



Until we are all equal

Iman Said, 36,
a carpet-making
trainee with the
SWEET project



Sweet Dreams Are Made of Thread, Macrame, and Beads

The Strengthening Women Entrepreneurs
in Egypt (SWEET) project

Women in Egypt are building a more
sustainable future, one hook, one scrap,
one story at a time.

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Carpets made by trainees in the SWEET project with tufting guns

Over a span of a year, **1,000 women** across 40 savings groups **managed 1 million EGP (C\$29,500)** in savings, loans, and emergency funds with the financial-management and investment skills they learned through SWEET project trainings.

THE FACTS

WHO:

The Strengthening Women Entrepreneurs in Egypt (SWEET) project aims to reach 3,100 women in the carpet-making and handicrafts industries. The project is funded by Global Affairs Canada, with support from individual Canadian donors.

WHAT: We're supporting women carpet and handicraft makers so they can start or grow their businesses, increase their family income, and shift long-standing cultural norms that limit their decision-making power and earning opportunities.

WHERE: Giza Governorate, Egypt

WHEN: April 2020–March 2026

WHY: The main goals of the project are to:

1 | Shift norms: We're helping women, men, and communities challenge restrictive beliefs about a woman's place and build a culture that recognizes women's rights, talents, and ambitions. By creating spaces where they can support one another, women are building the confidence to pursue their goals – together.

2 | Expand education and business skills:

Through hands-on training in financial literacy and business fundamentals – like saving, borrowing, marketing, and planning – women are gaining the tools to build their businesses. By stepping into more stages of the carpet-making process, they're not just crafting beautiful products; they're claiming a bigger share of the value they create.

3 | Grow savings: With better access to savings groups and banking services, women are learning how to manage money, open accounts, and secure small loans. These resources help them invest in their businesses, support their families, and plan for the future.

4 | Change at every level: We work alongside community leaders, businesses, and local, regional, and national governments

to create environments that support women – not only through individual training but also by encouraging broader shifts in how workplaces and policies recognize and protect women's rights. It's about making sure the environments women work in are safe and fair.



Amal (far left) with members of the Community Development Association, a SWEET project partner.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

A Step Toward Achieving the SWEET Dream

The air is electric in Hall 4 of the Turathna Exhibition, the largest handicrafts exhibition in Egypt. Just steps from the entrance, one booth crackles with excitement and anticipation: Macrame wall hangings, kilim carpets, and beaded handbags are displayed on shelves and hang on the walls, drawing in curious visitors. In one corner, a small sign reading "SWEET" is nestled in the middle of a cloud-shaped wall decoration. All these magnificent works of art were handcrafted by the women of the SWEET project.

"I can't express how happy I am to be here," says Amal, one of the project artisans. "For me, this is a step toward

achieving the dream I always had, to showcase my work. I'm thrilled that many people have admired my products."

Amal is one of 81 women who showcased their work at the Turathna Exhibition. It has been a year-long journey in which the SWEET participants have taken what they've learned and applied it to their businesses. This year, the project focused on how to market products using different technologies. For example, some women have used AI to digitally place images of their carpets in a mid-century-style living room to help potential buyers visualize how it could look in their own home.

Amal hands a customer a handmade bag at the Turathna Exhibition, where SWEET participants earned 33,000 EGP (C\$950) in sales and connected with new buyers, bazaar owners, and factories.



Thank you for your support

Thanks to your generosity, the women participating in the SWEET project have learned new skills to craft high-end carpets as well as the technological know-how to market them in innovative ways. They also have built valuable business connections to expand their customer base. Thank you for investing in their capabilities, their talent, and their futures.

BY THE NUMBERS



“

I think being able to see the change in their lives, going from feeling like they don't belong to feeling that they can take on the world, is my favourite part of the project.”

—Maria Paula Ballesteros Duarte,
economic advisor,
Plan International
Canada

Project Highlights

Here's what SWEET has achieved so far.

1,000 women have accessed financial credit and taken part in trainings in financial and business skills such as saving, borrowing, and planning for growth. [TARGET*: 1,000]

1,053 women have taken part in training to improve the quality, design, and marketability of their crafts, making them more competitive in both local and international markets. [TARGET: 1,000]

400 women have strengthened their decision-making, negotiation, and strategic-planning skills through mentorship from experienced industry professionals. [TARGET: 600]

81 women showcased their products at the Turathna Exhibition, the largest exhibition of handicrafts in Egypt, where they brought their work to a national stage and connected with new buyers. [TARGET: 200]



A SWEET participant focuses on making a carpet.

*Target numbers represent the cumulative goals for the six-year project.

PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

From Waste to Work of Art

How unexpected materials are helping grow strong businesses.

T-shirt scraps. Palm trees. Cut leather. What do these things all have in common?

They're found materials that craftswomen in the SWEET project use to make beautiful – and eco-friendly – handicrafts.

They twist T-shirt fabric from a nearby factory into kilim carpets. Palm trees are used to make fabric. They identify plant-based dyes to create vibrant colours in their handicrafts and carpets. And the smallest scraps of leather are turned into keychains and small coin purses – nothing goes to waste.

With your support, 300 women also learned how to use tufting guns: tools that push yarn through fabric to create loops or cut piles to form the textured

surface of a carpet. The tufting guns dramatically speed up carpet production and open up new possibilities for design. Over nine weeks, participants learned how to tension cloth on a frame, sketch and transfer patterns, operate tufting guns with precision, and trim their finished pieces for a clean, professional look.

These processes aren't just about artistry; they're about ingenuity. The women of the SWEET project are proving that with the right skills and a little creativity, even the smallest scraps can become something beautiful and valuable. By working with what's available and minimizing waste, they're building a more sustainable future, one hook, one scrap, one story at a time.

Trainees in the SWEET project make carpets with tufting guns.



The artisans use a tufting gun to create detailed designs.





SWEET participants track sales and calculate profits from selling carpets and other handicrafts at Egypt's largest handicrafts exhibition.

Thank you for your support!

Your generosity is helping women in Giza strengthen their expertise, step into leadership roles, and unlock new earning opportunities in the carpet and handicraft industries. It's also helping shift deep-rooted norms that limit women's roles to the home, undervalue their labour, and exclude them from decision-making. Together, we're creating lasting change that will continue well beyond the lifespan of this project. Thank you for being an important part of this transformation.



About Plan International Canada

Plan International Canada is a member of a global organization dedicated to advancing children's rights and equality for girls. Plan International has been building powerful partnerships with and for children for over 85 years and is now active in more than 80 countries. We stand with children, especially girls, wherever they are oppressed, exploited, left behind or not equally valued. We're determined optimists, and we will continue to persevere until we are all equal.

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