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AN EXPLORATORY STUDY ON CHILD DOMESTIC WORKERS IN EGYPT

Yasmine M. Ahmed and Ray Jureidini



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LIST OF ABBREVIATION AND TERMS

'Arzoki:	Casual laborer
CMRS (FMRS):	Centre for Migration and Refugee Studies (formerly Forced Migration and Refugee Studies Centre)
CRC:	Convention on the rights of the Child
ECWR:	Egyptian Center for Women's Rights.
ILO:	The International Labour Organization.
(ILO)-IPEC: (ILO):	International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour.
Mekhadamaty/ Mekhadamateya:	Domestic workers' recruiters (Male/Female).
NCCM:	The National Council for Childhood and Motherhood.
NGO:	Non-Governmental Organization.
SRC:	Social Research Center of the American University in Cairo
UNICEF:	The United Nation's Children Fund.

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INTRODUCTION

In Egypt, an estimated 2 to 2.5 million children between the ages of 6-15 are working as street vendors, domestic workers, agricultural labourers, factory workers, laundry workers and helpers for mechanics (ECWR, 2008, U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of International Labor Affairs), with the vast majority (83%) working in rural areas (National Council for Childhood and Motherhood, 2004 as cited by Social Research Center, 2007; Gazaleh, Bulbul, Hewala & Najim, 2004). Overall, more boys than girls in Egypt are working but it is not clear whether domestic work is sufficiently counted in child labour estimates as child domestic workers are explicitly excluded from Egypt's child labour laws and so remain unacknowledged (Gazaleh, Bulbul, Hewala & Najim, 2004).

Child domestic labour, like other forms of child labour, is a common household strategy that is often used to reduce costs and/or to increase income (ILO, 2009; Camacho, 1999; Bhat, 2005). On the one hand, it may offer opportunities for children that may not be available in their own households. On the other hand, it may put thousands of children under harsh working conditions. In Egypt, the problem of child labour has been addressed in the 2003 Labour Law. The 2003 Labour Law or Act 12 regulates the working conditions of children, such as limits on working hours and age limits (Azer et al., 2007; Egyptian Center for Women's Rights, July 8, 2008). Despite the fact that domestic work has been identified as one of the worst forms of child labour in Egypt (ILAB, 2007) and Act 12 prohibits children under 17 from working in hazardous conditions, child domestic workers are deliberately excluded from the 2003 Egyptian labour law through Article 4 of Act 12. This article is concerned with the scope of the legislation. It says that The termination of employment provisions of the LA (Article 4, LA) do not apply to: 1) public servants employed by State agencies, public establishments and local authorities; 2) domestic workers and the like; and 3) employer's family members whom the employer is in charge of. According to Azer et al. (2007), this exclusion results in increasing the vulnerability of child domestic workers to exploitation, abuse and deprivation, making them one of the most vulnerable groups among working children.

While child labor in Egypt has attracted scholars', policymakers' and NGOs' attention over the last few years (Azer et al. 2007, Ramzy 2002), the experiences of child domestic workers in Egypt has not been thoroughly studied. Child domestic workers are objectively vulnerable due to their employment in a high-risk form of labour, and their experience of exploitation on the basis of their gender, age and social class.

To address this gap, in January 2009, Terre des Hommes, Cairo Office commissioned the Center for Migration and Refugee Studies to undertake an exploratory study on child domestic workers in Egypt.

The aim of the study was three-fold: 1) to understand the complex working and living conditions of child domestic workers; 2) to address the vulnerability of children employed in the domestic sector; and 3) to explore the opportunities and benefits available for them in this environment. Moreover, the study provides first-hand baseline data on employers of child domestics, former and current child domestic workers and their families. It has inquired into the opinions of children, employers, recruiters and families who are impacted by child domestic labour.

In addition, this study aims to contribute towards the expansion of child protection as well as the inclusion of child domestic workers in national policies and laws. Furthermore, it is anticipated that the findings of this study may be used to mobilize efforts of national, international and civil society organizations to include child domestic workers' specific needs in child and labour protection policies wherever appropriate.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Over the course of six months (January-June 2009), a research team from the Center of Migration and Refugee Studies (CMRS) conducted an exploratory study on child domestic workers in Egypt. The central goal of the study was to gain an in-depth understanding of the conditions children domestic workers face. A second goal was to examine the effect of limitations and opportunities available for children in such environments. A third goal was to roughly estimate the prevalence and scope of child domestic labour at the national level.

To achieve these three goals, we examined the following:

1. Recruitment venues through which children enter the domestic service sector and the extent to which domestic work is inherited from mothers and/or close female relatives. We also looked at child trafficking involved in that process.
2. Different work arrangements of child domestic workers and the ways in which these arrangements benefit and/or disadvantage the well-being of child domestic workers, and their access to basic services and protection.
3. Moral attitudes associated with child domestic workers that emerged during our fieldwork, particularly notions of shame and stigmatization.
4. How sexuality, gender roles and intra-household relations impact upon the well-being of child domestic workers. In particular, the gender and class politics that take place inside employers' houses, that are translated into practices, opinions and attitudes.
5. Tools that could be used by key stakeholders (international organizations, NGOs and policy makers) to make the life and working conditions of child domestic workers, who are obliged to be in such circumstances, more tolerable.

DEFINITIONS AND CONCEPTS

For the purpose of this report it is necessary to provide conceptual definitions for the terms extensively used in the research to avoid confusion and to ensure clarity of their usage.

CHILD DOMESTIC WORKERS

The term child domestic worker has been used differently by researchers using different age groups, different living arrangements and performing a variety of tasks that are related to domestic work. Many researchers (Blagbrough, 2008; Levison, D. & Langer, A. 2008; Jacquemin, 2006; Ray & Iyer, 2006; Suda, 2001, Brown, 2007) follow the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and identify child domestic workers as domestic workers under 18 years old. One study (Sommerfelt, 2001) identified child domestic workers as domestic workers 15 years of age or under.

In this report, we are primarily concerned with young people aged less than 16 years old. We focused on this age group because, in the Egyptian context, 16 is the age where personal identification cards are issued, and thus persons who are 16 years old and above, can seek employment through recruitment offices and can sign contracts. Importantly, we do not perceive domestic workers over 16 years old as a protected group, but rather we perceive persons under 16 as an invisible and vulnerable group in the Egyptian domestic service sector.

Globally, ninety percent of child domestic workers are girls, with domestic work as the largest employment sector for girls under 16 (UNICEF International Child Development Centre, 1999; ILO-IPEC, 2004). Girls are often preferred as domestic workers because of employers' perception of girl workers as hard-working, malleable, controllable and cheaper to hire (UNICEF International Child Development Centre, 1999; Brown, 2007; Bhat, 2005; Rice, September 7, 2008). Employers and workers' families may also judge domestic work as a more suitable form of employment for girls and instructive for their future roles as wives and mothers (UNICEF International Child Development Centre, 1999; Jacquemin, 2006; Sommerfelt, 2001; Suda, 2001; Kippenberg, 2007). Domestic work is thus also seen as a more productive strategy than continuing a girl's education (ILO-IPEC, 2004; Suda, 2001).

When families are struggling to survive, girls are also more likely to migrate for domestic work, whereas boys are more likely to stay behind in rural villages to work in the agricultural sector (Camacho, 1999). In Egypt, as in other parts of the world (Black, 2002; Blagbrough, 2008; UNICEF, 1999; ILO 1999; Jacquemin, 2006), child domestic labour is feminized. While boys in Egypt sometimes perform domestic work, they are not likely to remain in this sector, i.e. domestic work for boys is only temporary. Moreover, in poor Egyptian households, girls are more likely to be kept at home for domestic work while boys are sent to work outside the home to supplement a family's income (Gazaleh, Bulbul, Hewala & Najim, 2004).

This study was concerned only with girl domestic workers who comprised our entire sample. As we will present throughout this report, gender-based themes (e.g. girls' sexuality, virginity, etc.) emerged as the most significant and common concerns for sending families and employers of child domestic workers.

DOMESTIC WORK

Domestic work encompasses a variety of situations such as live-in, live-out, monthly labour, and freelancing (Jureidini, forthcoming). Child domestic employment is no exception. In this research, we were concerned with the different types of work arrangements of child domestic workers. In fact, identifying these different work arrangements was a primary concern of this study.

We defined child domestic workers as persons under 16 who work in households of non-related individuals, doing different types of domestic chores (childcare, tending gardens, running errands, helping employers with small businesses, care of the elderly, cleaning, cooking), including those paid a wage and those paid in kind. We also included girls who join adult members of their families (mothers, sisters) in domestic work for cash and/or in-kind payment. We were aware that children work in their own households with often demanding workloads which needed to be explored. However, it was decided to restrict this inquiry to the informal labour market of non-related individuals. The intra-household dynamics in these more contractual circumstances are qualitatively different from those who work for their own nuclear and/or extended families.

METHODOLOGY

Data for this report was collected over the duration of six months, starting from mid-January 2009 till the end of June 2009, by the research team of the Center for Migration and Refugee Studies (CMRS), in collaboration with Terre des Hommes, Cairo and Assiut Offices.

Due to the exploratory nature of this study, the research team adopted an ethnographic approach, primarily using qualitative research methods of data collection, namely: participant observation, case studies, in-depth interviews and content analysis.

In-depth interviews

Researchers conducted in-depth interviews with five groups: former child domestic workers, current child domestic workers, former and current employers of child domestic workers, agencies and recruiters, and sending families. Prior to designing the interviewing guide, a roundtable discussion took place at the CMRS premises on February 10th, 2009. Eight participants (scholars, women's right activists, international organization officers) with experience in child labour and gender issues met in order to identify the themes that should be included in the interview guide as well as to identify relevant resources to the research team. One research assistant and two interviewers were recruited by the principle investigator. In order to avoid misunderstandings and/or misinterpretation of questions and/or concepts, a training of interviewers was conducted. Then, 10 pilot interviews were carried out by the research team. Based on this test, the interviewing guide was edited according to the gaps identified. A snowball referral technique was then adopted to widen the sample of the study.

In order to ensure confidentiality, names of employers, former and current child domestic workers, recruiters and sending families have been replaced by pseudonyms.

In-depth interviews were conducted with the following groups:

17 former and current female employers of child domestic workers. Interviewees were selected using snowballing techniques; each employer was asked to give us a contact of another employer. We explained to employers that we were interested in learning about domestic work in Egypt, without initially specifying our particular interest in their hiring of child domestics. Despite this, it is worth noting that four employers refused to be interviewed - one could not allocate time for the interview due to her busy schedule, two refused because their husbands did not want them to participate in the research, and one employer felt uncomfortable to be interviewed due to her sensitive position as she works on child labour issues.

The aims of these interviews were to: trace the process through which Egyptian families hire child domestic workers; understand the rationale behind selecting child domestics; identify common recruitment venues; document day-to-day treatment and working conditions of child domestics from the employer's point of view; and to examine the opportunities that they make available for the children such as, teaching them skills, opening saving accounts that they could later use, and/or assisting the child domestic worker to complete her education or to get a literacy certificate.

Twenty six interviews were conducted with current and former child domestic workers. Twelve were conducted with current child domestics under 16 years old (six currently working in Assiut, three working in Greater Cairo, one working in Fayoum, and two in the Minya governorate). Interviewees were recruited through local NGOs that provide a number of services to women in the areas visited, such as micro-credit loans, health awareness and different types of training. Interviewees in greater Cairo were accessed through their employers. It proved extremely difficult to access child domestic workers in Greater Cairo as they were hidden in the employers' houses that we could not access. The aims of these interviews included: examining girls' experiences and opinions on their current work situation; exploring their relationships with their parents as well as their employers and their families; impact of domestic.

work on girls' access to basic services (i.e. health, education, parental care) and to protection; and understanding if and how child domestic workers are trafficked. The research assistant who was responsible for field research signed and followed Terre des Hommes' ethical protocol regarding working with children.

With regard to former child domestic workers, fourteen interviews were conducted; Three interviewees were recruited through a NGO that provides multiple services for child workers such as tutoring, art classes and social support in Giza and Helwan governorates. One was identified by a social worker in Fayoum as a current child domestic worker, but at the time of the study, she had stopped domestic work to resume her education. The rest of the interviewees were recruited through their employers or other former child domestic worker research participants.

The aim of this set of interviews was to give former child domestic workers space to reflect on their work experiences as child domestic workers and the extent to which it affected their lives later on, with a focus on what could have been done to improve their circumstances as child domestic workers, recruitment and working conditions. It is worth noting that former child domestic workers were more at ease in talking about the disadvantages of the job as well as the bad incidents experienced (i.e. sexual, physical and verbal abuse) than current child domestic workers. This may be, in part, because their names and contacts were given by other former child domestic workers and because they were interviewed in their own homes. Current child domestic workers were mostly interviewed in the houses of their employers. Moreover, employers who allowed access to interview their child domestic workers were more likely to have a positive relationship with them. We consider this a bias in our sample, and thus a limitation of this study, but one that is consistent with other studies on domestic workers.

Two adult domestic workers were referred by former child domestic workers as former child domestic workers. However, the interviews revealed that they began work after the age of 18. Thus, we shifted our questions to what they knew about child domestic workers from family members and friends.

The aim of these interviews was to learn about the circumstances of child domestic workers from an outsider point of view and to understand their perceptions on children involved in this situation. During these interviews, we found that, in many instances, child domestic workers work as assistants of adult domestic workers. Thus, it was also useful for us to get their perspectives and experiences with child domestic workers that they had worked with previously.

Three NGO representatives who are in direct contact with child domestic workers were interviewed in Assiut, Giza and Minya. All NGOs were entry points for the researchers to access child domestic workers. Interviewing their representatives was invaluable to understand the general conditions of child domestic workers and their families in particular field sites, and to seek to estimate the breadth and depth of the phenomena in the areas where they work. It is worth mentioning that the NGO in Assiut also operates as a recruiter for child domestic workers. Thus, interviewing its representative gave us insight on the recruitment process, working conditions, and perceptions on child domestic workers' vulnerability.

Two recruiters in Fayoum, who are also domestic workers were interviewed. One recruits girls to work for employers in Fayoum, while the other recruits girls to work in Cairo.

The aims of these interviews were to: get an estimate on the numbers of child domestic workers, gain an understanding of the recruitment process and working conditions, examine the type of protection they offer to child domestic workers (particularly when conflicts occur between them and their employer), and learning about parents' involvement in recruitment and placement of child domestic workers. We also visited five recruitment offices in different parts of Cairo (Maadi, downtown, Mohandessin and Heliopolis) who do not hire child domestic workers under the age of 16. We got their contacts through job announcements that they post concerning adult domestic workers in newspapers, particularly al-Waseet. Here we learned of the rationale for the age limit 16 years as the age that IDs are issued. It was assumed that these contacts would lead to recruiters of child domestic workers, but they all claimed they had no connections with such recruiters.

Although we were extremely interested in interviewing male recruiters or mekhaemateyah who are responsible for collecting girls from villages for domestic work, it was extremely difficult. A number were contacted but they refused to participate, clearly due to the clandestine and disreputable nature of their work. The field research assistant attempted to contact male recruiters by posing as an employer, but mekhaemateyah /samasirahs refused to answer questions because she was not referred directly by a known employer.

Twenty four interviews were conducted with sending families of child domestic workers in Fayoum and Minya Governorates. We interviewed six parents in Fayoum (mothers) whose daughters work as child domestic workers either in Fayoum or in Cairo, and eighteen parents in Minya (seventeen mothers and one grandmother) whose daughters/granddaughter are employed in al-Minya or in Cairo. It was difficult to identify families that employ their daughters in the domestic service sector as it is considered shameful for the family. As we learned from the fieldwork, such employment may stigmatize their daughters to the extent of jeopardizing their marriage opportunities. Interviewees were recruited in Fayoum through a social worker and in Minya through the NGO. Interviews with the mothers were particularly interesting as they allowed us to understand the social and economic conditions of the families that employ their daughters, despite the stigma. Objectives here were to understand intra-household dynamics and the reason behind sending one child rather than the other; recruitment venues and processes; families' awareness of their children's/grandchildren's working conditions; uses of salary earned by child domestics; and protection, monitoring and surveillance practices, if any.

With regard to participant observation, we systematically observed the field sites visited, such as households in villages, urban squatters, or employers in middle-income and upscale neighborhoods. Notes were added to the interviews. We also identified three case studies where we managed to interview both employers and their child domestic workers to compare both narratives.

With regard to the content analysis, we reviewed nineteen newspaper clippings as records of cases that were discussed in popular and media discussions. These cases were interesting to ascertain the dominant discourses on child domestic workers. Unlike Egyptian media discourses around adult domestic workers (Abd al-Salam, 2003) which typically criminalize adult domestic workers, Egyptian media narratives are sympathetic to child domestic workers but typically focus on the most extreme individual stories of torture, death, and exploitation. Egyptian print media tend to refer to child domestic workers only when discussing broader child labour issues.

Findings of interviews with employers, child and former domestic workers were entered into SPSS quantitative software, and interviews were entered into N-Vivo qualitative software for analysis.

SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

EMPLOYERS

The seventeen female employers were from different governorates: Cairo, Giza, Helwan, Sixth of October, and Fayoum. Their ages ranged from 25 - 57 years, the majority being in their thirties. With regard to their religion, only two were of Christian background and the rest Muslim. Regarding marital status, 12 were married, four were divorced and one was separated. Their level of education ranged from an illiterate to a holder of Masters' degree, the majority being holders of university degrees (11 respondents), and of secondary level vocational degree (4 respondents). The one participant who did not attain a formal education was from Fayoum, in her late fifties. Eleven interviewees were working at the time of the study. They held a variety of white collar occupations such as social researcher, administrative assistant, market analyst, teacher, as well as other occupations (details provided in Table 1). One of the employers had been a physical education teacher. The remaining (five respondents) were housewives, and had never had paid employment outside the household.

Table 4: **Occupation of Female Employer**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Social Researcher	2	11.8	11.8	11.8
	Administrative and Technical Assistant	2	11.8	11.8	23.5
	Officer at an Embassy	1	5.9	5.9	29.4
	Housewife	5	29.4	29.4	58.8
	Market Analyst	1	5.9	5.9	64.7
	Clerk at the Ministry of Culture	1	5.9	5.9	70.6
	Unit Manager	1	5.9	5.9	76.5
	Teacher	1	11.8	11.8	88.2
	Sales	1	5.9	5.9	94.1
	Human Resource Officer	1	5.9	5.9	100.0
	Total	17	100.0	100.0	

The occupations of the husbands (or ex-husbands) of the interviewees included musician, social researcher, chemist, architect, engineer, businessmen (see Table 2), with one retired receiving a pension.

Table 5: **(Ex-) Husbands Partner's Occupation**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Researcher	1	5.9	5.9	5.9
	Chemist	1	5.9	5.9	11.8
	Architect	1	5.9	5.9	17.6
	Businessman	2	11.8	11.8	29.4
	Engineer	3	17.6	17.6	47.1
	Professor	1	5.9	5.9	52.9
	Actor	1	5.9	5.9	58.8
	Pharmacist	1	5.9	5.9	64.7
	Sales	1	5.9	5.9	70.6
	Graphic Designer	1	5.9	5.9	76.5
	Clerk in Kuwait	1	5.9	5.9	82.4
	On Pension	1	5.9	5.9	88.2
	Manager in Multinational	1	5.9	5.9	94.1
	Musician	1	5.9	5.9	100.0
	Total	17	100.0	100.0	

All the employers had children, with an average of 2.5 and a median of 2 (see Table 3). The age of the first child ranged between 1-35 years, however, the majority were under 10 years of age. In most cases, those who had older children began hiring child domestic workers when their children were toddlers, in order to keep company for the children and to have regular help with household chores.

Table 6: **Number of Children**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	4	23.5	23.5	23.5
	2	7	41.2	41.2	64.7
	3	3	17.6	17.6	82.4
	4	1	5.9	5.9	88.2
	6	2	11.8	11.8	100.0
	Total	17	100.0	100.0	

CURRENT CHILD DOMESTIC WORKERS

Throughout our fieldwork, we managed to interview ten child domestic workers who were employed at the time of the study. As noted before, accessing child domestic workers was difficult as they are hidden in the houses of their employers. Accessing child domestic workers in governorates through NGOs was much easier than through their employers. Most of the employers who agreed to be interviewed did not have a problem with us interviewing their child domestic workers. Only one employer refused our request to interview her 8 year old domestic worker because, it was argued, she is not talkative, and will not be able to answer your questions (Interview with Maha, a 50 year old employer).

All twelve current child domestic workers interviewed were Muslim girls. Their ages varied from 10 to 16 years, with the majority being 14 years of age. Their families were from different governorates, including Assiut, Minya, Beheira and Kafr al-Sheikh. Almost half of them began working as freelancers in more than one household (seven interviewees), two started as live-in domestic workers, and the remaining three interviewees worked as monthly labourers in one household.

They all come from modest family backgrounds. Four fathers were unemployed, one was deceased, and one was imprisoned, while the remaining occupied different jobs such as, seasonal farmer, leather dyer, carpenter and casual construction worker. One father was working as a doorman in Cairo. As for the mother's occupation, five were housewives taking care of baby siblings, and the remaining were domestic workers, bread makers and sellers, and fish sellers. As stated above, six of them work in Assiut, three of them work in different parts of Greater Cairo, one of them works in Fayoum, and two of them work in Minya.

Some studies have found that girls from poor rural areas with families that work in the subsistence agricultural sector in particular are more likely to enter domestic work (Arag o-Lagergren, 2003; Camacho, 1999; Sommerfelt, 2001; Children-Women In Social Service and Human Rights, 2007; Brown, 2007; Rice, September 7, 2008), particularly in areas that have suffered recent conflict or natural disaster (Arag o-Lagergren, 2003; Sommerfelt, 2001). The case of Egypt is no exception. Egyptian rural areas have witnessed a process of impoverishment as a result of the policies of economic reform and structural adjustment. These policies resulted in a polarization of the agricultural sector, creating winners and losers of the adjustment game (Bush 1998, 89). It has negatively affected the poorest in rural areas who account for 90% of the rural population. These include farmers with access to less than five feddans of land as well as the rural landless who were evicted as a result of the 1992 New Land Tenancy Act. These groups lost their secure land tenancy, access to credit, to food resources and more importantly to a dignified livelihood. On the other hand, landlords and investors organized their production systems in order to meet the demands of the export agriculture and agro-business markets and thus won from this situation (Bush, 2002).

Most of the child domestic workers' parents we met were seasonal farmers who did not have access to secure land but were seasonal day-labourers during harvesting. It is clear that economically vulnerable households, including female-headed households and households where the household head has had little education, are more likely to have children working as child domestic workers (Gazaleh, Bulbul, Hewala & Najim, 2004).

All the current child domestic workers were single, with exception of one who had been engaged but was broken because of financial disagreements between her family and the groom's family. All but two either never attended formal education or dropped out (Table 4). Those who dropped out reported that they left because their parents could not afford it, or because they failed and did not like schooling. Only one reported that joining the labour force was the main reason for leaving school.

Table 7: **Highest Level of Education**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No formal Education	4	33.3	33.3	33.3
	Some primary Education	3	25.0	25.0	58.3
	Primary school	1	8.3	8.3	66.7
	Some elementary Education	2	16.7	16.7	83.3
	Still enrolled	2	16.7	16.7	100.0
	Total	12	100.0	100.0	

It was therefore not surprising to find that most had little or no reading and writing skills (see Tables 9 and 10).

Table 8: **Reading skills**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Wel	2	16.7	16.7	16.7
	Some	2	16.7	16.7	33.3
	Not well	4	33.3	33.3	66.7
	Not at all	4	33.3	33.3	100.0
	Total	12	100.0	100.0	

Table 9: **Writing skills**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Wel	2	16.7	16.7	16.7
	Some	2	16.7	16.7	33.3
	Not well	3	25.0	25.0	58.3
	Not at all	5	41.7	41.7	100.0
	Total	12	100.0	100.0	

The starting age for working as child domestic workers varied from 6 to 15 years of age. Some started to work as child domestics when they were extremely young (6 years old) whereas others just joined the sector at the age of 15 years old. It is worth mentioning that the majority started between the ages of 8 and 10 years old. Only three of those interviewed had combined school and working. Eight had worked in three or less households at the time of the study; three worked in four to six houses and one had worked in more than nine households. This was not deemed unusual as relatively high levels of mobility of domestic workers between households has been reported among child domestic workers in Guatemala City (Arag o-Lagergren, 2003), in Morocco (Sommerfelt, 2001) and in Cambodia (Brown, 2007).

Table 10: **Number of households worked in before**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1 TO 3	8	66.7	66.7	66.7
	4 TO 6	3	25.0	25.0	91.7
	More than 9	1	8.3	8.3	100.0
	Total	12	100.0	100.0	

Scholars working on child domestics found that the reasons given for this mobility included excessive workloads, lack of pay or receiving insufficient food (Guatemala City); also homesickness, abuse and seasonal demands (for child domestic workers in Cambodia). In Egypt, several reasons were stated by the interviews, some of which speak to the international literature on child domestics. Rasha who worked in six houses throughout her 6 years of working as a child domestic left her previous employer because her female employer used to throw boiled water on her in order to wake her up for work, during the day or night. Another reason for leaving expressed by child domestics was a mistreatment- translated into hitting and yelling using bad words- by children of the employer, particularly if they are slightly younger than the child domestic. Naglaa, who is currently 19 years old, left one of her employers because her sons who were at the time 8 and 10 year old, while she was 13, used to hit her with their toys, to give her orders and to shout at her using bad words like "homara" (donkey), or shaghala (servant). Other reasons included disagreement between recruiters/parents and the employers about monthly salaries, need by mothers to take the girl back to perform domestic chores , and decision made by the sending family to take girls back, around the age of 16 and above, in order to find a suitable groom.

The best example of this is when the mother of a newborn needs the girl to take care of the household shores during the first few months after delivery.

FORMER CHILD DOMESTIC WORKERS

Under former child domestic workers, we include two sub-categories: 4 children under 16 years old who had quit work at the time of the interview, and ten adult domestic workers who started their careers in the domestic service sector when they were under 16. They came from different parts of Egypt including: Greater Cairo, Assiut, Minya, Fayoum, al-Beheira, Kafr al-Sheikh, al-Sharkeyya and Beni Soueif. They were all Muslim; nine had never been married, one was engaged, two were married and two were divorced.

Table 11: **Former Child Domestic Workers? Marital Status**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Never married	9	64.3	64.3	64.3
	Engaged	1	7.1	7.1	71.4
	Married	2	14.3	14.3	85.7
	Divorced	2	14.3	14.3	100.0
	Total	14	100.0	100.0	

Their husbands worked in different low-income occupations such as fixing ceramic tiles, a hairdresser, owner of small shop, driver and cook. Their fathers' occupations included: farmer, 'arzoki or casual laborer, driver, baker, gardener and sewage worker. Mothers, on the other hand, were either housewives or concentrated in the domestic service sector, with only one farmer.

Their level of education ranged from illiterate to those who were still enrolled in schooling. However, the majority dropped out from formal education, mainly due to their families' lack of financial means (see table 12).

Table 12: **Highest Level of Education**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No formal Education	3	21.4	21.4	21.4
	Some primary Education	2	14.3	14.3	35.7
	Primary school	2	14.3	14.3	50.0
	Some elementary Education	4	28.6	28.6	78.6
	Still enrolled	3	21.4	21.4	100.0
	Total	14	100.0	100.0	

Similar to current child domestic workers, the majority of former child domestic workers had poor reading and writing skills.

Table 13: **Writing skills**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very well	1	7.1	7.1	7.1
	Well	3	21.4	21.4	28.6
	Some	5	35.7	35.7	64.3
	Not well	3	21.4	21.4	85.7
	Not at all	2	14.3	14.3	100.0
	Total	14	100.0	100.0	

Table 14: **Reading skills**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very well	1	7.1	7.1	7.1
	Well	3	21.4	21.4	28.6
	Some	4	28.6	28.6	57.1
	Not well	5	35.7	35.7	92.9
	Not at all	1	7.1	7.1	100.0
	Total	14	100.0	100.0	

The starting age for working as child domestic workers varied from 7 to 14 years of age. Two were working in factories before joining the domestic sector. Six worked in three or fewer households at the time of the study; three worked in four to six houses, and only one worked in more than nine households. Most of them started as live-in workers.

Table 15: **Work condition when first worked**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Live-in worker	7	50.0	50.0	50.0
	Daily labourer in more than one household	1	7.1	7.1	57.1
	Monthly labourer in one household	3	21.4	21.4	78.6
	Free lancer/ casual Labourer as per request	2	14.3	14.3	92.9
	Elderly care overnight shift	1	7.1	7.1	100.0
	Total	14	100.0	100.0	

SENDING FAMILIES

Sending families included mothers of current child domestic workers and in one case the grandmother as she represented the responsible parent for the child domestic. As stated above, seven were from Fayoum and sixteen from Minya. Their age range varied from 25 to 55, with only one, a grandmother, who was 70 years old. They were all Muslims. The majority of the mothers were primarily housewives (9 respondents) whereas the remaining respondents occupied different types of low-income occupations; five seasonal farmers, two domestic workers, three helping their doormen husbands, and the remaining selling vegetables, breads and other types of products in the street. With regard to their marital status, four were widows, three divorced and seventeen currently married. However, among those who were married, six husbands were unemployed due to illness or inability to find a job. Moreover, eight were seasonal farmers only working during agricultural seasons (wheat, cotton) and stayed at home for the rest of the year. The remaining husbands occupied different jobs such as doormen, wall painters, manual labour in irrigation and soldier. This tells us that most of the sending families have unstable incomes. Moreover, they rely on the work of their children- in this case child domestics- for meeting regular financial obligations such as rent, food, and installments for the daughter's trousseau. This means child domestic workers must retain their jobs. When they get married, the younger sister is sent out to work. It is worth mentioning that the parents we interviewed were apologetic when we talked about the work of their daughters. They often recalled certain family events that drove them to have their daughters employed, particularly death or illness of the father. Moreover, mothers in these situations were unable to generate a stable income due to their role as care givers for younger siblings. It is worth noting that the number of children that mothers have range from 2 to 10 children, with the majority having 5 or more children. With the exception of one, none had attended formal education and had no writing or reading skills.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

ESTIMATION OF THE NUMBER OF CHILD DOMESTIC WORKERS

In the course of the fieldwork for this project we were able to gather the number of child domestic workers in several villages where it was known that they were either employed or sent elsewhere to work. It is always a risky process extrapolating from a small number of cases to the broader population. Nonetheless, there is a certain imperative to draw rough estimations in order to give at least some sense of the possible size of the phenomenon being studied.

From the outset, a number of key informants argued that there were very few child domestic workers left in Egypt; that it had been quite prevalent many years ago, but that it was no longer a widespread practice. There are two problems with this assumption. First, domestic work is hidden work, not only because it is excluded from labour law and officially unacknowledged as a legitimate form of labour, but also because the activity is in the private sphere of households and difficult to access. Second, from the inquiries throughout this research project, it became very clear that the practice of employing (and brokering) child domestic workers is morally problematic - indeed shameful. Thus, it is highly unlikely that child domestic workers will be revealed in the official census or labour force studies, without being specifically targeted as has been done in this exploratory study.

This study was conducted in three governorates of Egypt: Fayoum, Minya and Assiut. In Assiut the sample was taken from urban areas. However, there were six rural villages in the other two governorates, from which local social workers located child domestics. Each of the social workers worked and lived in the village where s/he gathered a list of names of child domestics they knew. We found this the most reliable procedure due to the sensitivity of the issue. The social workers who were selected were in close contact with the families, either because of reproductive health programmes or other charitable activities. Under these circumstances, families were not embarrassed to report or reveal cases of child domestics. The social workers had come to know them well and had established a sense of trust and rapport with the child domestic mothers throughout the years.

Social workers identified 98 child domestic workers, which amounted to an average of 1.7% (ranging from 0.4% to 5%) of households per village. There was an average of 1,200 households per village (ranging from around 250 to 3,000 households).

If we extrapolate to only the rural areas of the three governorates, that have a combined total of 2.07 million households (CAPMAS, 2006) we could estimate that, at 1.7%, there is potentially around 35,000 child domestic workers in those rural districts alone. If we add to this the same proportion from the urban areas of the three governorates, we derive a figure of approximately 53,000 child domestic workers in the population of 3.13 million households. Given that these were the only areas that were targeted for this study, it would not be wise to make any further estimation for the country as a whole. However, we think it can be confidently concluded that the incidence of child domestic workers in Egypt remains significant enough to be addressed as a public issue.

RECRUITMENT OF CHILD DOMESTIC WORKERS

In Egypt, as elsewhere, child domestic labour typically involves the migration of children from an economically vulnerable household and/or region (e.g. typically rural areas although Child domestic workers may also come from poor urban areas) to a more affluent household and/or region (e.g. urban centres or wealthier rural areas) (Jacquemin, 2006; Arag o-Lagergren, 2003; Sommerfelt, 2001; Suda, 2001; Children-Women In Social Service and Human Rights, 2007; Brown, 2007; Bhat, 2005; U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of International Labor Affairs, 2007; UNICEF International Child Development Centre, 1999; Suda, 2001). Basma, a former child domestic worker, moved from her original village in Assiut to an affluent household in Zamalek, one of Cairo's upscale neighborhoods, with the help of a recruiter. Most of the cases we met reflected this characteristic.

Entry Factors

Poverty is the main reason for children's entry into domestic work (ILO-IPEC, 2004; Sommerfelt, 2001; Suda, 2001; Children-Women In Social Service and Human Rights, 2007; Social Research Center, 2007; Gazaleh, Bulbul, Hewala & Najim, 2004; Bhat, 2005) although poverty manifests differently across countries. For example, child domestic workers from Peru and the Philippines reported working to pay for school; Indian child domestic workers worked to pay off family debts; and _ of Tanzanian children in this sector worked because of family deaths due to HIV/AIDS or family crises such as break-ups and abuse (Blagbrough, 2008). Family and child poverty may be due to unemployment, debt, regional or local conflict, family death and illness, excessive school fees, declining economy, rising inflation or natural disasters such as drought (ILO-IPEC, 2004; Arag o-Lagergren, 2003; Sommerfelt, 2001; Suda, 2001; Children-Women In Social Service and Human Rights, 2007; Brown, 2007; Bhat, 2005; Egyptian Center for Women's Rights, 2008). Child domestic work then becomes a strategy to reduce household costs and/or increase household income (ILO, 2009; Camacho, 1999; Bhat, 2005). Importantly, child domestic workers consistently express their desire to assist their families by working (Jacquemin, 2006; Kippenberg, 2007; Camacho, 1999; Arag o-Lagergren, 2003).

The following tables provide some relevant statistics on poverty, education and employment in the governorates where the fieldwork for this study took place, as per Egypt Human Development Report (2008).

Table 1: **Poverty rates in selected governorates (2008)**

Governorate	Poor persons (in thousands)		Poor persons (of total population %)	
	Total (2004/05)	Ultra poor (2005)	Actual (2004/05)	Ultra (2004/05)
Assiut	2072.5	776.9	60.6	22.7
Minya	1595.2	396.8	39.4	9.8
Giza	737.7	79.6	13.1	1.4
Fayoum	290.7	26.6	12.0	1.1
Cairo	356.4	41.2	4.6	0.5

As shown in table 1, Assiut and Minya have high percentages of poor and ultra poor persons, a factor that has driven many girls into the domestic service sector. Despite the fact that Giza, Fayoum and Cairo have less poor and ultra poor persons, there is no doubt that these statistics underestimate the number of persons who live in slum areas, where all of the girl domestics we met came from. In these areas, poverty is extremely widespread and underrepresented in the poverty statistics (see Sabry, 2009).

Table 2: Basic education enrollment ratios in selected governorates (2008)

Governorate	Gross enrolment ratios (%) basic education			Children not in basic or secondary schools (thousands)
	Primary (2005/06)	Preparatory (2005/06)	Secondary (2005/06)	
Assiut	85.6	80.3	56.2	198.06
Giza	93.8	80.1	59.5	283.39
Minya	91.2	79.1	55.6	185.56
Cairo	83.5	76.8	68.0	464.23
Fayoum	88.4	73.5	62.1	156.29

With regard to education ratios, this table clearly illustrates pupils' drop outs as enrollment ratios decrease significantly prior to secondary education. Only primary education in Egypt is mandatory and guaranteed by the government. This speaks to the findings of our study. Barriers to education can also contribute to children entering domestic work such as when schooling is geographically and/or financially inaccessible (ILO-IPEC, 2004) or considered irrelevant or unproductive (Egyptian Center for Women's Rights, 2008; Social Research Center, 2007; Gazaleh, Bulbul, Hewala & Najim, 2004). Some child domestic workers are motivated to seek out domestic work because of their educational aspirations (e.g. having an employer who sponsors a worker's education, or by earning money to pay for school fees) (Camacho, 1999; Children-Women In Social Service and Human Rights, 2007). Our study found that when girls drop out from school, they are more likely to join the domestic service sector, than any other sector of the informal labour market.

Table 3: Percentage of labor force (15+) in informal sector in selected governorates ((2008))

Governorate	Workers in informal sector % of labor force (15+)	
	Total (2001)	Female (2001)
Assiut	11.9	30.6
Minya	9.2	21.4
Giza	8.7	12.7
Fayoum	8.7	26.9
Cairo	5.3	8.7

As this table shows, there is a significant proportion of females in the informal sector, particularly for some governorates such as Assiut and Fayoum. In the domestic service sector, women and girls constitute the large majority of the labour force.

Employers' means for seeking child domestic workers

Employers procure child domestic workers through a variety of means including professional recruiters, family members, employers, doormen, neighbors and friends.

Table 16: Employers Preferred Means for seeking DW

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Social Network	14	82.4	82.4	82.4
	Recruiter and social net	3	17.6	17.6	100.0
	Total	17	100.0	100.0	

Table 17: Last DW or CDW hired through the following means

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Social Networks	12	70.6	80.0	80.0
	Recruiter	3	17.6	20.0	100.0
	Total	15	88.2	100.0	
Missing	NA	2	11.8		
Total		17	100.0		

As shown in the tables above, almost all the employers we interviewed reported that they prefer using their social networks as a means to recruit domestic workers. Employers often reported a bad experience with recruiters and recruitment offices. For example, Manal recalls her first encounter with a mekhademeteya (woman recruiter) when she hired her first child domestic worker:

In general the system of the mekhademeteya (woman recruiter) involves that she brings the girl. She takes one month as an incentive and each time she comes to take the girl for a vacation (which could be every six months or so) or the salary. She takes money in her pocket and the transportation cost.

But in reality, they move girls between houses to get this first-month-incentive every month. They take them after one month to employ them in another house to get the incentive again (first month). This is their system to ensure an ongoing income.

So she [recruiter] brought Nadia [child domestic worker] to my house. She took one month and the transportation cost. After one month, she came and told me that her parents want to see her. I asked her: why? She said her father wants her. I told her no, let her father call me. If he wants to take her, let him come and take her from here. These are my contacts: numbers and address, all my contact details. Ask him to come to tell me why does he want her? When she noticed that I'm very persistent to be in contact with her father, she gave me his contacts. I talked to him and realized that she doesn't give him the real salary and that she puts a sum in her pocket (30% or so). Her salary was L.E. 150 [approx. US\$30] and she used to take L.E. 50 of the amount. Also, I knew that she only wanted to send the girl to another house to get the incentive. And since then, I became in contact with the father, and the recruiter is out of the picture.

Manal's account mirrors the experiences and opinions of other employers we met. Manal now acts as a recruiter for the family of her domestic worker on the one hand, and her friends who seek domestic workers on the other hand. She has recruited the two sisters of her domestic worker to work for her cousin and her friend.

There are striking contrasting narratives between getting a child domestic worker through a recruiter (who only cares about money and who is not trustworthy), and a person they know (such as a doorman, an adult domestic worker, an existing employer or a neighbor).. The idea of not knowing the origin of the girl seems to be threatening to most of the employers we met, particularly because they will not be able to find her or her parents in the event that "something happens" (e.g. stealing, or running away). Moreover, recruiters were often described by employers as persons involved in illegal activities that they would not normally like to deal with, particularly if there are other options available. Amira, a 31-year-old researcher, who is currently seeking a 15-year-old girl to babysit her 1-year-old son during her working hours, was particularly concerned about this. She said:

I can't trust this person [recruiter]. I don't feel comfortable talking and dealing with a person like this; he's like a trader. I will never know the original story of this girl, and I won't be able to find out. There are many issues related to that. For instance, I'm uncomfortable regarding the relationship of the girls [child domestic workers] with this man; what if he sleeps with her and she gets pregnant? They can come and accuse my husband for that. He could recruit her for sex work, or so. You never know. It's much more secure to get someone through the doorman or friends.

As a result, Amira asked the wife of her doorman, who used to come and clean her apartment, to find her a trustworthy girl from the area.

However, for some, preferring a particular means of recruitment does not necessarily reflect the actual means of finding their child domestic workers. Sahar, an employer in her mid-fifties, reported that she prefers getting domestic workers through family and friends so that she feels safe and ensures that the girl is trustworthy. However, her current domestic worker was found through a recruiter that her sister knows through a friend. Choosing this means does not reflect a preference, but rather the option that was available at the time.

Similar to the employer, sending families often reported that they prefer to send their daughters to either work for people they know, or through people they know (recruiters/ family member). In Minya and Assiut governorates, we met and learned about many cases where the daughters work for rich neighbors in the area. Esmat, a sending mother describes the reason behind this preference.

Esmat: I know this woman [employer] long time ago as she used to give us money, fabrics and meat during the feasts I only accepted that my daughter works because I know the woman [employer] and her house. She is our neighbour and we've been living in the same neighborhood since I moved here. We know her, she treats us well. She distributes food and fabrics to us during the feast; she is a good old woman.

Researcher: What are your concerns in other houses?

Esmat: I wouldn't send her to houses I don't know. Maybe there are boys there who would try to flirt with her. She is a young girl, and with little experience, so I have to protect her I knew that nobody visits this employer but her daughters, and not even their husbands. She goes to stay with her daughters sometime. Her husband works in a laboratory, and he's rarely there. So we know everything about her house.

Researcher: So you wouldn't accept that she works for people you don't know?

Esmat: No

Also, in other cases we met, children are sent to work with extended family members who work as doormen in Cairo. Shams is a 70-year old grandmother of a 15-year-old child domestic worker. Her son left his daughter Samah with her after he divorced his wife. He disappeared, leaving both his mother and his wife under the mercy of rich people in the area. A few months later, Samah's aunt came to the village and learned about what happened. So she suggested taking Samah to work for some people in the building. At the time of the interview, Samah had been working for a year in Cairo. Although Shams has no idea about the working conditions of her granddaughter, the fact that she works with her aunt is enough reassurance for her granddaughter's well-being and protection. She said, An aunt is like a mother, wouldn't she protect her and take care of her? Of course, she would.

Child domestic workers' and sending families' means for seeking employment

In other countries, child domestic workers were referred by older girl acquaintances or family members (e.g. in Guatemala City and Metro Manila. See Arago-Lagergren, 2003; Camacho, 1999). Informal middlemen, including other child domestic workers in Morocco (Sommerfelt, 2001), or by parents in Guinea (Kippenberg, 2007) are also common. In Egypt, the majority of current child domestic workers in this study (7 out of 10 interviewees) reported they got their first job through a recruiter. Former child domestic workers got their first jobs using a variety of means including recruiters, family members, friends and employers who approached them.

Table 18: **Former CDW got first job through**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Recruiter	5	33.3	35.7	35.7
	Family members	7	46.7	50.0	85.7
	Herself/ asked the employers	1	6.7	7.1	92.9
	friend	1	6.7	7.1	100.0
	Total	14	93.3	100.0	
	Missing System	1	6.7		
	Total	15	100.0		

Similar to employers, favoring social networks over recruiters is also common among the mothers of the child domestic workers we met. 'Um Hussein, for instance, said that she would only leave her daughter to people that she trusts.

Interviewer: What do you think about recruiters and recruitment offices?

'Um Hussein: No, never. It's like selling your daughter. You give them the girl and they give you a lot of money like L.E. 1000. You don't know what happens to the girl; she can do hard work, or be treated badly, no guarantees.

Interviewer: What about women recruiters (mokhadamateya)?

'Um Hussein: No, same problems. For my daughter, I have to know the people, to have their phone numbers and to visit them when I want.

'Um Hussein's opinion about recruiters is common among the sending mothers we met. Most of them sent their daughters to work through relatives, employers or friends that they characterize as trustworthy. They were concerned not give their daughters to people who will do bad things to them. This also reflects trends in other countries. In Katmandu, child domestic workers are brought to work increasingly by parents and relatives, with the use of mediators decreasing since 2005 (Children-Women in Social Service and Human Rights, 2007). The same applies for child domestic workers in Cambodia where fears of trafficking were leading parents to place children to work for relatives or employers who are known to the child domestic worker's family (Brown, 2007).

Zeinab is the mother of a 10-year-old child domestic worker. Her daughter, Noha, is employed in a household that Zeinab knows since she was selling bread to Mme Mona, whose husband is Noha's school teacher. Zeinab refers to them as good people because their reputation is good in the area; they lend her money when she needs; they don't have teenage males in the house; and they distribute food to the poor in the area during feasts, Ramadan and other religious occasions. Zeinab's description of good employers is common among mothers of the child domestic workers we interviewed.

With sending families, the most common recruitment means in village and poor urban settings is to send the girl with an aunt, uncle or neighbor who may have moved to work in Cairo as the doorman of a building. All the sending families we met reported that they did not seek jobs for their children, but rather employers/recruiters came to seek a girl to help. According to 'Um Hassan, a mother of a child domestic worker, they [recruiters] know the poor families here, so they come to ask us. They know that the house of so and so is poor, and has girls who can work. This is how most of our girls work. Wafaa, a social worker in Minbal confirmed this. She noted,

The conditions are bad We are in a village and all know each other so if someone realized that a family needs money, everyone would know and then they ask them. That could be through a person working as a doorman and knows a family who needs someone, and so on.

After a consultation between the mother, sometimes the father and the recruiter, a daughter is selected to work. A number of criteria are used to select the suitable daughter for work. Age is the first criteria used by sending families. According to mothers, it is shameful to employ old daughters (16 and above) in the domestic sector, as they are either engaged, married or waiting for a potential groom. If they go to work, particularly elsewhere, the chances to get married decrease as they become invisible in the marriage market. Moreover, the risk of harassment at this age is particularly high, which may result in damaging their reputation, and thus reducing their marriage opportunities.

The following excerpts from Madiha’s interview, a 40-year old mother, illustrate this point:

Interviewer: Why did you send this daughter in particular?

Madiha: I said she is light and young so she can go. I told her to take care of herself, not to go with a guy somewhere, or to take food or drinks from men.

Interviewer: What about your other daughters? (Madiha has three older daughters 20, 16 and 15 year old).

Madiha: The others are old. I won't feel comfortable to send them. May be guys in Cairo will try to flirt with them or something, in that case, money will not help.

Employers' narratives mirror this finding. As we will discuss in the following section, some of them wanted to hire girl domestics who are 16 years old and above, but ended up getting younger child domestics by the recruiters.

Moreover, many mothers reported that they do not prefer to send their young daughters (under 11 years old), as they are too young to work. This puts daughters between the ages of 11 to 15 years old at high risk of being recruited in the domestic service sector.

In addition to age, other criteria are used for selecting a particular daughter to work. For instance, mothers mentioned that some daughters do not like work in agriculture because it is too hectic, and want to work in the capital, Cairo. Thus, when an employer, a relative or a neighbour come to ask for a daughter to work, they volunteer. School enrollment sometimes protects a daughter from joining or being pressured into the domestic service sector. For instance, Maha and Mona are two 13- and 14-year-old sisters, born to a poor family in Minya. Maha dropped out of school due to repetitive failure, whereas Mona was still enrolled at the time of the fieldwork.

When a neighbour came to ask their mother for a girl to work, she decided to send Maha as she is the one who was out of school, and could leave the village to work.

PREFERENCE FOR CHILD DOMESTIC WORKERS

The question of why employers preferred hiring a child domestic worker as opposed to an adult domestic worker is interesting and needing investigation. Although the majority of the employers (10 out of 17 employers) interviewed reported that they prefer to hire domestic workers who are 16 years old and above, as many ended-up hiring domestic workers who are as young as 9 years of age.

Most of the employers reported that they ended up getting younger domestic workers because, according to one employer, this is what we found in the market. Sahar's narration on how she ended up hiring her 13-year-old domestic worker illustrates this point:

I called him and asked him for a 16 year old girl who can help me after the leaving of Hind (previous DW). He told me 'that's difficult, at this age they are already married, but I will do my best to find you one. Then he called me one day and told me that he found someone and that he will come to bring her. He came and called from gate 13 (visitor's gate at al-Rihab City). I told him how to come over. When he arrived, he told me to come down to meet her (Rasha, child domestic worker). I went down and found a bus full of really young girls, like 6 and 7 years old. I looked at her and told him that she's definitely not sixteen year old. She looked eleven years old, maximum thirteen or fourteen; he told me, 'no she is going to be sixteen. She's maybe fifteen and a half or so.' So I asked her 'How old are you' She said, 'like what he told you. But I know how to do everything.' I felt bad for her to be in this situation, so I decided to keep her, even though my friend, husband and daughter didn't want that.

From the quote above, Sahar's intention was to get a 16-year-old girl. However, when the recruiter brought her a younger girl to work, Sahar decided to try her because she felt if she didn't keep her, the child domestic worker would end up with a bad employer. Sahar and other employers often use this form of moral argument to justify hiring young girls to work. They also add how well they treat them - almost like their daughters.

With regard to the advantages of child domestic workers, one of the most important characteristics that is most favored by employers is the 24-hour/7-day availability of live-in child domestics. Most of the employers interviewed preferred live-in domestic workers (11 out of 17). According to Soad, a 29 year old working mother, child domestic workers don't have obligations because they are usually not married. They are reliable and easier to be with you all the time. Most employers reported that having a live-in domestic worker is more convenient. Martha, a 33-year-old mother of two children, noted that having a live-in domestic worker is better.

because it is more convenient than coming and going and it is more convenient for me when I need to get up at night or I need something late or I have guests coming over, so it would be more convenient to have someone there. And a stay-in is more reliable because she is just there and she can get vacation like 4 days a month or so. Someone who comes and goes is just not reliable enough and to depend on someone who can come and then never show up again, which happened lots of times, so I prefer the live-in

In addition, employers described many qualities that characterize child domestic workers that are not present with adult domestic workers. Obedience, for example, is a significant quality with child domestic workers. It was often mentioned that child domestic workers typically do not have a say and will not compete with you like older workers. On this issue, Amira comments, Child domestic workers are more obedient. Adult domestic workers do not like to take orders and argue a lot, whereas child domestic workers will not argue with you. They will just do what you tell them to do. They are not opinionated. Moreover, a number of employers reported that they would not feel comfortable giving orders to a woman who is older than them. Giving orders to a young girl is often framed by the employer as a teacher, educating the poor young girl in basic cleaning standards that she lacked at home and which she will be able to use later as a wife and mother.

Preference for child domestic workers were also because of their innocence: she's too young to flirt with other males in the house, or she is not envious and will not look at what we have. Employers often contrasted these characteristics with adult domestic workers who may look at your husband, or may envy you and your children because you enjoy a better socioeconomic status. The lack of innocence in adult domestic workers were associated with having been exposed to a corrupted value system.

In many cases, adult domestic workers have a corrupt value system due to their early exposure to things; some look really good but in reality, they are actually very difficult to deal with. An adult domestic worker has more courage; she may try to flirt with your husband or a guest. But a child domestic worker is fully involved in the tasks people give her, is happy to be working and is usually very keen to learn new skills. On the other hand, an adult domestic worker may be envious because we live in a better house, no matter how much money she takes. (Mona)

Malleability is another major advantage of child domestic workers. Unlike adult domestics who have already acquired values and morals, child domestic workers can be molded according to the employers' taste, if treated well. According to Noha, a 27 year-old employer,

it's easier to give guidance to young girls. Their positive response is guaranteed if you treat them well and make them feel that they are members of the family, and that it's not wrong to work, if the job is in a respected place.

Molding a child domestic worker was described as a hard process that requires a lot of work from the employer's side. It often includes educating the child domestic worker on morals (not to steal, not to lie), cleaning standards, and more importantly, personal hygiene, dressing style and proper ways of talking and dealing with people. It is easier to do this with live-in arrangements because they can be molded the way they want without any external influence. Magda, for example, likes to have young live-ins in order to get them used to her system,

because I feel more secure. She stays here, knows the system and adapts to our values. If they go back every day, you never know what happens for the rest of the day. When these girls go back for a visit, you notice a difference in their behavior. They can steal [from] you, they become envious, and you can notice that in their looks. I only accept those who work per day for cleaners who come on weekly basis to do a certain cleaning task, and even those, I get people I know from before, like old women who work for my relatives - and I monitor them. But to have someone who will be there for you on a day to day basis, it has to be a live-in I like to bring them young, and raise them here in my house

Employers often described the overall conditions of child domestic workers in before and after class-based terms. Sahar describes the first day of Rasha, her 13 year old domestic worker:

... she was putting a veil, wearing a dirty pyjama and shoes. She looked completely different, much, much worse. But I guess this is classic. My sisters told me that they (sending families and recruiters) ask them to wear poorly so that we get them new clothes...When I showed her Hind's wardrobe (previous child domestic worker), she was surprised; for her it was like Ali Baba's Tavern.

She was in total surprise. She used to sleep a lot, like till noon. She was finding it weird that nobody wakes her up to work or so. Her legs were hurting her.

She also used to eat a lot. One time, Hussein (husband) brought two kilos of bananas. We went out and when we went back home, we found that she ate it all. The amount of food she used to consume was unbelievable. Now all this has changed. She's more decent than before if you see her in the street, you will never know that she works in a house.

Lastly, child domestic worker seemed to be particularly preferred by new mothers who hired child domestics so they could run after their toddlers, play with them and keep them company when the parents go out or are busy performing other household chores.

SALARY AND PAYMENT ISSUES

Salary and Incentives

Wages for live-in child domestic workers around the world are typically very low (ILO-IPEC, 2004; Black, 2002; Human Rights Watch, 2009; Rice, September 7, 2008). Child domestic workers may not be paid directly for their work (Blagbrough & Glynn, 1999), with part or all of their earnings going directly to their parents or to an intermediary (UNICEF International Child Development Centre, 1999; Camacho, 1999; Ray & Iyer, 2006; Suda, 2001; Bhat, 2005). Some child domestic workers are not paid a wage but are paid in-kind as in exchange for room and board (Brown, 2007; Suda, 2001; UNICEF International Child Development Centre, 1999; Jacquemin, 2006; Kippenberg, 2007; Sommerfelt, 2001).

In our study, all current and former child domestic workers, except those who work alongside their mothers, earned much the same on a regular basis (see table below). However, their rates are significantly lower than adult domestic workers (see Jureidini, forthcoming). The average annual income for child workers is LE 857 or 1/5 the average income for Egypt (Gazaleh, Bulbul, Hewala & Najim, 2004). Boys' wages on average are more than double the average wage for girls and wages of urban child workers are greater than wages for rural child workers (Gazaleh, Bulbul, Hewala & Najim, 2004).

Table 19: **Monthly salary**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Less than 100 EGP	6	60.0	60.0	60.0
	100 - 200 EGP	1	10.0	10.0	70.0
	200 - 300 EGP	3	30.0	30.0	100.0
	Total	10	100.0	100.0	

* Less than 100 is the income earned by girl domestics who work in governorates of Fayoum, Minya and Assiut.

Salaries are often given to parents either directly, through the recruiter or through the child. Former child domestic workers often emphasized that they never touched the salaries they earned when they first started to work. The money typically went to the mothers and was spent on male siblings and/or on household expenses.

Table 19: **Salary given to**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Parent	7	46.7	50.0	50.0
	Worke	6	40.0	42.9	92.9
	Sister	1	6.7	7.1	100.0
	Total	14	93.3	100.0	
Missing	System	1	6.7		
Total		15	100.0		

With the exception of two, most of the current girl domestic workers we interviewed received salaries from their employers directly. However, they gave all their income to their parents. Only three deducted a small amount, L.E. 5 - 10, to cover transportation costs, give few pounds to siblings and/or saved it to buy something later.

Employers interviewed said they paid the salaries to parents, recruiters, children, and sometimes whoever comes to pick it up.

Table 20: **Employer Pay salary to**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	parent	6	33.3	35.3	35.3
	Recruiter	3	16.7	17.6	52.9
	Child	4	22.2	23.5	76.5
	Relative	1	5.6	5.9	82.4
	Parent or Recruiter	2	11.1	11.8	94.1
	Parent or Child	1	5.6	5.9	100.0
	Total	17	94.4	100.0	
Missing	NA	1	5.6		
Total		18	100.0		

* Not applicable refers to the case of Amira, an employer seeking a child domestic worker.

Employers are aware that the salaries they pay go to the parents in the end. They often use this to claim that parents of child domestic workers are exploitative and sell their children for money. This helps them to construct a contrasting image, colored with religious and moral discourses, of exploitative parents versus the merciful employer, to rationalize hiring child domestic workers. They often distinguish themselves as the merciful employer, who is not like other employers. On that matter, Sahar says,

I'm happy that Rasha came to live here. That she's taking a break from her bad life back home. I teach her things that can help her later. My daughter taught her to take a shower every day. She's happier with us than with her family. She even asked us not to send her back to her parents for vacation because she likes it more here. I also feel that I'm doing something good to have her here. I'm happy that I taught her that there is another kind of employer who can take care of her, not like the others. We are keen to convey the message that this is her house and we tell her you are like Dina (daughter); she has to go to the university and you have to work.

There is also a gender difference in how salaries earned by child labour are used. Most of the girls we met gave their full salaries to their mothers who would decide whether to spend the money on younger siblings' education or household expenses. However, they related that their brothers often spend the salaries they earned on clothes, leisure, going out with friends, and very rarely on the family. Further, boy domestic workers are more likely to report working because of prior negative educational experiences but with the goal to learn a profession, whereas girls identified different aspirations such as wanting to earn their own money or helping their family financially (ECWR, 2008).

WORKING CONDITIONS

Working Hours per Day and Breaks

Work hours for child domestic workers around the world are typically very long (Blagbrough & Glynn, 1999; UNICEF International Child Development Centre, 1999; Camacho, 1999; Sommerfelt, 2001; Suda, 2001; Kippenberg, 2007), with estimates of a typical day ranging from 9-15 hours (Blagbrough, 2008; Ray & Iyer, 2006; Children-Women In Social Service and Human Rights, 2007) although child domestic workers are generally expected to remain 'on call' and available to the employer 24 hours a day (Blagbrough, 2008; Human Rights Watch 2009; Bhat, 2005).

From the interviews in Egypt, employers reported that child domestic workers work on average from 5 to more than 8 hours, with two breaks for live-in and one lunch break for day workers. In fact, some employers insisted that they let child domestic workers work until their children return home so that they feel on equal footing with the children of the household - I treat them like my children . Mme Hoda, an employer and a mother of a 20-year-old daughter, when asked about the working hours, responded:

We tell her you are like Laila (daughter); she has to go to the university and you have to work. When she comes back from university, she doesn't do anything. Same applies to you, when you finish working, you don't have to do anything more. This is your role. We didn't choose it but this is the reality so you have to adapt.

During the interview with Mme Hoda, however, it was obvious that Rasha was on call ; she served drinks, went downstairs to get something and babysat her sister's nephew. Importantly, for many employers, this was not considered work, but rather tasks as part of living in the house.

Employers often perceive that they assign child domestic workers light tasks that are not time consuming, and that the most important thing is that they are available all the time to give them something or to play with their children. In only one case did the employer report that her domestic workers works for maybe 4 or 5 hours a day, but is on demand for the rest of the day. Below is her response to the question on working hours:

What do you mean by work; she is there 24/7. What is work? Like cleaning up dishes (30 minutes) three times a day and hanging up laundry for 30 minutes. So approximately she would work 4-5 hours per day. No certain working hours, rather on demand. Like when I need something I would tell her please do this etc. Martha, 33 year old working mother)

All employers who have live-in child domestic workers reported that they give them regular time off, mostly every 6 weeks, and in one case once a year.

Current child domestic workers reported average working days ranging from a few hours to more than ten hours a day, with an average of one or two breaks, mainly for eating. Those who worked

for only a few hours were typically freelancers who perform a limited number of domestic chores in the mornings or those who perform domestic work side by side with their mothers. Those who live with their employers go on vacation every six months and, in one case, once a year during the feast. The majority of former child domestic workers (8 out of 14) reported that they worked for nine hours or more when they first started. Three former child domestic workers reported that they did not have regular time off when they started to work. One did not go back to her family for almost three years, and her only contact with them was her sister's visits to pick-up the salary. Ragaa', a 16-year old former child domestic worker, used to work overnight for an old woman when she was 14 years old. For Ragaa', the eight working hours were not the problem. The problem was that she had to stay up all night in case her 80-year-old employer needed something, and then go the next day to school.

Specific tasks assigned

As noted above, a common discourse that emerged during the fieldwork was that child domestic workers are hired for light tasks, which include playing with children, running errands and helping the employer or adult domestics in household chores such as cleaning floors and carpets. They may however, get involved in more sophisticated tasks after a couple of years, after they learn basic cleaning skills from their employers. On the other hand, child and former child domestic workers reported that they performed all types of heavy duty tasks. To contrast both narratives, table 21 lists those tasks performed by child domestic as reported by themselves and by their employers.

Table 21: **Tasks as Reported by Child Domestics and Employers**

Employers	Former and Child Domestics
Running errands	Doing laundry by hand
Sit and play with children	Washing the carpets
Helping in domestic chores	Washing the curtains
Arranging kids' rooms	Arranging all rooms of house
Cleaning restrooms and kitchens	Cleaning restrooms and kitchens
Washing dishes	Dusting the entire apartment
Throwing garbage	Washing dishes after every meal (for live-in)
Buying vegetables	Buying heavy things from market (could go up and down more than one time)
Removing dust	Help with cooking and making children's food
Polishing furniture	Serving food
Assist in cooking	Serving water, tea, coffee and drinks to household members and guests throughout the day.
Serving a glass of water	Babysitting family's children
Helping with dirty works (anything that does not need skills)	Taking full care of an old woman

As the table above shows, both employers and girl domestic workers listed the same tasks, like running errands, helping in household chores and babysitting. However, girl domestic workers often emphasized the physical effort of the tasks they performed, even when they were about the same tasks reported by their employers. For instance, running errands is a task that both employers and child domestic workers have reported. However, child domestic workers added another dimension by reporting that they would have to go up and down several times a day to get something that their employers wanted. Also, getting a cup of water was often translated by girl domestic workers as serving tea, coffee, juice and drinks to family members and guests all day. Moreover, some heavy-duty tasks were never mentioned by employers, particularly cleaning carpets and curtains alone. It is worth noting that the majority of child and former child domestic workers left their jobs at least once because of the heavy duties they were assigned and/or work overload. The mothers of child domestic workers did not express much concern regarding tasks and duties that their daughters performed, but rather considered it a learning experience and as part of the work load that their daughters have to tolerate.

Furthermore, employers strongly identified a distinction between tasks that they would assign to child domestics, and others that they, and only they, would do as part of their roles as mothers and wives. This responsibility entails: cooking, feeding, clothing and changing diapers of small children and serving food to the husband in order to avoid their interaction with girl domestic workers.

Mai is a 55-year-old woman, who used to hire child domestics when her twin daughters were born. Throughout the interview, Mai emphasized that her position in the house is very important and that women should be the ones responsible for the household and certain tasks like cooking, and serving food to their husbands:

Well this [cooking and serving food to husband] is the responsibility of the woman, it [work of child domestic workers] should not get that far I mean if I do not do the dirty works (and she does it), what should my role be in the lives of my children and husband? I have to have a role. My husband should not eat from the hands of someone else for example I mean I need to have a mark at home, otherwise I would be useless.

Hansen (1989, as cited in Jureidini, 2006) called bedrooms and food preparation both sexually charged domains. The importance of serving food to the men of the house was also found in Lebanese households (Jureidini, 2006). While domestic workers may assist with food preparation, the cooking and presentation of the food was described as part of the madame's role, mainly to reduce contact with the male head of the household.

In our study, only one employer, Magda, reported that she does not allow her child domestic worker to clean her room because she doesn't want her to see what's in the room, and advised other employers to do the same. She explained that this is the room where she keeps confidential documents like receipts for her children's school tuition fees, and that she would not like her to see the amounts that she pays. Also, she doesn't want her to know where she keeps her jewelry and other valuables.

ACCESS TO FOOD AND SHELTER

Access to adequate food and shelter are often perceived as indicators for fair treatment of child domestic workers. In a study of Moroccan girl child domestic workers (Sommerfelt, 2001), workers' satisfaction with living arrangements was based on the level of inclusion with their employer's family life.

While child domestic workers in an 8 country survey reported adequate sleeping arrangements (Blagbrough, 2008), studies of child domestic workers in India (Bhat, 2005; Ray & Iyer, 2006) and Kenya (Suda, 2001) reported child domestic workers were given inadequate sleeping arrangements and inadequate food.

Access to Food

In our study, food proved to be a sensitive issue with employers of girl domestic workers. Interviewers had to pose food-related questions in a sensitive manner in order to avoid offending employers with hidden messages like do you feed your child domestic? Rather, we asked them what food arrangements they had for their child domestic workers.

All employers reported that their child domestic workers eat exactly what they eat. They emphasized that they particularly took care of this point in order to make their child domestic workers, who were often deprived from good food, feel less envious, and almost like a family member. On that matter, Hoda noted:

Yes I was very careful regarding this point. You know they are deprived from food so I told her to eat whatever she wants, so that she doesn't get envious. You know when she first came; she used to hide food and sandwiches under the pillow, so I told her to behave as if this is her house and to eat whenever she wants. I also give her pocket money to buy sweets and chocolates, exactly like my children.

Mai's opinion mirrors Hoda's, but added the evil eye dimension: It was important that she would eat with us or before us so she does not give us an eye in the food. Poor her, she is usually hungry, you know.

Employers' views varied, however, regarding the place where child domestic workers sit to eat. Four employers reported that they would let their domestic workers sit with them at the table. For them, it was an indicator of fair treatment and for including the child domestic worker as a part of the family.

She eats with us at the table. We try to convey the message that she's part of the family. At lunch, we (Husband, Wife, Daughter and Adult Domestic Worker) eat at the same table, unless we have guests because, here in Egypt, some people don't like that ... But she can sit with my mother and close friends at the same table. (Hoda)

However, similar to Hoda, all employers mentioned that they would not let child domestic workers eat at their table if there were guests. Two said they only allow the girls to sit at the table if there are no males present. When asked about the reason for that, they explained that it is out of politeness - that the girls feel shy to sit with males at the table. Those who did not allow their child domestic workers to sit at the same table, said they felt some sense of discomfort and that they preferred them to eat separately. Ne'amat, a 27 year old single mother who lives with her 4 year old daughter and her 13 year old domestic worker, reported:

Not with us; in the room or in the kitchen. She can eat with us when Karima [her sister] is here with my cousin; I ask them to join us. She really likes to eat with us but I don't feel comfortable. Like if I'm alone and I'm eating, I eat here [in living room] and she eats alone in the kitchen. I don't know, I can't eat with her alone I just don't feel comfortable.

Ne'amat went on to say that she gave her child domestic worker access to food in the house:

Hoda [cousin who got her the child domestic] wants me to discipline her eating habits, because she's more experienced. Like she wants me to put breakfast for her before leaving to work and not let her eat until I come back because they [child domestic worker] eat a lot when they come here; maybe the habit in the village is to eat a lot or maybe they are deprived from food, I don't know. But I'm not comfortable with the idea of controlling her food. I don't like to feel that she wants something [food] and to get it, she has to take my permission, especially food. So I leave her to arrange her food as she wants.

As shown from the excerpts above, disciplining the food and eating arrangements of child domestics is often driven around perceptions/issues of hunger, enviousness, and interaction with male members and manners.

Because child domestic workers do not see their pay, they are interested in other direct benefits, particularly employers' treatment. Nice food, for many child domestic workers we met (and their families) was identified as an advantage for working as child domestic workers - and as a reason for not returning back home.

Access to Shelter and Adequate Sleep

Of course, she has her own room and restroom, is the answer that we got from two employers of child domestic workers living in al-Rihab City. Other employers who have small children reported that their child domestic workers sleep on the floor in their daughters' room, or in the playing room. Only one employer whose husband lives in Kuwait noted that her child domestic worker sleeps in the same room as her.

For those who work in the governorates of Fayoum, Minya and Assiut, however, sleeping over the employer's house seemed to be an overwhelming responsibility for the employer and a taboo for the child, her male siblings and her family. According to Soha, an employer in the Fayoum governorate, she doesn't sleep here. I'm scared that she sleeps here because I will be fully responsible for her. The fact that, in many of these areas, child domestic workers' parents live near the employer made it easy for them to commute to work. Sleeping outside of their parents' house is often seen as risking a girl's virginity and good reputation that may disadvantage girl domestic workers in the marriage market. Importantly, due to the shame associated with the job, some of the girls work in this sector secretly, and thus they have to go home every day in order to avoid suspicion among neighbors and relatives in the area.

It is worth noting that, mothers who have daughters working in Cairo had very little information about the working conditions of their daughters. The concerns they expressed were mainly related to chastity and virginity. Very little was mentioned in relation to access to food, shelter and adequate sleep. Moreover, very few details were reported about their daughters' working conditions. Mothers whose daughters worked in Cairo simply reported that they lived like a family member, eat what the family eats, and have a good place to sleep. However, when we asked about further details, nothing more was added. With regard to working conditions, being overworked or being mildly punished as a result of making a work-related mistake was often perceived by sending mothers as a good training for the girls. These findings were confirmed during a discussion with Wafaa, a social worker in Minya, who noted:

Because some cases happened, they [sending parents] are very concerned about that [sexuality] while they do not care about their daughters' sleeping places, food, drinks, clothing, diseases or so on.

ACCESS TO EDUCATION

Access to Formal Education

Educational barriers are considered to be a main factor driving children into domestic work, such as geographically or financially inaccessible schooling, failed educational experiences, irrelevant curricula, and gender-based norms such as the devaluation of girls' education (ILO-IPEC, 2004; Arago-Lagergren, 2003). In Egypt, educational policies may contribute to child labour, such as the lack of enforcement of mandatory education requirements (which is only to primary level), unaffordable school fees, the biased allocation of public educational funds, curricula irrelevant to students' needs, and gender bias against girls in the school system (Gazaleh, Bulbul, Hewala & Najim, 2004).

In a study by the Social Research Center at the American University in Cairo (2007), most poor families expressed education as the top choice for their children, though children started working due to prohibitive school fees and negative educational experiences. This also applied to the child domestic workers in our sample. As mentioned earlier, most of the child domestic workers either did not go to school or dropped out from formal education. Only two current child domestic workers are combining schooling and work, and only three former child domestics are still enrolled in education.

Fadwa is a 10 year old child domestic worker who works in the Minya governorate, and who was attending school at the time of the study. Fadwa started working as a child domestic worker when she was 8 years old, for an acquaintance of her mother. When Mme Aya approached her to work, Fadwa was in primary school, Grade 3. Fadwa's male employer was her teacher and said she was good at school. Fadwa's mother and Mme Aya agreed to arrange her working hours in a way that would enable her to pursue her education. During school times, Fadwa went to work around 1 p.m. and returned home before sunset. In the summer and during vacations, Fadwa went to work early and finished early. Although she sometimes got help from her teacher after work, Fadwa suffered from a lack of study time. She could not take pre-exam vacations and performed her double role throughout the school year.

Rawya is a 15 year old child domestic worker in Assiut that we met through an NGO. Rawya also mixed schooling and work. She was driven into domestic work to help her sick mother and young siblings. Rawya was recruited and secretly started working for a neighbor, 'Um Hamada, a mother of five young children in Assiut. Rawya followed the same summer and winter working schedule of Fadwa. Although Rawya took days off during exam times, her main concern was the job itself. Although Rawya went back home every day (her neighbors did not know anything about her work), she was sometimes bothered by the taunt of child neighbors of her employer who called her you, servant. She was very scared that her schoolmates would find out about her job. That is why Rawya was trying to complete a two-year vocational training diploma in order to start a micro-credit project offered through the NGO.

The salaries these girls earn do not go to their education, but rather to cover household expenses. It is worth noting that it was much easier for girls who live and work in village settings near their families to mix schooling and work, than those who leave their families to work in Greater Cairo.

All of the other child domestic workers we interviewed dropped out due to parents' inability to pay school fees, repeated failure at school, and gender-based bias against girls' education. In two cases, girls were given for work during the summer, but went back to continue their schooling, although Rasha reflected on this experience:

She [sister] told my mother, and they both told me that I will go to help a distant aunt in housework during the summer and go back when the school year starts. They said that they want me to stay away from my brother (Mohamed) because he used to hit me a lot. They used this argument to convince me to go. This summer never ended, and I understood that I became a domestic worker.

Based on our fieldwork, child domestic labour is neither a means for young girls to gain economic independence nor to cover schooling expenses. In fact, it is mostly a strategy for the families to derive an income that would allow them to cover basic household expenses and sometimes their girls' dowry and/or young male siblings' education. This contrasts sharply with findings in other countries where child domestic workers identified domestic work as a means to continue their education (e.g. by having their employer pay their education fees or by earning money for school fees) although the nature of their work (long hours, physically draining) presented a barrier to continuing their education (Blagbrough, 2008; ILO-IPEC, 2004; Camacho, 1999; Children-Women In Social Service and Human Rights, 2007).

It is worth noting that the only case where the mother insisted that her daughter would continue her education was a mother who completed two years of a graduate diploma. Amina, a mother of two, moved to Cairo to work with her husband, who is a doorman. When we asked Amina about the future of her daughter, she insisted that she would let her quit the job next year so that she could focus on her education and have a better future.

Access to Informal Education

As part of on-the-job training, all employers reported that they teach and improve their child domestic workers' cleaning and cooking skills so that they can rely upon them. Moreover, current and former child domestic workers reported that they learned cleaning and cooking at their employers, since cleaning and cooking at their parents' houses was very basic and very different from their employers. Cleaning and cooking for employers involved more complicated tasks as the houses are bigger; types of floors (ceramic and wood tiles) are different from modest countryside houses, as is the use of different types of detergents for each item, etc.

In addition, many employers reported that they were trying to teach girl domestic workers basic reading and writing skills because they had dropped out of school. Hoda, for instance, brought her 13-year-old child domestic worker coloring books with numbers and the alphabet so that she could teach her basic reading and writing skills. She was also planning to send her to a neighboring mosque so that she could learn the Koran and get a literacy certificate. Others noted that they tried very hard to teach their child domestic reading and writing along with their children, but they faced major barriers in acquiring these skills. Manal, for example, tried to teach her child domestic worker reading and writing since she came to work for her, almost 10 years ago:

I tried to teach her reading and writing but she couldn't catch it. She's very smart but she doesn't like to learn that. My son tried to teach her and the sheikh who used to come teach my son Koran tried too, but no hope. I also sent her to the sheikh of the neighboring mosque, but no hope. She only knows numbers.

No cases were reported about teaching skills that could later generate an alternative means of income, like sewing, knitting or other vocational skills.

Religious Education

Throughout our fieldwork, a significant emphasis was placed on religious education, which included praying and reciting Koran verses; or on- what has been identified by employers as religious, particularly Muslim, values like honesty - no stealing, no lying, and no flirtation . Employers often saw teaching religion to their child domestics as a must, because it would protect them and their families from bad things that they often hear about in the media. Maha, for instance, notes that if she taught her child domestic the Koran and Sunnah, she would have a reference of what is right and what is wrong, and would not steal or lie. When she tells her a lie, Maha often uses religion to explain for the girl that when she lies, God gets upset. In other times, a religious discourse is used to explain that it is the employer's responsibility to provide for the child domestic religious education. If the employer does not provide religious education, s/he will carry sins . In fact, Madiha, an employer of an eleven year old child domestic intended to send her child domestic back to the recruiter at the time of the interview because she could not provide her with a religious education. Madiha had one child domestic worker before, however, at that time she was younger, with more patience and, more importantly, her daughters were young. Madiha used to help her child domestic, along with her three daughters, memorizing Koranic verses and to tell them the prophet's stories. However, as her daughters got older, so did Madiha and she now has no patience to teach her child domestic. At the time of the interview, Madiha expressed a sense of guilt for her limitations, for which she aimed to reconcile by sending the child domestic back to her parents.

Hygiene Habits

Hygiene came at the top of the employers' list of skills they taught to the child domestics. Indeed, it is the first thing they recalled when we asked them about the first day the child domestic arrived. On that matter, Maha noted:

When she first came, I taught her personal hygiene. At the time, she already had her period, so I told her to put a pad and to clean herself. I also taught her to change her underwear every day, and to wash her hands. I told her that in Islam, we have to be clean. Her hands were so dirty when she first came; my children were disgusted to take a glass of water or food from her.

A typical hygiene story is to ask the child domestic worker to shave her hair in order to get rid of lice, and to throw their clothes in the garbage.

I was shocked when I first saw her. She was very dirty. Even street children were way cleaner than her and of course, they bring them without clothes - only the clothes she was wearing, nothing more, no clothes, no underwear... So I was in a complete shock but the woman recruiter told me that she's a hard worker. I decided to try, although it was difficult for me to deal with her at first. I took all her clothes and put it in the garbage and gave her new clothes. I shaved her hair completely to get rid of lice. I had to I asked her to take a shower and to brush her hair. Once she started brushing, I can't describe what came out of her hair Unbelievable so I shaved it completely and treated her hair. I tried to remove all the dirt and to ensure that she's clean from now on. Also her body was all burnt; they (sending families) treat them with violence. When they want to punish them, they burn them to stop doing bad things. I pitied her, that's why I kept her. (Manal)

As shown in the quote above, hygiene is often used by employers to accuse the parents of child domestic workers as abusive and uncaring, leaving the employer the task of cleaning up .

It is worth noting that while hygiene-related habits could be objectively perceived as a necessary life skill, it may be a traumatizing experience to the child domestic as it often translated into practices, attitudes and behaviors that distinguish between "the employer's family" and the "domestic worker's family." This was noted in the narrative of former child domestics. Nadia, for instance, noted that when she first worked at the age of 9, she was asked to undress at the house (a stranger's house), cut her clean hair, and she was given a separate eating kit - like their dog - that consisted of a cup, a plate, a spoon, a fork and a knife. For Nadia, this was a direct message: "you are not clean, you are different than us."

EMPOWERMENT AND OPPORTUNITIES

In this research we looked at girls' domestic work and its effect on their agency and well-being. We tried to understand what domestic work means to these children, bearing in mind that all of them did not experience the classical return for work - the salary. How do they feel about their work, and what does it imply for their position in their family and community?

Families' perceptions of empowerment/ opportunities

Despite the sometimes severe abuse and exploitation of child domestic workers, some families perceived that placing their child in a more affluent household would increase their access to education, resources and opportunities for social advancement (Black 2002). In some countries, domestic work is also seen as instructive for girls' future roles as wives and mothers (Suda, 2001; SRC, 2007; Gazaleh, Bulbul, Hewala & Najim, 2004). Our study confirmed these findings. Most of the sending mothers we met highlighted that their daughters live in better environments when they join the domestic service sector, under the provision that the employers are good people. As we have noted earlier, there were no clear criteria on what constituted good employers, except that they should be religious and support them and/or poor families in the area financially, particularly during religious occasions such as the 'Eid or during Ramadan.

From the sending families' point of view, the opportunity of living in a good and clean environment was considered one of the main advantages of their daughters' work. Most of the mothers reported that their daughters lived in hygienic environments that they could not afford. This was understood as having a shower every day, using shampoo, wearing new clean clothes, and sleeping on a separate bed. Rasha, a sending mother added that her daughter used a new more proper language, manifested in using words like shower, and many others that she did not know before, and that this taught her to speak more properly. Also, mothers considered learning some reading and writing at the employers' house as another opportunity available for their children.

Employers' perceptions of empowerment/ opportunities

As we have noted before, employers justified hiring young children to work by arguing that it was a great opportunity for them escape the harsh living conditions back home. This was best illustrated in Ne'amat's statement below:

It's an advantage for her to be here. She gets exposed, gains life experience and learns new things. She sees how people live; she gains habits that are better than their habits in the village like eating manners, dressing style, cleaning standards. When she gets married and opens a house of her own, she will apply the same/similar things. I think her work here is really full of advantages for her. She learns things that are way better than what she could have learned back home.

Interestingly, Ne'amat knew nothing about the village where her child domestic came from, not even the name of the village. In the following question, she was asked what she knows about the village. Ne'amat only replied her parents beat her, but she really likes them.

Child domestic workers' perceptions of empowerment/ opportunities

As we have noted before, domestic work in our sample was never considered to be a means to complete formal education. Getting literacy certificates and learning to read and write could be a potential opportunity for child domestic workers. However, children we interviewed rarely perceived education as an opportunity.

When we asked child domestic workers about the advantages or positive aspects of their jobs, they often reported things either related to helping their families or positive interactions with employers and their family members. For example, when we asked Rasha about the advantages of working for her employer, she responded, that I'm obeying my father and step-mother; that I help to send my young siblings to go to school and not to work like me but maybe to become engineers and physicians. Rasha's quote reveals a common pattern that emerged during the fieldwork: girls are internalizing a sense of being the family victim through sacrificing to enhance their families' overall conditions. In other words, working in the domestic sector is more of an opportunity for other family members' empowerment. Whether or not the girl gained increased status within her family from becoming one of the main breadwinners is unclear.

Other girls reported that the positive interaction with the family, and the feeling that they care is the main advantage of the job. In this sense, Fahima notes,

They talk to me a lot. Hoda (daughter of employer) sits with me and talks about things. Madame does too. Everybody here talks to me. I don't feel lonely. Hoda teaches me to memorize things. Madame teaches me to write and to color. Mr. corrects wrong things I say when I recite verses. I don't like to go back a lot. I told Madame that I'm thinking to stay here for five years without going back and see whether my parents will ask about me or not.

Other girls reported that they would like to remain with their employers because they had things they would not have at home, going to places that they would have never see otherwise, and living with people who care. The following are excerpts from an interview with Karima, a 19 year old girl who started to work for her employer since she was nine, and did not want to ever leave her:

Researcher: What are the advantages of your job?

Karima: Food, food is very good here.

It's a prosperous life; the food is clean, the clothing is clean. Instead of sleeping at 7 like in the village, I go out a lot and see things that I could not have seen if I had stayed in the village, like restaurants. I also go to have lunch in fancy restaurants and in their houses, and to clubs.

Researcher: Where do you like to go with them?

Karima: I like only to be with them wherever they go. I live with people who love me and I love them. Even now, sometimes, I don't like to go back in vacations.

Researcher: Who do you feel is your family? Here or there?

Karima: I feel that my family is here [my employer's family]; I lived with them all my life. My sisters are here; I consider them [employer and her sister] my 'real' sisters.

Karima does not want to get married because she would lose the advantages associated with her job, and would be separated from people she considers her real family. Similar to the cases of Fahima and Karima, among many other Egyptian child domestic workers, there was a sense of identity confusion between one's original class (parents' social class) and one's assumed class (i.e. employer's class). This resulted in child domestic workers' being suspended in a 'class limbo', e.g. a child domestic worker deriding her family's home or not wanting to return to her family's home because she didn't want to lose the characteristics of her employer's class, such as the values, morals, cultural capital, material possessions and overall living environment.

The positive aspects identified by child domestic workers in our study was consistent with findings in other countries, such as positive interactions/relationships with employers (Blagbrough, 2008), exposure to urban life, and accumulating cultural and social capital and possessions (Kippenberg, 2007).

SEXUALITY

Domestic labour, even children's domestic labour, is interlaced with social perceptions of sexuality. Child domestic workers are extremely vulnerable to sexual abuse and sexual exploitation by male members of their employers' households (UNICEF International Child Development Centre, 1999; ILO-IPEC, 2004; Brown, 2007; Ray & Iyer, 2006; Kippenberg, 2007; Blagbrough, 2008; Blagbrough & Glynn, 1998; Black, 2002; Levison & Langer, 2008; Sommerfelt, 2001; Suda, 2001; Human Rights Watch, 2009; Bhat, 2005). A review of several Latin American studies by UNICEF International Child Development Centre (1999) found that many men who grew up in households with domestic workers had their first sexual encounter with a domestic worker (see also Jureidini, 2006).

In our study, none of the current child domestic workers reported incidents of sexual harassment or sexual abuse. We believe that this might be due to the fact that we mostly accessed them either through their employers or the NGO that helps them finding work. On the other hand, 3 out of 14 former child domestic workers recalled intense experiences of sexual harassment that led them to leave the employer and in one case leave the domestic service sector all together. Hend recalls the incident at her first employer, when she was 9 years old:

I used to clean the rooftop apartment of her youngest 30 year old son. He asked me to sleep on the floor and to take off my skirt. He repeated this three times and I told him that I will tell Madame so he said that he will tell her that I stole money from his pocket. My brother came to take the money so I asked him to call my sister. She came so I told her about the story, and that I want to leave, otherwise, I will leave and you will not hear anything about me. So a few days later she came with my mother to take me, which was the first time to see my mother in two years. They told Madame that my cousin proposed and that I will leave to get married. They were scared to tell her the truth maybe because they knew that she might not believe me.

Hend's sister took her back for a few months; she did a virginity test for her and understood that nothing happened to her. She tried to go back to school, but she did not pass the exams, so her sister sent her to work again.

Bassma, another former child domestic, recalls an incident of sexual harassment by the brother of her male employer. After 15 minutes of silence, she said:

The brother of my employer tried to rape me. My employers were away and I was staying along with the children in the house, and Mr.'s brother. So he came to me while I was sleeping and tried to rape me. He pushed me on the floor and sat on me. But nothing happened further. I ran in the house and pushed him. Then I locked myself in the bathroom. After one hour, I opened the door but didn't find him. This was the reason for me to leave this house. I told Madame and she had a fight with him. She was afraid that he does the same thing with her daughter. She didn't tell her husband because she didn't want to cause problems. I left them but I couldn't tell my parents because they used to tell me to take care regarding these issues, so I was scared that they have a fight with my female employer.

The third story is of Ragaa', a 16-year-old girl who was taking care of an 80 year-old woman overnight. She reported sexual harassment by a relative of the woman:

I was sleeping in a room alone this night. So he opened the door. I woke up and I felt that he didn't look normal. It was as if he was drunk or something. He approached and asked me to get him a blanket, and I felt that he touched my feet under the blanket. So I shouted at him, and told him to go away. I was very shocked. I didn't understand how he would try to harass a girl who is the age of his sister.

I was shocked. I came to the center (Center for Child Worker and his Community) and I was speechless. People here noticed. They asked me what's up so I talked to Dr. Mona [Director], and told her what happened. So she called my mother and told her that I will not go to the job again. So my mother told Hagga, and Hagga had a fight with him and I never went back. I hated the place. They were good people; it was only this guy who was bad. But I was so shocked I decided not to work in houses again. So I quit, and now I'm focusing on school. Teachers at the Center told me that I should continue my education to find a good job.

Although Ragaa was able to quit not only the job but also the whole sector, with the help of the NGO where she participates in activities, her mother decided to replace her with her younger sister. When asked her how come her mother was not scared that the same thing would happen to her sister, she said that her mother believed that this was a coincidence and that they are good people and will not do bad things to her sister.

Based on the three stories above, child domestic workers do not have an adequate reporting system for sexual abuse. Only in the third case, the girl was able to report to the NGO, and to get out of the situation, thinking of education as a sustainable alternative. However, her sister may be driven into the same situation again. In the cases of Hend and Bassma, neither the employer nor the parent offered secure solutions, but only temporary actions to solve the problem. In fact, in both cases, no serious action was taken against the abuser, but rather a sense of fear for not believing the girl, blaming the victim, or not causing family problems dominated the incidents, leaving permanent scars in their memories.

Despite this, domestic work was perceived by some families and employers to be a protective environment where a girl's virginity until marriage will be upheld (avoiding temptation or 'spoiling') (ILO-IPEC, 2004). This is in part due to the control of the girl's movements by her employer (Brown, 2007; Sommerfelt, 2001). Although this was not detected from our interviews, we found other contradictory trends around age-related issues. Many sending mothers reported that they would send their younger daughters (under 16) to work for good people, believing that they would be treated like children and therefore would not be at risk of sexual harassment. When they talked about sexual harassment, it was mostly about people in the street, not the good employers that they seemed to trust rather blindly. This would seem to be in contrast to a study in Brazil that found girls employed as street vendors at a young age were moved indoors as domestic workers once they physically matured in order to avoid sexual attention from customers (as cited in Levison & Langer, 2008).

Although girl domestic workers are extremely vulnerable to sexual exploitation and abuse, the sexuality of girl child domestic workers is still perceived as dangerous and something to be controlled (Kippenberg, 2007). In Latin America (UNICEF International Child Development Centre, 1999) and Arab countries (Jureidini, 2006), media stereotypes depict domestic workers as promiscuous and threatening to the integrity of middle-class families. In Bangladesh, it is more common for girls to be employed at young ages and to lose their jobs once girl child domestic workers reach puberty and become sexually mature (Black, 2002).

Employers in our study tried to discipline or manage interactions between child domestic workers and other male members of the household. Hoda explains how she tried to control the situation between her child domestic worker and her 20-year-old son:

You have no idea what she does when she sees my son. She smiles and tries to get him food or drinks. So I told her not to open my son's room, if he's around. I also taught her to wear proper clothes. I make sure to take her with me when I go out so that she doesn't stay alone with my son. I also keep a record of her period in my notebook. I'm scared.

Interestingly, five employers advised that young couples should not hire child domestics as they may attract the attention of the husbands. Moreover, they highlighted that child domestic workers could be a threat to a newlywed, but a plus to a mother with toddlers or an old woman who needed company in the house.

In response to girl child domestic workers' perceived sexuality and to the awareness of sexual abuse risks, studies have found that employers (largely female) resorted to strictly managing the appearance of their adult female domestic workers (Constable, 1997), as in our case of Hoda. Some take girl child domestic workers out of a household if there are sons (Sommerfelt, 2001). Generally, child domestic workers have to manage interactions with male employers to prevent sexual abuse and jealousy-driven abuse (from female employers) (Blagbrough, 2008).

CHILD PROTECTION

Strategies to protect the physical safety of child domestic workers were described by both parents and employers. Employers' strategies of protection involved: exercising more physical control over the child domestic worker by locking her in the house; using informal monitoring techniques; and calling for greater protection systems for child domestic workers. For instance, Amira protected her child domestic worker (who also serves other residents in the building), against her neighbour:

Our neighbor asked Nessma to buy her bread, but she hid in our apartment because she didn't like her. So when she [neighbor] caught her, she yelled at her hysterically, so the girl cried hysterically too. She felt really bad and sad. Our neighbor was crazy; she used to send them queuing at the bread kiosk for four hours during the bread crisis, and she would give her 25 piasters. That's why the girl escaped. I pitied her. I told our neighbor not to ask the girl for things beyond her capabilities. I told her that she shouldn't ask her to stand for long hours without proper payment.

On the other hand, sending families' first strategy to protect their children is to limit their children sleeping at the employer's house, if work arrangements allow it.

Other strategies included talking to their children on a regular basis and asking about their overall conditions. Asmaa', for example, is a 30-year old mother of Hind, an 8-year old child domestic who works alongside her aunt in Cairo. Asmaa' used a number of strategies to ensure that her daughter was protected. First, she let her daughter sleep at her aunt's house after the working day. If her employer wanted her to sleep over, her aunt went with her. Second, she would ask her daughter (on visits home and over the phone) if her employer treated her badly.

Asmaa's narrative mirrors other cases we met. However, no clear protection system was identified, especially if the child was placed through a recruiter or a trustworthy person. The story of Sahar's daughter, Karima, best illustrated this point. Karima is an 11-year-old girl who works in Cairo in Dr. Ahmed's house, a rich landlord who works and lives in Cairo. When Karima came home last 'Eid, she kept crying the whole week, and was very upset. When Sahar asked her what was wrong with her, she refused to answer. After the interview, Wafaa, the social worker who introduced us to Sahar, told us that the doctor for whom Karima works has a bad reputation. She related the story of another girl from the village who used to work for him a few years before. She said this girl was very pretty, and he treated her in a very special, yet fishy, way. He used to bring her home in his own car and bought her jewelry. A rumor spread in the village that something was going on between him and the girl. It was said that his wife found a groom for the girl and made her marry him. When we asked the social worker why families in the area were allowed their daughters work for this man, she said that they knew, but they went into denial because they needed the money.

Stories of the inability to protect daughters against beating and hitting also illustrate parent's lack of a system of surveillance and protection. For instance, Rasha recalls,

She [employer] hit her once because of the children and once because she burnt the food I told her that my daughter will not go again. She told me that she was very upset and that's why she did that. If we would just have a better life, and not be as poor I would not let my daughter go again whoever takes someone to work for them as a domestic worker do not treat them like humans.

Rasha was unable to protect her daughter against physical abuse, but she was in need of the money. As many girls generate the main source of income for their households many are obliged to remain in harsh working and/or living conditions, suffering from physical and/or psychological abuses, and unable to leave the job.

Another precautionary measure used by mothers is to accompany their daughters to work. In this case, the original arrangement with the employer is that the mother will work and the daughter will assist. However, in some cases, the daughter performs all the work because the mother does not have the physical strength, needs the money and does not want her daughter to go to apartments alone. The case of Zeinab and her daughter Amina is a good example. Zeinab is a mother of a child domestic worker we met in Minbal, an area that belongs to markaz Matay of the Minya governorate. When Hassan, Zeinab's husband became ill, Zeinab called her nephew, who worked as a doorman in Cairo, to find work for her and her daughter in the building. Zeinab was originally looking for work for her daughter, but she had to go with her to help and, more importantly, to monitor her. Zeinab's eldest daughter never worked before because when she was young they did not need the money. However, it was argued, the younger Amina was not a very lucky girl because she had to work to feed the family. Zeinab says,

I told my nephew to find work for us. We both went, and worked together. I can't leave her alone. She is a virgin. I can't leave her in houses like that. Wherever she goes, I go with her. We clean, wash, do everything. She is in good health. She can do these things, and I monitor her. We work in parallel. She does the heavy tasks (windows, carpets, balconies) and I wash the dishes, buy things from the market. She has more energy than me. And at the end of the day, she has to sleep in the same bed as me. That is my rule.

Unlike other mothers' narratives that emphasize the light nature of the work their daughters perform, Zeinab clearly stated that her daughter did all the heavy work, and that her role was to monitor and protect. Zeinab added that she did not state any conditions for the households where they worked as nobody would dare to look at her daughter in her presence. There was a rule to never go to men-only houses, as her daughter might get harassed while working, if Zeinab was busy doing something else. Despite her role as the main domestic worker, Amina did not touch any of the salary that was fully paid to her mother.

Child domestic workers have described family and friends as their important supports and studies have found that increasing parents' links to child domestic workers can act as a protective factor against employer abuse (when child-parent relationships are supportive) (Blagbrough, 2008; Sommerfelt, 2001; Ray & Iyer, 2006; Children-Women In Social Service and Human Rights, 2007).

In India, also, mothers working as domestics sometimes bring along their children to work. This allows mothers to continue watching over their children. In some instances, children may take on some tasks to assist their mother, e.g. watching or playing with the employer's children while the mother cleans, in effect becoming an 'unpaid sub-contractor' (ILO-IPEC, 2004). Children accompanying their mothers to work may become domestic workers when they're perceived to be old enough (e.g. 8 or 9 in India) or after dropping out of primary school (ILO-IPEC, 2004; Bhat, 2005). The same applies in Egypt, when girls go to work with their mothers. Employers reported that the mothers would interfere if the employer asked them to perform a heavy task. Ragaa' for instance, a Fayoum employer of an adult domestic worker and her two girls (11 and 13), noted that the mother interfered many times when she asked one of the daughters to do something. For example, in one incident she asked the daughter to move a chair in order to clean underneath it, but the mother told her that she would do it because it could be heavy for the girl.

Unlike employers' discourse of the careless "sending parent," all mothers we met expressed an extreme care for their working daughters; a care that is not necessarily translated into middle-class practices (e.g. emphasizing on the children's education), but rather into protection from employers and males in the areas where they work.

A number of studies and reports have also warned against demonizing or criminalizing all employers of child domestic workers (UNICEF International Child Development Centre, 1999; Blagbrough, 2008; Black, 2002). Employers are often the most significant influence in shaping a child domestic workers' daily work environment and therefore her physical and mental safety and well-being (UNICEF International Child Development Centre, 1999). Both child domestic workers and child labour advocates have argued that interventions have to involve the cooperation (rather than the ostracisation) of employers and that interventions that do not include the involvement of employers would ultimately have little impact on child domestic workers' daily lives (Blagbrough, 2008; Black, 2002). This is an important consideration as some employers are quite conscious of the needs and indeed rights of their employees. Sahar, for example, noted:

there should a protection/surveillance system for these girls. They shouldn't work under 16 years old. They should have contracts and health insurance. They should have health check-ups every 6 months as some of them suffer from eating disorders.

Within Egypt's child protection policies, working children are considered a vulnerable group. However, child domestic workers and child agricultural workers are explicitly excluded from labour laws designed to regulate children's labour. Act 12 of the 2003 Labour Law outlines restrictions on the working conditions of children, such as limiting the number of hours a child can work during the day and the maximum number of hours a child can work before taking a break; health provisions that must be provided in the workplace (e.g. a glass of milk); age limits for child workers, and documentation requirements for the employer (Azer et al., 2007; Egyptian Center for Women's Rights, July 8, 2008). Act 12 also prohibits children under 17 from working in hazardous conditions. Although domestic work has been identified as one of the worst forms of child labour in Egypt (ILAB, 2007), Article 4 and Article 103 of the 2003 Labour Law explicitly excludes child domestic workers and child agricultural workers (respectively) from the protections afforded child workers in the 2003 Labour Law (Social Research Center, 2007). The exclusion of child domestic workers and child agricultural workers from

Egypt's labour laws governing child labour increases child domestic workers' risk of being exploited and abused (Azer et al., 2007).

Although child domestic workers are explicitly excluded from protection within Egypt's labour laws, Egyptian legislation does provide a range of protective measures for children against child abuse. However, Azer et al. (2007) argue that although Egypt is a signatory to the CRC, child protection approaches in Egypt are limited and fragmented. In summary:

- ¥ The 1996 Child Law attempts to legislate CRC principles but fails to provide adequate protection to vulnerable sectors of children, violates basic rights of children with some articles (e.g. Article 201 sets the age for criminal liability at 7), lacks effective mechanisms for implementation, and does not include family support and welfare services to facilitate child protection efforts.
- ¥ The Penal Law contains articles penalizing different forms of violence but does not specify special measures for violence committed against children.
- ¥ Sexual violence or exploitation is punishable, with penalties increasing to 15 years if the victim is below 16. However, sexual crimes against children are often not reported due to stigma, traditions and fear of judgment.
- ¥ The School Health Insurance Program (SHIP) provides preventative and curative health services for children but child workers are largely excluded from these health services.
- ¥ Child protection work in Egypt is based on legalistic measures but there is a great lack of trust between the legal system and the general public.
- ¥ There are discrepancies between law and policy, e.g. the Egyptian constitution declares free education by the government but school policies demand fees for additional services.
- ¥ Laws fail to consider urgent social realities and therefore become irrelevant to groups targeted by child labour laws, e.g. prohibiting work below a minimum age does not work, because poor households still need to generate an income.
- ¥ Programs are confined to a limited time period, certain areas or to short-term, immediate needs (rather than integrated, long-term solutions), e.g. only a relatively small number of street children are reached by child protection efforts.
- ¥ There is a lack of effective mechanisms to identify child protection needs, provide interventions, and monitor cases.

According to the International Labour Organization (2004), the worst forms of child labour comprise the situation of any child who has been trafficked into domestic service, is in slavery or quasi-slavery, is being sexually abused or exploited, or is engaged in work defined as hazardous in national legislation taking account of Recommendation 190. All worst forms of child domestic labour are unacceptable and must be eliminated. Children should be removed from such situations as a matter of priority.

PERCEPTIONS ON VULNERABILITY

Throughout this report, we have shown that not all child domestic workers suffer from abuse and exploitation at the hands of their employers. However, child domestic workers, particularly live-in, are vulnerable to extreme risks to their physical and mental safety, educational and social development. Moreover, as our research shows, girls who are vulnerable to mental, physical and/or sexual abuse are not, or cannot be, protected by their parents. Many advocates and researchers suggest that child domestic workers' extreme vulnerability arises due to their invisibility (Black, 2002; ILO-IPEC, 2004; UNICEF International Child Development Centre, 1999; Levison & Langer, 2008; Ray & Iyer, 2006) as many are kept behind closed doors in private homes, away from public scrutiny.

¥ It is not often the domestic work itself that puts children at risk but the employers' treatment and demands where most exploitation occurs.

¥ Our study found that child domestic workers are vulnerable to:

¥ Bad treatment such as discrimination and harassment in the employers' home

¥ Depression and feelings of alienation. Seven out of ten current child domestic workers reported that they were sad and depressed when they first started, particularly because of being away from family and friends, and/or moving to a strange setting .

¥ Verbal, psychological and sexual abuse by employer or members of the employer's household.

¥ Lack or limited protection at best for those who experience different types of abuse.

¥ Total or near-total control of child domestic workers' movements by the employer including isolation and limited contact with family and friends.

¥ Long working days, e.g. most working more than 8 hours a day, 6-7 working days, little or no time off, or always 'on call'.

¥ Little or no pay, or lack of control over payment/wages, economic exploitation, e.g. wages given directly to parents or recruiters.

¥ Human rights violations such as being deprived of the right to education, the right to health, the right to play and other rights listed in the Convention on the Right of the Child.

¥ Being deprived of their favourite activities.

¥ Physically demanding work, physically inappropriate tasks, e.g. requiring young children to carry heavy loads for a long period of time.

¥ Having to work with unsafe materials, exposure to toxic materials such as detergents, etc.

¥ Being obliged to work and remain at work because their parents and families need the income.

These risks have also been found among child domestic workers in other countries (see Blagbrough, 2008; Rice, September 7, 2008; Gazaleh, Bulbul, Hewala & Najim, 2004; Bhat, 2005; Kippenberg, 2007; Children-Women In Social Service and Human Rights, 2007; Suda, 2001; Ray & Iyer, 2006; Sommerfelt, 2001; Camacho, 1999; Arag o-Lagergren, 2003; Levison & Langer, 2008; ILO-IPEC, 2004; Blagbrough & Glynn, 1999).

CHILD TRAFFICKING

Trafficking of child domestic workers varies across countries and regions, whether it's through organized networks or small scale, individual traffickers that may be related to the family (ILO-IPEC, 2004). According to Egypt's National Council for Childhood and Motherhood, the following are covered under the definition of child trafficking:

- (a) Child sale: any act or transaction whereby a child is transferred by any person or group of persons to another for remuneration or any other consideration;
- (b) Child prostitution: the use of a child in sexual activities for remuneration or any other form of consideration;
- (c) Child pornography: any representation, by whatever means, of a child engaged in real or simulated explicit sexual activities or any representation of the sexual parts of a child for primarily sexual purposes .

The first article applies to the cases we encountered in the field, such as recruiters collecting girls from a particular village and distributing them randomly amongst employers (without parents' consultation regarding who the employers would be) in urban centres such as Cairo. In Egypt, child rights advocates argue that mekhadamateya or recruiters are actively recruiting girls from rural areas to work as domestic workers (Rice, September 7, 2008). In a study of 123 child domestic workers and 87 house owners in Cambodia, fears about trafficking influenced the recruitment and migration of child domestic workers by increasing the use of familial and social connections to place children with employers, yet the use of family connections often appeared to increase trafficking characteristics in the work environment as child domestic workers related to the household head were more likely not to have been told the true nature of their role (for fear of insulting family members), more likely to not be paid for their work, and more likely to be physically disciplined by the employer. In Guinea, social traditions of child fostering or confiage place children at a young age with relatives or acquaintances for various reasons (e.g. a relative doesn't have a daughter to assist with household chores, loss of family through illness or death, family crisis) with trafficking occurring more through informal networks which may include family and acquaintances (Kippenberg, 2007).

Rasha, for example, is a 14-year-old domestic worker who was sent to her employer by 'Am Hassanein, a mekhadamaty (village domestic workers' recruiter) who collects child domestic workers from a village in Kafr al-Sheikh, brings them to Cairo in a mini-bus and distributes them to employers. It is worth noting that 'Am Hassanein is the only person that deals with the employer; he comes every month to collect the salary, takes the girl every 6 months for a vacation, and has the authority to move the girl worker from one household to the other for a better salary and, more importantly, his commission. Mme Nadia, Rasha's employer, does not know anything about Rasha's parents. Rasha, on the other hand, refers to 'Am Hassanein as a family friend in the village who helps little girls to find work in Cairo.

Maha is another child domestic worker we met in Minbal, a poor area in Markaz Matay, Minya governorate. Maha and other girls from the same area moved to Cairo or to Minya City to more affluent households whose members are related to Hag Ahmed, a big landlord in the village who employs hundreds of seasonal farmers during harvesting seasons, and distributes money and food during feasts for this area's residents. Most of the child domestic workers' families in this area work as seasonal farmers in his land, and thus, as Hag Ahmed represents their main source of income, they cannot say no when he asks for a daughter to work.

The case of Rasha, Maha and other child domestic workers' migration and work experiences do reflect trafficking characteristics that involve complex or ambiguous interactions between family and intermediaries (Blagbrough, 2008; Jacquemin, 2006). Similar to the cases of Rasha and Maha, the cases we encountered in this project better reflected the definition of child trafficking as outlined in the Palermo Protocol: The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation shall be considered 'trafficking in persons' even if this does not involve any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article. The element of coercion needs to be present to determine whether an adult is trafficked but not whether a child is trafficked, so any child under 18 years of age who is transported or recruited to be exploited is considered trafficked, even if the child was not coerced or deceived (Dottridge, 2007).

Finally, cases of sexual abuse and sexual exploitation reported by interviewees, particularly former child domestic workers, are not covered in NCCM's second and third articles, which refer to prostitution and pornography, not sexual exploitation or sexual abuse in the workplace.

CONCLUSION

This exploratory study looked at the overall conditions of girls working in the Egyptian domestic service sector. Through in-depth interviews with former and current girl domestics, employers, recruiters and sending families, we have established the groundwork for understanding their working and living conditions, their vulnerabilities, as well as the opportunities and benefits available for them in such an environment. From the findings of this study we have been able to provide preliminary guidelines towards improving the lives of child domestic workers and their families in Egypt.

Girls' employment in the domestic sector is driven by their supply and demand. Having a daughter working in the domestic service sector is a strategy used by households in Egypt's poorest rural and urban settings, largely to cover household expenses. Moreover, hiring a malleable, obedient, innocent and reliable girl domestic is favourable among Egyptian upper- and middle-class families. Findings of this study revealed that girl domestics are vulnerable to sexual, verbal, physical and psychological abuse, particularly live-in domestics who live far from their parents and who are hidden in the households of their employers. This vulnerability increases with the lack of secure communication channels between the girls and their families, as well as the absence of monitoring and surveillance systems by the government, NGOs and sending families. Many girls are sent from Egypt's poorest villages to work in urban centers with recruiters, acquaintances, employers, or extended family members who, according to the parents, are "trustworthy". In many instances, girls do not have the contact details of their parents, visit their parents once or twice a year, and are left under the mercy of either the middleperson or the employer. This study also proved that girls who work within the vicinity of their parents have better protection as in most of the cases parents are in direct contact with the employers and can ensure that girls go home after the working day. Moreover, most of the girls who join the domestic sector either did not go to school or dropped out; therefore, the possibility of alternative work in another sector is minimal.

A common pattern that emerged during our fieldwork was sending families' concerns regarding their daughter's risk to different forms of sexual harassment and abuse while at work. In a sense it was an obsession where they suggested that the younger the daughter at work, the less risk there would be: they tended to ask only about the risks of sexual abuse rather than actual abuse because of the fear and shame that would follow if revealed; and they tended to neglect the importance of other issues such as access to food, shelter, education, health and mental health concerns. It may be that, instead of protecting girl domestics, factors may increase their vulnerability.

This study can conclude that protection, monitoring and surveillance systems at the family, government, NGOs and community levels need to be established for girl domestics. This could be done through: 1) using already established programmes at the government level such as the NCCM's 16000 helpline and mainstreaming child domestics in the national campaigns on child labour; 2) focusing on girl domestics in psychosocial work that is taking place at the NGO levels; and 3) raising awareness among sending families, particularly mothers, at the village/neighborhood level. The latter can be best done through using effective communication strategies such as Training of Trainers, community workers, communication tools such as leaflets and pamphlets. Last, but not least, lessening the vulnerability of girls at risk can be achieved by providing alternative opportunities for sending families to increase their income, and not to rely on their daughters as main breadwinners. The benefits that are provided by employers to girl domestic workers (and their families), however, should not be ignored and in this sense it is critical to provide protection measures to reduce their vulnerabilities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Improving the situation of child domestic workers and their families will require effort from employers, policy-makers and allied organisations. Advocacy is more likely to be effective when it is grounded in fact and experience, carefully and strategically planned over the short and long term, and integrated in an ongoing process of evaluation, reflection, analysis and action, involving a close relationship or the participation of child domestic workers themselves (Black, 2002). Advocacy will be ineffective when it is sensationalistic, not clearly thought out and not grounded in an integrated programme of action (Black, 2002).

The recommendations below are based on the study's findings. However, it should be noted that it is crucial that future plans are developed in consultation with child domestic workers and their families, employers of child domestic workers, NGOs and policymakers.

Governmental child protection bodies

1. Broaden Egyptian child labour laws to include domestic and other workers (e.g. child agricultural workers) currently excluded from protection under Act 12 or the 2003 Labour Law.
2. Mainstream child domestic workers in programmes and services for working children.
 - ¥ Child protection officers and/or the Child Labor Unit within the Ministry of Manpower and Migration (MOMM) should monitor the work and living conditions of Child domestic workers as part of their mandate to protect vulnerable children, remove children from the Worst Forms of Child Labour, and support and protect children that cannot be removed.
 - ¥ Establish an office within existing labour bodies for domestic workers' community organizing and outreach.
3. Pursue the efforts to establish a comprehensive child protection system to identify child abuse cases and provide protection by establishing guidelines and procedures.
 - ¥ Include Child domestic workers as a concern for child protection committees newly establish following the amendments of the Child Law in 2008.
 - ¥ Develop cooperation with civil society organizations (NGOs and CBOs) which have specific services for girls domestics
4. Mainstream child domestic workers in research on child labour. This will provide better estimates of the numbers of child domestics at both local and national levels, but also provide a base from which outreach programs can be established.
 - ¥ Include, in collaboration the Central Agency for Population, Mobilization and Statistics (CAMPAS), child domestic workers in household surveys conducted for the census.
 - ¥ Encourage further research on girl domestics.

Ministry of Education. Egyptian educational system

1. Find or establish mechanisms that would allow child domestics' access to basic education that will include mixing work with education for those who, for various reasons, are unable to stop working. This could be done by establishing afternoon and part-time schooling opportunities.
2. Facilitate the certification of child domestics who attend informal education and one classroom classes provided by NGOs.
3. Train school administrators in public schools to provide schooling alternatives for girls obliged to leave school in order to join the domestic service sector.

NGOs and CBOs that are in direct contact with families of Child Domestic Workers:

1. Increase the data collection and knowledge about child domestic worker
 - ¥ Education and awareness raising activities should be used as research venues to learn about their conditions, and to establish a broader documentation and database on child domestic workers.
2. Conduct awareness raising campaigns with sending families, school personnel, and child domestics on child trafficking, human rights, personal safety, and significance of education for better family income in the long term.
 - ¥ Conduct advocacy campaign for the introduction of contracts.
 - ¥ Media or organisations which publicise cases of abuses of domestic children should do as much as possible to protect the dignity of the children involved and ensure that their staff are aware of the possibility that both publicity and other initiatives could be counter-productive.
3. Develop projects and services to support Child Domestic Workers along the path of the child or the migration chain. NGO programming should include an overview of the different steps in the process of the migration networking along the continuum between village areas and working areas following the path of the child.
 - ¥ Establish a network of NGOs particularly specific to child domestic workers' issues so that they can co-act in abusive and exploitative cases. This network should have advocacy objectives and liaise with stakeholders operating in children's village and work areas.
 - ¥ Develop projects responding to the causes of migration in sending villages, especially targeting girls' education
 - ¥ Develop projects to protect working child domestics.

4. Reinforce existing family protection mechanisms. Even if their child is away, families have their own child protection mechanisms and develop coping mechanisms, but they are often insufficient and sometimes neglect such issues as access to food, shelter. Community-based intervention should take into account these coping mechanisms in order to reinforce them, and make them available to all children.

¥ Reinforce the capacity of parents to control the working and living conditions of their working children.

¥ Strengthen secure communication channels between children and parents that can be used to monitor the child's well-being and work conditions.

¥ Establish a surveillance system by facilitating protection discussions with sending mothers in different areas of girl domestics' concentration. These discussions should include what mothers need to ask their daughters such as, access to food, shelter, adequate sleeping arrangements, as well as sexual harassment and abuse. To ensure sustainability, this should be followed by a training of trainers for other mothers in the same or sister villages.

5. Develop protection intervention for children in their working places.

¥ Develop awareness to inform child domestic about the existence of services or project. Adapt these services to child domestic constraints (in term of freedom of movement, working time) and interests.

¥ Establish 'emergency' response for child domestics when they are victims of abuse or trafficking.

¥ Establish informal education programmes for girl domestics who dropped out or never attended formal education

¥ Reaching out to child domestic workers by providing services for them (like art and literacy classes), which may be done in conjunction with employing families.

¥ Help child domestics to find alternative employment opportunities instead of the domestic service sector when they want to quit this service sector.

¥ Train social workers on how to ensure specific protection for child domestics, and how to act in complex situations.

Employers of child domestic workers:

¥ Have a clear agreement with the guardians of child domestics, on the basis that such agreements could also help them retain their rights. These agreements should also include education and training requirements for child employees.

¥ Participate in awareness sessions developed by NGOs and media programmes. This could help to better understand the psychosocial conditions of child domestics, and improve respectful mutual relations between both parties.

Families of Child Domestic Workers (if needed in coordination with NGOs and CBOs)

- ¥ Ensure that they are in direct contact with their working daughters in the domestic sector.
- ¥ Develop a checklist that includes a well-being check list that include a list of questions to be asked during check-up calls (food, shelter, harassment), if needed, with the help of NGOs and CBOs.
- ¥ Participate in awareness sessions conducted by NGOs and CBOs.
- ¥ Encourage their daughters to pursue their education on a part-time basis as this could be a means to find another job and generate income in the future.

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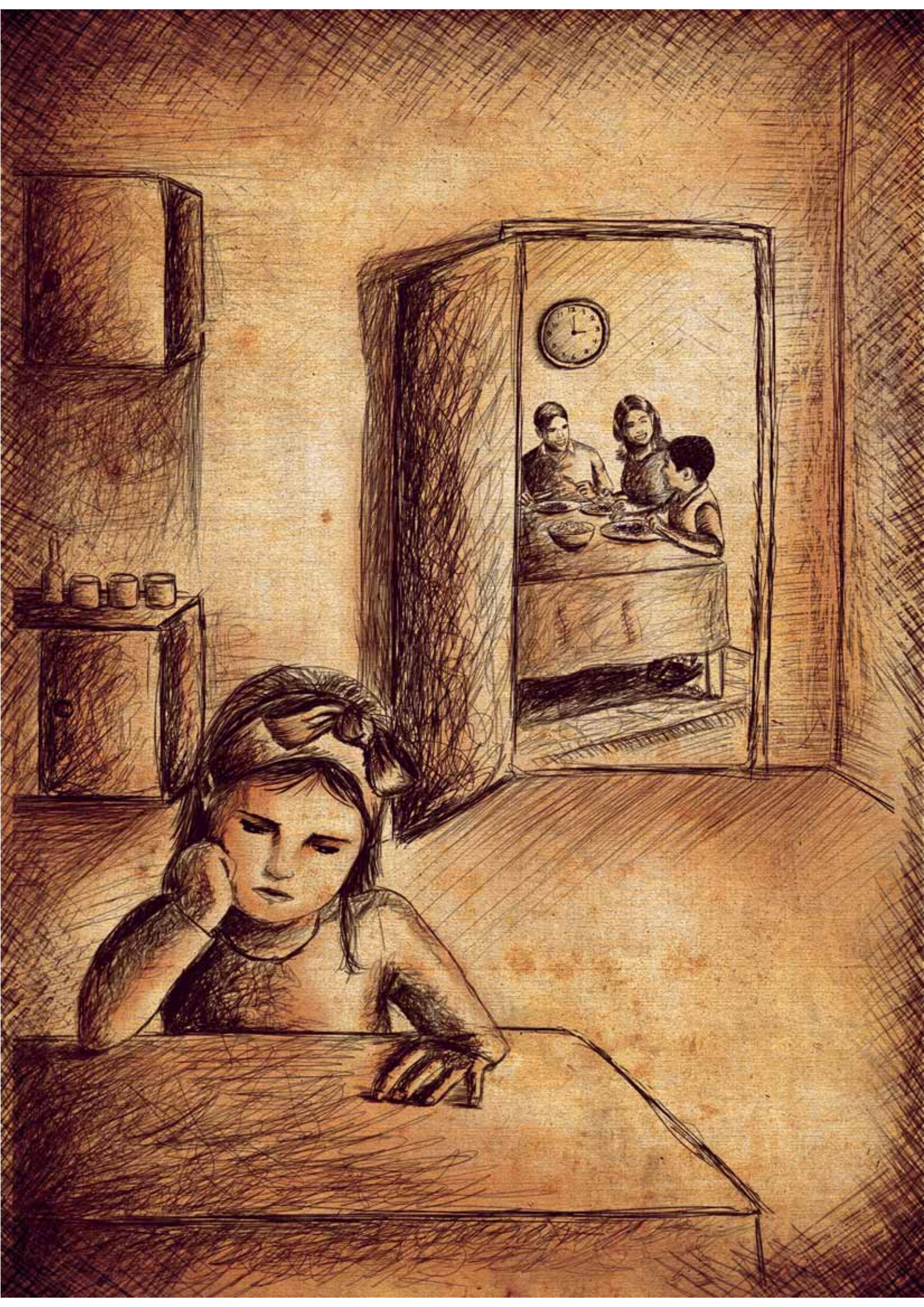
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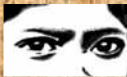
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