

Brief on Programme “Safe Cities Free from Violence against Women and Girls. Ending Violence against Women: survivor centered approach” funded by USAID Egypt

The Issue

Women and girls’ likelihood of experiencing violence – be it at home or in public spaces – reduces their ability to participate in school, employment, and public life. A 2015 study found that forty-six percent of ever-married women aged 18-64 years in Egypt reported experiencing some form of violence perpetrated by husbands, with 32 percent reporting physical violence, and 12 percent sexual violence.¹ Overall, an estimated 1% of all women who have faced violence report it to the police.² Other forms of sexual harassment take place more publicly, in the street, schools, workplace, or in online spaces, which can have an impact on women’s willingness to participate in public life. The cost of violence against women in public spaces in Egypt is estimated to be 571 million Egyptian Pounds (\$31 million USD).³ During the national lockdown in response to the pandemic in April 2020, a phone survey found that 11% of women surveyed were exposed to violence by their partner during the week preceding the survey and 19% of households had witnessed an increase in violence among family members.⁴ At the highest level, the Government of Egypt is actively pursuing efforts to end violence against women through policy and legal amendments, the enhanced provision of services in the health, social services, police and justice sectors, and public awareness campaigns.

Strategy for Change

The UN Women programme was launched in 2013 in partnership with the National Council for Women (NCW) as the main coordinating government counterpart. In 2015, the programme expanded to five governorates: Cairo, Giza, Alexandria, Minya and Beni Suef. The programme contributed to nationally-led enhanced policy and legal frameworks, strengthened capacities of national stakeholders and CSOs, and equipping communities with the knowledge and tools to confront violence against women. Prevention-oriented, survivor-centered, and locally specific interventions were carried out in partnership with the NCW, the Ministry of Social Solidarity (MoSS), the Public Prosecutor’s Office, Giza and Cairo Governorates, international and local civil society organizations (CSOs).

¹UNFPA & CAPMAS. 2015. *The Egyptian Economic Cost of Gender-Based Violence Survey (ECGBVS) 2015*. <https://egypt.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Costs%20of%20the%20impact%20of%20Gender%20Based%20Violence%20%28GBV%29%20WEB.pdf>

² Ibid p. 136.

Key Contributions and Achievements

In partnership with the Government of Egypt and civil society, the programme’s most significant contributions have been:

1. Partnering with nationally-led investments in strengthened policy and regulatory frameworks to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls:

- The **Penal Code was amended** in 2014 to clearly define and criminalize sexual harassment (Article 306), and the programme contributed towards nationally-led research and access to expertise in support of this.
- A comprehensive **Strategy on Ending Violence Against Women was supported** in 2015, with input from 12 ministries. The programme contributed to nationally led research and convening in support of this.
- With technical support from the programme, a **Gender Strategy was developed for MoSS** to provide strategic direction for the ministry’s programmatic interventions related to women and family empowerment.
- An **Observatory on the Status of Women was launched** to track progress on the National Strategy for the Empowerment of Egyptian Women.
- Through the programme, a **training module on gender for human resources personnel was developed and incorporated** into a training compendium of the National Institute of Governance and Sustainable Development affiliated to the Ministry of Planning and Economic Development.
- The programme supported national research to analyse trends on marriage and divorce in the context of the Egyptian family law, to support the NCW’s on-going research to inform evidence-based decision making.

2. Evolving Social norms, attitudes and behavioural change, at community and individual levels, to prevent violence.

- With 57 million total billboard views and ads on major TV channels, the **“Speak up” campaign**, launched under the programme in partnership with NCW in 2015, contributed to changing the culture of victim-blaming, advocating for social responsibility in preventing and reporting forms of

³ Ibid.

⁴ NCW, UN Women and the Egyptian Center for Public Opinion Research (Baseera). 2020. [Women and COVID-19 Pandemic](#). April.

violence against women, and promoting the Women's Complaints Office (WCO) hotline (15115)⁵.

- More than 10 million Egyptians now know about different forms of violence against women, access to legal rights and response services after watching the **"Nehad Stories" TV show. Produced under the programme**, the episodes also promoted positive male role models and reached an additional 1.14 million people on social media.
- The film **"Between Two Seas"**, co-produced under the programme in partnership with the NCW, has won 22 national and international film festival awards and is now streaming on Netflix⁶. Hundreds of Egyptians attended public screenings followed by group discussions on how to end the forms of violence depicted.
- More than 70,500 beneficiaries, including men and boys, increased their awareness of gender roles, stigma, and the negative impacts of different forms of violence against women through household visits and trainings. Many of the engaged youth continued implementing activities, receiving support for volunteer-run awareness-raising sessions, sports days, self-defense classes, children's carnivals, puppet-making, storytelling, art therapy, street graffiti and interactive theatre.
- More than 16,000 university students were engaged through community mobilization and awareness-raising, particularly on domestic violence and harmful practices against girls. **Through cooperation with Cairo University's Anti-Harassment Unit, university students implemented 57 activities to change mindsets. A sexual harassment policy was also developed and adopted at Cairo University with support from the programme, with training provided to 200 students and 23 faculty members.**
- Garnering 350,000 social media views in its first month, the second phase of the NCW's **"Taa' Marbouta"** campaign supported in part by the programme, increased awareness on the positive impact of women's access to economic opportunities, combatting stigma and discrimination⁷.
- Thousands of beneficiaries from low-income areas in Giza, Beni Suef, Minya and Sohag now know how to **access legal, medical, social, and economic services** offered by State institutions thanks to awareness-raising sessions conducted by the NCW.
- Nearly 500 children received messages about safety from different forms of sexual abuse through interactive songs, cartoons, games, and discussions imparted in school programmes developed in cooperation with SafeKids.

⁵ #SpeakUp Campaign to End VAW: Sexual Harassment <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GMvFriimY4M>

⁶ Between Two Seas Trailer, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sroF_8Gur28

3. Empowering women and girl survivors to benefit from accessible, affordable and quality basic services.

- Women have increased access to justice through pro-bono legal aid. Since 2015, the NCW's **Women's Complaints Office (WCO) has received nearly 80,000 complaints from women**, and the programme has supported WCO-affiliated volunteer lawyers to **provide free legal assistance, with almost 5,000 court cases filed.**
- Over the past three years, **more than 1,000 women and children have been hosted at the eight MoSS shelters**, with demand increasing steadily. Almost 8000 women have also benefited from an array of services ranging from psychosocial and family counselling to medical, legal, and financial assistance.
- **Four of the eight MoSS shelters were physically upgraded through an inclusive design process** under the programme, involving shelter residents and staff. Thanks to the renovations, women and their children now have greater privacy, safety and space for social activities and workshops. **Income-generation units for women survivors were also established in the Alexandria and 6th of October shelters.**
- **Shelter bylaw amendments were adopted by MoSS** to expand the range of services provided by shelters, allow them to receive homeless women, foreigners, and survivors of trafficking, and extend the hosting period for survivors from six months to one year.
- In partnership with NCW more than **900 public prosecutors strengthened their capacities** to respond effectively to crimes of violence against women and to provide support and protection to women and girl survivors.
- The quality of services for survivors has improved through mapping existing psychological service-providers (including national bodies, private clinics, and CSOs), **a partnership forged with the General Secretariat for Mental Health**, and a national volunteer network of psychologists and psychiatrists established to support female survivors.
- Capacity building trainings, Standard Operating procedures and a Training Manual on Case Management and Psychosocial Support **enabled service-providers (WCOs, shelters, CSOs) to better receive, manage and refer cases.**
- In partnership with the NCW and the two Governorates, a playground and school in Imbaba and Ezbat Elhagana respectively were upgraded as a women-friendly space where users can play sports, showcase/sell their handmade products, acquire new skills, and learn about positive parenting, girls' education, FGM and women's health.

⁷ #Taa Marbouta campaign videos

<https://www.facebook.com/unwomenegypt/videos/1398826993498922>

<https://www.facebook.com/unwomenegypt/videos/1398550383526583>

<https://www.facebook.com/unwomenegypt/videos/1398833583498263>

- Breaking new ground in gender-responsive urban planning in Boulaq El Dakrou, in partnership with the Governorate and the NCW, the **Zenein market was redesigned to create a space that is empowering for thousands of women customers and vendors**. The women-driven renovations included a physical expansion, 24-hour lighting, electricity,

running water and natural ventilation, the elimination of a dangerous back alley, the addition of a children's playground and bathrooms and ramps to make the market more accessible to women, children, the elderly, and people with disabilities. Women vendors also now have the know-how to run more successful businesses after financial literacy trainings and forging linkages with wholesalers.