

**Problems and Challenges Facing  
Marginalized and Vulnerable Children and  
Youth**

**Addressing the Vulnerable Children  
In *Ezbet El Haggana***

**A Case Study in a Squatter District in  
Cairo**

**Dr. Madiha El Safty**

# Outline

- ❖ **Children As a Vulnerable group**
- ❖ **Street Children As a Special Problem**
- ❖ **Prevention Or Treatment?**
- ❖ ***Ezbet El Haggana*: The Selected Site**
- ❖ **The Action-Oriented Project**
- ❖ **Activities**

**❖ Achievements and Outcome**

**❖ The Current Situation: What Next?**

## **Children as a Vulnerable Group:**

- **International, regional, and national laws guarantee the rights of children in Egypt**
- **However, there are still segments outside this scope**
- **Child labor and street children are examples**
- **The repercussions of this situation:**
  - A. physical and moral abuse**

**B. Their existence/prevalence is a violation of human rights**

- **Street children are victims of society**
- **They lack in skills, education, and moral upbringing**
- **They represent a deficiency in demographic characteristics**

## **Street Children As a Social Problem:**

- **It is difficult to estimate the size of the phenomenon because of its sporadic/mobile distribution**
- **The problem is urban, because the rural norms/values support primary relations, leading to emotional/psychological security**
- **Poverty, the major underlying factor, more widespread in the rural milieu, has a stronger negative impact in cities**

▪ **A second factor is the changing family conditions:**

➤ **the breakup of the family as a result of the absence of a parent, especially the father, as a result of divorce, abandonment, imprisonment**

➤ **unemployment**

➤ **The presence of step-parents in the household**

## ➤ **Female heads of households**

- **Studies have also shown that school is another factor: cost, private lessons**

- **Governmental and nongovernmental organizations address the problem:**

- The National Council for Childhood and Motherhood (NCCM): government**

- UNICEF, CARITAS: NGO's**

- **Some of these organizations provide day care services, involving constructive activities, offering medical and hygienic care**
- **Some others are residential for rehabilitation**
- **There are different definitions of the term “street children”:**
  - A. Those that live on the streets and are totally detached from their families**

**B. Those that spend the day on the street**

**But still retain relations with their families**

- **A corollary of both definitions is that these children are out of school**

**▪ This paper perceives any child who spends most of his/her time on the street, irrespective of ties with the family, as a street child, based on the vulnerability/risk of his/ her exposure to the dangers of the street**

## **Prevention or Treatment?**

- **This presentation is about an experiment conducted by the Health and Environment Education Association (HEEA), an Egyptian NGO, addressing “children at risk”, from the point of view of prevention**
- **The World Bank and the Ministry of Social Affairs provided the funds for the period 2005-2006**

## ***Ezbet El Haggana: The Project Site***

▪ **The project site is a squatter settlement, characterized by:**

✓ **Poverty**

✓ **A high crime rate**

✓ **Decayed infrastructure**

✓ **Absence of running water and sewage**

✓ **Unpaved narrow streets**

- ✓ **A High illiteracy rate**
- ✓ **Large family size**
- ✓ **Overcrowded households**
- **Inhabitants are rural migrants from Upper Egypt**
- **Labor: seasonal, informal sector, unemployed**
- **Women mostly in domestic labor**

## **The Action-Oriented Project:**

- **The team of researchers included an anthropologist, a psychiatrist, social workers, and led by the author, a sociologist**
- **The initial phase was a survey of the inhabitants to choose the target population**
- **The sample was as follows:**
  - ❖ **One hundred (100) children, aged 14 and 16, living under conditions of vulnerability:**

**divorced parents and/or living with either one, sometimes with step parents; father in prison; disabled or unemployed breadwinner**

**❖ The families of the above children, one hundred (100) in number**

**❖ One hundred (100) children who had been enrolled in school, but have been absent because of the inability of the parents to pay the fees**

**❖ Twenty-five (25) children who have dropped out from school**

**Activities:**

**▪ The project paid the fees for the 100 students whose parents were unable to afford them**

**▪ Provision for private tutorship for them was also made**

**▪ The 25 dropouts were enrolled in a one-classroom school**

- **Another group of 25 who had never gone to school and were wandering in the streets, were added to them**
- **The one-classroom school is a recent establishment in Egypt meant for the marginalized segments. It has its own curriculum**
- **A clinic was established in the NGO headquarters**
- **Trips were organized for all the children**

- **Seminars on different topics were held in the NGO headquarters, catering to all families in the district**
- **The headquarters also included counseling/psychiatric services to all residents of the district**
- **Training in bead work, sewing and embroidery was given to the girls; carpentry and electric work to the boys**

▪ **Products from these activities were part of the annual exhibition of the Ministry of Education**

**Achievements and Outcome:**

▪ **The main success was the good communication skills of the social workers**

▪ **This led to very good relations with the community, seen in trust and confidence**

- **The NGO premises still witness a flow of children and parents interacting with the research team, for health services, counseling or reporting achievements**
- **The project succeeded in creating a link between the school and the community**
- **The financial burden of education was overcome by paying the school fees, and providing private tutorship**
- **The one-classroom absorbed the dropouts**

**and illiterates**

**▪ Re-integrating the children in education was a major achievement**

**▪ Exposing the children to activities and trips helped develop their personality**

**▪ HEAA, by addressing the “children at risk” has helped upgrade the whole community**

## **The Current Situation: What Next?**

- **HEAA has not stopped its efforts in the district, in spite of the end of the funds**
- **It is now struggling to pursue the follow-up of its work**
- **The premises and clinic are still open to the inhabitants**
- **Seminars and trips continue but in limited numbers**

- **The current source of funds is only from NGO membership fees and a limited number of donations**
- **The fact remains that there are lessons to be learned from the experiment**

**THANK YOU**

This document was created with Win2PDF available at <http://www.daneprairie.com>.  
The unregistered version of Win2PDF is for evaluation or non-commercial use only.