



Save the Children

What we do in Egypt

- We're improving the quality of education for 2,593 children
- We're protecting 1,500 vulnerable children from violence and exploitation



The gap between rich people and poor people in Egypt is growing, leading to rising social tensions. Privatisation of public services means that poor families have less access to education, healthcare and other basic services. Many of those living in poverty (70%) live in rural areas, and depend on agriculture for their livelihood. In the south, in Upper Egypt, there are higher rates of illiteracy and infant mortality and there's limited access to safe water and sanitation.

Children's lives are getting worse instead of better. **Child poverty is increasing**, child labour is more common, and more children are dropping out of school to find work so that they can help their families get by. Rising prices for basic foodstuffs such as bread are hitting many families hard.

Regional insecurity continues, and tension on the border with Gaza remains high. In January 2008 an Israeli blockade led to acute shortages in Gaza, and the border crossing barrier at Rafah was destroyed. The United Nations estimates that up to 750,000 Palestinians flooded into Egypt to buy food and other supplies, and seek medical help. Most returned to Gaza and Egyptian troops secured the border. But the area remains tense, with further movements of population possible.

Save the Children in Egypt

We set up a regional office in Cairo in 1998. We've now set up separate programmes for Egypt and the occupied Palestinian territory. Since 1998, we've focused on ensuring that children with disabilities can access mainstream schooling. We're now taking that wider and working with parents, teachers, children and the Ministry of Education to make sure that all children have access to good quality education.

We're protecting 1,500 working children and children without parental care, such as street children, and children living in institutions. And we're advocating for legal changes that will protect many more from violence and abuse. We're raising awareness of children's right to have a say in matters that affect them, working with local organisations wherever we can. And we're also a member of the Egypt Disaster and Emergency Task Force, so that we're ready to respond quickly and effectively to any emergencies that arise.

Key areas of work

We're improving the quality of education

Enrolment rates are generally high, but children in poorer areas (such as Upper Egypt) are less likely to be enrolled in school, and many of those who are end up dropping out. The quality of education (including learning methods and the learning environment) is often poor. Children with disabilities used to be denied the right to go to mainstream schools.

We've recently completed a five-year project with our local partner, the Caritas Seti Center, to improve the quality of education in 15 primary schools and 15 kindergartens. Funded by the European Union, the project also worked with local communities to make schools better places for children to learn by encouraging children and parents to participate in school life.

Working with the Egyptian Association for Comprehensive Development, a national NGO, we're improving the quality of education for 2215 children in five primary schools in Fayoum governorate. We carried out a school survey with 600 children and 500 parents to prioritise what needs to change in their school, and we'll help them as they go about making these changes. Over the next year we plan to extend our support to 13 more schools.

We're supporting the Ministry of Education to develop its five-year national plan, based on a policy of inclusive education and with good provision for children with special needs. We're also providing technical support to the ministry to implement the plan. We're using our influence to call for changes to the national Child Law, particularly an inclusive policy for admission in public schools so that no child faces discrimination.

Our work involves building public support for inclusive education, as it's a relatively new concept in Egypt. To do this, we've launched a media campaign, and have succeeded in

getting stories into the press and programmes broadcast on national television. We've also produced a song and video called Learning Together, by Egyptian popstar May Kassab. It was voted best song in a viewers' text vote organised by a TV channel, and it also got great coverage in the Egyptian daily paper, *Rosa El-Youssef*.

We're promoting children's right to protection

Many children experience violence, abuse, exploitation or harm on a daily basis at home, in school or while they work (8% of children aged 6–14 years are thought to be engaged in child labour). And according to UNICEF, 77% of girls aged 15–17 have suffered female genital mutilation and cutting. As a result of our and other organisations' advocacy work, female genital mutilation has been made illegal.

We're working with a local organisation, Bright Tomorrow, to help 1,500 at-risk children in Cairo and Alexandria. These are children who work in dangerous situations and children who are not cared for at home. We're setting up local and national-level child protection committees. We've provided training on child protection and codes of conduct to other organisations, and we plan to extend this training to key agencies such as the police, social services, teachers and community leaders.

We've advocated for changes to the Child Law that will help children throughout the country. As a member of the law amendment task force, we organised a workshop and invited civil society groups, legal experts and interested organisations. This workshop produced a document highlighting the main gaps in the current law and suggesting some amendments that could make a big difference to children's lives. Working with the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood (NCCM), we set up local workshops in eight governorates to gain the support of national organisations and community-based groups. As a result, we collected more than 200 signatures in support of our proposed amendments. Most of our recommendations were included in the draft amendments that were signed by President Mubarak in March 2008 before being debated in the People's Assembly.

We've also produced four factsheets and Q&A booklets to raise media and parliamentary awareness about female genital mutilation, child labour, parental violence and increasing the age for female marriage.

One important area to extend children's protection is the labour law, which at present excludes working children, including those in domestic service and agriculture. We carried out a research study on domestic labour to understand the main problems children face and to support our discussions with the Ministry of Manpower to make sure that children receive protection in future.

Together with UNICEF, we've set up a network of international organisations working on child protection in Egypt. We'll continue to work closely with the government, NGOs such as

NCCM and other groups to ensure that children's rights are protected, on paper and in practice.



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