



What we do in Egypt

- We're improving the quality of education for 4,300 children
- We're protecting 7,000 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 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 the political situation within the country has remained tense since the Gaza conflict in early 2009.

Save the Children in Egypt

We've had a regional office in Cairo since 1998 and last year set up a separate Egypt country programme. We're focusing on protecting children from harm – such as violence in schools and early marriage – and making sure that children with disabilities and those from poor families or minority religious group can go to school. We're 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 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. Over the past year, more than 36,000 children benefited directly from our work, and many more benefited indirectly through our policy work, which led to improvements in government policy and legislation.

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're improving the quality of education for 2,719 children in Fayoum governorate, where 250 students were elected by their peers to represent them on school boards. Based on the results of a survey of 600 students and 500 parents, we're helping schools to tackle issues such as corporal punishment and poor facilities. For example, when student representatives complained about an overflowing septic tank at one school, the head of the local council immediately sent workers to empty it.

Together with the Ministry of Education, we've developed a child protection policy to reduce violence in primary schools. At the Ministry's request, we're coordinating other agencies to implement the strategy.

This year we updated and launched a World Bank-supported report exposing gaps in service provision – including education – for children with disabilities and those living on the streets. Based on interviews with 2,699 service providers and 183 children with disabilities and their families, the report received widespread media coverage.

When a massive landslide buried dozens of homes and damaged schools in Doweika – a shanty town in the west of Cairo – in September 2008, we provided uniforms and school materials for 752 children so that they could transfer to other schools and continue their education. We've also updated our emergency preparedness plans and we're a member of the Egypt Disaster and Emergency Task Force.

We're promoting children's right to protection

Many children are abused and exploited. This can happen at home, in school or while they work. Research we carried out in Fayoum showed that 44% of children in that Governorate

are working, many of them in hazardous conditions. More than three-quarters of girls aged 15–17 have suffered female genital mutilation and cutting.

As part of our advocacy work to improve the country's Child Law, we produced fact sheets and booklets about, for example, female genital mutilation, child labour, parental violence and increasing the age for female marriage. Nearly 95% of these recommendations have been accepted. Female genital mutilation is now illegal, the age of female marriage has been increased from 16 to 18, and children born to unmarried mothers now have the right to a birth certificate – which they need to get healthcare and education.

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 also provided training on child protection and codes of conduct to other organisations.

One important area where we're working to increase 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. We're also producing a toolkit to improve conditions and make it safer for children working in agriculture.

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 National Council for Childhood and Motherhood, and other groups to ensure that children's rights are protected, on paper and in practice.

We're saving children's lives

We've distributed 24,000 hats for newborn babies to help prevent them getting pneumonia – one of the major risks to a newborn baby's life. The hats have also enabled us to talk to mothers and health workers about hygiene and other measures they can take to keep their babies safe. In the coming year, as part of Save the Children's global newborn and child survival campaign, we'll be focusing on improving mothers and babies' healthcare in the slum areas of Cairo and later in the poor rural areas of Upper Egypt.



Save the Children UK
1 St John's Lane London EC1M 4AR
Telephone +44 (0)20 7012 6400
Fax +44 (0)20 7012 6963
savethechildren.org.uk