

SOCIAL PROTECTION SYSTEMS, ACCESS TO
PUBLIC SERVICES AND SUSTAINABLE
INFRASTRUCTURE FOR GENDER EQUALITY
AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN AND
GIRLS



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SOCIAL PROTECTION SYSTEMS, ACCESS TO PUBLIC SERVICES AND SUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURE FOR GENDER EQUALITY AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN AND GIRLS

This brief focuses on the priority themes of the 63rd Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). It is structured as follows:

- Presentation of the three main concepts under review, and their relevance for gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment;
- Egypt's main institutional commitments and strategic frameworks to improve social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls;
- A snapshot of available data in Egypt;
- Examples of initiatives to improve women's and girls' access to social protection systems, public services and sustainable infrastructure in Egypt.

I. Social protection systems, public services and sustainable infrastructure as levers for gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment



Social protection

Social protection refers to a set of policies and programmes aiming to prevent, reduce and eliminate risk and vulnerability to poverty, deprivation and social exclusion. Through the promotion of human capital,

decent and more productive employment, social protection systems are key instruments to promote healthy, resilient, productive, egalitarian, and prosperous societies¹.

Social protection policies can be implemented through a variety of formal and informal measures and tools, including social assistance and safety nets (e.g. cash or in-kind resources transfers to poor and vulnerable individuals or households, such as child and family benefits); social and health insurance; labour market legislation and interventions (such as maternity protection, unemployment/underemployment support schemes and others); etc^{2,3}.

¹ Sholkamy Hania (2011), "How can Social Protection Provide Social Justice for Women?", Pathways Policy Paper, Brighton: Pathways of Women's Empowerment RPC. Available at: <http://socialprotection-humanrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Social-Protection-Justice-Women.pdf>

² The Technical Support Team (TST) -DESA (n/d), TST issue brief: Social Protection. Available at: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/18320406tstissuesocprot.pdf>

³ Chopra Deepta (2018), "Initiating women's empowerment;

achieving gender equality: Interlinkages amongst Social Protection, Infrastructure and Public Services", Background paper prepared for Expert Group Meeting of the Sixty-third session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW 63) 'Social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls' <http://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/csw/63/egm/chopra%20dbackground%20paperdraftegmspsbp1.pdf?la=en&vs=4322>

Social protection does not only refer to social transfers but is also strongly linked to the availability, accessibility and quality of public services, such as health, education and family-focused social work support⁴.

Public services

Public services are a set of essential goods and services considered necessary at the national level⁵. Research has shown that public services can play a central role in reducing poverty and inequality and in advancing the rights of vulnerable people. However, the availability of public services is not enough, public services must also be of high quality, affordable and accessible.

Sustainable infrastructure

Infrastructure is the physical, human and financial set up and organisation that is required to deliver the public services⁶. For example, the State can provide public services such as education, health, water and sanitation – through physical infrastructure (roads, schools, hospitals, water pipes), human resources (teachers, doctors, engineers) and by putting in the requisite financial infrastructure (budgets) into place⁷.

Why should we look at those topics with a gender lens?

- Women’s and men’s experiences of poverty, deprivation and social exclusion differ, due to prevailing socio-cultural and gender norms.
- Gender inequalities are a source of risk and vulnerability. Women and girls are disproportionately vulnerable to poverty and exclusion, due to lack of capital (financial and social), high wage differentials and gendered work norms⁸.
- Increasing women’s resources has been considered as the most effective way of increasing families’ overall well-being, and especially impacting children’s health and nutrition positively⁹. Well-designed social protection systems can narrow gender gaps in poverty rates, and enhance women’s income security and access to personal income¹⁰.

- Women typically interact with public services more than men in their gendered roles as caregivers. Due to prevailing gender norms, the costs and time of caring for children and other dependents (such as the elderly, people with disability) continue to be borne mainly by women. The lack of (public) care services including childcare is an obstacle to women’s access to decent working conditions and livelihoods. In addition, they have specific health needs in relation to their reproductive functions.
- Gender-responsive public services can play a central role in advancing the rights of women and girls. However, to do so, barriers that constrain access for women and girls must be identified and removed.
- In the absence of gender-responsive infrastructure, women and girls face difficulties in accessing their rights to social protection (for instance, they might face difficulties in getting access to cash transfer services in case there is a lack of safe transportation systems) or public services (such as healthcare services). Therefore, greater efforts are needed to mainstream gender into sustainable infrastructure.

Feminist research has highlighted the link between social protection, public services and infrastructure for materialising women’s and girls’ empowerment, and those three thematic areas cannot be viewed in isolation from one another. Gender-sensitive social protection systems, accompanied of gender responsive public services and infrastructure of quality can have transformative potential and can contribute to achieving greater gender equality and women’s empowerment as well as reducing other inequalities in society and the economy.

⁴ UN Women (2018), “Report of the Expert Group”, Sixty-third session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW 63) ‘Social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls’. Available at: <http://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/csw/63/egm/63rd%20csw%20egm%20report%202018.pdf?la=en&vs=1850>

⁵ For further information, please consult: ILO, 2012: “The strategy of the International Labour Organization: Building social protection floors and comprehensive social security systems.” UNICEF, 2012. “Integrated Social Protection Systems: Enhancing Equity for Children. and The World Bank, 2012: “The World Bank 2012-2022 Social Protection and Labour Strategy”.

⁶ Chopra Deepta (2018), op.cit.

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⁸ Browne, E. (2015). Social protection: Topic guide. Birmingham, UK: GSDRC, University of Birmingham. Available at: <https://gsdrc.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/SocialProtection.pdf>

⁹ Chopra Deepta (2018), op.cit.

¹⁰ Puri Lakshmi (2017), “Women: Major Drivers & Beneficiaries of Poverty Eradication”, IPS News Agency. Available at: http://www.ipsnews.net/2017/10/women-major-drivers-beneficiaries-poverty-eradication/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=women-major-drivers-beneficiaries-poverty-eradication

II. Legal and policy background

International commitments addressing the specific relevance of social protection, public services and infrastructure for women's and girls' empowerment

Several international instruments to which Egypt is a party mention the specific situation of women (and girls) with regards to availability, access and quality of social protection, public services and infrastructure.



The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) recalls that poverty takes a significant and specific toll on women, and that in situation of poverty,

women have less access to food, health, education, training and opportunities for employment and other needs. In addition, the CEDAW calls Member States to fully recognize the contribution of women to the welfare of the family and society. Article 11.1 calls for the rights of women to have access to social security (art. 11.1 (e)) and the right to protection of health and to safety in working conditions, including the safeguarding of the function of reproduction (art. 11.1 (f)). Article 11.2 focuses on measures to ensure women's effective right to work and encourages Member States to provide *"the necessary supporting social services to enable parents to combine family obligations with work responsibilities and participation in public life, in particular through promoting the establishment and development of a network of child-care facilities"* (art. 11.2 (c)).

The CEDAW acknowledges women's specific needs and issues when accessing health care and calls on Member States to *"take appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of health care in order to ensure, on the basis of equality of men and women, access to health care services, including those related to family planning"* (Art. 12.1) and to ensure pregnant women and new mothers have access to appropriate services, including nutrition (Art. 12.2). Article 13 (a) recognizes women's rights to family benefits, and Article 14.2 (c) focusses on rural women's access to social security programmes.

The Beijing Platform for Action also recognises the importance of social protection, public services and

infrastructure for women and girls. Several areas of concern have addressed those topics in relation to the issues of availability, access and quality, especially Areas A (Poverty), B (Education), C (Health) and F (Economy). Area A (Poverty) emphasizes the importance of women' and men's equal access to public services to eradicate poverty, and to secure access to service with a gender perspective, as well as to create appropriate infrastructure to increase women's income, and to create social security systems. Area C (Health) recalls that women have different and unequal access to and use of basic health resources, including primary health services, and that it is important to ensure equal access to health-care infrastructure. Area F (Economy) emphasizes the importance of public infrastructure to ensure equal market access for women and men entrepreneurs.



Social protection, as well as public services and sustainable infrastructure are at the centre of inclusive, equitable and sustainable development, as highlighted by the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** and related **Sustainable Development Goals**. The importance of those three areas as well as their complementarity has been highlighted to achieve SDG 5 on gender equality and women's empowerment and its targets (especially target 5.4 *'Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate'*).

In addition, *"coordinated and well-funded systems of social protection, public services, and sustainable infrastructure form the backbone of the entire 2030 Agenda"* and are of substantial importance to reach several goals, including: SDG 1 on poverty eradication; SDG 3 on health and wellbeing; SDG 4 on quality education for all; SDG 8 on decent work and inclusive growth; SDG 10 on the reduction of inequalities; and SDG 13 on combating climate change¹¹.



¹¹ UN Women (2018), "Report of the Expert Group", op.cit.

National legal and policy framework addressing women's and girls' access and right to social protection, public services and sustainable infrastructure

The Egyptian Constitution

The Egyptian Constitution adopted in 2014 includes several articles dealing with issues related to the CSW 63 priority themes. Article 9 enshrines the principle of equal opportunity for all citizens, regardless of their sex. Article 11 acknowledges the State's obligation to ensure equality between women and men, and women's access to their civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. The article opens the door to the implementation of specific measures to ensure discrimination against women is eliminated; and that women are protected against all forms of violence. This article also recalls the State's obligation to provide care and protection for children and their mothers, women-headed households, the elderly and the women most in need. The State also commits to take measures to ensure women's work life balance.

Several articles are particularly relevant to social protection. Under article 8, the State commits to ensure social justice and the provision of social solidarity, while Article 17 reaffirms the State's obligation to provide social security services to all its citizens and to guarantee a decent life to all. People who are unable to support themselves or whose activities do not enable them to access an adequate pension (such as the elderly; unemployed people; people with disabilities; small farmers; agricultural workers; or people working in the informal economy -groups in which women are over-represented) have the right to receive support from the State.

With regards to public services and infrastructure, Article 18 recalls that every citizen is entitled to quality healthcare services. Article 78 guarantees all citizens the right to decent, safe and healthy housing, in a way that preserves human dignity and achieves social justice.

Legislative and policy framework towards more gender sensitive social protection, public services and infrastructure

In 2015, a presidential decree (15/2015) amended the social security law, to acknowledge new categories of beneficiaries eligible for social protection.

The same year, a prime minister decree (540/2015) was issued to develop a new Conditional Cash Transfer programme (Takaful & Karama) under the umbrella of social protection¹².

The Government established the 'Ministerial Committee for Social Justice', headed by the Prime Minister. The Committee has been given a policy formulation and coordination mandate to transform social policies and social programs for proactively tackling social inequality.

A recent amendment to the Inheritance Law (2017) imposes stricter sanctions on those who impede entitled persons access to their inheritance rights. The amendment makes the obstruction to inheritance a crime punishable by jail time of no less than 6 months and a fine of up to 100,000 EGP. It should protect the economic rights of women, who are often deprived of their inheritance.

In 2018, a presidential directive was issued on life insurance certificates for temporary and seasonal workers and women heads of households.

The same year, the Egyptian Parliament approved the Law for People with Disabilities, which aims to better recognize their rights, integrate them into society, provide them with proper living conditions and eliminate disability-based discrimination. The law provides the first comprehensive definition for people with disabilities and ensures that people with disabilities have access to all services, activities, public facilities and means of education, without exclusion.

The Egyptian Parliament is currently discussing the new Labour Law. The bill should foster the implementation of measures to provide a safer and more secure working environment. It should ensure the rights of working women and people with special needs. In addition, the bill should grant women working in the private sector the right to a four-month maternity leave equal to those working in the public sector.

Initiatives to improve access to decent housing have recently been launched by the Government of Egypt. Those include the provision of decent housing to families in need in Al Asmarat and Gheit Al Enab; the 'Decent life'

¹² MoSS, EGYPT: From Social Protection to Promotion & Transformation

initiative (“hayah kareema”) which seeks to improve the status of people who are most in need.

At **policy level**, the Government of Egypt is committed to mainstreaming the objectives of inclusive and sustainable development into the country’s national **Strategy for Sustainable Development – Egypt Vision 2030**, a ten-pillar roadmap for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by addressing the country’s economic, social and environmental development.

The National Council for Women (NCW), developed through a participatory process a strategic framework which addresses the challenges faced by women in Egypt. **The National Strategy for the Empowerment of Egyptian Women 2030 (NSEEW)**¹³ is based upon the principles enacted in the 2014 Constitution and is aligned on the “Egypt’s Vision 2030” and Egypt’s commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It provides a strategic framework for the concrete implementation of the commitment to women’s rights as set out in the 2014 Constitution.

At international level, the National Strategy for the Empowerment of Egyptian Women 2030 is the first strategic document designed to achieve the SDGs for gender equality and women empowerment.

The NSEEW has four main pillars, including:

- Women’s leadership and political participation;
- Women’s economic empowerment;
- Women’s social empowerment; and
- Women’s protection.

The Strategy aims to set the bases to address the issues faced by Egyptian women and recognises that “*the prevalent male dominant cultural attitudes and gender discrimination*” hinder women’s and girls’ social and economic opportunities, rendering them more vulnerable to poverty and marginalisation. Two of the pillars are especially relevant for this year’s CSW priority theme. It pays special attention to issues in relation to social protection, access to public services and infrastructure, and this is especially addressed under the **Economic empowerment pillar**. Indeed, the NSEEW recognises the need to protect the rights of working women, especially the most marginalised, through the

provision of support services, including social protection and the expansion and improvement of infrastructure. The Strategy further recalls that the absence of mechanisms and services that support working women (such as care services for children and the elderly) leaves a considerable number of women with no choice but to refrain from working. The burden of unpaid work compromises women’s opportunities to secure decent jobs, and the Strategy thus considers necessary to invest in time- and effort-saving infrastructure to help family members share household needs.

Under the **Social pillar**, the Strategy encourages taking actions to ensure women’s access to their “*guaranteed rights and benefit from the available protection schemes*”. To do so, the NSEEW recommends increasing the resources, capacities, and mechanisms of law enforcement entities, other state institutions, and civil society organizations that are expected to provide legal assistance, protect, and fulfil the rights of women.

¹³ National Council for Women (2017), *National Strategy for the Empowerment of Egyptian Women 2030 – Vision and Pillars*, Egypt.

III. Facts and figures in Egypt

Demographic changes are creating new unmet needs for public service and infrastructure.



After decades of continuous decrease in fertility rates, an increase in birth rate from 3 children per women in 2008 to about 3.5 in 2014 was documented^{14,15}. In addition to population growth, significant changes with implications for women are taking place in Egyptian household structures and family dynamics. For example, the latest 2017 census shows that 14% of Egyptian households would be headed by women. Moreover, lower mortality rates and longer life expectancy are creating new demands for elderly and other dependent care. In the absence of support policies for care, these tasks continue to be performed by women on an unpaid basis in the home.

Rising care needs significantly hinder women's abilities to participate in paid labour.



Rising care needs represent an additional burden for women, who continue to provide most of the unpaid care. Indeed, data from a time use survey carried out by the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS) in 2015 shows that 91% of women and girls aged 10 or older were providing non-paid domestic services for final use of the household, for an average time of 4.6 hours a day, while men and boys aged 10 years or older were only 26.4% of them doing so, for an average time of 1.4 hours a day¹⁶.

The amount of time women (and girls) spend providing unpaid care greatly hinders their ability to participate in the economy, engage in paid work and other activities (e.g. studying, leisure, community engagement).

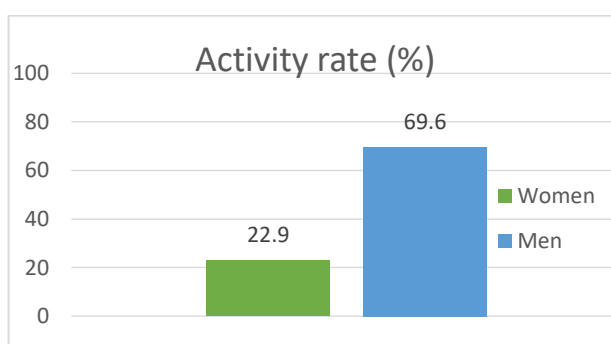
Research has shown that due to gender norms that assign unpaid and domestic work to women and girls, they tend to be 'time poor' and to face difficulties

accessing public services through several types of infrastructure. In addition, their opportunities to participate in decision-making processes to design suitable social protection programmes are more limited compared to men's.

Women's participation in the formal labour market is limited.



Women's activity rate in Egypt is one of the lowest in the region (22.9%), as opposed to a high activity rate for men (69.6%) in 2016¹⁷.



Source: LFS, 2016

In addition to the low activity rate, almost a fourth of active women aged 15 to 64 are unemployed (23.4%), as opposed to 8.4% men¹⁸. Unemployment is particularly high among younger women (aged 15-24), and 38.3% of them are unemployed, while this is the case for 25.7% of young men. More than a third of young women (35% of women aged 15-24 years) are not in education, employment or training; while this is the case of 19.6% of young men¹⁹. The incidence of part-time employment is much higher among women (21.2%) than among men (11.8%)²⁰ and finally the share of women employed in managerial position is also particularly low, at 6.4%²¹.

By contrast, informal employment is very high in Egypt, and the informal economy would employ over half of

¹⁴ Hussein A. Sayed (2017), *Egypt's Demographic Opportunity Preliminary Assessment based on 2017 Census*, UNFPA.

¹⁵ 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 [EDHS, 2014].

¹⁶ CAPMAS (2016) *Egypt's National Time-Use survey, 2015* [Time spent performing activities for individuals aged 10 or older and proportion participating in those activities, by background characteristics, 2015]

¹⁷ Egypt Labour Force Survey, 2016

¹⁸ See ILOSTAT – Egypt Labour Force Survey, 2017. Dataset available at:

https://www.ilo.org/ilostat/faces/oracle/webcenter/portalapp/pagehierarchy/Page3.jspx?MBI_ID=7&_afLoop=2659128179498741&_afWindowMode=0&_afWindowId=9nbo99jcb_1#!%40%40%3F_afWindowId%3D9nbo99jcb_1%26_afLoop%3D2659128179498741%26MBI_ID%3D7%26_afWindowMode%3D0%26_adf.ctrl-state%3D9nbo99jcb_57

¹⁹ See ILOSTAT – Egypt Labour Force Survey, 2017

²⁰ Idem

²¹ Idem

Egyptian workers²². Research estimates that between 48 and 70% of Egypt's non-agricultural private sector workers are subject to informal arrangements - they are either employed outside establishments (48%), not subject to national labour legislation or entitled to social protection or employment benefits (51%), casually employed (63%) and/or paid below minimum wage (70%)²³. Informal employment also affects 94% of Egypt's agricultural and mining workers and 11% of public sector workers²⁴.

Women are most likely to be 'trapped' in informality, with poor working conditions and limited access to social protection. Research has found that women informally employed earn on average half informally employed men's average wages. They also work longer hours and more days per week²⁵. Moreover, a large percentage of informal women workers are unpaid family workers (35% of women and 5% of men)²⁶.

Informality often goes in hand with lack of social protection, which means that the majority of women workers are unprotected in case of sickness, old age, maternity, etc. and more exposed to poverty. Research has shown that between 2011 and 2015, income poverty rose from 25% to 28% while an additional 22% of the population was at risk of falling into poverty. 24.5% of women (compared to 9.6% of men) live in poverty²⁷. In addition to gender, poverty in Egypt is largely connected to regional disparities, and poverty rates are significantly higher in rural Upper Egypt (were 43.7% of the residents are income poor)²⁸. Data from the 2015 national household income, expenditure and consumption survey revealed that extreme poverty reached 5.3%, and that 23 % of participating households could barely meet their basic food needs and 4.7 % had insufficient access to food²⁹.

While Egypt has made significant progress in improving women's and girls' access to social protection, important gender gaps remain.

Looking at regional level, Egypt is the country that spends the highest share of its GDP on public social protection expenditure. In 2015, Egypt's total social protection expenditure, including health amounted to 11.2% of its GDP. In 2015, 36.9% of the Egyptian population was covered by at least one social protection benefit (effective coverage)³⁰. However, women have less access to social protection, due their low formal labour market participation. Women also face additional issues, such as lack of IDs and long (and costly) application procedures, hindering their access to services. In addition, social assistance programmes and providers are often not free from gender biases and those stereotypes can restrict effective access for some eligible groups of women³¹. Research estimates that women's coverage of social insurance barely exceeded 20% in 2006 (and reached only 3.7% of women aged 20-29)³².

37.5% of the population above statutory pensionable age are receiving an old-age (contributory or non-contributory) pension. Approximately a third (29.3%) of the Egyptian working population is currently contributing to a pension insurance scheme and would then be entitled to contributory pension when retiring (contributory schemes offer higher benefit levels than non-contributory schemes). However, this is only the case for 10% of working women³³.

Egyptian women have only limited access to health insurance. Regardless of their professional status, only 8% of women are covered by health insurance³⁴. Only approximately 5% of private sector workers would be covered by health insurance, as small and medium



²² African Development Bank (AfDB) (2016), Addressing informality in Egypt, Working Paper – North Africa Policy Series. Available at: https://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Publications/Working_paper_-_Addressing_informality_in_Egypt.pdf

²³ As per February 2019, the minimum wage stands at 1,200 EGP (68.5 USD), only enforced for governmental employees.

²⁴ African Development Bank (AfDB) (2016), op.cit. Citing Angel-Urdinola and Tanabe, 2012: 14.

²⁵ African Development Bank (AfDB) (2016), op.cit. Citing El Mahdi and Amer, 2005; Nasr, 2010: 12-14

²⁶ International Labour Organization (2016), Women's entrepreneurship development assessment – Egypt, ILO DWT for North Africa and ILO Country Offices for Egypt and Eritrea. Available at: http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---emp_ent/---ifp_seed/documents/publication/wcms_551168.pdf

²⁷ CAPMAS (HIECS), 2015

²⁸ UNDP (2010), *Egypt Human Development Report*

²⁹ CAPMAS (HIECS), 2015

³⁰ ILO (2017), World Social Protection Report 2017–19: Universal social protection to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals International Labour Office – Geneva: ILO, 2017. Available at: https://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/WCMS_604882/lang-en/index.htm

See SDG Indicator 1.3.1. Effective coverage of social protection is measured as the number of people who are either actively contributing to a social insurance scheme or receiving benefits (contributory or non-contributory), as a percentage of the total population. Health protection is not included.

³¹ Maia Sieverding and Irene Selwaness (2012), "Social protection in Egypt: a policy overview", Gender and work in the MENA Region, Working Paper Series - Poverty, Job Quality and Labor Market Dynamics, N.23.

³² Idem

³³ ILO (2017), op. cit.

³⁴ EDHS, 2014.

enterprises are not required to enrol their employees in health insurance³⁵. In addition, research has shown that healthcare spending is also biased in favour of men and urban areas, due to the association between health insurance and the formal sector (especially governmental employment)³⁶.

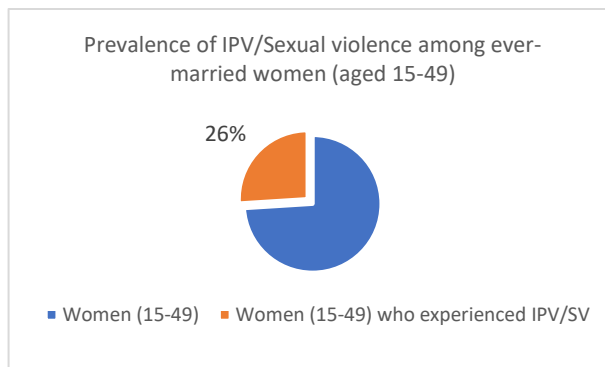
Women and girls have specific health needs in relation to their reproductive functions and are more affected by gaps in provision of healthcare services.

Among those are the need to access family planning services. 12.6% of currently married women in Egypt are considered as having an unmet need for family planning; around one-third of these women want to space the next birth, and the remaining are interested in limiting births³⁷. Research has shown that the total wanted fertility rate (TWFR) is below the actual fertility rate (TFR), meaning that if they could, Egyptian women would have less children^{38, 39}. However, lack of access to reproductive health services contribute to limiting women’s options and to increasing their fertility rate. Those unmet needs are more important among rural and poor women. Moreover, in spite of significant overall progress in maternal mortality, 16.5% of births in rural Egypt and 25 % of births in the lowest wealth quintile took place outside of health facilities⁴⁰.

Women survivors from violence are also in need of gender-sensitive services.



Data from the 2014 EDHS shows that 26% of ever-partnered women aged 15-49 years have experienced intimate partner physical and/or sexual violence at least once in their lifetime.



Source: EDHS, 2014

A recent survey found that less than 1% of those women had reported the incident or sought support. In addition, 13% of women aged 18-64 were exposed to any form of violence in public spaces; either at workplace, educational institutions, public transport or street in the previous 12 months⁴¹.

About 1 million women leave their homes yearly to escape intimate partner violence. Direct and indirect economic cost resulting from violence incidents are estimated to be at least L.E. 2.17 billion based on accounting only for the last most severe incident and the cost can reach up to L.E. 6.15 billion.

³⁵ Maia Sieverding and Irene Selwaness (2012), op. cit. (citing Maeda and El Saharty, 2008).

³⁶ Maia Sieverding and Irene Selwaness (2012), op. cit.

³⁷ EDHS, 2014.

³⁸ Hussein A. Sayed (2017), op. cit.

³⁹ 2017 Census data and 2014 EDHS.

⁴⁰ EDHS, 2014.

⁴¹ CAPMAS, 2016.

IV. Examples of initiatives to improve women's and girls' access to social protection, public services and infrastructures in Egypt

In line with the goals and objectives set out in the National Strategy for the Empowerment of Egyptian Women 2030, **UN Women Egypt has worked towards fostering women's access to social protection through its support to the Women's Citizenship Initiative.**

Egypt's social protection system is backed by strong legal, societal and historical foundation and its social security system has been considered as one of the most comprehensive in Africa and in the Arab region⁴². However, it faced some issues to meet social protection needs, in priority due to an imperfect targeting of previous safety net programmes, their low coverage and fragmentation⁴³. Thus, in 2015 the government of Egypt launched a series of economic reforms, including a comprehensive national social protection programme for reaching out to vulnerable people such as pregnant and lactating women, schoolchildren, people living with disabilities and the elderly.

Since March 2015, Egypt has implemented its first conditional cash transfer programme, the *Takaful* and *Karama* programme⁴⁴. Through this programme, the Ministry of Social Solidarity (MoSS) has been providing cash to poor households. *Takaful* ("Solidarity") supports poor families with children under 18 and 89% of the recipients are women. By the end of 2018, some conditionalities will be added to benefit from the programme, including ensuring children's attendance to school and participation in health screenings; and women's participation in ante and post-natal care. *Karama* ("Dignity") supports the elderly poor and people living with disabilities, without conditionalities. This cash transfer programme has enrolled 2.25 million families across all of Egypt's governorates, reaching out to 10 million individuals. Through this programme, a gender perspective has been given to social protection in Egypt. Indeed, *Takaful* is based on the acknowledgement

that women's role as unpaid carers should be recognised and valued, clearly highlighting the fact that the cash received should compensate for the time women have to spend on reproductive tasks.

However, the most vulnerable women, who the programme targets, faced structural issues to access the programme as they were lacking IDs or official registration documents.

BOX 4.1

Since 2011, UN Women Egypt Country Office has been supporting the **Women's Citizenship Initiative**, which aims at reaching out to rural and marginalized women and support them in getting their ID cards issued, so that those women can apply for *Takaful* and enjoy their social, political and economic rights. UN Women played a significant role in the provision of technical assistance, quality assurance and documentation of processes and success stories of the Women's Citizenship Initiative (WCI). The programme is considered one of the most politically-recognized and nationally-owned development programmes in Egypt due to its key contributions to women's advancement on both the political and socio-economic levels.



UN Women promotes women's and girls' access to gender-responsive public services.

Over the past few years, critical importance has been given by the Government of Egypt, UN agencies, women's machineries and CSOs to end violence against women and achieve international and national development goals and standards. In 2014, the Penal Code was amended to include a new provision against sexual harassment (Article 306), while in 2016, the 2008 law criminalising FGM was amended to include harsher

⁴² Loffredo Luciano (n.d.), *Welfare in the Mediterranean Countries Arab Republic of Egypt*, CAIMED.

⁴³ Research had shown that the 20% richest Egyptian households received 36% of the total energy subsidies, while 73% of non-poor Egyptian households had access to food ration cards.

⁴⁴ IFPRI Policy Brief, Egypt's *Takaful* and *Karama* Cash Transfer Program – Evaluation of Program Impacts and Recommendations, October 2018. Available at: <http://ebrary.ifpri.org/utils/getfile/collection/p15738coll2/id/132886/file/133097.pdf>

punishments against perpetrators (Article 242 of the Penal Code).

UN Women works to make public services, and especially those that target survivors of violence more gender-responsive in Egypt. One example of such work is the **Essential Services package on gender-based violence**, rolled out through a Joint Programme gathering several UN agencies, including UNFPA, UNDP, UNODC, ILO and UNHCR. Aiming to ensure a more holistic approach to combating violence against women, the programme convenes a wide spectrum of national governmental and non-governmental counterparts. Responding to the limited support services available to women and girl survivors of violence in Egypt, the programme aims to establish a multi-sectoral framework and to upgrade the standards of services available to survivors, integrating guidelines and tools in line with international standards in health, police and justice, social services and coordination and governance sectors. In cooperation with UNDP, UN Women has worked on improving available legal and social support services through the improvement of shelters as well as other social networks. UN Women has supported the Ministry of Social Solidarity to revise its by-laws for women's shelters to be in line with international standards. UN Women has also provided capacity development and support to the staff of the Ministry of Social Solidarity, National Council for Women, and Public Prosecution to better respond to survivors' needs.

UN Women Egypt contributes to the efforts to mainstream gender into more gender sensitive infrastructure.



UN Women promotes the safety of women and girls in public spaces through gender sensitive urban planning. One example of such work is the investment in the **urban upgrading and economic viability of a market in a low-income neighbourhood in the surroundings of Cairo.**

Zenein Market is a formal, mixed use market in Boulaq al Dakroun District in Giza Governorate. The market currently hosts 131 vendors of whom 52% are women. However, due to deteriorated physical condition and safety and security issues that affected women's (both as

vendors and customers) access, most of the market selling units were not operating.

BOX 4.2

UN Women developed a gender action plan that aimed at introducing a set of actions to enhance the operations of the market to better serve women vendors and customers. A gender analysis was carried out to identify gender inequalities and constraints, as well as a participatory needs assessment (PNA) to understand the needs of the different groups (vendors, users, etc.). Findings from these exercises informed the physical upgrading plan of the market.



Transport infrastructure is a significant determinant of women's experiences and participation in the labour market, as well as in carrying out their unpaid care work tasks⁴⁵.

Transport infrastructure also facilitates access to public services such as health care facilities and schools, and participation in community decision-making. As such, transport infrastructure has a strong empowerment potential.

However, urban space and transport systems have rarely been planned with women's safety and mobility in mind, and Cairo, Egypt's capital with over 20 million inhabitants, is no exception.

Seizing the opportunity offered by the foreseen Cairo Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), UN Women partnered with UN-Habitat to foster a better understanding of the challenges and the needs of women using public transport, in order to feed the design of the Cairo BRT system, and contribute to make public transports more gender-responsive. A series of surveys and focus groups were conducted with commuters, to capture the travel

⁴⁵ Chopra Deepta (2018), op.cit.

patterns, mobility needs, preferences and constraints faced by women and girls when navigating the city. Findings revealed that women have different travel patterns than men, due to their double role of carer and breadwinner, and that like most of public system transportations worldwide, Cairo's public transport systems have been catered to respond to men's traditional commuting patterns (connecting peripheries to the centre during peak hours). Women, by contrast, are more likely to engage in multipurpose trips throughout the day, within peripheral neighbourhoods where they combine income-earning with domestic tasks ("trip-chaining"). However, although they assume a higher share of the travels related to household duties and reproductive and caretaking responsibilities, women have more limited access to private transportation means, due to several factors (including their costs) and have to rely more on public systems. In addition, safety and security concerns and (and real) fear of being exposed to harassment and assault also hinder women's use of public transports. Such difficulties have a direct impact on women's access of numerous services and significantly restrict their socio-economic opportunities. The on-going design of the Cairo BRT offers an interesting opportunity to engage with the infrastructure sector to integrate social, gender-responsive and environment-friendly approaches into transit planning.

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