

The Bottom Line

An investment in Scouting is an Investment in the Future

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How lucky are you?

Your name is Ali, you are 14 years old, living with your grandmother in a settlement in one of the poorer parts of Alexandria, Egypt. Your grandmother is eighty years old, and has little money. Your parents live in a rural village a long way away – you haven't seen them or your five sisters and brothers since January last year.

You came to live with your grandmother when she fell last year and could no longer run the market stall which she had for years. Although she had sold the stall to her neighbour, that money only lasted a couple of months, and so you were sent to help her in her daily life.

Your day starts early – at dawn, around four am these spring days, when you get up and walk a half a kilometre to get the water for the day. The shack in which you live is in a dark and dusty lane, but it is reasonably clean, and safe. Water comes from a pump installed in a paved street at the edge of your settlement, and your daily waste is put in a bucket and dumped in a drain at the end of the lane. Once you have left the water bottle to your grandmother, with bread that you have bought on the way, you leave for work in the metal workshop. It's at the far side of the district, so it takes 45 minutes to walk there, but these days it's not too hot and you're there in no time at all and start work at six sharp.

Your workshop makes metal frames for doors, for windows, for gates – in fact for anything. Mr Hassan, the workshop owner is one of the best in the district – he's renowned for his good quality work, his speed in delivery, and above all his

business sense ... and as an employer he's not bad either. Yes, he does have a temper ... and if you make a mistake, watch out! But he's also fair, and takes care of the twenty-five men and boys who work for him. You're one of the youngest, and he has taken you in because your grandmother's neighbour asked him. Unlike many other employers in the district, he insists that, when you arrive, you get a cup of milk and a piece of bread with some meat stew. Yes, it is the law that working kids have to have some food, but most employers in the district don't comply...

Your work involves carrying lengths of angle iron of different thickness to the welders who sit in their corners, cutting and welding from six to twelve and from one to six, only stopping for prayers and an occasional drink of water. These guys work hard! The Mr Hassan pays them by the piece of work completed, so for them the more they rest, the less they earn. But you are paid by the day, and woe-betide any boy who slows one of the welders down by not having the right piece of metal at the right time!

Your life has improved remarkably in the past year. Mr Hassan was approached one day in November by someone from the Sea Scouts – a kindly looking man, who invited him to a training seminar. Now, Mr Hassan isn't one to waste a good day on talk, but he went along – that Scout guy brought a letter from the local mayor – that really impressed Mr Hassan. When he came back, Mr Hassan took all you young workers aside and told you that you'll be going to school – OK, it was on

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You learn a trade ...

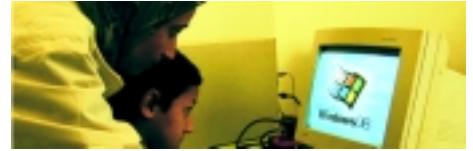


and computers too!



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How lucky are you?

Sundays, your only day off, but it was still *school!* You'd never been to school ... so this really excited you.

Mrs Fatma, the Scout lady who welcomed you that first Sunday at your workshop was really nice! As she led you to the Scout Centre, she told you about the great lessons you would be following – reading and writing, and crafts. The Scouts were going to start a savings scheme for you and deposit money in it every Sunday you came – this sounded great! When you arrived at the Scout Centre at the harbour, you were met by the Scouts of the 1st Alexandria troop. That first day, they organised a great programme for you and your work-mates – fun and games, your team beat them in the soccer match ... and the *food* they prepared – this was excellent!! – you even had a bag of leftovers to bring to your grandmother!

And leaving that night, the Sea Scouts gave you a new set of overalls, a hard hat and tough shoes to wear in the workshop – these would protect you from the cuts and injuries which some of the more experienced workers have – one sixteen year old has even lost three toes! The first lesson next week was to be on safety, and you were looking forward to the judo lesson which was promised too!

That's almost six months ago now, and you have had a great time ever since.

The World Scout Foundation helps the growth and development of Scouting worldwide by providing the financial support for the World Organization of the Scout Movement.

Some priorities include: Improving child health. Helping marginalized youth. Actively protecting nature and the environment. Assisting in the development of Scouting in newly emerging countries. Helping Scouts address community needs in developing and industrialized countries.

Your writing has improved. You've written a letter to your parents and last week received a reply (written by a neighbour in the village). And your grandmother enjoys you telling her the stories which you hear from the Scouts each Sunday.



Working children learn judo as a recreation, but mainly to build self-esteem

Mr Hassan has received a plaque from the Scouts last month showing that all his young workers are following the Scout Course – he has proudly stuck it up on the wall outside the workshop for all to see. A foreign woman from UNICEF came two weeks ago and asked you lots of questions – she was really nice.

Most of the kids in your lane work in the small workshops that are scattered through the district. Some lucky kids go to school, but not that many. And in the village where your parents live, all the kids work in the cotton fields ... even kids as young as six and seven!

But you seem to have joined the “lucky ones”! Mr Hassan has really taken this training serious, and the Scouts have become your friends – although they are not as good at football as you and your mates are, they are great at other things and have asked you to join them too!

Child labour in Egypt is quite widespread. The Government has issued decrees and passed laws limiting the employment of children below 14, and even in some cases 17, but with widespread poverty in some areas, this is so difficult to enforce.

Recognising this, the Egyptian Scout Association, with help from the Regional Office of the World Scout Bureau and UNICEF, have managed to so far bring 2,000 children through a course of training in literacy, work skills and fun, every Sunday in two Centres in Alexandria. Based on this success, the Scout Association is now looking to expand.

Their success is down to the great volunteers in the Sea Scouts in Alexandria – some are skilled craftsmen and women, others are students, but all are Scouts, interested in helping these kids get on in life! They work with the kids, but an important success factor is also that they work with the workshop owners, encouraging them to recruit their workers and improve conditions for them. And in the end, everybody wins! Stopping child labour will take some time in Egypt, but improving the working conditions and prospects of these kids can and is being done today – by the Scouts in Alexandria!

World Scout Foundation

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