



Country Profile of Egypt

A Review of the Implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
August 2011



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The Child Rights Governance Programme in Save the Children Sweden's Regional Office for the Middle East and North Africa implemented the activities of the Manara Network: A Civil Society for Child's Rights in the Middle East and North Africa Region.

Work on Child Rights Governance aims to build societies that fulfil children rights by establishing and strengthening the infrastructure necessary for states to effectively implement the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and other child rights obligations. It seeks to support a vibrant civil society pushing children up the political agenda and holding states to account for what they have or haven't done to realise children's rights. It is an effective strategy for impacting at scale the lives of millions of children, resulting in structural and lasting change.

Our long-term vision is that far more children have their rights fulfilled because:

- All states meet their obligations to monitor and implement children's rights
- A strong civil society, including children, holds states and the international community to account for children's rights

To advance this vision the Child Rights Governance Programme will have significantly contributed to two key objectives:

- Strengthened State institutions and mechanisms for the implementation and monitoring of children's rights,
- Increased awareness and capacity among civil society and children to promote children's rights and hold duty bearers to account

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*Save the Children's vision is a world in which every child attains the
right to survival, protection, development and participation.*

*Save the Children's mission is to inspire breakthroughs in the way
the world treats children, and to achieve immediate and lasting
change in their lives.*

*The Manara Network is a regional network focused on coordinat-
ing and promoting information and action on children's rights in the
Middle East and North Africa. Based on the belief that civil soci-
ety can and should play a key role in the protection and promotion of
human rights in general and child rights in particular, Manara aims
to support civil society organizations and children in the MENA
region in their role as advocates and active development partners for
the rights of the child.*

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Foreword

The project “Manara Network: A Civil Society for Child’s Rights” was designed and has been implemented by Save the Children Sweden in a time when the Middle East has experienced an Arab spring.

Our partner, the Egyptian Coalition for the Rights of the Child (ECCR), was key in producing this country report, a component of the Manara Network project.

The objective of this innovative project is to assure and contribute to effective development and implementation of policies, strategies and legislation in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child at the national and regional levels in Middle East and North Africa countries. The overall project aim is to establish a regional child rights network of civil society organisations by supporting and strengthening the capacity of local organisations in four main components: analysis and reporting, coordination and networking, advocacy and child rights programme mainstreaming with a high degree of children’s participation. During the year, children across the region have been actively involved in the newly-developed child-led data collection. Based on their findings, the children developed their own animated movies for advocacy purposes, which can be found at www.manaracrc.org.

On behalf of Save the Children Sweden’s Regional Office for the Middle East and North Africa, I am happy to introduce you to one of the key components of the Manara project, the country profile, a report highlighting the commendable practices implemented by government, civil society (parents, non-governmental organisations, media, religious leaders, etc.) and the international community (United Nations agencies and international non-

governmental organisations) towards compliance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols.

The country profile component of the Manara project is a rigorous and exhaustive report on the status of the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It aims to be a resource for identifying gaps and challenges on the status of the implementation of the Convention, to highlight the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on specific matters, and to identify commendable practices implemented by the State, civil society and the international community in addressing these issues.

We encourage its use as an inspiration to neighbouring countries, since the exchange of experiences presented in the country profiles can only lead to positive changes in the promotion and protection of children’s rights in the region. I would also like to thank the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency and their regional office in Cairo who believed in this idea and made the funding available.

Sanna Johnson
Regional Director, Save the Children Sweden

Regional Office for the Middle East and North Africa



Acronyms

AP	Action Plan	ERP	Education Reform Programme
BOD	Board of Directors	EU	European Union
CBR	community-based rehabilitation	FGM	female genital mutilation
CCA	Common Country Assessment	FHI	Family Health International
CDAP	community development associations	FJP	Family Justice Programme
CEFRS	Centre for Economic and Financial Research and Studies	GOTHI	General Organization for Teaching Hospitals and Institutes
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency	G-TIP	Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child	IBCR	International Bureau for Children's Rights
DAG	Donor Assistance Group	ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
EC	European Commission	IDSC	Information and Decision Support Centre
ECCR	Egyptian Coalition for the Rights of the Child	IMCI	Integrated Management of Childhood Illness
ECOSOC	United Nations Economic and Social Council	INGO	international nongovernmental organisation
ENCRO	Egyptian National Child Rights Observatory	IOM	International Organisation for Migration
ENP	European Neighbourhood Policy	NCCM	National Council of Childhood and Motherhood
ERCS	Egyptian Red Crescent Society	NGO	non-governmental organization
		NHASD	New Horizons Association for Social Development

OAU Convention	Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa	WFP	World Food Programme
		WHA	World Health Assembly
OPD	non-official organisations	WHO	World Health Organization
PDO	organizations for people living with disability		
PHC	Primary Health Centres		
PRI	Penal Reform International		
SETI	Support, Education, Training for Inclusion Centre		
SIP	School Improvement Program		
TDH	Terre des Hommes		
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework		
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme		
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund		
UNGEI	United Nations Girls Education Initiative		
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees		
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime		
UNV	United Nations of Volunteers		
USAID	United States Agency for International Development		



Introduction

Egyptian Coalition for the Rights of the Child (ECCR)

The Egyptian Coalition for the Rights of the Child (ECCR) was established in year 1995, and is comprised of 66 associations over 18 provinces. ECCR coordinates efforts between governmental and non-governmental organisations in various fields of childhood, and supports the rights of all Egyptian children without discrimination. Moreover, ECCR works to monitor and to implement the Convention on the Rights of the Child at the national level in Egypt.

The International Bureau for Children's Rights

Created in 1994 and based in Montreal, Canada, the International Bureau for Children's Rights (IBCR) is an international nongovernmental organisation (INGO) with special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). IBCR offers its expertise, particularly in the legal sector, to contribute to the protection and promotion of children's rights in conformity with the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and its Optional Protocols. IBCR is involved in projects around the world to facilitate the sharing of knowledge and good practices and the development of tools and models to inspire implementation of children's rights. IBCR's expertise also lies in raising awareness about children's rights to persuade decision-makers to adopt laws and programmes that more effectively respect the rights of the child. In recent years, IBCR's main successes include its exceptional contribution to the elaboration of

the Guidelines on Justice in Matters Involving Children Victims and Witnesses of Crime as well as their adoption by the United Nations Economic and Social Council.

Save the Children Sweden

Save the Children Sweden was established in 1919 as an independent rights-based non-governmental organization (NGO) with no religious or political affiliations. The basis of its work is the CRC and the United Nations' Declaration on Human Rights. These build on the principles that all people are equal, children have special rights and everyone has a responsibility—but governments have a special obligation. Save the Children Sweden believes that children themselves can also fight for their rights, if they are given the chance to do so and if they receive support and encouragement.

Save the Children Sweden works both in Sweden and in eight regions around the world, carrying out its own programmes and in cooperation with other organizations. It is also part of Save the Children International, comprised of 27 Save the Children organizations. Save the Children's vision is a world in which every child attains the right to survival, protection, development and participation. Its mission is to inspire breakthroughs in the way the world treats children, and to achieve immediate and lasting change in their lives.

About This Country Profile

All Middle East and North Africa (MENA) states have ratified the CRC since its adoption in 1989. Following ratification, MENA countries have enacted or proposed the enactment of laws to protect children from violence, abuse, neglect, and exploitation. Demonstrating a willingness to realise the promotion and protection of children's

rights, states have introduced legislation that provides for the protection of the child. Some states have gone further by implementing comprehensive mechanisms to not only prevent violations of children's rights, but also to monitor the situation and ensure justice for victims of violations. Despite these initiatives, however, the rights of children in the 17 countries of the region continue to face challenges.

In fact, child protection remains a sensitive issue in MENA countries, some of which have yet to comply fully with international standards. The nature and extent of child protection concerns varies from country to country, and includes issues such as violence against children, harmful practices (particularly female genital mutilation and early marriage), juvenile justice, exploitative child labour, and birth registration. Children in Lebanon, Yemen, Iraq and the occupied Palestinian territory have been exposed to political violence and conflicts, and have been affected by the deteriorating humanitarian situation. In other countries around the region, children also face violence, abuse, neglect, and discrimination. However, all children deserve the full enjoyment of their rights including the right to education, health, housing, and a basic standard of living, as well as the right to express their views, to be heard, and to participate in matters concerning them.

Civil society organisations (CSOs) are a driving force of society. Their continual and often thankless work has resulted in increased awareness, sensitization, monitoring, and reporting of violations of children's rights. As guardians of international human rights instruments, and more specifically of the CRC, CSOs have played a key role in raising awareness, denouncing violations, protecting victims and advocating, promoting and defending children's rights against abuse, violence, exploitation, ignorance, and contempt. In many parts of the world, including in the MENA region, CSOs have above all served to denounce violations of children's rights, often in conflict with public

“Child protection remains a sensitive issue in MENA countries, some of which have yet to comply fully with international standards.”



authorities, at the risk of grave consequences. However, too few local CSOs obtain recognition from the international community for their competency in these areas. Often, international organisations will rely on local organisations, who are rooted in the reality on the ground and working directly with children afflicted by the problems under study, to obtain their data and analysis of the situation. The international organisations then produce reports that are considered credible and speak on behalf of these affected populations. By being actors of public policy and therefore essential in the development of democratic governance, local CSOs should also be heard at the international level.

About The Manara Network

Bearing in mind the importance of the role of civil society organisations (CSOs) in ensuring the respect, protection and fulfilment of children's rights, the project “Manara Network: A Civil Society for Child's Rights”¹ was designed and implemented by Save the Children Sweden in collaboration with IBCR, along with local civil societies from the region. This innovative project was made possible thanks to the funding of the Swedish International Development Agency.

The objective of the project is to contribute to the effective development and implementation of policies, strategies and legislation in line with the CRC in MENA countries but also at the regional level. The project aims to establish a regional child rights network of CSOs by sup-



porting and strengthening the capacity of local organisations in four main components: analysis and reporting, coordination and networking, advocacy and child rights programming mainstreaming.

One of the components of the project is the production of a country profile. This report highlights commendable practices implemented by the government, civil society (including parents, local non-governmental organisations, media and religious leaders, among others) and the international community (both United Nations agencies and INGOs) to improve compliance with the CRC and, where applicable, its Optional Protocols.

The country profile component of the Manara project is two-fold: it includes the publication of a credible and exhaustive report on the status of implementation of the CRC in each country, but also involves strengthening the capacity of local CSOs in conducting research and analysis. To this end, the IBCR provided technical expertise and support to partners. During the project, a one-week training workshop on research methodology on children's rights was given on site to each partner, followed by a complementary training session a few weeks later. Throughout the project, IBCR provided support in drafting the report in order to ensure its credibility and reliability.

In order to paint a clear picture of the situation of children's rights in its respective country, each partner conducted an exhaustive literature review to identify existing reports and documents on all issues affecting the rights of children, followed by field research involving a series of interviews with identified stakeholders. Key respondents in relevant government ministries and institutions, local and INGOs, academics, unions and professional associations, media, religious authorities and United Nations agencies were contacted and interviewed. These inter-

views contributed to filling the gaps identified through the desk research. By meeting with relevant stakeholders, partners were able to gather information about the practices implemented by governmental and non-governmental actors following the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child in its latest Concluding Observations, as well as the challenges they faced.

The availability of respondents contacted in the course of the research for this project, and their willingness to share their experiences, allowed partners to identify praiseworthy initiatives implemented by a variety of stakeholders, at the same time as noting the gaps and overlaps that may prevent children from the full enjoyment and exercise of their rights. Therefore, the results of the research are based on responses given by a wide range of interlocutors in corroborating and completing data collected from secondary sources, so as to depict as accurately as possible the situation of children's rights in the country.

The country profiles were initiated first in July 2009 in Lebanon, Yemen and Morocco. A second phase was implemented from July 2010 in the occupied Palestinian territory, Jordan and Iraq. During that second phase, partners from Lebanon, Morocco and Yemen also conducted an in-depth analysis of violence against children in schools. Based on a methodology similar to the country profiles, that report depicted the extent of violence in schools in the three countries while also analysing the initiatives implemented by all stakeholders to prevent such violence and legislate, monitor and protect child victims of such violations. Compiling information, comparing experiences and sharing successful practices on one specific issue, especially among states with similar socioeconomic situations and cultures, was a particularly valuable process. Between July 2011 and January 2012, organisations in Tunisia, Algeria and Egypt had started conducting research.

As an opportunity to generate inspiration among neighbouring countries, the exchange of experiences presented in the country profiles can only lead to a positive change towards the promotion and protection of children's rights in the region.

Constraints and Challenges

Besides the contextual challenges specific to each country, the writing of the country reports has faced some constraints. The lack of up-to-date statistical data or informa-

tion was a challenge common to all partners. While each country has rather extensive expertise on children's rights, accessing it remains a challenge as reports and studies conducted by experts and other stakeholders are not available to the public. Also, taboos and cultural considerations sometimes prevented partners and respondents from having reliable and accurate data on issues that remain unspoken of, underreported and therefore, unaddressed. On the other hand, stakeholders were at times reluctant to share their experience on the initiatives implemented. Therefore, the report reflects only information that was corroborated by various stakeholders.



Country Overview

1. Demographic and Geographic Presentation

Egypt is located in northern-eastern Africa and covers an area of 1,002,000 square kilometres. The country's frontiers border Libya to the west, the Sudan to the south, and the Gaza Strip and Israel to the northeast. In the north, its Mediterranean coastline is about 1,000 km long and in the east, its Red Sea and Gulf of Aqaba coastline extend 1,900 km.¹⁴

Egypt's population is estimated to total 83,688,164 people by July 2012, with an average growth rate in 2012 of 1.922%. In 2011, 32.7% of the population was between 0 and 14 years of age, 62.8% between 15 and 64 years of age, and 4.5% of the total population was 65 years of age and older. In 2012, the total fertility rate was estimated at 2.94 children per woman.¹⁵ For 2010-2015, the average annual growth rate is expected to be 1.7%.¹⁶

The urban population represented 43.4% of the population in 2010, with an estimated annual increase of 2.1% from 2010 to 2015. The Egyptian population is divided between four major regions: the Nile Valley and Delta, the Eastern Desert, the Western Desert and the Sinai Peninsula. About half the population of the Delta are peasants; they are either landowners or labourers living on agricultural production. The remainder live in towns or cities, the largest of which is Cairo, Egypt's capital.¹⁷

Due to its position within the North African desert belt, Egypt's climate is characterised by low annual precipitation and a considerable temperature range between day and night with sunshine throughout the year. There are

sandstorms/dust storms in the desert (also called '*khamsins*') accompanied by a sharp increase in temperature, thick dust and a drop in humidity. The climate is basically bi-seasonal: winter and summer. Precipitation mainly occurs in the winter months and even if the amount is light on average, it is highly variable and diminishes southward. Overall humidity diminishes also diminishes to the south and on the fringes of the desert.¹⁸

Arabic is the official language, but English and French are widely understood by the 'educated' classes. The country's population is 90% Muslim (mainly Sunni), 9% are Coptic and 1% are other Christians.¹⁹

2. Historical Overview

Egypt was the home of one of the main civilisations of the ancient Middle East, that of the Pharaohs, who settled in Egypt's heartland, the Nile River valley and delta. This civilisation thrived for some 3,000 years through a succession of dynasties. Egypt then came under Hellenistic influence, conquered by the Romans and then the Byzantine Empire. It was later invaded by Arab Muslim armies and Arab culture adopted and the Arabic language prevailed. Egypt's history became part of the broader Islamic world. The French occupation in the 19th century marked the first western influence and set the path for European regional involvement and the occupation of Egypt by the United Kingdom.²⁰

This European influence led to a constitutional monarchy in 1922, followed by a military coup in 1952 that resulted in a new republic in 1953. The first President was General Muhammad Naghib who was ousted in 1954 by Gamal Abdul Nasser, who ruled governed Egypt for 18 years. His successor Anwar El-Sadat was the head of the State from 1970 to 1981 when he was assassinated. Subsequently, Mohammed Hosni Mubarak led the country

General Statistics on Egypt

Official Name	Arab Republic of Egypt
Capital	Cairo
Official Language/s	Arabic
Type of Political Regime	Republic
Date of Independence	1922
Date of Admission to United Nations	24 October 1945 ²
Human Development Index (/173)	113 ³
Total Population (2010)	81,121,000 ⁴
Youth (under 18) (2010)	30,264,000 ⁵
Children (under 5) (2010)	9,008,000 ⁶
Density (people per km ²)	81.4 ⁷
Urban Population	43.4% ⁸
Life Expectancy (male/female)	70.7/75.38 years ⁹
Fertility Rate	2.97 ¹⁰
Adult (Over 15) Literacy Rate	71.4% ¹¹
People Living on Less than USD1/Day	19.6% ¹²
Average Annual GDP Growth per Capita	5.1% ¹³

until 2011 when the Supreme Council of Armed Forces (SCAF) took over control of the nation's affairs after civil unrest and Mubarak's resignation.²¹ On 13 February 2011, SCAF announced that both the constitution and the parliament of Egypt had been dissolved.²²

3. National Political System

Egypt became independent on 28 February 1922 after being a protectorate of the United Kingdom. The revolution that began on 23 July 1952 led to the declaration of a republic on 18 June 1953; all British troops withdrew on 18 June 1956.

Egypt's legal system is mixed, based on Napoleonic civil law and Islamic religious law. Judicial review occurs through the Supreme Court and Council of State, with the Council of State overseeing the validity of administrative decisions. The legislative branch is a bicameral system composed of the Advisory Council or *Majlis al-Shura* and the People's Assembly or *Majlis il-Sha'b*. The Shura Council includes 264 seats; 176 of the members are elected by popular vote, 88 are appointed by the president. Members serve six-year terms and mid-term elections are held for half of the elected members.. The People's Assembly has 518 seats, with 508 members elected by popular vote, 64 seats reserved for women, and 10 seats appointed by the president. Members serve five-year terms. The Advisory Council traditionally has largely taken a consultative role. There are 27 governorates (or *muhafazat*) including the governorate of Cairo. Suffrage is compulsory and universal for all citizens older than age 18.²³

As mentioned, following the resignation of President Mubarak in February 2011, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, headed by Defence Minister Muhammad Hussein Tantawi, assumed control of the government.²⁴



4. Social and Economic Situation

Most of the country's economic activities take place in the highly fertile Nile Valley. The economy was mainly centralised under former President Nasser but presidents El-Sadat and Mubarak moved to open it. In 2004, a wide-ranging macroeconomic reform programme was launched with positive outcomes. Indeed, Egypt has been able to move towards a more market-oriented economy through structural reforms including new fiscal and monetary policies, privatization and business legislation. However, these reforms have not yet been able to rapidly reduce poverty levels.²⁵ From 2004 to 2008, the capital Cairo aggressively pursued economic reforms to attract foreign investors and increase the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Despite this economic aggressiveness, the living conditions of the average Egyptian remain poor.²⁶ Egypt Human Development Index is ranked as medium, at 113 out of 187 countries. The GDP per capita is at USD 5,673.²⁷ In 2011, the GDP purchasing power parity was estimated at USD 515.4 billion and the GDP real growth rate 1.2%.²⁸

Following the civil unrest that erupted in January 2011, social spending drastically increased to address public dissatisfaction. Nevertheless, ongoing political uncertainty led to a significant slowing-down of the country's economy, reducing the government's sources of revenues. Tourism, manufacturing and construction are among the sectors most hit by this slowing-down. Foreign exchange reserves are now supporting the Egyptian pound and the country may need to borrow money from the International Monetary Fund.²⁹

5. General Human Rights Situation

In June 2011, Human Rights Watch warned that Egypt's transition to democracy is at risk unless the military transition government carries out a number of human rights reforms, including lifting the state of emergency, ensuring the prosecution of security officials responsible for serious abuses, repealing laws that restrict free expression, association and assembly, and ending trial of civilians before military tribunals.³⁰



Two girls in Egypt participate in a psychosocial activity about child rights. *Courtesy of Save the Children Sweden*

The Children of Egypt

Notwithstanding legislative reforms and initiatives, children in Egypt are generally considered recipients of benefits rather than rights holders. Advocacy for a rights based approach remains necessary to change the opinions and behaviours of family members and neighbours that strongly influence decision-making in the family. Parents and professionals working or dealing with children do not voice children's view and opinions in matters that affect their lives. Children have little or no say in the decision-making process.³¹

1. The Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Optional Protocols

i. General Overview

Egypt ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) on 6 July 1990,³² and submitted its initial report on 23 October 1992. The second periodic report was due on 2 September 1997 but was submitted on 15 September 1998. The NGO Coalition for the Rights of the Child submitted an alternative to the Committee. The third periodic report was due in September 2002, but Egypt submitted its third and fourth periodic reports on 29 December 2008. Alternative reports were submitted to the Committee on the Rights of the Child for its 57th session of June 2011 by the International Baby Food Action Network and the International Disability Alliance. The Committee issued its Concluding Observations on 15 July 2011.

Egypt acceded to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography on 12 July 2002 and submitted its initial report on 30 March 2010, almost six years after the report due date of 8 December 2004. The committee issued its Concluding Observations on 21 July 2011.

Egypt ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict on 6 February 2007 and submitted its initial report on 5 February 2010, almost one year after the due date of 6 March 2009.³³ The Coalition to Stop the Use of Child soldiers submitted an alternative report for the 57th session of the Committee. Concluding Observations relating to the Optional protocol were issued on 18 July 2011.³⁴

“Notwithstanding legislative reforms and initiatives, children in Egypt are generally considered recipients of benefits rather than rights holders.”



ii. Ratification and Reporting to the Committee on the Rights of the Child by Egypt and Relevant Alternative Report Submissions

	STATE REPORT NUMBER	TYPE OF REPORT	DUE DATE	DATE OF SUBMISSION	CODE OR NAME OF ORGANISATION
Convention on the Rights of the Child Ratified 6 July 1990	1	State report	1 September 1992	23 October 1992	CRC/C/3/Add.6
	1	Concluding Observations	18 February 1993	CRC/C/15/Add.5	
	2	State Report	2 September 1997	18 September 1998	CRC/C/65/Add.9
	2	Alternative Report	CRC Session 26, 8-26 January 2001	NGO Coalition on the Rights of the Child Egypt	
	2	Concluding Observations	21 February 2001	CRC/C/15/Add.145	
	3, 4	State Report	2 September 2002	29 December 2008	CRC/C/EGY/3-4
	3,4	Alternative report	CRC Session 57, 30 May to 17 June 2011	International Baby Food Action Network	
	3,4	Alternative report	CRC Session 57, 30 May to 17 June 2011	International Disability Alliance	
	3, 4	Concluding Observations	15 July 2011	CRC/C/EGY/CO/3-4	

Optional Protocol to the CRC on the involvement of children in armed conflict Ratified 6 February 2007	1	State Report	6 March 2009	5 February 2010	CRC/C/OPAC/EGY/1
	1	Alternative Report	01 November 2010	Coalition to Stop the Use of child soldiers	
	1	Concluding Observations	18 July 2011	CRC/C/OPAC/EGY/CO/1	
Optional Protocol to the CRC on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography Ratified 12 July 2002	1	State Report	8 December 2004	30 March 2010	CRC/C/OPSC/EGY/1
	1	Concluding Observations	21 July 2011	CRC/C/OPSC/EGY/CO/1	

iii. Reservations

When Egypt ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child, it made reservations to articles 20 and 21 with regard to alternative care for children deprived of their family environment and adoption. The reservations were

unnecessary as the Convention recognises the Islamic fostering tradition or *kefalab*, and does not require a State to provide for adoptions. On 31 July, 2003, Egypt withdrew its reservations.³⁵



iv. Punctuality/Quality of State Report

Reporting on time is an obligation under Article 44 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The committee has emphasized the need for such discipline and timely reporting in its twenty-ninth session report (CRC/C/114). The Committee must be able to examine progress made in implementation of the Convention, hence the importance that states submit their reports on a regular basis and on time. Egypt did not submit its third and fourth reports on time. To make up for this delay and to comply with the obligations of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Committee requested that Egypt submit both its third and fourth reports in 2007. Eventually Egypt submitted both reports on 4 September 2010—that is three years after the due date of submission.

v. The Concluding

Observations of the Committee

Positive Aspects and Progress Highlighted in the Committee's Concluding Observations regarding the implementation of the CRC and the Optional Protocols

The latest concluding observations of the Committee regarding the implementation of the Convention and its Optional Protocols were made in June and July 2011. The Committee welcomed the significant efforts made by the State Party with respect to the implementation of the Convention. In particular, the Committee noted as positive different legislative initiatives such as: the adoption of Child Law No. 12/1996 amended by Law No. 126/2008, the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Involvement of Children in armed conflict in 2007 and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography in 2002. The Committee also noted as positive

the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2008, the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime in 2004, the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention No. 182 in 2002, and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child in 2001. Other institutional and policy measures were adopted and welcomed by the Committee. The Ministry of State for Family and Population was created in 2009 (albeit dissolved in 2011), an Egyptian National Child Rights Observatory (ENCRO) was established within the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood the same year. Child Protection committees and sub-committees were established at the level of governorates and districts. A National Committee to Combat Violence against children was also established. A Strategic Plan to Improve the Quality of Education (from the school year 2007/2008 to the school year 2011/12) was adopted and the Children at Risk Programme was implemented between 2006 and 2008. Various national plans, programmes and strategies for children were implemented as well including the Girls' Education Initiative in 2002, the National Strategy for the Protection, Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Street Children in 2003, the National Strategy for the Protection of Adolescents against Drugs in 2005, the National Strategy for the Elimination of Child Labour and its action plan in 2006, and national plan to combat violence against children between 2007 and 2012, and finally the National Illiteracy Eradication Project initiated in 2003.³⁶

With respect to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography, the Committee welcomed the adoption of Law No. 64 on Combating Trafficking in Persons and of the Harvesting and Transplant Act in 2010. Other positive initiatives were also welcomed such as the creation

of the National Coordinating Committee for Combating and Preventing Trafficking in Persons, as well as the Child Trafficking Unit within the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood which were both established in 2007. A National Plan of Action against human trafficking was adopted in 2011-2013 and positively noted by the Committee. As for the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Involvement of Children in armed conflict, the Committee appreciated the declaration made at the time of ratification that the minimum age for conscription into the armed forces is 18 years of age, including the country's participation in UN peacekeeping operations currently deployed in Africa and its active role in policy coordination, training and capacity building relating to peacekeeping and conflict resolution.³⁷

vi. Main Factors and Difficulties Impeding Implementation of the CRC and the Optional Protocols

The Committee expressed concern regarding the socio-political challenges that the country faces following the 25 January 2011 Revolution. It was particularly concerned over the interim rule by the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, which dissolved the Parliament and replaced the suspended Constitution with a temporary Constitutional Declaration. Within this context, the Committee reminded the State party of the continuous obligation to abide by its international human rights obligations and that the rights under the Convention apply to all children at all times. It called upon the State party to seize this critical transitional period as an opportunity to shift its policies towards democratic governance, as solicited by the country's youth, and to strengthen its legal and institutional system for the protection and promotion of human rights, including the rights of the child. The State party was strongly encouraged to uphold and build upon recent

achievements, among them the adoption of legislation relating to children including the 2008 Child Law, with a view to further improving the situation of children in the country.³⁸

vii. Overview of the Response of the Government to the Committee

In response to the Concluding Observations and in observing the developments underway in Egypt during the writing of this report, the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood in cooperation with UNICEF has begun to draft a National Plan for the coming 10 years covering all issues related to children and beginning fiscally in 2012-2013.³⁹

However, due to ongoing political unrest and the resulting absence of political decision-making, many initiatives launched to respond to the Concluding Observations could not be implemented by the State Party.

2. Applicable International and Regional Human Rights Instruments

i. Overview

Egypt has acceded to or ratified a good number of international legal instruments whether specifically related to children's rights or more generally to human rights. Indeed, besides ratifying the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols (1990, 2002 and 2007 respectively), Egypt has acceded to all major United Nations conventions on human rights, such as: the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (both in 1982); the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination



(1967); the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1981); the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (1986); the Convention on the Rights of the Child; the Convention on the Protection of Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (1993); and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2008).⁴⁰

However, Egypt has yet to adhere to a number of the optional protocols of the above mentioned legal instruments, including the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the two Protocols to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

ii. Relevant International and Regional Human Rights Conventions and Treaties and Their Status of Ratification by Egypt

INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS CONVENTIONS/ TREATIES	STATUS	LAST REPORT SUBMITTED BY STATE
Admission to the UN	24 October 1945	Not Applicable
Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)	Ratified 6 July 1990	Third and fourth reports: 4 September 2010
Optional Protocol to the CRC on the involvement of children in armed conflict	6 February 2007 (a)	17 March 2010
Optional Protocol to the CRC on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography	Ratified 12 July 2002	17 March 2010
International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination	Ratified 1 May 1967	Thirteenth, fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth reports: April 2001
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)	Ratified 18 September 1981	Sixth and seventh reports: February 27 2008
Optional Protocol to CEDAW	No Action	Not Applicable
International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights	Ratified 14 January 1982	Not Applicable
Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights	No Action	Not Applicable

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)	Ratified 14 January 1982	Third and fourth reports: 13 November 2001
Optional Protocol to the ICCPR	No Action	Not Applicable
Second Optional Protocol to ICCPR aiming at the abolition of the death penalty	No Action	Not Applicable
Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT)	25 June 1986 (a)	19 February 2001
Optional Protocol to CAT	No Action	Not Applicable
Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities	Ratified 14 April 2008	Initial Report in Progress
Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities	No Action	Not Applicable
International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance	No Action	Not Applicable
Convention relating to the Status of Refugees	22 May 1981 (a)	18 November 1997
Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees	22 May 1981 (a)	Not Applicable
Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness	No Action	Not Applicable
International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families	19 February 1993 (a)	23 April 2007
Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others	12 June 1959 (a)	Not Applicable
Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children	5 March 2004	Not Applicable
Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages	No Action	Not Applicable

Minimum Age Convention (C-138)	Ratified June 9, 1999	2011
Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (C-182)	Ratified 6 May 2002	Not Applicable
Convention on the Rights of Migrant Workers and their families	No Action	Not Applicable
Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court	Signed 26 December 2000	Not Applicable
African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child	Ratified 9 May 2001	19 April 2005

3. National Legal Framework and Practices Affecting Children's Rights

i. The National Legal Framework

At the time of this writing, it is worth mentioning that the Egyptian national legal framework is subject to change, since the country is currently governed by an interim ministry and new elections are due. A new Constitution is expected to be adopted after said elections.⁴¹

Until such elections are held and a new Constitution is adopted, Article 151 of the current Constitution governs the translation into domestic law of international instruments. Under the Constitution, these treaties have the force of law after their conclusion, ratification and publication according to an established procedure.⁴² The need to issue national legislation guaranteeing the implementation of the rights provided in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, an international legal instrument, led to the first Egyptian legislation pertaining to children's rights passed in 1996 by Decree 3452/1997 on 14 November. Indeed, the 1996 Child Law No. 12/1996,

considered then as the most important accomplishment of the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood, aimed to translate the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child within Egyptian domestic law. A further step was taken when amendments to the 1996 Child Law were adopted by new legislation in 2008, the 1996 Child Law as amended by Child Law No. 126/2008. These amendments impacted the civil status law, the criminal code and the criminal procedure code.⁴³

This set of amendments included the criminalisation of female genital mutilation, the elimination of discrimination against children born out of wedlock, the raising of the age at which children can be criminalised, the increasing of the minimum age of marriage from 16 to 18 for both girls and boys, the establishment of nurseries in prisons for children of jailed mothers, the obligation to undergo a pre-marriage medical check-up, and an increasing of penalties for child abuse.⁴⁴ The amendments were approved by the Egyptian parliament in June 2008.

Other legislative changes took place in recent years, such as Law No. 6/2009, which states that pregnant prisoners

should receive special medical treatment⁴⁵; the new Law on Combating Trafficking in Persons (No. 64) adopted in 2010 that clearly defines 'trafficking' and legally criminalizes the offense.⁴⁶ Egypt also adopted in 2010 the Organ Harvesting and Transplant Act, which prohibits organ trading and regulates organ transplantation.⁴⁷

In parallel to this legislative set, two plans were implemented: the Strategic Plan to Improve the Quality of Education (2008-2012) and the National Plan to Combat Violence against Children (2007-2012).⁴⁸

ii. The Main Stakeholders for Children's Rights

a. *Government Bodies*

Prior to the revolution, there were various Government bodies in charge of the promotion and implementation of children's rights in Egypt. One primary stakeholder was the Ministry of Family and Population, with the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood under its supervision. However, in March 2011, this ministry was abolished.

The Ministry of Education is responsible for the compulsory education of children aged six to 18.⁹⁴ The Ministry of Culture helps in raising awareness on child rights by issuing child rights publications, organising different seminars addressing problems faced by children living with disabilities and on gender equality and by promoting a culture of non-violence.⁹⁵ The Ministry of Information has launched a special family and child television channel while establishing a family and child committee as part of the Broadcasting and Television council.⁵¹

The Ministry of Manpower and Immigration has a Child Labour Unit, mainly responsible for the enforcement of

labour law regulating children's economic activities. It also assists in raising awareness of child rights by regulating programmes and media campaigns for combating child labour. In addition, the Ministry of Agriculture and Land Reclamation cooperates to prevent the employment of children less than 13 years of age.⁹⁶

In regard to child health, the Ministry of Health and Population⁵³ has a research centre for childhood diseases that is specialised in collecting data on child epidemic diseases and in following up on research conducted in the field of diseases control, disseminating the findings and recommendations, and exchanging information with scientific and research organisations in the field of childhood disease.⁴⁵

Concerning the security of and legal rights of the child, the Ministry of Interior has a Department of Children that is responsible for enforcing Child Law No. 126/2008 pertaining to the protection of children living in the street and children in conflict with the law while preventing the detention of children with adults.⁵⁵

The People's Assembly and Shura Council are the legislative bodies responsible for promulgating laws and each has a special committee specialised in children's matters, whether a separate committee or a part of the Human Rights Commission. The Ministry of Justice has four branches working on children's rights (the Sub Directorate of Information, Statistics, Communications and Cooperation with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC); the Council of State's Judicial Body; the Children's Judiciary Body; and the Children's Prosecution Authority).⁶⁵

The Ministry of Social Solidarity (now the Ministry of Insurance and Social Affairs) is also responsible for enforcing Child Law No. 126/2008 with regard to the social se-



curity pension of working children. It also helps in raising awareness of child rights through seminars, programmes and newsletters, providing consultation and guidance for those newly-married, and running care institutions for orphans, abandoned children and children at risk.⁵⁰

*b. National Councils
and Other Human Rights Institutions*

The National Council for Childhood and Motherhood (NCCM) was established in 1998 and is the supreme authority in charge of formulating policy, planning, monitoring and coordinating the national activities related to child-related programming. The Council has intensified child protection efforts to mobilise society as a whole and at all levels. Examples of such efforts are reflected in the Girls' Education Initiative, which combats female genital mutilation among other activities. The Council is currently working on providing resources and raising funds from donor agencies as well as the Egyptian and international private sector.⁵⁸ It fell under the auspices of the Ministry of Family and Population since 2009 but has been under the Ministry of Health and Population since March 2011.⁵⁹

The National Council for Human Rights was established in 2004⁶⁰. It monitors child rights violations and also has the authority to monitor the state in its implementation of the recommendations made in the Committee's Concluding Observations on the state report. It reports to the Shura Council.¹⁶

The National Council for Youth conducts programmes, trainings and competitions for children aged six to 18 years, supporting their participation in public life.⁶² In coordination with the National Council of Youth, the National Council for Sport organises sports competitions for school students and in youth centres.⁶³

The Egypt National Child Rights Observatory (ENCRO), a tri-partite initiative between the Egypt Cabinet Information and Decision Support Centre (IDSC), the National Council on Childhood and Motherhood (NCCM) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), was launched in January 2009. It helps strengthen the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood's ability to coordinate, develop, monitor and advocate for more accountable, transparent and participatory public policies for children by producing and managing evidence for policymaking. The Policy and Planning Unit proposes and coordinates the formulation of results-based and child rights-centred policies and monitors the implementation of national policies for the wellbeing of children, mainly through the National Plan of Action for Children.⁶⁴

c. Local Civil Society Organisations and Networks

There are 16,000 registered associations in Egypt.⁶⁵ Of these, 2,177 associations are working in the field of childhood. It has been reported, however, that many of these organisations were forced to change their field of activities due to a lack of funds.⁶⁶ Most NGOs are financed by the public sector (very few are financed by business or religious associations). Around 18% of NGO funding for children originates with governmental or foreign institutions.⁶⁷

The system for the establishment and operation of civil society organisation is inhibitive and has been hindered by the emergency law, which has been in place for decades.⁶⁸ Civil society organisations have been typically controlled through bureaucratic measures and procedures restricting access to local and foreign grants.⁶⁹ Indeed, Association Law No. 84 of 2002, while providing civil society organisations with exemption from contract registration and a separate taxation system, has been criticised as increasing the control of the State over civil society.⁷⁰

The Egyptian Coalition for the Rights of the Child (ECCR) is composed of 66 associations from 18 provinces. The ECCR is interested in the role of civil society organisations—especially non-governmental organisations that have begun to grow in number and have a positive relationship with government bodies—in providing assistance through partnerships.

Several networks have been established at the initiative of civil society organisations and international organisations. The aim of these networks is to increase cooperation and coordinate the work of partners. For example, there is the Community Based Rehabilitation Network that was established in 2010, the Child Protection Network established 2009-2010 or the Inclusive Education Network. These networks are mainly comprised of international non-governmental organisations. Depending on the network, meetings are organised on a regular basis. However, the successes of these networks has depended greatly on the availability of participating members.⁷¹

d. Media

Egyptian Children's Programmes mainly aim to promote the culture of the child, develop his/her talents, and promote his/her rights and duties. There are also programmes for parents about child rights and the parental role in discovering and encouraging a child's talents, the dangers of child labour, children's vulnerability to violence, the importance of health care and the early detection of disability.⁷²

e. Donors and Diplomatic Community

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has been funding projects in Egypt for over three decades. The majority of USAID's assistance is to the government. Since the 2011 political unrest, though,

“Civil society organisations have been typically controlled through bureaucratic measures and procedures restricting access to local and foreign grants.⁶⁹ Indeed, Association Law No. 84 of 2002, while providing civil society organisations with exemption from contract registration and a separate taxation system, has been criticised as increasing the control of the State over civil society.”



than \$28.6 billion.⁷⁴ Such programmes have helped to decrease infant mortality and increase youth literacy.⁷⁵

European Union (EU) cooperation (specifically that of the European Commission) with Egypt is part of the EU's overall support for Mediterranean countries. Since 2004, the EU has defined a European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) in relationship to countries that adjoin its eastern and southern borders. In March 2007, Egypt and other countries signed a jointly-agreed Action Plan (AP), a tool for economic and political cooperation that enshrines commitments and objectives governing the Egypt-EU relationship (the Association Agreement). In the latest 2007-

this support has also been provided to non-governmental organisations and the private sector to help the country in its economic and political transition. Two-thirds of awardees are local organisations and 40% are new partners. So far, overall economic support has come in grants totalling USD 100 million for job creation programmes, humanitarian assistance and poverty reduction. In addition, USD 65 million has been provided for democratic development and the protection of human rights.⁷³ Nationwide, this assistance has translated into programmes in health, education and other sectors. Since 1975, USAID assistance has totalled more



2013 Country Strategy Paper, the EU-Egypt cooperation strategy shifted to be more explicit and include direct support for civil society in order to support reforms in the areas of democracy, human rights, good governance and justice. The issue of social development has taken on a broader perspective, moving from a focus on 'human resource development' (mainly health and education) to a focus on 'poverty alleviation support', including support to a sustainable development.

From 1998 to 2008, the European Commission has dedicated a total of one billion Euros for bilateral interventions. This economic assistance has targeted different sectors including education and health, human rights, civil society and democracy. The bilateral ENP budget allocation for 2011-2013 amounts to a proposed sum of Euro 449.29 million, an average of 149.76 million per year which is a 5.4% increase over the previous programming period.⁷⁶

f. UN Agencies

Thirty-five resident and non-resident UN agencies are active in Egypt.⁷⁷ UNICEF is one of the main aid agencies cooperating with the Egyptian Government. UNICEF's priorities are children's health, education, equality and protection, with HIV/AIDS, refugees, infant mortality and girls' education as areas of particular focus. UNICEF is involved in a variety of programmes including policy analysis, the evaluation of practices, humanitarian aid distribution, research, and data monitoring.⁷⁸ The agency has supported awareness campaigns on hygiene, HIV/AIDS, female genital mutilation, early childhood development and immunization at the national and community level.

As per the 1954 Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of Egypt and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the UN

agency carries out all activities related to the registration, documentation and determination of refugee status.⁷⁹ The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) works mainly to provide a protected environment for refugees, meeting their basic needs and providing services, as well as guaranteeing refugee children's access to quality education.⁸⁰

The United Nation Development Programme (UNDP) conducts development programmes for poverty reduction, integrated social development and social protection including Conditional Cash Transfer. UNDP continues to assist the Government of Egypt in building its capacities and developing adaptation options and local solutions for climate change, including energy efficiency and water management.⁸¹

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) country office was established in 1972 and since then, UNFPA has supported Egypt through seven five-year country programmes. The current country programme is the eighth and covers the period of 2007-2011. It is based on the Common Country Assessment (CCA) and aligned with the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF). UNFPA works in the areas of population and development, reproductive health, and gender. The United Nations Population Fund aims at ensuring that relevant measures are taken to uphold the quality of reproductive health services, and that the capacity of the Ministry of Health for commodity security is maintained. The UNFPA has also taken the lead in increasing access to and improving the quality of voluntary counselling and testing services for sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS, including for vulnerable segments of the population. It has also contributed to the introduction of Youth Friendly Reproductive Health Services.⁸²

The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) helps in encouraging the regularisation of migrants in Egypt. Its strategy is to continue supporting the country's efforts towards migration management, intervening in the migrants' resettlement and enhancing the bonds between the Egyptian Diaspora and the homeland. To that end, IOM has developed and implemented projects as well as funded research on a regional scale. Since 2008, the IOM's mission in Cairo has also worked with civil society and the United Nations to assist the Egyptian government in fighting against human trafficking.⁸³

g. International Civil Society Organisations

Save the Children International works to promote and protect children's rights around the world. It works with 29 national organisations to support children and to implement better practices and policies and to build partnerships with communities, civil society, governments and the private sector.⁸⁴ In Egypt, both Save the Children United States and Save the Children United Kingdom have been working at implementing programmes with local groups to help Egyptian boys and girls enjoy their childhood and reach their full potential. They have worked to improve access to health services and quality education while providing support to children living in the streets or others at risk. In 2010, services reached 2.5 million children and families in impoverished communities all over Egypt.⁸⁵

Plan International has been working in Egypt for more than 30 years. The organisation serves more than 1.5 million children and their families in six governorates. Plan's core activities target children involved in child labour or in street situations, children with disabilities, helping youth become employable and developing organisations for youth, in support of literacy, and to help women save money.⁸⁶

Terre des Hommes (TDH) has been working in Egypt since 1983. It carries out activities in Lower and Upper Egypt for the support of and monitoring and coordination with local non-governmental organisations in order to improve the situation of children in the country. TDH focuses on child protection, child labour and socio-educative integration of children with special needs. Child protection activities are undertaken to guaranty the survival and development of the child. The organisation also aims at reducing child labour through enhanced education and family support. Its assistance for disabled children is two-pronged: empowering children with disabilities and their families (through education and access to health, for instance) as well as enhancing disabled children's integration by raising community awareness and support.⁸⁷

Handicap International has been working in Egypt since 1987. Its programmes include a rehabilitation programme for children with disabilities and their families, physiotherapy and the fitting of artificial limbs, and assistance to people with intellectual disabilities. Currently Handicap International's projects are focused on promoting the rights of people with disabilities.⁸⁸

Caritas has been working in Egypt since 1967. The organisation works in many realms of child's rights protection. Since 1987, Caritas has run a Support Education Training for Inclusion (SETI) Centre to improve the quality of life of people living with a disability. Awareness-raising campaigns are also organised for students, professionals and various other sectors to sensitise them to the living conditions of persons living with disability.⁸⁹ Caritas also manages seven medical centres in poor areas far from urban regions. These centres offer services including support for mothers in education and nutrition. Caritas has been involved in literacy programmes since 1972. Its Basic Education Programme has extended to coordinate with



approximately 50 agencies and non-governmental organisations.⁹⁰

4. Identifying Child Rights Commendable Practices in Light of the CRC's Main Principles

i. The Right to Non-Discrimination (Article 2)

Article 40 of the Constitution provides that citizens “... are equal in front of the law and equal in rights and duties. There shall be no discrimination between them based on gender, origin, language or belief.”⁹¹ Furthermore, Child Law 126 of 2008 prohibits discrimination on any grounds.

a. Gender

Primary school attendance for boys and girls between the years 2005 and 2009 was 96% and 94%, respectively. However, among students in secondary school over the same time period those ratios decreased to 72% for boys and 67% for girls. A similar decline in school enrolment as children get older was found in data on primary and secondary school enrolment. For example, from 2005 to 2009, 95% of boys and 92% of girls were enrolled in primary school, while in high school 73% of boys and 77% of girls were enrolled.⁹²

Discrimination has been documented towards girls living with disabilities, with girls being more marginalised than boys. These children suffer from compounded discrimination, both as girls and people with disabilities. They experience more abuse and harassment at home, at school or within their communities than do boys living with disabilities. Being more likely to be forced to stay home, they are deprived from health services, access to education and employment and the right to have their own family.

This assessment was observed by the Community Based Programmes Centres run by Plan Egypt, where fewer girls attended the activities.⁹³ Families tend to hide girls with disabilities because they are ashamed. The handicap might be an obstacle to the marriage of their sisters, as it is commonly believed the family genes are “defective”. Nor do families consider marrying off their girls living with disabilities and consequently, these girls are seen as having less value and their needs for the future are not considered. Furthermore, families do not want to send their girls living with disabilities to the Centres, since they fear they might mingle with boys. Often these centres only offer programmes geared towards boys. And even if the families wanted to send their girls with disabilities to these centres, it is hardly feasible since there is limited if not complete lack of accessibility (for example, the steps between floors that are hard to navigate), notwithstanding the remoteness of some centres which forces poor families to incur public transportation expenses. Eventually girls living with a disability stay home; valued less than boys, they are left behind to take care of the household.⁹⁴

In its latest Concluding Observations, the Committee was concerned about the “significant gender gap” and persistent discrimination against girls. It regretted to note that among children who never enrol in school, 82% are girls. In this regard, the Committee encouraged Egypt to continue the Girls’ Education Initiative and proceed with intensified awareness-raising activities towards the promotion of education for girls. It should repeal all legislation discriminating against women, the Committee said, including the Penal Code and personal status law. The Committee also recommended the adoption of legislation granting equality between Egyptian men and women in passing nationality to their children and the full incorporation of decrees made by the ministries of Interior and Foreign Affairs of 2 May 2011 allowing Egyptian mothers married to Palestinian men to pass on their nationality

to their children. The Committee was further concerned about gender inequalities stemming from Article 288 of the Penal Code (1937) stipulating 10 years imprisonment for the crime of abducting girls as compared to five years for boys. The Committee highlighted its concerns about sexual harassment and abuse experienced by young girls and, in this regard, urged the State party to implement a comprehensive law criminalizing all forms of violence against women.⁹⁵

The United Nations Girls Education Initiative (UNGEI), an international initiative, was implemented in Egypt by the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood. This initiative was implemented in seven governorates⁹⁶ from 2002 to 2007, and a generalisation phase was planned for 2008 to 2012. The programme aimed at decreasing the gender gap during primary education and improving the quality of education and realising gender equality in basic primary education by 2015. The objective was to construct 1,076 girl-friendly schools and target 24,413 girl students.⁹⁷ At the time of this writing, around 1,200 schools and more than 30,000 children had been reached, 80% of whom were girls.⁹⁸

UNICEF is also supporting three community-based initiatives: 227 community schools reaching more than 5,000 children (75% of whom are girls).⁹⁹ The Community School Initiative was initially created by UNICEF in 1992 in Upper Egypt and was used as a model for the UNGEI.¹⁰⁰ Since 2009, the Ministry of Education has supported the initiative and the project has been expanded to more than 750 schools.¹⁰¹ The pilot project targeted populated, rural and hard-to-reach areas with a small number of school age children and was intended to provide access to education, with a special focus on girls.¹⁰² UNICEF evaluated the programme and has since suggested expanding it beyond the targeted governorates to Sohag, Assiut,

Minya, Beheira, Giza, Fayoum and Beni Suef, where a gender gap has been observed.¹⁰³

b. Birth Out of Wedlock

Birth out of wedlock is considered against *Sharia* (Islamic) law since it results from a presumably illicit relationship. If a woman becomes pregnant and is not married, her family has in some cases killed both the woman and the father of the unborn child, particularly in rural areas. In other instances, the child born out of wedlock might be registered under the family name of the mother and raised as her brother or sister. The family might also go to court to prove the child's paternity. If the man refuses to take the paternity test, the court would recognise him as the father's child.¹⁰⁴

In its latest Concluding Observations, the Committee was deeply concerned about the persistence of discrimination against children born out of wedlock. The lack of uniformity throughout the State party in birth registration and related social stigma means that children born out of wedlock continue to face difficulties in their daily lives and notably in obtaining birth certificates.¹⁰⁵ In this regard, the Committee recommended ensuring free and compulsory birth registration to all children born in the State party, with particular attention paid to children in deprived and remote regions, including children born out of wedlock.¹⁰⁶

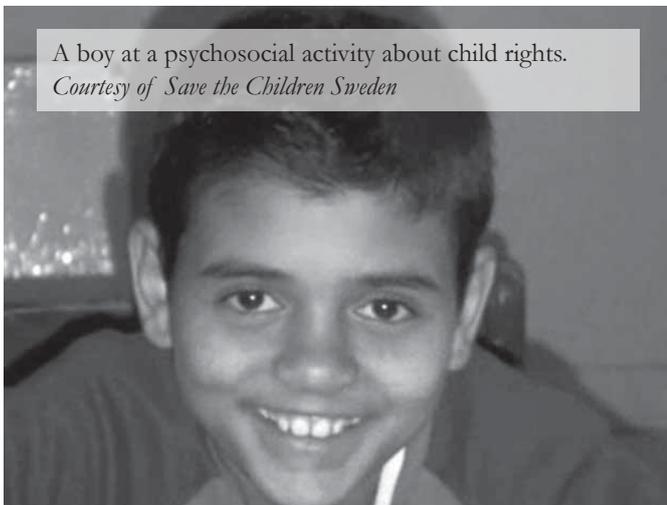
No initiative addressing discrimination against children born out of wedlock was found in the course of this research.

c. Rural/Urban Areas

In the year 2010, 43.4% of Egypt's population was living in urban areas.¹⁰⁷ Rural areas typically have higher poverty rates, fertility rates, and are affected by other social factors.



A boy at a psychosocial activity about child rights.
Courtesy of Save the Children Sweden



Agriculture is a key component of the economy in rural areas, though some people are employed in the tourist industry or other non-farm occupations.¹⁰⁸

UNICEF and the Centre for Economic and Financial Research and Studies (CEFRS) have reported that in rural areas and Upper Egypt, poverty among children was much higher and more concentrated than in Lower Egypt. Indeed, in 2008/2009, income poverty rates for households with children were 30.5% in rural areas and 12.6% in urban areas. In Upper Egypt, among urban households, poverty affected 21%.¹⁰⁹ While preparatory schools exist in almost all-sub districts in urban areas, in rural areas, only 73% of households have preparatory schools in their communities.¹¹⁰ Moreover, 63.38% of kindergartens are concentrated in urban areas.¹¹¹ It has also been reported that children living in poor households are less likely to be enrolled in school. In rural Egypt, 8.5% of all girls and 15.5% of poor girls are not enrolled in school.¹¹² Almost four percent of all rural children aged seven to 18 were severely education-deprived.¹¹³ In Lower Egypt, only one percent of children in urban areas are health-deprived

compared with 1.4% in rural regions and 3.9% of children in rural Upper Egypt.¹¹⁴ It has also been observed that in rural areas children are more than eight times more likely to experience severe water deprivation than children living in urban areas (4.3% vs. 0.5%, respectively). Indeed, rural Upper Egypt and frontier governorates have the highest rates of water deprivation (5.3% and 18.2%, respectively), having to walk 30 minutes or more to go and return from their water source or are using unsafe sources of water.¹¹⁵ Frontier governorates and rural Upper Egypt were also characterized by the most marked deprivation, where 19% and 18% respectively of all households had no access to piped water.¹¹⁶

In its latest Concluding Observations, the Committee expressed its concerns about discrimination against children living in rural areas. Child mortality remains high in these areas and a great disparity exists in the provision of health care as compared to urban areas. In this regard, the Committee urges the State party to prioritize improving access and availability of primary health care in rural areas, given the high levels of poverty.¹¹⁷ The Committee also welcomed the Government's intention to launch programmes aimed at decreasing poverty levels but was disappointed with current levels of poverty, lack of basic needs and growing economic disparities in rural areas.¹¹⁸ It thus recommended the State party promote anti-poverty programmes in rural areas.¹¹⁹ Furthermore, the Committee remained concerned by the quality of education in rural areas and existing disparities between rural and urban regions in enrolment and access to education.¹²⁰ Indeed, the lack of opportunities for children living in rural areas to access educational facilities such as pre-school and other early childhood institutions persists. In this matter, the Committee recommends the State party, as proclaimed in the Constitution, strengthen all measures guaranteeing children, without discrimination, access to free and compulsory education.¹²¹

A three-year geographically targeted national project has been launched by the Government for the poorest villages as part of the reform agenda. The poorest villages are mainly located in four governorates in Upper Egypt: Minia, Assuit, Sohag and Qena. This plan encompasses 11 main programmes (i.e., development of formal education infrastructure; conducting of literacy classes; development of health and new housing units; provision of potable water and sanitation, electricity and roads; improvement of environmental conditions; and social protection schemes, including social fund loans).¹²² Based on the interviews conducted in the course of this research, most projects by international organisation are implemented in Upper Egypt, and take into consideration regional disparities. The majority of interlocutors expressed their intention to address the needs of children living in rural areas.

d. Refugees, Migrants and Internally Displaced Status

Egypt is a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention and 1967 Protocol as well as to the 1969 Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa (OAU Convention). As of January 2011, there were 95,056 refugees in Egypt, and 14,303 asylum-seekers.¹²³ As of December 2011, there were approximately 44,570 asylum seekers and refugees in Egypt registered by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), including 13,549 (30%) under the age of 18 (6,037 asylum-seekers and 7,512 refugees). These individuals came from the occupied Palestinian territory, Sudan, Iraq, Somalia, Eritrea, Ethiopia, and elsewhere. Refugee status documentation was suspended for Sudanese in June 2004 and therefore they remain under the status of asylum-seekers.¹²⁴

Egypt is both a transit country (through the North Sinai) and a final destination for refugees, often for irregular movements originating from sub-Saharan countries.¹²⁵

According to the UNHCR, refugees and asylum-seekers living in Egypt are faced with “difficult socio-economic conditions aggravated by poverty and a sensitive political and security environment.”¹²⁶ Difficult socio-economic conditions have contributed to high unemployment and widespread poverty, thereby limiting the effectiveness of the UNHCR in developing sustainable self-reliance strategies. These socio-economic conditions prolong vulnerability and dependence on the UNHCR’s financial assistance and subsidized basic services. Since national services lack the capacity to address the requirements of refugees and asylum-seekers, the UNHCR and its partners have been responsible for providing assistance.¹²⁷

In its latest Concluding Observations, the Committee highlighted that in spite of some progress in reducing discrimination, children of migrant workers and refugee children persistently experience unequal treatment, especially in fulfilling their right to education.¹²⁸ Hence, it urged the State party to guarantee that all children are treated equally, as stipulated in the Convention.¹²⁹ Among other concerns, the Committee observed that children born of migrant workers continue to encounter obstacles in obtaining birth certificates, due to social stigmas.¹³⁰ In this regard, the Committee urged the State party to ensure compulsory birth registration and abolish birth registration fees.¹³¹ It also expressed concern that almost a third of the refugee and asylum-seeking population living in the State party are children and lack legal protections under domestic law.¹³² These children are exposed to unequal access to education and the public health care system.¹³³ Refugees in the State party live in very poor conditions that are exacerbated by a prohibition on their obtaining work permits.¹³⁴ In this matter, the Committee called upon the State party to ensure access to free public education and to primary and emergency health care for all children, including asylum-seeking and refugee children.¹³⁵

In 2009, the UNHCR conducted 18 workshops or seminars and four academic courses on refugee law for 500 Government officials, including immigration, police, state security officers, judges and prosecutors. Many of the workshops, which took place in different locations in Egypt, discussed sexual and gender-based violence, HIV and AIDS, statelessness and the asylum-migration nexus.¹³⁶ In December of the same year, the Cairo Regional Office of the UNHCR carried out two back-to-back workshops jointly with the National Council for Judicial Studies on International Refugee Law and Favourable Protection Environment for 25 Judges and Public Prosecutors from Cairo, Giza, and Alexandria Governorates.¹³⁷

In 2010, Cairo was the pilot city for the implementation of the UNHCR's policy on refugee protection and solutions. The implementation of the policy resulted in new strategies for health care, education, and livelihoods for 2011.¹³⁸ In the same year, the UNHCR conducted 13 training sessions on refugee law training and capacity building. The sessions, organised in cooperation with the Egyptian Press Syndicate, targeted 325 individuals, including border guards, lawyers, journalists, and NGOs.

UNHCR seeks in 2012 to strengthen the services and the support for groups with specific needs, to ensure fair protection processes and documentation, to guarantee the favourable protection environment and to ensure community participation and self-management.¹³⁹

e. Ethnicity or Religion

Islam is the official religion of the State party, and about 90% of all Egyptians are Muslims, most of them members of the Sunni sect. According to official Egyptian estimates, the Coptic Orthodox church, a Christian denomination, has three million adherents and constitutes the largest religious minority. Copts themselves claim

some seven million members. An estimated one million people belong to the Greek Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Armenian, and various Protestant churches. The country has a very small Jewish community.¹⁴⁰

The Committee on the Rights of the Child issued no specific concern or recommendation regarding discrimination of children based on ethnicity or religion. No initiative on the matter was documented in the course of this research.

f. Disabilities

Egypt ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on 14 April 2008. The initial report on compliance is being written.¹⁴¹ When adopting the Child Law of 2008, Egypt committed to take measures necessary for the early detection of disabilities and the rehabilitation and employment of the disabled when they reach a working age (Article 75). It also committed to take all measures necessary to raise awareness about the integration and participation of disabled people in society.¹⁴² Egypt enshrined in this new legislation the right for children to be protected from all forms of discrimination, particularly discrimination on the basis of disability (Article 3).¹⁴³ It also guaranteed children with disabilities the right to education and training at the same schools as other children unless their disability prevents this. In this case, the State has the duty to provide these children with education in specialised institutions (Article 76).¹⁴⁴ A child with a disability is also guaranteed special care promoting self-reliance and facilitating his/her integration and participation in the community.¹⁴⁵

Since September 2003, a helpline for children living with a disability has been in place.¹⁴⁶ Through this helpline, children living with a disability and their families can get free medical advice and information about services provided by the State and civil society organisations. Callers can also

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lies and government education specialists. This network continues to support governmental efforts to mainstream disabled children into the education system. Members of the network have different types of experience in inclusive education. The Disability Awareness Network was likewise established through the internet to bring together disability rights advocates, family members and specialists. This network monitors media coverage of the issue of disabled children.¹⁴⁹ A disability support group was also initiated, as well as the Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) network, the latter in place since approximately 2010. These networks enable organisations working in the same field to increase coordination and information-

get free legal advice. The helpline contributed to the creation of a database mapping disabilities in Egypt. Between March 2006 and December 2008, a total of 29,604 calls were received.¹⁴⁷ While the helpline has been functioning well, it was recently reported as being less used since the abolition of the Ministry of Family and Population.¹⁴⁸

Several networks have been put in place in recent years engaging disability experts and stakeholders in improving civil society organisations' role of advocacy. In 2008, the Education Integration Network brought together 20 specialised organisations, stakeholders, fami-

sharing. These networks were informal but most of them are in the process of transforming into foundations.¹⁵⁰

It is estimated that eight million people are living with a disability in Egypt, among them four million living with moderate and severe disabilities.¹⁵¹ Estimations place the number of children living with a disability between one and 2.5 million. In the past, negative social attitudes and feelings of shame contributed to a cycle of isolation, where children with disabilities were often hidden from families and community. They generally did not attend public schools and had limited access to public services.¹⁵² Recent events have led to a shift in social perceptions of people living with a disability. Many organisations have worked on advocacy, including people living with disability organisations (PDOs) and service providers have extended their services, enabling access. Since many people living with a disability were part of the revolution, they have become more visible and receive greater recognition of their rights. In remote areas, perceptions are also improving but less rapidly.¹⁵³

On top of discrimination due to disability, girls with disabilities are more marginalised than boys and also suffer from gender discrimination. They experience more abuse and harassment, whether at home, at school or within their communities than do boys living with disabilities. Because of stigma and prejudice, girls living with a disability often they stay home and are less valued than boys, despite often bearing the burden of caring for the household.¹⁵⁴

The National Council for Childhood and Motherhood (NCCM) has a “Children with Disability” Programme that includes the launching of a website about disability that provides answers to common questions (www.special-needs.org.eg);¹⁵⁵ the adaptation into Braille of the Scouts training manual in cooperation with the Arabic Scouts



Organisation; the design and production of awareness-raising materials including brochures about working with children with cerebral paralysis and a video about children with Down Syndrome.¹⁵⁶ The NCCM, alongside the Ministry of Social Solidarity, has also initiated awareness seminars for parents and caretakers to discuss children's problems and how to address them. It provides other services including a social rehabilitation programme to help children living with a disability to reintegrate in their local communities.¹⁵⁷ The Ministry of Culture has organised seminars on the rights of children living with a disability: how to care, educate and integrate them into society. These seminars aim at propagating a culture of participation, gender equality and the rejection of violence. Leaflets or innovative publications depicting the writing and drawings of disabled children initiated by the Ministry have given children the opportunity to express themselves.¹⁵⁸ The private sector has also contributed by providing services to children with learning difficulties. These services include the measurement and evaluation of psychological and educational aptitudes, the provision of educational supports and teacher and assistant teacher training on how to work with children with disabilities in regular schools.¹⁵⁹

In its latest Concluding Observations, the Committee noted the strengthening of children's legal protections through the Child Law of 2008. It remained concerned, however, by the lack of a definition of disability that conforms with international standards, which perpetuates discrimination and prevents the collection of data on children with disabilities.¹⁶⁰ Also, the Committee highlighted the extremely low number of children with disabilities who have access to services provided by the State (4%) and was alarmed by the fact that rehabilitation services and general health insurance do not cover children with disabilities who are not part of the education system.¹⁶¹ While the Committee did note improvements in efforts

to provide adequate services and mainstream students into regular schools, it remained worried about the very low number of villages with such facilities, the limited number of schools and the persistently low number of children with disabilities that enjoy their right to education (1.1%).¹⁶² The Committee thus called upon the State party to ensure conformity between the draft law proposed by the Higher Council for Motherhood and Childhood on the rights of children living with a disability¹⁶³ and the Convention; to adopt a national strategy on the rights of persons with disabilities, with special attention to children; to strengthen the availability and accessibility of community-based educational and health for children with disabilities; to ensure that all children with disabilities enjoy access to rehabilitation services and to ensure that data and statistics on the subject are collected and analysed.¹⁶⁴

The suggested law on the rights of children living with a disability was submitted to the Cabinet before the revolution and remains on the agenda. It is in the process of revision and finalisation, however the date of its approval remains unknown. The legislation was developed with the participation of PDOs, and addressed children living with disabilities such as blindness, hearing impairment, motor disability and mild intellectual impairment and their rights to education, health, and their role in the family.¹⁶⁵

Inclusive education for children living with a disability has become a component of an overhaul of the education system. In 2008, an integral education committee, which remains in place at the time of this writing, was established at the Ministry of Education and included civil society representatives. An ongoing five-year national strategy plan for the period of 2007-2012 was launched in order to reform Egyptian educational programming.¹⁶⁶ So far, 320 children with special needs have been reached through the joint UNICEF-Ministry of Education pilot project established in two governorates. Through this

project, UNICEF has been supporting the Ministry of Education's efforts to identify and reach children with special needs. Furthermore, the UN agency has provided 20 schools with equipment and adequate training for teachers. Inclusive education programming has focused on integrating children with different disabilities (whether physical or mental) into schools with the help of social workers and psychologists. It has also focused on equipping special schools and training personnel to work with children living with disabilities.¹⁶⁷

Between October 2008 and December 2009, the Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) project entitled "Izdehar" was launched in Assiut governorate by Terre des homes and sought to develop the local resources of persons living with disability, providing them with access to community services, and rehabilitate children with disabilities in various fields (social, physical, cognitive, etc.). More specifically, home visits were conducted to raise families' awareness about preventing disability; public meetings were held in each village with officials and influential persons/leaders to do advocacy; events (puppet shows, live theatre public performances, etc.) were organised to raise community awareness; and regular meetings were conducted to increase coordination and networking with services providers and governmental bodies.¹⁶⁸ The "Izdehar" project focuses on 30 villages in the 11 districts of Assiut, working to change attitudes towards disability and encourage the community in providing services to persons living with disabilities.¹⁶⁹ The local community also engaged the project by contributing voluntary in-kind or cash resources, making structural changes in schools and thus facilitating access to education, raising community awareness of disability via religious leaders and providing recreational activities at youth centres and clubs. Children of any age were able to benefit.¹⁷⁰ Interventions took place in the identification of persons living with disabilities and their type of disability, the health needs of

children with disabilities, the referral of cases to service providers and follow-up to raise awareness in the community, capacity-building through planning workshops and the training of trainers, trainings and technical assistance, the formation of a stakeholders committee to address the problems faced by persons with disabilities, and the formation of an advisory committee to conduct media and outreach activities. Coordination was also carried out with service providers and civil society organisations.¹⁷¹ Post-project surveys (of 10% of the participants in each of the project activities) showed that attitudes and behaviours changed positively towards persons with disabilities. Community participation increased with the active support of governmental and grass-roots leadership. Moreover, the selected villages have become aware of the good behaviours and practices that support the integration of persons with disabilities in community development.¹⁷²

Between October 2008 and September 2011, the "Sahwa" Project was launched by Terre des Hommes, supporting self-advocacy for rights and equal opportunity for persons living with disabilities in Upper Egypt (Assiut, Sohag, Qena and Aswan).¹⁷³ The project was implemented through partners in four governorates in Upper Egypt and Handicap International. It targeted 400 people with disabilities, service providers, policy planners and decision-makers. The project sought to implement policies and programmes providing persons with disabilities with access to adequate services and removing all barriers preventing them from equally participating in society.¹⁷⁴ At the time of this writing, Terre des Hommes had achieved the following: people with disabilities developed an understanding of the rights-based approach and the entitlements that are granted by existing legislation and increased their organisational and advocacy skills. As many as 1,739 persons living with disabilities received a complete training program on their rights and the basics of project management. People with disabilities are now forming



non-official organisations (OPD) and alliances in the four governorates. Forty-two OPD and three qualitative unions were established in the four governorates with at least six key meetings held each year in each governorate. OPDs are also involved in local initiatives to promote the rights of persons living with disabilities among local authorities and NGOs working in their communities, notably through the development of a community disability action plan. In this way, 132 local initiatives were implemented during the project, 68 of them implemented by groups serving persons with disabilities and 20 by community development associations (CDAPs). Due to the programme, local authorities, service providers and community development NGOs have a better understanding of disability issues and the need to significantly increase the participation of people with disabilities in their programme and activities.¹⁷⁵

Following the “Izdehar” project, Handicap International and Terre des Hommes are cooperating in the “Frame Project” implemented from January 2010 to December 2013 in Aissiut and Qena governorates in collaboration with the Ministry of Insurance and Social Affairs, the National Council of Childhood and Motherhood (NCCM), the Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) network and several INGOs.¹⁷⁶ The main tasks of the framework project include developing a strategy, quality standards and curriculum for CBR, proposing them to the national and local authorities, establishing and operating two rehabilitation training centres in Assiut and Qena governorates, and supporting and providing coaching and training to CBR personnel. The strategy of CBR is developed based on the principles of the Convention on the Rights of persons with Disabilities and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. A task force comprised of 20 to 30 people was created to support and guide the related working groups, and this task force is meeting two to three times a year. The task force is following the World Health Organisation guidelines for the CBR matrix. In regard to training pro-

vided to CBR personnel, a coordination team and three trainers were trained in each governorate. These trainers will then train other members of the CBR. In the curriculum, modules on child’s rights and child protection are included. It is expected that by the end of 2012, the trainers will be trained on child’s rights and the curriculum will be completed and ready.¹⁷⁷ Local communities have also mobilised through activities implemented by the training centres along with CBR teams in the targeted villages.¹⁷⁸ The project involves the combined efforts of people living with disabilities themselves, their families, associations, and the relevant governmental and non-governmental health, education, vocational, social institutions. The basic goals are to ensure that people with disabilities are able to maximize their mental and physical capacities and access regular services and equal opportunities and contribute positively in the development of their communities. Also it seeks to activate the communities’ capacities to advocate for and secure the rights of people with disabilities by removing barriers and obstacles hindering participation.¹⁷⁹ The project suffered from delays in the beginning and was confronted with several obstacles such as lack of coordinated participation and common commitment, lack of an existing community-based rehabilitation strategy on the national level, the absence of quality reference books, poor quality of basic rehabilitation services, lack of trained and motivated CBR service providers and inadequacy of services in the targeted areas.¹⁸⁰ However, these difficulties are no longer a problem.¹⁸¹ It is expected that the implementation of a strategy for comprehensive and quality CBR will be recognized as reference material and CBR workers, supervisors and managers will be equipped with knowledge and skills necessary for the implementation of quality and comprehensive CBR.¹⁸² The project will benefit 4,000 CBR workers, supervisors, managers, trainers, members of the task force as well as 8,000 people living with a disability.¹⁸³

In May 2011, more than 30 children with disabilities conducted artistic exhibitions through three festival days organised by the Terre des Hommes delegation in Egypt and El Fagr, an organisation providing assistance to disabled persons.¹⁸⁴

Caritas works on family rehabilitation by providing guidance and counselling to families of persons living with a disability. The objective of the training is to enable people living with a disability to be independent and their families to best support them in this process.¹⁸⁵ The Early Intervention Unit trains children with disabilities from birth up to age four and their families. The Family Empowerment Unit trains children with a disability from age four to age 12 and their families. Young persons and adolescents with disability have access to a vocational rehabilitation programme provided by Caritas. They are trained on certain jobs in shelters or open workshops. They can also start new family projects to earn their living and be part of the community. Ten years ago, with the cooperation of the Ministry of Social Affairs, Caritas initiated the “Light Initiative” with the objective of integrating children living with a disability with other children. This initiative was implemented within the framework of the initiative for social protection, funded by the World Bank. Children with disabilities benefit from medical, teaching and recreational services offered by the medico-social centres of Mataria, Kafr El-Sissi and Abu Zaabal. The Inclusion Department develops models of inclusive education in primary schools and in four kindergartens to improve and extend access to quality education for children living with a disability.¹⁸⁶ Children living with a disability are included gradually into the group to allow all children to learn how to interact and reduce stigmatisation and marginalisation.¹⁸⁷

Plan International implemented a community-based rehabilitation (CBR) programme eight or nine years ago with pilot projects that focused on capacity-building, partici-

pation in decision-making, promotion and protection of the rights of people with disabilities by including them in society and seeking to ensure that they are empowered, integrated and have the possibility to actively contribute. The strategy taken by the programme reflects a shift away from the medical towards a rights-based model in the way persons with disabilities are dealt with.¹⁸⁸ Plan International’s strategy is a home-based approach. Overall, it focuses on raising-awareness campaigns, capacity-building, advocacy, networking and partnership. It aims at building non-governmental organisations’ capacities on a grass-roots level, but also intervenes at the governmental and national level through networking and partnerships. It relies on a network of partners including Terre des Hommes, Handicap International and Caritas-SETI Centre, each one of them working in their field of expertise. It also involves local non-governmental organisations since it remains a home-based programme.¹⁸⁹ Within the CBR Programme framework, Plan International has reached more than 5,000 children with disabilities and their families, in 22 communities living in Cairo, Qualiubia, Giza, Alexandria and Beheira and recently Assiut after an expansion adopted five years ago. More than 100 volunteers have been trained to plan and manage CBR activities on a daily basis.¹⁹⁰ In 2011, Plan International also launched a five-year plan including the new component of ‘inclusion’. It works at improving accessibility to services for children living with a disability, independently of their social and/or economical background.¹⁹¹

g. HIV/AIDS

Due to the persistence of stigma and discrimination, existing HIV surveillance and testing may face impediments and could lead to undetected cases and obstruct affected people’s access to services.¹⁹² HIV cases increased exponentially, by 268%, between 1990 and 2009. This



percentage might be explained by the National AIDS Program, which has improved HIV testing and reporting, but it is also due to epidemic growth.¹⁹³ In 2009, however, the estimated HIV prevalence rate for people aged from 15 to 49 was less than 0.1%.¹⁹⁴ According to the Regional Report on AIDS published in 2011, the estimate number of people living with HIV in Egypt is 11,000, but the ratio of reporting for males and females remains at 4:1.¹⁹⁵ According to reports, the virus was most often transmitted through sexual transmission (72%) of which 49.1% was heterosexual and 22.9% was homosexual transmission. Transmissions through drug use (2.9%) and mother-to-child transmission (1.6%) still remain underreported.¹⁹⁶

“According to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the exact number of HIV infected individuals in the general population is unknown because there is no adequate surveillance system.”



Population Fund (UNFPA), the exact number of HIV infected individuals in the general population is unknown because there is no adequate surveillance system.¹⁹⁹ Universal access to prevention, care, support and treatment of HIV is hindered by the existence of punitive practices and widespread stigma. Moreover, services intended to prevent mother-to-child transmission remain very limited in Egypt. While there is an increasing commitment to

In 2008, 18.3% of males and 4.78% of females aged from 15 to 24 years old correctly identified ways of preventing the sexual transmission of HIV and rejected major misconceptions about HIV transmission.¹⁹⁷ In the same year, 23% of children with advanced HIV infections were receiving antiretroviral drugs, while in 2009 that percentage rose to 27%.¹⁹⁸ However, according to the United Nations

HIV response, visible in particular through national and international expenditures, the response is still driven by health institutions.²⁰⁰

Several hotlines have been put in place in Egypt to provide support for the population. The national hotline for HIV/AIDS established by the State is a free service that can relate on HIV, testing, service points, counselling, etc. Two other hotlines have been implemented in Alexandria by non-governmental organisations (NGOs). One has been monitored by Caritas and focuses on social mobility and the other was launched by the Egyptian Aids Society, a local NGO, and focuses on access to services. Another hotline based in Cairo and focusing on reproductive health services was implemented by the Egyptian Family Planning Association, targeting youth in particular.²⁰¹ Since 1996, a centre and hotline have provided counselling on HIV/AIDS, offering information about HIV, testing locations, care centres and support to patients and their families. The Ministry of Health and Population provides services for the care of people living with HIV and their families. There are over 700 doctors and nurses trained in all provinces on patient care, health counselling and the psychological and social status of patients and their families in order to reduce the psychological impact of the disease.²⁰²

To improve the quality of life of people living with HIV/AIDS, UNAIDS, UNICEF and Caritas in Alexandria established in 2007 a home-based project that provides care and support services while making certain that these individuals have access to basic, medical, social, and psychological rights. The project focuses on training caretakers such as family members at home and on building capacity among those who relate to persons living with HIV.²⁰³ This programme, which was the first of its kind in Egypt, was later expanded in 2009 to Cairo in partnership with the National AIDS Program.²⁰⁴ Beneficiaries are re-

ferred to it through the hotline established by the Ministry of Health as well as through other organisations working in the field.²⁰⁵

A National Strategic Plan on HIV supported by the United Nations was launched for 2007-2011 in collaboration with key government sectors, such as the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Information and the National Youth Council, in addition to civil society and international organisations. They have assisted civil society organisations in order “to implement education programmes on HIV for vulnerable groups (children in street situations, refugees, prisoners) and several prevention programmes for most-at-risk populations (injecting drug users, men who have sex with men and sex workers).”²⁰⁶ The National Strategic Plan sought to maintain a low HIV prevalence and reduce HIV incidence and death within the country. It prioritized prevention of HIV and sexually-transmitted diseases and the care, support and treatment of people living with the disease, while strengthening the surveillance system.²⁰⁷ The major donors in Egypt are the Global Fund, United Nations agencies, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Drosos Foundation and the Ford Foundation.²⁰⁸ Another National Strategic Plan has been drafted for the 2012-2016 period and includes specific components related to vulnerable children, children at risk, children in street situations and young people.²⁰⁹

The National AIDS program and Family Health International (FHI) have launched the “First Round Biological and Behavioural Surveillance Survey (Bio-BSS)” in 2006 among high-risk populations to determine the status of the HIV epidemic and set baseline data on its prevalence for further analysis. Pre- and post-HIV test counselling was provided for respondents and HIV-positive cases were referred to the National AIDS program for further support.²¹⁰

Anti-stigma campaigns have encouraged the spread of knowledge on the subject in order to influence public opinion about AIDS and those living with it. In Egypt, AIDS remains without a personal face which contributes to misconceptions and fear about the disease itself.²¹¹

Asmaa is an Egyptian movie script written and directed by Amr Salama and produced by Mohamed Hefzy. It was intended to reflect the anger and injustices to which people living with HIV have been exposed and to transform the silence and lack of parity that characterize Egyptian society. The movie tells the true story of a woman, played by Hind Sabry, a Tunisian celebrity actress, who overcomes her own fears and social rejection to claim her rights. It also addresses the situation of the children of a mother living with HIV. The movie was made before the Egyptian revolution and sought to play a role in empowering people living with HIV and changing society’s perceptions. The movie has been launched in Egypt and the United Kingdom and reactions have been very positive.²¹²

In May 2011, a photography exhibition opened in Cairo combining portraits from the Egyptian revolution in January 2011 and portraits submitted to a World AIDS Day photo contest in 2010. This initiative, in which people living with HIV participated, was intended to emphasize people’s power to create social change, including ending HIV-related stigma.²¹³

To support the Association of People living with HIV, UNAIDS has provided artificial milk for mothers living with HIV. Other awareness-raising campaigns using celebrities are in the making, such as creating a *capella* song and a television advertisement including young people and other interested groups.²¹⁴

Several other initiatives regarding HIV/AIDS have been undertaken but could not be thoroughly documented in the course of this research.



ii. The Best Interests of the Child (Article 3)

In 1996, Egypt adopted the Child Law, the first legislative instrument explicitly protecting children's rights in the country and placing their best interests as the highest priority. These rights are provided for by Islamic *Sharia* law, the principles of the Egyptian Constitution, and the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Child Law includes provisions regarding healthcare, social, and educational services for children. It has also focused on issues faced by working mothers and children living with a disability and defines the age of criminal responsibility for a child. The Law was amended in 2008 in order to adopt a rights-based approach, specifically for children deprived of their rights to education, health and social care, and family care.²¹⁵ Between 1998 and 2008, 12% of central government expenditures was allocated to education, and only 7% was allocated to defence.²¹⁶ In 2009, Egypt dedicated 5% of its gross domestic product to education, and 5% to health.²¹⁷

In its latest Concluding Observations, the Committee welcomed the incorporation of the principle of the best interests of the child into Article 3 of Child Law No. 126/2008, which gave paramount priority to all decisions and measures concerning children.²¹⁸ It regretted to observe, however, that this principle was not well-understood by State authorities and civil servants, and its integration into policies, programmes and decision-making processes remained insufficient.²¹⁹ It found particularly worrisome that, in regard to matters relating to child custody, the starting point for consideration is age and thus the circumstances of each child are not treated individually. Furthermore, children in street situations deprived of a family environment and in conflict with the law were rarely exposed to considerations related to this principle.²²⁰ In this regard, the Committee urged the State party to reinforce the implementation and application of

the principle of the best interests of the child in all laws, policies, programmes and projects related to children.²²¹

The Egyptian National Child Rights Observatory (ENCRO), created in 2008, developed a set of National Child Rights Indicators for use by policymakers in assessing child rights and their attainment. These indicators serve as a reference and help in monitoring respect, protection and fulfilment of child rights. To select these indicators, an extensive review of similar international experiences was done. Furthermore, ENCRO organised a workshop to bring together experts knowledgeable in specific child-related areas. An agreement was reached on 85 indicators (related to structure, process and outcome), the plan being to compute a final set of indicators and reporting mechanisms on each indicator for the years 2000 to 2010, using the "DevInfo" mapping technology.²²² This project has been funded by the government of Italy.²²³

iii. The Right to Life, Survival and Development (Article 6)

a. Health

According to UNICEF, 4% of central government expenditures between 1998 and 2008 was allocated to health.²²⁴ In 2009, the percentage was raised to 5%.²²⁵

In 2009, the vaccination rates for one-year-old children were at 98% of children immunized against tuberculosis, 97%²²⁶ against diphtheria pertussis and tetanus, 97% against polio and 95% against measles.²²⁷ Government efforts and support from international agencies have resulted in Egypt no longer being classified as polio-endemic.²²⁸ In 2009, the under-five mortality rate was 21/1,000 live births while the infant mortality rate for the same year was 18/1,000 live births.²²⁹ A reported 79%

of women between 2005 and 2009 had a skilled health attendant present at birth.²³⁰ According to UNICEF, the presence of a skilled health attendant at birth has been “a factor contributing significantly to the progress in maternal mortality rate reduction”.²³¹ During the same time period (2005-2009), at least 74% of women said they had received antenatal care coverage at least once while 66% reported that they had received antenatal care coverage at least four times.²³² From 1997-2009, 91% of women aged 15 to 49 years old reported to have been experienced female genital mutilation.²³³ Between 1997 and 2008, 24% of women from the same age group had at least one mutilated/cut daughter.²³⁴ Other estimations found that 66% of girls aged 10 to 14 have undergone female genital mutilation, compared to 96% of girls and women aged 15 to 49 years.²³⁵

The Child Law of 2008 bans and criminalises female genital mutilation in Egypt.²³⁶ If found guilty, an individual can be sentenced from at least three months to a maximum of two years of prison, including a fine of 1,000 to 5,000 Egyptian pounds.²³⁷

By Ministerial Announcement No. 380 for year 1997, children aged one day to six years have the right to health insurance at the cost of five pounds per year. For each medical visit to a clinic, the cost to the family is 50 piasters in addition to one-third of the cost of prescriptions, as well as the treatment of chronic diseases and free referral services to hospitals.²³⁸ The State provides health insurance for all students in all governorates of the Republic in full conformity with Law 99 for the year 1992. There are 7,829 clinics in schools and 314 clinics outside schools that allow doctor visits and specialist follow-up. An annual subscription to this insurance is four Egyptian pounds per individual. In addition, the State contributes 12 pounds per student annually and pays for one-third of the cost of drugs accessed outside hospitals, with the exemption

of students with chronic diseases.²³⁹ These services within the schools focus on preventative health, clinical and laboratory examinations and immunizations according to age group, and surveillance services to detect cases of mental illness, neurological and congenital diseases, and students with special needs including those with mental, visual, hearing or speaking disabilities. They also supervise the school nutrition process.²⁴⁰

In regard to preventing female genital mutilation (FGM), the FGM-Free Village Model was initially launched in 2003 in 60 villages in six governorates. The project was an initiative of the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Donor Assistance Group (DAG), European Commission (EC), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations of Volunteers (UNV) and Plan International. In 2005, the project was extended to 120 villages in ten governorates. The project aimed at reversing attitudes of families towards FGM by enhancing knowledge about its consequences, thus enabling them to abandon the practice. Youth groups against FGM were created in universities, schools, youth centres or other youth outlets. The model, at the local level, aimed at empowering families to denounce the practice. Resentment against the practice eventually led communities at the village level to announce public opposition to the practice. The project also included the participation of religious leaders in promoting a discourse on anti-FGM messages from a rights-based perspective and mobilised doctors against the practice.²⁴¹

In the 2011 Concluding Observations, the Committee expressed concerns that health care may not be a Government priority and recommended the State party increase budgetary allocation and public spending on the health sector. It remained alarmed at the persistence of a high level of child mortality in rural areas. In this regard, the

Committee urged the State party to provide training for medical personnel with a view to reduce neo-natal, infant and maternal mortality rates, and prioritize access and availability to primary health care in rural areas, given the fact that these areas have high levels of poverty. The government's priorities cover only 70% of the health services provided and have no budget for promoting breastfeeding. Moreover, children continue to die from diarrhoea and respiratory diseases and suffer from anaemia, children under the age of five continue to be exposed to malnutrition, and those living in street situations face difficulties in accessing state-run health care services. Furthermore, the Committee was very concerned about the limited maternity leave (13 weeks) allowed women employed in the public and private sectors and thus strongly recommended that the State party strengthen maternity protection legislation. The Committee further regretted to observe that children and adolescents have limited access to health information and in this regards called upon the State party to improve access to information on the right to physical and mental health. Among its other concerns, the Committee highlighted the extremely low number of children with disabilities (4%) who have access to state services and the fact that rehabilitation services and general health insurance do not cover children with disabilities who are outside the education system. Hence, it urged the State party to review the current health insurance system and reinforce the availability and accessibility of health care services for children with disabilities. Finally, the Committee highlighted its concerns over the fact that mental health counselling remains almost non-existence in the State party and insisted that the latter improve its mental health services and increase the number of qualified mental health personnel specialized in children.²⁴²

The World Health Organization (WHO) and Egypt have developed a country Cooperation Strategy for the period of 2010-2024. The main areas of focus are infectious dis-

ease control, health promotion and protection, and health systems development.²⁴³

Egypt has met its Millennium Development Goals with regard to reducing mortality rates overall but disparities remain between Upper Egypt and Lower Egypt, with Upper Egypt still experiencing higher rates of neo-natal deaths.²⁴⁴

In order to address these disparities and to reduce neonatal mortality, peri-natal care centres were established in 2008 by UNICEF in four governorates in Upper Egypt, targeting two million children under the age of five and their mothers. The five-year project supports the national integrated management of neonatal and childhood illnesses (for women pregnant at 28 weeks up to 28 days after birth). Training was given on clean delivery to 11,000 nurses, intensive midwifery to 50 nurses, neonatal resuscitation to 160 nurses, paediatricians, neo-natologists, anaesthetists and obstetricians.²⁴⁵ Family workers were also involved as intermediaries between communities and family health services. Since 2008, there has been a 20% reduction in neo-natal mortalities in Upper Egypt.²⁴⁶ The overall strategy of said project is to strengthen community-building capacities while improving the quality of health services. UNICEF also supports the national expanded programme on immunization.²⁴⁷ The National Polio Immunization Campaign organised by UNICEF in 2011 in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Population reached 12 million children under the age of five.²⁴⁸ The campaign

“Egypt has met its Millennium Development Goals with regard to reducing mortality rates overall but disparities remain between Upper Egypt and Lower Egypt, with Upper Egypt still experiencing higher rates of neo-natal deaths.”

used all communications means available (social media, high profile spokespersons and TV and radio messages) with the main goal of maintaining Egypt's status free of polio, measles and rubella among 36 million young people.²⁴⁹ This campaign is to be renewed every year to confirm the country's polio free status and for Egypt to be certified by the WHO.²⁵⁰

UNICEF, WHO and the government are conducting a comprehensive survey on immunizations nationwide. In 2010, UNICEF launched a perinatal Mortality Surveillance system in 12 sentinel sites in the Governorate of Assiut and also validated the project results and identified its barriers. In 2009, UNICEF completed a baseline survey on community child care practices in Upper Egypt, specifically in the Governorate of Assiut. Data-driven and evidence-based advocacy was to address the disparities that exist in disadvantaged governorates and ensure that relevant health interventions are provided appropriately, including adequate equipment and infrastructure. This survey was conducted at the national, district and hospital level.²⁵¹

Egypt's integrated health services project "Takamol" was funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and was implemented by Pathfinder International between 2006 and 2011, along with a consortium of partners including the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health Centre for Communications Programme. The "Takamol" project aimed at strengthening two core areas: the health system and the communities served by the health system. This strategy sought to address the entire service delivery value chain from suppliers to users. This meant combining community capacity-building with health system strengthening activities to maximise providers' ability to deliver services of quality and to develop patients' capacity in engaging with service provision. It promoted an integrated model

for strengthening maternal and child health, family planning, and reproductive health services. To that end, "Takamol" targeted individual health providers and their team members, as well as the institutions in which they worked. This meant providing structural assistance to the Ministry of Health and Population such as technology transfer or change of management principles. It also entailed renovating facilities, reforming clinic and hospital Boards of Directors (BOD) through a democratic election process. "Takamol" created a Board Exchange Programme aimed at enabling the most successful boards to share their experiences. These BODs established Safe Motherhood Committees to review on a regular basis hospital maternal and neo-natal morbidities and mortalities with the goal of improvement. "Takamol" also trained providers and their teams in increasing their technical knowledge and improving their service delivery. As for community capacity building, "Takamol" used a socio-ecological approach to mobilise the community (including religious leaders) and to address all the factors that influence women's ability to identify, demand and participate in qualitative health service delivery. "Takamol" identified community development associations in support of this project and put in place integrated health and literacy classes to increase women's education on health issues while teaching them how to read and write. The project also implemented a component on corporate social responsibility to encourage public-private partnerships. Within the first year of the project, Primary Health Centres (PHC) caseloads increased from 700 clients per month to 1,100 per month. In addition, PHC quality scores improved in both Upper and Lower Egypt. The communities' knowledge of mothers' and children's health outcomes increased. Outreach workers succeeded in reaching a majority of women about health issues such as maternal and neo-natal outcomes and/or HIV prevention. Women's participation in community activities such as literacy and empowerment classes



increased. A total of 179 clinics and 21 hospitals were targeted, representing a population of 2.6 million people in both Upper and Lower Egypt, including the less densely populated rural areas.²⁵²

In 2010, Plan International launched a gender equality women/girls empowerment programme that focuses mainly on educational, health and financial rights. For instance, the programme addresses the issue of gender-based violence, including early marriage and female genital mutilation. It also addresses gender inequality through the involvement of communities in activities that encourage change in cultural practices.²⁵³ So far, Plan International has been able to raise awareness on the negative effects of harmful traditional practices on girls and women, notably at the legislative level: the legal age of marriage has been raised to age 18 and FGM has been legally banned. It has also organized vocational training for girls and women to improve their skills and access to opportunities. It has worked on reinforcing women's rights through actions on girls' education, identity cards and health services.

In parallel to the NCCM FGM-Free Village initiative, UNICEF is an active participant in the national movement against FGM in Egypt, working with a variety of NGOs and national partners. The agency has been advocating for the complete abandonment of FGM through a combination of social mobilization and advocacy, especially in grassroots rural communities. The project targets community members and social pressure groups and supports increased action by local governorates and community groups. For the last three years, UNICEF's strategy has included raising awareness among religious leaders from the Coptic Church and Al Azhar University. Another approach has been working with the Ministry of Health in order to reach doctors (as 72% of FGM are conducted by doctors).²⁵⁴ In Upper Egypt, UNICEF sup-

ports an innovative community mobilization programme using individuals who have already chosen to stand against FGM, and who have found a positive new path for themselves and their families. This project was being implemented in 42 communities in Assuit, Sohag, Qena and Minya and identifies actors of changes in the community to conduct awareness-raising activities. While seeking to create an environment conducive to the rejection of FGM, the teams also identify girls liable to being circumcised, and sensitise their families to the issue. Helping break the silence on what has long been a taboo subject in Egypt has been a key UNICEF objective.²⁵⁵ Beginning in January 2012, a national plan has been developed with the European Union, the United Nations Development Programme, UNICEF, and United Nations Population Fund, using a new approach of non-violent parenting.²⁵⁶

Caritas promotes health awareness and practices, organising health information sessions in urban and rural areas in 10 governorates, in collaboration with other stakeholders including UNICEF, the European Union and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). Health education programmes are organised, including a special health education programme for children 9-13 years old, the "Child to Child" Programme. Children are provided with information about maintaining family health (general hygiene, first aid, etc). Caritas has also established follow-up, monitoring and evaluation of the existing programmes.

Mother and child health is also promoted through follow-up visits to Caritas' maternal and childcare units. Nutrition education, food supply and medical care are also provided. Mothers are encouraged to have pre-natal and post-natal check-ups where they learn how to weigh their babies and the prevention of infant infections, for instance. Children benefit as their growth rate, eyesight and vaccinations are checked and maintained.²⁵⁷ Mothers are also sensitised to

issues such as female genital mutilation, their rights and those of their children and are offered literacy classes. This initiative is intended to prevent families' abandonment of children at risk.²⁵⁸

b. Nutrition

Between 2005 and 2009, 53% of children under the age of six months were exclusively breastfed, 66% were fed with complementary food between six to nine months, and 35% were still breastfed between the age of 20 to 23 months. Over the same period, 13% of infants were born with a low birth weight (<2,500 grams). Data from 2003 to 2009 indicates that 8% of children under five years old had moderate and severe underweight, 29% had moderate and severe stunting, and 7% had moderate and severe wasting.²⁵⁹ Due to governmental efforts to promote the use of iodized salt, approximately 78% of the population now consumes iodized salt. However, variations remain and five governorates are "classified as high risk for iodine deficiency."²⁶⁰

With the adoption of Child Law No. 126/2008 amending the 1996 Child Law, conditions for working mothers have slightly improved (in view of the New Unified Labour Law No. 12 (2003)). Thus, a woman working for the State, the public sector, the business sector, and/or private sector (no longer solely the public sector as under the Unified Labour Law), whether with a permanent or temporary contract, is entitled to maternity leave with full salary for three months after delivery. In all cases, a female worker is not entitled to this leave more than three times during her entire service period (instead of two times during her service under the Unified Labour Law).²⁶¹ Also, a working woman breastfeeding her child is entitled, during the two years following delivery, the right to an additional two rest periods of not less than a half hour each (instead of the previous one hour daily break prescribed in the Unified

Labour Law).²⁶² And finally, a woman working for the State, the public sector, and/or business sector (independently of the number of employees as previously under the Unified Labour Law) is granted the right to unpaid leave for a period of two years to care for her child. She is entitled to this leave three times during her entire service period (instead of two times under the Unified Labour Law).²⁶³ Notably, notwithstanding the improvement, this leave does not allow for the recommended six month exclusive breastfeeding period.²⁶⁴

In 2010, the Egyptian government issued Bylaw No. 2075/2010 to give effect to the International Code of Marketing Breast-milk Substitutes, an international health policy framework for the promotion of breastfeeding adopted by the World Health Assembly (WHA) of the World Health Organization (WHO).²⁶⁵ The scope of the bylaw is wide, covering all infant feeding products for babies under age two. It combines marketing restrictions with provisions on food quality, preparation and additives. It also includes provisions on information and education materials. But the most important provision is the prohibition of promotions for infant foods, feeding bottles, teats and pacifiers. Indirect communication with pregnant women and mothers and sponsorship of infant feeding programmes are prohibited as well.²⁶⁶

Notwithstanding these provisions, the bylaw has weaknesses. Several marketing practices are allowed if baby food companies obtain permission from the Ministry of Health and Population. Promotion by distributing free samples in health care facilities remains common. And advertising is eventually allowed once the product is registered and its trading license granted, which can undermine the objective of the bylaw.²⁶⁷

In 2010, 30% of the total student population participated in Egypt's school feeding programme, which was estab-



lished in 1951 with pre-schoolers and primary school children as its main targets. Egypt's Ministry of Education used a "poverty map" to determine which students receive school meals. The World Food Programme (WFP) first piloted a milk programme in Egypt from 2005-2006 before expanding it in 2007-2011. Tetra Pak Egypt Ltd. is also involved in school feeding efforts by distributing flavoured milk in all 27 governorates alongside biscuits and "sweet pies". The school feeding programme falls under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education in collaboration with the ministries of Health, Agriculture and Industry. The Ministry of Education sets its programme policies at the national level, while local governorates then administer the programmes. The school feeding programme budget is USD 60 million.²⁶⁸

In its latest Concluding Observations, the Committee expressed regret that the Government had not sufficiently prioritized health care, despite that malnutrition has increased among children under the age of five. In this regard, it recommended the State party increase its nutrition interventions and provide training for medical personnel. In light of continuing low rates of exclusive breastfeeding, the Committee called upon the State party to proceed, through programmes and campaigns, with intensified awareness-raising activities promoting breastfeeding and to seek assistance from UNICEF and WHO, among others.²⁶⁹

According to the International Baby Food Action Network, the government has made little efforts in improving support for and promotion of breastfeeding. It has no budget to that end and the Ministry of Health and Population relies on international funds and international organisations to pursue that goal.²⁷⁰

A breastfeeding component is included in some courses offered through the undergraduate medical and nursing

curriculum, the Integrated Management of Childhood Illness (IMCI) programme, pre-service training courses for freshly-graduated doctors and for nurses and physicians working in Primary Health Care Centres that are responsible for dispensing breastfeeding information.²⁷¹

The Egyptian Lactation Consultants Association is among the few non-governmental associations to promote and support breastfeeding. It monitors breastfeeding but only on a case-by-case basis due to the lack of a budget. This Association, in collaboration with the International Code Documentation Centre that is funded by UNICEF, organised a training session on the International Code of Marketing Breast-Milk Substitutes in Alexandria in 2009 including participants from all over the country. The Ministry of Health and Population is also developing a plan for revive the Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative, to be funded by UNICEF.²⁷² This initiative aims at educating people on breastfeeding, including mothers and mothers-in-law, who might influence the new mother in order to change communities' perceptions of the practice of breastfeeding. It also aims at training nurses and doctors to provide better counsel in preventive measures. In 2011, an analysis of the capacity of the nutritional system was conducted to support the government in the implementation of a Nutritional Surveillance System (based on World Health Organisation Growth monitoring). This was carried out in six governorates.²⁷³

c. Physical Environment

In Egypt, 23% of children under 15 years old were living in poverty in 2008-2009.²⁷⁴ In 2008, 98% of the rural population and 100% of the urban population were using improved drinking water sources.²⁷⁵ Similarly, 97% of the urban population and 92% of the rural population was using improved sanitation facilities.²⁷⁶ UNICEF data indicates that the lack of proper hygiene and sanitation causes

20% of all under-five deaths in Egypt, most of them due to diarrhoea.²⁷⁷

The Committee's most recent Concluding Observations expressed concern at the high level of and increase in poverty in the State party. The growth of shanty towns and socio-economic disparities among the population in different regions of the State party, with 70% of the poor living in rural areas was of serious concern. The Committee was particularly concerned that 18% of all children in the State party are deprived of shelter, water or sanitation, especially in Rural Upper Egypt. The Committee was further distressed by studies indicating an increase in 2008 of children living in poverty (23.8%) and that 41% of children living in households with over three children were poor.²⁷⁸

“The Committee's most recent Concluding Observations expressed concern at the high level of and increase in poverty in the State party. It was particularly concerned that 18% of all children in the State party are deprived of shelter, water or sanitation, especially in Rural Upper Egypt.”



UNICEF has developed a number of different ways of teaching communities about hygiene and the environment. Volunteers from selected villages were trained on personal hygiene, safe methods of handling water, and assessment and reporting on environmental problems in their villages. By training volunteers in the skills necessary to take care of their own families, and also in methods of communicating what they have learned to others, UNICEF hopes that the message will

be spread effectively and accurately throughout the community.²⁷⁹

The Egyptian Red Crescent society (ERCS) established a training programme named “Sehha w Salama” or “Health and Safety” at the beginning of the academic year 2010-2011, to be expanded over three years in cooperation with the private sector. It targeted children aged nine to 12 years, aiming to create a culture of health promotion and hygiene under the theme “Making Our School Community Safe, Prepared and Healthy”. There are five components to this programme: disaster preparedness, first aid, road safety, hygiene and healthy lifestyle as well as climate change. Since, 2010, the ERCS has conducted training sessions for children on first aid skills, class evacuation in case of fires, and the ‘drop-cover-hold on’ manoeuvre for earthquakes. Discussions followed the training sessions allowing children to share their experiences and re-evaluate their response. Teachers were involved to allow them to continue carrying out the training courses for other children. Materials used included booklets, flyers, posters and worksheets.²⁸⁰

d. Reproductive Health

UNICEF reported that between 2005 and 2009, 16% of male adolescents and 3% of female adolescents had comprehensive knowledge of HIV.²⁸¹ According to the Joint United Nations Programme for HIV and AIDS (UNAIDS) 11% of male and female youth under the age of 15 correctly identified ways of preventing the sexual transmission of HIV and rejected major misconceptions about HIV transmission.²⁸² However, the United Nations Population Fund reported that 5% of women aged 15 to 24 and 18% of men from the same age group had comprehensive and correct knowledge about HIV/AIDS between the years 2000 and 2008.²⁸³ In 2009, the estimated HIV prevalence rate for people aged 15 to 49 was



less than 0.1%.²⁸⁴ The prevalence of contraception among women aged 15 to 49 between 2005 and 2009 was 60%.²⁸⁵ In 2009, 21.5% of HIV-positive pregnant women received antiretroviral medicines to reduce the risk of mother-to-child transmission.²⁸⁶ Between 1996 and 2008, the birth rate among women aged 15 to 19 was 50/1,000.²⁸⁷ Reproductive health education is not provided at schools and young people normally obtain information through friends and family. The School Health Insurance System does not systematically include reproductive health care for students, and no such programme exists for children out of school.²⁸⁸

A 2008 UNICEF behavioural survey regarding children in street situations in Greater Cairo and Alexandria revealed that around 67% of the study participants (ages 15-17) had already had sex with a member of the opposite sex. Among the children who had sex during the prior 12 months, 25% said they had used a condom, and 54% stated that they had sex with more than one partner. Around 26% of girls in street situation in Greater Cairo and 58% in Alexandria stated that they had engaged in commercial sex. Only 28% of boys admitted to having sex with boys, however they added that they were often under the influence of drugs and in many instances the sexual contact was part of a group rape. In addition, 53% of the boys reported having more than one partner. Although 79% indicated that they were aware of AIDS, only 16% said that they did not know how to stop themselves from becoming infected.²⁸⁹

In its latest Concluding Observations, the Committee expressed its concerns about limited access to health information including reproductive health among children and adolescents and thus highly recommended the State party strengthen access to information on right-to-health matters, including reproductive health. It further regretted that accessibility and availability of reproductive health

care services are limited and hence highly encouraged the State party to undertake a study on health matters, including reproductive health, to develop a nation-wide adolescent health policy and programme, include reproductive health into the school curricula and to increase reproductive health services.²⁹⁰

The National Council for Childhood and Motherhood (NCCM) in cooperation with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and UNAIDS, is implementing activities to educate adolescents about HIV/AIDS. Indeed, the Adolescent Health Programme, which focuses on educating youth in reproductive health and HIV has been implemented in several schools and youth centres.²⁹¹ The programme also includes training of health service providers, teachers and NGOs on prevention of the disease.²⁹² The NCCM also supports peer education and provides packages of information to middle school students.²⁹³

UNICEF in cooperation with the Government of Egypt seeks to put children and women's rights at the centre of a broad range of development decisions through the implementation of projects requiring the involvement of people living with HIV and AIDS (PLHIV). This project works with PLHIV to strengthen their capacity to cope with HIV and AIDS by establishing Egypt's first non-governmental organisation managed by PLHIV. The objectives are to mitigate the impact of the infection and improve the quality of life for PLHIV. It also supports the establishment of home-based care services that help improve medical care services for PLHIV, with plans for expanding this initiative to additional governorates.²⁹⁴

The United Nations "Y-PEER" initiative was launched in Egypt in 2005 and has been very active since then. The network in Egypt currently consists of 40 non-governmental organisations in 16 governorates. Activities in the

framework of UNFPA's programme include: the training of peer educators (so far, more than 100 trainers and 1,600 peer educators are involved); the involvement of celebrities; the establishment of a Youth Advisory panel in collaboration with UNICEF; awareness-raising campaigning activities along with the Mansoura University; and the involvement of the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood. UNAIDS launched several national campaigns five years ago involving youth groups, medical associations, scouts groups, and several other organisations. The 2010 campaign included a massive ceremony, involving more than 5,000 young people. The Y-PEER network also includes theatrical activities and the translation of MTV's stayingalive.org-website into Arabic.²⁹⁵

Between 2007 and 2011, a UNFPA project aimed at increasing access to appropriate adolescent reproductive health services, awareness and information on sexual and reproductive health. It expanded the accessibility and availability of services through 12 already-established Youth Friendly Clinics in the eight governorates of Ismailia, Qaliobia, Menofia, Dakahlia, Aswan, El Menia, Red Sea and Matrooh. The project provided tools and methods to help adolescents through this phase of life and empower them, especially girls, via increased access to sexual and reproductive information and services, offering them community roles and increasing their knowledge. The project's strategy targeted schools, the community, and marginalized populations. Activities also implemented by the UNFPA included a training of trainers workshop for peer educators on reproductive health and peer education, thus increasing young people's awareness regarding sexual and reproductive health and rights through seminars in schools, etc. and working with marginalized populations to raise their awareness on sexual and reproductive health.²⁹⁶

Between 2008 and 2011, UNFPA also gave support to several Youth-Friendly Clinics established by the General Organization for Teaching Hospitals and Institutes (GOTHI) in the governorates of Cairo, Behaira, Monofeya, Qaliobia, Sohag and Aswan. The initiative aimed at strengthening the national capacity to design, plan and implement comprehensive programmes that target young people. More specifically, the project aimed to strengthen the capacity of teaching hospitals at selected sites to provide quality reproductive health services and information for young people. The project worked on enhancing service provider skills in providing reproductive health services for young people through training on counselling, communications and management of issues.²⁹⁷

e. Education

Nine years of schooling is compulsory between the ages of six to 15 years and is free for all grades. The public education system in Egypt is divided between basic education from the age of four to 15 years, including kindergarten for two years, elementary school for six years, and preparatory school for three years. Basic education is then followed by secondary school for three years from the ages of 16 to 18. There are several types of schools in Egypt such as public schools managed by the government, private schools, schools per semester, community schools and small schools. A technical secondary stage is divided into concentrations of industry, commerce and agriculture.⁸⁹²

Between 2005 and 2009, 95% of boys and 92% of girls were enrolled in primary education, while in high school those ratios were 73% for boys and 77% for girls. Primary school attendance rates for boys and girls were 96% and 94% respectively. However, in secondary school those ratios decreased to 72% for boys and 67% for girls.²⁹⁹



Between 2005 and 2008, the combined adult literacy rate was 66%.³⁰⁰ However the literacy rate among both female and male youths aged 15 to 24 from 2004 to 2008 was comparatively higher at 88% and 82% respectively. In 2008-2009, there were 1,263 technical secondary schools.³⁰¹ Only 20% of children aged four to six in Egypt are enrolled in pre-primary schools.³⁰²

The Ministry of Education is responsible for making decisions about the education system with the help of three centres: the National Centre for Curriculum Development, the National Centre for Educational Research and the National Centre for Examinations and Educational Evaluation. Each of these centres focuses on formulating education policies with other committees at the national level. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Higher Education supervises the higher education system.³⁰³

In its latest Concluding Observations, the Committee regretted that there have been several impediments to achieving effective and equal implementation of Article 28 of the Convention, due to the fact that socio-economic inequalities and low public spending on education (2.5% of GDP) persist. Accordingly, it has been difficult to improve the quality of education, which is plagued by poor school infrastructure, high density classrooms and poor teaching standards. Moreover, low levels of enrolment in primary schools and high school drop-out rates in secondary schools have also exacerbated any advance in education. Obstacles have further been observed in the high level of illiteracy (29%) and the absence of a database on illiteracy among children. In this regard, the Committee pressed the State party to strengthen measures that would guarantee all children, without discrimination, access to free, compulsory, and quality education; increase budgetary allocations and public spending on education; and instil the importance of education at an early age. The Committee also encouraged implementing a quality

reform program by expanding the School Improvement Program (SIP), reinforcing the human, technical and financial capacities of the Ministry of Education, and further seeking assistance from UNICEF, the World Bank and other relevant organizations. Among its concerns, the Committee was alarmed by the fact that only 22% of children in the State party go to pre-school and thus urged the latter to reach the target of 60% enrolment of children in pre-schools. Furthermore, children living with disability have seen their right to education neglected, given that the number of schools in this regard is limited and the number of children with disabilities (1.1%) enjoying their right to education is extremely low. Thus the Committee urged the State party to reinforce the availability and accessibility of community-based educational services for children with disabilities. In light of the slow introduction of adolescent health care into schools, the Committee highly recommended the State party include reproductive health in the school curricula.³⁰⁴

The Ministry of Education has adopted a strategic plan for 2007/2008 to 2011/2012 that includes 12 programmes of reform, including the development of new curricula, school reform and development (primary and secondary), the development of vocational and human resources, institutional decentralization, technological advancement and information technology development. The strategy also includes building schools, developing kindergartens and expanding societal education opportunities for boys and girls outside the school system.³⁰⁵

The Ministry of Education has developed a system of vocational training for students who are not following the regular curriculum. The Ministry of Manpower is implementing a project to provide guidance and vocational training through existing workshops for boys and girls aged 12 to 18 years. The project course is two to three years long. The Ministry of Manpower is also implement-

ing another seven-month vocational training programme targeting children who have dropped out of basic education and taking into account the demand in the labour market. The Ministry of Social Solidarity has established several centres for the development of human and vocational resources among the same target population. Seventy centres exist in all provinces with the exception of Marsa Matrouh.³⁰⁶

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) assists the Government of Egypt in developing a learning environment where teachers inspire their students, where students learn to think critically and where communities participate in their schools. Assistance is mainly provided in schools in underprivileged urban areas in Cairo and Alexandria, and the five Upper Egypt governorates of Aswan, Qena, Beni Suef, Minya and Fayoum. USAID also supports the Egyptian Ministry of Education

through the Education Reform Programme (ERP). The ERP promotes school-based reform to improve the quality of schools. It introduces modern teaching methods that increase community participation and strengthen school management. It promotes education decentralisation, innovative professional development, education management information systems and improvements in students' assessment. USAID collaborates on the Technology for Improved Learning Outcomes project with the relevant ministries to enhance teaching, learning and school management through the use of technology in 85 different experimental public preparatory schools. This entire programme covers 200 government primary schools in 11 governorates. USAID has provided technical assistance to the Ministry of Education to decentralise the education system as part of a larger decentralisation strategy. Successful decentralisation efforts have been made in three pilot governorates (Ismailia, Fayoum and Luxor) resulting

in continuing efforts on a nation-wide scale.³⁰⁷

As part of its efforts to improve the quality of education in Egyptian schools, the Government of Egypt has recently established a National Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation. UNICEF supports this programme through school improvement projects in two governorates in Upper Egypt, reaching 195 primary schools in order to



Cut-outs created by children learning to do animation.
Courtesy of Save the Children Sweden

improve the quality of teaching and learning in preparation for accreditation.³⁰⁸

A two-level programme on education reform has been in place since 2007, targeting community and policy stakeholders.³⁰⁹ At the community level, UNICEF aims to increase enrolment at the pre-primary stage by strengthening the capacity of non-governmental organisations to establish kindergartens. Indeed, it sought to increase the numbers of inclusive kindergartens with more materials, training and supervision. So far, 310 kindergartens have been created and 25,000 children enrolled, 50% of whom were girls. At the end of 2011, these community-level initiatives were transferred to the Ministry of Education.³¹⁰ Additionally, UNICEF has been supporting a parenting education programme at the community level for more than 10 years, reaching 30,000 parents.³¹¹ This programme aims at educating parents on how to care for children and providing them with basic knowledge on child early learning protection and health.³¹² UNICEF has also been in charge of the programme at the policy level, aiming to set national standards and tools to assess school readiness. These efforts have been made in cooperation with the ministries of Education and Social Solidarity, the private sector, and non-governmental organisations, which have supported the programme through multiple awareness-raising campaigns.³¹³

Since 2007, UNICEF has provided training of trainers courses to supervisors and teachers nationwide to support the national initiative to mainstream child-centred learning techniques in one-classroom and primary schools. The Ministry of Education worked with school principals to implement proactive learning, provided assistance in the form of technical manuals, and reached more than 5,000 teachers. Nearly 500 active learning specialists have been coached in training primary school teachers.³¹⁴ A more child-friendly school environment was also made pos-

sible thanks to better sanitation and hygiene in schools.³¹⁵ Indeed, UNICEF has encouraged the maintenance of schools and the training of teachers in extracurricular activities related to the environment and hygiene.³¹⁶

Save the Children UK's programmes aim at improving children's access to high-quality education in all grades. To that end, it promotes the social, physical, psychological and cognitive development of the child under age six. It also assists in developing the infrastructure of the basic education system by increasing children's enrolment (especially that of girls), providing pivotal school and teacher training, extending learning methodologies and increasing community involvement. Some of the related projects emphasise the importance of female education. Indeed, Save the Children UK works on improving prevailing attitudes towards female education to give girls the opportunity to learn valuable academic and life skills. This work was done with adolescent out-of-school girls and members of their communities.³¹⁷

Caritas has supported pre-school centres in rural remote areas by modernising them and organising seminars for teachers and social workers. These seminars focused on improving children's physical well-being and behaviour, teaching children to acquire skills and improving interaction between teachers and the children, among other things. Caritas has provided the necessary equipment and facilities but plans to stop the project.³¹⁸

Caritas Egypt, Save the Children UK and The Support, Education, Training for Inclusion Centre (SETI) jointly initiated and supported the Inclusive Education Network. This five-year project was funded by the European Commission. Save the Children UK with SETI established in 2007 a network for the most active NGOs involved in the inclusion of children with disabilities; the network served as the main vehicle for advocacy and promoting inclusive

education in Egypt at all levels. More than 20 NGOs were included in the network by the 2011. During its initial phase, some network members influenced the development of the five-year national strategy of the Ministry of Education (2007-2012) which led to the adoption of an inclusive approach to the primary education system for the first time in Egypt. The Inclusive Education Network led and coordinated intensive advocacy in Egypt that resulted in two Ministerial decrees, the first one issued in April 2009 and the second in July 2011, allowing and regulating the inclusion of more than one million children with disabilities that were not benefiting from any kind of education into the mainstream education system. The Inclusive Education Network is officially recognised by the Ministry of Education as its main partner in developing and supporting Ministry inclusion plans. The last Ministerial Decree of July 2011 referred to the network in some of its articles. The network is also represented as an expert member in the National Inclusion Committee of the Ministry of Education to follow up and support the implementation of the five-year national strategy and plan for the inclusion and education of children living with a disability, noting that all other members are from the Ministry of Education. At the time of this writing, the project is fully functioning and has official status as the network is now registered in the Ministry of Social Affairs under its new name: The Egyptian Foundation of Organisations and Experts on Inclusive Education. The SETI Centre/CARITAS Egypt has also supported the Ministry of Education in Egypt in cooperation with the Canadian International Development Agency in developing a manual on Inclusive Education for Kindergartens from May 2009 to February 2010. Some other members of the IE Network also supported this process.³¹⁹

The Egyptian National Child Rights Observatory (EN-CRO) conducted a survey to analyse the reasons why children drop out of school. This study was completed in

December 2010. It also used the household survey done in June 2009, conducted by the Information and Decision Support Centre (IDSC), taking into consideration factors such as age, gender, region, household head educational level, household size, wealth, and disability. Eventually, the survey studied existing legislation and policies, examining their extent and whether they were coherent.³²⁰ It addressed the situation of access and participation in basic education. The survey built on previous research to create a profile of out-of-school children and examine what policies are available to address the shortcomings. To that end, it triangulated the national statistics on out-of-school children, using different sources of data, to assess the magnitude of the phenomenon. Furthermore, it compiled all the most significant reasons for dropping out of basic education based on previous research. According to UNICEF, some of the reasons why children drop out of school are that they are exposed to economic hardship, unskilled teachers and a lack of child-friendly learning environments in schools. With the Ministry of Education, UNICEF has advocated for this issue to be a top priority and to work on equitable educational system for disadvantaged children.³²¹

f. Violence Against Children

Even if Child Law No. 126/2008 amending the 1996 Child Law is an important legislative achievement including Article 3 that protects children from violence and abuse, Article 7 a) gives the right to parents and caretakers to discipline children as long as it is a “reasonable corporal punishment”, indicating that provisions against violence and abuse are not interpreted as prohibiting corporal punishment.³²²

According to statistics from UNICEF, 92% of children aged two to 14 experienced physical punishment and/or psychological aggression in 2005-2006. Moreover, 68%



experienced physical punishment and psychological aggression, 22% experienced psychological aggression only and 2% experienced physical punishment only. 40% were hit on the face, head or ears, hit repeatedly or hit hard.³²³ Furthermore, 81% of children, in deprived communities in Cairo and Alexandria reported to have been exposed to corporal punishment at home; 91% said they had encountered it at school. Verbal humiliation was experienced by 90% of respondents at home and 70% of respondents at school. In Egypt, 80% of boys and 67% of girls are subject to corporal punishment in schools.³²⁴ Moderate verbal and psychological discipline, especially shouting, is the next most common form of discipline. From 70% to 95% of parents reported shouting at their children. Egypt was notable for comparably high rates of cursing (50%), name-calling (44%) and refusing to speak to children (47%).³²⁵

Child Law No. 126/2008 (Article 97) has mandated a General Committee for Childhood protection, with sub-committees in each governorate. This General Committee formulates general policies for childhood protection, and follows up on the implementation of these policies.³²⁶ A governor chairs the committee, which includes senior representatives from all public and civil authorities concerned with children's welfare such as the ministries of Education, Health, Social Solidarity, and Interior as well as representatives of civil society.³²⁷ The subcommittees monitor all cases of children at risk as defined by Child Law No. 126/2008 and take the necessary preventive and therapeutic measures for all cases reported. They are intended to monitor and suggest policies for the protection and well-being of children, including the security, social, psychological, medical and educational needs of children. All cases of preventive intervention and the treatment of such cases have to be monitored by the sub-committees. The latter have the authority to intervene where children's

rights are being neglected or abused or in other instances of child exploitation.³²⁸

These committees were in place until March 2011 under the Ministry of Family and Population's supervision then they were abolished; today they fall under the auspices of the Ministry of Health and Population.³²⁹ So far, the Committee in Alexandria has been the most effective one. UNICEF has put in place a procedural manual to help the members of said committees in their mandates and to put into effect those committees at community level.³³⁰

The National Council for Childhood and Motherhood initiated a helpline four or five years ago.³³¹ The helpline receives and records complaints from children. The main goal of this helpline is to provide protection from violence, abuse and neglect all over the country. The helpline is monitored and evaluated by three committees (the monitoring and facilitation committee, the health committee, and the technical committee). This helpline offers families healthy methods of raising children. A number of teachers who used violence against children were administratively penalized on the basis of complaints introduced through the hotline.³³² According to UNICEF, this helpline helped in identifying children in need of social welfare. Most calls received are from adults. The few critical cases reported to the helpline were dealt with properly. Due to the current situation of instability, fewer calls are being made to the helpline. An evaluation of this helpline is planned in the year of this writing by the Egyptian National Child Rights Observatory (ENCRO).³³³

In its latest Concluding Observations, the Committee highlighted that violations of the rights of the child to protection from torture and ill-treatment still occur. Consequently, the Committee urged the State party to eliminate all forms of torture and ill-treatment against children by providing supervision of police, security forces and

prison guards regarding the protection of children under their responsibility and pushed the State party to provide adequate data on the matter. The Committee also regretted to observe that levels of corporal punishments of children at home and in educational institutions are high, remain a common practice, and that there is no effective protection system for children exposed to violence. The Committee remained very concerned about the fact that the prohibition of all forms of violence against children is still not fully implemented in domestic legislation and hence, reiterated its previous recommendations and urged the State party to guarantee the prohibition of all forms of violence against children in its domestic legislation, to proceed with intensified awareness raising campaign on the prohibition and unacceptability of violence against children, to offer complaints mechanisms accessible to children, to create a child protection system and initiating a School Free From Violence programme. The Committee further expressed its apprehension at recent reports of excessive use of force by security forces in the context of the 2011 January revolution, which resulted (according to the Ministry of Health), in the death and serious injury of 12 children under age 18. It found it particularly worrisome that during the demonstrations, children were in close proximity of and affected by tear gas, rubber bullets and live bullets. Due to lack of identification, injured children were refused access to health care. In the light of reports of the use of force by security forces during the revolution, it further insisted that the State party conduct impartial investigations into all cases of deaths of children during and after the 25 January 2011 Revolution, with a view to bring to justice those responsible. The Committee urged the State party to provide compensation to all injured children and ensure their full physical and psychological recovery and reintegration into society. The Committee remained particularly worried at the lack of a comprehensive data collection system and its implementa-

tion, which contribute to the State party's lack of data on children subjected to torture and ill-treatment.³³⁴

UNICEF launched a two-year project from October 2010 to July 2012 to map and analyse child protection systems in five countries in the Middle East and North African region. In Egypt, the study focused on prevention and response services for children affected by abuse, violence, neglect and exploitation.³³⁵ This project was half-way complete as of the writing of this country profile. UNICEF conducted interviews and did a literature review at a central level focusing on various ministries, including the Ministry of Education. It has encountered delays but should be completed by the end of 2012. Four governorates are to be targeted as the project is expanded. The subject matter remains of high importance to UNICEF, and its scope has been broadened to encompass health services as well as juvenile justice. Its aim is to identify gaps pertaining to protective mechanisms and adopt the measures necessary to address such gaps. Children should be involved in this study.³³⁶

Terre des Hommes (TDH) has developed a child protection policy that seeks to promote child's rights, defend their welfare and consider the child's feeling and needs without discrimination. This policy was developed for communications and training purposes, to protect children's rights and prevent physical, emotional and sexual abuse, to raise awareness about child rights, to give a voice to children by empowering them, and to give adequate training to employees. As such, TDH has supported eight national and international organisations in implementing the policy in their respective organisations. TDH trained the personnel and supported them in developing guidelines in this matter.³³⁷

g. Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

Even though Egypt has raised the minimum age for marriage for girls to 18 years old through Child Law No. 126/2008, the practice of child marriage still persists, particularly in remote rural areas.³³⁸ Before the minimum age of marriage of girls was raised, the prevalence of early marriage had declined from 27% in 1995 to 17% in 2008.³³⁹ According to UNICEF, 13% of girls from ages 15 to 19 were married between 2000 and 2009.³⁴⁰ Furthermore, 7% of women aged 20 to 24 reported during the same time period to have given birth before the age of 18.³⁴¹ It is estimated that one million children (boys and girls) working or living on the street are victims of sexual exploitation.³⁴²

Reportedly, mainly wealthy men from the Gulf region travel to Egypt to purchase “temporary” or “summer marriages” with Egyptian women, including underage girls. According to a 2010 government survey, these men come from Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait. The children are involved in both sexual servitude and forced labour as servants to their “husbands”. Children are also victims of sex tourism, particularly in Cairo, Alexandria, and Luxor. Egypt is a country of destination for Iraqi women forced into prostitution. However, the government acted to prosecute those persons responsible for facilitating “temporary marriages” of young girls for profit. The Penal Code, as amended by Child Law No. 126/2008, provides for sentences of at least five years of imprisonment prohibiting the violation of a child’s right to protection from sexual, commercial or economic exploitation.³⁴³

In its Concluding Observations concerning the initial report of Egypt to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, the Commit-

tee expressed concerns about the inadequacy of existing laws and policies at preventing children from becoming victims of the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, at reports of persistent increase of prostitution activities in which children as young as 10 years old may have been affected, and at reports of child domestic workers who may have been victims of sale and inhumane treatment. Hence, among its recommendations, the Committee called upon the State party to specifically prohibit exploitative child domestic work by amending the Labour Code and Child Law (2008).³⁴⁴ It also regretted that in order to be considered victims of prostitution, children over 15 years old would have to prove coercion or forced exploitation and if a child becomes involved in prostitution at his or her “own free will”, he/she will be held responsible and prosecuted.³⁴⁵ The Committee was also alarmed at the high level of sexual harassment and abuse experienced by young girls and at insufficient support services for victims of sexual abuse and exploitation, and has called upon the State party to implement the Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) Committee’s recommendations to criminalize all forms of violence against women, including marital rape, sexual violence and sexual harassment by adopting a comprehensive law and implementing social care institutions and shelters for protection and physical and psychosocial recovery of child victims of violence, including sexual abuse and exploitation.³⁴⁶ The Committee was also concerned about the State party’s lack of appropriate laws preventing child sex tourism and protecting children from becoming victims, the failure to define and prohibit all offences, and poor awareness-raising activities on safe tourism or child sex tourism.³⁴⁷ The number of early marriages of girls and ‘tourist/temporary’ marriages of young Egyptian girls to foreign men remains high. These practices may disguise the prostitution of children and efforts taken by marriage clerks and the family counselling help line are not enough to circumvent the phenomenon and the Committee has

urged the State party to prevent and eliminate all forms of child marriages and consider preventing and eradicating “tourist/temporary” marriages of children.³⁴⁸

Among its other concerns, the Committee emphasized that children in street situations are at risk of exposure to forced prostitution and other forms of exploitation and thus highly encouraged the State party to undertake all necessary measures to prevent and protect these children from all forms of abuse.³⁴⁹ The Committee highlighted the absence of an effective protection system for children, including those exposed to sexual abuse, and has thus recommended the State party ensure that all forms of violence against children are prohibited in domestic legislation and that the State party initiate a School Free From Violence programme protecting schools from sexual violence.³⁵⁰ Domestic legislation does not fully incorporate all offences provided for in the Optional Protocol and the State party lacks awareness-raising activities about the Optional Protocol. Moreover, limited data exists on child prostitution and related issues and budget allocations have not been dedicated to activities implementing the Optional Protocol or for compensation for victims of offences.³⁵¹ As such, the Committee has urged the State party to strengthen cooperation and coordination between the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood and other ministries such as the Ministry of Interior’s General Department for Child Protection on the Optional Protocol to develop information and education programmes on preventive measures and the harmful effects of the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography to ensure that child victims of offences under the Optional Protocol are not treated as offenders. The Committee also called for the prohibition and criminalization of the sale of children, and to ensure the allocation of adequate resources for training programmes and activities related to respect of the Protocol.³⁵²

In 2010, the Government implemented a documentation unit compiling all laws and enforcement efforts by government bodies pertaining to abuses of children in general (including efforts made to combat sexual exploitation). Due to the political situation at the time of drafting this country profile, the Government had not reported any data. It had nonetheless reported efforts to come down hard on said “temporary” marriages, prosecuting 50 cases of 29 imams, marriage brokers, and parents who had profited from facilitating such practices, as well as the men who tried to purchase the young girls.³⁵³

In December 2010, the Ministry of Family and Population commenced an awareness campaign to educate local communities about the dangers of ‘temporary marriages’ and child marriages. The National Council for Childhood and Motherhood officials interrupted marriage ceremonies in process, thus raising parents’ and community members’ awareness on these practices. The Government also implemented a microcredit loan to allow parents otherwise tempted to sell their children into exploitative marriages to find an alternative source of revenue.³⁵⁴

UNICEF is also involved in raising awareness on ‘temporary marriages’ through a plan of action to support a study on human trafficking, within a joint programme with different UN agencies. Hence, the issue of “temporary marriages” is now being dealt with on a broader scale, engaged with along with other subjects such as organ trafficking, Female Genital Mutilation and children living in the street. Campaigns are mainly led in Upper Egypt.³⁵⁵

b. Child Trafficking

The countries in the region, including Egypt, are origin, transit and/or destination countries of child trafficking, which poses a major challenge. Furthermore, due to regional demographic, cultural and socio-economic charac-

teristics as well as large numbers of displaced persons, these populations are highly vulnerable to trafficking.³⁵⁶ Based on the available information, the common forms of trafficking in Egypt include trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation, child labour, domestic servitude and trafficking in human organs and body tissues. In particular, there is a growing phenomenon of ‘seasonal’ or ‘temporary’ marriage of under-aged Egyptian girls to foreign men,³⁵⁷ even though the minimum age for marriage was raised to 18 years by Child Law No. 126/2008, amending the 1996 Child Law.³⁵⁸ Among the victims of human trafficking that have been reached through assistance programmes, around 10% were children.³⁵⁹

As stated earlier, in its most recent Concluding Observations, the Committee regretted to observe that the high number of early marriages of girls and ‘tourist/temporary’ marriages of young Egyptian girls to foreign men may disguise the trafficking of children. Hence, the Committee recommended that the State party prevent and eliminate all forms of child marriages using various mechanisms and facilities, including the Anti-Trafficking Unit of the NCCM.³⁶⁰ The Committee further recommended the State party ensure that all child victims, including child victims of trafficking, are afforded adequate legal protection as required under the Convention.³⁶¹ It expressed deep concern at reports of children in street situations being subjected to the sale and transfer of their organs and of their abduction for organ transplantation, and hence recommended the State party, through law enforcement, prevent, detect and eliminate offences under the Optional Protocol.³⁶²

The Government of Egypt has acknowledged that trafficking is a challenge that must be addressed.³⁶³ In light of that acknowledgement, the Egyptian parliament adopted in April 2010 the Law on Combating Trafficking in Persons No. 64, a comprehensive set of provisions that

criminalises the offense of trafficking and provides for protective measures for the victims. The law prohibits the exploitation of children in any of its forms and anyone who perpetrates such crime against a child faces life imprisonment and a fine not less than 100,000 Egyptian pounds and not to exceed 500,000 Egyptian pounds.³⁶⁴ This new Law on Combating Trafficking in Persons provided a clear definition for ‘trafficking’ and legally criminalized the offense. Since the law was passed, the Ministry of Justice, public prosecutors and the police have put together guidelines on how to effectively implement the law and provide appropriate protection for victims.³⁶⁵ Egypt also adopted in 2010 the Organ Harvesting and Transplant Act, which prohibits organ trading and regulates organ transplantation.³⁶⁶

However, labour laws have not been affected by any legislative change, despite the need. According to the available information, there are a large number of domestic workers trafficked in Egypt for labour exploitation. Work inspections are underutilized for detecting victims of trafficking and in any event cannot be conducted in private homes where domestic workers are employed.³⁶⁷

Between January 2010 and March 2010, a study on human trafficking in Egypt was conducted by the Egyptian National Centre for Social and Criminology Research upon the request of the National Coordinating Committee for Combating and Preventing Trafficking in Persons.³⁶⁸ The latter was tasked with collaborating with all governmental and non-governmental agencies working on human trafficking.³⁶⁹ The study was a national survey expected to fill in the gaps in statistical information and provide indications of the most widespread forms of human trafficking in Egypt. This study was funded by UN agencies and International Organisation for Migration (IOM).³⁷⁰ Efforts to combat human trafficking have also led to the introduction, in December 2010, of a National Plan of

Action Against Human Trafficking, a project intended to combat trafficking through partnership and joint collaboration. Prosecution of the law has been supervised by the Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Justice while shelters, through assistance and protection, were put in place initially by the NCCM and now fall under the direction of the Ministry of Health.³⁷¹

The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) has undertaken several initiatives since 2008 in counter-trafficking, focusing on prevention, prosecution and protection and conducting training activities, including among the health sector. It provided several handbooks as guidelines for investigation, prosecution, protection, and providing services to victims by health workers.³⁷²

Among the training courses provided to government officials was a three-week training course intended to strengthen capacity in combating human trafficking conducted in June 2008 for 20 Egyptian law enforcement officials. In 2009, a new training course was conducted to build on this successful pilot initiative.³⁷³ In January 2010, OIM began a project funded by the US State Department Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (G-TIP) entitled “Supporting the Government of Egypt’s Efforts to Combat Human Trafficking by Enhancing Key Investigation and Prosecution Capacities”. This was done in collaboration with the Ministry of Interior, the Office of the General Prosecutor and the Ministry of Justice.³⁷⁴ Since 2008, the IOM has conducted several workshops pertaining on human trafficking, including child trafficking, reaching more than 500 specialists such as army officers, police officers, public prosecutors and judges, hospital staff, hotline staff, peacekeepers officers, diplomats and the staff of non-governmental organisations and civil society organisations.³⁷⁵ The handbooks produced by the IOM have included one on the “Investigation and Prosecution of Trafficking in Persons and Treatment of

Victims During Law Enforcement Proceedings”, which analyses existing legislation pertinent to the investigation and the prosecution of offenses related to trafficking.³⁷⁶

The IOM has also been conducting training courses in enhancing awareness and knowledge on trafficking in the health sector. In December 2008, in partnership with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a “Regional Expert Meeting on Rights-Based Assistance to Victims of Trafficking” was organised. Representatives of the 22 Arab countries, civil society, research institutes and UN agencies met to discuss the best practices in the field for assisting victims of trafficking. This meeting resulted in the launching of an Arabic version of the IOM handbook on the provisions of direct assistance to victims of trafficking. This handbook aims at fostering understanding about the protection and health needs of victims of trafficking. Indeed, it is a valuable resource for identifying victims, shelter management and training.³⁷⁷

This led to the establishment of a pilot Trafficking Victim Support Unit in 2011 at the National Bank Hospital, the only hospital providing such services. This programme was supported by the Ministry of Health and the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood. It is intended specifically for victims of trafficking and provides the victims with comprehensive medical and psychological care. Since September 2011, more than 50 patients have been medically treated and five doctors trained on a voluntary basis. Following the treatment of victims, follow-up is conducted outside of the hospital by social workers through nongovernmental organisations or shelters.³⁷⁸ IOM has also published a handbook “Caring for Trafficked Persons” and has translated it into Arabic for use in training within health programmes.³⁷⁹

IOM has also been involved in several awareness-raising initiatives among the vulnerable foreign migrant com-



munity. Under the Regional “Programme for Identification and Provision of Assistance to Iraqi Victims of Trafficking and Vulnerable Migrants in the Middle East” established in 2008 and funded by the US Department of State’s Bureau for Population Refugees and Migration, IOM has organised activities targeting community and religious leaders, taking into consideration the socio-cultural context.³⁸⁰ To raise awareness on trafficking and the vulnerability of migrants, IOM has also established a community volunteer network that began as a health programme initiative and then became a system to identify communities on the ground. This programme has expanded to include Sudanese, Somali, Eritrean, Ethiopian and now Syrian migrants. Through awareness-raising campaigns, victims have been referred to IOM, which provides medical assistance and shelter.

IOM has worked in cooperation with the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood since 2010 to support the establishment of a Regional Shelter for Recovery and Integration of Women and Girls who are victims of trafficking; the shelter has capacity for 12 people.³⁸¹ Victims and/or extremely vulnerable Egyptian and migrants are provided a secure, transitional accommodation, medical assistance and legal aid while being provided support until a long-term solution is found.³⁸² Boys otherwise have access to shelters, which exist mainly for children in a street situation.³⁸³ Victims reach these shelters through various facilities, including judiciary placement and referral through police and nongovernmental organisations. A national toll-free 24-hour hotline has been established to receive calls from trafficked persons. Between August 2009 and February 2010, it was reported that 144 calls related to child marriages were received.³⁸⁴

Among other related innovations, there is now a programme at the Faculty of Law of the University of Alexandria designed to provide legal aid services to victims of

trafficking. Furthermore, the Suzanne Mubarak Regional Centre for Women, Health and Development has created a health and well-being clinic for women victims of gender-based violence and potential victims of trafficking, in light of their vulnerability.³⁸⁵

i. Children Associated with Armed Groups and Forces

According to the Egyptian constitution and Military and National Service Act of 1980, military service is compulsory for males aged 18 and over. The Egyptian Armed Forces also accept volunteers from the age of 16 with proof of age and permission of a parent or guardian. However, concerns were raised about the lack of clarity of the legislation regarding measures in place to ensure that, in the event of hostilities, Egyptian military personnel aged below 18 are prevented from taking a direct part in hostilities.³⁸⁶ According to some sources, military training for recent secondary school graduates has been provided in military academies, such as the Air Defence Academy and the Egyptian Naval College in Alexandria, the Egyptian Air Academy in the Sharqiya Governorate and the Armed Forces Technical Institute. Children aged 11 to 15 could be accepted in certain military schools as long as they have completed their primary school education.³⁸⁷

In its latest Concluding Observations, the Committee was concerned at the poor data available on several matters including the voluntary involvement of children under 18 in armed forces, the absence of definitions in domestic legislation of terms such as “hostilities” and “direct participation”, and the fact that while the law prohibits the involvement of children under 18 in armed forces, there is no specific provision in domestic legislation prohibiting and criminalizing the recruitment of a person under 18. Sixteen remains the minimum age for voluntary recruitment.³⁸⁸ The Committee found it worrisome that children aged 11 to 15 have been allowed to enrol in certain mili-

tary schools under Law No. 22 (1982), while the minimum age of admission is 15.³⁸⁹ It was also alarmed at the State party's incomplete incorporation of the Optional Protocol into its domestic legislation, at inadequate training on the protection and rights of children in armed conflict, at the lack of systematic awareness-raising activities for military officers, and at the non-ratification of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court by the State party.³⁹⁰ As such, the Committee called upon the State party to fully incorporate the Optional Protocol into its domestic legislation, to proceed with intensified awareness activities and adequate training towards its implementation among professional groups working with and for children, and to ensure that members of the armed forces that are under the age of 18 do not take direct part in hostilities and that the minimum age of voluntary recruitment is 18 and older. It also called upon the State party to amend Law 22 (1982) to ensure that children attending military schools have adequate access to independent complaints and investigations mechanisms and be free to leave such institutions, to prohibit by law any violation of the provisions of the Optional Protocol regarding the recruitment and involvement of children in hostilities and to ratify the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.³⁹¹

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), together with the League of Arab States, has actively promoted the integration of international humanitarian law into national legislation, university and school curricula, and the training of national armed forces in Egypt and throughout the Arab world.³⁹²

j. Landmines and Small Arms

Egypt has 23 million landmines in the eastern and western parts of the country. Besides being a threat to the life and safety of individuals, landmines pose a severe challenge to economic development efforts.³⁹³

In its latest Concluding Observations, the Committee was deeply concerned at the absence of a clear prohibition of the use of firearms in military schools and at reports revealing that small arms and light weapons have been exported by the State party to Sudan, where children have been recruited by armed forces and groups.³⁹⁴ As such, the Committee highly encouraged the State party to clearly prohibit training on the use of firearms in military schools, explicitly make illegal trade and export of any type of arms to countries where children are being recruited or involved in armed conflict, continue to criminalize illicit activities such as the manufacturing and trafficking of small arms and light weapons and ratify the Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunitions, and relevant related conventions.³⁹⁵

No initiative addressing these recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child was documented in the course of this research.

k. Internally Displaced Children and Refugees

In January 2011, there were 95,056 refugees in Egypt, and 14,303 asylum-seekers.³⁹⁶ In December 2011, 44,570 asylum seekers and refugees in Egypt were registered by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR); these included 13,549 (30%) minors (6,037 of them asylum-seekers and 7,512 of them refugees). These displaced persons originated in the occupied Palestinian territory, Sudan, Iraq, Somalia, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Eritria, and elsewhere.³⁹⁷

In its latest Concluding Observations, the Committee expressed concern that almost a third of the refugee and asylum-seeking population living in the State party are children and that refugee children are not legally protected under domestic law. In this regard, the Committee highly



encouraged the State party to reinforce measures taken to improve living conditions for refugee children, including by abolishing the prohibition of work permits for refugees.³⁹⁸

In order to support the education of children, UNHCR provided educational grants between USD 175- USD 490 to 6,300 refugee and asylum-seeking children attending primary and secondary school for the academic year 2010-2011.³⁹⁹ These were one segment of 8,000 educational grants provided by the UNHCR in that year. Approximately 6,670 students received full grants while 1,330 received reduced grants due to a shortage of funds.⁴⁰⁰ In 2010, through UNHCR's subsidised primary and emergency health care, approximately 41,500 medical consultations were carried out. In total, 1,600 patients received treatment from UNHCR's partner. Further, patients suffering from chronic illnesses received treatment on a monthly basis.⁴⁰¹ During the same year, approximately 660 pregnant women accessed antenatal, natal, and early neonatal services through UNHCR's partner.⁴⁰² In 2010, an average of 10,000-11,000 people, which is around 25% of the population of concern to the UNHCR, obtained financial assistance. Depending on family size, households received between USD 52 and USD 210.⁴⁰³

Accordingly, UNHCR sought in 2012 to strengthen services and support for groups with specific needs, to ensure fair protection processes and documentation, to guarantee a favourable protection environment and to ensure community participation while encouraging self-management.⁴⁰⁴

The Happy Child Preschool Programme of Refuge Egypt aims to provide an outlet for normal educational and personal development to deprived children of refugees. The Primary Education Programme provides a comprehensive curriculum in English for up to 30 children aged five to

eight years. The Well Baby and Well Child Clinics provide monitoring on growth and development using World Health Organization (WHO) charts and early childhood health education to families.⁴⁰⁵

In April 2009, a training centre for refugee social workers, themselves refugees working in isolated communities, was established by Terre des Hommes in Cairo, aiming at improving access to social and health services.⁴⁰⁶ The project, in collaboration with the American University Study Centre on Migrants and Refugees, was to train 26 social workers in the psychosocial approach. TDH has also provided support for ten organisations already assisting refugees in Cairo to establish psychosocial activities for children and their families.⁴⁰⁷ Ultimately, the project aims at developing a sustainable Centre for Psychosocial and Mental Health Training of Refugees in Cairo. The centre will include activities such as an annual nine-month training programme for community-based refugee psychosocial workers, monthly seminars to strengthen mental health professionals' interests and capacities in supporting refugees, community-based workshops to build psychosocial and mental health knowledge and self-help skills, research and measure the training centre's impact, and organise an annual regional conference on related issues and treatment.⁴⁰⁸ It also aims at initiating a community-based psychosocial and mental health support system by refugees for refugees, where a multi-lingual, multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and gender-balanced group of 16-20 refugees will be trained yearly as psychosocial workers.⁴⁰⁹ In addition, the project seeks to increase the capacity of refugee organisations in Cairo and integrate psychosocial support within existing services.⁴¹⁰ In order to do so, future psychosocial workers will be selected from their communities through existing community-based refugee organisations and will have to use what they have learned within those existing organisations. About half of the trainees are expected to come from organisations' existing staff.⁴¹¹ These refugee

psychosocial workers are expected to provide community-based psychosocial needs assessments (approximately 10 a year) and to put into practice psycho-social education through sessions on various coping mechanisms, in order to increase community leaders' and members' (approximately 1,050 participants) ability to understand, prevent and respond to psychosocial and mental issues. The social workers will also provide outreach to refugees in their homes and communities (480-600 vulnerable identified and assisted), facilitate support groups for adults, families and children, (540-720 participants), focusing on issues such as stress, violence, parenting, adjustment, despair due to disenfranchisement or issues of communication, and implement community-based crisis intervention (50 clients), psychosocial support and basic problem-solving counselling for adults, children and families.⁴¹² Moreover, a training session for trainers will prepare a local team to take over in year two of the project.⁴¹³ To date, 2,993 children have benefitted from project activities such as sports and recreational and educational activities (in sports, art, music, dance and theatre).⁴¹⁴

l. Orphaned, Separated and Unaccompanied Children

Estimates indicate that there are 46,000 children in various types of care institutions in Egypt.⁴¹⁵

In its most recent Concluding Observations, the Committee noted the monthly pension provided to orphans or children with unknown parents and an increase in social insurance support, however, it remained very concerned about persistent family disintegration and an increase in separation of children from their parents due to economic conditions. It regretted that there appears to be insufficient support by the State party for child-care services and facilities. The Committee found it particularly worrisome that the number of children, including 'abandoned

children' and those living in institutions, is high, and therefore urged the State party to encourage family-type placements, such as the *kafalah* system (an Islamic system where families provide for the needs of a child without legal adoption) and placing children with extended and foster families.⁴¹⁶

Save the Children UK has been working with the Government Department of Social Solidarity in order to develop minimum standards for the protection of children in public and private care institutions. A training programme for social workers on child protection is being implemented in two institutions in Cairo in 2011-2012. A database is also being developed as a model to increase monitoring.⁴¹⁷

m. Birth Registration

From 2000 to 2009, the birth registration rate in both urban and rural areas remained at 99%.⁴¹⁸ However, it was reported by civil society organisations that in Upper Egypt, some families were not obtaining the birth certificate of their child and not registering the death of some children. Instances were also reported where birth certificates of deceased children were used by newborns.⁴¹⁹

In its 2011 Concluding Observations, the Committee was deeply concerned that the rates of birth registration remained inconsistent throughout the country, that some children due to discrimination have more difficulties in obtaining one, and that individuals have to buy a stamp to register, effectively placing a fee on birth registration. In this regard, the Committee highly encouraged the State party to impose free and compulsory birth registration for all children and thus abolish birth registration fees.⁴²⁰

Plan International has actively worked through its "Universal Birth Registration Campaign" with many partners and governments to promote birth registration around

the world.⁴²¹ Its initiative began in 2007 and remains in place but with greater scope. The programme provides facilitation of birth registration after child delivery but also helps in obtaining certification for sponsored children, non-sponsored children and marginalised children (children living in the streets, working or school drop-outs). It also helps mothers without identification papers in registering their children. Through local partners, Plan International reaches out to mothers by going house-to-house.⁴²²

n. Children Living/Working in the Street

Estimations place the number of children living in the streets between 200,000 and two million.⁴²³ The issue is of national scale but the magnitude of the problem cannot be assessed as long as a census has not been conducted to count the number of children living in the streets.⁴²⁴ Many children in a street situation have fled their homes due to family breakdown, abuse and neglect. Although family breakdown and poverty are described as being the root causes of this situation, children also appear to be attracted to the opportunity to earn money and socialize.⁴²⁵ Children in a street situation are marginalised in Egypt by poverty and lack of opportunity.⁴²⁶ Violence over food, drugs and money is rather common, and children in a street situation are vulnerable to abuse by adults and other children as well as to injuries, sexual exploitation and drug abuse. They have limited or no access to education, health or legal services.⁴²⁷

Child Law No. 126/2008 contributed to addressing shortcomings in the treatment of children living in the street by the justice system. Thus, Article 96 of this amended law adopted a new approach in dealing with children in conflict with the law, including children living in the street. “Children liable to deviancy” have become “children at risk”. They are at risk when they are “exposed to

a situation threatening the sound upbringing that should be made available to” them or found in 14 other situations listed under Article 96, including children in vagrancy, with no permanent residence, or generally sleeping in the streets. A new section on social and psychological measures for the protection of children at risk and their families was also added. A mechanism to monitor and follow up on them was established and penalties against parents who abandon their children were strengthened.⁴²⁸

In its latest Concluding Observations, the Committee found particularly worrisome that the troubles faced by children in street situations, an environment where they risk exposure to violence, drug abuse, arrest and detention by police and exploitation of all forms including prostitution and begging, can be perpetuated by factors such as school drop-out, family disintegration, extreme poverty, or stigma. Children in street situations, in part because of poverty and school violence, are not adequately covered in the State party’s data collection system, are exposed to difficulties in obtaining birth certificates, have impediments to accessing State-run health care services and do not enjoy social care institutions’ or civil society organisations’ full services. In light of such conditions, the Committee strongly recommended the State party to take all necessary measures to prevent children from street situations and to ensure their protection and social assistance in such conditions, notably by enforcing implementation of the new National Plan of Action for Children’s strategies and ensuring that children in street situations have all their rights protected.⁴²⁹

In fact, the National Plan of Action for Street Children developed in 2007 by the National Council for Motherhood and Childhood with the support of UNICEF was not implemented. Most work in the field conducted by non-governmental organisations.⁴³⁰ The NCCM supports them in providing services and in establishing facilities

for children living or working in the streets.⁴³¹ NGOs also have taken the initiative in organising themselves by creating a Street Children network in Alexandria, and a Street Children Committee in Southern Cairo as part of the Child Protection Network established in 2009. The programme is still proceeding with the same strategy: awareness-raising campaigns, capacity-building, advocacy, networking and partnership between organisations.⁴³²

While the child helpline established by the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood (NCCM) also sought to prepare maps identifying locations with high concentration of children working or living on the street,⁴³³ the helpline appears to be falling out of use, and the number of calls has reduced over the past year.⁴³⁴ A numeration is planned for 2012 and 2013 in Cairo and Alexandria.⁴³⁵ This census would help in applying individual solutions linked to the mapping process undergone through the abovementioned child helpline. So far, attempts to measure the number of children living in the streets have resulted in a count of 10,000.⁴³⁶

Since 2007, UNICEF has been working with non-governmental organisations (NGOS) such as Hope Village Society, Caritas and the Egyptian Association for the Protection of Children in Alexandria and Qena. UNICEF seeks to strengthen non-governmental organisations' capacities and help in reintegrating children living in the streets, as well as develop outreach work.⁴³⁷ Therefore, UNICEF supports the centres established by NGOs by training social workers on child rights and the risks that children face in the streets, and by providing training directly to the children themselves through social workers. UNICEF is building the capacity of seven NGOs and governmental child care institutions. The project supports between 1,500 and 2,000 children per year.⁴³⁸ Since 2008, UNICEF has also supported the only shelter for young mothers in

street situations. The centre is managed by Hope Village and can accommodate 30 girls.⁴³⁹

Day centres and night shelters established and managed by NGOs aim at improving the lives of children in street situations. The centres provide health services ranging from check-ups to hospital referrals, alternative education, meals, sanitation facilities and support services.

Caritas manages six of the 21 units of the hot-line for children.⁴⁴⁰ Caritas also established day-care centres in Alexandria and Cairo for boys and girls. Both centres offered a wide variety of services including Arabic classes (writing and reading, since most often the children are illiterate), medical assistance and a substantial meal. Through its literacy classes and vocational training, Caritas also tries to teach the basic skills children need to find employment. To that end, social workers help the children in getting their birth certificate and identification, and maintain a professional profile on them. In parallel, Caritas undertakes awareness activities by organising workshops for the media, government social workers, psychiatrists and night supervisors along with planning open door days and preparing brochures pertaining to the issue of children living in the street.⁴⁴¹

A programme to run between January 2011 and December 2013 on reducing the phenomenon of children in precarious conditions was initiated by Caritas. Through the centre in Kafr El Sissi in Giza (established in 2004), boys and girls aged six to 18 have access to a health programme, social-psychological support, education and pedagogical support, vocational training on electricity and leather manipulation, cultural activities and support in obtaining proper documents. In addition, a family mediation component is included to facilitate the reintegration of children into the family. The family can be supported through a micro-credit initiative equivalent to 166 USD

(1,000 Egyptian pounds). The project aims at targeting 200 children and their families. Children are identified through mobile units, a bus with medical equipment, and a team of specialised personnel (a doctor, a psychologist and a social worker) that works five days a week, from nine pm to midnight in the areas of Cairo and Giza to identify children in street situations. Around 15 children are helped by the mobile unit per visit. The mobile unit works in collaboration with other NGOs such as Beena El Mogtama, El Mawaa and Nour El Hayat.⁴⁴²

Caritas also manages a night shelter in Alexandria for boys. The shelter can accommodate 20 boys.⁴⁴³ The shelter is a temporary accommodation, although children may remain there for six to nine months during which time social workers attempt to contact their families. Mediation is conducted between the child and his family to facilitate reintegration.⁴⁴⁴ Once the children are ready for reintegration, they are transferred to the Pedagogic Institution of Giza for boys or of Agouza for girls. The ultimate goal is to prepare children for social insertion while monitoring and assisting the families. In addition, a number of children at the centres are trained to act as ‘mentors’ for other children living in the streets. The children are trained to understand and deal with the potential health threats of living in the streets, and then pass this information on to their peers.⁴⁴⁵

Save the Children UK works with public institutions as well as local NGOs, local community leaders and children in creating an outreach programme for children in street situations in some of the poorest slum areas in Cairo. Its project initiated in January 2012 will be implemented over the next three years and aims at establishing a framework for mobilizing governmental and community-based resources by developing a map of services for children in street situations or children at risk. The project includes health and educational services, life skills, and vocational

training opportunities. Children also learn how to advocate for their rights. A prior project implemented between 2010 and 2012 funded by the Ford Foundation aimed at enforcing local mechanisms for identifying children at risk through the child protection committees. The project has showed positive results with 3,500 identified by the community as ‘at risk’ benefitted from this programme. The project also supported children in getting their documentation in order to gain access to services such as health and education.⁴⁴⁶

Since 2007, Plan International Egypt has assisted children in street situations with reintegrating into the community and improving their quality of life and future prospects. Plan International works in association with community members, local organisations and decision-makers who take responsibility for promoting and protecting children’s rights.⁴⁴⁷ This assistance is provided in four different stages: prevention (raising awareness on reaching out to children living in the streets and counselling vulnerable children and families), protection (awareness-raising campaigns, capacity building of local non-governmental organisations and local advocacy), rehabilitation (outreach through mobile units that meet children in specific locations in urban areas) and transition (transitional and permanent shelters to smooth the transition between life in the street and reintegration into society/family). The shelters are separated between boys and girls. Usually, the children remain approximately three months in transitional shelters where they can stay overnight, whereas they are able to stay in permanent shelters until they reach 18 years of age.⁴⁴⁸

a. Child Labour

Child Law No. 126/2008 forbids the permanent employment of children under age 15. It also forbids the training of children under age 13, but allows children between

ages 12 and 14 to be hired for seasonal work. Similarly Article 66 of this same law limits the number of hours children can work per day.⁴⁴⁹ National Labour Law No. 12 (2003) also provides a framework for child work. Children under 14 years of age cannot be permanently employed while still enrolled in compulsory elementary education. The law also limits the number of hours they are allowed to work. This Labour Law explicitly excludes domestic workers and members of the employer's family and children working in agricultural labour, however.⁴⁵⁰ The Ministry of Manpower and Migrations' Decree 118 of 2003 also contains provisions pertaining to the conditions of working children. It lists specific hazardous occupations in which anyone under age 18 is forbidden to work. The decree further requires the child to be submitted to a medical examination and be informed on safety equipment and precautions.⁴⁵¹ Articles related to child employment, including employment in hazardous settings and regulations on working hours, are generally not enforced, however.⁴⁵² Egypt has ratified international conventions pertaining to child labour, but their implementation at a national level is lacking and currently the country does not have a coherent government policy on child labour.⁴⁵³

Prior to the events in Egypt of January 2011, there was a General Committee for Child Protection under the auspices of the Ministry of State for Family and Population. This Committee coordinated the national child protection programme and was in charge of identifying and monitoring children at risk of exploitative labour. The Ministry also had an office for implementing pilot projects and awareness-raising campaigns to fight child labour.⁴⁵⁴ Since March 2011, the Ministry of State for Family and Population no longer exists and no other governmental authority seems to have taken over the responsibility of carrying out the mandate of the Ministry regarding the fight against child labour.⁴⁵⁵

From 2000 to 2009, 8% of males and 5% of females, both aged five to 14 years of age, were involved in child labour activities, particularly in the agriculture sector.⁴⁵⁶ In Egypt, an estimated two to 2.5 million children between the ages of six and 15 are working as street vendors, domestic workers, agricultural labourers, or in factories, in laundries or as mechanics. The vast majority (83%) are working in rural areas. More boys than girls in Egypt are working but it is not clear whether domestic work is sufficiently counted in child labour estimates.⁴⁵⁷ It was reported that 90% of domestic workers were girls.⁴⁵⁸ Reports were mentioning that the majority of children involved in child labour are below the age of 11.⁴⁵⁹ Other estimations place the number of children involved in labour at 2.7 million, or 20.5% of children aged six to 14. Two-thirds of working children are reportedly employed in the agriculture sector, often in hazardous conditions with limited or no access to education or life skills development.⁴⁶⁰

In its latest Concluding Observations, the Committee expressed concerns about the persistently high number of children engaged in child labour, likely prompted by poor law enforcement and prevailing social acceptance of child labour as a strategy to reduce poverty. It regretted that the vast majority of children used for labour were under the age of 11; that child labour in agriculture persisted; that agriculture, domestic work or any forms of informal work remain unregulated by the Labour Code; that deficiencies in the Child Law (2008) have allowed seasonal employment of children aged 12-14 and that the minimum age of children to be employed was lowered to 17. It further been observed that a low level of enrolment in primary schools and high school drop-out rates in secondary schools persisted as a result of poverty and school violence, both of which contributed to child labour and children living in street situations. It was in this regard that the Committee urged the State party to implement effective strategies prohibiting and eliminating children's



economic exploitation and to adopt policies and implement programmes aimed at protecting, regulating and respecting human rights, especially child rights, in relation to the activities of the business sector.⁴⁶¹

From 2006 to 2011, the Government of Egypt and the US Department of Labour established a USD 5.5 million project that provided education and other social services to 10,900 children targeted to be withdrawn or prevented from exploitative labour situations, primarily in the informal sector. The project has created 97 community schools and developed an apprenticeship programme for older youth. The project has also provided livelihood support to families of child labourers, including food rations and income-generating activities training for mothers. The project also developed in 2009 a system to monitor child labour and a tracking database, both of which were rolled out nationally under the Mobile Computing and Multimedia conference.⁴⁶²

Following up on this, the Government of Egypt is participating in a project extending from 2010 to 2014 to prevent and withdraw 16,000 children from the worst forms of child labour in agriculture in Upper Egypt by providing them with access to education, apprenticeship opportunities and livelihood support for their households. The project's budget is USD 9.5 million.⁴⁶³ When in 2009 the Ministry of Manpower⁴⁶⁴ piloted the central tracking database to monitor child labour, it also formed a committee made up of government, union and employee representatives, to develop a National Action Plan to combat the worst forms of child labour.⁴⁶⁵

The World Organisation for the Scouts Movement has been working on eliminating child labour in Egypt since 2002. One of its projects is promoting performing arts so that children can express themselves and convey their message to wider communities. Over 2,000 working

children have received social and health care and participated in cultural activities, literacy classes, sports, music activities, technical skills training, vocational training and scouting activities through the project.⁴⁶⁶

Save the Children in cooperation with the Danish International Development Agency are working on developing a toolkit for companies in the agricultural sector in Egypt, to encourage companies to address child labour and improve working conditions for children and adolescents. The project is entitled "Developing a Toolkit to Address Child Labour in Agriculture in Egypt"⁴⁶⁷ and is founded on the premise that the agricultural sector can be particularly dangerous for children and is lightly regulated. This toolkit is the result of an assessment conducted in 2010 that sought to provide a global vision and understanding of the realities of children working for two exporting agricultural companies in Egypt. The field research provided an overview of the two companies involved and examined the reality of the dangers the children, mainly girls, face.⁴⁶⁸ The toolkit takes into account the findings of the assessment and encourages companies to work in collaboration with different stakeholders such as farmers, suppliers, subcontractors, trade unions, children, families, civil society and governments. The toolkit is aimed at small and large companies and is divided into seven chapters that provide information about work conditions for children in the agricultural sector in Egypt. It also emphasizes companies' corporate social responsibility, offering solutions as to what a business can do to address and prevent child labour. To that end it provides seven tools designed to give companies practical and sustainable guidance on how to assess and analyse child labour and how to address and prevent related issues. More precisely, it explains how to conduct a child-friendly interview, how to determine a child's age, how to identify, minimise and eradicate hazards and exploitation and how to identify occupation

safety and health risks, promote child-centred corporate social responsibility and develop a code of conduct.⁴⁶⁹

Terre des Hommes (TDH) aims at supporting working children in production workshops by providing access to schools and/or apprenticeships, in collaboration with employers, parents and local communities.⁴⁷⁰

TDH commissioned a study in June 2010 on domestic workers in Cairo. The study aimed at understanding the working and living conditions of child domestic workers, addressing the vulnerability of children involved in domestic work, and exploring the opportunities and benefits available. Recommendations were addressed to relevant stakeholder in order to extend the protection of these children.⁴⁷¹

From July 2007 to June 2011, a project to combat child labour through education was implemented in industrial zones in Assiut. Community development associations were involved, such as Dwena and Atta Bela Hedod, along with the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Ministry of Manpower and Migration, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health. The project targeted 5,830 working children or children at risk of being involved in commercial exploitation and helped them by providing health services, education, economic support and improving their social situation. The project's objectives were to protect 4,280 working children by improving labour conditions and providing a safer working environment; provide alternative solutions and strategies to withdraw 1,550 children from the labour market; provide appropriate educational opportunities for working children through formal and non-formal education programmes; provide psychosocial support and improve awareness and capacities of national and local governmental institutions, civil society and local communities to address child labour; and promote educational issues and support the protection system at

the governorate level. The project supported families in overcoming obstacles to education, such as payment of tuition fees, purchase of uniforms, educational incentives and school feeding. Committees comprised of families, teachers, and school social workers to support education in different districts were also created. Remedial classes to facilitate the education of children who had dropped out of school by integrating them into the education system were developed. Teachers and mentors were trained in active learning. The mothers of working children were trained and participated in education classes and life skills classes to improve their economic status while benefiting from income-generating activities and micro-finance projects. Once this project had ended, a new one was implemented targeting the agricultural sector in three districts of the same governorate from September 2011 to August 2014. TDH intends to help 4,000 children aged six to 16 get out of the labour market and go back to educational programmes in order to improve the lives of 1,000 families. So far, a survey in targeted areas has been conducted and awareness-raising activities implemented in the community in preparation for the project.⁴⁷²

The TDH project "Asasak" is currently underway and will run for a period of four years in the governorate of Damietta, which constitutes one of the five regions with the highest percentages of working children.⁴⁷³ It has been reported that in some villages in Damietta all children living in a house work in the familial workshop and most of the children involved in labour work in the informal sector in small workshops.⁴⁷⁴ Child labour may mean working all day and all week from nine am to nine pm, from three-thirty pm to nine or ten pm (while going to school from eight am to three pm) or working only during school vacations. The project aims at decreasing child labour by implementing adequate education and family support and ensuring that working children are both learning and working in a safe quality environment. In order to achieve



this goal, the project seeks to increase regular school attendance, enhance the working and learning environments of working children, improve families' ability to cope with economic difficulties and to consider child's aspirations, and assist civil society and local social structures in implementing child protection related policies.⁴⁷⁵ This project will be implemented by Terre des Hommes and four partners: the Association of Righteousness and Piety Balbsarth, the Islamic Society Balsnanyh, the Association of Orphan Poets and the Assembly of Muslim Youth in Damietta.⁴⁷⁶ The project seeks to sustain past achievements while improving participation and ownership from Community Development Associations, the communities and children. This will be achieved by promoting participatory, accountable management practices that are sensitive to the complexity of child labour-related problems and fostering civil society and government agency support at all levels. These two measures will help create an overall favourable environment that is conducive to promoting children's rights and empowering working children.⁴⁷⁷

Since September 2011, Caritas, in collaboration with the International Labour Organisation (ILO), UNICEF and the World Food Programme (WFP), along with the governorate of Faiyum is implementing a four-year project aiming at identifying children involved in child labour, promoting and facilitating their return to school by providing training and working with the families of children targeted.⁴⁷⁸ In parallel, Caritas is working through an umbrella network of 14 organisations and associations in the field. Such coordination enables each stakeholder to exchange information.

Initiatives are also being implemented at the regional level. The ILO has brought together representatives of governments, employers and workers to jointly shape policies and programmes. In an ILO regional strategy session developed in the aftermath of the 'Arab spring' of 2011,

Egypt has been targeted for actions combating the worst forms of child labour including modern apprenticeship schemes, skills development, assistance for the parents of working children and the rehabilitation and integration of child labourers into formal and non-formal education.⁴⁷⁹

p. Juvenile Justice

The Child Law No. 126/2008 has introduced a new provision to the Criminal Code raising the minimum age of criminal responsibility to 12 years (at the time the child committed the crime).⁴⁸⁰ As part of this reform of the juvenile justice system, Childhood Protection Committees and local-level Protection Sub-Committees have been created in each governorate to monitor children at risk, as defined by this same 2008 Child Law, and to take the necessary preventive, therapeutic, and follow-up measures for all cases identified.⁴⁸¹ Furthermore, the 2008 Child Law has provided for the establishment of a new General Department for the Child Helpline by the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood (NCCM), which has been mandated to receive children and adults' complaints and handle them efficiently to protect children from all forms of violence, risks, or neglect.⁴⁸² The administration of justice has also been improved: children can no longer be placed in custody or imprisoned where adults are held, the duration of detention has been revised to reflect the situation of the child and the conditions of detention have been improved.⁴⁸³ Juvenile oversight over juvenile care institutions were also made mandatory.⁴⁸⁴ The child now has the right to legal assistance and the right to be represented. If the child has not selected a lawyer, the public prosecutor or the Court shall appoint one.⁴⁸⁵ Child victims or witnesses of crime have the right under Child Law No. 126/2008 to be heard and treated with dignity, including the right to legal assistance, at all stages of arrest, investigation, trial and implementation.⁴⁸⁶ The Child

Law hence contributed to addressing shortcomings in the treatment of children in conflict with the law. Article 96 adopts a new approach in dealing with children, no longer defining children as “children liable to deviancy” but “children at risk”. They are at risk when they are “exposed to a situation threatening the sound upbringing that should be made available to” them and in 14 other situations listed under Article 96, including when the child is unduly deprived of his/her rights, even partially, in terms of custody. A new section on social and psychological measures for the protection of children at risk and their families was also added. A mechanism to monitor and follow up on them was also established and the penalties against parents who abandon their children were strengthened.⁴⁸⁷ However, some limitations in the legislation remain. For instance, children over age 15 involved in sexual exploitation shall be considered victims only if there exist elements of coercion or forced exploitation. If they enter into prostitution on their ‘own free will’, they are held responsible since domestic legislation criminalises prostitution.⁴⁸⁸ It was reported in 2010 that 11.7% of the prison population was children.⁴⁸⁹

In an effort to support the Egyptian government in improving the juvenile justice system, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) launched in 2003 a two-phase project funded by the Danish Embassy from 2003 to 2006, and since then by the Drosos Foundation. The first phase of the programme, from 2003 to 2006, was aimed at and focused on the legislative reform that resulted in Child Law No. 126/2008; UNODC contributions to the leading efforts of the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood; and the implementation of a monitoring mechanism at the level of the Ministry of Justice. It also aimed at training all actors involved in the juvenile justice system such as magistrates, prosecutors, police officers or social workers.⁴⁹⁰ For the purpose of monitoring, a database system was created in 2004 to

compile and share data on juvenile justice. This database covered at first three governorates (Cairo, Giza and Alexandria), and was later expanded by the Ministry of Justice to the governorates of Qaliobia and Gharbia. This database is a tool for the General Department for the Child Judicial Protection (created in 1997 under the auspices of the Ministry of Justice) to assess delays in procedures and the performances of the different actors working in the juvenile justice system. It helped in identifying and addressing the gaps in said performances and in reducing delays in judicial procedures.⁴⁹¹

The positive results of this first phase led to an extension of the project from 2006 to 2009, which then focused on improving conditions of detention of children and youth deprived of their liberty at the Institution for Young Male Offenders in Marg (the Institution) and their rehabilitation. The work pertaining thereto was funded by the Drosos Foundation while UNODC acted as the technical implementing agency. The Institution is the only closed institution for children in conflict with the law in Egypt. It has a capacity of 700 children aged 16 to 21.⁴⁹² The implementation of this second phase was under the Ministry of Social Solidarity’s supervision (now the Ministry of Insurance and Social Affairs), in collaboration with the Ministry of Interior. The overall outcome of the project was positive as it helped to refurbish classrooms used for the literacy component of the programme. Literacy classes were implemented with an adapted curriculum addressing issues such as HIV/AIDS, drugs, family and law. A documentary was even made to present to these offenders on their rights and obligations, and it was broadcasted within the Institution. Leisure and sports activities were also organised (a stadium was paved to play handball and a cinema club set up, for instance). The existing vocational workshops were upgraded (workshops for leather shoemaking, sewing, electricity, welding, plumbing and carpentry) and new ones created (workshops for cooling/



“The Committee appreciated the State party’s prohibition against sentencing children to death, life imprisonment and forced labour, as stipulated in Article 111 of the Child Law (2008). However, in light of recent reports that an individual who committed an offence while under the age of 18 was sentenced to death, the Committee remained very concerned.



The Family Justice Programme (FJP) of the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood (NCCM) aims at strengthening equal access to justice, enhancing family stability, and protecting the rights of children. The FJP intends to raise the awareness of the family courts and access to their services, including awareness of peaceful conflict resolution, communication skills, problem solving, and acceptance of others within the family. The project established counselling offices that provide legal, social, and psychological services to families of the community, together with non-governmental organisations (NGOs). These NGOs also engaged in capacity building, disseminating child protection and child rights approaches and providing economic empowerment to families in dispute

conditioning, painting and engine work). Life skills improvement sessions were held where the young male offenders learned to have better self-esteem, develop their interpersonal skills, and learn to deal with peer pressure. Social workers were trained to develop an interactive education framework.⁴⁹⁵ More social workers were hired by the Ministry of Insurance and Social Affairs and trained to meet the objectives. By the end of the project, 70% of the young male offenders living in the Institution were benefitting from the programme, an increase from 10 to approximately 450 young boys.⁴⁹⁴

when poverty is the main reason for conflict.⁴⁹⁵ To date, the Family Justice Programme has provided 22 grants to NGOs: 10 to main NGOs in Minya, who are working with 24 partner NGOs, and 12 to main NGOs in Giza, who are working with 18 partners NGOs.⁴⁹⁶ The NCCM also assesses laws currently in place and recommends possible improvements. In addition, it organises awareness campaigns in the media, tries to introduce new attitudes, systems and practises in relation to juvenile justice, and advocates for alternatives in dealing with children in conflict with the law.⁴⁹⁷

In its most recent Concluding Observations, the Committee expressed deep regrets that some provisions of domestic laws, including family law, still did not conform to the Convention’s provisions due to the restrictive interpretation of some domestic laws. Thus the Committee highly recommended the State party review domestic legislation and ensure its full compliance with the Convention. It further expressed its concern that, in matters of divorce, the wife usually forgoes all financial rights, including alimony, dowry and other benefits, which directly affects the children. This is due primarily to the father’s refusal to accept court decisions thus resulting in the mother handing over custody of the child to the father and the fact that decisions related to child maintenance have been weakly enforced by the Family Courts. In this regard, the Committee called upon the State party to abolish provisions in domestic law that deny women of their financial rights in case of divorce. The Committee also reiterated its concern that in determining child custody, the child’s age is the starting point and thus means that each child’s case is not treated individually. The Committee appreciated the State party’s prohibition against sentencing children to death, life imprisonment and forced labour, as stipulated in Article 111 of the Child Law (2008). However, in light of recent reports that an individual who committed an offence while under the age of 18 was sentenced to death,

the Committee remained very concerned. It insisted that the State party, in compliance with its obligations under international and domestic law, not carry out the death penalty on children or persons aged less than 18 at the time of their crime. Among its other concerns, the Committee highlighted the State party's lack of an independent mechanism specifically devoted to children's rights and thus recommended it establish one. The Committee was deeply concerned at the slow progress in establishing special Child Courts and Specialized Child Prosecution Offices; the lack of a developed system of alternative measures for children in conflict with the law; the high number of children aged 12 to 18 years who are deprived of their liberty during investigation, in spite of Article 119 of the Child Law (2008) which provides that children below the age of 15 shall not be placed in custody; the ongoing practice in some police stations of children being held in custody together with adults; the insufficient and ineffective supervision of children's conditions; the shortage of information on children deprived of their liberty and the number of children prosecuted and sentenced by the courts to imprisonment; the detention of children by the military and the prosecution of children before military courts since January 2011 under military law; and finally the reports of children sentenced by military courts and imprisoned together with adults in the period following the January 2011 Revolution. In light of these observations, the Committee urged the State party reform its juvenile justice system in line with the Convention; put in place an effective system of specialised Child Courts and Specialised Child Prosecution Offices; guarantee that situations in which children are deprived of their liberty are only a measure of last resort, carried out for the shortest period possible and have public and independent supervision; establish a confidential registration system and ascertain that children are never brought before and prosecuted under the military justice system.⁴⁹⁸

The Ministry of Justice's involvement in the reform of juvenile justice has taken several forms as part of a four-year project approved in 2010. This project entails the expansion of the database developed with UNODC since 2004 to map crimes all over Egypt, in order to identify gaps pertaining to juvenile justice and adopt measures necessary to address such gaps. The project also provides for training of courts personnel. Legal officers and psychologists are to be appointed in the courts to assist in the implementation of the 2008 Child Law. This four-year project was adopted after discussions with partners such as UNICEF, Terre des Hommes, UNODC, the Egyptian Coalition for Child Rights, and the Ministry of Social Affairs. Thanks to the database, needs pertaining to juvenile justice in the country are being assessed and documented to provide a baseline for any request to the government to address these needs. The database mapping has identified thus far different profiles for crimes in different areas of the country. For instance, in the Cairo and Giza areas, 85% of youth aged 16 to 18 were involved in driving without license. In Alexandria, the main crime recorded has been carrying and possession of a knife. Furthermore, the Ministry of Justice has undertaken to activate alternative mechanisms for the imprisonment of children as provided by the 2008 Child Law all over Egypt (such as keeping the child with his/her family or recommending the placement of the child temporarily in a rehabilitation centre, as well as using an integrated education system to improve child rehabilitation) and in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Population and the Ministry of Insurance and Social Affairs. To that end, with the help of international and local partners, judges as well as prosecutors are being trained to become acquainted with and respect child rights. So far, 38 judges have been trained in courses in different districts (Giza, Mahal El Kobra, and Cairo, for instance). Within this training component, a National Centre for Judicial Study has been created to

enhance judges' and prosecutors' capacity in construing and applying the 2008 Child Law. By 2014, the objective is to have trained the majority of the Courts personnel in being accountable for children's rights and for the personnel of the ministries of Justice, Interior and Social Affairs to work together in improving existing child protection mechanisms. This cooperation has also been reflected in the appointment of legal officers and psychologists in courts, to better assess children's needs and psychological state of mind. This improved collaboration is intended, among other objectives, to help in improving referral mechanisms associated with the helpline created by the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood.⁴⁹⁹

Based on the success of the project implemented between 2003 and 2009, UNODC started planning another project on the reintegration of children in conflict with the law between 2009 and 2012 in the same institution for young male offenders in Marg (the Institution). The project was designed to complement what has been done so far within the rehabilitation framework of the previous project. It is aimed at the reintegration of released children and youth in coordination with local organisations. Indeed, the planning of this new project was done with a non-governmental organisation, New Horizons Association for Social Development (NHASD), which was selected by the Ministry of Insurance and Social Affairs and cleared by the Ministry of Interior. The project is designed to create the necessary structures and services in the greater area of Cairo for children released from prisons. It has a two-pronged approach inside and outside the Institution. Inside the Institution, three months prior to their release, the young offenders attend a 'preparation to reintegration programme'. They have pre-release meetings and develop a 'life plan' for when they are out and have to face society, all conducted in coordination with social workers. This 'preparation to reintegration programme' focuses on (re)strengthening the young of-

fender's self-esteem. The personnel of the Institution make sure the young boy knows what he wants to do when out of prison and how he plans on achieving his goal. His psychological state of mind is assessed in the event there is any problem. Visits to families are organised to confirm where the released boy is going to live. Once outside the Institution, the children and youth are assisted by social workers in implementing their 'life plan'. So far, more than 200 former young offenders have benefitted from this reintegration programme. In 2011, 20 of them owned their own business and 49 of them were engaged in small businesses supported by NHASD thanks to long term loans (no cash is ever granted). Others went back to school and kept on attending literacy classes. Even former young offenders out of prison since 2008 have asked to join the programme, which remains voluntary. A network of employers has been created to help the children in engaging or re-engaging the labour market. There is also a legal assistance service to help the young offenders to put in order their papers for judicial follow-up, as the case may be, and a lawyer to assist throughout the process. This legal assistance is provided before and after the release as judicial procedures often require finalisation before the child is released.⁵⁰⁰

On 11 January 2011, 10 NGOs were invited by NHASD to a workshop with the objective of presenting their work at the Institution and the idea of creating a network among the invited NGOs to support the reintegration of the released children and youth. Nine NGOs contracted with NHASD mainly in distant governorates where it is difficult for NHASD to implement the reintegration of young offenders' project. The NGOs currently collaborating are: SECOM, Alhajer for Community Development; Social Defence; Local Community Development; Kol el Nass; New Vision Association and Al Nadim Association; Barout for Local Community Development; Al Fagr;

Islamic NGO for Community Development and Tiba Shelter.⁵⁰¹

UNODC is at the time of the drafting of this report organising with Terre des Hommes a roundtable scheduled for 10 and 11 April 2012 to gather all governmental and non-governmental stakeholders addressing justice for children to allow them to coordinate their work. This roundtable has been approved by the Ministry of Justice, which will host it. Another project is also under discussion with the Ministry of Justice to continue legislative reforms on the efficient application of alternative measures to imprisonment such as community work (with supporting infrastructures), the reintegration of young offenders, inspection of detention centres and the creation of detention centres for girls (which were non-existent at the time of the drafting of this country profile). This project would also focus on reinforcing the database on juvenile justice (to be implemented nationally by the Ministry of Justice) and on developing an analytical system of the data found for further use. This project would advocate for interventions in police stations, for a more child-friendly environment, and judicial protection. There would be capacity building efforts with regard to the training curriculum of magistrates, police and social workers to raise their awareness on the issues of children victims or children in conflict with the law.⁵⁰²

In collaboration with the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Social Solidarity, Penal Reform International (PRI) encourages judges and public prosecutors specialised in juvenile justice to inspect and conduct inspection missions in semi-open centres and police stations where minors are detained. PRI aims to enhance the lives of vulnerable groups, such as children and women, in Egyptian prisons and provide them with adequate services and minimum standards. Between 2008 and 2011, PRI has trained representatives of the Ministry of Social Solidarity

in 29 governorates on juvenile justice. This programme was the second phase of a previous one implemented between 2004 and 2008 where judges and social workers were trained as well. PRI has worked with Heads of Social Defence from the Ministry of Social Solidarity who are responsible for running the centres in different governorates as well as with several social workers, civil society organisations, and around 60 NGOs in providing legal aid services and mixed training to lawyers, social workers and judges.⁵⁰³ In June 2011, PRI organised a regional conference in Algeria on Juvenile Justice in the Arab World, headed by government representatives.⁵⁰⁴ The conference lasted two days and addressed all the issues pertaining to juvenile justice within the existing international and Egyptian legal frameworks (non-custodial measures, causes of juvenile delinquency and the reform of the juvenile justice). It also addressed the shortcomings of sentencing standards applied at the international and domestic level and lawyers' role in protecting children's rights.⁵⁰⁵ In December 2011, the head of the Child committee of the Ministry of Justice required judges in the juvenile courts to remain for three years as one of the main issues in juvenile justice was that juvenile judges were not staying long enough in child courts.⁵⁰⁶

In November 2008, the Egyptian Coalition for Child's Rights (ECCR) in cooperation with the Egyptian Foundation for Advancement of the Childhood Condition established a "Children Legal Assistance Unit". The unit aims at providing both legal and psychological support for children and to strengthen reconciliation mechanisms for children before taking them to prosecution by providing centralised legal assistance units and psychosocial support and family counselling units, training and empowering workers involved with juveniles such as lawyers or psychologists on the international conventions and charters, and encouraging the establishment of an independent judicial system. The project is still functioning. Between

2009 and 2011, 3,500 children received legal assistance, 1,450 cases received legal consultations, 2,200 cases received social and psychological support and 250 lawyers and 250 social specialists were trained.⁵⁰⁷

5. The Right to Be Heard/ Child Participation (Article 12)

Young people have limited opportunities for participation and their opinions tend to be undervalued in their communities. Young people often feel that they do not have much of a role in their society. Young people and adolescents have limited access to information to guide them through this transitional period and lead healthy lifestyles.⁵⁰⁸

In its 2011 Concluding Observations, the Committee noted that professional groups, children and journalists are not sufficiently aware of the Convention and its principles. In this regard, the Committee recommended that greater efforts be made to ensure that the principles and provisions of the Convention are widely known and understood by adults and children alike, by increasing media engagement in raising awareness of the Convention.⁵⁰⁹ The Committee was also concerned at the limited practical application of children's right to be heard in educational institutions and youth centres in particular. The Committee suggested the adoption of a "systematic approach" to ensure that views of children are heard and taken into account in the development and implementation of public policies and programmes affecting them. In addition, the Committee recommended Egypt ensure the right of pupils to form student unions and pupils' councils and encourage their active involvement in the media, and thereby consolidate their position in society as rights holders.⁵¹⁰

A peer education life skills programme is being supported by UNICEF at youth centres to address the gap in information about life skills. The project includes a pioneer counselling service where trained youth counselors provide guidance and support to others and assist them in making key and informed decisions regarding their futures. The life skills and counselling components are implemented in 30 youth centres managed by the National Council for Youth. Around 10,000 young people are reached annually by both components in 10 governorates of Egypt.⁵¹¹

UNICEF, in collaboration with the National Council for Youth, also implemented a National Civic Education Programme that aims at giving youth the knowledge, skills and attitudes to allow them to participate in social life based on a special manual developed for the context. Annually, 4,000 young people are reached by this programme that is implemented in civic centres managed by the National Council for Youth.⁵¹²

In December 2011, the Egyptian Coalition for the Rights of the Child submitted an initial development plan for media to integrate the principles of child rights into media programmes. The objectives of the plan are to ensure children participation in media, create a Children-Friendly Media, coordinate with NGOs to address violence against children, participate in child protection awareness, organise trainings for media representatives based on understanding the nature of childhood and characteristics of children, ensuring the accuracy of the information given to children, and supporting the child rights cases and issues. The plan is currently under review by the Head of the Radio and Television Sector.⁵¹³

UNICEF-supported youth-led initiatives have provided youth with planning, research and fund-raising skills to enable them to access their communities and better imple-

ment their initiatives. Young people thus not only gain critical social development skills but also have a chance to show their potential in contributing to the development of their communities.⁵¹⁴

The national Civic Education Programme, with the National Council for Youth, seeks to provide young people with the knowledge, skills and attitudes to enable them to participate in social and political life based on a special manual tailored to the Egyptian context. The programme covers issues related to human rights, participation, volunteerism and citizenship. Annually, 4,000 young people benefit from this programme. The programme is implemented through civic education centres managed by the National Council for Youth with the potential to expand into schools.⁵¹⁵

The Refuge Egypt organisation has a Youth Membership programme that conducts four main activities: a Hip Hop Music Programme, Sports Program, Outreach and Conferences and Brother to Brother Mentoring.⁵¹⁶

Plan International Egypt has been supporting the creation of children's groups and recreational facilities and strengthening their capacity to encourage child participation.⁵¹⁷ It has also aspired to provide capacity and opportunities for improving youth future employability and participation in governance.⁵¹⁸

"Youth Development and Leadership" is one of the four programmes launched by Plan International Egypt to advance children's rights and interests by increasing young peoples' confidence and capacity and encouraging them to become active and responsible citizens.⁵¹⁹ As such, Plan has intervened in three areas: "Youth media" as a tool to raise awareness among young people and motivate them to get involved in their community, "Youth employability – Forsa" to use the business sector to help youth acquire

social skills and livelihood and "Alfatoun" to provide young people with entrepreneurial skills and financial literacy. Plan International aspires to work with young people and assist them in acquiring the skills and knowledge necessary to secure a livelihood and support their families. The three-year programme has engaged children of all ages through different platforms.⁵²⁰

"Active citizenship, civil society participation, and alliances with the government and private sector" is a fourth programme that actively works on enhancing the capacity of local organizations and raising the number of children, youth and communities that participate in civic engagement and public accountability for child rights.⁵²¹ The private sector usually gets involved to meet its Corporate Social Responsibility or simply out of interest. Plan International also organizes awareness-raising campaigns among the private sector. This initiative led to the creation of Village Saving and Loans in 2008, a micro-finance programme aimed at women's empowerment. It does not lend money but strives at encouraging self-management. Barclays and Care are the main partners in this programme,⁵²² which seeks to strengthen partnerships between the private sector and governmental institutions.

Plan's initiatives to raise awareness on child rights led to the launching of a TV show on children and youth rights in 2006, "Esma3ouna" ("Hear Us"), which has been a real success in Egypt.⁵²³ The filming, script-writing and editing are managed by children who can use the show to express their views. Nokia and the national television station are the main partners in this project.⁵²⁴



Concluding Remarks and Way Forward

This country profile was drafted with the aim of documenting commendable practices implemented by the State, civil society and the international community in response to the Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child. Since the last Concluding Observations were issued in July 2011, some documented initiatives superseded the Concluding Observations. In addition, uncertainty in Egypt remains a key concern since the Revolution has resulted in the dissolution of the Parliament by the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, which suspended the former Constitution for a temporary one. At this writing, new elections had yet to be scheduled.

Traditionally, the state in Egypt has played a major role in promoting and protecting children's rights through the NCCM, which collaborates with civil society organisations. Nevertheless, political turmoil has led to major changes in public institutions. Ministries have been changed or abolished and the government's role has been affected. The State remains committed, however, to follow up on the recommendations of the Committee.⁵²⁵ In recent years, and even more so following the Revolution, local civil society has been better organised and mobilised through associations, organisations of common interests or networks. In light of the societal structure in Egypt, organisations involved in child rights promotion and protection adopt a community-based approach. These organisations strive to make the beneficiaries of their programmes and projects more autonomous, aiming at self-sufficiency in the long run.

Among changes, Child Law No. 126/2008 brought major advancements in the protection of children's rights by amending the previous 1996 Child Law as well as the civil status law, the criminal code and the criminal procedure code. Implementation of this law and related protection mechanisms has yet to be fully completed, however.

Based on the interviews conducted within this research project, a trend of duplication was observed among international non-governmental organisations seeking to address specific issues related to child rights. Nonetheless, this research may not reflect the reality on the ground, as many initiatives could not be fully documented.

Notwithstanding the political situation, local and international organisations' day-to-day work has continued and projects are being implemented with long-term planning. Interesting practices documented show that Egypt is still dedicated to protecting and promoting children's rights in many realms.

“Political turmoil has led to major changes in public institutions. Ministries have been changed or abolished and the government's role has been affected. The State remains committed, however, to follow up on the recommendations of the Committee.”

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