

Morocco's street children live a difficult life, often filled with drugs and crime. Efforts to reintegrate them into families and schools are small and somewhat successful but experts say the problem is large and its root lies in poverty and difficult social circumstances

Othmane left his home and school at the age of 14 to live on the street. He no longer wanted to see his mother fight the daily battle to get bread for his five little siblings, and pay for his school expenses. "The street is not a better place to live in," Othmane says, "but at least she will not have to think about my daily living. In the meantime, I may be able to help her." Othmane carries bags of vegetables and other purchases for customers at a nearby market. In this way, he earns a few dirhams a day, enough to bring a little money back home when he visits his family once a week and still be able to buy the cheap drugs which help him put up with his suffering.

Othmane is part of the growing number of street children in Morocco. These are the homeless and marginalized youths without identity or family. The sidewalks, public gardens, and the buildings' doorsteps are their beds. In Casablanca, these children's main "residences" are alleys in the old city, the port, the train station and the fruits and vegetables wholesale market. The port provides them with an opportunity to immigrate illegally. The wholesale market gives them the chance to work as porters and make money to buy drugs. At the train station, they can earn a bit from helping passengers or by begging from tourists.



According to the most recent statistics, 7,000 street children live in Casablanca Wilaya alone. 8,800 more live in other major cities such as Marrakech, Fez, and Meknes. The figures are dated and unreliable, however, because homeless children do not stay in one place. They move between neighbourhoods and cities in search of another temporary refuge. They are often fleeing dreadful poverty where six or 10 family members live in a single room.

Moroccan civil society has adopted a strategy of setting up NGOs to shelter some of these street children and attempt to reintegrate them into schools and families, but the challenge is enormous. The number of children usually exceeds the centres' financial capabilities and many are turned away.

"We try to provide some assistance to these children. We don't claim that we will solve the problem once and for all," says Al Tahir Skali of the Casbah Association for Children in Difficult Circumstances.

His group is now building a homeless shelter for children in Mohammedia, as part of the National Initiative for Human Development. The shelter will provide accommodation, schooling, food and, eventually, socio-professional integration. But while there are thousands of these children in the city of Mohammedia alone, the centre will host no more than 100 of them.

**I COMPREHENSION (16 POINTS) {BASE ALL YOUR ANSWERS ON THE TEXT}**

**A Answer these questions. (3 pts)**

- 1 Why did Othmane become one of the street children? .....
- 2 Where do street children sleep in Casablanca? .....
- 3 What has been done to solve the problem of street children? .....

**B Say if the following sentences are TRUE or FALSE? JUSTIFY your answers. (2 pts)**

- 1 Othmane prefers living on the street to living at home. ....
- 2 The shelter in Mohammedia will put up homeless children. ....

**C Complete the following sentences with the right information from the text. (3 pts)**

- 1 Efforts to reintegrate them into families and schools are small and somewhat successful despite .....
- 2 The wholesale market gives them the chance to work as porters along with .....
- 3 The figures are dated and unreliable due to .....

**D Find in the text words or expressions which mean the same as the following. (4 pts)**

- 1 origin (para1): ..... 3 escaping (para 4): .....
- 2 brothers and sisters (para 2): ..... 4 definitely (para 5): .....

**E What do the underlined words in the text refer to? (4 pts)**

- 1 its : ..... 3 them : .....
- 2 he : ..... 4 His : .....

**II LANGUAGE (15 POINTS)**

**A Rewrite the adjectives between brackets in the correct form. (3 pts)**

- 1 Brazil is ..... (hot) than Norway.
- 2 Reality TV programmes are .....(interesting)than that chat shows.
- 3 The Atacama desert, in Chile, is the .....(dry) place in the world.
- 4 American Idol is the ..... (popular) TV show in America.
- 5 My coach was ..... (disappoint) in me because I wasn't able to throw the ball through the basket.
- 6 He has just heard some .....(shock) news.

**B Complete the sentences with these words. (3 pts)**

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- 1 Farmers rotated their crops to avoid the ..... of the.....
- 2 "An ounce of ..... is worth a pound of cure."
- 3 This document will ..... him to pass through the enemy lines unmolested.
- 4 ..... is necessary to the existence of civilized society.
- 5 He found it impossible to work with ..... interruption.

**C Put these sentences into the passive voice. (4 pts)**

- 1 A special messenger has brought a letter.  
A letter .....
- 2 The magician turned the judge into a parrot.  
The judge .....
- 3 They will handle the goods with care.  
The goods .....
- 4 Our friends are making special preparations.  
Special preparations .....