

## MES Cairo's IBDP Students get to the heart of the matter CAS Trip to Aswan – October 2015

MES Cairo's International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IBDP) students have been inspired by Egypt's brilliant past and hopeful present. They are now filled with optimism and great plans for its future...

Early in October, the IBDP students enjoyed highly rewarding and enriching experiences on their Creativity, Activity, Service (CAS) trip to Aswan. The experiences incorporated several aspects of the curriculum, emphasising the concurrency of learning in the Diploma Programme. As well as discovering much about the culture and traditions of an area that many of them had never visited before, the students discovered more about Egypt's fascinating history and developed their scientific knowledge and understanding. They engaged in team planning and reflection and in a variety of cultural and creative activities throughout each day.

Their first excursion was to the Nubian museum; a beautiful and serene museum built in 1997 which houses many treasures. On their second outing, they marvelled at the enormity and intricate structural mechanics of the Unfinished Obelisk. After attending a presentation about the geographical features of the Nile, they enjoyed a thrilling sail through the fast flowing arteries of the beautifully unpolluted waters of the area, and gasped in awe as they approached the magnificent Temple of Philae. In the shaded courtyard of the temple, they re-enacted the past with great panache when they performed dramatic improvisations of the story of the goddess Isis.



The students were able to expand their knowledge across the three Sciences when they were given an educational guided tour of the Sir Magdi Yacoub Heart Centre. They felt honoured to be given the opportunity to interview three prominent heart surgeons and felt a great deal of pride in this inspirational charity project, which provides free treatment for heart diseases (mostly for children) and relies on donations. Interestingly, the hospital uses state-of-the-art technology and runs mostly on funds received within Egypt itself - not relying on donations from abroad. The students focused again on the Sciences and on politics and culture when they visited the High Dam and found out about its multiple functions and its history.



The IBDP students all agreed that the most rewarding feature of their experience was also the most physically and psychologically challenging. On the third day of the visit, they sailed deep into the Nubian cataracts to reach an impoverished village where they planned to carry out their Service work. Residents of the village rely on tourists to buy their handmade wares in order to make a living, so there is real suffering in the area due to the recent decline in tourism. Using materials bought with funds they had previously raised through charitable events, the IB students keenly got work on the renovation of two local widows' homes.



The challenging conditions and intense heat did not hinder the IBDP students. Strong leadership and teamwork skills were displayed as they planned and designed, painted and decorated, and prepared the plumbing for the installation of bathrooms and roof tops for each of the homes that were improved. The widows and children gave their own ideas for the decorations and colours and our creative students stayed true to traditional Nubian artistic styles. By sunset, there were smiles all round, even for the houses themselves, as they glowed with a new internal optimism and a bright and cheerful facade.

### From the heart...

'Aswan was, truly, an experience of a lifetime. I got to visit places of great importance which helped my understanding of ancient Egyptian history and the greatness of our ancestors. I felt inspired by the devotion, success and determination of notable modern Egyptians like Sir Magdi Yacoub and all those who work for the foundation. As part of our Service project, we felt humbled by the surroundings and the resilience of the people and gained a great deal of satisfaction from contributing so much to the restoration of the houses. We now have plans to continue helping people in this village.'

**Sousana Hakim (DP12)**

'On this trip we enjoyed many diverse activities. I was able to learn more about my country's history and culture and also appreciate what I have. The visit to Magdy Yacoub's heart foundation gave me hope, because it showed me that people who





care do still exist. The trip added a lot to my knowledge and made me a more experienced person. Now I am looking forward to future challenges with great enthusiasm because I know that I can help to make a difference.' **Habiba El Dissouky (DP11)**

'Aswan was a very enriching and enlightening experience. It was a great opportunity for us all to get to know each other and bond. Not only did we have a great time, but we also saw beautiful parts of Egypt that we had never seen before. The highlight of this trip for me was the time we spent renovating the houses of Azeeza and Masreyya in the Nubian village. This particular activity made me grow in ways that I never before could have imagined. It made me feel connected to a part of Egypt I had never explored before, and expanded my awareness of different cultures and ethical perspectives. Moreover I learned new skills such as building roof tops and painting walls. The experience reminded me of how proud I am to be part of such a beautiful country like Egypt. As a global citizen, I now feel that I have so much more to contribute and have a strong desire to build on my experiences and share them with the world.' **Sarah El Taweel (DP11)**



'The Aswan trip activities were not only educational but also extremely good fun. Visiting the Aswan Heart Centre left most of us very emotional because of the purpose behind this foundation. Watching the children wave at us through the windows was heart breaking but also very motivational. The renovation of the Nubian house was exceptionally rewarding and seeing the smiles we brought to the faces of the villagers due to our service was an irreplaceable moment that will be impossible to forget. I miss every second we spent on this trip.' **Mahum Shaikh (DP12)**



'This trip helped us grow closer together and gave time for us all in DP11 and D to bond. DP11 learned how to use the managebac software and to record and reflect upon our CAS activities effectively. We became more culturally aware and discovered the beauty of Aswan, making us want to help the people of Aswan and to conserve the beauty of the river Nile in any way possible.' **Yola Elwy (DP11)**

Mr Bullough, Mr Macaulay, Ms McTigue and Ms Sheehan, the IBDP teachers who accompanied the students to Aswan are extremely proud of these young people and of their achievements.

**Ms S Sheehan - Assistant Head, IBDP Coordinator**

