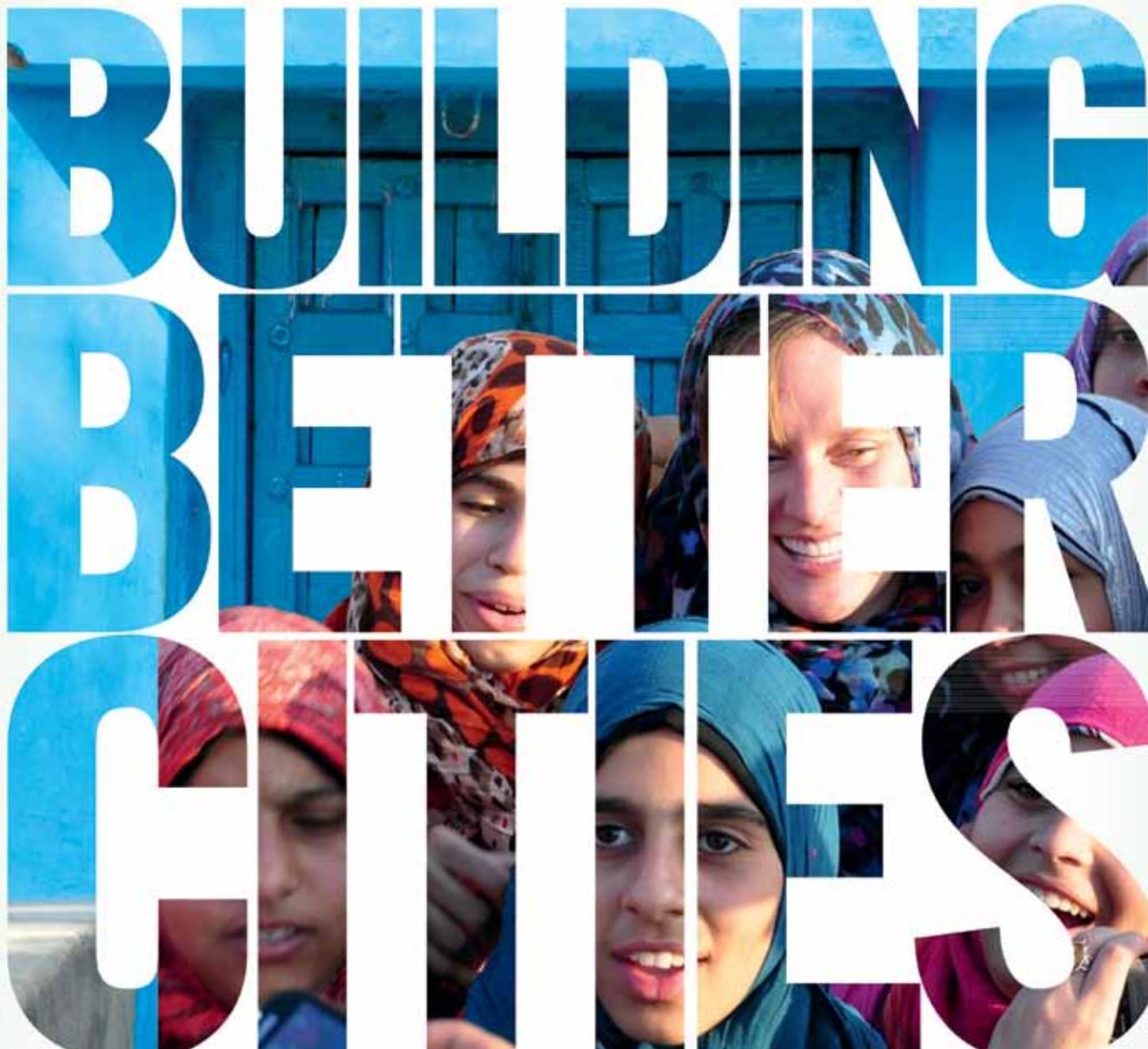


Egypt

Lafarge Egypt CSR newswire

Issue 5



Pushing Through the Tough Times

Sewing Center Expands Beyond Training & Employment

Now the sewing center is moving full speed ahead, the women working there decided that it was time for some marketing to promote their products and see the demand it generated. They invited their community members to come and have a look at the output of the center's production lines for kids' jeans and shirts. They decided to sell these products at affordable prices; LE 7.5 for the shirts and LE 12 for the jeans.

Their success encouraged them to become even more creative and expand their production assortment to include:

- Fiber pillows
- Crochet bags and wallets
- Leather bags, teddy bears, stuffed hearts and other Mothers Day gift ideas
- T-shirts for kids



Teacher at Sewing Center





Healthy, Wealthy and Wise

Since the very start of its initiatives in EW and AW, Lafarge has been keen to create comprehensive programs that develop every aspect of the participating women's lives.

Under the umbrella of literacy and technical skills, other life skills were constantly promoted such as the importance of maintaining good health for the entire family.

Through ongoing educational seminars, women were regularly updated on how to drop bad eating habits, learn about proper nutrition and adopt basic rules to keep their homes sanitary.

In addition, Lafarge had organized medical caravans in EW and AW; during which, community members received basic health checkups.

The most recent health initiative was held on March 14th at the Sewing Center and came in the form of a lecture on a number of crucial health issues specific to women.

With a number of highly qualified female doctors brought in, 130 women from the community came together to learn all about breast cancer, how to search for lumps early on and possibly avoid the dangers of late discovery.



They were also lectured on the importance of breast feeding for both the mother and child and in addition to all that, they covered topics on general health and maintaining a sanitary environment.

The event brought together all the women of EW and AW, from those enrolled in the literacy and sewing center projects.

It created the perfect environment to bring them all together to learn and share their different experiences and encourage non participative women to become part of their thriving community.

They were also particularly delighted with the overall

friendliness of the doctors and useful tips that they were introduced to making them request more similar events in the future.

"What we enjoyed most about this day was that the doctors were very generous with their knowledge and didn't mind talking to us even after the event was over." Says one of the participating women, "We learned so much and they are all things that we can start using right away."

Defying Gender Based Rights to Education

Thirty three year old wife and mother of 3, M.M. was never happy about her father's decision to exclude her from her right of education when she was a little girl.

On the other hand, her brother was sent off to school for the simple reason that he was born male. "Where I come from in Souhag, mentalities are old fashioned and men are always given more privileges.

And because I never got the opportunity to learn how to read and write, I was never able to actively help my children in their school work when they needed my help."

Her inability to help her children is just one of the many challenges that M.M. faces in her day to day life.

She couldn't sign her own name and had to walk around with a stamp instead. It worried her that she would never know what she was signing on or in her case stamping on if she couldn't read what was there.

She would forget the dosage for medicine when her children were sick and was unable to read the prescription. She would easily get lost because she could not read street signs or subway stops..

She promptly enrolled in the Lafarge Literacy Program and



made sure never to miss a single class. school.

She was determined that she would not only learn to finally read and write but that she would graduate with flying colors. "I've come a long way and I still have a dream that maybe one day I can actually finish

It may or may not happen but I believe that I have to try and always aim high."

From Dreamer to Believer

Thirty two year old wife and mother of two, M.Z. had been feeling the weight of inflation on her family's wellbeing.

She hated that her husband was burdened with all the household expenses and unable to keep up with the constant price hikes. Without previous work experience, she worried that finding work would be impossible for her.

Her luck however started looking up when she learned about the sewing center opening up and its potential to offer job opportunities to graduates of its training courses.

"I was terrified of failing but it was also an opportunity that would be hard to come by again" she says, "I knew that as I got older, my chances of finding a job were getting slimmer by the moment.

I immediately enrolled and discovered that it was the best decision I had ever made. Not only did I learn how to operate the machinery but I also learned how to improve my social skills and how important it was to be flexible in the workplace.

I also learned useful tips about raising my two children and discovered that my constant yelling at them was absolutely wrong and how that they too had feelings and needed



understanding"

M.Z admits she desperately wanted to secure a position at the center after graduation and so she would concentrate hard at class and try to absorb everything she learnt. Her hard work eventually paid off when she was awarded her graduation certificate and offered the job.

It was a very memorable day for her as she rushed home full of excitement and eager to tell her entire family that she had

achieved her goals.

"That was such a special day for me", she beams "My whole family was so proud of me that they bought me a necklace as a gift! I was so proud of myself too and ever since I have started working I've felt this spark inside of me.

I feel ambitious and I don't want to stop at just being an employee. I truly believe that I now have what it takes to start my own little factory."

