

Because Baseball: Diamond Diplomacy

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The Challenge:

The field (or court) of play is an arena where life's greater lessons are taught - a place where young girls and boys learn teamwork, respect, sportsmanship; a place to thrill in success, a place to pick oneself up from failure. And while each sport has particular merits, baseball's unique framework celebrates the individual (the batter, the base stealer, the fielder's diving catch) while extolling actions for the benefit of the collective team (the sacrifice bunt, the double play). The challenge will be to create a new league (indeed introduce a new sport) in Egypt that will give young people an opportunity to compete, explore life lessons and grow as people. And a sport is a universal language, it will serve a bridge across cultures between Egypt and the United States.

Project Overview:

We will bring baseball to Egypt, founding the first Little League in Cairo with a handful of teams. Such a league should encourage Egyptian and expat children of all backgrounds to play together, finding a common purpose and learning to recognize common humanity in the midst of a current geopolitical climate that thrives on demarcation (i.e. creation of the other).

To build buzz and demand in Egypt, we will begin with baseball clubs at the university level. Ideally, participants these student clubs will then become coaches in the Cairo Little League. But their role will be so much greater than merely "coaches" – they will be mentors and role models to their young players, able to teach valuable life lessons in the context of sport.

To kick off the Cairo league's inaugural season, select American coaches and umpires will travel to Egypt to teach the game to their Egyptian counterparts; clinics will be conducted to train the local adult and children participants.

In subsequent seasons as the league matures and grows (participation increases) additional groundbreaking exchange opportunities will result:

1. Egyptian coaches will visit the US as coaching fellows

2. US Little League teams will travel to Egypt to play their Egyptian counterparts
3. Egyptian teams will journey to the US to play American teams

In each of the above exchange scenarios international diplomacy will be learned and enacted on the baseball diamond. Diamond diplomacy indeed...

The Goal:

The goals are both simple and powerful:

1. Create a new activity for kids to engage in
2. Build mentorship opportunities for Cairo-area university students to connect with Cairo youth
3. Allow for cross-cultural understanding through the vehicle of sport

Population Served:

- Baseball Clubs: Students at university education
- Youth League: Boys and girls aged 8-12 years living in Cairo

Project Milestones:

Phase 1: Founding of university baseball “clubs” (student organizations) at select Cairo universities

Phase 2: Founding of Cairo Youth baseball league

Phase 3: Travel of US Coaches and umpires to Cairo for weeklong clinic with youth league coaches, university students and youth participants.

Phase 4: First pitch of the inaugural season

Phase 5: During the second season, there will be a number of additional exchange opportunities between Egyptian and US youth baseball teams.

Expected Outcome:

While the league will be small during the inaugural season, the plan is to rapidly expand with each season to meet a growing demand among Egyptian youth to take part in this groundbreaking venture... with each passing year, the league footprint will grow, so will its overall impact on youth culture.

Furthering Foundation’s mission

Because Baseball ultimately seeks to use the sport of baseball as a vehicle for diplomacy, setting up opportunities for youth players (as well as their adult coaches) from Egypt and the US to learn about each other’s culture through various team exchanges.

