OIC OUTLOOK REPORTS

Situational Analysis of Street Living Children and Street Working Children in OIC Countries

OIC Outlook Report

No: 2019/1

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Statistical, Economic and Social Research
and Training Centre for Islamic Countries
(SESRIC)

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ABSTRACT / ملخص / **Résumé**

The objective of this report is to provide a situational analysis and an overview of street living children and street working children in the OIC Member Countries. Due to the lack of reliable quantitative data on street children at the OIC level, this report employs qualitative case studies from specific OIC Member States in an attempt to provide an overall picture of the condition of street children in the OIC Member States. The report investigates five OIC Member States along with the major causes of the phenomena of street children and provides some key policy recommendations on how to deal with the phenomenon of street children across the OIC Member Countries.

الهدف من هذا التقرير هو تقديم تحليل لوضع أطفال الشوارع والأطفال العاملين في منطقة منظمة التعاون الإسلامي وتوفير نظرة عامة عنهم. وبسبب عدم توافر بيانات كمية موثوقة عن أطفال الشوارع في منطقة المنظمة، يستخدم هذا التقرير دراسات حالة نوعية من دول أعضاء محددة في منظمة التعاون الإسلامي في محاولة لتوفير صورة شاملة لوضع أطفال الشوارع في منطقة المنظمة. كما يبحث التقرير في الأسباب الرئيسية لظاهرة أطفال الشوارع ويقدم بعض التوصيات السياساتية الرئيسية حول كيفية التعامل مع قضية أطفال الشوارع في الدول الأعضاء في منظمة التعاون الإسلامي.

L'objectif de ce rapport est de fournir une analyse et un aperçu de la situation des enfants des rues et de ceux qui travaillent dans la rue dans la région de l'OCI. En raison du manque de données quantitatives fiables sur les enfants des rues dans la région de l'OCI, le présent rapport repose sur des études de cas qualitatives des États membres de l'OCI afin de présenter une image globale de la situation des enfants des rues dans cette région. Le rapport examine les principales causes de ce phénomène des enfants des rues et fournit quelques recommandations politiques clés sur la manière de traiter le problème des enfants des rues dans les pays membres de l'OCI.

1   Introduction

The eighties and nineties witnessed an increasing concern for the rights and well-being of children. This culminated with the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) by the General Assembly of the United Nations (UN) in 1989. This was followed by the adoption of the Organisation of African Unity's Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child in 1990. Then, in 2005, the OIC adopted the first human rights binding document called the Covenant on the Rights of the Child in Islam as part of the efforts of OIC to promote the protection of children. On 8 November 2005, at the First Islamic Ministerial Conference on the Child, the OIC Member States adopted the Rabat Declaration on Child Issues.

In accordance with the emerging general concern for the rights and welfare of children, is the mounting international problem of the existent and rising number of street children. All three of the adopted conventions assert that every child has the right to a standard of living that is adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development without any form of discrimination. The millions of children around the world living on the street in hazardous, vulnerable and exploitative situations deny children each one of these rights.

The presence and the growing number of street children in major cities has resulted in an alarming concern on a global scale. The phenomena of street children have not only attracted immense public worry but has become a principal priority for governments as well as national and international organisations. The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child with mounting distress about the situation of street children around the world adopted the General Comment on Children in Street Situations No. 21[1] in 2017. With more than 60 contributors, the Committee recommended that the General Comment be widely disseminated amongst government agencies, NGOs, academics, parents, community leaders, and other relevant organizations to serve as a set of guiding principles. The Committee urged decision makers and relevant actors to foster cooperation, policy dialogues and research in relation to quality, evidence-based interventions for the prevention of and response to street children at the national and international level.

The exact number of street children is nearly impossible to count due to the lack of reliable censuses. Street children are a difficult population to quantify for a number of reasons – they are often on the move, will not be present during the time of counting, or they may choose to stay

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[1] See General Comment No. 21 (2017) on Children in Street Situations for the full report.

hidden for protection purposes. According to the UN sources, there are approximately 150 million street children in the world today (UNESCO Street Children, 2017). Other estimates proximate a much lower number ranging from tens of millions and up to a 100 million (The State of the World's Children, 2006). Additional assessments approximate the number of street children to be no more than 10 to 15 million (Naterer and Lavric, 2016). Therefore, it is extremely difficult to pinpoint the number of street children in a specific region including the OIC region.

It is often presumed that the phenomenon of street children is only visible in developing countries. However, nearly all countries, developed and developing, have young people living and working on the streets. For example, some estimates indicate that there are over two million young people living on the street in the United States, over 100,000 children on the street in the UK and similar figures in Spain and the Netherlands (British Council Schools Online, Street Children, 2014).

The OIC Member Countries, in comparison to developed countries, still tend to experience higher number of street children with more severe conditions. The number and the condition of street children is diverse amongst the OIC countries due to the differences in economic, social and political contexts. Some of the OIC countries are better equipped to deal with street children while others are not as well prepared. The OIC 2025 Programme of Action aims to tackle the various social issues faced by member countries including the issue of street children. The Programme aims to do this through a social and legal framework: improving social awareness, policies and laws for street living children and street working children.

Similarly, the Fourth Islamic Conference of Ministers in Charge of Childhood issued the Baku Declaration in 2013 pledging commitment to its directions, which is to improve equal access to decent living conditions for street and urban children in the Islamic world. During the Fourth Islamic Conference of Labour Ministers the aim to eliminate child labour was set as one of the goals. These initiatives point to the awareness and the magnitude of the street children issue amongst the OIC countries.

This outlook report aims to provide a situational analysis and an overview of street living children and street working children in the OIC. Due to the lack of reliable quantitative data on street children in the OIC, this report employs qualitative case studies from specific OIC Member States in an attempt to provide an overall picture of the condition across the OIC Member Countries.

The report is divided into four sections. The remaining part of this section will discuss the varying and diverse definitions of street children along with a brief discussion on Islamic perspectives on street children. The second section of the report identifies the major drivers and causes that lead children to live and work on the streets with a particular attention to the overarching factors common to all OIC Member States. The ensuing section examines five specific OIC Member Countries and the situation of street living and street working children to provide a qualitative understanding of the degree and extent of this problem in the OIC. Owing to the lack of regional data, the case study chapter aims not to make specific disconnected analysis but to look at each case as interconnected to identify the foundational causes that are prevalent at the OIC level.

This discussion leads to the final section where policy recommendations and the way forward are discussed. This last section provides social, political and economic recommendations, focussed particularly on the OIC countries, but ones endorsed by successful practices and examples that are backed by extensive research on street living and street working children.

1.1   Definitions of Street Children

The definition and terminology regarding street children has experienced great amount of controversy and discussion. Categorizing and defining street children is an important element as it can either increase or decrease the number of street children according to whether the definition is narrow or broad. Narrow definitions will inherently exclude certain types of street children while too broad definitions can falsely magnify the problem. The definitional issue will also have serious implications on policy formulation and response in dealing with street children. Definitions are similarly important in the way in which the public perceives street children – definitions that portray street children as criminals for example may legitimize certain biases and the way the public acts toward street children. Many child experts utilize the designation of UNICEF, which states that a street child is:

"Any boy or girl who has not reached adulthood, for whom the street in the widest sense of the word, including unoccupied dwellings, wasteland, and so on, has become his/her habitual abode and/or source of livelihood, and who is inadequately protected, directed and supervised by responsible adults (Still on the Streets – Still Short of Rights, 2011).

Further to the general definition above, UNICEF has categorized street children into three types:

- Street living children: those who sleep in public places without the presence of their families.
- Street working children: those who work on the streets during the day and return to their families at night.
- Children from street families, who live with their families on the street.

Even with all the attempts to define street children, a standard all-encompassing definition has not been reached. This is because street children are not a homogenous group. The way in which children use the street vary depending on many different factors such as age, gender, past experience, culture, religion, family type etc. The culmination of these factors define the character of the street child. There are also stages in the cycle of street children – some street children may temporarily work or live on the street but may experience the trauma even when they return home. For this reason, as other researchers have done, this report when referring to street children, takes into consideration the heterogeneous character, the contextual variations and the many types. This report uses street children in the widest sense possible, which includes the general designation and the three types defined by UNICEF.

The general definitional issue is also reflected amongst the various OIC member countries. A standard definition is not employed at the OIC level and various different categorizations are used

to define street children. For example in Algeria, a study conducted reported that children could not be classified in terms of street children or children on the street. This is because these theoretical groups did not reflect the complexity and the diversity of the Algerian children's situation (Civil Society Forum for North Africa and the Middle East on Promoting and Protecting the Rights of Street Children, 2004). In Egypt, multiple definitions are employed ranging from official legal definitions to social ones used by NGOs.[2] Lebanon subjected street children who beg or who has left their family home to criminal law if they are considered as vagrants but has recently made commitments to eliminate child labour and children working on the streets.[3] The trend toward defining street children in criminal language is decreasing and a more sympathetic approach across the OIC member countries is evident. Overall, the definition of street children vary across the OIC – some still reference it in criminal terms, some in vulnerability terms and others either do not define it at all or provide mentions of it under the broad category of child protection.

1.2 Islamic Perspectives on Street Children

Many causes drive children to the street (see Chapter 2) ranging from economic and political to cultural and social factors. Islam is a religion that organizes and provides guidance on the relationship between people and amongst society. Within this framework, Islam views children regardless of their age or sex as valuable and important members of society. Islamic values and teachings put the responsibility of caring for children on the shoulders of parents, families and the wider community. According to Islam, all of those members of society have a role to make sure that children are kept away from harm and are raised in a healthy and safe environment (Children in Islam, 2005).

Islam has also set rules and guarantees for children's legitimate rights in the family and society. As such, Islam provides particular attention and guidance on children, and Islamic Sharia states that all the below rights are evident in the Holy Quran and the Sublime Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammed (Children in Islam, 2005). Accordingly, Islam affirms:

- A child's right to health and life
- A child's right to family, kindred, name, property and inheritance
- A child's right to healthcare and nutrition
- A child's right to education and the acquisition of talents

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[2] The official legal definition in Egypt has until recently been 'juvenile delinquents', but street children are now labelled 'vulnerable to delinquency' according to Egypt's Child Law (law 12 of 1996), which includes all persons under 18 who beg, sell or perform on the streets for money, collect rubbish, engage in 'immoral conduct', lack a stable place of residence, associate with suspected persons, and who lack a legal source of income or support.

[3] Street work is completely prohibited by law for children under 18 years old in Lebanon. However, the real situation of street children in Lebanon is far from meeting these standards of legal protection. Lebanese law is also inconsistent; while the Decree seeks to protect street children, the Lebanese Penal Code criminalizes begging.

- A child's right to live in security and peace, and enjoy human dignity and protection under the responsibility of the parents
- The caring role of society and the state to support all these rights and support families incapable of providing appropriate conditions for their children

Not all the rights provided to children by the virtues of Islam are adhered to when children are forced in one way or another to live and/or work on the street. The positive and special attention Islam yields to children commend for families, communities and governments to ensure that the inherent rights provided to children by Islam is upheld and enforced. More specifically, parental care is seen as the primary source for the protection of children and the one that needs to facilitate the enjoyment of the rights guaranteed by Islam to children.

Society and state institutions also have a critical role to play on the issues involving children. For all children to enjoy their rights (right to identity, health, education, safe environment etc.) without discrimination, lawmakers must make this clear in their constitutions. In addition, state's responsibility to provide and protect children does not contradict with nor does it replace society's obligation to protect and guarantee the rights of children. Thus, in terms of Islam and street children, families, society and the state need to work together to deliver and guarantee the rights provided to children by Islam. Street children are deprived from these rights because of their exploitative and vulnerable situation on the streets, and need special consideration within the framework of the Islamic rights, values and virtues.

1.3   Risks Faced by Street Children

Children living and working on the street face numerous risks due to the lack of supervision, protection or support. This results in children becoming vulnerable to a wide range of problems and dangers. The risks children on the street face vary according to the type of work and the place of residence on the street. Typically, children work in crowded areas such as bus stations, touristic attractions, around mosques or shopping centres. They typically sleep in parks, gardens, under bridges, tents or behind closed shops. These working and living conditions expose street children to risks of violence, drug abuse, sexual trafficking, conflict with law agencies and crime (Zarezadeh, 2013). All street children nearly universally face these risks. In the OIC countries, the widespread biases of the public along with discrimination from law enforcement agencies mixed with harsh and dangerous conditions on the streets make children even more susceptible to such risks. Below is the summary of risks street children in general but also across the OIC member countries face.

Violence and Exploitation: Many of the children living and working on the streets experience various forms of violence. These children are regularly threatened and harmed by their peers, law enforcement officers and ordinary citizens (Street Children: State of the World's Street Children, 2007). Violence is also perpetrated by the street culture of the street children. Gang formations and cultures normalizing violence further heighten risks of violent confrontations. Other forms of violence include sexual abuse. More common amongst female street children (to

a lesser extent but male children also experience sexual abuse) who are forced into prostitution or other forms of sexual activity on the streets (Still on the Street, Still Short of Rights, 2011). Finally, many street children face economic exploitation by their families, street gangs, organized crime members, drug dealers or employers. Either children are forced to work long hours, sell drugs or perform other duties.

Sexual Abuse and Trafficking: Affecting both male and female street children, but more common amongst female children is sexual abuse and trafficking. Girl street children most often are involved in forced commercial sex work for their survival as other work is limited to male children (Still on the Street, Still Short of Rights, 2011).

Crime and Law Enforcement Agencies: Given the situation that street children are left to take care of themselves, it is only expected that they get involved in various forms of crime ranging from petty crime to sometimes-serious offences. Pick pocketing and stealing are amongst the petty crimes, however, some of them join gangs and get involved in other criminal activity such as murder, robbery and theft (State of the World's Street Children Report: Research, 2011). The criminal activity of street children persistently bring them in contact with law enforcement officers. Although occasionally due to committed crimes, many times street living children and street working children are arbitrarily detained and harassed by police officers including sexual abuse.

Health Risks and Diseases: Street children face multiple health risks while living and working on the streets. Exposure to harsh and many times hazardous work environments impairs children's emotional, physical, mental and psychological development (Woan et al., 2013). Street children often suffer from various illnesses ranging from a common cold to other serious life threatening diseases such as HIV, Malaria or Hepatitis (State of the World's Street Children Report: Research, 2011). Street children are also at an intensified risk of consuming alcohol and drugs while at the same time being exposed to sexual abuse, which may result in the catching of various sexually transmitted diseases. In many of the OIC countries, these children do not have access to basic health services, which further negatively aggravates the health situation of street children.

Drugs: Drug use is common amongst street children. They use drugs to escape their emotional and physical pains they endure throughout their days on the streets or past experiences at home, school or other institutions (orphanage for example) (State of the World's Street Children Report: Research, 2011). Numerous street children start drug use initially by pressure from their peers (Woan et al., 2013). Afterwards, many get addicted and start to distribute drugs for drug dealers for a return of a portion for themselves. Drugs are also used without the proper protection. Often needles are shared, not cleaned and result in the catching of diseases. Most common drugs used by street children involve hashish, heroine and other forms of industrial toxins such as glue (Embleton et al., 2013).

Street involved children, as mentioned above, face numerous risks on the street according to the environment in which they work and live. It is imperative that children already on the street be provided support but it is also critical to understand the initial causes that lead children to the

street. In this way, preventative measures can be formulated. The next section of the outlook report discusses the root causes that lead children to the street in the countries across the OIC. Although not limited to the causes below only, these are the major determinants involved in pushing children to the streets.

2 Major Causes of Street Children Phenomenon

The causes that lead children to the street are diverse and unique. There are certain structural, social and individual factors identified that are vital to understanding the foundational causes behind the phenomena of street children. These causes can be grouped into three general categories: economic, social and family factors. Economic causes refer to poverty, injustice, unemployment, vast material inequalities and unjust distribution of wealth amongst others. Social and cultural causes refer to population growth, migration, war, rapid changes and transformations in cultural values, discriminative beliefs and general societal attitudes towards children. Family causes denote to the extended, populated and strained families, violence against children at home, parents incapacity to meet the needs of the children or families view of children as a source of income.

Although all of the OIC Member Countries have ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and have displayed a considerable and growing concern for promoting and protecting child rights, there still exist significant gaps in the areas of rights violations, in the field of protection, education, survival, development and health. Along with these factors, the long-term political instability and violence in some of the Member Countries, mass migration of populations including large numbers of children due to civil conflict and other forms of political volatility have exacerbated and greatly influenced the issue of street children.

The involvement of children with the streets is nearly never due to a single factor or event, but it is a combination of factors. For example, families living in poverty and experiencing political violence that do not have coping mechanisms may resort to sending their children to work on the streets for survival. The factors discussed below are all elements that drive children to the street irrespective of the region or country. However, as these issues are generally higher in developing and more particularly in comparison with the developed countries, in OIC Member states, their influence is greater.

Before proceeding, it is important to highlight that all the causes highlighted below are not isolated from one another, but are intimately interrelated and interdependent. The interaction and relationship between and amongst these factors contribute to the creation and persistence of the street children problem in OIC Member Countries. This section is structured to highlight the general causes that are relevant to the entire OIC Member States. In this sense, these are not the only causes but are the major and the most cited factors pushing children to the street.

2.1 Poverty

In countries where the poverty levels are higher, the phenomenon of street children tends to increase. The inability to create sufficient employment creates many problems for families in the developing world, and more specifically in the OIC Member Countries. Young children in families suffering from poverty may be left to themselves with less care because their parents are too busy trying to acquire the necessities for survival. In other cases, children may be sent to the streets to beg or vend to assist their families in generating income or children may be on the streets begging and vending for their own survival. Children raised in poor families are also more likely to experience deprivations of their basic rights. These children are more likely to drop out of school, experience violence and neglect and many times inadequate shelter.

In Egypt for example, UNICEF approximates that 47 % of children in poor family households experience at least one severe deprivation of their rights compared to 14 % of non-poor children. Poverty and the economic strains experienced by families makes them particularly vulnerable, and these factors culminate to force children either by their own will or by force to the streets. Many children on the street have stated poverty as a major and most common cause for being on the street (The World Food Programme, UNICEF, UN Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention, 2001). In Afghanistan, nearly 30 % of children aged 7-14 work, with at least 40,000 children on the streets of Kabul alone (UNICEF Focus: Islam and Children, 2014). In many of the Central Asian countries, children form part of the cotton-production labour force to either survive or assist their families. In the poor countries of Sub-Saharan Africa, half of all children aged 5-14 are working with many of them either living or working on the street.

Poverty most often leads to other conditions such as hunger, violence, homelessness, crime, inhumane treatment and lack of basic needs (food, clothing, health care and security). These circumstances consequently serve as a driving force behind children's willing or unwilling decision to resort to the street. Looking at the OIC Member Countries, although significant progress has been made in many of them, it is still as a whole home to over one third (33.1 %) of the total poor population in the world (Measurement of Poverty in OIC Member Countries: Enhancing National Statistical Capacities, 2015). As a result, high poverty rates across the OIC functions as a critical factor in relation to street children and street children workers.

2.2 Conflict, Disasters and Migration

Conflict, migration and disasters are intimately linked to the conditions that exacerbate or create street involvement and leads to an increase in the number of street children. Civil wars and other forms of internal conflicts disturb women and children significantly. Conflict affects the wellbeing of children by destroying their essential infrastructures and livelihoods that they are dependent on: thereby, deepening conditions of poverty and removing the delivery of basic services (Still on the Streets, Still Short of Rights, 2011). As a result, families are put under immense pressure and stress and not able to provide adequate care for their children.

The lack of care and subsistence ultimately leads to children resorting to the street to fill the gaps that families are incapable of filing in. In addition, conflicts create other forms of conditions for children. Children are often used as child soldiers, in sex trafficking, forced marriages and child labour. All these factors further deepen children's street involvement. The trauma and experience of war affects children significantly and without the suitable support, these children find the remedy on the streets.

Natural disasters, just as with conflict, also cause mass displacement, destroy necessary livelihoods and rapidly deepen poverty. The displacement of people from their homes, the destruction of schools and the halting of basic services contributes to the phenomenon of street children. Children start to get involved on the streets to try to recover the damages caused by the natural disaster.

In Bangladesh for example, natural disasters have caused mass displacements and a dramatic increase in street children and street children workers in cities and towns. Disasters may also influence children due to loss of parents, family members or other loved ones, which may put children in a psychologically risky situation. The breaking down of social networks, local economies and community values eventually leads children to look for their own survival – most commonly on streets.

Internal and external migration has consequences on families and communal structures. Rapid urbanization due to internal movements has resulted in the creation of large slums. These areas are generally characterized by poverty, limited public services, over crowdedness and high crime rates. In some of these cities, many families themselves are living on the streets. Rural to urban migrations pose many risks for children as their traditional lifestyles and values are exhausted by the new city life, and they along with their families have a hard time adapting. These children are more prone to dropping out of school, getting involved in exploitative work and being involved in the streets at their new destination in large metropoles.

Other children migrate alone for education or work opportunities to support their families in rural areas. However, when they arrive many of them are unable to find work in the formal sector forcing them to resort to living and working on the streets. Finally, conflicts and disasters play a role in forced migration that puts children at a heightened vulnerability and consequently many children turn to the streets for comfort, work or livelihood.

Conflict, disasters and migration are intertwined factors that force children to the streets. In comparison to developed and non-OIC developing world, the OIC Member Countries experience greater conflicts. The conflicts in Syria, Afghanistan, Yemen, Iraq and Libya are witness to this. These conflicts in the OIC region increases children's likelihood to get involved in the streets. Conflicts result in forced migration, the breakdown of livelihoods and trauma which consequently leads to greater number of children resorting to the streets either to escape dysfunctional families, harsh work conditions or other forms of violence, or because they are forced to contribute to their families income generation due to poverty.

2.3   Cultural Norms and Attitudes

Cultural norms and attitudes of societies towards children often serve as a basis for the abuse of children's rights to care and protection. Certain cultural norms and attitudes legitimize violent discipline of children for behaviours that are considered to be "outside" the customary roles and actions accepted by society. Other norms in society may restrict respect for the views of children due to their young age and are sometimes considered irrelevant to issues concerning them. Other traditional beliefs stigmatize children born out wedlock and girl children. Traditional culture does not always work as negative elements in children's life but they also have positive roles. Therefore, culture and attitudes also contribute to children resorting to the streets when cultural norms and traditions are broken down and altered. This could be due to changes in traditional family structure, alterations in traditional roles or the rejection of these traditional roles by children.

Cultural norms and attitudes that permit and degrade children are amongst the causes that forces children to the street to escape these negative harms. At the same time, the breakdown and alterations of cultural norms and attitudes could also be a factor that forces children to the street. There are also cultural norms and attitudes prevalent in society specifically targeting street children which intensifies the issue. Children working and living on the streets of OIC Member Countries face numerous forms of violence and exploitation that is deemed normal due to their status. Community members most often disregard or reject street children and police treatment is commonly harsh on them.

Other stigma street children face includes difficulties obtaining birth certificates and basic services due to the social stigma. Street children are viewed as thieves, bad members of society and dirty. These cultural norms and attitudes further intensify the harsh conditions of street children and disables pathways for them to be rehabilitated into society. In many of the countries in the OIC region, these sorts of cultural norms and attitudes are present that either drive children to the street or prolong their stay on the streets due to lack of support networks from communities to help them reintegrate into society.

2.4   Violence against Children

The United Nations study on Violence against Children highlights that violence against children in the home, school, community and workplace is widespread (UN General Assembly, 2006). Violence against children may take several different forms. These include physical violence, sexual violence, mental violence and negligent treatment (Woan et al., 2013). As discussed in the above section, corporal punishment (along with other forms of violence) is a norm in many of the OIC Member Countries – although not legally prohibited, it is practiced in many countries.

> **Box 1: Street Children in Sudan**
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> "I left the house because my parents are dead. I am alone. I moved to live with my uncle, but his wife treated me badly. Therefore, I came to the market. I am roaming and learning bad behavior such as sniffing snuff and stealing. Now I am confused. I do not have a future."
>
> *Source*: A Civil Society Forum for North Africa and the Middle East on Promoting and Protecting the Rights of Street Children.

For example, in Egypt 81% of children experience corporal punishment at home and 91 % experience it at school (Egypt Demographic and Health Survey, 2008). In Bangladesh, a study found that 98 % of street children had experienced violence in the year prior to moving onto the streets and many of them described occasions of repeated and multiple types of violence (Conticini and Hulme, 2006). Research on street children reveals that experience of violence is one of the key causes that precipitates children to resort to the streets and violence is a determining factor in why some children and not others separate from their families and end up working and living on the streets.

In comparison to developed and non-OIC developing countries, violent discipline of children in the OIC member countries had the highest average (State of Children in OIC Member Countries, 2017: p. 46). In OIC member countries such as Yemen, Tunisia, Togo and Cameron, over 90% of children experienced some form of violent discipline (Ibid). Only in Kazakhstan was violence experienced by children below 50% (Ibid.). The high rate of violence against children in the OIC region is a significant cause of street children. Children who experience violence whether it be at home or other areas of life resort to the streets to escape these sorts of treatments.

2.5   Restricted Access to Quality Education

Access to education is a fundamental right of every child. Educational opportunities support children in the learning and development of their personality and identity, and it helps shape their social, economic and cultural standing in their future lives. Education enrolment is a platform for children to make friends, to socialize and to become integrated into society. When education opportunities are restricted children become more vulnerable and likely to resort to other activities to pass time – including street involvement.

Although access to education is an important element affecting street children, the way children area treated at school is also an important factor that may drive children to the streets. Bullying and violence from school personnel or other children may serve as a cause for children to resort to the streets with the hope to escape these sorts of treatments. Poor families may not be able to afford school costs, thus not able to send their children to school. This will again not only stigmatize these children but will not provide them a chance to integrate into normal children processes of society and may end up being forced to work or carry out other activities not suited for children.

The schooling rate in OIC Member Countries differ significantly. In Egypt for example, 12% of boys and 20% of girls from the poorest families have never attended school (State of Children in OIC Member Countries, 2017). These children become more susceptible and vulnerable to get involved in the streets. School attendance and education serves as a protector factor against street involvement.

In Niger the share of population with no schooling was as high as 84% in 2010 (Ibid). Youth literacy rates across the OIC with nearly 80% are still below the non-OIC developing with above 80% and the world average of 88.2% (Ibid.). In terms of primary and secondary school enrolment, the OIC countries again lack behind non-OIC developing and developed countries (Ibid.). The educational opportunities and access along with the way children are treated in these institutions interacts with other push and pull factors (such as poverty, conflict and migration) to precipitate street involvement of children.

2.6   Child Labour

In many countries, children are viewed as contributors to household income and this in turn causes children to become involved in the streets to either work or to escape income commitments to their families. Children who are employed in unsafe and dangerous work environments experience various forms of physical, verbal and sexual abuse. Abusive and exploitative labour undertaken by children functions to force children to the streets because they are not able to uphold the duties given to them and are not able to take the severe treatment. Children who are forced by their families to work, or ones that have migrated into the cities for work, find it difficult, or may be unwilling to return to their family homes due to rupture with their employers. In Egypt for example, street children transitioned from working children mainly due to violence and abuse by their employers.

Box 2: Case Study from Palestine

Abed (not his real name) is a 12 year old boy from Sumu'a, a village in the Hebron district. He is spending his summer holidays at his brother's house in Ramallah. It is the first time that he has been far from his home and family, but he only goes home every two or three weeks. Abed is working 9 hours a day in the streets of Ramallah selling plastic wallets for 1 shekel each. He sells about 25 of these a day. He saves up the money to give to his family, as his father has lost his job due to the current political situation and his mother doesn't work. It is up to him and his brother to make sure that there is enough money to pay the school fees for the new year. Two days ago, while Abed was shouting to get attention from the crowd the Palestinian police saw him, walked up to him and started beating him to 'make him silent'. Fortunately, Abed's brother and cousin were not far away and came to protect him. However, Abed was badly beaten and two days later his body still hurts. Abed is scared to be alone in the streets, but he does not have a choice.

Source: A Civil Society Forum for North Africa and the Middle East on Promoting and Protecting the Rights of Street Children.

Links between child domestic work and street involvement are increasingly being recognized. When children are forced to take the heavy burden of income earners, they tend to be forced to work in unsafe and dangerous environments, which lead them to the street to escape this condition. The prevalence of child labour as with education varies significantly across the OIC. While in majority of the OIC countries child labour is prohibited, 13.5 % of children aged 5 to 14 years old are involved in child labour in 2009-2013 (State of Children in OIC Member Countries, 2017). The OIC average in comparison to the non-OIC developing countries is slightly less; however, child labour is still a major issue across the OIC – one that tends to cause children to resort to the streets.

2.7   HIV Pandemic

The HIV pandemic has exacerbated poverty and social exclusion, most seriously in the Sub-Saharan Africa region of the OIC. This has led to an increasing number of children without parental care or orphaned. UNAIDS approximates that there are over 16.9 million children who have been orphaned due to AIDS and of those 90 % lives in Sub-Saharan Africa (UNAIDS, 2010). Either when children do not have extended family networks or when those families themselves are overloaded children end up in vulnerable situations. Some of them engage in hazardous work and others end up on the streets.

There are also cultural and traditional beliefs that stigmatize children whose parents have HIV and AIDS. Rising trend in Sub-Saharan Africa has been to accuse children whose parents have died from AIDS of witchcraft. The stigma, family breakdown and the economic hardship caused by the HIV pandemic forces children to the streets.

In most parts of the world, HIV infection and deaths from AIDS have been falling, however, in Muslim majority regions, new HIV infections have been on the rise since 2001. North Africa, Middle East and Asia are seeing an increase in deaths to AIDS. This increasing trend has serious implications and correlations with street children. As parental death increases, the number of street dependent and involved children also respectively rises. Moreover, due to the HIV pandemic, numerous orphans are created and without the lack of services and suitable arrangements for them, many of them end up on the streets.

2.8   Family Factors

Poverty, over-crowdedness and violence at home that lead to serious frustrations causes children to view the streets as an alternative. Research finds that children who are deprived materially and morally opt to take to the streets because of the grave discomfort they experience at home. Lack of parental supervision, parental attitudes and burdens placed on children in the family increases the risks of children resorting to street life and street work (Erbay, 2008; Karaman & Ozcalik, 2007). Furthermore, families headed by single parents also increases the risks of children getting involved in the streets due to lack of support networks, single parents economic struggle and various forms of stigma attached to these types of families. When poverty is combined with
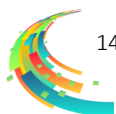
frustrations at home and children are forced to work to supplement family income, the likelihood of children running away onto the streets increases. Yet in other cases, children may be forced to leave their homes due to behaviour that is not approved by the family. These may include pregnancy, lifestyle, political view etc.

In the OIC Member States, corporal punishment and breakdown of family values contributes to children resorting to the streets. In comparison to non-OIC developing and developed countries, household size with 6 or more people are much greater. In addition, in recent years, marriage rates have been falling and the divorce rates have been increasing across the OIC consequently leading to more single headed households.

Poverty and economic challenges has also forced families to alter traditional roles because women have entered the labour force. Although women's labour increase is a positive development, in terms of children and their need for care, this has led to gaps in the family structure. Thus, the way children are treated at home, the level of material and moral care provided and the type of family could serves as a push factor for children deciding to go onto the streets.

2.9   Conclusions on Why Children Live and Work on the Streets

The complexity and the specificity of the causes of street involvement require paying attention to the diverse contexts, environments and factors that shape why children resort to the streets. The causes discussed above are ones that thorough research has revealed as the major deterministic factors leading to street involvement regardless of country or region. The interplay and the extent of the above-mentioned causes differ from region to region and country to country.

The phenomenon of street children is rarely due to a single factor or event, but often is the cause of multiple factors that reinforce and deepen negative conditions for children, which culminates to produce street children. The arrival of a child onto the streets may be a willing decision on the part of the child in retaliation against the violent conditions at home/school, child labour, family breakdown, death of a parent or a combination of these factors mixed with poverty, conflict or migration.

In other instances, the child may be forced to the streets by natural disasters, war, migration or social exclusion. The important point to highlight here is that all the causes are interdependent and influence whether a child will end up on the streets living and working. Due to the extent of conflict, migration, poverty and rising HIV trends amongst the OIC member countries, combined with the social stigma, violence and transformations in families, the OIC Member Countries are becoming more susceptible to street children. To prevent and decrease street children the causes must be understood comprehensively and measures taken to address these causes while realizing the commonalities but also the context specificities of street children.

3 Case Studies from the OIC Member Countries

This section of the report examines various cases from OIC member countries to show how the causes above are relevant in nearly all cases of street children. Due to the lack of quantitative data, this section aims to provide qualitative analysis of five countries to highlight the extent and the seriousness of the problem of street children across the OIC. The cases outlined below have differing and diverse contexts in which street children are forced to resort to the streets either to contribute to family income and/or for their own survival.

In all of the cases below the major causes outlined in Section 2 play a critical role. The cases chosen are purposive in that they aim to reflect the different OIC sub-regions and the different yet overlapping causes in each of the cases. Overall, the case studies show that the risk children on the street face, the major causes for children resorting to the street and the extent of the problem across the OIC is similar. Therefore, preventative and existing policies should aim to address the major causes and the risks across the OIC.

3.1 Pakistan

In Pakistan, the number of street children is estimated is anywhere from 1.2 to 1.5 million (International Street Children Day: 1.5 million children in Pakistan live on the streets, 2018). According to surveys, 94 % of street children are boys and 6 % girls. The reasons behind the street children phenomenon in Pakistan vary. Domestic violence, poverty (contribution to family income), unemployment, school dropout and natural disasters are all cited as some of the major factors for children living and working on the streets.

According to one survey, 56 % of children resorted to the street to avoid domestic violence, 22 % dropped out of school and 22 % got involved in the streets to contribute to the family income. Furthermore, a qualitative study carried out by the Society for the Protection of the Rights of the Child (SPARC) in Pakistan found that 56.5 % of the children interviewed in Multan, 82.2 % in Karachi, 80.5 % in Hyderabad and 83.3 % in Sukkur resorted to the streets due to the 2010 and 2011 floods (State of Street Children in Pakistan, 2015). Other major factors cited are the rising inflation and economic degradation along with refugee migration that has resulted in rising street children in Pakistan (Ghani, 2014).

Children on the streets of Pakistan face various types of threats and risks. Street children in the major cities of Pakistan experience sexual abuse on a daily basis. More than 90 % has reported

being sexually assaulted. Although only 8 % of street children in Pakistan are female, most of them are picked when they arrive on the streets and sold off into prostitution (Ghani, 2014). Other risks children face include exploitation by organized crime members, drug use and health issues.

To prevent and protect children the Pakistani government has passed acts such as Punjab Destitute and Neglected Children Act 2004, Sindh Child Protection Authority Act 2011 and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Child Protection and Welfare Act 2010. In sum, these acts aimed to provide care, protection and welfare for children at risk. The success of these regulations seems to be limited as the street children problem continues to exist and is growing in Pakistan.

3.2   Egypt

The precise of number of street children in Egypt is yet to be measured; however, numerous studies estimate that there are in excess to 1 million children on the streets of Egypt (Rapid Situation Assessment of Street Children in Cairo and Alexandria, 2001). Various interrelated factors lead to the existence of the street children problem in Egypt. Poverty, family breakdown, child abuse and neglect are amongst the leading causes (The situation of street children in Cairo and Alexandria, including the children's drug abuse and health/nutritional status, 2001). Many economically marginalized families in Egypt have become extremely dysfunctional, and have placed their children in harsh situations that have resulted in children resorting to the streets for their own survival.

Box 3: Street Life in Cairo – Testimonies

"At night there are lots of people on the streets, and it's cold. We spend the night on the pavement – we don't sleep. Older people threaten us with knives to steal our money. We pretend to have nothing so they will leave us alone…

A lot of kids sniff glue. Sometimes they start shouting and making trouble… sometimes they just go quiet.

We stay awake until the mosque opens so we can go in. Nobody can attack or harm us in the mosque… nobody would dare.

Some parents fight over small things. The kid can't handle these problems so he runs away.

If a kid has money, others try and take it. If he refuses, they cut his face and arms. They fight for things they want – glue, drugs, cigarettes…

When I see kids in school and I'm on the street, I feel really down – sometimes I even cry."

Source: Taken from the video: 'Voices from the Street – Testimonies of Cairo's Street Children', (UNICEF Egypt).

The dysfunctionality of families is due to separation (creating single headed families), child abuse by the family and exploitation of the child as a wage earner by violent employers (Zemouri, 2018). Trying to escape these sorts of severe environments, these children often resort to working and living in hazardous and unprotected conditions on the streets. While on the streets, children in

Egypt face numerous risk factors. A study conducted in 2010 in Alexandria and Cairo found that 93 % of street children faced harassment or abuse by police officers or other children. Furthermore, 67 % reported being sexually active with multiple partners wherefrom 52 % never used protection. 90 % of street girls reported being exposed to sexual abuse. In terms of drug use, 62 % of surveyed street children indicated that they have used some sort of drug (Zemouri, 2018).

Besides sexual and drug related risks to children on the streets of Egypt, other health related problems are widespread. Respiratory and skin problems were highly prevalent amongst street children. According to a study published in 2017, 22.4 % of children experienced respiratory problems and 16.6 % of children have some form of skin disorder such as lice infestation, scabies or dermatitis because of poor hygiene conditions on the streets (Zemouri, 2018).

Government and Non-government organizations in Egypt have been working to deal with the street children problem. However, their technical and financial support is limited to address such a large issue. In addition, beginning with family counseling and continuing through to street-based services, there exists a lack of effective, trained and knowledgeable professionals. While awareness on street children has increased in recent years, there still exists vast prejudices toward street children in Egypt, and legislation is still insufficient to deal with the street children problem (Akkawi, 2018).

3.3   Turkey

The number of street children in Turkey has risen in recent years due to the influx of Syrian refugees. The exact number of street living children and street working children are difficult to quantify as the definition influences the count. Street children and child labor are most often conflated in Turkey; therefore, different definitions may expose diverse range of numbers. For example, taking into count the street children who work on the streets but are still connected to a home and a family may portray a number in the hundreds of thousands while counting only street children who live and work on the streets may reveal a number in the tens of thousands. Nevertheless, UNICEF estimates that there are approximately 42,000 children living and working on the streets of Turkey (UNICEF Children First: Children Living and Working on Streets, 2006). This number has probably increased in recent years due to the Syrian refugee crisis; however, an updated number is not so far available to account for this influx.

There are several different factors pushing children to the street in Turkey. As with other OIC member countries, poverty seems to be a major defining characteristic forcing child to resort to the streets. Other factors include social and cultural reasons, peer influence, neglect and exploitation, abusive families, insufficiency of support by social services and the fact that street jobs are unregistered and require little to none capital (Mert and Kadioglu, 2014).

Families experiencing economic difficulty and falling into poverty were more likely to send their children to the streets to contribute to the family income. This often was the first step in children's involvement with the streets (Mert and Kadioglu, 2014). Migration from eastern and

southeastern provinces into the large cities is also a factor pushing children to the streets. Inability to adapt economically and culturally to the new life in the city, children both resort to work on the streets or to work and live on the streets. Cultural values also affect street children. Family relationships and the value attached to children are a significant factor. Some families believe that working on the street will make children into man and teach them responsibility. Other families employ violent discipline, which forces children to resort to the streets for a sense of comfort.

All the factors above interplay to push children to the streets in Turkey where they face numerous forms of risks. Research on street children in Turkey reveal that nearly 80 % of them face physical abuse, 77.1 % experience some sort of medical issue, 29 % are slightly or moderately malnourished, 23.4 % pick up the habit of smoking (Mert and Kadioglu, 2014). Many of the children also pick up habits of drug use and are exposed to various forms of sexual abuse. Through legislative initiatives and other forms of collaboration with NGOs Turkey has been trying to protect and reintegrate street children into society.

The Family, Labor and Social Services Ministry has been working to raise awareness amongst the public and provide various forms of educational opportunities for these children. Particularly in terms of refugee children, Turkey successfully implemented programs to make sure that they are enrolled in school and their basic services provided (Turkey's Family Ministry reaches out to thousands of children working on the streets, 2018). Although serious steps has been taken and significant progress has been made, the issue of street children continues to exist in Turkey.

3.4 Lebanon

As with other OIC member countries, the exact number of street children in Lebanon is not accurately documented. According to a study conducted by the Lebanese Ministry of Labor, International Labor Organization, Save the Children and UNICEF, there are approximately 1,500 street children in Lebanon. Other experts point out that the number is probably much higher than the 1,500 indicated by the report (Street Children in Lebanon, 2016). Due to the nature of street children, getting an accurate count is nearly impossible. The main drivers behind street children in Lebanon are due to larger socioeconomic and political issues.

The recent influx of Syrian refugees, many of whom are children, has seriously exacerbated the problem. The refugee issue is by no means the sole or core cause of children living and working on the streets of Lebanon. Instead, interrelated webs of economic, social, cultural and institutional factors, both current and long-standing, constitute the foundational causes. Poverty, family breakdown, social exclusion and influx of Syrian refugees are cited as the major factors pushing children to the streets in Lebanon (ILO et al., 2015).

Over half (51 %) of the street children in Lebanon reside in the capital Beirut and perform various types of street work. More than half of the street children are aged between 10-14 years old and this age group applies to both females and males. 43 % of the street children are involved in begging while 37 % street vend. Another 20 % is involved in street work such as shoe shining,

fortune telling, prostitution and car windshield washing (Children Living and Working on the Street in Lebanon: Profile and Magnitude, 2015). In terms of education, the majority of street children is illiterate and has never attended school. 40 % of the street children have never been enrolled in school and 57 % that was enrolled dropped out. Only 3 % of them were attending school and working at the same time.

Street children in Lebanon, similar to other OIC Member Countries, experience various risks while working and living on the streets. Drug use is a significant issue amongst the street children in Lebanon. It is reported that 44 % of street children in Lebanon smoke cigarettes, 14 % consume alcohol and 9 % sniffs glue. According to reports, 3 % of street children admitted to smoking hashish and 2 % had engaged in other forms of severe drug consumption.

Street children suffer from various health conditions in Lebanon. In general, 41 % of them suffer from some sort of health issue. 14 % of the children noted constant headaches and stomach pains. Another 12 % reported to having back pains, 10 % cuts and wounds, 8 % coughs and 6 % fevers. Overall, even with these medical conditions, 72 % of street children had never visited a medical professional (Children Living and Working on the Street in Lebanon: Profile and Magnitude, 2015).

To minimize street children and reintegrate them into society, Lebanon has pledged to eliminate worst forms of child labor by 2016 through the enactment of national action plan that was launched in 2013. Although progress has been made, the influx of Syrian refugees combined with the turmoil in the region has created problems in the elimination of street children and Lebanon continues to experience serious issues regarding street and street working children.

3.5   Bangladesh

The Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) approximates that there are 1.5 million street children across the country and these numbers are expected to rise substantially (Sheppard, 2018). Children account for 45 % of the total population of Bangladesh and of them 46 % live below the national poverty line. Furthermore, 25 % of these children live in extreme poverty (Investing in Vulnerable Children, 2010). These children are deprived of the most basic services and needs such as shelter, food, health, education and sanitation. Therefore, poverty serves as a vital cause pushing children to the streets of Bangladesh.

A baseline survey conducted by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics reported that the major reasons children resort to the streets is because of poverty and hunger ((Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2013). Other factors significantly pushing children to the streets are the Rohingya crisis, conflict, natural disasters, abusive families and neglect. Although it is not fully clear which one of these factors majorly pushed children to the street, it is evident that all of the factors are interrelated and interdependent. Poverty and family relations for example may intensify the situation and ultimately force children to find refuge on the streets. While on the streets, street children in Bangladesh are exposed to serious vulnerabilities and risks.

Children on the streets of Bangladesh frequently find themselves victims of sexual abuse and at high risk of HIV infection (UNICEF, 2009). Physical abuse and torture along with commercial sex work are also widespread (UNICEF, 2009). ECPAT (2006) global monitoring report on Bangladesh reported that commercial sexual exploitation of children in Bangladesh continues to be widespread. Although reliable data is lacking, it is estimated that 10,000 to 29,000 children have been sexually exploited.

Another risk street children face is the behavior of law enforcements agencies. Police officers often resort to violence to deal with street children. In 2003, one fifth of street children reported being arrested and 50 % of the arrests were not on legitimate grounds (Ahmed et al. 2003). Street children in Bangladesh are also likely to get involved in crime, drug use and other violent behavior to survive on the streets. Although much effort is enacted in terms of legislation and grass roots movements to protect and assist street children, the implementation and the scale is falling short to deal with this issue.

4 Policy Recommendations

The data on the exact number of street children across the OIC Member States is not readily available. Yet, a qualitative analysis of various OIC member countries shows that street living children and street working children is a significant issue that requires special attention. This outlook report has examined the major causes that push children to the street along with the risks those street children already on the street face. The above five cases from various OIC sub-regions shows that the issue of street living children and street working children are an important issue across the OIC. Even though all the cases have their own specific contexts and issues that force children to the streets, an overview of the analysis demonstrates that commonalities of the causes and risks to street children are greater than their differences.

Poverty, family breakdown, migration (internal and external), abuse, neglect and exploitation are common features across the five countries that cause children to resort to the streets. In some of the countries, conflict and natural disasters were intervening factors that enhanced poverty that ultimately served to force children to the streets.

Risks street children faced while on the streets also resembled similarities across the five cases. Most street children face risks of health, drug use, crime, physical and sexual abuse. Therefore, policies at the OIC level need to target these common issues faced by the OIC Member Countries. Although some countries are dealing better with street children than others in the OIC group, all countries need to work together to decrease and ultimately eliminate the factors pushing children to the streets.

The report has identified various causal factors pushing children to the street. These factors can be grouped as follows:

- Economic factors
- Family relations
- Child labor
- Health
- Migration (internal and external)
- Wars and natural disasters

Figure 1: Recommendations to Prevent the Rise of Street Children Phenomenon
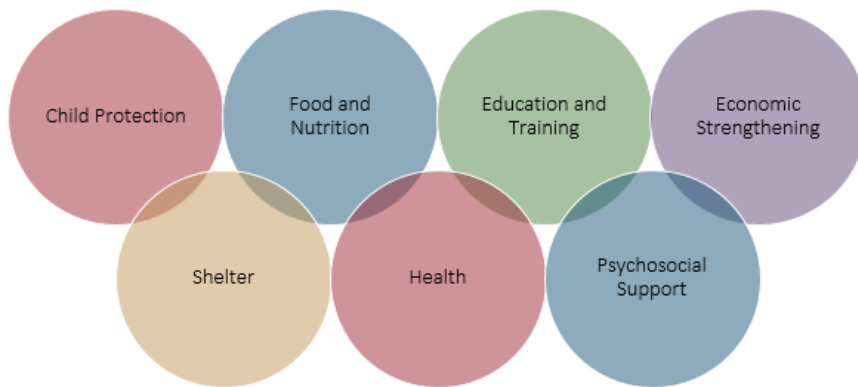
Source: Zaheed and Adeola (2016)

Taking into consideration complexity and the magnitude of the street children problem across the OIC region, the below recommendations are suggested to prevent the rise of the street children phenomena and to support and reintegrate street children currently living and working on the streets. The recommendations specifically target the root causes leading children to the street to serve as preventative measures, and others target children already on the street to assist children to reintegrate into society and normal life.

Islamic Teachings, Values and Virtues: Islamic teachings, values and virtues should be reinforced in society to provide a platform for communities to realize the importance of children according to Islam. Islamic rights provided to children should be clearly explained and employed in campaigns.

Intra-OIC Cooperation: OIC member countries need to cooperate on issues involving street children through sharing of knowledge and best practices but also through regional initiatives to deal with the mass amounts of street children caused by migration and conflict. Intra-OIC cooperation is needed to set a standard definition of street children so that regional frameworks could be established to solve the issue of street children.

Financial Allocation: Financial allocation is needed to create programs and initiative for the training of professionals, public awareness campaigns and initiatives for rehabilitation services to children already on the streets. Budgets for shelter and secure living conditions should also be employed to divert children from resorting to streets.

Poverty Reduction: Poverty serves as a significant cause of street children. Therefore, policies to reduce poverty are an important overarching element that will prevent children from resorting to the streets for either their own survival or as contributors to family income. Subsidies to families and other forms of basic services should be provided to ease the economic burden on families.

Legislation and Regulation: Many children resort to the street because they do not feel protected or secure. Therefore, existing and new legislation and regulations should be strengthened or created to protect and secure the well-being of children.

Comprehensive Surveys and Studies: OIC member countries need to conduct regular surveys to produce reliable data on the number of street children along with their living and working conditions. Reliable data will enable Member Countries to initially identify the problems and will allow for post monitoring to evaluate the success of policies.

Education Enrolment: Education attendance is a positive way to keep children integrated and off of the streets. Education provides children with skills and opportunities that make them feel empowered and better equipped to deal with the hardships of life. In this respect, policies should aim to provide children with educational services in the form of public educations or vocational and technical education that will assist them in their futures.

Strengthening Families: Family breakdowns are a major cause of street children. Campaigns and initiatives to strengthen the family institution should be utilized to protect families from disintegration. Awareness raising on the importance of families and counselling services to families should be provided.

Recreational Activities: Many times children resort to the street because they do not have activities that will safeguard them from street activities. Local recreational activity centres may serve to keep children away from the streets and spend their time on productive activities. These activities may include sports, music, or arts workshops.

Major Public Awareness Campaigns: In many of the OIC Member Countries, street children are viewed in negative light. Awareness campaigns to eliminate the negative view, treatment and bias towards street children by different segments of society should be carried out.

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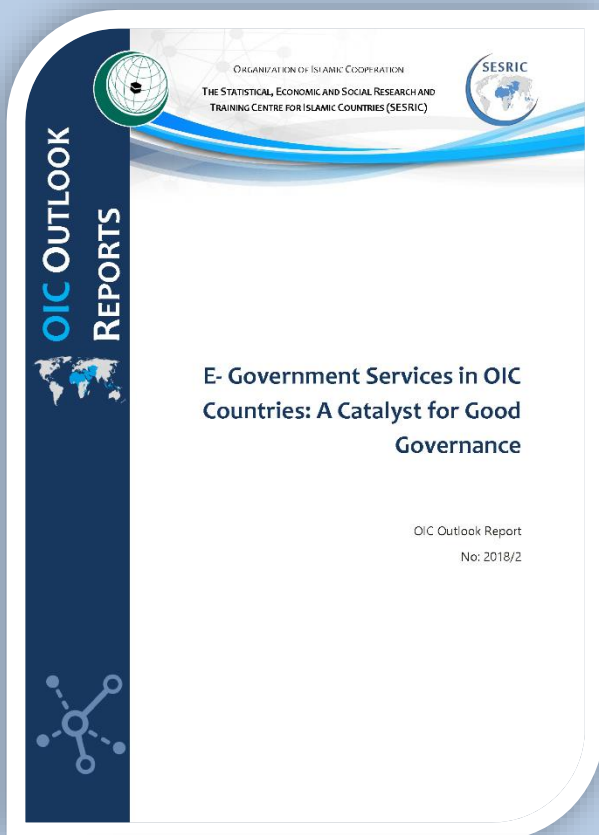Hossain, S. and Alam, M. (2016). Socio-Economic Status of the Street Children in Bangladesh. International Journal of Social Work, 3(1), p.42.

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E- Government Services in OIC Countries: A Catalyst for Good Governance

OIC Outlook Report
No: 2018/2

The objective of this report is to shed light on e-government services in the OIC countries and highlight the important impact of e-government services on good governance in member states. The report reviews the relevant literature on e-government and e-governance services and then analyses the trends in e-government indicators for the OIC member countries. This outlook report also discusses the e-government services in the OIC member countries to widen the understanding of a new form of good governance, involving efforts to broaden and deepen participation with the support of ICTs. Lastly, the report provides a comprehensive discussion and some key policy recommendations on how to improve the effectiveness of e-government and e-governance services in the OIC countries.

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People with Disabilities and Special Needs in OIC Countries

OIC Outlook Report
No: 2018/3
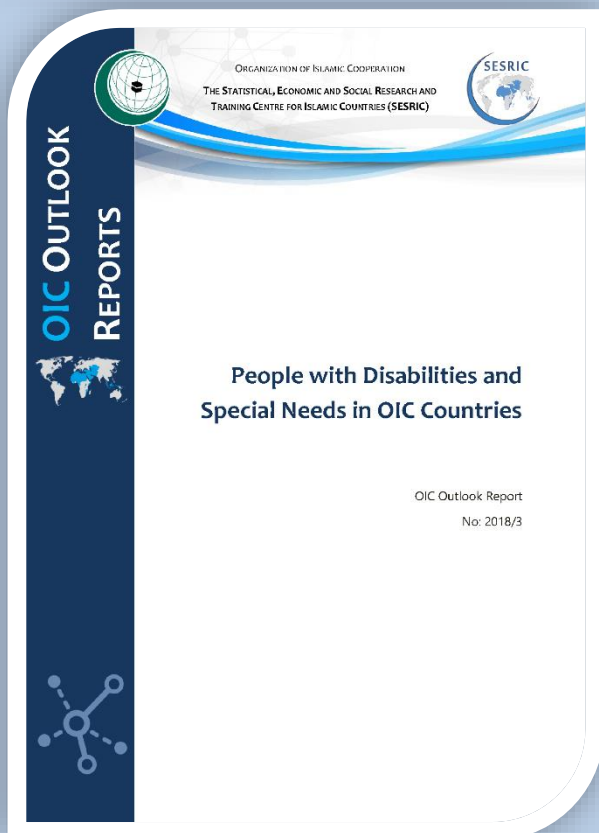
This report looks at the state of people with disabilities and special needs in OIC Countries in comparative perspective. It discusses global as well as regional trends and elaborates on the implications for OIC Countries. As a group, OIC Countries host millions of people with special needs. These people are in need of basic healthcare services, specialized rehabilitation services and other community services from transport to education. Due to underinvestment into social security systems, insufficient number of trained health professionals and rehabilitation units, many people with disabilities in OIC Countries cannot reach such services easily. Addressing diverse needs of people with disabilities require to develop a holistic approach and an action plan at the OIC level that can guide OIC Countries to deliver these services more effectively.

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