

# Strategic Priority 4

Reaching Out – breaking down barriers and working with all segments of society



The World Organization of the Scout Movement



PROMISING PRACTICES

## The Child Labour Project in Egypt

### The Results

During the life of the project, to the end of 2000, almost 2000 working children have received social care, cultural activities, literacy classes, health care, sports, music, technical skills, vocational training and Scouting activities through the project.



Weekly meetings provide young people with support and a range of activities

The aims of the project were to:

- Improve the living and working conditions of working children through improving their talents, personalities, health, education and vocational skills as well as providing them with safety measures and raising the awareness of the children and their employers regarding occupational safety.
- Contribute to the protection of working children to ensure a healthy development. This includes empowering mothers of working children and potential working children through literacy programmes, health and nutrition awareness and protection of the environment.
- Contribute to the prevention of child labour through the provision of credit and training for vulnerable mothers to enhance their ability to generate income. The purpose is to take the burden off the working children and enable the mothers to send them to school.

The specific achievements of the project undertaken by the Regional Maritime Scouts are:

- contributing to the establishment of a mechanism at local community level for monitoring the situation of working children and those at risk of becoming working children;
- developing the children's personalities, talents, mental and physical abilities, and to strengthen positive traits among the children;
- providing literacy for working children on the project sites;
- facilitating access to community based health services for working children in order to improve their health status, working conditions and safety.



Young people receive information and training in safety issues

- increasing the occupational health awareness among workshop owners, working children and the Scouts and promote the use of safety equipment;



Egypt: Egyptian Scout Federation

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- enhancement of the co-ordination of activities undertaken by Sidi Gaber, Sidi Ali el Sammak, and the Scouts in the field of child-centred protection and development of working children.

## The Reasons

The project was developed in response to the needs of working children, which were identified in Egypt during the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s. Although the minimum age of employment is 14 years of age, young people who drop out of formal education may start vocational training at the age of 12 years. The law does prohibit the employment of young people under the age of 17 in hazardous occupations and includes laws to protect young workers against exploitation and harmful working practices, e.g. their working day is limited to six hours.

The project was developed to respond to the need of children in the West District in Alexandria, who were some of the most deprived in the city. An assessment carried out by the Arab Council for Childhood and Development (ACCD) in July 1996 on working children, revealed a high percentage of illiteracy in this group as well as less than the recommended requirements for energy and calcium.

A further assessment by an international consultant in 1998 revealed the need to include effective mechanisms for promoting and protecting the rights and development of working children. This was possible due to the strong base that had been established in the first stages of the project.

Since 1999, the focus of the project is now child-centred protection and development and a special focus has been developed in relation to working girls. Data is being collected which will contribute to interventions to improve their living and working conditions.

## The Methods

The overall goal of the project was to improve the working and living conditions of working children in selected areas of Alexandria through the adoption of a child-centred approach.



Young people have an opportunity to meet with their peers in the weekly meeting

Weekly gatherings take place every Sunday from 09.00- 16.00 hours where the children are offered a variety of services including a hot meal. The total number of children served during the life of the project is in excess of 2000. The services on offer cover social care, cultural activities, literacy classes, health care, sports, music, technical skills, vocational training and art. Scouting activities are also included.

A series of training events run for owners of the workshops on topics such as occupational safety and security has also been provided. A relationship is built up with the owners of workshops which enables more children to be recruited to the project.

## Our Learning

We have learned of the importance of Scouts working with international and local NGOs to achieve results. Scouting has a specific contribution to make in its:

- capacity to work with young people using a young person centred approach,

- experience in training adults and
- good standing in the community.

The learning from the project has led to similar projects being set up in Karmouz/ West District of Egypt, in conjunction with the NGO Sidi El Sammak and UNICEF. The project has a special focus on the protection of children against all forms of abuse, neglect and exploitation following an assessment carried out by professionals. One hundred young people have also been provided with computer training to promote their future employment as well as to provide them with health and nutrition awareness.



Physical recreation is an important part of the programme

UNICEF has re-initiated a credit programme at Maawa El Sayadeen, as it is convinced that economic incentives and income generating activities for parents represent an effective approach to tackling child labour.

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## Our Future Plans

Scouting in Egypt and in the Arab Region has developed effective relationships and partnerships with NGOs at regional, national and local level. These partnerships are having a very positive impact on Scouting's profile, meeting the needs of the community and supporting the growth and development of young people.

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