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# **SECTION 1:**

# **Introduction**

**PICTURE  
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## ***1. Introduction***

### **Cairo Education Insight Project Background**

Refugee Youth Project has been working with Children's Cooperative (with funding from Comic Relief) to facilitate a six month young person-led research project exploring refugee and Egyptian children's experiences of education in Cairo. This project has engaged young refugees and Egyptians in gathering information from their peers, community members, teachers and professionals to improve understanding of the barriers that some children face in accessing and/or achieving in education, to propose potential solutions to the challenges, and to inform advocacy efforts on educational rights for all children.

Forty-five young people (ranging in age from twelve to eighteen years old) living in Cairo including a mix of Egyptian, Sudanese, Ethiopian, Eritrean, Somali and Iraqi participants were trained in research methods and ethics and were supported as they conducted research on educational issues. The young people worked in small groups to collect data from their peers and community members in different areas of Cairo (mainly informal settlements) and were assisted by adult research facilitators from various refugee communities. In September 2012, the young people participated in data analysis workshops, discussed recommendations for improvements to education in Cairo, and created a film about this issue.

### **Refugee Youth Project**

Refugee Youth Project is a UK-based charity founded in 2004 that works with community-based partners to provide support and activities for young refugees and asylum seekers. We currently work with young refugees in Lebanon, Egypt, Nepal and the UK.

Our projects enable access to educational and social development opportunities for young refugees and forced migrants, and build sustainable community-based networks of support. We develop and share innovative, participatory methodologies to address issues facing young refugees and forced migrants in the UK and internationally.

### **Children's Cooperative**

Children's Cooperative is a Cairo charity which aims to promote the wellbeing and empowerment of socially marginalized children through participatory educational activities. It focuses on working with children of different cultures and backgrounds, and promoting mutual tolerance and understanding between them. Children's Cooperative works with vulnerable children in Egypt who face discrimination based on poverty, class, race, gender, religion and/or ability including refugee and displaced children, street children and child labourers.

## **Cairo Education Insight Project Aims**

- To engage with marginalised children, families and communities in order to make recommendations to enhance the quality of primary, secondary and informal education opportunities for young people in Cairo.
- To engage these groups in planning additional services (e.g. community or peer-led tutoring, training for teachers or children's committees in schools) to improve access, retention, achievement in education in their own schools and communities.
- To support young people to create a film and report to present their findings to other key stakeholders including UN agencies, NGOs, children's rights and education networks, government representatives and journalists.

To create an advocacy strategy with the young people for realising educational rights for refugee, female, and disabled children in Egypt that takes account of wider issues including health, immigration status and livelihood hardships

# SECTION 2: Research Participants, Methods and *Ethics*

**"We can contribute to providing assistance for refugees  
and be part of the solutions "**

**Sudanese young researcher**

## ***2. Research Participants, Methods and Ethics***

### **Participants**

We worked diligently in a short period of time to consult over 700 participants including young people, parents, teachers and representatives from organisations providing education services.

### **Methods**

Although we received training in group interview methodologies, we focussed on conducting one-to-one interviews with peers and families from our communities. Drama and art workshops were also conducted with fifty young people, resulting in art work included (in this report) and a play.

### **Ethical Issues**

Our training covered issues in ethical research. This included ensuring that participants give prior informed consent and that the information used in our report is anonymous so as to protect the identities of participants. We are sharing our findings with the communities who were involved in the research. We faced some ethical problems in the research, including unrealistically high expectations from some participants, who hoped we would be able to solve the problems they face in education. Other adults and children felt worried about giving us information. For example, some refugees were scared we had been sent by the government in their home country.

### **Challenges**

We faced some challenges in conducting the research. This included meeting some people who did not want to answer our questions: *“Sometimes we got bored because respondents did not answer all the questions directly or gave long answers without responding to the questions”* (Sudanese young researcher). We also found that: *“Some teachers were worried because the government does not allow NGOs into schools to ask questions as they report bad things about the schools so some teachers were scared to answer our questions”* (Egyptian young researcher).

Some of the adults we met did not believe we were able to undertake research, and others asked for money in exchange for answering our questions. Initially, it was difficult to find people to participate in the research: *“Some parents underestimated us as young people asking for information”* (Iraqi young researcher). Additionally, *“we faced some difficulties asking questions to children out of school”* (Egyptian young researcher) and *“some Sudanese people asked us ‘where are you from and what is your tribe’”* (Sudanese young researcher).

We also overcame many practical obstacles to complete the research including travelling around Cairo and working throughout Ramadan: *“We had to travel long distances to places to implement data collection”* (Sudanese young researcher) and there were *“delays during the summer and especially Ramadan”* (Eritrean young researcher).

## Limitations

Our training included the differences between qualitative and quantitative research methods, but did not cover in depth training on using surveys. This was our first experience undertaking research. We carried out significantly more interviews than we expected at the beginning of this project, and this has made it possible to highlight some interesting trends in terms of the numbers of children and parents experiencing particular problems. However, this was not a statistically selected sample so it represents the people interviewed but not necessarily the whole population of refugee and Egyptian children and families. The interviews were conducted in many different languages, and the questions were not tested before beginning the research and were not asked in a standardised way across the communities. There may have been some problems with translation between the multiple languages in which the interviews were conducted.

## Impact on young researchers

Despite the challenges, the research was an amazing experience. We learned about our own communities, developed confidence in ourselves, gained new skills and *“we met new kids and people”* (Iraqi young researcher).

Some of us began to value ourselves and our abilities more: *“I learned that I’m a child with value, but before I felt that only adults had value, so now I realise I have my own personality as part of the community”* (Egyptian young researcher). This made some of us feel that we can help others and find solutions to the problems we face:

*“We can contribute to providing assistance for refugees and be part of the solution”* - Sudanese young researcher

*“We have become more responsible for solving others’ problems.”*-Eritrean young researcher

We have realised that as children we bring something new to this research. We have ideas for how to solve the problems we found that adults might not think of:

*“As children we have more ideas than adults about the situations. We can communicate with both children and adults, because as children we learn how to communicate at all levels, whereas adults do not”* (Egyptian young researcher).

We found that when our family and community members understood more about the research they were happy with our work: *“After parents and family were convinced about research they became very positive”* (Ethiopian young researcher).

We also learned and developed skills that will help us in other parts of our life:

*“We learned to become more patient and comforting.”* - Sudanese young researcher

*“We learned how to work together in a team and to help others.”* - Iraqi young researcher

*“We learned about making films including the importance of lighting and sound and angles.”* - Somali young researcher

# SECTION 3: Research Findings

### ***3. Research Findings***

#### **3.1 Education Services in Cairo**

We interviewed people working for UNHCR, Catholic Relief Services (CRS), AMERA, and the Egyptian Centre for Education Rights in order to learn more about the educational services provided for Egyptian and refugee children and young people in Cairo.

**UNHCR** (the UN refugee agency) informed us they work on ‘youth and education issues as part of the mission we have to protect refugees in Egypt.’ UNHCR works with local partner organisations (including Catholic Relief Services) to ‘offer educational services for all refugees (48,000) of all nationalities on Egyptian soil, from primary school through secondary school.’ UNHCR works on ‘guaranteeing free education for all refugees in Egypt by enrolling them in several types of schools in Egypt, including private schools for refugees that are administered by civil society organisations.’ Some children ‘enrol in public (government-run) schools if they are authorised to do so’ (see below for more details).

**Catholic Relief Services** ‘provides educational opportunities for 8,000 students a year’ through their scholarship programme. These include ‘elementary, primary and secondary school pupils.’ Catholic Relief Services also has an **education quality unit**, which assists refugee schools in Egypt. There are more than twenty schools for refugees in Cairo and Catholic Relief Services works with seventeen of them to provide teacher training, textbook printing for the Sudanese curriculum used in many refugee schools and language classes for refugees who do not speak Arabic.

**AMERA** provides legal, psychosocial, and community outreach services for refugees in Cairo. There is a Children and Young People’s team which supports unaccompanied minors in Egypt without their families. This team assists unaccompanied minors as they attempt to access educational services.

**Egyptian Centre for Education Rights (ECER)** organises people (workers, teachers, parents and students) in groups to defend education rights, and supports teachers’ unions to defend the rights of teachers and administrators. It pressures the Egyptian government to improve education policies.

#### **Barriers to refugee children’s access to education in Egypt**

Refugee children find it difficult to access public schools and educational opportunities. The Egyptian government put a reservation on Article 22 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), meaning refugee children are not entitled to free education in public schools. Sudanese children are allowed to attend public schools, since the Four Freedoms Agreement between the Egyptian and Sudanese governments in 2004. Although in theory some refugee children should be able to access public schools if they can produce residence permits, and academic certificates (or a letter from the Ministry of Refugee Affairs explaining why these are not available), in practice these documents can be hard to acquire and are not always recognised by schools which leads school officials to often refuse to register refugee students.

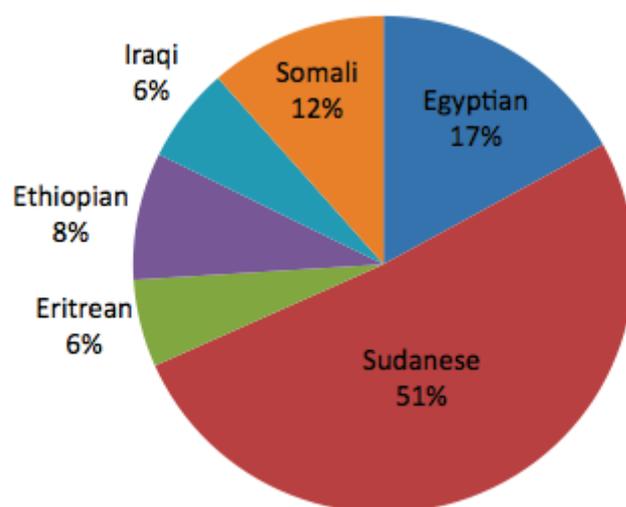
### Problems faced by organisations in offering educational services:

- Some refugees find it difficult to understand how to apply for education scholarships due to language barriers (Catholic Relief Services)
- Funding limitations (UNHCR and Catholic Relief Services)
- Reaching and providing information to a large number of refugees living in an urban area can be complicated and challenging (UNHCR)
- Difficulties monitoring the quality of services delivered to the refugee communities (UNHCR)
- Problems in securing higher education opportunities for refugees in Egypt (UNHCR)
- Language barriers for refugee children and young people who do not speak English or Arabic make it difficult for them to access education (AMERA)
- Lack of information on education services for refugees in Cairo (AMERA).
- The Egyptian government does not perceive education as a right but rather views it as merely an investment (ECER).

### 3.2 Children and young people's perspectives

We interviewed 529 Egyptian and refugee children and young people. Of these interviewees, 34% were 5-11 years old, 55% were 12-17 years old, and 11% were over 18. The children and young people interviewed were from various ethnic and national backgrounds including 51% Sudanese, 17% Egyptian, 12% Somali, 8% Ethiopian, 6% Eritrean, and 6% Iraqi. The proportion refugee children interviewed from different national communities is similar to UNHCR's figures on the percentages of these groups registered with the agency in Egypt (56% from Sudan, 17% from Iraq, 16% from Somalia, 4% from Eritrea, and 4% from Ethiopia). Disabled children were consulted as part of the research including interviews with 15 disabled males and 15 disabled females.

### Percentages of Children interviewed by nationality



## How do you get to school?

Almost all (99%) of the Egyptian children we spoke to can walk to their local school. As one Egyptian mother said, *"All the Egyptian schools are next to our houses, so the children do not have to struggle to get to school."* Although, some refugee children (particularly Iraqi children of whom 30% walk to school) attend local Egyptian schools, only 12% of all refugee children interviewed walk to school. This is because there are only a small number of schools that are specifically for refugee children. These are in the centre of town, yet many refugee families reside in areas far away. The rest of the refugee children we spoke to take at least one form of transportation (bus, minibus or metro) and 24% take multiple forms of transportation.

*"I walk to school, as it is close to home, most of the elementary and junior high schools are in the same area, in Sayeda Zeinab."* - Egyptian girl, 13

*"School is near home."* - Iraqi girl, 9

*"I go to school at 4.30am each day. We get the minibus [a small van with 20 passenger seats which is a cheap way to travel long distances], then the metro, then another minibus to get to school."* - Sudanese girl, 15

*"School is very far, I get transport and then the metro because school is in Al-Esaaf and I live in Al-Ma'adi."* - Ethiopian boy, 14

*"I take a minibus then the metro to get to school."* - Eritrean boy, 11

*"A school bus comes to the house."* - Ethiopian girl, 15

*"When I don't find transport I go back home, because I'm not able to walk."* - Sudanese girl, 12

## Where do you get school necessities from?

Children manage to get their school supplies from a number of different sources including their parents, siblings, other relatives (including those living outside Egypt) and from international organisations providing education services in Egypt.

Amongst the Egyptian children, 56% reported earning money themselves to pay for their school supplies, compared with only 5% of refugee students, who are more likely to receive these from their parents (57% - 34% from mothers and 23% from fathers) or Catholic Relief Services (32%). This is compared with 44% of Egyptian parents paying for these school costs (8% mothers and 36% fathers). This may be partly because many refugees are unable to find work and are more likely to rely on funds from international organisations in Cairo or from relatives abroad.

*"My elder brother works in a workshop, he helps with household expenses." - Egyptian girl, 9*

*"My mum and dad"- Iraqi boy, 14*

*"My maternal aunt sends me money for school from the UK, she takes responsibility for my education"- Ethiopian girl, 13*

*"From Caritas and the Catholic Relief Services"- Eritrean boy, 7*

*"My mum works long hours and she gives me things I need for school"- Sudanese girl, 8*

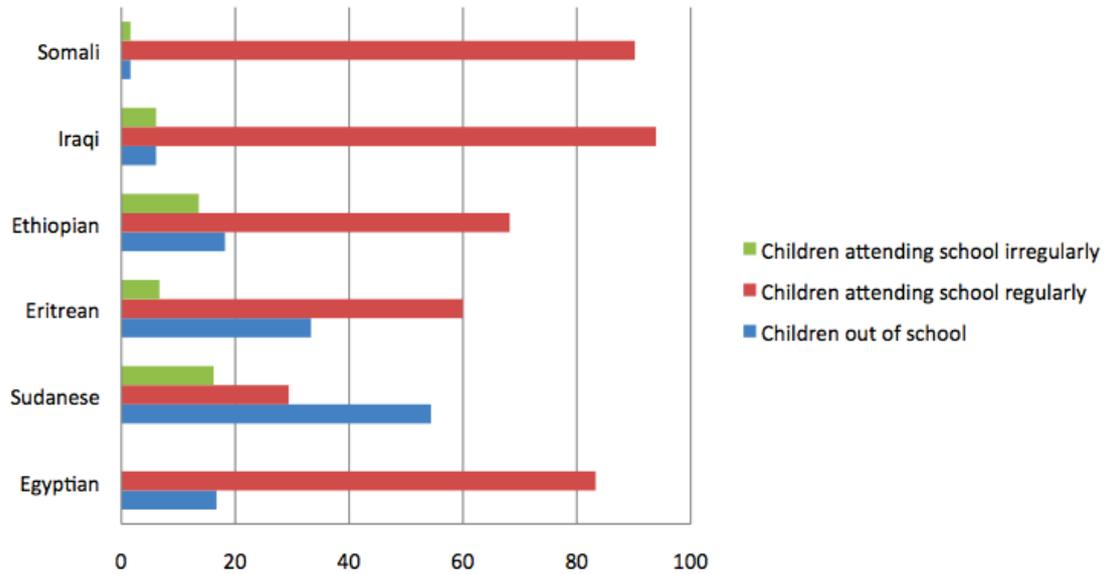
*"Caritas and the Catholic Relief Agency, and relatives send us money from abroad"- Somali boy, 12*

### **Do any problems stop you from going to school?**

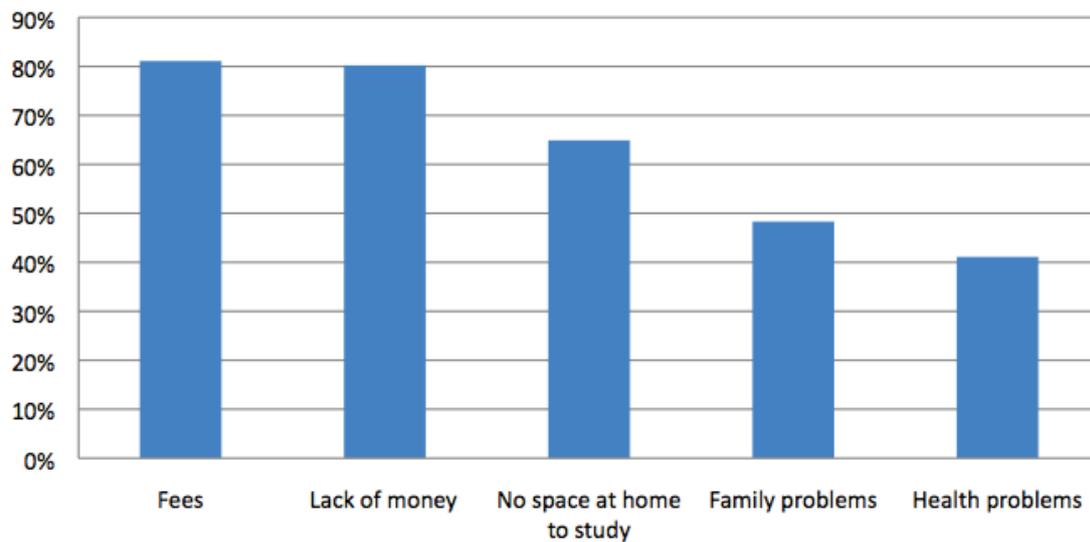
Of the 529 children interviewed, 289 (55%) are able to attend school regularly and a further 55 (10%) of children said they attend school sometimes. However 35% of children are not attending school at all. None of the disabled children interviewed attend school. Despite some variations across the different nationalities, the overall percentages of males (35%) and females (34%) out of school are similar. Across national groups there are some differences. In particular, 54% of Sudanese children interviewed are not attending school. This is a higher percentage than amongst all other nationalities where a total of 35% of all children interviewed and 38% of refugee children interviewed are out of school. This includes 33% of Eritrean, 18% of Ethiopian, 17% of Egyptian, 6% of Iraqi and 2% of Somali interviewees being out of school.

*"One of my children works as street seller and he is a 16-year-old. The other is washing vehicles, so that we can cover our basic needs." - Sudanese mother*

## Percentages of children interviewed in and out of school by nationality



## Top five problems preventing children from attending school



### ***Financial Difficulties***

The biggest challenge faced by both Egyptian and refugee students is financial difficulties, which were mentioned by 80% of children who feel that lack of money in general is a barrier to attending school regularly. Additionally, 81% specifically reported that paying school fees is a challenge that may stop children attending school. Inflation has increased greatly since the revolution in 2011, so it has become even harder for families to pay school expenses (which include the annual registration fee, school uniform, the morning meal, stationery, textbooks and transport). One of the issues for both Egyptian and refugee families is that to

due to the expenses that would be accrued from sending every one of their children to get an education, parents often choose only one or two children to send to school.

*"[The main problem is] school costs." - Sudanese boy, 9*

*"We are a large family of 11 children and the problem of tuition is big issues for all my sisters: Mum [only] sends me to school with my younger brother." - Somali girl, 10*

*"I left school because I couldn't pay school fees and I needed to pay even more for private lessons, so I registered at UNHCR, and now I am looking to go abroad and complete my education."- Sudanese girl, 18*

The Iraqi students in particular, are astonished to find that in Egypt you have to pay registration fees for school, since it is free in Iraq. There is also an assumption that Iraqis and some other refugee communities who came to Egypt are wealthy people with lots of money. As a result, landlords charge double prices, and schools also demand more money. Some families have closed files (have been refused asylum) which means that they are not getting support with fees.

### ***Lack of space to study***

Lack of space at home was mentioned by 65% of the children interviewed including both Egyptian and refugee young people. This means that children cannot do their homework easily or study for exams:

*"I don't want to go to school when the madam is angry because I didn't do my homework." Sudanese boy, 6*

### ***Challenges working and studying***

72% (or 65 interviewees) of Egyptian children said that they have to work full or part-time to earn a living for their family e.g. in wood workshops, cutting marble or in construction and house painting. However, only 10% (or 45 interviewees) of refugee children interviewed reported missing school in order to work.

*"I work every summer vacation so I provide my school expenses throughout the year."- Egyptian girl, 14*

### ***Health Problems, Disability and Domestic Responsibilities***

Difficulties in attending school due to health problems were mentioned by 41% of children interviewed. About three in ten (28% or 148 interviewees) of children and young people reported responsibilities at home including household work, babysitting younger siblings, and caring for sick or disabled family members sometimes prevented them from attending school.

*"I take care of my mom who is sick. I go to the hospital once a week with her." - Somali girl, 15*

*"..sick family members, family problems and my father's death." - Eritrean girl, 11*

*"All my sisters are in school, except my little sister who has a mental illness." - Sudanese girl, 9*

18% of children (93 interviewees) said that disability stopped them from attending school. This included serious injuries such as broken legs or arms and staying at home to assist in the care of disabled siblings or parents.

*"I become absent from school because I am tired and I'm not able to walk."- 15-year-old Sudanese girl*

*"I fell down for four floors and broke both my legs so I couldn't go to school for a whole year." - 10 year-old Eritrean boy*

### **Family Problems**

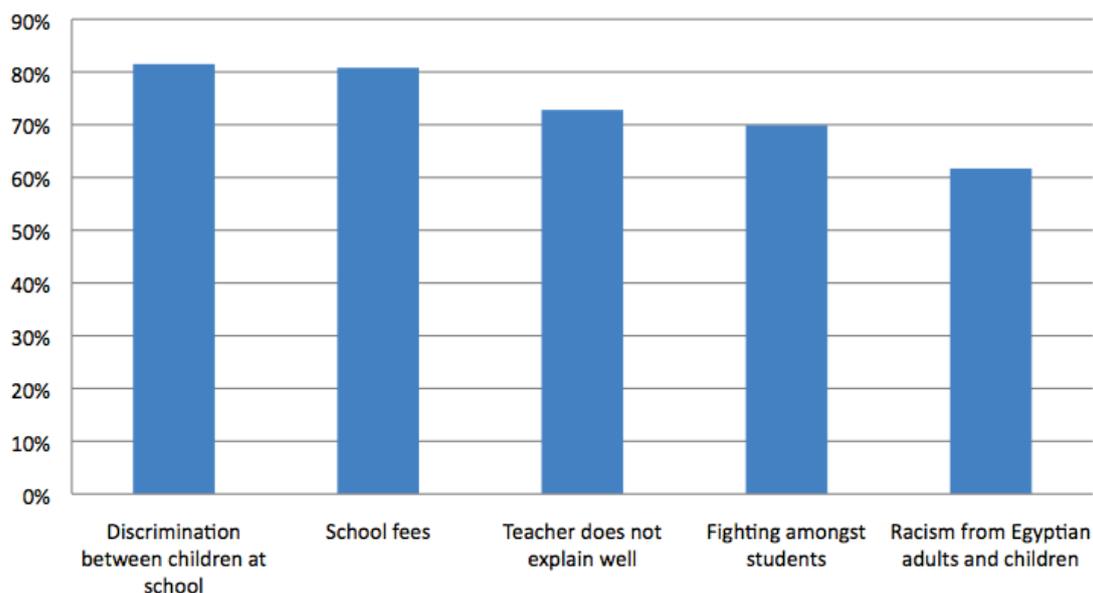
Many refugees reported that family problems prevent them from going to school and this is particularly high amongst the Somali community with 73% of young Somalis mentioning this difficulty. A higher proportion of refugee children (52%) than Egyptian students (28%) told us that family problems prevent them from attending school.

#### **Case Study of Sudanese Family**

In one Sudanese family, health problems have made it difficult for a child to attend school. The mother suffers from osteoporosis, which hinders her movement. The father suffers from a gunshot wound in his hand and his back. He is an old man and is not able to move well. They do not have any way of alleviating their situation, and for this reason the mother sells tissues in the area around her house. She says "my eldest son is absent from school because of this situation, and due to the fact that we have not got enough money to meet educational or even daily needs. His teacher wants him to be in school, because he is a clever kid. However, this situation does not help his attendance at school or ability to continue the school year. We don't even have food in the house, and our clothes are very old and ragged."

## What problems do you have at school?

### Top five problems faced by children at school



### **Harassment and Discrimination**

82% of children (or 432 interviewees) reported facing harassment from teachers and other students at school.

Harassment at school means all unacceptable behaviour including students stealing another student's money; or teachers or students joking about or insulting you because of your clothes, class, or religion; physical violence from other students or corporal punishment from teachers.

Refugee students also face harassment inside and outside school with Egyptian children calling refugees 'chocolate' – 'they forgot you in the oven – that is why you are black' or calling younger girls 'prostitute' or telling you bad words.

Although none of the Egyptian children experience racism, 77% (or 69 interviewees) of Egyptian children explained that they faced discrimination based on differences such as being overweight, disabled, or lacking confidence.

*"There is a girl in at our school and she is overweight. The students call her 'mefashwla' (uncontrolled body) as an insult."* - Egyptian girl, 12

*"An Egyptian child has a problem with the way he walks, and the other students call him 'limping boy' and they insult him saying 'your dad is a limper too.'"* - Egyptian child, 14

Iraqi and Sudanese girls also say they are asked why they are not wearing a *hijab* (veil) at school. This has become an issue at primary school as well as secondary school. Children say that this interferes in their personal life since *"it is as if the hijab has become part of school uniform."*

*"I am not veiled but I wear a hijab to avoid harassment in the school and street."* - Southern Sudanese girl, 13

A total of 291 children said they experienced verbal, physical or sexual harassment from teachers. This includes 55% of students reporting receiving beating as a form of punishment which is common in many schools in Egypt. 78% of Egyptian children experience beating and abuse from teachers compared with only 50% of refugee children. This may be because schools for refugee children have introduced rules preventing teachers from beating students. The teachers beat children on sensitive places e.g. their head, their bottom, the soles of their feet, and the back of calves.

*"[teachers name] is the best teacher because he doesn't beat us on all parts of our body."* - Sudanese girl, 9.

*"There is a lot of school work, and [I don't like] being hit by the teachers."* - Sudanese boy, 12

*"One teacher insults us and our parents, and screams and hits us."* - Sudanese girl

*"I have a lot of harassment because of the colour of my skin from the teachers, I'm trying to ignore it to stop them from giving me low scores in my subjects."* - Eritrean girl, 10

## **Racism**

Of the children interviewed, 74% (or 327 interviewees) of refugee students reported experiencing racism from Egyptian adults and children on the way to school. Additionally, the 82% of children who reported suffering discrimination at school included racism in this definition.

*"Yes we do get harassed by Egyptian pupils, they say to us 'chocolate', 'black', 'brown' and they describe us in lots of different ways, and all we can do is be patient and distance ourselves from them and try to stick together."* - Sudanese boy, 12

*"Sometimes [we face] bullying because we do not know Arabic. There are some students who speak and we are shy because we do not know if they are talking to us or not. In class a student has come, I don't know which country he is from, he doesn't know English or Arabic, he came to the class and when the teacher asked him a question he didn't know how to say anything. This got the pupils really excited and they laughed at him and he nearly started to cry but the teacher took him to the head"* - Ethiopian child (male), 14

*"The Egyptian children tell me that I smell." - Sudanese girl, 7*

*"Egyptian students tease us because of our Arabic language difficulties" - Somali boy, 10*

*"Inside the school there is no problem, but there is an Egyptian school next door where the Egyptian children insult me saying, 'Ya samra, ya black, chocolate.'" - Sudanese child, 16*

*"In the street I have been harassed by many Egyptians. I can tell they are saying bad words." - Sudanese girl, 15*

### ***Violence and fighting amongst students***

Violence and fighting among students was mentioned by 69% of our interviewees. The teachers do not intervene, and some even encourage students to beat each other by saying that one of them has made a mistake.

*"What most bothers me at school is violence among children." - Iraqi girl, 13*

*"Children hit each other and using dangerous things such as knives." - Eritrean child, 16*

*"There have been fights and problems in school after the revolution." - Egyptian girl*

### ***Problems with students' behaviour***

43% (or 230 interviewees) of the children interviewed said that problems at school include bad behaviour of students such as smoking or swearing. There is also sexual assault/harassment of girls (e.g. boys pulling their skirts or *hijab*) inside and outside school, but the teachers do not say anything. Some children are practising sexual behaviour with each other.

*"Rude words and cursing, I complained to my teacher and she didn't do anything." - Egyptian girl, 9*

*"Fallings out between students in school. I don't do anything." - Eritrean boy, 12*

### ***Gang violence***

50 children (or 11%) mentioned gangs who hang out in front of the refugee schools. They carry long knives and wait for kids outside the door. Once they killed a student in front of the school. Some gangs are inside and some are outside school, but the main problem is that they are stealing money and mobiles. Some of the students spy on kids to tell the gang members outside when particular individuals are coming out of school and have money. Some students said that you need to join one of the gangs to get protection.

## **Private Lessons**

Private lessons are when the teacher does not explain well inside class and then holds an extra class at home or at school (either one-to-one or in a small group (up to six) to give you the information you need. In private they help you to pass the exam, but in class they do not - their behaviour is different. If the kids do not take the private lessons, they may be insulted, beaten or harassed by teachers or could be sent out from school. The teachers want more money as they only earn 300-500 EGP per month. We have seen teachers passing out exam questions during private lessons or telling them what to study, as the teacher is setting the questions. But in secondary school the government sets the exam so it is more official.

The need to attend and pay for private lessons causes problems for 59% (or 314 interviewees) of the students we spoke with (including 83% of Egyptian students and 54% of refugee students). Private lessons cost around 40-60 LE per subject for one lesson per month. This amount is considered excessive for families to pay for all their children since there are five or six subjects even at the primary school level.

73% of students (or 386 interviewees) mentioned the related issue that the teacher does not explain well in class, or gives them too much homework (52% or 274 interviewees). This can be a way of ensuring that students pay the extra for the private lessons. Additionally, 33% of the students said that teachers attend irregularly.

In Egyptian schools private lessons are mandatory, but in refugee schools students can choose to take private lessons. In refugee schools (e.g. St Andrews), they have a summer programme to support kids with difficulties learning, either free or for a small amount.

## **Language barriers**

197 children or 45% of the young refugees interviewed mentioned difficulties with understanding Arabic, which compounds the difficulties with homework, or subpar teaching in class. An Ethiopian girl told us: "*The Arabic language is a big problem for me, I cannot speak in the Egyptian dialect and teachers and pupils are always laughing at me.*"



### **3.3 Parents' and Caregivers' Perspectives**

The young researchers carried out 218 interviews with parents including 65 Egyptian, 58 Sudanese, 17 Eritrean, 20 Ethiopian, 35 Iraqi and 23 Somali parents. Interviews were conducted with 169 mothers and 49 fathers.

#### **How do you pay for your child's school costs?**

For refugee families, UNHCR and Catholic Relief Services give school tuition grants to access public, private, or refugee community schools every year, which ranges from 550 up to 2700 EGP depending on school type and grade. Families have to pay all the other costs, including transport, food and uniform and school materials. 93% of refugee parents pay these costs for their children.

Some refugee families receive support from Caritas for rent and food, and they sometimes use this money for school costs. Only a small proportion (3%) of refugee children both work and attend school, and the majority of refugee young people (76%) do not work at all.

Of the Egyptian families, 97% of parents work to pay for school materials, along with 68% of sons who also contribute money to their siblings' education fees. 94% of Egyptian parents reported that their children are both working and going to school and only 6% of parents reported having children who do not work at all.

*"I am unemployed and I get help from Caritas. Sometimes they cut support for up to five months. And I have a girl who has to walk to school and I'm not able to get loans, and I'm not able to provide her with anything."* - Mother

*"I have three children, one of them is disabled and she doesn't go to school because there is no school in our area which can meet her needs. I work so that I can give them their school things."* - Mother

*"We cannot give them all of the things for school because we have little means. We take some money from our food budget to do so."* - Sudanese mother

*"The children are in school and we have to scrounge from work in order to be able to offer what they need."* – Sudanese mother

*"From the Catholic Relief agency, and from my personal funds."* - Iraqi father

*"My family sends some money from Canada, and the rest I get from the Catholic Relief Agency."* -Somali mother

*"I work in other households in order to provide things for my children in school"* - Sudanese mother

*"The two children work in the holidays in the supermarket delivery service."* - Sudanese mother

*"Our children in Egypt work and help with household and school costs. The children work in a mechanical workshop."*- Egyptian mother

*"My eldest son works, in order to provide for our daily needs, and his sisters work in the holidays."* - Egyptian mother

*"All of the children are working, so that they can help themselves and can avail themselves of what they need for school."* - Sudanese father

*"We rely on support from Caritas and the Catholic relief agency."* - Eritrean mother

*"We are not able to provide for school needs."* - Sudanese guardian

## **How far is school from home?**

Refugee parents confirmed what children said, namely, that many live far from schools and travel long distances in the mornings:

*"School is very far from home and they leave at 5am and come back at 4pm."*- Female carer

*"The school is far from the house and they get there using two types of transport."*-  
Male carer

*"School is very far, they use two forms of transport to get to school in Saad Zaghloul. They leave at 6am and come back at 4pm."* – Sudanese mother

*"School is far, they get the metro 5 stops and some kids get a minibus as well."* -  
Somali mother

*"We paid to share the school bus, so that my daughter could get to school, and this money came from the last of the household budget."* - Ethiopian Mother

*"All of the Egyptian schools are next to our house, so the children do not have to struggle to get to school."* – Egyptian mother

*"We live in 'Arba wa Nus and the school is in the centre of town, the kids get four different types of transport every day."* – Sudanese mother

*"School is far from home, they leave at 5am and come back at 3pm."* – Sudanese male guardian

### **Are you satisfied with your children's school? Why?**

Amongst the parents interviewed, only 35% said they are satisfied with their children's school. However, none of the Egyptian parents were satisfied with their children's school, compared with 50% of refugee parents. Parents who were not satisfied mentioned issues about fights, and disorganisation, and poor teaching at the schools.

*"My children do not work and the school is close to home, it is disorganised and they do not work with them on their comprehension and understanding."* - Eritrean mother

*"The current level of instruction is good, but our own instruction is preferable."* -  
Iraqi father

*"I have five children at school. I work with them on their comprehension sometimes with their arithmetic. The level of instruction is bad."* - Sudanese mother

*"The school has racial divisions. The Muslim children are bullied by the Christian children because it is a Christian school. They say to them 'hey foreigner' and punish them for their mistakes. My children do not work and the school's level is not good, but we do what we can."* - Male carer

### Refugee Parent Case study

"The school is far, they leave at 6am and they come back at 3pm. They only get one meal. I do not have a solution for any of these problems, the solution requires a teacher, and a teacher needs money but sometimes our (financial) situation is difficult. My children do not work and the flat is small and there is no space to play and my children suffer from anaemia. I am not satisfied with the level of instruction and I have to work with them on comprehension and arithmetic. "

### How do you treat your children when they make mistakes?

Parents use a combination of methods to deal with children's behaviour. 31% said they beat their children when they make mistakes. 33% explained they discuss the mistake with their children and discuss why it is a problem. 35% use a mixture of beating and discussion.

*"We sometimes work with them on arithmetic and sometimes on discussion work."*  
Sudanese mother

*"We work with them on arithmetic and, with the older ones, we forbid them from going out and withhold money."* - Egyptian mother

*"By writing and explaining things to them, despite the fact that they are still children at this age, they insist on not doing the right thing. However, we advise them of the right way to behave."* - Iraqi mother

*"We work with them on making right their mistakes sometimes through punishment, and sometimes beating them."* - Sudanese mother

### Case study of a Sudanese female carer

"There is no possibility of the child without private lessons, and without that children are not able to be successful or to move to the next class, or to provide what is necessary for school and leisure. My children do not understand their studies and there is no help for them from their teachers with their studies. I am not satisfied with the level of instruction; I don't think it is enough. Transport is difficult, the school is far and the children have to take two forms of transport in order to get to school. I fear for them because of the route, and the time they spend in school and getting to and from school. It goes from 6am to 4pm. I don't have any working children and I work with them on their arithmetic and their comprehension. The livelihood situation is very difficult, as is the security situation in the country after the revolution, and the violence on the street. I have fears in relation to the refugees, I cannot offer any leisure to my children, they spend most of their time in the apartment or with the Sudanese neighbours that live in the area."

### Sudanese Family Case Study

The children are constantly exposed to fights and verbal abuse from their Egyptian neighbours. One day, their son was doing the washing. Drops of water from his washing dripped down onto the washing of an Egyptian family, and he got into a fight with them. He attempted to stab them with a knife, which sent his mother into a panic. She did not let her children leave the house and decided to take them to school and bring them back or not to let them go to school, and completely stopped them leaving the house.

### 3.4 Schools and Teachers' Perspectives

We interviewed twenty-six teachers including fifteen Egyptian and eleven Sudanese teachers since most refugee schools are run by Sudanese refugees. We also visited twenty-four schools to find out more about the service they provide, the problems they face and their suggestions for solutions.

It can be difficult for refugee schools to find qualified teachers. Absenteeism is also a significant problem especially for unaccompanied minors and the older children who will go out to work for a couple of days a week to try to support themselves and/or their families (St Andrews School Director).

#### **How do you deal with children who do not do their homework?**

Fifteen of the teachers talk to the children: *"we give children advice on the importance of doing homework."* Four teachers explained they made children repeat their writing or homework as punishment. One teacher said *"We explain to students that it is not ok to miss their homework and that neglecting doing homework is not in their interests. We also tell the school administration"*. Another teacher said *"we asked to meet children's guardian/parents to find out the reasons why their children do not do their homework."*

#### **How do you deal with children who cannot understand your subject?**

We asked all the teachers about how they handle students who have problems with language. They assured us that they support these students. One Egyptian teacher said, *"there is tutoring program (private lessons) students can register and join in."* Other teachers reported that they use various methods to communicate with these students. They try to be consistent in order to gain students' trust and explain the parts of the lesson that they have not understood.

#### **How do you help children who face difficulties in learning?**

We asked 26 teachers about how they deal with students who are behind in their studies. Sixteen teachers reported that they try to help children as much as possible:

*"I try to go over past lessons with the student"*

*"I have a special period at the end of each week devoted to helping and motivating students"*

*"Every teacher helps students who are behind".*

Seven teachers mentioned offering private lessons (although students must pay for these) and one of the teachers provided *“intensive support.”*

Three teachers who work in refugee schools mentioned they are happy to give their free time to help children. One of the teachers explained that he gives his own time for free: *“I devote personal time to it in the holidays.”* Another teacher agreed that some children need extra help as *“they are not able to catch up the syllabus, unless I can sit with them when the class is calm”*.

# SECTION 4: Research Outcomes and Recommendations



#### 4. Research outcomes and recommendations

Our research has already led to some new actions and initiatives which aim to improve education for young Egyptians and refugees living in Cairo. This includes adults and organisations taking note of what we have found out and taking our opinions seriously.

- We are working with UNHCR to set up a children and young people's advisory board made up of representatives from our different national communities.
- We plan to organise summer activities for the young researchers to keep our group working together
- We will keep working together as Egyptian and refugee young people

#### **Other solutions we are already working on:**

- Increase young researchers' networks among schools to form children's groups to campaign to stop violence at Egyptian and refugees' schools.
- Young researchers plan to work with other children out of school such as street children and working children on creative activities and education activities program inside school.
- Through a children's network group, children can create joint activities with refugees and Egyptian children in their neighbourhood.

We have discussed the problems and developed some proposals for how we could solve them and improve education for Egyptian and refugee young people living in Cairo. We hope that this report and the following recommendations will help organisations working with young people in Egypt.

#### **To the Egyptian Government**

- Increase teachers' salaries and make private lessons illegal
- Ask the Egyptian Minister of Education to lower the fees for refugee students and others who cannot afford to pay. The Ministry of Solidarity could research this on a case-by-case basis for poor families.
- Increase security and police officers in the street to reduce violence and punish violent actions.
- Issue a law to outlaw child labour for all children under eighteen years of age.
- Facilitate the issuing of birth certificates, and primary, secondary and higher education certificates to enable children and young people to access education.
- Recognise refugee schools.
- Ensure that school and education buildings are accessible to disabled children.
- Open medical and first aid clinics inside all schools.
- Provide education scholarships for young people to support them to access educational services at the university level.
- Provide free educational materials (including books, and uniforms) to children attending school.
- Develop new educational curriculums to increase children's critical thinking abilities.

- Create clear laws on the maximum numbers of children allowed in each class.

#### **To organisations supporting children's education in Cairo**

- Provide training for single mothers so they can help themselves (e.g. by making handicrafts and selling them in the market) to pay for fees and school materials for their children
- There should be activities for refugee students and others (e.g. Egyptians) on cultural differences to help them get to know each other
- Provide community schools offering training in Arabic language to help refugees communicate with the Egyptian community close to refugees' houses
- Organisations could run awareness workshops in community centres on racism and could also use the media to raise awareness of the problem of violence inside school
- Increase financial support from UNHCR and other organisations
- Awareness campaign from UNHCR and organisations about violent gangs and how to stop them. Establish a residential centre for those groups where they have education programmes
- Implement workshops inside community centres regarding family problems and the impact of those problems on children
- Implement workshops for parents in communities to stop violence in the home
- Ensure that refugee schools have the necessary resources and support they need to teach students
- Catholic Relief Service could provide support for refugee students with closed files, increase grants for parents who cannot pay all of the schools fees, follow up on transportation problems and make sure teachers are qualified.
- Support refugee schools to rent fixed spaces so they do not have to move locations each year

#### **To teachers and schools**

- Teachers should not beat children and should find alternative ways of disciplining them
- There should be a complaints mechanism and process for dismissing teachers who are beating or harassing children
- Teachers should stop putting pressure on students to take private lessons
- Teachers should be qualified and experienced
- Schools could offer summer courses for children instead of having private lessons and also could provide group tutoring for students inside school
- There should be psychosocial support for children
- There should be security to make sure that gangs do not enter the school
- There should be awareness workshops for teachers and students inside school to reduce sexual harassment
- Schools should hire adults to collect garbage and stop making children do this

### **To parents and community**

- It is possible for Egyptian families who earn under 300 pounds per month or those who are on social security (government financial aid program for poor Egyptian families) to get 40 EGP per month. However, not many people know about this so we should have an awareness campaign to let people know they can get this help. The 40 EGP per month should also be increased
- There could be a school bus or parents should take kids to school to reduce the amount of violence in the street
- Raise awareness amongst parents about children's right to go school
- Raise awareness amongst parents about children's problems and how to deal with them.
- Stop treating children violently and increase dialogue with them
- Children should have entertainment programs with their family members

### **To children**

- Children should respect each other and stop being violent towards each other
- Children should stop using curse words and insulting each other
- Children should not act in a racist manner toward each other
- Children should not litter the school
- Children should be punctual while in school