

Permanent Mission of the Arab Republic of
Egypt
to the United Nations Office, the WTO
and other International Organizations
at Geneva

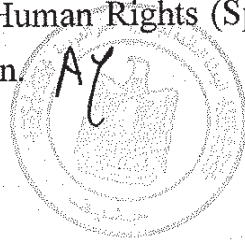


البعثة الدائمة لجمهورية مصر العربية
لدى مكتب الأمم المتحدة ومنظمة التجارة العالمية
والمنظمات الدولية الأخرى
جنيف

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The Permanent Mission of the Arab Republic of Egypt to the United Nations Office, the World Trade Organization and other International Organizations at Geneva presents its compliments to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (Special Procedures Branch), and with reference to the letter received from the Independent Expert on the effect of foreign debt and other related international financial obligations on States on the full enjoyment of all human rights, particularly economic, social and cultural rights, dated 22 January 2018, has the honour to attach herewith the response of the Arab Republic of Egypt to the call for contribution for the preparation of the Independent Expert thematic report for the 73rd session of the General Assembly, which will analyze the impact of the economic reform policy on women's human rights.

The Permanent Mission of the Arab Republic of Egypt to the United Nations Office, the World Trade Organization and other International Organizations at Geneva avails itself of this opportunity to renew to Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (Special Procedure Branch) the assurances of its highest consideration.



Geneva, 26 March 2018

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Introduction

Egypt has witnessed notable positive progress on the women's empowerment and gender equality agenda during the past three years. Progress is recognized on several levels, starting with a strong political will to fulfil women's constitutional rights, and commitment that is evidence based as it becomes translated into strategies and programs that are implemented by state and non-state actors.

To start with, President Abdel Fattah Al Sisi is the first Egyptian leader to show tangible interest in women's empowerment issues, being the first to announce and dedicate a year for women (year 2017); the first to celebrate the achievements of pioneering women; the first to appoint the first woman ever as governor; the first to publicly denounce and announce zero tolerance to any acts of violence against women; and the first to publicly pledge government funds to avail an infrastructure that facilitates the lives of women.

This was complemented with the launch of the 'National Woman's Strategy 2030,' which aims at achieving the SDGs for women by 2030, and for which President Abdel Fattah Al Sisi announced to be the national document to guide the country in its women empowerment efforts; His Excellency also gave clear directions to the government institutions to adopt as the national document for the way forward and implementation, where Egypt took unprecedented steps to formulate a national strategy that is compatible with the SDGs agenda and the Egyptian Constitution. The strategy includes 4 main pillars which are: Political empowerment and promotion of leadership, Economic empowerment, Social empowerment and Protection, with 2 cross-cutting themes in each pillar which are legislations and culture

The mentioned report will discuss the impact of economic reform policies on women's human rights in different areas as follows.



1. Relevant analysis of the impact of economic policy reforms including fiscal consolidation policies, structural adjustment and measures on women's enjoyment of human rights, including gender equality in the following areas:

a. Care services (in relation to care of children, persons with disabilities, older persons and persons who are sick or suffer from chronic diseases).

- Article 180 of the Egyptian Constitution stated on the appropriate representation of people with disability in the upcoming local councils elections.
 - The Egyptian Parliament has recently approved the issuance of the People with Disability law.
 - The Egyptian labor law states on the establishment of nursery for any employer who employs over 100 women.
 - Women workers can take two years off without pay for childcare if they work in an organization with 50 employees or more.
 - President Abdel Fatah El-Sisi dedicated year 2018 to be "Year of People with Disability".
 - During the celebration of the Egyptian Woman Day - March 2017, H.E president of the republic gave his instructions the Egyptian government to allocate a certain amount of money for the Ministry of Social Solidarity in order to provide childhood services that allow women to have the opportunity to go to work and engage in the economic development.
 - Launch of the 'Takaful and Karama' (Solidarity and Dignity) cash transfer program in which Karama provides monthly unconditional income to poor elderly people age over 65 and people with severe disabilities who are unable to work. The program succeeded to reach a large number of beneficiaries where women beneficiaries represented more than 90%.
- b. Social security and pension; including contributory schemes**
- Ministry of Social Solidarity offers care services for elderly women through elderly institutions and provision of strong pension system.
 - Egypt launched the 'Takaful and Karama' (Solidarity and Dignity) cash transfer Targeting 2 million poor households, takaful Provides monthly conditional income per family and per each child (up to 3 children) in school.



based on an incentive-based system related to school attendance, making use of maternal, and child health care services.

- Ministry of Social Solidarity provides monthly cash aids for individuals and poor families and the value is determined according to the number of individual within the family. The percentage of women beneficiaries reached 51%.
- Family insurance fund affiliated to Ministry of Social Solidarity is responsible for the provision of cash transfer for divorced or widow women.

c. Access to land, housing and inheritance

- Amendment of Inheritance Law No. 77 for 1943 to impose strict punishments for those who refrain to give the inheritors their rights.

d. Access to credit, productive sources or property including when such access based on civil status.

- The Issuance of the Investment Law No.72 of 2017 which provides equal opportunities between men and women, as article (2) of the law stated that "Equality in investment opportunities and equal opportunity regardless of the size and location of the project and without discrimination due to gender".
- Since its establishment, the National Council for Women initiated a Citizenship Initiative program that was adopted by the President of Egypt. The program aimed at the issuance of National IDs for women & girls to practice constitutional rights and have access to services provided by the Government and concerned entities. 448,562 ID card was issued since February 2016 - December 2017.
- The Government of Egypt is currently working on a comprehensive financial inclusion program (for financial illiteracy, inclusion in banking systems and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) illiteracy) targeting women in Upper Egypt and rural areas. This is done through an agreement signed among the National Council for Woman and the Central Bank of Egypt.
- The Egyptian Junior Business Association provides a group of financial and non-financial services to women.
- Egypt started implementing the Village Savings and Loans Association scheme (VSLA) that was initially started in India." VSLA " is a group of people who save together and take small loans from those savings. In 2016, more than 18,000 women participated in VSLA and since the beginning of the



project, 54,011 members enrolled and the total number of loans disbursed to start micro projects reached 6138 amounting to 2,240,457 EGP.

e. Health, including sexual and reproductive health

- Issuance of the Health Insurance Law.
- Ministry of Health provides a group of services such as:
 - Provide maternal care services during pregnancy
 - Provide safe birthing services
 - Activation of committees to monitor maternal deaths in hospitals to review the causes of death and ensure the safety of procedures in dealing with cases
 - Revitalize maternal care services
 - Implement family planning convoys
 - Reproductive health counselling service through the hotline of the ministry where medical consultations are provided through specialized physicians in family planning to respond to inquiries or complaints.

f. Public education

- Article 19 of the Egyptian constitution 2014 stated that Education is compulsory until the end of the secondary stage or its equivalent. The State shall provide free education in the various stages in the State's educational institutions according to the Law.

g. Taxation

- Act No. 91 of 2005 on income tax removed the discrimination against women in the law by including them in the principle of financier with respect to a tax waiver that was previously granted only to men as the sole breadwinners in the family, the exemption limit was raised twice in 2005 and in 2012.

h. Labor market, including flexible working arrangements, paid maternity/ paternity/ parental leave, sub - employment part time employment and domestic work.

- Law No. 12 of 2003, which included a special chapter on the employment of women, was released, stating that women shall receive equal pay for the same job as men, and prohibited employing them in jobs that are physically hard, dangerous or harmful by nature, moreover, women may not be



employed at night, except by decree issued by the Minister of Manpower, the law also obliges the private sector and private businesses to provide protection to their women employees during pregnancy, childbirth, and allow for maternity leave, child care, and that they may not be dismissed from work due to any reason pertaining to motherhood and pregnancy.

- The Egyptian constitution ensures care and protection of motherhood. Maternity leave is provided and regulated under the labor law.
- Women employees are entitled to 4 months of fully paid maternity leave in which pregnant workers are entitled to maternity leave twice during the tenure of her service.
- Women workers can take two years off without pay for childcare if they work in an organization with 50 employees or more.

i. Policies to address or mitigate discrimination in the workplace, salary gaps, sexual harassment and violence

- The Egyptian constitution in its article no. 11 highlighted that "State shall ensure the achievement of equality between women and men in all civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights in accordance with the provisions of this Constitution". Moreover, article 53 stipulated that "Discrimination and incitement of hatred is a crime punished by Law. The State shall take necessary measures for eliminating all forms of discrimination, and the Law shall regulate creating an independent commission for this purpose."

- Establishment of Equal Opportunity Units (EOU): these units are established within the structure of the ministries and they are considered the focal points between NCW and the ministry in which their main function is to focus on the constitutional equality between men and women at the workplace and address any discriminatory employment practices against women and provide legal awareness programs to support the rights of working women and help them get the necessary training and promotion opportunities.



j. Eradication of gender based violence against women

- Article 11 of the constitution ensured the protection of women against all forms of violence.
- The Penal Code was amended to criminalize sexual harassment under articles 306 (a) and 306 (b), and for the first time defined it. According to the law, verbal, physical, behavioral, phone and online sexual harassment attract a prison sentence of 6 months – 5 years, and up to LE 50,000 in fines, representing a major step towards achieving safety for Egyptian women and girls in public spaces.
- The Egyptian parliament passed more stringent penalties for Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) as an additional step to eliminate the practice. The new penal code amendments (article 242) provide for prison terms of five to seven years for those who carry out FGM, and up to 15 years if the case results in permanent disability or death.
- Legislative committee within NCW in cooperation with concerned institutions had prepared a draft law to combat child marriage and it is now in the process of approval from the Cabinet of Ministers and the Egyptian Parliament.
- Egypt launched three national strategies in 2015; the National Strategy to Combat Violence against Women, the National Strategy to Combat Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), and the National Strategy to Combat Early Marriage.
- Egypt launched the “Egypt Economic Cost of Gender Based Violence Survey” as the lead Arab Country. The survey provides reliable evidence confirming that combating Gender-based violence in Egypt is a priority issue that the government needs to act swiftly on in order to eradicate poverty in Egypt. Having this data should also encourage policy makers to invest in institutionalizing GBV protection and response services across all relevant sectors.
- Ombuds Office – NCW: the office is the official channel which allows any Egyptian woman to report any discriminatory practice she might face, it also issues a number of periodic studies and statistics on the most important problems affecting women as well as raising women’s awareness on their legal rights



- Establishment of anti-harassment units in national universities which started in 2016 and reached to 13 units in 2017. These units are considered a significant step in addressing institutionally the phenomenon of sexual harassment in the university community. Their aim is to raise awareness among university staff, professors and students about their rights in case they experienced harassment in the university, make them aware of the mechanisms of reporting and dealing with the concerned parties and finally supporting the victims who experienced harassment.
- The Government of Egypt is committed to the upgrading of shelters for women victims of violence under the supervision of the Ministry of Social Solidarity.
- 320 general hospitals integrated Gender Based Violence (GBV) comprehensive package of health services and capacitated service providers to provide services for victims.
- Manual on Violence against Women (VAW) in Islam was launched by Al Azhar to train religious leaders.
- The Public Prosecution issued a manual to combat violence against women.

k. Political participation for women

- Article 11 of the constitution stipulated that the state should take necessary measures to ensure appropriate representation of women in the parliament in addition to guaranteeing women's right of holding public and senior/executive management offices in the state and their appointment in judicial bodies and authorities without discrimination.
- Article 180 of the constitution stated on the allocation of 25% of local council seats for women and another 25% for youth.
- Law No. 45 for 2014 concerning exercising political rights.
- Law No. 46 for 2014 which regulates the parliamentary elections.
- Women representation in the Parliament reached 15% which is considered the highest representation of women in the history of the Egyptian parliament.
- Women representation in the government reached 20%



- The national council for women is currently implementing an awareness campaign in all the governorates of Egypt in order to encourage women and girls on the participation in the up-coming presidential elections. The campaign succeeded till current to reach 300,000 beneficiaries.

2. Lessons learnt about designing and monitoring these policies and reforms on the rights of women of all ages.

The strong political will has created momentum and space that enabled stakeholders, including youth, academic institutions, legislators, religious leaders, rural women, and many others to advocate for and commit to the empowerment of women and girls at many levels.