socio entrepreneurs of the year” in Egypt

....and finally about the NGO's influence on her personality.

TA Raghda is an AUC marketing graduate. Yet, this volunteer work made her change her career as she believed that her life in multinational companies is focused on people who are not in need for something. This belief that Egypt definitely needs more contribution was also the reason for her to drop her MBA and to make her masters in the management of NGOs. She chose the academic career at the GUC to be able to finish her PhD on Socio entrepreneurship, a topic which no one did before. Personally, she benefited from the diversified relations she is put into due to her position in the NGO to stronger leadership and communication skills. Moreover, this work taught her responsibility towards the limited resources we have in Egypt and satisfaction towards everything she gets.

Finally, this volunteer work also gives her and everyone else in the NGO the feeling that youth are the solution for the problems in Egypt. Even if they have to face a lot of obstacles to reach their goals, “Ashanek Ya Balady” created loyalty and commitment to the country inside every member.