International Article - Kholoud Mohamed

When dreams come true... 

I always dreamed of teaching geo-education to children in Egypt, and two years ago it happened as I heard about the International Geography Olympiad (geo) and wanted to be part of this competition.

A friend of mine, Hana, is 11 years old. I asked her if she wanted to know more about geology. She did, and I invited her on one of my post-graduate field trips to collect fossils. And that is where I asked her about the competition. At first I was worried about launching the competition as no one had ever competed in Egypt before. Some of my colleagues thought I was out of my mind.

I went ahead anyway and organized a one-day field trip to the desert east of the Gulf of Suez about 140 Km from Cairo, a place called Northern Galala. The Northern Galala plateau lies in the northern part of the Egypt and occupies an area of about 5,750 square kilometers between 29° 36′ & 29° 53′ N latitude and 31°26′ & 32°33’ E longitude. It is surrounded by Wadi Ghoeweba to the north, Wadi Araba to the south, the Gulf of Suez to the east and the Nile Valley to the west. The Galala plateau is made up of Cretaceous rocks (latest Aptian- Albian to early Cenomanion); there are three successive rock units, the Malha, Galala and Adabiya formation. Lithologically, the Galala formation is characterized by its yellowish-green color and its macrofossil content. It is also distinguished by its transitional character between the lower Cretaceous-Jurassic-Tertiary carbonate successions. Lithologically, the Galala formation can be subdivided into a thick lower part consisting of shales and marls with minor limestone and dolostone inter-beds and an upper part consisting collectively of limestone and dolostone beds. It extends to Khasm el-Galala and increases southward to reach 125m in Wadi Qiseib. This formation is characterized by its common fossiliferous horizons of echinoids and the oyster bank, as well as the famous two ammonite species Neolobites Vibrayeanus and Thomelites Soornayi Thomel.

My goal was to make Hana aware of the many fossils, as well as the different kinds of rocks and their orientation using GPS mapping. Hana was attentive and interested. I was delighted that she located and collected 20 fossils without any assistance. Finally she asked me if she could locate her own fossils using the map I provided for her. I told her she could.

We should continue to motivate girls like Hana. Perhaps we can use iGeo 2015?