



**Urban Children and
Youth in the MENA
Region: Addressing
Priorities in Education**

16-18 May 2005, Dubai

Consortium for Street Children (CSC)

Who we are and what we do....

CSC is an international NGO, established in 1993 and based in the UK. We are a membership organisation and have around 40 members in the UK who partner grassroots organisations working with street children in the developing world.

Working collaboratively with our members and their partners, we aim to:

- Improve the quality and stability of projects to serve street children and prevent further generations of children from being forced to live and work on the street.
- We achieve this by undertaking *capacity building, advocacy and policy development* for our members and their partner organisations.



Who we work for – definitions of street children

- Children who live and work on the streets with limited or no contact with families
- Children who work on the streets who have contact with families
- Children who live on the streets with their families
- Children at risk of taking to street life



CSC's Policy on Street Children and Education

CSC recognises that the need to improve primary education is urgent and well justified.

CSC lobbies for the following:

ACCESS: Access for all children including the most marginalised, e.g. street-living and street-working

QUALITY: NFE projects can be of high quality and need to be recognised and accredited by governments

APPROPRIATE: education needs to be relevant and appropriate to the needs of street children



CSC's Policy on Street Children and Education

If education for street children is accessible, of high quality and appropriate to their needs, it will equip and empower them in difficult circumstances to adapt to the complexities of urban life in the 21st century.



CSC Civil Society Forum for North Africa and the Middle East on Promoting and Protecting the Rights of Street Children, Cairo, Egypt, March 2004

The fifth in a series of forums organised by CSC, this forum was attended by 70 delegates from 10 countries in MENA:

Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia and Yemen.

Key areas of Focus:

Street children and...

- Access to health
- Access to education
- Access to employment & Skill development
- Violence
- The rights of the Arab street girl

Objectives:

- Facilitate networking and sharing of experiences
- To identify good practices of work with street children in MENA
 - To formulate regional policy recommendations
- To formulate country level follow-up action plans



Participants from the forum were united in urging the following:

- All governments of the MENA region must fulfil their obligations towards street children as stipulated in the CRC
- Street & working children in the MENA region be recognised legally and issued with birth certificates and other appropriate documentation
- That the principles of participation, gender sensitivity and non-discrimination are respected
- That governments ensure that children are protected from the worst forms of hazardous labour (ILO Convention 182)

Key policy recommendations from the Forum: **Street Children's Right to Education**

- Enhance and develop the education systems to better suit the current and future development needs of marginalised children
- Governments should implement or devise legalisation protecting children from violence within schools
- Street educator programmes should be developed. Governments and NGOs should work together in training street educators
- Develop flexible learning alternatives to the formal education system specifically for street and working children
- Early childhood education opportunities should be developed especially for vulnerable families



Key policy recommendations from the Forum:

Street Children's Right to Health

- National level awareness programmes need to be developed for street children on health, environment, hygiene, HIV/AIDS, drug abuse, nutrition etc.
- Ensure that each street child has free access to healthcare at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels (such as through public hospitals and/or outreach facilities such as mobile clinics).
- Modules on health education should be incorporated in the training of street educators.



Key policy recommendations from the Forum: Appropriate Skills Development and Income Generation for Street Children

- Governments in the region should develop policies offering vocational training for street children, and should provide recognised accreditation for non-formal programmes.
- NGOs should link non-formal vocational training programmes to private sector enterprise. Non formal vocational training should be appropriate to the local market demands and enable street children to find employment.
- Governments and NGOs should ensure that all street and working children are fully protected from the worst forms of child labour as listed in ILO Convention 182.



Key policy recommendations from the Forum: Protection Issues for Street Children

- Develop and implement in all government, private and NGO institutions working with children a Child Protection Policy that is adhered to by all staff.
- Free telephone helplines should be established for children suffering violence and abuse.
- Enforce existing legislation banning the use of children in armed conflict, as camel jockeys & the trafficking of children.
- Incorporate CRC and UN guidelines into police training
- Encourage transparency & accountability systems to avoid rights violations during the arrest and processing of street children. Encourage the provision of free legal assistance.
- Encourage the formation of a culture of non-violence on the street, in institutions and across society as a whole.



Key policy recommendations from the Forum: **The Arab Street Girl**

- NGOs and governments should design and implement more programmes specifically targeting the needs of street girls.
- More field research and baseline surveys are needed on the specific vulnerabilities and experience of Arab street girls.
- Governments to devise or implement existing legislation giving birth certificates and legal identification for the babies of street mothers. They should also provide pre-natal and post-natal support services for pregnant street girls and child care facilities for mother and child.
- Community awareness raising programmes are needed to address gender inequalities and violations within the domestic sphere and to show that the state has the obligation to intervene if girls are subject to these violations.



Amongst all the above policy recommendations, a prominent issue that stood out was that:

Street children in the MENA region are victims of severe stigma in society.

The challenge for all of us now is to work together and take up our responsibilities to change the concept of a street child from a social burden to a productive individual.

