

Hazards and Gender in Children's Work

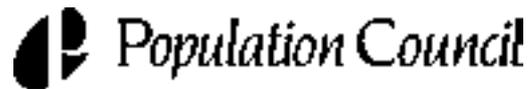
An Egyptian Perspective



Nadia Zibani

Hazards and Gender in Children's Work: An Egyptian Perspective

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The Population Council is an international, nonprofit, nongovernmental organization that conducts research worldwide to improve policies, programs, and products in three areas: HIV and AIDS; poverty, gender, and youth; and reproductive health.

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Photo Credit: Nadia Zibani

PREFACE

For over a century, the world has been preoccupied with children's work and the risks to their health and well-being. Despite progress in enacting laws and developing programs, millions of children are exposed daily to hazardous work. According to the International Labor Office, out of an estimated 240 million children who work, 170 million are believed to be engaged in harmful activities. In Egypt, estimates of child workers range from 1.5 to 2.5 million. Many studies have focused on understanding the nature of child labor and its causes in Egypt and other countries. While these studies vary in approaches and focus, few identify the gender dimensions. Yet, in gendered societies such as Egypt, social perceptions and attitudes towards men and women operate at every level and sphere, whether at home, school or the workplace. In the context of child labor, these gender attitudes and perceptions are also reflected not only in the nature of work that the children undertake but also in the gender-differentiated risks girls and boys face. Such analysis provides critical information that would allow policymakers to better target policies and programs to the specific conditions that affect girls and boys.

In an ideal world, these children should be enjoying a childhood of learning and development free of any form of risk. However, they continue to share the burden of poverty and of failures in social services and systems. Until such a time when all children can enjoy an education and a healthy childhood free of hardship, we continue to expand our knowledge of their conditions in the hope that if they must work, then at least their working conditions can be safer with minimal risk to their current and future well-being.

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COMMON TERMS AND EXPRESSIONS TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH

<i>'Urfi</i>	customary marriage
<i>Eib</i>	socially unacceptable
<i>Bahdala</i>	physical, moral, and social degradation caused by work of low status, especially when one is forced to perform this work as a result of poor education and lack of resources
<i>Usta</i>	the title given to the owner of a workshop as a technical specialist or the most skilful worker (Plural: ustas)
<i>Dalala</i>	a trader, usually female, who buys goods such as appliances, carpets or clothing items, and sells them locally at a marked-up price. A dalala's customers usually pay in instalments. The trader often takes orders and buys products that her customers specifically request, sometimes even bringing them to her customers' homes. She is relatively more mobile than other women in the community as she is expected to travel to markets and visit houses in the neighbourhood. (Plural: dalalas)
<i>Sha'yana</i>	a term used to describe a toiling woman
<i>Galabiya</i>	a traditional long garment worn by men and women
<i>Kolla</i>	a tanning substance with a narcotic effect which is often inhaled by children in workshops
<i>Baladiyya</i>	the very first stage of work at workshops; at this stage, children make coffee and tea and run errands; there is no serious learning.
<i>Sabby</i>	the beginning workers at the workshop; these children hand tools to other senior workers and perform simple tasks, like changing car tires in a mechanic's workshop
<i>Sanayyi</i>	a later stage of work at workshops when young men and women acquire the rudiments of the trade and master their work (Plural: sanayyia)
<i>Makbas</i>	a compressor
أنا مش غاوية	"lack of genuine interest in schooling."
ما عندناش بنات تتعلم	"We do not educate our daughters."
أولى بورشة أبويا	"Instead of bringing in a stranger to work here, I felt more entitled to my father's workshop."
ربنا حا يكون تاب على في بيتي	"God will save me [from work] by allowing me to finally stay at home."
بلاش بهدلة ولاد الناس	"Women from good families should not be demoralized."
الرجال قوامون على النساء	"Men are more capable than women."
امانة في رقبتي	"Girls who work for me are in my custody."
كنت واقف على رجلي طول الوقت	"I was standing on my feet all day."
احنا جايين عنده امانة	"We are in his custody."
غلبانة	A term used to describe someone who has the combined characteristics of young age, poverty and lack of experience.
يعمل خاطر	"The workshop owner would be like a girl's father. He would worry about her safety and would look after her because he knows her parents."
الله ينور عليك	"May God light your way."

INTRODUCTION

Girls and boys can and do work. They work for a variety of reasons related to poverty or failures in educational systems, and they work to support themselves and their families or to learn skills for future careers. The types of work carried out by children often differ according to the gender of the child. Additionally, the hazards they face in their work can also be differentiated on the basis of gender. The present study attempts to develop a better understanding of the gender aspects of children's work with a particular focus on the gender-differentiated hazards that exist therein.

Purpose of the Study

This study takes place within the "PPIC-Work" project (Promoting and Protecting the Interests of Children who Work), an initiative that supports working children in Egypt, and attempts to understand how gender issues affect girls and boys in their workplaces. It is expected that the results of this study will assist microfinance institutions and other development practitioners to mitigate the negative aspects of gender-differentiated workplace hazards.

Microfinance programs have been operating in many parts of the world for more than two decades, and have become a recognized and widely practiced means of reducing poverty. By contributing to poverty reduction, microfinance programs have the potential to help eliminate one of the main causes of children's work. However, there is also increasing evidence that the provision of credit inadvertently draws children into work.¹ This work can have positive as well as negative impacts on children. Children may benefit from the income they earn and they may be able to learn new technical, business and life skills through their work, but they can also be exposed to physical, psychological or other forms of hazards. By developing an understanding of how microfinance programs affect the lives of girls and boys, proponents and practitioners of microfinance can modify their programming and policies to further contribute to the betterment of children's lives.

Overview of the PPIC-Work Project

The PPIC-Work project aims to improve the working conditions and learning opportunities for children and youth employed in the growing micro and small enterprise sector in Egypt. Children and youth work for a variety of reasons, but the principal motivations are poverty and problems within the formal educational system.

The PPIC-Work project is designed to establish self-financing programs that build on microfinance best practice principles. Utilizing participatory, gender-sensitive, rights-based and business-focused approaches to programming, PPIC-Work is able to serve the interests of large numbers of working children over the long term. The project has been funded by the Canadian International Development Agency from 2002 to 2009, and project implementation has taken place through locally owned microfinance

¹ Canadian International Development Agency, "Impacts of Microfinance Initiatives on Children" (Gatineau, Quebec: CIDA, 2007).

institutions (MFIs). These institutions work through the lending process to upgrade technology and improve learning opportunities and safety conditions for at-risk and underage workers.

PPIC-Work has been innovative in applying socially responsible microfinance practices in three key governorates in Egypt: Aswan, Qena and Cairo. In collaboration with working children, their families and business owners, PPIC-Work has developed a series of intervention tools to improve the working conditions and learning opportunities of economically active children. Interventions were first developed by the Egyptian Association for Community Initiatives and Development (EACID) and the Coptic Evangelical Organization for Social Services (CEOSS) in 2002 and were later adopted by the Zeinab Kamal Hassan Foundation (ZKHF) and the Association for Rural and Urban Women's Development (ARUWD) in 2006. Interventions are organized around three main areas: working conditions, learning opportunities and key processes that support children's involvement in the project. The specific interventions are:

Working Conditions

- Dual purpose loans
- Workplace safety assessments and hazard mitigations
- Code of conduct

Learning Opportunities

- Education support
- Learning through work
- Computer-based learning (particularly Ba'alaty, an interactive computer simulation)

Key Processes

- Child participation
- Gender equality
- Child rights

Training manuals and program development guides have been developed for each intervention tool to allow other organizations to adopt and adapt PPIC-Work programming. As part of the PPIC-Work project, the Population Council has been commissioned to undertake the following study and field research, entitled "Hazards and Gender in Children's Work: An Egyptian Perspective."

Structure of the Study

This study is comprised of a review of current literature and a field study that was carried out through interviews and focus group discussions with men and women business owners and with working boys and girls. Children from 6 to 17 years of age make up the target population for this study, as 6 years of age is the base age widely associated with child labour statistics both in Egypt and in the Middle East and North

Africa (MENA) region more generally.² Moreover, 6 years of age is the base year for compulsory education in both Egypt and a range of other MENA countries.³ Our selection of age 6 as the base year for the target population reflects the intimate link between educational systems and child labour trends. Children who miss proper entry into the educational system at the beginning of the compulsory age range become increasingly vulnerable to pressures to work, both because they are viewed by society as being capable of learning and because they are not otherwise occupied. Entry into the educational system at a later stage is extremely difficult once preliminary education is missed, particularly for older girls as they become drawn into marriage, the household economy, and rising pressures from their family to pay more attention to safety and public image.

The literature review was carried out with the following objectives:

- Provide a selective overview of the literature on child labour and children's work;
- Reflect an evolving understanding of the positive and negative aspects of children's work and the perspective that efforts to eliminate harmful child labour do not necessarily mean eliminating all forms of children's work;
- Review the current understanding of gender-differentiated hazards within children's work;
- Reflect the general experience of working children in Egypt and worldwide as depicted by the literature and by interviewed subjects.

The field study was conducted during 2007 and 2008 in Manshiet Nasser, a neighbourhood in the Greater Cairo area. The specific objectives of this field study include the following:

- Explore the range of work options available to working girls and boys, examine children's specific tasks and/or work and the work conditions in their current employment situation;
- Identify working children's needs as well restrictions, limitations, and opportunities corresponding to each gender in a given social context;
- Examine from a gender perspective the nature and type of work-related hazards that girls and boys face in the workplace. For girls in particular, the analysis will require looking beyond the usual types of hazards as defined by the ILO.⁴ For instance, we may consider the lack of learning opportunities for girls in the workplace and their inability to associate easily with female peers as gender-differentiated hazards in children's work. The tendency of boys to

² The website of the Egyptian Centre for Women's Rights cites 2-2.5 million child workers in Egypt between the ages of 6 and 15, noting that between 12 and 14 percent of Egypt's child population (6-15) are employed either part-time or full-time. See <http://www.ecwronline.org>. Since 1993, MENA regional statistics have more broadly referred to the age of 6 as a base year for child labour.

³ The age range for compulsory education is 6-13 years in Egypt. See UNESCO, "Egypt: Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programmes," Country Profile commissioned for the EFA Global Monitoring Report 2007 (Geneva: UNESCO International Bureau of Education (IBE), 2006). Available at <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001471/147187e.pdf>.

⁴ According to a recent ILO publication entitled *Eliminating Hazardous Child Labour Step by Step*, the ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182) groups the different types of hazards in each economic sector into the following categories: accident hazards, biological hazards, chemical hazards, ergonomic hazards, physical hazards, psycho-social hazards, and working condition hazards.

imitate the unsafe behaviour of adult male workers to show that they are not afraid may be another gender-differentiated work hazard;

- Understand how children's participation in economic activities helps them build self-confidence, gain skills, develop their ability to influence decisions and negotiate, as well as promote safer work and productive future livelihood initiatives;
- Ensure that issues affecting both working girls and boys are well understood and that PPIC-Work programming is able to respond to gender-differentiated needs. In doing so, we hope that the Population Council and other agencies that target economically active children will be able to implement the changes recommended through this project.

Section 1: Literature Review

Part One: Child Labour or Children's Work?

There are both positive and negative aspects of children's work. While most attention has been focused on the negative aspects, there has been a shift toward a more nuanced view of children's work. The ILO's International Program on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) now states: "Not all work done by children should be classified as child labour that is to be targeted for elimination. Children's or adolescents' participation in work that does not affect their health and personal development or interfere with their schooling is generally regarded as being something positive. This includes activities such as helping their parents around the home, assisting in a family business, or earning pocket money outside school hours and during school holidays. These kinds of activities contribute to children's development and to the welfare of their families; they provide them with skills and experience, and help to prepare them to be productive members of society during their adult life."⁵

The term "child labour" is increasingly being used to describe work that is harmful for children, while "children's work" encompasses the full range of children's work and can include tasks that are benign or even those that have positive effects on children's development.

The ILO defines child labour as:

"... work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development."⁶

It refers to work that:

- "...is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children;
- interferes with their schooling by:
 - depriving them of the opportunity to attend school;
 - obliging them to leave school prematurely;

⁵ International Labour Organization, "Defining Child Labour," International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour, International Labour Organization, <http://www.ilo.org/ipec/facts/lang-en/index.htm>.

⁶ International Labour Organization website, "About Child Labour," available at <http://www.ilo.org/ipec/facts/lang-en/index.htm>. Last accessed May 13, 2009.

- requiring them to attempt to combine school attendance with excessively long and heavy work.”

There are three main international conventions that apply to children’s work:

- ILO Convention 138 of 1973
- Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989
- ILO Convention 182 of 1999

ILO Convention 138 of 1973 set standards for children’s work determined mainly by age and industrial sector. Convention 138 has often been used as a reference for developing national laws to regulate the work of children. However, the use of age-based standards is now being challenged by researchers who claim that age is not an appropriate determinant for children’s work.⁷ Children’s work is also addressed under the Convention on the Rights of the Child that was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1989. Under this Convention, protecting children from economic exploitation through work is recognized as a right along with children’s rights to education and other protective, provisional, and participative rights. ILO Convention 182 of 1999 is the most recent of the conventions relating to children’s work. It addresses the worst forms of child labour. Under Convention 182, the focus is on getting children out of work that is inherently harmful for them.

Child Labour

The ILO estimates that of the 240 million children who work, 170 million are engaged in activities that are harmful. Child labour is a global phenomenon inherent to many cultures. While there is significant variety in the scale and forms of children’s work between one country and another, child labour remains pervasive throughout the developing world. Despite international and national legislation limiting the forms and permissible age of child labourers, a significant number of underage children continue to work in both the formal and informal sectors. Within the development field, there is considerable debate on the acceptability of children’s work in non-hazardous occupations. While some believe that children below the age of 18 should not be involved in any type of work, other practitioners now believe that children may continue to work provided that they are not harmed (physically, mentally, or morally) and that they are able to continue their education. Efforts to ban all forms of children’s work have not been successful mainly because the underlying causes of children’s work, namely poverty and failures in education systems, remain. The focus is now on removing children from the worst forms of child labour as set out in ILO Convention 182 and on securing safe working conditions for child labourers.⁸ The worst forms of child labour, as defined in Convention 182, include trafficking, forced and bonded labour, participation in armed conflict, prostitution and pornography, and other illicit activities.⁹

⁷ Michael Bourdillon, William Myers, and Ben White, “Re-assessing Minimum-Age Standards for Children’s Work,” *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy* 29, no. 3/4 (2009), pp. 106-117.

⁸ CIDA, “Impacts of Microfinance Initiatives on Children.”

⁹ International Labour Organization, “Every Child Counts: New Global Estimates on Child Labour.” (Geneva: ILO-IPEC/SIMPOC, 2002). Available at <http://www.ilo.org/ipeinfo/product/viewProduct.do?productId=742>.

For many years, policies, studies, and programs on child labour have lacked gender analysis under the assumption that the needs and perspectives of boys are identical to those of girls. It is only recently that working girls have received increased attention from different quarters, ranging from community-level organizations to international development agencies. This shift has been largely due to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the recommendations adopted during the Fourth World Conference on Women (1995), and the recent adoption of ILO Convention 182 and Recommendation No. 190.¹⁰ The issue of gender is now universally regarded as a vital component in addressing child labour because a great number of gender-based differences appear when examining the prevalence of child labour worldwide.¹¹ It is a widespread practice to segregate boys and girls into different occupations and provide them with different employment prospects based on their gender. Hence, gender roles and gender-based work have profound effects on the employment constraints and future employment opportunities of children. To this end, while there is a need to protect children from harmful work, there are positive aspects that can and should not be overlooked. These include the technical, business, and life skills that children acquire through work which they can transfer to future careers and income-generating activities. In addition, some children attain other positive qualities through work, such as self-confidence and social status. Thus, this report aims to address gender-based child employment and how it is correlated with unjust forms of child labour and detrimental future career consequences.

Children's Work

Fyfe (1993) believes that there should be universal agreement that not all work is bad for children.¹² In fact, work can be a gradual initiation into adulthood and a positive element in a child's development. Light work, when introduced into a child's daily schedule and lifestyle appropriately and proportionately to the child's age, health and capacity, is not necessarily child labour. Work that does not detract from other essential activities for children, like leisure, play, and education, is not child labour. Child labour is work that impairs the health and development of a child. According to Fyfe, priority ought to go to targeting and rooting out child prostitution, child pornography, bonded and tied labour, and work in hazardous occupations. These extremes are manifested in situations where children work in slave-like conditions in factories and mines, use dangerous chemicals in pesticide-soaked fields, are imprisoned in homes as domestic servants, or work as prostitutes.¹³

Weston (2005) defines child labour as "work done by children that is harmful to them because it is abusive, exploitative, hazardous, or otherwise contrary to their best interests – a subset of a larger class of children's work, some of which may be

¹⁰ International Labour Organization, "Recommendation 190: Recommendation Concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour," International Labour Organization, <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/relm/ilc/ilc87/com-chir.htm>. This document sets out programs of action, provides more detailed explanations of hazardous work, and includes recommendations for implementation of programs.

¹¹ International Labour Organization, "Child Labour – A Textbook for University Students" (Geneva: International Labour Organization, 2004).

¹² A. Fyfe, *Child Labour: A Guide to Project Design*, ILO Child Labour Collection (Geneva: International Labour Office, 1993).

¹³ Judith Ennew, *Learning or Labouring: A Compilation of Key Texts on Child Work and Basic Education* (Florence: International Child Development Centre, UNICEF, 1995).

compatible with children's best interests (variously expressed as beneficial, benign, or harmless children's work)."¹⁴ Child labourers are often engaged in productive activity from a very young age. Children in developing countries often start factory work at the age of six or seven. Research indicates that they also work for extended hours -- reaching 12 to 16 hours per day -- often under poor working conditions that can cause physical, social or psychological damage (e.g. conditions in mines or sweatshops). In the majority of cases, the tasks performed by children are dull, repetitive and monotonous, thereby stunting their social and psychological development. The significant amount of responsibility that is placed on children's shoulders and the fact that they are often subjected to intimidation may inhibit their self-confidence.¹⁵ A further predicament is that, in some instances, children may receive high rates of pay in exchange for hazardous work such as employment in quarries. Long working hours also affect children's ability to attend school. As a result, their skills training may be limited, preventing them from gaining an education that could help lift them out of poverty in the future.

Research conducted by Abu Gazaleh and others (2004) indicates that there are twice as many working children in rural areas as in urban areas.¹⁶ The farming techniques and working conditions in rural areas expose these children to a number of health hazards. The most notable of these hazards is exposure to freshly-sprayed pesticides. Indeed, in Egypt, where two of the five pesticides recommended for use by the government are labelled "highly hazardous" by the World Health Organization (WHO), children were found operating motorized pumps used to spray the cotton fields. Moreover, Abu Gazaleh and others find that children working in agriculture suffer from high rates of injury, ranging from cuts and back injuries to being crushed by tractors and heavy equipment. Routine beatings by foremen as well as dehydration, urinary tract infections, and humiliation due to the lack of sanitation and drinking water in the fields have a tremendous impact on children's health and are features of the lives of many Egyptian agricultural child labourers. In addition to the direct impacts of agricultural labour on children in Egypt, it has significant consequences for the education of girls and boys. A Human Rights Watch study published in 2007 found that children engaged in pest control during the school year were more likely to miss classes and were too tired to study, causing them to lag behind and eventually drop out of school completely.

Gustafsson-Wright and Pyne (2002) indicate that children working on the streets are subjected to the worst possible working conditions. Exposure to drugs and violence is common, both in the home and on the streets. In addition, children working on the streets are exposed to traffic hazards and accidents, extreme weather conditions, and poor sanitation as well as psychological stress and discrimination. Girls working on the streets are particularly vulnerable to prostitution as they are susceptible to being targeted by recruiters and coerced into the sex industry.¹⁷ Indeed, for many years, the

¹⁴ Burns H. Weston, "Introduction," in *Child Labour and Human Rights: Making Children Matter*, edited by Burns H. Weston (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2005).

¹⁵ International Labour Office, *World Labour Report: From Work to Exploitation* (Geneva: International Labour Organization, 1992).

¹⁶ Kawther Abu Gazaleh, Lamia Bulbul, Soheir Hewala and Suadad Najim, "Gender, Education and Child Labour in Egypt" (Geneva: International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour, International Labour Organization, 2004).

¹⁷ Emily Gustafsson-Wright and Hnin Hnin Pyne, "Gender Dimensions of Child Labour and Street Children in Brazil," World Bank Policy Research Working Paper No. 2897 (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 2002).

absence of gender-disaggregated data has obscured the hazards to which girl children are subjected. This problem has been compounded by the lack of research and statistics on informal and household work in Egypt, where a large majority of domestic workers are female, in line with international trends. The aforementioned Human Rights Watch report noted that employers of domestic help often subject child domestic workers to verbal, sexual, and physical abuse “including severe beatings, burning with irons, and death threats.”¹⁸

The lack of sufficient research on child labour has been compounded by imbalances in gender employment such that the gender-differentiated hazards faced by child labourers have often been overlooked in the literature.¹⁹ This research initiative is innovative in that it seeks to push the existing literature a step further by investigating the complex relationship between gender, child labor, and the gender-differentiated hazards encountered by child laborers. For example, given the fact that girls’ work in Egypt’s informal sector tends to be concentrated in specific industries such as agriculture, the types of hazards to which they are exposed could be gender specific – a point that has not been brought to light in the past. This report seeks to address these issues.

Part Two: Types of Work Undertaken by Children

Depending on the nature of the work or the tasks involved, children’s work may have a significant effect on child health. Particularly in cases where children are engaged in hazardous jobs, their work may have severe effects on their nutritional status, endemic and work-related morbidity patterns, and long-term psychological health. Forastieri (2002) describes some of the hazardous forms of children’s work related to particular sectors.²⁰ However, it is important to recognize that hazardous work is often related to the specific tasks that children are asked to perform; hazardous work may occur in many different work settings. The classifications set out by Forastieri have been slightly reordered to indicate the levels of hazards along the lines of ILO Convention 182.

Children’s Work in Potentially Hazardous Environments

In the following sectors and industries, children may be involved in hazardous work if they undertake activities that are not age or size appropriate or if they utilize equipment or materials that may be damaging to their health without proper training and safety measures. However, the work in these industries is not inherently hazardous, and these hazards may be mitigated to ensure safer working conditions for children.

¹⁸ CommonDreams.org News Center, “International Women’s Day: Girls Face Widespread Violence,” <http://www.commondreams.org/news2007/0308-02.htm>.

¹⁹ The ILO and other global institutions that produce research on child labour address gender to some degree in much of their literature, providing gender-disaggregated data where possible. For example, see selected ILO publications on child labour and gender, available at http://www.ilo.org/gender/Events/Campaign2008-2009/lang--en/WCMS_093756/index.htm.

²⁰ V. Forastieri, *Children at Work: Health and Safety Risks* (Geneva: International Labour Office, 2002).

- **Agriculture (plantations and farms)**

Seventy percent of child labourers (170 million) work in agriculture, fishing, forestry, and hunting. Only 1-2 percent of child labourers work in export-oriented agriculture. Children work as divers in the deep-sea fishing industry in Indonesia, banana harvesters in Ecuador, flower harvesters in Colombia, and cotton harvesters in Egypt. They frequently work long hours in scorching heat, haul heavy loads of produce, may be exposed to toxic pesticides, and suffer high rates of injury from sharp knives and other dangerous tools.

- **Trades, services, and manufacturing in micro and small enterprises**

Children work in a variety of roles in micro and small businesses throughout the developing world. They may work within family businesses or in non-family businesses and may have opportunities for learning technical, business, and life skills as well as earning income. In many countries, this work takes place in the informal sector and is not well regulated, which poses some potential risks for children in the event of an injury in the workplace.

- **Domestic work (in homes)**

Many children, especially girls, work as domestic household help in Asia and other regions. Many of these children are victims of child trafficking and are bonded by debts to their employers. They also work long hours with very little opportunity to rest and are often exposed to hazards while working. Most of them may be verbally, physically, and/or sexually abused. Their working conditions cannot be monitored as they work in the privacy of their employers' homes.

- **Scavenger and street children**

Street children are boys and girls for whom the street has become their regular home and/or source of livelihood. In general, they are inadequately protected or supervised by responsible adults. In the context of child labour, children who work on the street may or may not live there. These children do everything from shining shoes to selling cigarettes and gum to washing cars. They are often subject to intimidation, harassment, physical assault, and arbitrary arrest by the police. Street children are often victims, but they are regarded as irresponsible and lawless. Egyptian girls who engage in work involving sexual acts in exchange for money and goods are frequently sexually abused.²¹ These child labourers confront great health risks due to poor hygiene and nutrition and high exposure to air and other forms of pollution. Children also work as scavengers in garbage dumps collecting cans or plastic bags in baskets on their backs to sell.

²¹ Khaled Nada, El Daw Suliman, and Nadia Zibani, "Behavioural Survey among Street Children in Greater Cairo and Alexandria," (Cairo: Population Council, 2008).

Worst Forms of Child Labour

The worst forms of child labour include all work that is inherently hazardous for children. For these forms of work, it is impossible or impractical to eliminate or mitigate the hazards facing children.

- **Hazardous manufacturing**

Child labourers may engage in hazardous manufacturing activities such as making bricks, spending long hours in textile sweatshops, breathing toxic fumes while making shoes, risking their lives to produce matches and fireworks, and suffering high blood-lead levels from work in smelters. These forms of work are inherently hazardous.

- **Mining and quarrying**

In coal mining, children may work for long hours in dark and damp mines and carry coal on their backs. Children may work inside mine shafts where they inhale dust and toxic gases or spend hours in the full sun crushing rocks at quarries, where injuries are common and medical care is non-existent.

- **Slavery, bonded labour, prostitution, and child soldiering**

Millions of children are trapped in forms of slavery and slavery-like practices, such as child trafficking, debt bondage, and forced labour. Some are recruited as soldiers and sent to the front lines; others are used as spies, servants and camp-helpers.

There are significant differences in the types of work undertaken by boys and girls. For example, a study in 2006 showed that Egyptian girls spend more time than boys doing chores and light work in businesses (more than seven hours per day versus 5.2 hours per day for boys).²² None of the above classifications have reflected the gender composition within each sector or considered gender-differentiated hazards, a shortcoming that points to the need for this research.

Part Three: Gender Issues in Children's Work

It is widely accepted that a more nuanced approach to researching children's work requires an analysis of data by sex and age group in order to better understand the situation of the subjects. Recent studies that analyze data on the differing nature of girls' and boys' work confirm that girls are working in almost every sector, and begin to do so at very early ages. The use of a gender lens –filtering out misleading assumptions about who does what, why and when – is thus vital in preventing and solving the child labour problems which stem from gender.²³

Quantitative analyses of household surveys illustrate that gender patterns in children's work are difficult to discern and vary by region.²⁴ In this respect, even where girl

²² CIDA, "Impacts of Microfinance Initiatives on Children."

²³ ILO, "Child Labour – A Textbook for University Students."

²⁴ L. Guarcello and others, "Child Labour in the Latin America and Caribbean Region: A Gender-Based Analysis" (Geneva: International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC), ILO, 2006).

workers engage in similar types of labour as boys, they often endure additional hardships and are more susceptible to exploitation, largely as a result of societal views of the role that girls and women should play.²⁵ This bias has been reflected in traditional research methodologies such that standard definitions of child labour tend to exclude household chores and thus invariably underestimate girls' work. This is particularly an issue for girls in developing countries because they tend to perform more household chores than boys. For example, in a study conducted by Cigno, Rosati, and Tzannatos (2002) in rural Morocco, 38 percent of girls and 19 percent of boys were reported as "idle," although it was determined to be highly possible that their parents simply do not consider the tasks that their children undertake to be real work.²⁶

Where domestic chores are overlooked or not considered to be real work, statistics are likely to reflect a higher percentage of girls as "idle." This view is confirmed by research on Latin America and the Caribbean presented in Guarcello et al. (2006), which finds that the time spent by girls on household chores surpasses that of boys in all countries in the sample, including Bolivia, Brazil, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru and Venezuela. In addition, the gaps between the sexes were particularly prevalent in rural areas.²⁷ Significantly, the same research report finds that higher numbers of children engaged in household chores are associated with lower intensity levels of work whereas higher levels of intensity are attributed to children participating in economically productive activities.²⁸

Compounding this issue are the variations in economic activity between boys and girls according to country and industry. Global and regional estimates of children's involvement in economic activities hide substantial national differences. For example, trends in Africa suggest that girl children are more likely to participate in the market, whereas Latin American trends suggest boy child labourers participate more in the market than girls.²⁹ South Asian trends show overall economic participation by boy child labourers to be more significant than that of girl children, but to varying degrees.³⁰ Trends in the Asia Pacific region, which alone give rise to more than half of the global population of child labourers, suggest that boy children play a more significant role in the economy than girl children across sectors.³¹ Moreover,

²⁵ ILO, "Child Labour – A Textbook for University Students."

²⁶ A. Cigno, F. Rosati, and Z. Tzannatos, *Child Labour Handbook* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 2002).

²⁷ L. Guarcello and others, "Child Labour in the Latin America and Caribbean Region: A Gender-Based Analysis."

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ It is important to note that in Africa, the majority of girl child laborers largely work in the household economy and are thus often underreported in global and regional statistics. They emerge in the literature as more dominant in the market because the formal market economy is still largely underdeveloped in most of Africa. In 2001, the World Bank noted that 95 percent of Africa's child labour took place in and around the home, a trend which is well supported by a range of more current research on the topic. The trend of not yet sufficiently recognizing activities in the household economy as market participation should be considered relevant to each of the regional cases noted here. For more on child labour in Latin America, see L. Guarcello and others, "Child Labour in the Latin America and Caribbean Region: A Gender-Based Analysis."

³⁰ An OECD report entitled "Child Labour in South Asia" (2003) suggests that boys participate in the market more than girls in the countries surveyed (Pakistan, Nepal, and Vietnam), whereas girls participate more in the household economy than boys, but to varying degrees. In Vietnam, the boy to girl ratio in the market was 2:1, while in Nepal it was 8:7. See Eric V. Edmonds, "Child Labour in South Asia," OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Paper No. 5 (Paris: OECD, 2003). Available online at <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/28/20/2955703.pdf>.

³¹ In addition to a number of ILO sources, the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC)-Asia Pacific Platform of Action for Gender Equality attributes more than half of the world's child labour population to this region. Sources say that much of the data for the Asia Pacific region is not yet gender-disaggregated. However, based on other gender trends in the region, it is estimated that more boy child labourers participate in the market economy than girl child

significant research points to a higher concentration of girls in agriculture and domestic service, while boys are more likely to engage in the manufacturing and trade industries. These variations emphasize the need to collect and analyze data at the national and local levels, a point for consideration in both this and future research studies. In line with international trends, both boys and girls are likely to be attracted to employment in the non-agricultural sectors as they near the end of childhood.³²

The determinants of child labour also vary by gender. While a strong correlation exists between poverty and child labour, increases in household welfare may not be sufficient to reduce the total work burden for children. Research indicates that variables such as the availability and level of investments in health and water infrastructure may reduce the work burden on girl children, especially in areas where it is the responsibility of girls and women to fetch water. Aside from traditional cultural norms which dictate a gendered division of household chores, an illness within a household, particularly in rural areas, is more likely to result in an increased workload for girl children. Interestingly, illness in the household has little or no bearing on the amount of work for boys.³³ Finally, the level of parental education has important consequences for both girl and boy children. However, in many countries, cases in which the father has a lower level of education has a more detrimental effect on girl's education.

Educated parents are likely to hold a greater appreciation for education and thus are likely to send their boy and girl children to school, while parents with lower levels of education, particularly fathers, are less likely to send their daughters to school.³⁴ This has an important bearing on the consequences and impact of child labour according to gender. Due to differences in the nature of activities undertaken by boys and girls, differences are also realized in their long-term development. Research indicates that boys are more likely to gain marketable work experience that they can use in their later careers, while girls mostly gain experience as domestic workers, and hence they gain skill sets that are not transferable to other occupations.³⁵

The factors described above illustrate the importance and relevance of gathering and reporting gender-disaggregated data to reveal gender differences in working conditions. They also highlight the importance of developing gender-sensitive policy interventions designed to address the issue for improved effectiveness and efficiency. Parallel to this, the broad promotion of gender equality that ensures equal access and entitlement to a wide scope of services, rights, and market opportunities for boys and girls is vital to the success of any action against child labour. Both boys and girls from low-income population groups are involved in child labour. Girls are particularly vulnerable to child labour exploitation, face different problems, and have different coping strategies than boys. Programs working against child labour and trafficking

labourers. This document is available at: <http://www.icftu-apro.org/documents/Platform%20of%20Action%20for%20Gender%20Equality%20PDF.pdf>. The participation of girl child labourers in Asia Pacific's sex industry, though still poorly documented, should not be overlooked here; its omission may have significantly altered the region's overall statistical trends.

³² Ibid.

³³ L. Guarcello and others, "Child Labour in the Latin America and Caribbean Region: A Gender-Based Analysis."

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Alexandra van Selm, "Gender Issues in Child Labour," PREM Note No. 100 (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 2005).

need to take these differences into account if they want to effectively reach both boys and girls.³⁶

Gender studies have highlighted differences in how female and male children experience life, yet very little research has examined how gender affects child labour. Gender-based research has brought to the forefront perceptions of gender roles and their impact upon schooling and social and economic opportunities for boy and girl children. In this respect, and according to the ILO's Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention 182, agriculture, domestic work, and commercial sexual exploitation are among the sectors where girl children are most commonly found working under exploitative conditions.³⁷

Reasons for Gendered Children's Work

Children work for many reasons. Yet poverty is often a chief cause of child labour. In a survey conducted in Egypt by Helmy and Ismail (2005), over half of the children surveyed who acted as sole or partial breadwinners asserted that they worked in order to support their households and meet basic household requirements.³⁸ Helmy and Ismail also found that long-term employment was a key goal for many children: 68 percent of children claimed that the reason they were working was to learn a profession which they could rely on for work in the future in order to secure an income. This response was far more prevalent among boys than girls. According to a UNICEF survey (2002) taken in collaboration with the National Centre for Sociological and Criminology Research in Egypt (NCSCR), half of the working children in Egypt claimed that they had to work in order to increase their family income and 33 percent said that they needed to support themselves. This number increased in families where the mother was divorced or widowed; the study found that 81 percent of mothers claimed that the salary they receive from their child's work was vital, contributing an estimated 23 percent toward their household income.³⁹ According to the Egyptian Centre for Women's Rights (ECWR), girl children make up 71 percent of Egypt's child labour force, compared to 29 percent for boy children.⁴⁰

According to another view put forth by Wille (2001), boy children in Egypt tend to engage in labour as a result of peer pressure, whereas girls are mainly forced into employment as a result of family pressures.⁴¹ Helmy and Ismail (2005) demonstrated that 14 percent of children, all of whom were male, preferred to work because they enjoyed it more than schooling.⁴² Yet a high number of girls tended to work in order to gain extra money for personal needs or pocket money.⁴³ In addition, a lack of

³⁶ Nelien Haspels and Busakorn Suriyasarn, "Promotion of Gender Equality in Action Against Child Labour and Trafficking: A Practical Guide for Organizations" (Bangkok: International Labour Office, 2003).

³⁷ International Labour Organization, "A Selected Annotated Bibliography on Girl Child Labour: A Gender Perspective," *Girl Child Labour Studies* Volume No. 4 (Geneva: ILO, 2004).

³⁸ M. Helmy, M. and M. Ismail M. "Learning Through Work: the Interface Between Education and Child Labour." Commissioned for PPIC-Work, 2005. pp 4. ILO Convention 182, 1999. <http://www.ilocarib.org.tt/childlabour/c182.htm>.

³⁹ UNICEF survey in collaboration with the National Centre for Sociological and Criminology Research (NCSCR), 2002.

⁴⁰ Egyptian Centre for Women's Rights, "Child Labour in Egypt," available at <http://ecwronline.org/pub/childLabourInEgypt.pdf>.

⁴¹ C. Wille, *Trafficking in Children into the Worst Forms of Child Labour: A Rapid Assessment* (Geneva: ILO-IPEC, 2001).

⁴² Helmy and Ismail, "The Interface between Education and Child Labour?"

⁴³ Ibid. "The interface between Education and Child Labour".

alternative opportunities and conditions of poverty were found to be prime motivations for child labour. Parents struggling for the survival of their families often have no other alternatives but to send their children to work. Other factors may include the death of the family breadwinner, a broken family, falling victim to a natural disaster, physical or emotional abuse, and unfavourable political situations.⁴⁴

Gender roles are assigned to children from a very young age. This has a considerable impact on the different types of constraints that boys and girls face and on expectations regarding the type of economic activity in which they engage. Furthermore, gender roles have a strong influence upon household chores and duties. Social and cultural norms are fundamental to such expectations, and ultimately lead boys and girls to have different experiences and motivations related to work. Gender roles are usually instilled from a young age, resulting in children being concentrated in different types of economic activities depending on their sex. According to Ashagrie (1998), boys are more concentrated in sectors like manufacturing, trade, transport, restaurants, and hotels, while girls are found more frequently in agricultural work, textiles and garment production, and domestic service.⁴⁵ Statistical surveys often underestimate the number of working girls because they do not account for unpaid economic activities such as prostitution or domestic work in their own or other people's homes, which are normally hidden types of employment. Hence, it is expected that the actual number of girls who work is significantly higher than recorded.

Research suggests an inverse relationship between girls' participation in child labour and age, as the percentage of girl children involved in child labour decreases with age. In such cases, however, lower participation in child labour does not equate to increased mobility for girl children as they age. According to a national survey of Egyptian youth conducted by the Population Council, girls often encounter a different set of activities and pressures as they reach puberty, which similarly restrict their mobility.⁴⁶ Such pressures can be attributed to societal perceptions of the reproductive and domestic roles of women and girls. These pressures draw women increasingly into the private sphere of marriage, home, and family as they become older and grow more watchful over their public image. If other female members of the household are available to perform domestic chores, there is a higher chance that a girl will be sent to work outside the home.

The time use of other children and adults within the family (particularly females) is also significant because it affects the division of labour within the household. In those instances where adult female family members are engaged in productive income-generating activities, girls are likely to assume the domestic roles and responsibilities of the adult female. This view is supported by research indicating that in those countries where the remuneration for women's employment is high and where childcare markets are operating, the more expensive childcare option is likely to be chosen. In countries where no such market alternatives exist, the burden falls on girl children, who become "mother substitutes," often at the cost of their schooling.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Haspels and Suriyasarn, "Promotion of Gender Equality in Action Against Child Labour and Trafficking: A Practical Guide for Organizations."

⁴⁵ K. Ashagrie, "Statistics on Working Children and Hazardous Child Labour in Brief" (Geneva: ILO, 1998).

⁴⁶ Population Council, *Transitions to Adulthood: A National Survey of Adolescents* (Cairo: Population Council, 1999).

⁴⁷ L. Guarcello and others, "Child Labour in the Latin America and Caribbean Region: A Gender-Based Analysis."

Therefore, it is evident that cultural and social norms play a significant role in gendered differences with regards to child labour. In many regions of the world, boys continue to be favoured over girls; this is particularly the case for those living in poverty. Poor parents tend to make greater investments in their sons, while giving their daughters the role of tending to household needs rather than pursuing an education and career. According to Haspels and Suriyasarn (2003), even if girls are provided with educational opportunities, they often accept that being a boy is considered more valuable, leading to lower self-esteem.⁴⁸ This type of internalization can further increase constraints and limit opportunities for women. In addition, this becomes a vicious circle, whereby parents pass on such outlooks to their children. Thus, such cultural values reinforce the reduced status of girls and women. For example, in Egypt, females have traditionally been regarded as a burden on the household, and are thus subject to biases in decisions concerning their education and gender roles within the household. This holds particularly true in Upper Egypt, where there is a higher incidence of poverty. The lack of employment opportunities for females has become evident in a preference not to educate girls and assigning them instead to domestic and productive roles within the household.⁴⁹ This pattern also holds true in the poorer female-headed households in Egypt, where the incidence of child labour is higher, and where a mother may sacrifice the education of her daughter who is taking her place in the household while she pursues income-generating activities outside the home.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, there has been a decline in children's work in Egypt.⁵¹

Due to the fact that boys and girls are engaged in different types of economic work throughout their lives, the outcomes of their labour activities are different. Studies generally find that the consequences of early economic labour market participation are more severe for girls than for boys (Knaul, 2001; Gustafsson-Wright and Pyne, 2002).⁵² Research conducted in both Brazil and Mexico indicates that the long-term returns from children's work can balance out the consequences of early work for young males. However, this does not generally occur for girls. Both boys and girls may miss out on the opportunity to attend school because of early entrance to the labour market, thereby restricting their ability in later life to earn income as educated workers. However, boys tend to engage in economic activities through which they are able to attain marketable skills and work experience, which can result in greater overall earnings during their lifetimes. In contrast, girls are predominately concentrated in domestic or low-skilled activities that rarely result in marketable skills or increased earnings over their lifetimes. It is common for girls to begin working at a younger age in comparison to boys. This is particularly the case in rural areas where many girls are excluded from school and are instead forced to undertake the burden of household work. Alternatively, many girls who are still in school have to undertake household chores, even if they are also in paid employment outside the home.

⁴⁸ Haspels and Suriyasarn, "Promotion of Gender Equality in Action Against Child Labour and Trafficking: A Practical Guide for Organizations."

⁴⁹ Abu Gazaleh, Bulbul, Hewala and Najim, "Gender, Education and Child Labour in Egypt."

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Bjorne Grimsrud, "Millennium Development Goals and Child Labour: Understanding Children's Work" (New York: UNICEF, 2003).

⁵² F.M. Knaul, "The Impact of Child Labour and School Dropout on Human Capital: Gender Differences in Mexico," in *The Economics of Gender in Mexico – Work, Family, State and Market*, edited by E. Katz and M. Correia (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 2001); Gustafsson-Wright and Pyne, "Gender Dimensions of Child Labour and Street Children in Brazil."

Links to Education

The rights-based approach to children's work recognizes that children often forfeit their right to education and other rights to holistic development, irrespective of the kind of work they do. In many regions worldwide, especially those where girls are considered subordinate to boys, girls receive less education and training than their male counterparts. Wille (2001) asserts that worldwide, as many as 60 percent of those children not enrolled in primary schooling are girls.⁵³ Many girls are forced to remain home and undertake unpaid household chores. Daughters may additionally be prevented from attending school due to long distance to schools, unsafe routes, or cultural values which oppose having boys and girls in the same class.⁵⁴ Many studies indicate that children's work decreases as household welfare increases.⁵⁵ Furthermore, girls often substitute for mother's unpaid household work when both parents are engaged in economic activity. Ilahi (2001) demonstrates that in urban Peru, adult economic activity is correlated to an increase in housework for children, particularly girls.⁵⁶ Moreover, increases in the costs of schooling also affect the rate of children's school enrolment. Glinskaya et al. (2000) argue that in Kenya, a 10 percent increase in childcare costs is correlated to a 3 percent reduction in girls' school enrolment rates.⁵⁷ Interestingly, the study found no effect on boys' school enrolment rates. This suggests that parents generally make greater investments in the education of their sons and that low-cost schooling could potentially maintain girls' attendance at school.

Furthermore, educational and working institutions may reinforce norms which prevent females from working or advancing in certain occupations due to sex-segregation within and across sectors. This additionally concentrates females in low-paid, low-skilled professions. According to Anker (1998), this is highly problematic because there are approximately seven times as many male occupations as there are female occupations in non-agricultural sectors.⁵⁸ Assaad and Arntz (2005) further emphasize that 95 percent of females are employed in just nine occupations in Egypt.⁵⁹ Moreover, in the last few decades many developing countries have implemented structural adjustment policies which have had the effect of increasing workforce feminization through decreased costs in the tradable goods sectors, resulting in a situation where cheaper female labour is substituted for more expensive male labour.⁶⁰ Thus, structural adjustment policies have further contributed to restricting women to poor-quality, labour-intensive jobs such as those in the manufacturing sectors.

⁵³ Wille, *Trafficking in Children into the Worst Forms of Child Labour: A Rapid Assessment 2001*.

⁵⁴ Haspels and Suriyasarn, "Promotion of Gender Equality in Action Against Child Labour and Trafficking: A Practical Guide for Organizations."

⁵⁵ A. Dar, N. Blunch, B. Kim, and M. Sasaki, "Participation of Children in Schooling and Labour Activities: A Review of Empirical Studies," Social Protection Discussion Paper 0221 (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 2002).

⁵⁶ N. Ilahi, "Children's Work and Schooling: Does Gender Matter? Evidence from the Peru LSMS Panel Data," Policy Research Working Paper 2745 (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 2001).

⁵⁷ E. Glinskaya, M. Garcia, and M. Lokshin, "The Effect of Early Childhood Development Programs on Women's Labour Force Participation and Older Children's Schooling in Kenya," Policy Research Working Paper 2376 (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 2000).

⁵⁸ R. Anker, *Gender and Jobs: Sex Segregation of Occupations in the World* (Geneva: International Labour Office, 1998).

⁵⁹ R. Assaad and M. Arntz. 2005. "Constrained Geographical Mobility and Gendered Labor Market Outcomes Under Structural Adjustment: Evidence from Egypt," *World Development* 33, no. 3 (2005), pp. 432–54.

⁶⁰ G. Standing, *Unemployment and Labour Market Flexibility* (Geneva: International Labour Office, 1989).

Finding the Equitable Balance

A frequent justification for excluding children from all work is the claim that child labour perpetuates poverty. However, while some kinds of work may be abusive to children, damage their health, or deny them an education, much of the recent literature describes how, now and in the past, children's work has buffered them and their families against poverty. Many children work to help pay for their school expenses. In addition, children's labour market participation in most of the world is a common way of learning essential life skills and major occupational skills. Many societies consider work to be integral to children's upbringing, and both children and their families view work as a complement to formal schooling. In many instances, a third factor, such as poverty, independently contributes to both children's work and low schooling rates, with work and school having little influence on each other. Further to this, a growing literature based on children's views of work contains testimonies about how work contributes to their quality of life and builds their self-esteem. Children often express frank enjoyment of their work, even in unlikely places.⁶¹

In child labour, boys and girls tend to be concentrated in differing types of economic activities. According to Ashagrie (1998), boys are more likely to be employed in occupations such as manufacturing, trade, and restaurants and hotels, whereas girls tend to work in domestic services and agriculture.⁶² Traditionally, child labour has been regarded as hazardous and detrimental to a child's well-being. However, this perspective has changed to include only extreme cases of child labour such as trafficking or pornography. Furthermore, in recent years, the definition of acceptable child labour has shifted to include participation in work that does not affect the personal development or health status of a child and does not interfere with their schooling. Should none of these factors come into play, child labour is generally regarded as positive through the contributions made to family welfare. Nevertheless, more studies are needed in order to understand the experiences gained by young boys and girls who work in the informal sector and the subsequent effects that their labour has on their future and their families.

In order to further examine the gender-differentiated hazards that working children face in their workplaces, the Population Council carried out fieldwork in Doweika, a community in Manshiet Nasser. Manshiet Nasser is an informal settlement within Greater Cairo that has a high prevalence of poverty, and a majority of its workforce is involved in informal employment. Consequently, the area also has a high incidence of child labour. With the intent of examining the experiences of children working in Doweika, collaboration was formed with a local microfinance non-governmental organization (NGO) located in the community which was able to facilitate field work by connecting researchers with NGO clients for in-depth interviews. These interviews provided us with insight into the realities behind children's work experiences and the reasons for gendered child labour in Egypt.

⁶¹ Bourdillon, Myers, and White, "Re-assessing Minimum-Age Standards for Children's Work."

⁶² Ashagrie, "Statistics on Working Children and Hazardous Child Labour in Brief."

Section 2: Field Study

Introduction

The following analysis revolves around the question of how gender influences the work experience of economically active children in Doweika. More specifically, it seeks to understand the ways that jobs are gendered and how gender determines what children do and how they do it. The main goal of this research is to explore possibilities of intervention that would enhance the work prospects of working children, particularly girls.

The analysis concentrates on the gendered experiences of working children with a particular focus on the gender-differentiated hazards that exist within children's work. Interviews with adult male and female business owners are used to support the findings of the interviews with children and provide insights into the experiences of children on the job, in terms of what business owners perceive as gendered treatment and expectations. As the interviews with adult business owners proceeded, patterns of continuity and change in children's work experiences became clear. The work experiences of business owners when they themselves were children was in many ways similar to those experiences of the working children we interviewed. It was useful to see how trajectories have developed and how gender attitudes have changed over time. More importantly, interviews with adult business owners helped to identify role models who shape not only children's ideas about work, but also their expectations and future aspirations.

In the sections below, we present stories of the children's work experiences with a focus on the gender dimensions of the process. We have tried to understand their decisions to work: why and how children join the labour market, their experiences on the job, and their interactions with employers. We underline the role of gender in determining their learning processes and the skills that they acquire, as well as their prospects for advancement and promotion.

Geographic Setting

Manshiet Nasser is located on quarry land on the slopes of the Muqattam hills, east of the city of Cairo. It was established in the early 1960s by a number of low-income migrants from Upper Egypt and is one of the poorest districts of Greater Cairo, also known in Arabic as '*ashwaiyyat*,' meaning unplanned or spontaneous settlements. This low-income urban settlement has an estimated population of 262,050 inhabitants according to the Egyptian Census data 2006 and a large concentration of small enterprises, estimated at over 3500 in 1998. These small enterprises include foundries and other workshops that produce a wide range of manufactured products, such as soap, leather goods, brass, chalk, ready-made clothes, rugs, toys, and furniture. Doweika is one of the largest neighbourhoods within Manshiet Nasser.

Manshiet Nasser is also the site of the active involvement of a number of local microfinance institutions and non-governmental organisations, which for years have been providing services to the local community. This and perhaps other factors, such as the proliferation of businesses, have contributed to the development of an enterprising population which values work regardless of gender or age. No work is considered demeaning, as long as it has a legitimate source. Many household members are engaged in one or more occupations, and they tend to accept any kind of work offered to them whether or not it is in their main line of business. Quite often they are simultaneously both business owners and workers for others, depending on the situation of their own businesses and the availability of other work opportunities. Of most concern to residents is the maintenance of a regular source of income and the ability to keep busy. A great deal of planning and organization goes into this process. There are seasons and bottlenecks during which men and women are busy and have to meet deadlines, and then there are more relaxed periods when they gather their raw materials and prepare for busier times. In some cases, they organize their work in a way that allows them to dedicate a few days each week to their own businesses and the other days for work commissioned by others.



Methodology

Prior to the data collection phase, close collaboration with a newly created local microfinance NGO, the Egyptian Association for Community Initiatives and Development (EACID), was established in order to facilitate access to the field and to help build trust with business owners operating in Doweika. The role played by the loan officers was crucial in introducing Population Council field researchers to business owners, at least during the very beginning of the data collection phase.

During the initial planning of the study, it was envisaged that all interviews with business owners would be strictly limited to EACID clients. Using the client list from a loan program launched in early 2004 as a sample frame, businesses owned by men and women located in Doweika were identified and interviewed. Then, working boys and girls under the age of 18 who were engaged as wage workers or unpaid family workers by these business owners were interviewed. Business owners were purposely selected to cover a variety of different areas of work such as plastics manufacturing, garments manufacturing, auto body repair, metal products, and hand weaving of carpets.

With the aim of understanding gender issues that affect working children in their workplaces, the interview guides were designed to carry out a detailed inquiry into business owners' attitudes, values, hiring practices, and motives for employing girls and boys, with a particular focus on gender issues. The guides also covered the business owners' personal and business profiles, including school experiences, opinions about early employment, methods for teaching trade or technical skills to

young employees, and perceived work hazards as they are related to children. Typically, informal work activities are expected to be located in unconventional places like open spaces or unregistered shops and workshops, each of which are associated with gender-specific issues and work hazards.

The first set of interviews with business owners was conducted over the second half of April 2007 and lasted until the end of May 2007. Interviews with business owners were conducted through one visit that lasted approximately two hours. The original plan was to conduct the interviews through two visits to the business owners during their work day; one visit would cover the questions in the interview guide and the second visit would involve spending time with the business owner, observing how he or she manages to run his or her business, and taking note of the work-related hazards at the workplace. However, preliminary field visits revealed that business owners were burdened with heavy workloads and they were judged as too busy to welcome two visits to their workplaces.

An initial list of 26 businesses that have child workers (family and non-family-based businesses) was first identified by loan officers working for EACID. For some businesses, field researchers did not find working children in the workplace on the day of the interview with the business owners. Business owners simply told the interviewers that "*the boy is doing some errands.*" As the field researchers got more acquainted and familiar with area of Doweika, they made appointments with non-EACID-affiliated businesses that employed children under the age of 18. One challenge faced by interviewers during the data collection process was that female business owners were few and hard to access through EACID. The scarcity of female business owners, which could be attributed to the safety of working in Doweika, added to the difficulty of accessing female business owners.

Population Council field researchers interviewed a total of 15 women business owners. These were meant to be individual interviews. However, in most cases, other family members or neighbours were present during the interviews. This is significant because it indicates that private spaces of homes are shared in Doweika. It also indicates that those family members and other individuals are often integral to women's work, an aspect that has been illuminated in the interviews.

The second round of interviews took place during the aftermath of the rock slide disaster in Doweika in December 2008.⁶³ A bit shaken and destabilized, residents had been awaiting news about their relocation to new housing and were unsure about the future of their businesses in their new locations. Another noteworthy aspect of these interviews is that women were accessed through the local microfinance institution as recipients of loans to begin or expand on-going businesses. None of the women we met were first-time loan clients. The loans they received ranged from EP 1000 to EP 3000, approximately USD 180 to 500.⁶⁴ The fact that the women were accessed through the microfinance institution as well as the range of loan size they received is significant because it predetermines a particular category of women who run relatively small enterprises. These women business owners generally do not hire others to work for them and rely mainly on the help of family members. This was a

⁶³ Doweika is located on a hillside, overlooked by a rocky cliff. In December 2008, a large piece of rock dislodged and fell onto the community, destroying housing and killing people.

⁶⁴ EP means Egyptian Pounds. The current exchange rate in 2009 is 1 US\$= 5.3 EP.

limitation because there was no way to examine women’s interactions with hired labour.

Part One: The Decision to Work

Boys and Girls

For both boys and girls, the decision to work results from a combination of factors, including material poverty and poor quality educational opportunities. In most cases, families are keen on educating their children and, when possible, children are encouraged to attend school. However, poor quality schools, poorly designed and delivered curricula, scarce educational materials and abusive forms of discipline from teachers often make the school experience so unpleasant for children that either the children’s themselves or their parents view the investments of time and money in education as an unproductive use of limited resources. Two main patterns can be discerned among working children in Doweika, the focus site of this study: children either combine work and school or just work. While it generally has been thought that many children who just work have had at least some preliminary exposure to education before deciding to drop out, our most recent interviews suggest that this trend could be changing.

We spoke with a total of 52 children between the age of 10 and 17 in in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. Their gender and educational status are indicated in the table below.

	Working with some past schooling experience	Working and going to school	Never been to school
Girls	12	6	6
Boys	8	8	12
Total	20	14	18

From the interviews it was clear that once children expressed an interest in leaving school for various reasons, work became a viable alternative and parents, either father, mother or occasionally step-mother, strongly favoured work for the child.

“I repeated the year in third primary and I used to be absent from school. Mother told me if I didn’t want to go, I should go out and find myself a job.”

(Adel a boy car painter, 12 years old) ⁶⁵

⁶⁵ The names of all interviewed children and adolescents have been replaced by pseudonyms in this report.

It is generally believed that boys who fail in their studies will spend more time in the streets and pick up bad habits from their peers. For girls, it is generally believed that the transition from school to work is a more extended process than it is for boys and that the girls are likely to remain longer at home to help with domestic chores and take responsibility for their younger siblings. Doaa, a 15-year-old female loom worker, for example, was forced by her father and stepmother to



leave school in order to work and support the family. On the other hand, a number of interviewed girls reported that they sought jobs out of boredom from staying at home and the desire to fill their time with something useful.

Overall, children reported that financial reasons contributed directly to their decision to quit school. Some children took the decision to work after realizing their families' need for additional income, even though they were quite advanced in their studies and performing well at school. Both boys and girls reported a sense of responsibility and duty toward their families and younger siblings. For example, Nesma, a 17-year-old girl, lost her father, who left behind seven children. When she and her siblings were little, their mother worked to raise them but when the children grew older, it became their turn to work and take responsibility for their mother. Another young girl, named Leila, dropped out of school after passing her third preparatory exam (9th grade) in order to help with her sister's marriage trousseau. In her case, the father was alive but not actively present in the life of her family. She described him as someone who "comes and goes" as he was married to another woman. Her family's precarious financial situation, in addition to her own lack of genuine interest in schooling (أنا مش غاوية) and the fact that school was expensive led to her decision to drop out of school. For boys in particular, the decision to leave school and begin working is reinforced by their perception of the low value of schooling in the labour market and the limited returns to education.⁶⁶ Boys, in particular, tended to justify their desire to leave school by referring to the many jobless university graduates, low personal returns on education and almost totally absent link between educational degrees and occupations.

In several cases, children reported that they made the decision to quit school on their own and without any clear reason. For some the decision was not challenged by their parents, even in cases where those same parents had previously encouraged their children to remain in school. For other children who decided to quit school, their decision was challenged by parents and in some cases the children stayed enrolled. One 14-year-old girl, Nesma, dropped out of school after passing the sixth primary grade. She said:

⁶⁶ Ragui Assaad, "Unemployment and Youth Insertion in the Labour Market in Egypt," ECES Working Paper no. 118 (Cairo: Egyptian Centre for Economic Studies, 2007).

I did not have to be re-examined nor did I fail. None of that. I was a good pupil but I don't know why I did not continue. My parents used to beat me to go to school. They woke me up at 7am, made sure I put my clothes on and gave me pocket money to force me to go to school; my father yelled at me and said I should go to school. He said he didn't want anything of me-- just to go to school.

Another young girl, Sabreen, disliked school and insisted on leaving despite her parents' pleas to stay enrolled. Once the decision was made, however, she began helping with the family's home-based weaving business and hair salon and her mother began to rely heavily on her contribution of labour and income. It is noteworthy that siblings are generally treated differently according to their aptitudes and preferences. Sabreen has younger siblings who are doing well in school and their mother has encouraged them to remain enrolled. She monitors their time and schedules and makes sure they pay attention to their studies.

Some parents intentionally disrupt their children's education out of what they perceive as protection for their children. In these instances, parents claim that they were concerned about the safety of their children, especially their daughters, and were therefore reluctant to send them to school despite the children's interest in attending. As one 13-year-old girl named Mona noted, *"The road to school was dangerous. School was at Alwahayed and I lived in al Masaken. My parents were afraid that I might meet bad boys on the way to school and they might harass me."* Quite often girls referred to stories that spread in the neighbourhood about sexual harassment, abuse, and even rape in the streets. In some cases, going out, even for school, meant jeopardizing a girl's safety and reputation; it also sometimes influenced parents' attitudes toward boy children. For example, a young 11-year-old, Fatima, and her younger brother, stopped going to school after fourth primary as rumours were spreading that children were being kidnapped. Their parents were fearful and decided to keep their children at home.

Some girls blame their parents for not providing them with the support they needed to persevere at school when, for example, they had to apply to a new school or needed to obtain official papers. In these cases, the girls were left on their own to meet their needs and therefore felt discouraged from pursuing their education. In a few cases, girls sensed discrimination against them and voiced their belief that their families were more willing to invest in their male siblings' schooling than in their own. One 13-year-old girl named Nesma comes from a large family and has five siblings. None of her sisters went to school because their conservative father, who came from a village in Upper Egypt, is opposed to the education of girls and believes that it invites immorality. But he plans to send his sons to Al Azhar schools when they reach the right age. Nesma's paternal aunts and uncles tried to convince her father to send his daughters to school, but he refused. Nesma said that she is sad when her friends tell her stories about their school day.

Finally, as the international literature also confirms, bad experiences at school significantly contribute to the decision to drop out. Most of the girls and boys who left school claimed that they did so because of their teachers' bad treatment and/or insistence that the children take private lessons as a condition to pass, something which they often could not afford. One 16-year-old boy named Ahmed said, *"At*

school they scolded, humiliated, and beat us up. They forced us to join tutoring groups, otherwise we failed. They wanted me to take private lessons. It was not important for them whether or not I understood what they were explaining; they just took money.”

Nonetheless, many children who dropped out of school or have never been to school, especially girls, regretted their present situation. One 17-year-old loom worker named Samar never went to school but wished she did. She explained that if she had gone to school she would have become an employee in an office or a company and would not have had to do the demoralizing work of the workshop. Having these second thoughts, children declared their intentions to go to literacy classes where they could learn how to read and write, but none of them actually did. One 17-year-old boy named Ahmed explained that he wanted to attend literacy classes, but was discouraged by his siblings. They made fun of him and said he was too old to sit in a classroom with little kids. Children felt that a minimum level of literacy and numeracy skills could have helped them at work. As one 17-year-old girl named Aziza explained, *“I go to another workshop that makes button holes. I should know how many pieces I am giving them and how many I am taking so that no one would fool me. A piece may fall off when I do not notice. I have to know how many pieces I am bringing back.”* Some boys tried to combine school and work for a little while, but when it became too difficult to manage both, a majority opted for work. Those who were able to combine work and school still aspired to become professionals, such as doctors or engineers.

Girls had interesting insights on the issue of schooling, which highlighted differences between the two sexes. They tended to think that girls were generally more committed to and serious about schooling than boys and that if families’ financial conditions were good and school was affordable, girls would stay at school and do well there. They voiced their belief that if girls dropped out, it was often against their will, whereas boys quit because they did not do well in school and had no interest in studying. Girls also expressed a commonly held notion that education empowers girls and strengthens their position in life. One 13-year-old girl named Nesma explained why it was more important to send girls to school than boys. She felt that boys could manage on their own whether or not they were educated, unlike girls, who need educational backing in order to find their way in life. She said, *“When a boy goes anywhere, it is not a problem. He knows where he is going and where he is coming from, but when I wanted to go to Attaba and the bus came, I couldn’t read what it said.... Men teach each other and learn from each other, but girls, who will teach them?”*

The interviews conveyed a popular belief that once children make the decision to join the labour market, finding a job is easy. Children learn about jobs from their friends. Job recruitment is largely informal and does not require extensive negotiation. Children tell their prospective employers where they worked before and how much they earned and often work begins immediately thereafter. Wages are not negotiated because there are generally applied standards that both employers and employees are aware of. In addition, employers typically do not require legal documents or credentials. Seventeen-year-old Ahmed, for example, did not have an ID card nor did he feel the need to obtain one because he was not asked to provide legal documents at work. Quitting work is also informal. Girls interrupt work easily once they feel tired

or bored or if their parents arbitrarily decide that they should stay home. Boys may also decide to leave their jobs without notifying their employers (*ustas*).⁶⁷ However, the girls interviewed considered the presence of other female co-workers as important to their choice of workplace because girls generally do not want to work in an exclusively male environment.

Female Business Owners

Like many of the young girls who work, adult female business owners in the sample tended to have little to no education with only two exceptions: a woman in her 30s in the makeup business and a hairdresser in her 20s both had high school degrees. However, as an older generation of women, they faced more restrictive attitudes that discouraged girls' education in favour of preparation for their roles as wives and mothers. Om Saber, one of the local *dalalas*, said that her father had been vehemently opposed to his daughters' schooling, saying, "we do not educate our daughters" (ما عندناش بنات تتعلم).⁶⁸ In general, most of the women seemed to have accepted their parents' decision without much challenge and yet when they had the opportunity years later to improve their level of education, they used it. Om Hadeel's mother, who had gone off to marry another man, left him to watch after her two younger brothers. She left school after completing her primary education. After she got married, she considered going to school and eventually enrolled for the preparatory school certificate while at home. While she did not believe more education for herself was realistic or useful to her at that point, she was keen on ensuring her children's education to the highest possible degree. Other women interviewed in this sample had also earned illiteracy eradication certificates. In almost all of the cases, the women thought that the certificate allowed them to have a sufficient level of literacy and numeracy skills to get by in the market, particularly since they could also rely on their educated children to help with their accounts and with the collection and recording of payments.

Like some of the girls interviewed, many of the adult women indicated that economic reasons had driven them into the labour market. Some had no prior work experience and joined the labour market only after being married. These women tended to be either divorced without regular sources of income, married to jobless men, or widows running businesses in order to support small children. In addition to financial need, some women indicated that boredom and not knowing what to do with their time contributed to their decision to work. A few had inherited businesses or were business partners with their husbands and did not have to start their own businesses. Nonetheless, while the decision to work was often triggered by economic reasons and/or the desire to improve their life situations, all of the women expressed the notion that work helped them to "develop a sense of worth and self-esteem and enhanced their value as women," and thus what started as need-based work became a situation that many of these women actually enjoyed.

⁶⁷ *Usta* is a term given to the owner of the workshop as a technical specialist or the most skilful worker.

⁶⁸ A *dalala* is a trader, usually female, who buys goods such as appliances, carpets or clothing items, and sells them locally at a marked up price. Customers usually pay in instalments. The trader often takes orders and buys products that her customers specifically request, sometimes even bringing them to her customers' homes. She is relatively more mobile than other women in the community as she is expected to travel to markets and visit houses in the neighbourhood.

Male Business Owners

Male business owners described their decision to work early in life as an economic and financial-based decision, making it consistent with the testimony given by women and children. Raised in families with modest means, work was the expected thing to do. As Nabil, a young mechanic, said, *“Our families were poor and their wages were modest. We could not tell them we wanted this and that. We had to get our own things... If I wanted a t-shirt I had to work for it. My father earned EP 12 per day and we were 10 children.”*

Mohamed, a young bag maker, did not recall exactly how his transition to the labour market took place or who made the decision, saying, *“There must have been a reason. They must have needed my ten pounds. It would not be possible to send a boy to the street unless you needed money. It must have been the difficult economic conditions.”* Yet another workshop owner was sent to work by his older brother because both their parents died when they were children and they had to fend for themselves. A number of other respondents recalled having to take responsibility for a widowed or divorced mother and younger siblings. Yet, although these male business owners were driven into the market for economic reasons, many of them spoke about the passion they had developed for their work, which became a lifetime enterprise and not simply the thing they were expected to do as men.

Several business owners recalled developing a liking for their trade during childhood, as most times it was the same trade their fathers and grandfathers had practiced, and in this sense many felt a strong sense of “continuing a tradition.” These men began their work experience as assistants to their fathers or relatives rather than strangers. Samy, a young male car painter, for example, had helped his father in his car-painting workshop and, because he had shown skill at the work, decided to leave school after completing his preparatory certificate in order to work full-time. He said, *“Instead of bringing in a stranger, I felt more entitled to my father’s workshop”* (أولى بورشة أبوي). Ayman, another young man in the mother of pearl business, felt that his work had been much more valuable than anything else he could have done. Ayman’s father had been keen on his schooling but also wanted to teach him the mother of pearl business, a handicraft practised by only a few skilled artisans, in order to keep the skill knowledge alive in the family. Ayman proudly described his work as an art form, saying, *“my father thought to teach this art to his children instead of investing in strangers.”* Ayman recalled working with his father after the school day, until 8 or 9 p.m. and then going home to study. During exams, he did not work and his father made sure to provide for all his financial needs during that time. In the end, it was this young man’s own choice to leave school and concentrate on the family business.

Like Ayman, some other business owners had the luxury of choosing to work and experimented with various school and work arrangements. Gaber, a light metal worker whose father was a private school principal, left school at the age of 14. His father did not want to put pressure on any of his sons to continue their education. Gaber explained that *“For my father, he who wanted to be educated, the door to school was open; he who wanted to work, the door to the workshop was also open.”* This young man had 11 brothers and sisters, including one who finished industrial school and went on to study literature at university and another who spent three years

in medical college but decided not to continue. One young man named Medhat indicated that he had started working in his father's car upholstery workshop rather late, after trying other trades. His father did not put pressure on him to join the family business until he finally decided that upholstery was what he wanted to do.

Nine of the business owners interviewed had some years of schooling, seven had technical school degrees, three had university degrees, and only two had no education at all.⁶⁹ Like the working boys interviewed, many business owners combined work with schooling and then eventually gave up school to focus on their work. In almost all cases, they also seemed to have exercised a degree of agency in their decision to quit. A typical statement in the interviews was, "*I calculated it and found that a trade is better for me than school.*" These young men had decided that a successful business was more lucrative than a government job. Because they had developed a liking for their jobs, they were confident that they would excel. As Sayed, a young paint mixer, put it, "*If I didn't like the job, I would not have taken it up... I would not work without a goal...I worked for an objective. If I didn't have an objective, I would not have learned the job.*"

But some business owners regretted leaving school. Another young paint mixer who dropped out during his first year of secondary school had planned to continue his education, only to realize later that it was not possible anymore. He was so involved in establishing his business that he never had the time to resume his education. He eventually came to the conclusion that it had to be "*either work or education; not the two.*" In hindsight, some had initially thought that it would take a long time to learn the job and that they would need to devote all their time to it. Thus, they decided to drop out of school and concentrate on the work front. Many of them learned the job quickly, but by the time they thought about school again, they had lost the chance to continue their education.

Like the working children interviewed, business owners who left school early to work expressed a belief that schools are to blame for their generally negative educational experiences. They tended to remember the bad treatment they had received, to the extent that some said their *ustas* in the workshops were kinder to them than their teachers at school. One young metal worker named Fathi recalled how his teachers threatened to put students in the "mice room" if they broke the rules. During his last encounter with school, he had jumped over the school fence to escape his teacher's punishment and broke his legs, after which he crawled home on his knees and never returned to school. Many of these young men also felt that school management did not understand their economic situation, and they often paid a price for being poor. As Nabil, the car metal worker, said, "*They would beat us if our school uniforms were not ironed. We were poor people who did not iron clothes. They also beat us if we were late going to school. I used to work during the summer holidays. There the workshop owner did not beat the kids.*"

In general, the business owners we interviewed believed that combining work and school is the ideal situation for children and adolescents, as school provides knowledge and a feeling of academic accomplishment while work widens one's horizons and gives practical life skills. "*Combining work with school taught me how*

⁶⁹ A technical school degree requires three years of vocational education after the preparatory stage.

to be bold at school and how to ask questions in the classroom. Sometimes I would forget and call the teacher usta,” said Mahmoud, a bag maker who did well in both school and work, “I was an usta at the age of 15. I was good at work and good at school. I had 89 percent score in my commercial diploma.” Still, in general business owners were aware that work did affect school performance and understood how difficult it was for children who tried to combine both. As one metal turnaway said, *“The child postpones his studies until the evening, goes to work and gets exhausted, and then does not study after going home.”* In addition, business owners recognized the attraction of money and were aware that once children started earning money and “acquired a taste for it,” they often stopped going to school.

Part Two: Gender-Differentiated Work

In Doweika, popular ideas regarding what constitutes feminine and masculine jobs are very influential. The ideal jobs for women are office positions, which poor people realize have become scarce and are beyond the reach of many due to their limited education. Many recognize that workshops are their only option because this kind of work does not require an academic degree. Typical work for girls includes peg making, chewing-gum packing, working in garment or utensil factories, sewing and embroidery, loom operation and work that requires artistic skills like drawing and colouring. Certain professions are completely closed to women, such as



mechanics and electrical work, and generally speaking, women do not take up jobs outside the home which require physical strength or carrying heavy loads. Most importantly, however, girls do not perform tasks that jeopardize their modesty as women and that require exposing their bodies. According to this logic, women should not lie under cars to repair them, operate machines which involve, for example, pushing an arm to the chest and drawing attention to a sensitive part of the female body, or work the upper parts of the loom which would require standing up and stretching the body to reach the top.

Typically, feminine jobs like rubber band and peg making, manufacturing zippers, and packing chewing gum are generally monotonous and require no particular talents, but are considered suitable to certain ideal female traits like being quiet, patient, and persevering. The fact that certain types of work have been labelled “female work” has two implications. First, boys do not consider them “real” jobs and do not take them seriously. Many boys associate these jobs with home-based work for women who need to generate income after they get married and for girls with restricted mobility. One 10-year-old garment manufacturer named Hisham said that he does not like to sew female robes (*galabiyas*), *“When I touch them, I feel I am not a man.... I don’t like to work with that stuff.... It is women’s wear... I also don’t like to sit next to women. I feel it is eib (socially unacceptable) as if I am not a man....”* Second, some jobs associated with women are poorly paid and, in this way, are also looked down upon by boys. On the contrary, plumbing, house painting, working with metals, and

carpentry are perceived as both male jobs and as high-paying jobs. It is generally understood among boys and girls alike that boys perform “different” work, which can be more difficult, more specialized, or require greater technical precision and dexterity. In garment manufacturing, where both girls and boys work, it is commonly said that men are more qualified to work on sophisticated “Singer” machines that can handle advanced procedures, while girls seem to do more of the detailed finishing work. Nevertheless, this does not stop some girls from voicing their belief that girls are better workers. Many young girls regard the “female” attributes of patience and perseverance as positive and important qualities for an efficient and quality work process. Thus, it is not unusual to hear girls say “*what girls do in 15 minutes takes half an hour for boys to do*” or that “*boys are stronger physically but when it comes to actual work, we are both the same; we are even better.*”

But because of the predominant sense that boys’ work is more valuable, boys have a clearer understanding of their role in the success of the business and feel that they are indispensable to business owners. “*Employers have to be good to their workers and protect them because if they don’t, the workshop will never be able to operate,*” said Ayman, the 15-year-old mechanic. Girls have internalized this discrimination to some degree and recognize the indispensability of boys to business owners. Fifteen-year-old Doaa described her belief that because boys are valuable, they are more self-confident and can shout back and threaten to quit. Doaa also explained that their bad behaviour often goes unpunished because of the business owner’s need for their work. On the other hand, the interviewed girls generally recognized that business owners tend to exploit young women because they recognize the girls’ need for work.

In Doweika, it is recognized that women who accept work in workshops generally have a lower social standing and an adverse financial situation at home and possibly have no males to support them, since fathers, brothers and/or husbands are generally responsible for the women in the household. A 16-year-old female aluminium worker articulated this situation in the following statement:

Mind you, business owners exploit girls. No girl can expect to work in a workshop and impose her conditions. Business owners know her circumstances and that her family conditions are difficult... Boys on the other hand work on the machines and they control the business owners... If I am absent for a few days, it is not important; any one can replace me, even a little boy. But if a sanayyi is absent for one day only, the whole work will stop.

Another 17-year-old loom worker named Neama added, “*If girls take up jobs, they do not leave them until they get married; employers know that. A girl is a gain, particularly since she takes less money and her work is better quality.*” The understanding that a job in a workshop is a girl’s last resort and thus an indication of poverty is also shared by working boys. As 17-year-old Mohamed, who works in stainless steel manufacturing, said, “*I feel sorry for girls who work while there are others (men) at home who can take care of them. It must be that the girls do not find anyone who will take responsibility for them and that is why they work.*” He added, “*For example, perhaps the father died and the condition of the household is not good in terms of money; maybe the father is ill and cannot work or the father has divorced*

the mother and the kids might go homeless, so they work in order to eat. What else would they do?"

Despite the obvious financial need, the male view among boys and adult business owners is that girls should be spared *bahdala*, or demoralizing work. *Bahdala* refers to physical, moral, and social degradation caused by work of low status when one is forced to perform this work as a result of poor education and lack of resources. For example, men do not believe that women should sweep and clean workshops, mainly because sweeping exposes the female body to passers-by. But equally important, sweeping is a low-status undertaking if performed in public and should be done only within the privacy and confines of one's home. "Sweeping a workshop is not like sweeping your own home. At home this would be cleanliness for herself, not for others. Also, men should not be allowed to see a woman's buttocks. She herself would say she does not want to bend over. What if someone passes by and saw her bending over? It would look awful," said 17-year-old Amer, a brass-carver. Work that involves *bahdala* for girls includes work in unpleasant environments where, for example, bad odours can be found or bad language is used. The latter is typical of workplaces dominated by males. Sixteen-year-old Ahmed, who uses *kolla* -- a tanning substance used in shoe making workshops -- in his work, said, "*Kolla smells very bad. It is impossible for a girl to work with kolla. It is impossible for our workshop owner to employ a girl to work with us.*"

In particular, boys feel that it is their responsibility as males to protect their sisters and wives against degrading work. One 14-year-old carpenter named Ahmed explained that his sisters worked in workshops, but only until their older brother came back from the army. As soon as his brother was able to resume his job and provide for the family, he asked his two sisters to stop working. Boys feel that it is their job as men to help provide their sisters with the education that will allow them to obtain respectable jobs or find suitable husbands and ultimately avoid *bahdala*. As Adel, a 13-year-old car mechanic, put it:

Girls must go to school and get educated. Work entails bahdala. Girls work amid men who might glance at them. This is bad for women. They ought to stay at home instead of getting bahdala... it is better if girls stay at home with their mothers and fathers. If they have younger siblings, they ought to be looking after them... My sisters will go to school. I will spend money on them because I am the man.

Another 14-year-old car mechanic named Mohamed gave another example:

Even if a girl has to work as a servant at a home, it is still better than working in a workshop... workshops are for men and small boys... Men's work is outdoors and entails bahdala while girls have limits. For example, girls cannot bend over in the presence of five or six men; they cannot sweep the floor. They cannot pour lead into moulds and sit next to the fire. They cannot endure it.

A 16-year-old rosary manufacturer named Mahmoud said (speaking to the female interviewer), "*Didn't you get educated in school and become an eminent doctor? Can anyone talk to you now? You are polite and respectable and you have a diploma.*

Girls have to respect themselves and get educated, but this work in the workshops is bahdala. It is only normal for boys to work in workshops.”

Work Hierarchy

Generally speaking, working children pass through three main stages during their working lives: the first stage is called *baladiyya*, when children perform simple tasks such as making coffee and tea and running minor errands. There is gender differentiation in this stage, where young boys go out to buy things and run errands while girls stay in the workshop to clean and sweep the floors. The second stage is called *sabby*, when the child is still learning the job.⁷⁰ This is followed by the *usta* stage, when the child masters the job and can work independently to a large extent. Usually, one of the senior workers is designated as a commander or supervisor who replaces the workshop owner when he is not there and gives orders and distributes work to the apprentices. Most commonly, commanders are male.

In general, male business owners as well as working girls and boys recognize that girls rarely become *ustas*; they believe that this title is a male privilege. From the boys' point of view, no girl will be called *usta* even if she deserves it. *“If she is a good craftswoman and I am a sabby, then of course she is my usta. But I don't call her usta; I call her Ms. so-and-so,”* said one 16-year-old boy. Boys are opposed to the idea of having a female *usta* or supervisor. As another 11-year-old boy said, *“If I had to work with a female usta, I would have certainly refused and I would have opted to work with my siblings instead of with her.”* A 17-year-old loom worker conceded that girls can work faster, have a better ability to concentrate, and at the end earn the same as boys, but still, *“there is no such thing as a female usta, even if she is better or more senior than me. This goes for all professions...there is nothing called a female usta. How can this ever happen?”* Later, the same loom worker added:

A girl usta? How? It does not work to have a female usta. The usta has to be a man. How can she work and command other men? An usta has to be older than us and senior at work...How can I accept having a female usta? No one will ever take orders from her. Ustas have to scold and yell at people. Sometimes they beat the workers. (Sarcastically) Will a woman be able to do that?...Personally, I would never allow a girl to teach me. My usta is there and my male colleague, too.... I will never have a woman teach me.

Even when girls excel in the jobs that supposedly suit their abilities and preferences as women, they are viewed as unable to control all of the workshop operations, which is what an *usta* does. The 17-year-old loom worker described girls working in the colouring of brass products: *“There are girls who are irreplaceable by men. No man can hold the feather the way girls do or colour the way girls colour... A woman can teach a man how to hold a feather and colour.”* But in the end, “colouring” is a typical female job, which the loom worker described as requiring the “chic” and “artistic” taste of women. However, when it comes to more serious work like negotiating with clients, men have to be there to do the negotiations because, he

⁷⁰ Some children mentioned that there is also the level of *sabby kebir* which is more senior than *sabby*, but not quite at the level of an *usta*, or master.

noted, *“Women will understand only the colouring bit.”* Girls are in charge of only a specific part of the whole process, and they are *ustas* only in the specific task that they know how to perform. But they have no control over the whole process of work. The loom worker added: *“In our trade, boys manufacture the pieces and pass them on to girls to colour them. They have no opinion in our work, but we ask for their opinions in the colours: white or yellow? Which is more chic? The girls’ job is to hold the pen and write and hold the feather and colour.”*

The notion that girls cannot be *ustas* is also internalized by the girls themselves as a part of tradition that has gone uncontested. One 17-year-old female loom worker said, *“There are no girl ustas. The usta has to be a man because this is how things are. A girl can be smart and have a strong personality but according to traditions, the usta has to be a man... The only exception -- and it is not official -- is when the usta is away. I can take his place on the loom and explain to the other kids how to do the work and check on the girls while they are working.”*

Part Three: Work Today and in the Future: Girls’ and Boys’ Long-Term Views of Work

As the previous sections suggest, popular attitudes toward work in general and toward specific kinds of work in particular significantly influence popular ideas about gender-appropriate work decisions for boys and girls as individuals and as members of the family and the community. These ideas of gender appropriateness, which become centred around work decisions and behaviours, imply that some forms of work are more appropriate either for girls or for boys, but rarely for both. These perceptions in turn influence the way that girls and boys themselves think about work and about the reasons for work. In the following sections, we include testimony from our interviews regarding the various motivations for earning money among boys and girls. Overall, the interviews suggest that girls and boys tend to hold different long-term attitudes toward work and toward the role of work in family and community life. Whereas boys and male business owners tend to view their work or businesses as part of their long-term careers, girls and women business owners tend to view their work or businesses as an effort to fund and support family life.

Boys and Male Business Owners: Working toward a Career

From a boy’s point of view, work is a sign of manhood and a crucial step in the passage to adulthood. A boy who works is considered a *real man*. Boys work because they want to feel that they have become adults and have taken responsibility for themselves. As Islam, a 13-year-old boy working in the mother-of-pearl industry, said, *“So that no one would one day say that they helped me. I have built my own self and took responsibility since my childhood so that one day when I propose and get married, I would be fully responsible and not look for help from my father.”* Boys’ sense of working toward a career is further enhanced by their sense of taking some financial responsibility for their families. Mohamed, a 14-year-old boy, said, *“A boy toils and brings money to spend on his home. He does this alone. He is a man.”* When they get paid, the general rule is for the children to give all their money to their parents, particularly their mothers, who then give them daily pocket money to cover

their food and transportation costs. The daily pocket money usually ranges from EP 1 to 3. In general, mothers are recognized as the financial managers of the households. However, sometimes this rule does not apply to older boys, who keep all of their money and disburse it as they see fit, giving their parents or siblings a portion and keeping the rest for themselves. Both boys and girls tend to join saving groups to save their money. Like girls, boys also report that they are saving money for their marriage and to open their own workshops.

Many boys assert that being a man involves being a good *sanayyi*, which occurs when one acquires good skills and technical knowledge. More often than their female counterparts, boys say that they work because they want to learn a trade that might come in handy in the future, regardless of financial need. As Hisham, a 14-year-old boy, said, *“My mother did not need my money nor did my father, but they wanted us to learn a craft so that we would not need anyone in the future... My mother and father will not live forever.”*

Jealousy of peers and the desire to imitate them also pushes boys into the labour market. Aamer, a 17-year-old boy, recalled that his family was not destitute nor was he doing poorly at school. He completed his third preparatory year at school, but decided to leave school when, according to him, *“I saw other boys working and became jealous. When I talked to other kids, they used to tell me that they worked and did not rely on others for money. I was the only one who took money from their parents.... I felt that they were better than me.”* Another 13-year-old boy named Mohamed, who worked and went to school, reported that jealousy of his peers was the reason behind his work, saying, *“My friends play and buy things and I sit there without money. I work so I can have money like them and do what I want.”*

Boys exercise a high degree of agency in choosing their areas of work. Sometimes they opt not to follow in the footsteps of their fathers who are established in a particular business. Fourteen-year-old Mohamed works during school vacations to earn money for his education. Even though his father has a carpentry workshop, Mohamed decided to work in metals because he did not particularly like his father's area of work. Moreover, boys who work for their uncles or other family members take pride in saying that they do not get privileged treatment because of these family connections. The boys interviewed stressed that their uncles were quite firm with them and treated them like any other worker. They also got paid like everybody else. An 11-year-old car mechanic named Ali works for his uncle and often hears his uncle say, *“I am your uncle at home only.”* Hisham, a 10-year-old tailor, works with his father and mother at home. At work, he calls his father *“usta”* because his father *“is a man”* and they are both *“at work.”*

Unlike girls, boys believe that their jobs will lead to a career. Their *ustas* often serve as their role models in that respect; their success in setting up workshops is an example that the boys wish to emulate. For that reason, they take their jobs seriously and demonstrate ambition. *“I want to be like my employer. I want to own a workshop and have people work for me.”* One 14-year-old manufacturer of shoe soles named Hisham said, *“I want to own a big workshop. I want to have a car and money.”* They also have a sense of pride in their work and feel that what they accomplish is meaningful. *“The time I felt most proud of myself was when I made a rug for the king of Saudi Arabia”* was one example given by a boy. They also feel at home in the

workshops and gain self-esteem when their work is recognized by their employers. As one boy put it, *“Suffice to feel that the workshop is mine and that I am replacing the owner if he is not there.”*

The boys’ ambitions and dreams for growth are similar to those of the business owners when they were children. As soon as they learned their trade, business owners reported that they also had plans to build and expand own workshops. Gaber, a light metal worker, wanted to be like his uncle, who owned a car in 1952 before anyone else in the neighbourhood. Gaber also dreamed of having both a workshop and a family. In general, all business owners dreamed of expanding their businesses. One male business owner named Nabil, who runs a metal business, also dreamed of owning a workshop. Now he has two. Business owners who were interviewed also believe that one should not work for others as one grows older. Rabie, a *koshari* seller, operates his business on a cart that he rents from someone else.⁷¹ He said, *“I always wanted to have my own shop instead of working on the koshari cart like this. The owner can send me away at any time. There is no contract between us, only a commitment. I am committed to him and I pay my rent on time.”*

All business owners went through the first stage of work as *sabbys*, boys who run errands and stand next to the masters to give them the tools they need at work. After that, they learned work details and experimented with everything. *“I knew everything and became so good at my job that my master said if I had to leave his workshop, it would be to open a workshop of my own, not to work for someone else,”* said Mohamed, a young male bag maker. Some business owners followed one path and excelled in it while others began an apprenticeship in one area and, even though they did quite well in it, changed their work completely and did something else.

Business owners remember learning their jobs by watching and imitating others in the workshop, and this is the system that they now follow with their own apprentices. As Gaber, a young male light metal worker, said:

No one holds your hand. If you were doing something and got bored and wanted to do something else, they would not say no; they would tell you to do it. If you do it right, he [the workshop owner] would tell you it was right. And if it was wrong, he would say it was wrong... I always took the initiative; they did not want to teach me directly so that I could use my brain and think. This is what I learned from them.... Don’t ever tell anyone to do this or that... If you do, he will stop using his mind at the last word you uttered.... Leave him to watch with his eyes... when he needs you, he will call you.

Business owners describe their careers as learning by making mistakes and learning from them. Nabil, a metal worker, remembers how he was given the bumper of a car to fix. When he hit it so hard that it almost broke, he ran home to hide from his older brother, who was his boss at the workshop. To his surprise, his brother was pleased with the work produced by the young apprentice; it showed that he had “good hands” and was on the right path to becoming a skilful *usta*. Nabil said, *“I love my trade... just like I love my children, I love my work.”*

⁷¹ *Koshari* is a local Egyptian dish made of pasta and lentils.

As they acquired the rudiments of the trade and became well-established *sanayyi*, or second-level apprentices, they also had to learn other skills. They emphasized that marketing oneself and one's products is crucial as one becomes an *usta*. *"You can be the best worker, but if you can't market yourself and your products, you have failed,"* said Mohamed, a young man working in the ready-made clothes business. They also reported some basic and essential "codes of conduct." As businessmen, they respect their work commitments, which help them build a good name and a solid reputation. For business owners, a good reputation is more important than money because it enhances one's position in the market. Nabil, a male business owner with a metal business, brags about the fact that his business attracts important individuals and that all his clients are *"respectable people: army officers, counsellors, and state security employees."* Being a good businessman also means having the ability to *weigh* people and know their social worth. As Galal, a male plastics manufacturer, said, *"When I sit with a customer, I immediately figure out his [social] status. With some people, you need to be eloquent. With other people, like people from Manshiet Nasser, we can sit informally on the sidewalk to chat and I go down to their level to talk with them... I try to show them that I am like them."* And most important is for the business owners to be in full control of all operations in their workshops. Not only do they perform work, but they also have to know what everyone is doing, so that each one can be paid and praised appropriately at the end of the day.

Several business owners talked about the difficulty of obtaining loans from banks and the unpredictability of the market; sometimes they would have lots of work and other times, they would have nothing at all. Ahmed, a male car painter, said, *"Sometimes I have three or four cars to fix and other times I have no cars at all. And in my line of business, if I earn EP 500, I spend EP 400 on raw materials."* Ahmed's dream is to enlarge his business and sell cars. Two other young men working in the garment business, Khaled and Gamal, began their enterprises with loans from the Social Fund for Development (SFD). Before starting their businesses, they attended training sessions organized by the SFD on "how to manage your own business," which seemed to be of great help to them.

The Views of Girls and Female Business Owners: Accommodating the Family

Unlike male business owners, many female business owners are reluctant to hire external help, preferring to rely on their own efforts and those of their family members. Several of the women are involved in family businesses with their husbands and children. In these cases, women share the desire for self-sufficiency and plans for expansion with their family members. For example, Khadra and her family want to be entirely self-sufficient with their wire manufacturing business, for which they procure raw wire and treat it until they produce a finished, painted product. Their long-term plan is to buy machines for their son to start his business.

Women expressed concerns about the challenges associated with additional employees and the potential disagreements involved in running a large business. They do not want to deal with taxes, large accounts, and payrolls for employees, expressing their fear that additional staff or partners might mean a loss of control over their work.

Only a few women expressed interest in expanding their businesses, increasing their products, and having new designs and new markets.

The only exception to the above is women who have male children. These women plan for their sons to take over their businesses and expand them. Om Mohamed runs a small grocery store and plans to leave her business to one of her many sons when they finish school. Another woman expressed hope that her son would enlarge her current business of selling make-up products. Om Mamdouh, who runs a cardboard manufacturing business, said that she had greatly reduced her involvement in the enterprise, making only formal appearances in the workshop, and that it was really her son who was now running the business. Most women indicated that they would retire as soon as their sons were firmly established in their businesses and ready to take over.

On the other hand, women business owners who had daughters were protective of their daughters and felt that they needed to spare them the cumbersome or tiring work they themselves had done. These women often stated that they themselves were exceptionally hard workers and wanted to make sure that their daughters did not have to toil as hard as they did. Even though their daughters were often substantively involved in the businesses and being paid for their work, this was regarded as a temporary situation which would end once their daughters got married. Khadra said that her daughters generally helped with her work in wire manufacturing, but that she preferred to keep them indoors and spare them the difficult stages of metal work that damaged the hands. It was understood that once they got married, her daughters, who are now engaged, would move into their husbands' homes and stop working. In another case, Om Adel, a woman who baked cakes and biscuits and was also involved in small metal and electric work, had three married daughters who regularly helped her after they finished their own household chores. She relied heavily on their input and contribution, but did not pay them a wage for the time they worked.

Very few girls based in workshops indicated that they sought a career from their work. It was evident from the interviews that the girls generally worked only temporarily and for the very specific purpose of preparing their marriage trousseau. Once married, they stated that they would not work again because work could not be reconciled with marriage. The following quotation summarizes girls' general attitude towards work:

Work is tiring for girls, but what can we do? I need to buy my trousseau. I work because I need to work. After I buy my trousseau, I will stay at home because I will be tired and bored of work. We all know that when a girl gets married, she stays at home and does not work.

Statements like “*God will save me [from work] by allowing me to finally stay at home*” (ربنا حايكون تاب علي في بيتي) show that girls generally do not view work as a particularly rewarding experience that they wanted to sustain. Girls work out of necessity in the hope that one day they will be “rescued” by marriage, which is of central importance in the lives of Doweika girls. As one 15-year-old girl said, “*Girls marry early so that their parents will be relieved of their responsibility. My neighbours and friends and all girls know that. We all think so. What else can we do?*” For most girls, work after marriage is ruled out. A 16-year-old aluminium

worker said, *“It is not nice if a married woman comes to work in a workshop. If her husband cannot afford to keep her at home, he should say so from the beginning... (بلاش بهدلة ولاد الناس) one cannot wait until one gets married to stop work.”*

However, Doaa, a 15-year-old girl, and a few others like her said that whether or not she will continue to work depends on whether her future husband will allow her to work. *“If he agrees, I will work. If he doesn’t, I will not,”* she said. In all cases, girls believed that any training they receive on the job could be useful after they get married only if their husbands cannot support the household. As one woman said, *“When a girl gets married and her husband is of modest means, she can work and earn money in her house if she has a trade and knows how to work on a sewing machine at home ...It is good for the girl, her husband, and her children.”* And yet, it was also not uncommon for some girls to voice their belief that work is their only “solace” out of the confines of their homes. *“Work is better than staying at home and doing nothing. I like to work more than staying at home. When I argue with my father or my brother and they swear that they will make me stay at home, I feel like I am suffocating and bored to death.”*

It is generally believed that girls are not financially responsible for their families or themselves and this explained why they did not *need* to work. Those who worked did so because their parents could not provide for them and the girls felt that they needed to work in order to take responsibility for buying their trousseau and fulfilling their daily necessities. They often kept the money that they earned for themselves; they were not expected or required to contribute to the household. If they did contribute, however, this was of their own volition because they wanted to help their mothers or their siblings. Otherwise girls, unlike boys, did not have many demands put upon them. As 15-year-old Aya explained:

I work so when I get married, I will have everything I need... Boys, on the other hand, want to do things with their money like buying clothes and cigarettes or going out with their friends or fiancées. Of course, there are boys who support their families and the responsibility of the household falls on their shoulders... Also, it is eib [shameful] for boys to sit at home and have people spend money on them.

As a general rule, boys do not like or expect women, particularly their sisters, to work because it undermines their positions and roles as responsible males in the household. It is generally understood that girls’ work is allowed only until they get married, after which they are expected to stay at home. As Adel, a 12-year-old male car painter, said, *“Girls can work and not help their parents. They can keep their money or save it, but boys give their money to their families.”* And yet, some boys conceded that work after marriage was not completely ruled out, but would be a matter for discussion by the couple based on their economic needs. As Mustafa, a loom worker, said, *“Work for married women is not eib. But as long as I am taking good care of my home, why should my wife work? If she has a job, I can ask her to stay at home and I can pay her and she becomes my responsibility. Women work after marriage only if they have to because of economic reasons.”*

Seventeen-year-old Ahmed said, *“The best thing is for girls to stay home. Their brothers or fathers will provide for them and for the house...We are from Upper*

Egypt and don't like to send our girls to work. This is eib... people can say, 'look, her father has sent her to work.'" Sixteen-year-old Ahmed said of his future wife, *"Of course she will not work. She will stay home with her children and I will work."* Fourteen-year-old Hisham said:

If I marry now, I will not let my wife work. Even if we are engaged, I won't let her work. Well, if she is engaged, why should she work? She should stay home and think about her engagement and about the man she loves and the one who loves her... She should not be thinking about work or education...Some loafers might stop her in the street and molest her. She will not be able to defend herself. After all, she is a girl. No matter how strong she is, she will not be able to defeat boys. It is best if girls work from home. This way they can take care of their children, cook their food and do their domestic chores.

Fourteen-year-old Mohamed said, *"A girl should stay at home until her groom comes along. Her groom will provide her trousseau. She should not work. She should stay at home and help her mother,"* and later, *"If my sister ever decides to work, she has to work in a respectable job."*

Part Four: Gender-Specific Issues in Work

The next sections deal with issues that are specific to the workplace experience for girls and boys, respectively. The boys and girls we interviewed face very different issues in the workplace because they are operating in an environment in which popular beliefs regarding gender and the workplace influence the attitudes of employers and community members toward male and female employees. We gathered information regarding the views of male business owners toward girl versus boy employees, but our research here focused in large part on the gender-specific issues faced by females in the workplace. The reason for this is mainly that, because work outside the home is generally perceived as more acceptable and appropriate for males and because males base their long-term attitudes toward work around the idea of building a career and supporting a family, females seem positioned to face unique obstacles and issues in the workplace because of their gender role in society. In order to better understand the gender-specific issues faced by girls in the workplace, we provide testimony here regarding unpaid family labour and other modes of work for girls.

The View of Male Business Owners

According to our interviews, there are two main types of businesses and employers: those that do not hire girls and those that hire both boys and girls. Businesses that tend not to hire girls include mechanics, carpenters, and various forms of metal work. Businesses that often hire both boys and girls include garment manufacturers, carpet factories, and candle manufacturers. There are also jobs that are mostly done at home, such as peg manufacturing and chewing-gum packing; these are almost exclusively performed by women. None of the interviewees, even those who depended mainly on female workers and who had a favourable view of females as reliable workers,

regarded women's work as a "normal" thing. Like working children, business owners view female work as an indicator of dire economic hardship and unfavourable life conditions. Interviewees stated that work is the right and expected thing for men to do, while for women, there always had to be a reason for choosing to work. Male business owners assumed that working girls had no male providers at home. As one male cardboard maker named Ahmed said, girls "*can also work to earn money to spend on themselves. Their families might be poor and cannot afford to send them to school. They cannot pay school fees, so they work. They can use the money they earn to buy books and pay for private tutoring. Work is useful in this way.*" Emad, a business owner who runs a *galabiya* (a traditional long garment worn by men and women) business and hires girls, imagines the circumstances that push girls into the labour market as follows: "*In this society, a girl sees her mother divorced from her father and her father takes another wife. Her mother re-marries and the girl is only 10 years old but does not have anyone to support her. In this case, she has to work.?*"

The same *galabiya* business owner also understood the central importance of marriage and preparation of the trousseau for girls. He expressed a belief that the absence of a proper trousseau reduces girls' chances for marriage and says:

Some girls marry without their trousseau. And because they do not have a trousseau, they do not have the freedom to choose whom they will marry ... Sometimes this is not the man she dreams of, but because of her difficult financial conditions, she is forced to. But if she works a few years before marriage, she can buy her things, dress well, look good, and eat well....

Some business owners believe that when women work, they compete with men for limited work opportunities. Rabie, a *koshari* seller, said he is totally opposed to girls' work even though he hires some in his *koshari* business. His belief, popular in these difficult economic times, is that when jobs are scarce, women should stay home and only men should work. He also believes that when women leave their homes, this causes societal, moral, and family disintegration. As he put it:

Girls create unemployment in society. In the government, you find more girls than boys. When I go to the hospital, there are more women there and when I go to schools, there are women too... Everywhere I go there are women. There is unemployment because of that ... what other freedoms are they asking for? Do they really want girls to work and become uncontrollable? In some homes, girls leave their parents' houses only to go to their husbands'... Now we live in a new era when women keep their husbands as baby sitters at home and they go out to work.

Mustafa, another business owner, also opposes girls' work for the same reasons, adding disapprovingly that work empowers women to claim equality with men:

Why should a girl work? When she works, she takes the place of a man in a job to which he is more entitled. In the end, the man is responsible for her. She is supposed to stay at home and raise the kids while he works and earns money for them...If she takes the place of a man, then he has nothing to do and has to sit in the coffee shop. She will not marry and

neither will he. They will both age. Then this causes problems and makes them violate religious teachings... adultery and bad conduct... Women should stay at home until someone proposes. If she works and earns money, she will tell her husband that they are equal....

Some male business owners maintain that girls are not serious workers, have limited work abilities, and are only capable of doing simple tasks. They claim, moreover, that girls are easily distracted and can fall under negative influences. As Gaber, another business owner, put it:

All girls want is to buy a skirt or a blouse....It is wrong to allow girls to work. Even if they are good and polite, they learn to be impolite. They learn bad conduct and imitate their friends at work...They want to dress like their friends. Girls want to buy things; they want to imitate others...not support a family. The best thing for girls is to go to school and think only about their studies. Girls can work in packing, garment manufacturing, selling in shops. I give a girl some products and say "count 12 and put them in a pack." She cannot go beyond that. Boys on the other hand can become sanayyis.



Other male business owners believe that girls are qualified to do only some types of work that fit their abilities as women and are similar to the domestic chores they perform at home. Mustafa, a business owner in the packing business, hires girls because he believes that the work he does is appropriate to their skills and aptitudes. He said, *"They sit in an office and pack things... as if they are sitting at home cleaning rice."* The analogy between the "feminine" chores

women do at home and their jobs in the workshops was also emphasized by Gaber, a *galabiya* maker, who commented on women's aversion to sophisticated machines, saying he himself did not understand the reason behind that. He explained that he has two types of machines in his workshop: an "over" for women [a lower grade sewing machine] and a "singer" for men. *"Women don't come close to the 'Singer' machines. I don't know why; maybe because it is inconvenient for them because all the workers are males. If there had been more girls here, perhaps they would have worked on them."* In Emad's *galabiya* workshop, women generally work on the finishing steps because they are believed to be more meticulous than men. The analogy between "female" kinds of work and housework was also raised by Mahrous, another business owner in the garment-making industry, who said to a female interviewer:

Imagine yourself at home hand-washing a piece of cloth. First you take the collar, then you take another part ...you have the patience. They are like you. On the other hand, a boy would...hop ...hop...finish the piece and start another one. He has no patience. Also, when girls see that a piece has a stain, they wash it and bring it back. Boys do not notice these things.

In the final analysis, however, business owners agree that the preference for male workers and the gendering of certain workplaces is ordained by God. Ashraf, a leather-worker, says, *“Work was created for men...God created men like that and He prefers them to women... these are God’s ordinances. Am I wrong? ...These are God’s words, not mine. I am not inventing things...If the government knew that girls could get into the army and carry weapons, would it not have done so a long time ago?”* According to a number of business owners we interviewed, there are jobs that women are simply not born to do, such as welding, mechanics, carpentry, and all vehicle-related jobs. For example, Ahmed, a male carpenter, said, *“Women were not created for this kind of work,”* while Mohamed, another carpenter, said, *“Girls cannot work with a saw. They are not bold. They are soft-hearted.”* Gaber, a car painter, added, *“In car painting, sandpaper eats your hands, and sometimes your hands bleed. Girls can’t endure this. They cannot endure the smell of paint. They cannot go with me to the stove to spray a car. If they smell paint, they will pass out...for us, this is all very normal.”*

One male mechanic said, *“Some work requires physical strength – muscles – and so girls cannot do it. Can a girl carry this car? No she can’t, but a boy can. Girls are fragile. They cannot hold tools in their hands. They can injure themselves.”* One male bag manufacturer said, *“Boys can do any and everything. They can endure. God said that men are more capable than women. This means that they can do anything.”*
(الرجال قوامون على النساء).

Ambition is another quality that business owners claim women do not have. They believe that boys come to work with the only obsession of establishing their own businesses and it is the business owners’ job to help them achieve their plans. As one metal worker put it:

Two boys left me because they bought their own machines and went independent. I was selling a compressor (makbas). The boy working here said that he wanted to buy it. I deducted its price from his pay - EP 50 every week - until he paid up the whole amount. Then I made him work for me for five more weeks for no pay and instead bought him some raw materials so that he could start work.

For some business owners, teaching girls is perceived as a waste of time because they will eventually leave to get married. Ahmed, a garment manufacturer, said, *“Boys are more ambitious than girls at work. They want to learn because they want to open their own workshops. Girls want to get married.”* Rabie, a *koshari* seller, agrees that in the *koshari* business, girls are not ambitious, saying, *“Boys are 100 percent ambitious; girls are 50 percent ambitious because they know that in the end they are getting married.”*

Business owners who employ women feel that they are taking on a major responsibility. They are required to protect girl employees from molesters, treat them with the respect they deserve as women, and generally keep them away from trouble and humiliation. A mother-of-pearl manufacturing business owner says that in his workshop, *“...there is no bahdala and no humiliation and dirty work for women... It is all artistic and mental; no physical effort.”* When they hire girls, business owners

feel responsible toward their families and the whole community. *“To hire a girl, I have to ask who her family is and where she is from. When she works here, I am totally responsible for her: her food, her drinks, how she talks, how she stands, and her conduct,”* said one male bag manufacturer. *“Girls who work for me are in my custody” (امانة فى رقبتي).* *I treat them like I treat my own daughters. As I take them from home, I have to return them safely to their homes,”* added one male candle maker. *“I worry that as they go home in the evenings, accompanied by co-workers, the latter can molest them in the dark.”* This perceived responsibility for girls discourages some business owners from hiring them. One business owner said that he did not employ girls because he wanted to stay away from the trouble that came with them. *“On the other hand, I can control a little boy. I can ask him not to joke around, not to say this and that, and I know how to make him work.”*

Business owners who employ both girls and boys make sure that they separate boys and girls to prevent them from mixing and to avoid unnecessary problems. In the *koshari* shop, there is also a clear division of labour: girls wash the dishes and pans while boys serve clients, carry the trays, and serve people in their workshops. *“I cannot ask a girl to take trays to workshops,”* said one of the *koshari* sellers. Reflecting more conservative attitudes, one car metal worker said, *“When girls are in shops...the devil is there; no matter what, girls are weak. And boys can play tricks with them.”*

On the other hand, there are business owners like Mohamed, a plastics manufacturer we interviewed, who prefers girl workers because of the “female qualities” referred to above. Some business owners prefer girls to boys because girls sit still and can be controlled. According to the plastics manufacturer, *“Girls are tranquil; they are quiet ... They want to prove that they are efficient ... I prefer the work of girls over boys although there are things that they cannot do like carrying heavy stuff around.”* One male cardboard manufacturer agreed, saying that, *“Boys are hard to keep and please. Girls are easier. When they decide to work in workshops, girls usually have made this decision because they are bored staying at home and need a change. They cherish their work and want to keep it.”* Another plastics manufacturer added, *“Girls are more intelligent than boys. Boys are faster than girls at work, but sometimes you get a very intelligent girl who will learn within a week.”*

Further, a garment factory owner said, *“Girls sit still. They can have breakfast and lunch here. Boys on the other hand want to go out to eat *koshari*, then they want to go to the coffee shop. Girls are more patient.”* A mother-of-pearl business owner said, *“Girls learn faster than boys, particularly in artistic things. They have more patience to learn, [but even then they] have to maintain good conduct because I have men working here too.”*

Meanwhile, a ready-made clothing business owner named Galal added:

The industry of ready-made clothes has always been a girl’s domain. Now we hear of girls working as shoe makers and aluminium manufacturers. But garment making is a proper job for women - no humiliation. A girl comes to work wearing clean clothes, changes her clothes at work, then puts on her clothes again and goes home... no kolla and nothing of that

sort. In shoe making workshops, it is known that they take drugs, but here we don't even smoke cigarettes.

Another business owner in the garment industry named Farouk said that he mostly relies on women workers but does not know why his business is women-dominated. He said, *"I grew up knowing that our profession is for women and not men."* He has experience with two categories of women: those who are not very clever and do not want to learn new things, and those he keeps for the finishing work, which requires more skill and dexterity. Those who are clever and keen on learning can progress until they are able to work independently on the machines. In his business, girls can become *sanayyi* and earn as much as EP 140 per week.

Nasser, a producer of hand-made carpets, also relies on girls in his business. He thinks that they are more clever and more obedient than boys/men. While it takes a boy seven years to become a *sanayyi*, it takes a girl only five years, he claimed. However, he says that there are still things girls cannot do in the carpet industry, like cutting carpets using a pair of scissors. As he puts it, *"... she will worry about her fingers. Using the scissors creates warts on the fingers. When she gets engaged, her fiancé would find her fingers like this and will send her back to her mother."*

Emad, a *galabiya* maker we interviewed, said that he hires women. He said that he makes sure no girls get harassed in his workshop, unlike other places where women are molested because they are "girls and [thus] weak." If a girl complains about a male *sanayyi* colleague, he sends him away immediately. However, he understands that the time eventually comes when girls have to leave the workshop to get married. When this happens, he helps them with their marriage preparations and contributes to their trousseau.

Some business owners hire women to work from their own homes. They think that by doing so, they are helping them generate income while enjoying the safety of their homes and relieving themselves of the responsibility of having to look after them. Nabil, a peg-maker, noticed that particularly after they get engaged or married, women prefer to work from home. He said, *"When a girl has her menstrual period and she bends, one can see things. At her own home she is protected. This way, I do not take responsibility for her."*

Girls and Unpaid Family Labour

The interviews have shown a higher tendency among girls to engage in unpaid work in family businesses than among boys. When boys are engaged in family businesses, like 10-year-old Hisham who assists his parents in their garment-making business, they are paid for the work they do. However, this particular boy admitted that he did not insist on claiming his money if the business was not prosperous, most likely because he was working for his parents.

We interviewed two girls who attended school but were also active helpers to their parents in their family businesses. In one case, the mother was a seamstress and her 14-year-old daughter, Mona, was her main assistant. Supported by even her relatively low level of education, Mona helps her mother take measurements and orders and is

her mother's only employee. This means that, in addition to assisting with the sewing work, Mona also cleans the shop and runs errands for her mother. The mother opens her shop seven days a week, and Mona has no time off. She is the youngest child in the family and her older siblings have full-time jobs outside the house. When the children come home after a long day of work, they are not expected to do any house chores, but Mona is always working. Mona said that from time to time her mother gives her EP 10 and with this money she saves to pay for private lessons to support her schooling.

In the second case, 14-year-old Afaf (who, like Mona, attends school) helps her father in his small business selling *foul* (cooked beans) alongside her mother. Her job involves a wide range of tasks including helping her father prepare the *foul*, selling it, washing the dishes, and helping him carry the *foul* cart home at the end of the day. In both cases, the girls do not get paid in any systematic or regular way, though their work takes up a good part of their day.

Housework and work in parents' businesses are two types of work that stand in contrast to schooling. After finishing their work, the girls have two hours of studying in the evening. Mona had not gone to school for three weeks because of the heavy workload generated by her mother's business. She felt that it was unfair not to get paid for her work. She knew that if she had worked for strangers, she would have earned regular wages and if her mother had hired a stranger, she would have been expected to pay regular wages. At the same time, the two girls said that they were aware that their parents treated other working siblings better than those who didn't work because they "earn a real income" and spend money on the house. They also felt that they received no rewards for their good work and all they got was reproach when they made mistakes.

Thirteen-year-old Doaa works with her father, but she does not go to school. Together they display and sell clothes on the street. It is her responsibility to carry the heavy pile of clothes to the display site and back home, which she does to spare her father the hard work of carrying heavy loads. What bothers her most is that, because selling clothes this way is illegal, she and her father have to watch out for raids by the municipality and move their merchandise before it is confiscated.

Some of the girls interviewed knew their rights as workers and insisted on being paid. Fifteen-year-old Aya, for example, willingly combines work with school. She is currently at the third preparatory level and has worked since she was seven. Her work is home-based and she makes laundry pegs. The factory owner sends her an amount, weighed in kilograms, to fix and send back. When she does not have work to do, she opens the small shop that belongs to her family for selling electrical appliances. The girl makes sure that she is paid by her father. "*If my father had brought a total stranger, he would have paid him....I told my father I wanted to be paid because I work hard.*" He agreed. She saves her money to buy clothes and to pay for her tutoring groups, but she is very clear that buying her trousseau is the responsibility of her parents, not her own.

Girls who combine work with schooling voiced their sense of embarrassment about the work they did, although when probed they admitted to being happy that they were contributing to the family income. The girl mentioned above who sells *foul* with her

father on the street is ashamed to tell her fellow students at school about the nature of her work. The modesty of the job, the fact that it speaks to their poverty, and the fact that it is not the kind of occupation that would eventually make her family rich is particularly painful. “*Why didn’t God create my father with a shop like them and give me a cellular phone like them? Why doesn’t my father make me like other girls? They would befriend me if I were like them; if I brought money (to school) like them.*” she asked. Another 13-year-old girl helps her father sell clothes on the street. She had no problem doing so in a location far from their own neighbourhood, but now that her father has moved closer to their home, she is embarrassed to be seen by her neighbours and other people who know her. In particular, she does not like it when her friends see her at work on their way to school and tease her about it.

Alternative Modes of Work for Girls

A few of the girls interviewed took the initiative to begin their own businesses. Among those was 17-year-old Aziza, who is exceptional because, like many of the boys interviewed, she has ambitions and dreams of expanding her business in the future. This young woman is a *dalala* who trades in ready-made clothes. She buys clothes from cheap markets and sells them to her neighbours and women in the vicinity who pay her in instalments. Her work requires her to go out to the market three times a week for a few hours. The rest of the time she can spend at home cleaning and doing chores for her mother. Her conservative father, who comes from Upper Egypt, has always been opposed to her working outside the home. However, she has found ways to make herself visible at home by spending long hours indoors. With the help of her mother, who covers for her, she has managed to hide her work from her father. To begin her business, Aziza sold her earrings for EP 450 and started with a loan of EP 400. She prefers self-employment to going to workshops where she would have to mix with men, and hopes that in the future she can open her own shop.

Dalala is a type of work that most women do at some point in their lives. In Doweika, it is a typical job for women. It involves taking orders from neighbours and going to nearby markets to buy specific things that people want, such as clothing or household items, and then reselling them at a marked-up price. It can also expand to include buying and selling larger products such as electrical appliances. One mother takes orders for clothes but also brings new fashions to people’s homes. She sees what is offered in the markets and brings back samples to show people. In many ways, she is the people’s window to the outside world of fashion and changing consumer tastes. “Not just any woman can be a *dalala*,” she said. “She has to be strong, courageous, and daring in order to push her way in and be able to deal with people in financial matters.” This woman goes out shopping twice a week and during the week collects money from her neighbours. Other than the risk of clients defaulting, dying, or moving out and consequently losing her money, she enjoys her work and finds it appropriate for her role as a mother of five children. She has territorial sovereignty over this part of the neighbourhood and is recognized by her neighbours who respect her.

Collective family business is another form of work for girls. Fifteen-year-old Sabreen works with her sisters on a loom owned by her family and mainly run by her mother. Her father also takes part in the business and is responsible for buying raw materials

and concluding deals for the sale of their products. He also has the difficult task of cutting carpets. Sabreen's mother feels that her husband, who also acts as their financial manager and distributes wages to his family members, underpays them and that they could earn more had they been working with a stranger. Despite this, she feels that this family work arrangement has been ideal for her as it has provided her work in the safety of her own home and she has avoided risking her reputation, which could come with having too much mobility.

It is clear from the interviews with adult women business owners that they tend to rely on their social networks and family connections to carry out their business. In addition, female neighbours are often their main business collaborators, along with husbands and children. In several cases, women use their children's networks to run their businesses. For example, one mother accesses the market through her son, who is in the same line of work. He concludes transactions for her and sometimes buys her the goods she needs. He takes her products to market them among shop owners and brings the orders home for her to handle the remaining steps.

Unlike most of the girls in this study, the majority of businesswomen interviewed had no systematic work experience before marriage and joined the labour market out of a desire to improve their family conditions and raise their income. The norm for women is to expect that they would not work after marriage and that their husbands would be fully responsible for the house. Consequently, they give their husbands the privilege and opportunity of doing so. However, once women find out that family needs are not being met, they join the labour market.

The few women interviewed who had the opportunity to work before marriage and had prior hands-on training found their previous work experience useful in their current business. For example, Om Hadeel worked in garment factories in 6th of October City for three years before getting married, but stopped work just before marriage in preparation for the new stage in her life. As expected, her husband was opposed to her working outside the home and she too had felt it was a good idea to stay home and look after her children. But two children brought an increase in financial needs, and she decided that she should contribute to the household. Om Hadeel had learned a great deal from working in factories, and as she thought of what would be an appropriate business, garment making was a natural choice. Another woman named Om Adel had learned the cardboard manufacturing business from her late husband, who owned a cardboard workshop. She had worked with him and had been trained to perform all of the steps of the work process. Now she is able to supervise others. However, some women also ventured into new lines of business based on their understanding of the gaps and needs in the market, without having had previous experience in them. Yet another woman interviewed, named Leila, considered opening up her own business as a hair-dresser, a profession in which she had no prior experience, because she knew that the neighbourhood lacked this service.

Part Five: Gender-Differentiated Work Hazards

Physical Hazards

All interviewees said that their businesses entailed physical hazards and that it was the responsibility of business owners to ensure that children were protected against those hazards. For example, carpenters said that all carpentry tools are sharp and dangerous and children had been warned to be careful while they use them. The car painting business involves inhaling fumes, and as they paint cars, workers turn on fans and small boys are asked to leave the workshop.



In order to overcome the smell of paint and resist sickness, we were told that workshop owners make sure workers drink a glass of milk in the morning. Mother-of-pearl work includes cutting wood, which creates dust, and workers have to put on masks, *“but that is a hazard for both adults and children and kids don’t usually sit on the machines,”* said one mother-of-pearl business owner. At mechanics’ workshops, boys working under cars have to be careful in case the cars fall down on them. One of the business owners recalled that as a child, when he tried to work in a mechanic’s workshop, a car fell on his feet. He quit that job and looked for something less risky. Both *ustas* and children report that they often have to hold the hands of small boys while using the equipment to make sure that no harm befalls them. When working with glass, boys worry that fragments might fly into their eyes. They tell stories of how one employer lost his finger while working at a machine and another died because he mishandled an electric loom. Cooking *koshari* also presents the hazard of working with butane gas stoves, which can explode, and thus raises concerns about possible electrocution or burns.

Most of the work-related hazards are gender differentiated because they are more associated with boys’ work. Girls generally do not get involved in tasks that require exposure to potentially harmful machines or equipment. For boys, on the other hand, part of being seen as a man in the workplace is experimentation with pushing the limits, which puts them in the way of hazards. At the same time, boys tend to trivialize “minor” injuries, describing them as insignificant and part of the training that comes with the job.



Nader, a 15-year-old boy who works in a turnery, was injured a couple of times. His boss told him that his hands would eventually harden as he got more accustomed to using the machine, emphasizing that for boys, “injury is the road to skill.” Fourteen-year-old Hisham

works in the shoe making business, which entails dealing with *kolla*, a tanning substance with a narcotic effect that is often inhaled by children in the workshop. He claims that he personally does not let *kolla* bother him, but when the windows are closed, the smell is suffocating and hard to avoid.

However, some boys believe that certain jobs are too dangerous for them and are therefore not ready to take the risk. Seventeen-year-old Ahmed used to work in a welding shop, but left because he feared that he was not able to handle the equipment and was worried about getting injured. Instead, he found work in a cardboard manufacturing workshop but there he found out that he had to handle *kolla*. He had heard that it caused lung cancer and feared its influence on him, so he left this job as well and went to a carpentry workshop. Male business owners are aware of potential physical hazards at work but associate them with lack of experience and negligence on the part of apprentices and contend that as one becomes more familiar with the job, the possibility of exposure to work hazards decreases.

All workshop owners stated that they had licenses from the Industrial Safety Department and had access to medical units and hospitals in the neighbourhood. One male carpenter explained that he was used to workers injuring their fingers because of the saw. He usually took them to the hospital for a few stitches and antibiotics. If boys who work for a daily wage get injured, the workshop owner is responsible for their medical expenses even if they are required to stay at home for treatment. But if the workers are paid by piece, as they are in many production-based jobs, they are responsible for their own medical expenses. Children's reports on how *ustas* handle children's injury vary. Fifteen-year-old Samar claimed that when her hand got burned and she had to run to the pharmacy for help, the *usta* did not show compassion and was even reluctant to pay her for the hours she had worked until she got injured. On the other hand, the boss of 14-year-old Mohamed showed more understanding. When he got hit by a car, his employer took him to the pharmacy, bought him medicine, accompanied him to his flat, and told him not to come to work the following day.

Girls mostly complain of physical inconveniences. Beginners, or *baladiyyas*, recall being worn out after a long day of work because they are always on the move (ما كنتش باقعد على رجلى طول الوقت). They complain about back pain or pain in their joints when they have to sit for a long time in front of the loom. They talk about bad lighting, which causes weak eye sight, as well as limited ventilation, which workshop owners often ignore. One 15-year-old girl who sometimes does embroidery in addition to making pegs complains that her job has affected her vision.

Adult female business owners are in agreement that harmful jobs should not be performed by women, which explains why most of them have concentrated in relatively safe sectors such as embroidery, garment manufacturing and trading, and hair dressing. These jobs are not only less potentially hazardous, but they also have flexible hours and are therefore appropriate for their positions as married women with families. One working mother described needlework as “*very convenient for women as they have the patience for this kind of work and also lots of time at hand. After finishing their domestic chores, they have nothing else to do. They do the needle work while sitting in front of the TV or socializing at their door steps with other women.*”

Some adult women do, however, venture into areas that are hazardous and atypical of women's work in different ways. We interviewed four women, two in the business of selling butane gas cylinders, a third working with water pipes, and a fourth working in cardboard manufacturing. Among the women interviewed, the butane gas sellers received almost no help from their family members. The job entails buying large butane gas cylinders and either selling them in their present state or using them to fill up smaller cylinders that people then buy and use mainly for cooking purposes. The smell of butane gas is terribly malodorous and permeates the whole room. The process of filling up smaller cylinders is also very hazardous. Any leakage can cause a disaster, especially in a crowded neighbourhood like Manshiet Nasser, where houses are built literally wall to wall. One of the two women burned one of her hands while working. The two women involved in this business have small children. In one of the two cases, the woman did not allow her children to fiddle with the cylinders (but they were playing nearby while she was at work). In the second case, the children (two school-aged sons) sometimes helped fill up cylinders when they were not at school. The key point here is that the husbands of the two women had nothing to do with their wives' businesses and one of the two women made it clear that her husband was indeed concerned about his own safety. He would carry the cylinders and bring them home, but would not have anything to do with the actual filling process.



The work undertaken by the woman who sold used water pipes involved a great deal of travelling. She would go to small towns known for the production of pipes that are later broken down into small pieces to be recycled and made into new pipes. She bought in bulk, supervised the loading onto pickup vans, and transported them to Cairo where she sold them to other merchants. Although she reported that there were no physical hazards in her line of business, she recognized it as a “male domain” and asserted that she was the only woman in the business and had to deal exclusively with males.

Adult women also perform jobs that young boys and girls as well as male business owners thought were socially inappropriate for women because they required physical strength and sometimes exposure of “female” parts of the body. Contrary to these preconceived notions, the woman who worked with cardboard had to operate some heavy machines which required physical strength and a “manly” posture as she revealed her arms and moved them up and down.

Working Hours and Security

In general, both girls and boys work for 10 to 12 hours daily, usually from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. It is generally accepted that boys can stay longer than scheduled to finish their jobs, while girls are expected to leave on time. Because they put in more time at work, boys are perceived to have more flexibility, freedom, and mobility in the workplace.

If for any reason girls have to stay longer, the business owner is expected to accompany them, or to send a male child he trusts to accompany them to their homes or to the nearest means of transportation.

All the girls said they felt safe working within Manshiet Nasser and thought that going out to other places exposed them to unwarranted risks and abuses by employers who were not from their neighbourhood and did not know them personally. It is important for the girls' families that their daughters work for workshop owners who are both "kind and respectable." Once a daughter decides to work, parents make sure to pay a visit to their daughter's prospective workplace and ensure that her future employer is indeed a reliable man and a good person. Reciprocally, the employer has to live up to the parents' expectations. Good employers are those who look after and protect girls. To reassure the girls' parents, employers often say that "so and so is like my daughter," an indication that they will indeed watch over the girls, make sure boys do not harass them, and keep the windows closed so that no one in the building will molest the girls. "*We are in his custody*" (*احنا جايين عنده أمانة*) and *we spend a long time at his place so he has to look after us,*" says Nesma, who adds that she gets special treatment from her employer. "*My usta treats me better than the other males; if anyone ever bothers me, he yells at them both because I am the youngest and a girl.... He tells me, 'I want you to be better than all of them here.'*"

Punishment

Business owners use two main types of punishment. The first is to deduct money from the children's pay and the second is physical and moral punishment, including beating, slapping, and verbal abuse. When the children commit major mistakes, repeat their mistakes, or are absent from work, the workshop owner deducts or threatens to deduct money from their pay. In the carpet manufacturing business, there is an interesting gender aspect related to the deduction of money. The children said that when boys make mistakes, workshop owners deduct from their pay because they work independently. On the other hand, girls are told the design and number of stitches by the workshop owner himself and, hence, do not work independently. Therefore, any mistakes that take place are the responsibility of the workshop owner and not the girls, so they do not get punished.

However, there is an implicit understanding that business owners may threaten to deduct money but do not actually do so. Fourteen-year-old Mohamed said that to punish him, his employer threatens to deduct money from his pay, in addition to beating him. His employer does not pay him his money in full, but later on gives it to the boy's father. Fourteen-year-old Nesma, however, said that even when she makes mistakes her employer does not reduce her pay and gently asks her to be more careful the following time. Children also reported that divorced women with children get special financial treatment because they support families.

In general, boys do not seem to mind physical punishment by their *ustas* and tend to think of it as part of the training process. As Adel, a car mechanic, put it, "*Whoever wants to learn must be beaten; beating is what teaches us.*" More humiliating than physical punishment, however, is verbal abuse and other intentionally degrading gestures, and these often have a gender dimension. When employers want to be mean

to their employees, they ask them to sit next to a colleague who is subordinate to them so that he can learn from him or her. Alternatively, they can give a male worker a hard job that he cannot do alone. However, an even worse humiliation is to ask a boy to sit next to a girl so that she can teach him. *“This hurts a lot; how can a good apprentice sit next to a girl and be taught by her?”* said 16-year-old Mahmoud, who works in the rosary manufacturing business. By the same token, to humiliate a girl, the employer would ask her to sit next to someone who is subordinate to her. This distinction is significant, because to a male worker, a girl is always a subordinate.

Small boys at the bottom of the hierarchy report that *ustas* often scold and beat them. They slap them on the face and hit them with hoses. Some boys cannot endure the bad treatment and they leave. Twelve-year-old Adel said that he left his job as car painter because his *usta* used to beat and scold him. On second thought, however, he explained that his *usta* beat him only when he made mistakes or when he did something that could harm himself. Ten-year-old Hisham, a tailor, works with his parents from home. Both of his parents are in the business and they both teach the boy their trade. However, his mother is stricter with him than his father. Hisham was convinced that his mother beats him so he can learn and be a good *sanayyi* and a *real man*. *“She beats me, but this works in my interest,”* he says. Once, she hit him with scissors on his head and with a piece of metal on different parts of his body.

However, it is not acceptable to use physical punishment with girls, and both *ustas* and working boys know that girls are not to be touched. Also, in daily interactions between boys and girls, distance has to be kept. As 17-year-old Amer said, *“When girls and boys joke together, we have to make sure to keep a distance. If you don’t respect this distance, you are in trouble. Joke only with your mouth; don’t use your hands.”* Otherwise, girls and boys have a cordial relationship on the job. *“We are like brothers and sisters; we eat together, share our food together, and laugh together.... We do everything together; if one of us is unhappy, we are all unhappy.”* Boys also feel that they are responsible for protecting their female colleagues; they might accompany them home if it is dark and late. *“Yes, they can walk us home, but it has to be a group of girls, not just one, and they will walk ahead of us,”* said 15-year-old Sabreen. It is generally understood that girls should receive preferential treatment. They should not be rebuked or verbally abused by their employers or male colleagues. *“As long as the woman works with dignity, she should not be rebuked.... Girls should be in a more elevated position than boys...they cannot be called names.... We always bear in mind that girls should be treated as girls. We cannot talk to them as we would with boys or male friends. You have to watch your tongue with them,”* said Gamal, the owner of a garment manufacturing business.

Most business owners claim that they do not punish the children physically, but they might scold or abuse them verbally or threaten to deduct from their pay. *“If he makes a mistake once or twice, I alert him. If he insists, he has to be punished. All I do is ask him to get up and leave the machine. I cannot beat anyone; I don’t beat my own son, how can I beat children of others?”* said Galal, a business owner. Nasser, a plastics manufacturer we interviewed, recalled how he used to hate it when his own father beat him in the workshop, so he does not beat the children who work for him. He said, *“They are just kids; we want them to like their work.”* One man who owns a carpet making business also recalled that when he was a *sabby*, he disliked being punished by his *usta*. He said, *“What I saw as a child I don’t like to apply to the kids who work*

for me. I know what makes a child upset... beating and humiliation, so I don't do it. I try to be diplomatic with the boys so that they will like the place. Once a child likes the place, he will never leave it." Khaled, a business owner in the garment industry, said he only threatens punishment but does not actually do it, since he is aware that wages are too low to deduct from. *"It is not possible to deduct the price of a galabiya – EP 3 – from a girl who earns EP 50 a week. What would she earn at the end and why would she work? I never deduct money from their pay; I take responsibility as a workshop owner for the mistakes they commit...Girls and boys who come here are neighbours and children of parents that I know well. I cannot beat them. What I do not do with my kids, I do not do with other people's kids."*

However, there are *ustas* who admit that they punish children if they commit serious mistakes and claim that punishment makes a good apprentice. *"If I whack them, they will not do the wrong thing again. I beat them if they break something that cannot be replaced. I hit them with a hammer on their heads; I hit them with anything I have in my hand, so they will not repeat their wrong deed,"* said Ahmed, a carpenter. A car painter named Magdy added, *"It is the job of a sabby to open the workshop at 9a.m. even if the real work does not begin until 11 a.m. I beat him because he opened the workshop at 11a.m. No workshop stays closed until 11 a.m."*

Generally, workshop owners claim that they do not like to dismiss their workers, and it is usually the employees who decide to leave if they find better pay somewhere else. However, owners decide to get rid of apprentices in some cases if they continue to be negligent in their work, if they want to *"deliberately cause them to get angry,"* if they are not disciplined or if they are frequently absent. Boys are also fired if they are impolite, unproductive, or dishonest.

In general, business owners are reluctant to punish girls because they are perceived to be "different" from boys. *"I can beat a boy or yell at him, but I can't beat a girl. Their 'structure' is different. If I yell at her she can cry; boys don't cry. You need to be soft with girls. Men need toughness...I can punish a boy or say anything that comes out of my mouth, but if I shout at a girl, I feel bad afterwards,"* said Rabie, a *koshari* seller.

Workshop owners apply different punishments to girls and boys based on their understanding of the differences between them. One business owner in the cardboard manufacturing industry named Kamal said, *"I punish boys by asking them to carry loads of cardboard up to the fourth and fifth floors. I punish girls by moving them to another place that they don't like to work."*

"To punish girls, I frown at them...or I threaten to reduce their wages, but in the end, I don't...Girls are more sensitive than boys. I can scold boys; they can take it, but I only reproach girls," added Raouf, a business owner in garment manufacturing.

But after the children are punished, workshop owners claim that they make sure to reconcile with them. For example, one workshop owner noted that, *"I rebuke and I whack him, but then I buy him a soda or ask him to buy us food and then it's all over."* Another owner added, *"We eat together and I allow him to choose the food he wants to eat."* Yet another workshop owner said, *"I yell and shout at them. I call them dumb and stupid, but by the end of the day, we're all fine again."*

As stated earlier, there was no opportunity to examine women business owners' opinions or practices with regard to punishing working children because they generally do not hire workers and instead collaborate with adult work partners. However, in the few instances when they did hire children to help out during times of work pressure, women reported that they applied no punishment because the workers were usually the children of neighbours and friends. However, businesswomen did say that they were concerned about projecting a professional image of themselves and not compromising the quality of their work. While they were not in a position to punish co-workers, they felt that they had the right to draw their attention to the fact that the quality of their work was not up to standard.

Conduct at Work

From the children's perspective, a good worker is "polite and respects the old and the young." Underlying this general rule, however, are some gender-specific requirements that mainly apply to female workers. According to 14-year-old Samira, her employer likes her because she displays all of the qualities of a perfect girl worker. According to the girl, he has said that she is "good, young, and poor" (غلبانة). One 16-year-old girl describes a good female co-worker as "polite; her clothes should be modest; she should not talk a lot and should enjoy a good reputation." Girls are not supposed to laugh loudly on the street or in the workshop and attract attention. Moreover, they should not show or expose any parts of their bodies and it is important that they look plain and not wear make-up. There are also certain motions that girls are not supposed to make. While sitting at the loom, for example, 12-year-old Doaa explained, "It is important that girls don't lean to the side or bow so that boys won't look at them. A boy can lean down and sideways." Girls are expected to look plain, wear loose-fitting, long attire (*galabiyas*) and cover their hair so they do not attract boys' attention and distract them from their work. They are expected to bring their *galabiyas* to work every day and change their clothes there. Girls believe that employers can tell the difference between serious girls who need their jobs and the money they earn from them, and other girls who go to work just to socialize, enjoy themselves, meet others, and have a good time. But just to be on the safe side, some workshops segregate boys from girls or keep boys for outdoor work such as carrying goods and loading up cars, while girls remain inside to work.

Young female businesswomen reported that they also have to observe a modest dress code, consisting of a plain black *abaya* and a head cover. They have to put on a serious, business-like expression and not allow men to joke or try to be friendly with them. Older women business owners gain legitimacy from their seniority and maturity. For example, being an older woman enables a *dalala* to enter houses, talk to men, and take their orders for clothes, something that a young woman could not do. As older women, they are also not exposed to harassment and might even gain a measure of respect and sympathy. As they walk around carrying heavy loads, men do not bother them because they realize that the women are workers (*sha'yana*) who are out on the street pursuing a livelihood. Some women, like one working mother in the waterpipe resale business, have the manly attitude of a *me'alema*. She is well known and respected by men in her neighbourhood, and she walks around confidently, cracking jokes with younger men, calling them names, and yelling out to them.

Opportunities for Learning

It is generally understood that instability and frequent movement from one workshop to another does not make one a good *sanayyi*; a good apprentice should be able to accumulate skills and knowledge in one place. Some boys also believe it that would not be ethical to walk out on their *ustas*, particularly if they develop a good working relationship and liking for them. As 12-year-old Adel said, “*I will not leave my usta. He teaches me and it is eib to leave him. It is also good to work near home. Suppose my mother or sisters want something, I must be near them. How will they get me if I work far from here?*”

However, other boys worry about the instability of their work conditions and feel that it makes more sense to diversify their knowledge and learn more skills just in case the business owner decides to lay them off. Thirteen-year-old Ahmed, a loom worker, said:

If the business owner decides to get rid of me at any time, I know I have another skill in my hand, and in this case I do not have to worry about finding another job. Business owners can get rid of us at any time and hire new workers... For me, all work is the same; there is no good or bad job; it is all a way to earn money.

For boys, changing jobs is an exercise of free agency and the choice to earn more money. However, for girls, frequent moves may result in a bad reputation and the impression that they are unreliable. Changing jobs also involves widening the scope of their social interactions with men, which is not advisable. For girls, work relations are best if they develop into quasi-family relations in which parents get to know the *ustas* and address their fatherly and protective feelings towards their daughters. Frequent changing of jobs means having to rebuild these relations. According to 16-year-old Samar, an aluminium worker, a girl “*has to stay in one place because her parents already know the workshop and its owner. The owner would be like her father and would worry about her safety and for her parents*” (يعمل خاطر).

When they first join a workshop, children are expected to watch and observe their more senior co-workers and *ustas*. The learning process follows fixed steps. As Abdel-Rahman, a metal work business owner, put it, “*First they make tea, then they start to identify the tools, then they start to learn or take the initiative to learn. It takes up to 10 years to become a real usta.*” Mahmoud, his employee, said:

The usta told me “you stand next to me and you watch and pick up things. One time after the other, you will learn.” When I first came here, I did not know anything and I could not have worked on a car because I was going to make mistakes. But as I grew up, I learned more... This is a good job and it will make me an usta when I grow up.

As they grow at work, acquire more skills, and become more assured of their abilities, child workers are given small jobs to do and are observed. If the child is smart, he or she will learn fast. Workshop owners appreciate dexterous *sabbies* who are agile and clever. As Ahmed, a car painter, said:

I like that some boys stay with me because in four or five months, they learn the job and know what I want. As soon as I come in, the boy gets me tea, and then cleans the car. At night, he makes sure the tools are all there and cleans the workshop. I have gotten used to this kind of boy and for me he is better than a skilled worker, a sanayyi who finishes his work and then goes home right away.

If children have the aptitude and like the job, they learn quickly and win the attention of their *ustas* who are confident about their ability to teach them. As one young male metal turnery said, *“I mould metals and they give in to me...I talk to metals and I tell them what I want them to look like ...this or that way...if I can manipulate metals and they respond to me, wouldn't I be able to manipulate the boys who work for me?”* Children are allowed to experiment and try things. They are expected to spoil a few things before they learn how to do the job well. This is how the business owners themselves learned. *Ustas* often give the children some spoilt pieces of metal to experiment with and at the end of the work day the children show their work to their *ustas*. On the following day, the *ustas* give the children comments on their product.

Rewards and Pay

Moral encouragement at work is important for children, who like it when their *ustas* commend their work in front of their co-workers. Sixteen-year-old Mahmoud said that the best reward he got from his boss was when the boss told him *“May God light your way”* (الله ينور عليك) when he did his work well. *“For me, this is worth 100,000 pounds,”* the boy said.

When it comes to money, there are two main modes of payment: a fixed daily or weekly rate and payment by the piece or unit. In almost all cases, the children receive the money themselves; the children's payment is usually not distributed to their parents. Girls and younger boys tend to get paid fixed amounts while older boys get paid based on the number of pieces they produce. The idea here is that if boys work longer hours and increase their production, they will make more money. But even without this condition, there is a tacit understanding that boys earn more than girls because of their “special” endurance, possibly their longer hours of work, and therefore their ability to produce more. A young boy working on a loom reported that he earns EP 20 a day, while girls doing the same kind of work earn EP 15 to 18. In the business of brass carving, which is technically sophisticated, Aamer said, *“Girls do not get more than EP 18 while boys earn EP 20 to 25. The difference being that the girls work on stuff that I produce for them. They cannot do my work...If they fix a girl's daily wage at EP 20, how much would I earn then?”*

Based on this understanding, both boys and girls consider it *normal* that girls get paid less. Girls accept that boys earn more because boys do more technically advanced work and have more needs. Sixteen-year-old Iman justifies this bias by saying: *“...because they work harder, they need to spend more money on tea and cigarettes and they also eat more.”* She goes on to explain that, in some cases, the bias is induced by the girls' own reluctance to get involved with machines and other more

technically sophisticated work because this work is difficult and exhausting. As one girl said:

When I first came here, the usta explained to me what I would be doing. I was afraid that he might ask me to work on a machine. In the end, I found that what I needed to do was easy, although it is exhausting and boring. The workshop, as you see, is smothering. All the hassle – the machines and the cutting - takes place here. Boys come in and out. We (girls) squat here in the corner with a piece of cloth in our hands (wiping the aluminium products) to give the boys some space.... Look at my hands, they have become like a man's hands. I have to wash them several times, but it does not help. They have become dirty like this... My chest too -- because of the dust it hurts me... I don't feel my knees and my fingers are always numb... For boys, it is even worse. They make the aluminium into panels. They cut them in the fire and stay there facing it, and all their bodies are black from the fine dust.

When business is prosperous, children follow the steps of promotion from *baladiyya* to *sabby* to *usta*. In cases where business does not fare well, workshop owners have to reduce children's wages. In these cases, girls generally suffer more than boys because the latter's wages usually remain untouched. Samia works in the loom business and used to earn EP 100 per week. Her wages were reduced to EP 70 because of market fluctuations. The workshop owner considered laying her off and replacing her with a small boy who would earn less money. However, Samia's colleagues liked her and put pressure on the owner to keep her at a lower wage. The girl did not seem to care a lot about the demotion, as all she wanted was good company at work.

Physical Mobility

Boys enjoy much wider privileges in this area than girls. In general, there are no restrictions on boys' mobility in terms of going to work outside Manshiet Nasser, staying out until late at night, or how they spend their leisure time. Young boys reported that on their days off, they play football in the club or play in the street or elsewhere. Girls' mobility, on the other hand, is restricted. They go to work, are expected at home right after work, and do not go out except sometimes to visit close friends or family. The perception is that girls' frequent appearances in public spaces should be controlled because it encourages men to harass them, causes problems, and jeopardizes their reputations. As 12-year-old Adel, a car painter, said:



Even on their days off, girls should stay at home. When they go out, they joke together in the street and put colours on their faces which encourages boys to molest them. This causes problems... Problems also

happen when girls walk alone. If they are with people they do not know, it is okay; they might have a reason to justify walking alone. But if they walk in a street where people know them and they have brothers in the neighbourhood, this becomes a problem.

On their days off, girls might sleep a little longer, watch TV, and engage in domestic chores and cleaning. Nesma, a 15-year-old female factory-worker in ready-made garments, said, *“My day off is Friday... I sweep the flat. I do the laundry, wash the dishes, and cook the food.”* Some girls are critical of the constraints on their mobility; they are opposed to the discrimination between boys and girls in this respect and to the preferential treatment that boys receive. But in general, girls have learned to accept these restrictions. *“Boys go out because they are boys,”* said 13-year-old Fatima. An 11-year-old girl said she has learned to accept her parents’ preference for male offspring because boys help their fathers more than girls do. She does not mind that her brother beats her because *“he is our man.”* A similar belief is shared by 10-year-old Hisham, a tailor we interviewed who studies and works. He explained that his aversion to girls runs in his family, saying that, *“When I went to Upper Egypt (Beni Suef), I learned that boys are better than girls. My aunt and grandmother treated me well, better than my sisters. They like boys and they called me a man. Girls are unimportant.”* At school, Hisham told us he does not like to mix with girls. *“I don’t like girls and have no girl friends... At school they are weak and when we joke with them they cannot take our jokes and they weep. The teacher beats me... so it is better if girls play with girls and boys with boys.”*

Girls sometimes take their responsibility for household chores for granted. *“Well, my female siblings help me do the housework on my day off and it does not take more than a couple of hours...this is better than spending the day outside home,”* said 17-year-old Neima, a loom worker. Eleven-year-old Fatma confirmed that after the age of 13, girls should stop playing in the street. She and other girls appreciate that their parents restrict their mobility out of fear for their safety. Parents’ and girls’ fears of going out in public places is rooted in TV reports and hearsay about incidents of rape and *‘urfi* (temporary and often forced) marriage. Iman, a 16-year-old female aluminium worker, confirmed that she did not want to work far from her home, saying:

When I first came here, I thought this job was full of dirt and filth and I wanted to leave. But then I said, it will at least give me money to cover my expenses and it is also near my home, so I don’t have to travel a long way... And I go home to have lunch - just a few steps and I am there. You feel that you are near your house. If anything should happen at home, if anyone should fall sick, they can call me and I will be there.

Iman explained that hiring workers who reside in the same neighbourhood is also good for employers, saying, *“This way he will not have to pay for their transportation and they will not be late for work when they finish their lunch break.”*

Adult women also recognize that domestic chores are their responsibility. Even though, as mentioned earlier, adult female business owners face few restrictions on their physical mobility, they all said that they have to organize their time in such a way that would allow them to accommodate their domestic chores as they are fully

responsible for their homes and their families. To do that, they designate special days of the week for going to the market to shop for their goods and raw materials. Often they go out alone and move around in public transportation or taxis. They are not concerned about their safety. On the other days when they do not have to go shopping, they stay at home to work and manage their households. Several women said that when they first started to work and had to leave home often to buy work materials, their husbands complained. Their husbands did not ask them to stop work altogether, but rather to organize their time well so that they could both look after their homes and do their work efficiently. Invariably, adult women who had grocery stores or vegetable or chicken shops and the *dalalas* had no major problems juggling their work and housework. The proximity of their workplaces to their homes was convenient. Om Shadia, who runs a grocery shop in the same building where she and her extended family live, continues baby-sitting her grandchild as she pursues her trade. Others commented that it is easy to go home and cook or clean their flats and then go back to their shops.

Moreover, older women with grown-up daughters who were interviewed tend to have more flexibility with their time and their physical mobility. They are able to devote more time to running their businesses because their daughters take care of the housework. In addition to running her business, Om Saeed, another mother working as a baker, is also involved in local politics with the ruling National Democratic Party, which requires that she networks with other residents and organizes regular meetings with local officials. She is able to do several things because of the regular help with housework that she gets from her three adult daughters.

Part Six: Conclusion and Discussion

The work of children in Doweika is governed by relatively strict gender norms that are commonly held by the children themselves as well as by business owners. There are jobs for girls and others for boys, and those distinctions are determined by a clear understanding of what is appropriate for females in terms of physical abilities and social norms. This system has confined girls to jobs that require “female” qualities and reinforces their restricted mobility and constraints on their time. Girls have internalized the rules which disadvantage them in several ways. They have accepted confining themselves to routine and monotonous jobs that do not involve learning skills for further development. Agreeing to occupy a lower position in the job hierarchy and doing the uninteresting and uncreative work has also resulted in a pay system that rewards “valuable jobs” – a system in which those who stay longer hours and produce more are always boys.

As members of the community in Doweika and other places in Egypt draw connections between work and masculinity, boys see the value of work and its importance in their transition to manhood and to the initiation of their responsibilities as adults. They are challenged by work and exercise agency in the choices they make and in the management of their work details. On the other hand, girls are introduced to work situations from a disadvantaged position of a need for money and a desire for a male supporter. The fact that girls are identified as working out of necessity has affected their self-esteem and regard for their own value. It has also undermined their ability to question discriminatory practices and their power to negotiate better conditions. Entering the labour market from a weak position has prevented them from

recognizing that work can be more meaningful and rewarding. This attitude toward work has also been encouraged by social norms that value marriage and consider it the only acceptable and socially sanctioned alternative for girls and women. We cannot examine the situation of working girls in Doweika without understanding the centrality of marriage for them and their families and the perception of work as “something to do only until they get married.”

However, our interviews with older women business owners have shown a different picture. Marriage is not always the panacea women have dreamt of and men are not always able to take full responsibility for their households, especially under the current economic circumstances. Almost all of the female business owners we interviewed started their business career after marriage and childbearing. They managed to run businesses that involved careful time management and other financial calculations and required extensive mobility while enjoying the approval of their husbands and the respect of their community. It is important to give due consideration to the alternative modes of work that married women have adopted, which are both lucrative and still accommodate their positions as married women with domestic responsibilities. We have seen the example of women entrepreneurs or middle-women and *dalalas*, whose work draws on their extensive social networks of friends and neighbours. Another mode of work for women is the family business, which some of the girls have been partially engaged in. The family business mode of work was often fully realized for adult women. In these two alternative modes of work for women, small loans from NGOs have been central to the business process.

Part Seven: Findings and Recommendations

The Decision to Work

1. Most children who work do so out of necessity, and not because they and their families do not value education. When working children drop out of school, it is usually due more to economic necessity and the failure of the education system to prepare young people for the workplace. In some instances, parents consider travelling to and from school as dangerous for girls. In these cases, children can experience pressure to leave school and work in the home or in the family business.

Gender-Differentiated Work

2. Workplaces and the role of children in these workplaces are differentiated by gender. Both boys and girls may be working in the same businesses (e.g., textile factories), but they will often perform different tasks and their opportunities for advancement may differ. Also, many workplaces are considered more acceptable for either boys or girls.
3. Work tasks are also differentiated by gender. The types of work typically performed by women reinforce negative gender stereotypes. Girls and women are seen as “patient” and are therefore often steered toward monotonous work. They are seen as “meticulous” and are therefore assigned repetitive tasks, often those requiring awkward or ergonomically-challenging postures. Tasks

and jobs that are recognized as “female work” are consequently devalued and poorly remunerated.

4. Because tasks are differentiated by gender, boys typically perform work that is more important to the operation of a business. Therefore, business owners are more likely to try and keep boys as long-term workers and invest in their training. On the other hand, girls are seen as less essential to the success of the business. If girls leave, the business will simply substitute another worker whose skill level does not need to be advanced.
5. The types of work that are considered appropriate for girls and women are partially dictated by the status associated with the tasks. Sweeping, for example, is identified as inappropriate female work by some men and boys because the motions might expose parts of her body to scrutiny and also because sweeping is considered low-status work and therefore should only be done by women within the home.

Gender-Differentiated Hazards

6. This study has led to a new definition of the word “hazard” for the PPIC-Work project, giving it a broader meaning that goes beyond physical harm. For girls, these hazards can include lack of learning opportunities and barriers to the pursuit of long-term careers. This situation has been particularly pertinent to girls who face a cluster of significant attitudinal and learning barriers from a number of directions. They often perceive their own work as a way to save money for their marriage, rather than as a career, a view often supported by their families. Business owners often believe that girls will only work for a limited time, e.g., until their marriage, and therefore it is not worth investing in their skills. Contributing to this limitation is the fact that because girls learn few skills, they are stuck in uninteresting “dead end” jobs that they want to leave. The lack of opportunity becomes a self-reinforcing process. Family and societal norms, combined with a lack of skills, reinforce the pattern of work for a basic income, rather than learning skills for a career. Male business owners often view female work as degrading and only to be done out of necessity, presenting a further barrier to girls seeking a long-term career. This study has defined this lack of learning opportunity leading to low skilled jobs as a significant gender-differentiated hazard. Boys face hazards when their imitation of older male workers leads them to take risks in order to prove their masculinity and suitability in a job.
7. It is important to recognize that the hazards faced by boys and girls are different. Boys are more likely to be in situations where they are subject to physical harm, and their tendency to emulate behaviours of adult male workers can lead them to take additional risks as a way of showing their masculinity or bravado. Girls, on the other hand, are less likely to feel pressured into this type of behaviour, though their work may expose them to some physical harm, depending on the sector.
8. Boys are more likely than girls to be physically injured and may be more subject to a loss of income because they are unable to work after an injury.

Girls, on the other hand, are more likely to work in types of jobs that expose them to ergonomic hazards resulting from repetitive motions or standing for long periods of time. These may not lead to a loss of work in the short term, but may result in long-term health problems and even contribute to their decision to leave work.

9. When disciplining or punishing workers, business owners are more likely to punish boys with physical force, whereas they discipline girls verbally through humiliation or insults, often involving their sexuality.
10. Boys often see their work as a way of preparing for their future careers; they expect to learn skills that will benefit them in the long run. Girls see themselves as helping to support their families and/or saving for their future marriages. Some women have forged careers for themselves as business owners or senior workers, but these are unusual cases.
11. Girls are also limited by the lack of mobility within their communities. This means that work opportunities are also restricted to those workplaces that are near their homes. If girls find their jobs to be problematic, there are fewer available alternatives than for boys. Mobility can become another gender-differentiated hazard for girls.
12. Girls face a variety of significant attitudinal and learning barriers from many directions. Business owners often believe that girls will only work for a limited time (e.g., until their marriages), and therefore it is not worth investing in their skills. Contributing to this limitation is the fact that girls are stuck in uninteresting “dead end” jobs that they want to leave because they learn few on-the-job skills. The lack of opportunities becomes a self-reinforcing process. Family and societal norms combined with a lack of skills reinforce the pattern of working for basic income rather than learning skills for a career. Male business owners often view female work as degrading and only to be done out of necessity, presenting a further barrier to girls seeking a long-term career. This study has defined this lack of learning opportunities leading to low-skilled jobs as a significant gender-differentiated hazard.

Attitudes towards Work and Careers

13. Despite the negative attitudes of many male business owners toward female work, women business owners often spoke of their work as empowering and positive.
14. Despite all of the challenges, girls and women have become successful business owners and have forged respectable careers within their communities. This study has identified many examples of women who run businesses and support themselves and their families through meaningful work.
15. Within this group of successful female business owners, some have become entrepreneurs out of necessity after becoming widowed or divorced. Others share a family business or work alongside family members. For programming

purposes, it is significant that there are role models of successful women in business.

16. The study began its interview process by initially speaking with men about their attitudes toward girls' and boys' work. These men viewed girls as employees with limitations in the type and duration of the work that they could do. In addition, they believed that girls did not have a future as business owners for a variety of social reasons. However, as the study incorporated more female business owners into the research, a different attitude became apparent: female business owners tended to recognize the abilities of girls in the workplace and to understand the challenges faced by girls which can undermine their capacities.

Programming Recommendations

1. The challenges facing working children, particularly girls, are multidimensional and include the attitudes of parents, business owners, teachers, co-workers and girls themselves. Programming that seeks to tackle any gender-differentiated hazards at work must recognize that addressing only one of these areas may have a limited effect. Solutions might include developing comprehensive programs or seeking partnerships with groups working in the same geographic area. Documenting and sharing experiences in this type of programming would be an asset for groups that are working with these children.
2. Significant numbers of children work in micro and small enterprises, businesses that are typical clients of microfinance institutions. MFIs that are concerned about the social impact of their programming should consider ways of responding to the interests of working children. In doing so, they need to take into consideration gender differences in both the tasks and the hazards faced by working children.

The Decision to Work

3. Most working children and their families are already aware of the value of good quality education; dropping out of school is related more to economic necessity and/or poor quality education. Therefore, programming that focuses on raising awareness of the value of education is likely to have little effect. Instead, programming should focus on raising family incomes and improving the quality of education.

Gender-Differentiated Work

4. Business support programs in Egypt recognize that the majority of jobs that are created in the future will be in small-scale, private-sector businesses. The impediments to girls and women who are preparing for long-term careers in these types of settings are multidimensional. Therefore, interventions seeking to address these concerns must be aware of and prepare for impediments at many levels, including those in the family, in the workplace, and in the minds of individuals.

Gender-Differentiated Hazards

5. Lack of learning opportunities at work has been identified as a gender-differentiated hazard, particularly for girls, who are often relegated to repetitive, monotonous tasks.

- a. MFIs and other business support programs can help to improve learning opportunities for both girls and boys by helping business owners recognize the types of learning that take place through work and by improving the learning processes. Learning opportunities for girls and boys in the workplace can be enhanced by supporting business owners in their roles as trainers and mentors and by introducing new technologies to the businesses. For example, the introduction of diagnostic scanners in auto mechanic shops creates the need for literate workers with computer skills.
 - b. Groups that provide educational programming can support working children with literacy and numeracy programs that accommodate their work schedules. Holding classes during lunch breaks, after work hours, or on weekends can provide opportunities for working children to develop skills that will benefit them both in and outside the workplace.
6. Girls face significant challenges in pursuing meaningful work and careers. Sharing the results of studies like this one with working girls can raise their awareness of the challenges they face and can present opportunities for them to help shape future programming.
7. The results of this study can provide valuable information for gender training programs that are delivered by a range of NGOs and government actors.

Attitudes towards Work and Careers

8. A group of successful female business owners thrives in Egypt. For programming purposes, it is important to recognize that these role models can provide positive examples for working girls. Not all girls want to follow this path, but for those who do, a career in business is both possible and appropriate and these female business owners can provide inspiration.

About the Author

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Quotes from the Working Children:

“I calculated it and found that a trade is better for me than school.”

“I would not work without a goal....I worked for an objective. If I didn't have an objective, I would not have learned the job.”

“If I didn't like the job, I would not have taken it up...”

“Employers have to be good to their workers and protect them because if they don't, the workshop will never be able to operate”