

Project Summary

The project will take place in the Sahrawi refugee camps in Tindouf (Algeria) with the aim to support refugee children with a playground and a library corner at Hope School Western Sahara. Due to the conflict between Western Sahara and Morocco back in 1975, the Sahrawi people have been living in a collection of refugee camps in southern Algeria for more than 47 years under harsh environmental and humanitarian conditions. Over 173,600 Sahrawi refugees are estimated to live in five camps Awserd, Smara, Dajla, Layoun, and Boujdour. Nearly 80% of the Sahrawi refugees still rely on humanitarian assistance for their minimum daily food intake, shelter, and livelihoods. The Sahrawi children face many obstacles to meeting basic human needs. One of those needs that are hardly met at the refugee camps is having a playground where children can safely grow through playing and learning.

The issue to be addressed: For the past 47 years, there have been no proper playgrounds in the refugee camps. Children used to create their own playgrounds from the sand or define an area as a playground between their family houses. This is an issue that needs to be addressed for many reasons which include but are not limited to:

- **Safety:** Because of the camp's situation, there are no proper streets and no traffic lights. Therefore, children usually tend to play in areas that are close to traffic which is very dangerous. Many accidents where a vehicle against a pedestrian has happened. However, it mostly happens when the pedestrian is a child because children tend to cross the road following a balloon or a friend without looking at both sides to make sure there is no car coming. As a child, I witnessed one of our schoolmates get dragged by a car while we were playing and waiting for school to start. Since that day, I was never able to forget that tragedy, neither one of his friends nor his family members. One of the first theories we learn in nursing school is Maslow's hierarchy of needs. It is an idea proposed by the American psychologist Abraham Maslow which explains human motivation based on the pursuit of different levels of needs. In the Model, the most basic needs are physiological needs such as food, water, and sleep. The second most basic need is safety. Therefore, I am hoping to make a change that can promote safety and sustainability.
- **Health:** Having a clean environment for living, learning, and playing is a basic human need. However, in the refugee camps, many children are experiencing multidimensional poverty which makes having a clean and safe place to play a 'dream'. Children usually play in the sand and with rusted metals. This is a global health issue that needs to be addressed.
- **Natural need:** Playing is a natural need for the development of children. It improves the cognitive, emotional, physical, and social well-being of children. Through play, children learn about the world and themselves. It improves their literacy, promotes physical fitness, fosters cognitive growth, and encourages greater independence. They also learn skills for study, work, and relationships such as confidence and trust.
- **A taste of Vacations in Peace:** Because of the harsh conditions in the refugee camps where temperatures can reach 113°F and because of the history of Spanish occupation of Western Sahara, many Spanish families volunteer yearly in the "Vacation in Peace" program. The Program consists of welcoming children between the ages of 6 and 11 by Spanish families for two months during the summer. As a child, I was fortunate enough to get the opportunity to participate in this program. My experience was very remarkable. It was my first time in a place that has trees, running water, and proper buildings which do not fall when the rain comes as the sand houses in the refugee camps do. It was also my first time visiting a doctor's office for a general check-up. Nevertheless, I was enriched when I saw a playground that has many different games for children and their families. Unfortunately, for many reasons including Covid-19 and the current war situation in Western Sahara, the program has only been able to take a very small number of children during the summer lately. This made a great change in the life of many refugees and because of that, I believe this project will have positive reinforcement in the camps.

**Green Sand: In Support of Refugee Children at Hope School Western Sahara
The Sahrawi Refugee Camps In Algeria
Methodist University
Ladiba Said Nafe (Western Sahara)**

Background

Hope School Western Sahara: Hope school is a classroom project that was implemented by me with the great help of my friends at the United World College Red Cross Nordic back in the summer of 2019. Over two years of high school in Norway, our group worked hard to fundraise for the project by selling Sahrawi traditional staff, cakes, and drinks during school events. Since the classroom was built, it has been used for many free-access educational purposes such as English courses for youth, tutoring for school kids, and learning to read and write for women. This experience along with other volunteer services that I have done in the refugee camps, previous school, and current school, I believe I am qualified to lead this project.

Implementation

Proposal: From my experience growing up in the refugee camps and researching the importance of playing for children, I aim to make Hope School a place for a safe and effective learning environment. I hope to build a playground at the side of the Hope School classroom. Hope School has land space where the playground can be established for the children to use during school breaks and between the volunteered tutoring sessions at Hope School. The playground will also be open for families in the community to use throughout the year. My family and some friends at the camps volunteered to help with the project during the summer as they helped with the Hope School project. We will be hiring two workers to professionally build the playground and ensure the safety of the children. We will also hire a welder to work on creating outdoor swings. We will purchase the needed supplies from the nearest city of Algeria (Tindouf) such as artificial grass to protect the kids from the rocks and the dust. Monkey bars made of metal and redwood, a seesaw, swings made of cedar wood, slides made of hard plastic, and a chain bridge. There will be a paved area for sitting with chairs and tables made of bricks. The playground will also have areas that have shade to protect the children from the sun during summertime.

A path to the outside world: Only through watching television when electricity permits, children can learn about the outside world. However, I believe in the power of reading and learning to facilitate the establishment of a peaceful, educated, and sustainable community. Therefore, I would like to create a corner at "Hope School Western Sahara" as a library where kids can have access to different books during the volunteering sessions times to learn different materials such as math, stories, poetries, art, Spanish, English, and Arabic. During playtime, kids who would like to read instead of play can also have access to the library and the classroom.

Timeline: For the project, I will be traveling back home during the summer. We will be finalizing the playground design once we are granted the budget. We will start working on the project at the beginning of June and it will take approximately two months to finish it. We already have the land for the project. However, there is a need for leveling the ground before starting. While the constructors work on regulating the playground, the welder will be working on getting the outdoor swings ready. By August, the playground would be ready, and we will welcome the children with a small party and give them snacks as a celebration. The schools start the fall semester in early October.

Anticipated Results

The long-term impact: I believe this is a multifunctional project. It will not only provide a safe and effective environment for children to grow and develop cognitively, emotionally, socially, and physically. It will also make Hope School the first place for children and their families to have a friendly environment to hang out in and access to a small library. The current war situation has also impacted the lives of many children. Many children lost their fathers who usually provide for the family. Therefore, with the intent to touch lives, Hope School will be collaborating with a group of women who volunteered to make local snacks for Hope School. These snacks will be for sale during playtime for low prices and by the end of each month, the money will be distributed between two families that have children and were affected by the war.