

Egypt's Children Picking Through Trash to Survive

With Syria dominating the headlines, much of the world is forgetting the chaos in Egypt and how it has decimated the nation's economy.

The recent wave of violence and destruction roaring across Egypt has taken a toll on younger generations there.

Children are among the hardest hit. Some are even helping their families survive by picking through garbage.

Many young children are suffering trauma and older kids are wondering if hope and opportunity will be restored.

Some have even dropped out of school to support their family, even though Egypt's constitution guarantees them a free education. Even then, the nation's 25 percent youth employment rate makes it almost impossible to get a job.

While Egyptian law requires school attendance for kids ages 6 to 14, many young children don't go and a third of girls in Upper Egypt never attend school.

CBN News met some young children hanging out on the streets, trying to hustle a few Egyptian pounds. They work from dawn to dusk each day, sifting through garbage, searching for recyclables.

One of them is 8-year-old Bishoy who told us about his routine.

"When I wake up in the morning I get a big sack and start collecting cartons, plastic and cans," he explained. "I do it so I can give money to my father."

Ninety percent of the garbage that is collected in Cairo comes

to a place called Garbage City. And some of it is collected and sorted by children. They'll need quality hygiene and a better education if they are to have a brighter future.

An Egyptian mother named Hoda works with CBN to help the street children.

"Most of the day they are in the street collecting plastic bottles and cartons and no one is looking after them or caring for their needs or education," she told us.

"It's a big problem, but the main issue is with the parents because they do not see the need to provide or care for a child that they have brought into this world," she said. "These children have no one to look after them, so they come to our center."

Each day when they arrive, they shower to clean up. Center workers wash, dry and fold their clothes. After their shower, the kids put on clean outfits.

Then it's time for coloring, a hot meal and learning some basics.

"I like learning, especially writing and coloring. This is what I like," Bishoy said.

And before they return home for the night, Bishoy and the other kids enjoy playing some games. The children screamed with excitement when one child knocked over all the pins in a bowling game.

"The children are very grateful that someone is taking care of them and looking after their needs. And the families of these children are also very happy because they don't have to pay us or give anything to us in return," Hoda said.

What motivates the women and staff who give care and education to these children?

“God has blessed us so we may give to others and bless them,” Hoda told CBN News. “These children need support and understanding if they are to bear fruit in the future. I hope Americans will continue to assist us in meeting their needs. Come and give us a hand!”

Young Bishoy said he’ll return to the center instead of spending most of his time sorting garbage.

“I’m very happy here and I want to keep coming,” he said.

On the midst of a volatile political crisis, CBN and its partners are helping Egyptian children rise above the refuse, bringing them value and the promise of a better tomorrow.