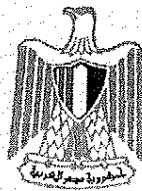


*Permanent Mission of the Arab Republic of Egypt
to the United Nations Office, the World Trade
Organization & International Organizations
in Geneva*



البعثة الدائمة لجمهورية مصر العربية
لدى الأمم المتحدة، ومنظمة التجارة العالمية
والمنظمات الدولية
في جنيف

CHAN.2019. 302

The Permanent Mission of the Arab Republic of Egypt to the United Nations, the World Trade Organization, and Other International Organizations in Geneva presents its compliments to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and with reference to OHCHR's circular note dated 17 October 2019 concerning the questionnaire on the progress made to end child, early and forced marriage, and to support already married girls and women affected by this practice, has the honor to attach herewith a submission by the Government of the Arab Republic of Egypt concerning the aforementioned questionnaire.

The Permanent Mission of the Arab Republic of Egypt to the United Nations, the World Trade Organization, and Other International Organizations in Geneva avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the assurances of its highest consideration.

AM

Geneva, 10 December 2019



2019

Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
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Questions on progress made to end child, early and forced marriage and to support already married girls and women affected by this practice

1. What measures have been taken to implement the recommendations of the last report of the Secretary general on the issue of child, early and forced marriage?

International and Regional Conventions

- In 2015, Egypt withdrew the reservation on article 21/b of the African Charter for Child Rights and Welfare which prohibits marriage or engagement to boys or girls below the age of 18 by the Presidential Decree no. 75/ 2015.

Legislation:

- The Egyptian Constitution:

Article 80: A child is considered to be anyone who has not reached 18 years of age. The state guarantees the rights of children who have disabilities, and ensures their rehabilitation and incorporation into society. The state shall care for children and protect them from all forms of violence, abuse, mistreatment and commercial and sexual exploitation (Egyptian and Non - Egyptians). Every child is entitled to early education in a childhood center until the age of six. It is prohibited to employ children before they reach the age of having completed their primary education, and it is prohibited to employ them in jobs that expose them to risk. The state shall work to achieve children's best interest in all measures taken with regards to them.

Article "89": "All forms of slavery, oppression, forced exploitation of human beings, sex trade, and other forms of human trafficking are prohibited and criminalized by Law".

Article 93: The State is committed to the agreements, covenants, and international conventions of human rights that were ratified by Egypt. They have the force of law after publication in accordance with the specified circumstances.

- The Child Law no. 126/ 2008 sets the minimum age of marriage in Egypt at 18 years for females and males.
- Article 2-3 of the law no.64/ 2010 on Combating Human Trafficking.
- Act No. 23 of 2012 which provides a health insurance to single women.
- The National Plan of Combating Human Trafficking (2016-2021).

Policy Response

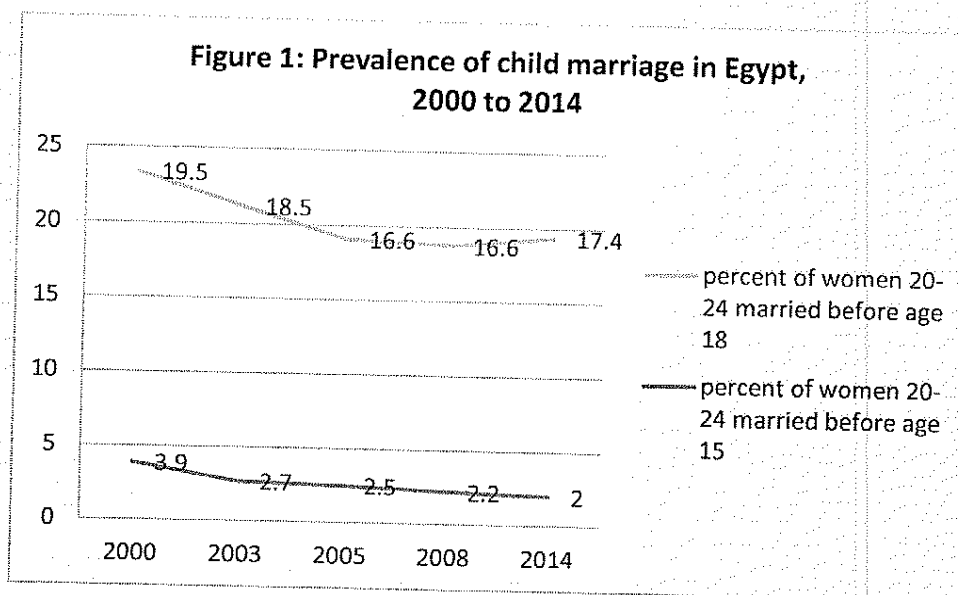
- In 2014, the National Population Council developed the National Strategic Plan (NSP) for Prevention of Early Marriage. The aim of the strategy is to reduce the prevalence of child marriage by 50% within a five-year period. There is a strong political will to end child marriage through providing the adolescent girl with opportunities in order to be developed and empowered; particularly in the light of the prevalence levels shown by Egypt's census 2017.
- In 2018, NCCM launched, with the support of UNICEF, the first policy brief: "Policy for Action: Ending Child Marriage".

- In 2019, NCCM launched the second policy brief "Policy for Action: Eliminating Female Genital Mutilation".

Data Collection and Statistics:

Figure 1 below reveals that the percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who were married before the age of 18 had declined from 19.5 percent in 2000 to 16.6 per cent in the period between 2005 to 2008, it was slightly increased to 17.4 per cent in 2014.

In contrast, the percentage of women aged 20 to 24 years who married before the age of 15 has remained low and declined steadily during the same time frame, going down from 3.9 per cent in 2000 to 2.0 per cent in 2014¹.



The median age at first marriage amongst women in Egypt ages 25 to 49 is 20.8 years, but this varies according to several background characteristics². It is lower amongst women who live in rural areas (20.0 years versus 22.4 in urban areas) and those who live in Upper Egypt (19.9 years) compared to Lower Egypt (20.8).³ It also varies by wealth, with the median age at first marriage of women in the poorest quintile more than four years younger than those in the wealthiest (18.9 years versus 23.2)⁴.

Figure 2, below, shows the positive linkage between educational attainment and median age at first marriage in Egypt. The difference is large for women who have completed secondary education or higher; their median age at first marriage is almost four years older than women who completed little or no education and almost three years older than those who completed primary or even some time secondary education⁵.

It is important to note that the cause of this association is not clear; low education may be both a cause and/or a consequence of child marriage.

¹ <https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Fact-sheet-Egypt-national-strategy-May-2015.pdf>

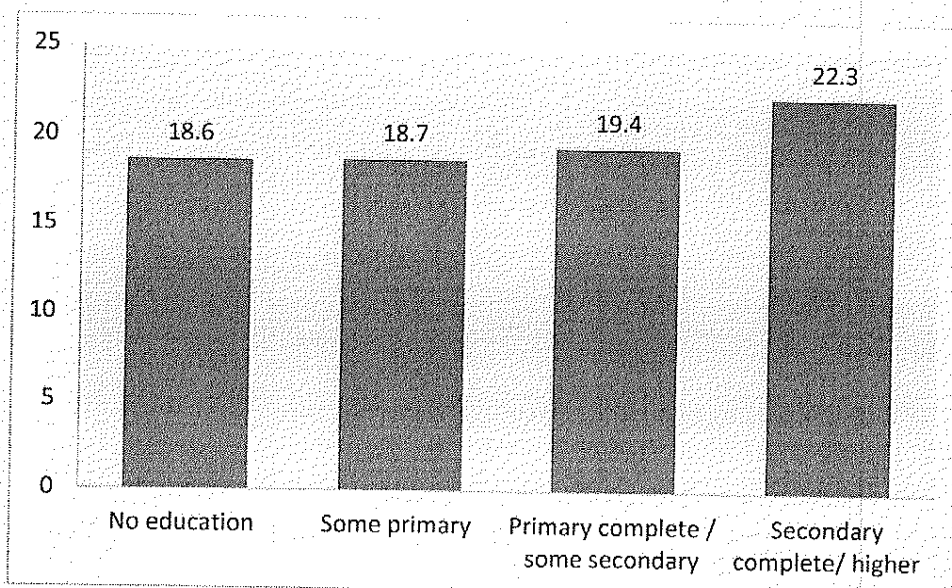
² Egypt Demographic and Health Survey data 2000-2014.

³ Ministry of Health and population [Egypt], El Zanaty and Associates [Egypt], and ICF International, (2015). Egypt Demographic and Health Survey 2014, Cairo, Egypt and Rockville, Maryland, USA: Ministry of Health and Population and ICF International.

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Ibid

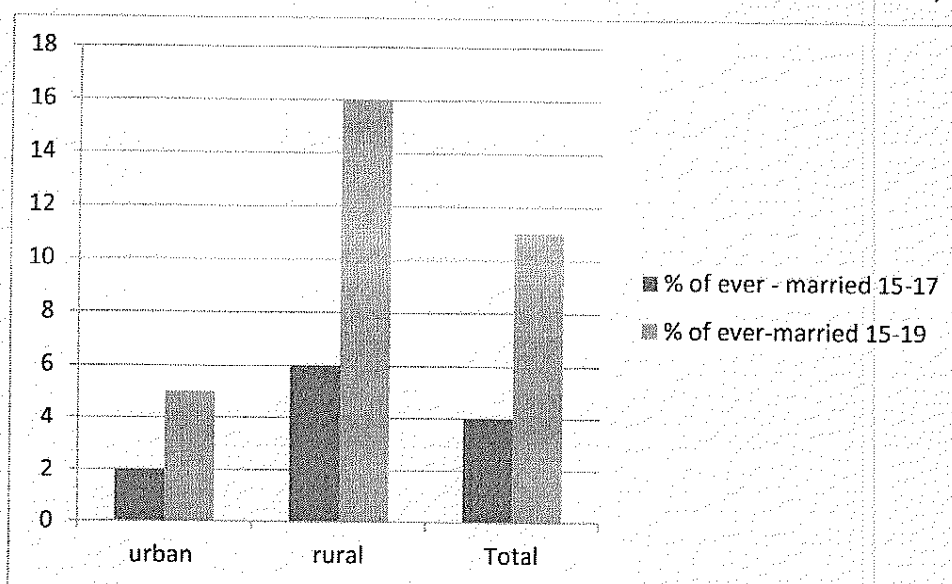
Figure 2: Median age at first marriage by educational attainment amongst women 25-49, Egypt, 2014.



Source: Egypt's DHS, 2014.

Despite the legislation, child marriage is still being practiced in some regions of the country. According to the Egypt Census (2017), child marriage remains an issue. In Egypt, nearly 1 in every 20 girls (4%) between age 15 to 17 years and 1 in every 20 girls (4%) between age 15 to 17 years and 1 in every 10 (11%) adolescent girls 15-19 years are either currently married or were married before, with large differences between the rural and urban residence.⁶

Figure 3: Prevalence of child marriage, by urban/rural residence, 2017



Source: CAPMAS, Egypt Census of Population, Housing and Establishments 2017.

Although the overall prevalence of child marriage has not significantly improved, it shows substantial decline among the younger age groups. For women in the 20-24 age group,

⁶ CAPMAS, 2017, Egypt Census of Population, Housing and Establishments, Egypt.

getting married before age 18, has dropped to reach 3 out of 10 women born between 1965 and 1969, compared to 2 out of 10 women born between 1990 and 1994.⁷

System strengthening

- Increase reporting mechanisms for child marriage: The Child Protection System through the governorate and district committees, as stipulated in Child Law no. 126/2008, has the mandate to identify children at risk of any type of violence, including child marriage.
- In 2018, NCCM established a specialized unit in NCCM to combat the child marriage in Egypt.

Change attitudes and social norms:

- The "Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces" initiative, included Egypt as one of its founding cities. Thus far, the initiative has resulted in Egypt's Ministry of Housing, Utilities and Urban Development adopting women's safety audits as part of its gender approach to urban planning and has trained 100 youth agents of change to lead "transformative activities in schools and other settings in the programme intervention sites to promote respectful gender relationships, gender equality, and safety in public spaces" in Cairo.
- Another intervention designed to improve the safety and acceptability of girls' public participation is the Ishraq programme. Started in Upper Egypt in 2001, the Ishraq programme provides out-of-school girls ages 15 to 17 with literacy classes, life skills programming, and sport activities whilst also intervening with their parents and communities in order to change norms about girls' roles in society⁸. An evaluation of the programme, conducted in 2007, found that in addition to girls' achievements in literacy and participation, "Ishraq girls expressed a desire to marry at older ages and to have a say in choosing a husband" and that, compared to non-participants, 22% of whom married during the time of the intervention, just 12 % of girls who participated in Ishraq for 13 to 29 months and 5 % of girls who participated in the full term married⁹. The Ishraq programme, therefore, serves as a model for future interventions aiming to reduce child marriage by increasing the safety and acceptability of girls' public participation.

Invest in services and programmes that help removing the structural barriers that incentivize child and forced marriage

Initiatives to promote girls' education

The Girls' Education Initiative led by the Ministry of Education and World Food Programme (WFP) shows promising results. The goal of the initiative is to encourage girls' education and help girls have dropped out of school to return and complete their primary education. Students' families receive monthly, nutritious take – home rations of food for each girl student who maintains an 80 % class attendance. Additionally, WFP has recently started offering vocational training to the mothers of students attending the community schools. WFP also provides the mothers with microloans to start small businesses as a way to encourage financial independence.

⁷ Ministry of Health & Population, 2014, Egypt Demographic and Health Survey, Egypt.

⁸ Brady, M. et al. (2007). Providing new opportunities to adolescent girls in socially conservative settings: The Ishraq program in rural Upper Egypt. Population Council. Available at: https://www.sportanddev.org/sites/default/files/downloads/66__providing_new_opportunities_to_adolescent_girls_in_socially_conservative_settings.pdf

⁹ Ibid

Continue to provide financial incentives for sending girls to school

With support from the World Bank's Strengthening Social Safety Nets Project, Egypt's Ministry of Social Solidarity's Takaful cash transfer programme provides monthly income to 1.5 million poor households in Egypt, conditional on children's 80 % school attendance as well as medical check-ups for mothers and young children¹⁰.

Cooperation between national, regional and global human rights mechanisms

- In September 2018, NCCM received an African Union delegation led by Ms. Christine Bakum, the Special Rapporteur of the African Union Commission on Ending Child Marriage. The purpose of the visit was to review Egypt's experience in addressing child marriage and to recognize Egypt's response to the campaign to end child marriage in Africa 2014-2018, which extended to 2023, as well, to exchange experiences, knowledge and best practices in the field of combating child marriage. Mrs. Christine Bakum acknowledged the efforts Egypt made in this regard, particularly the political will to end child marriage and violence against children. She also, highlighted the enlightened role of Al-Azhar, the Church and religious institutions in this regard. She valued the issuance of the Strategic Framework and the National Plan of Action for Childhood and Motherhood (2018-2030). As well, she praised the Child Protection system for children at risk.
- In June 2019, NCCM in collaboration with the African Union Commission, the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the National Council for Women held the Regional Conference on Eliminating child marriage and female genital mutilation under the auspices of the President of the Arab Republic of Egypt where African countries shared their best practices, lessons learned and challenges of eradicating harmful practices against the girl child. " Cairo call for action" was the joint outcome of this important regional conference.
- During its 2014 Universal Periodic Review, Egypt agreed to consider recommendations to abolish child marriage and the temporary commercial marriages of girls.
- Egypt joined the AU Campaign to end Child marriage in Africa which was launched on 29 May 2014 during the 4th Conference of African Ministers of Social Development.
- Egypt co-sponsored the 2013 Human Rights Council resolution on child, early and forced marriage, and signed a joint statement at the 2014 Human Rights Council calling for a resolution on child marriage.

2. What types of measures are in place to end child, early and forced marriage, including laws and policies as well as national and subnational action plans and programmes? What measures have been taken to ensure adequate budget allocations for the implementation of these plans and programmes?

I. The National Strategic Plan for Prevention of Early Marriage

A national strategy to prevent child marriage was developed in Egypt between November 2013 and June 2014. Linked to the national population and development strategy, and the implementation of the ICPD Program of Action in Egypt, it recognised the need to prioritise child marriage as a health and population issue. The National Population Council (NPC) led the process and facilitated inputs from a range of different stakeholders.

¹⁰ World Bank. (2015). Building resilience & opportunity: Social protection reform in Egypt. Available at: <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2015/06/09/building-resilience-and-opportunity-social-protection-reform-in-egypt>

Egypt's strategy development process included the following components:

1. A literature review on the situation of child marriage and strategies for prevention, and validation of the findings by multi-sectoral experts.
2. Establishment of a working group to input into the development of the strategy. The working group was made up of over 126 individuals and 64 institutions from different sectors; including government representatives, the private sector, civil society, international organizations, UN agencies and religious leaders.
This group was divided into four technical groups focusing on (i) legal challenges, (ii) technical challenges (sub-divided into thematic areas of health, education, economic development), (iii) financial challenges, and (iv) social and cultural (including religious) challenges.
3. Focus group discussions took place in six districts of high child marriage rates to explore different strategy interventions. Meetings were held with ordinary people and religious leaders to know their opinion regarding the strategy development process.
4. Finally, the strategy was launched at an inaugural conference in June 2014.

Strategy Overview

- Egypt's strategy aims to **reduce early marriage by 50% by the end of the five-year plan**, focusing on areas with the highest rates or increasing trends of early marriage.
- The strategy adopted a **right-based approach** that ensures children's rights and a **partnership approach** bringing together government, civil society and the private sector to work together.
- The strategy has **five operational areas**:
 1. Empowering girls (including economic empowerment);
 2. Supporting girls who were married early in order to minimize the negative impacts on themselves, their children and families;
 3. Updating and modifying legislation to ensure that already issued laws are working in favour of girls and women;
 4. Educating and empowering young girls to be able to tackle family and societal pressures.
 5. Working with families and communities to ensure that they understand the harmful consequences of child marriage.
- The execution of the national strategy is dependent on a result-based planning process, with outputs, outcomes and indicators which will support its implementation in concrete way.

II. The Strategic Framework of Childhood and Motherhood (2018-2030) where FGM and Child Marriage are priority areas.

III. Ending Violence against Children Strategic Framework (2018).

IV. "Ending Violence against Children taskforce (EVAC)" and the National Strategic Framework for Ending Violence against Children (2018).

3. Please provide information on promising practices relating to the development and implementation of holistic, comprehensive and coordinated responses and strategies to prevent and eliminate child, early and forced marriage?

I. Invest in services and programmes that help remove the structural barriers that incentivize child and forced marriage

Initiatives to promote girls' education

The Girls' Education Initiative led by the Ministry of Education and World Food Programme (WFP) shows promising results. The goal of the initiative is to encourage girls' education and help girls who have dropped out of school to return and complete their primary education. Students' families receive monthly, nutritious take-home rations of food for each girl student who maintains an 80% class attendance. Additionally, WFP has recently started offering vocational training to the mothers of students attending the community schools. WFP also provides the mothers with microloans to start small businesses as a way to encourage financial independence.

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II. The National Girls' Empowerment Initiative "Dawwie..."

The initiative is launched by NCCM in 2018. "Dawwie..." is an Arabic word which means a voice with an echo-and impact; it represents the importance of speaking up on girls. The three-dots can indicate: an unfinished thought, a leading statement, or an echoing voice.

Dawwie tackles the main root causes of the harmful practices (FGM and Child Marriage) by reinforcing gender equality and promoting girls' rights and welfare. The core of Dawwie initiative is to stimulate new conversations about girls within a safe environment by encouraging girls, boys, and communities to be engaged in storytelling opportunities to reshape social expectations.

4. What measures are in place to support already married girls and women affected by child, early and forced marriage, including targeted programmes aiming at addressing their specific needs and promoting gender equality in all aspects of marriage and its dissolution?

- In 2007, NCCM established Anti-Human Trafficking Unit. The unit managed to:
 - Raise awareness through community networks & website, www.child-trafficking.info
 - Provide technical support to relevant entities.
 - Networking Civil society activities.
 - Establish a task force for descent domestic work.
 - Develop training manuals & brochures.
 - Adopts the best interest concept.
 - Develop disaggregated data base for victims.
 - Conduct campaigns to combat transactional marriages.
 - Enhance regional & international cooperation.

5. Please provide information on promising practices concerning measures that promote the meaningful participation of and active consultation with children and adolescents, including already married girls, on all issues affecting them and to raise awareness about their rights?

- In June 2018, NCCM organized the celebration of African Child Day in cooperation with Plan International - Egypt and UNICEF - Egypt under the title "For the development of Africa: No Child left behind".

¹¹ World Bank. (2015). Building resilience & opportunity: Social protection reform in Egypt. Available at: <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2015/06/09/building-resilience-and-opportunity-social-protection-reform-in-egypt>

The celebration was held with participation of 120 participants, including representatives of African Union, African countries' ambassadors, relevant ministries, civil society organizations, Egyptian and African children.

The aim of the celebration was to highlight the rights and responsibilities of African children in light of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, the role of all parties involved in the promotion of those rights, and the issues affecting the enjoyment of all rights of children.

In this day, a number of activities were carried out by Egyptian and African children in family clubs affiliated to primary health care units, through workshops for artistic activities such as painting and coloring. More than 1,500 Egyptian and African children participated in these activities this year.

- In 2018, the "Expanding Access to Education and Protection for Children at Risk" programme implemented by NCCM in cooperation with UNICEF Egypt and funded by the European Union held camps in Alexandria, Assiut and Cairo governorates. In these camps children were introduced to the role of NCCM, the services provided by the Child Helpline (16000) and the African Charter on the Rights and welfare of the Child. The camps included interactive activities with children about their rights and duties, as well as working groups where children presented their proposals for the next phase and for their plans regarding educating their peers.
- In September 2018, NCCM, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Technical Education, and UNICEF Egypt, with the support of the European Union, launched the anti - bullying national campaign under the title "I am against bullying". This campaign was launched to provide children and adolescents with information and knowledge regarding cyberbullying in order to achieve safe social networking and Internet, as well, to communicate without bullying, and to raise their awareness on issues that they may face online. Through this campaign, children themselves launched anti-bullying initiatives and educated their peers on the risks of bullying.

6. What types of measures are taken to empower girls, including by removing barriers to education and promoting technical and vocational training and skills development for women and girls?

NCCM launched The National Girls' Empowerment Initiative "Dawwie...". "Dawwie..." is an Arabic word which means a voice with an echo-and impact; it represents the importance of speaking up on girls.

The three-dots can indicate: an unfinished thought, a leading statement, or an echoing voice.

Dawwie tackles the main root causes of the harmful practices (FGM and Child Marriage) by reinforcing gender equality and promoting girls' rights and welfare. The core of Dawwie Initiative is to stimulate new conversations about girls within a safe environment by encouraging girls, boys, and communities to be engaged in storytelling opportunities in order to reshape social expectations.

7. What type of measures are taken promote women's and girls' access to health care, social services and childcare opportunities?

- The National Coordination Committee on Preventing Illegal Migration and Combating Trafficking in Persons provided training to media professionals on reporting on human

trafficking and victim protection. As well, social media messaging on irregular migration and human trafficking reached one million individuals.

- Shelters for Children: Dar El Salam shelter is operated by NCCM and FACE for children victims of trafficking. Dar El Salam provides social services, including psychological counselling and health services. In 2016, around 5.600 children benefitted from Dar El Salam services.

8. What progress has been made in formulating or reviewing policies, programmes or strategies to address discrimination and violence, including domestic violence, which may occur against women and girls subjected to child, early and forced marriage, including with a view of strengthening child protection system?

- In December 2016, NCCM launched "Awladna" (*Our Children*) National Multimedia Campaign Promoting Positive Parenting. It was the first campaign of its kind on positive parenting, in partnership with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). The campaign was supported by the European Union (EU) in the context of the joint programme titled 'Expanding Access to Education and Protection for at Risk Children in Egypt'. The campaign comes as part of a holistic approach to support development of policies on protecting children from violence, and to raise public awareness on the issue of positive parenting by targeting parents, caregivers and parents-to-be. The multimedia campaign "Awladna" reached millions of parents and caregivers, through TV and Radio Public Service Announcements (PSAs), SMS transmission, and social media posts engaging some celebrities under the slogan #Calm Not Harm, as well as printed press, outdoor advertising, and direct public interaction.
- In 2018, Egypt launched the first national anti-bullying campaign against peer-to-peer violence. It was launched under the auspices of NCCM, in partnership with the Ministry of Education and Technical Education (MOETE) in cooperation with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and funded by the European Union (EU).
- The Family and Child Rights programme (FCR) implemented by NCM and funded by the EU, realized combating Child Marriage, trade marriage, and trafficking awareness raising campaign in Giza Governorate which was composed of the following:
 - * 5 Marriage legislative seminars: the target beneficiaries were 175 attendees (lawyers, official leaders, teachers, community natural leaders, women who facilitate marriage "Khatba" and religious leaders). The objective was to address the legal situation of child marriage even in cases which were not officially documented by Māzoon.
 - * 20 awareness raising seminars attended by 1000 beneficiaries: the seminars' beneficiaries were rural poor women and men who attended seminars on child rights.
 - * 20 Reproductive Rights seminars attended by 500 women between 20 – 39 years: the seminars' beneficiaries were rural poor women who attended seminars on reproductive rights.

9. What measures are taken to hold perpetrators accountable, to ensure access to justice and accountability mechanisms, and to implement violence prevention and response activities, including at school and community level, as well as to provide adequate victim reparation and assistance measures?

Childhood Protection Committees (CPCs): NCCM works on ensuring the prevalence and quality of centralized and decentralized child protection mechanisms at all levels.

These protection mechanisms are represented by CPCs which are technically supported by NCCM.

In this regard, NCCM coordinates with the concerned organizations to provide urgent support to children through Child helpline 16000, through which all violations against child and mother rights are reported.

10. What progress is made to improve the collection and use of disaggregated quantitative, qualitative and comparable data on violence against women and girls and harmful practices in order to strengthen measures to prevent and eliminate child, early and forced marriage?

- NCCM through child helpline 16000 and researches prepared by the Child Rights Observatory is working on collecting data and identifying the scope of the problem in Egypt.
- Egypt Census 2017 held by the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS) included marriage cases under 18.
The children in Egypt, a profile produced by CAPMAS from Census 2017, indicated that around 111000 girl children age 10-17 years are ever-married.

References:

- Policy For Action: Ending Child Marriage, Issue 1, the National Council for Childhood & Motherhood.
- Egypt Country Brief, UNICEF Regional Study on Child Marriage in the Middle East and North Africa.
- **Girls not Brides**, the Global Partnership to End Child Marriage, Country Fact Sheet: Egypt.
- Bureau of International Labor Affairs, 2016 findings on the worst forms of child labour, https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/ILAB/child_labor_reports/tda2016/Egypt2016Report.pdf