

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



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

CHAN.2023.065

The Permanent Mission of the Arab Republic of Egypt to the United Nations Office, the WTO and other International Organizations in Geneva presents its compliments to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and with reference to the note verbale WHRGS/MG/Res47/25 dated 1 February 2023, concerning the follow-up report on “good practices and challenges in the application of a human rights-based approach to the elimination of preventable maternal mortality and morbidity”, has the honor to attach herewith the contribution of the Government of the Arab Republic of Egypt to the aforementioned report.

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

Geneva, 20 April 2023



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The National Report of Egypt about the “Good Practices and Challenges in the Application of a Human rights-based Approach to the Elimination of Preventable Maternal Mortality and Morbidity”

1. What steps has your Government or Organization taken to utilize a human rights-based approach in policies and programmes to eliminate preventable maternal mortality and morbidity? how has the technical guidance assisted your government or organization in designing, implementing, revising and/or evaluating such policies and programmes?

The Technical guidance assisted the Government in designing, implementing, revising and evaluating such policies and programmes eliminate preventable maternal mortality and morbidity through the following decisions and measures:

As part of the state’s dedication on maintaining healthy households and society at large, the President’s Egyptian Women’s Health Initiative was launched to promote the health of Egyptian women. Women were targeted in particular to health education and care.

The initiative is designed to screen carcinoma of the breast at an early stage for 28 million women governorate-wide; pursue clinical examination; and provide free-of-charge treatment. at the same time, reproductive health, family planning, and healthy lifestyles remain at the core of the initiative. Detection of non-communicable diseases such as diabetes, blood pressure and obesity constitute an integral part of this endeavor. Risk factors of non-communicable diseases and breast self-exam are further considered.

- The Ministry of Health and Population announced the resumption of the initiative of the President of the Republic “women’s health” in health units and specialized centers, with all precautions taken to ensure the safety of Egyptian women during the covid-19 pandemic.
- **The 100 Million Health Initiative:** The Ministry of Health and Population announced that the total number of examinations conducted by the President of the Republic initiative to support the health of Egyptian women reached 33 million 827 thousand and 901 women since the launch of the aforementioned initiative in July 2019, and until March 2023. In fact, it includes testing and providing awareness of public health care for all women for free. The initiative is being implemented through 3593 health units at the level of the governorates of the Republic. Moreover, inquiries are received through the 100 Million Health Initiative Hotline (15335), and the locations of the units are known through the official website of the initiative.

- The Prime Minister assigned the government and the relevant authorities and bodies (i.e. the Ministry of Planning and Economic Development, the Ministry of Health and Population, the Ministry of Social Solidarity, the National Council for Women, the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood and the Demographic Center) to prepare an integrated executive plan and a clear roadmap for the goals and visions for a national project targeting Egyptian families in light of the spread of the virus.
- The National Family Development Program: to raise the quality of living of Egyptian citizens through upgrading population demographics. The program is based upon a concrete population policy that is based upon a comprehensive developmental dimension.

Strengthening women's health services (2022):

- conducting (188) medical convoys at the governorate level, with 64,559 beneficiaries, including 17,375 in the villages of Hayat Karima under the umbrella of the National Project for the Development of the Egyptian Family}.
- 308 awareness session in the field of public and reproductive health and prevention of infectious diseases {28.046 beneficiaries}.
- Continue to raise awareness of the importance of early detection of tumors, and participate in the activities of Pink October every year.
- Launching a campaign entitled "The impact of climate change on pregnant and lactating women" in the governorates: Alexandria / Beheira / Qena / Luxor / Minya / Gharbia / Assiut / Red Sea / Aswan, coinciding with the celebration of World Breastfeeding Week.

2. **Has the technical guidance assisted your Government or organization in building enhanced understanding of requirements of a human rights-based approach? If so, please expand upon the impact that such enhanced understanding has for the design and implementation of policies and programmes in this area.**

The technical guidance assisted in building enhanced understanding of requirements of a human rights-based approach and enhanced understanding for the design and implementation of policies and programmes in this area from a human rights based approach:

- The Ministry of Health and Population issued a "guide for home isolation for cases of COVID-19 infection in schools." In fact, half a million copies of the guide have been printed and are being distributed to the directorates in the governorates.
- The Third Committee of the United Nations General Assembly on Human Rights adopted the unprecedented Egyptian decision on "protecting the rights of women and girls from the consequences of the emerging COVID-19" which was prepared in cooperation between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the National Council for Women, and 19 Arab countries and 60 countries around the world joined the list of sponsors of the mentioned resolution.

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- **Ending waiting lists initiative:** This initiative implements the directives of President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi to alleviate the suffering of patients. It is based on alleviating the suffering of the impoverished and performing urgent and critical surgeries at the highest quality and soonest time. Operations are performed in government, public and private hospitals without the citizen bearing any financial burdens, in order to provide a decent life for the Egyptian citizen.

Initiative Objectives:

- Ending patient waiting lists for medical interventions.
 - Providing high-quality medical services free of charge to all patients equally.
 - Reducing the suffering of impoverished patients on hospital lists to undergo different operations.
 - Raising the level of performance at hospitals to provide the best medical services to patients through offering continuous training to the medical staff and providing hospitals with supplies and modern equipment necessary to perform surgeries.
 - Constant development of the automated system to facilitate the follow-up and extraction of data within the initiative.
3. **What challenges does your government or organization face in implementing a human rights-based approach in policies and programmes to eliminate preventable maternal mortality and morbidity? please elaborate on the nature of these challenges and steps taken to address them.**

According to the last Egyptian family health survey EFHS 2021, The unfulfilled demand for family planning is defined as the percentage of women who wish to postpone the next baby or they don't want more babies, but they don't use any method of family planning. The results of the Egyptian Family Health Survey 2021 indicate that about 14% of married women Currently, they have an unfulfilled demand for family planning, 4% for birth spacing and 10% for cessation of childbearing unfulfilled demand increased slightly (about 2.1%) between 2014 and 2021.

NCW has presented a number of proposed response measures, whether immediate or middle-term responses, for concerned all line ministries & government institutions, regarding the following pillars:

- The National Family Development Program

With the launch of the project by H.E President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi in February 2022, NCW began work in cooperation with 6 ministries and different governmental entities and NGOs in the National Project for the Development of the Egyptian Family which includes interventions for women's economic empowerment, awareness, education and population

issues and its impact on economic and social development, and other issues related to family development. This program is based on two approaches, the first one is the human rights-based approach and the second is the human development. The scope of implementation includes 1518 village of decent life in 20 governorates.

The program consists of 4 main pillars:

- 1) Economic empowerment: economically empowering women aged between 18 and 45 to promote their involvement in the labor market and achieve financial independence
- 2) Service provision: Enhancing the efficiency of reproductive health services provision and addressing unfulfilled demand
- 3) Culture, awareness, and education: Raising awareness among targeted groups about population growth and its myriad socioeconomic implications
- 4) Digitalization Pillar: Digitalization of systems to reach out to targeted groups and integrate data bases, in addition to effectively monitoring demographic trends and analyzing the impact of implemented policies.

Deferred Incentives Program "Insurance Certificate": The Insurance benefits could be drawn upon at the age of 45, provided that the following conditions are met:

1. Having two children at most
 2. Regular visits to 'Family Development' clinics
 3. Regular screening for breast cancer and noncommunicable diseases.
- NCW implemented training courses to raise women's awareness in the field of financial education and entrepreneurship, many training manuals have been produced to enhance the skills of working teams in transferring awareness to local communities through roundabout sessions, workshops, campaigns and various events:
- (1) The Population Awareness manual was directed to religious leaders, Ministry of Awqaf and the three Egyptian churches.
 - (2) A manual about family guidance and balanced upbringing was directed to imams and professors of Al-Azhar and other groups of trainers from local leaders in the governorates, members of branches and committees, and employees of the Council.
 - (3) Girls' Empowerment manual "Nora".
- In the field of raising awareness of family counseling and balanced upbringing, the program is implemented in cooperation with the Reunification Unit at Al-Azhar to correct misconceptions about violence against women within the family, raising awareness of children's rights to equal care from a religious and social perspective
- Implementation of (73,811) awareness sessions "Dawar sessions" for 5,298,613 citizens {4,323,960 women / 974,653 men}. (2021-2023)

- Holding 137 training courses for 6,463 religious and community leaders from endowments, the church and community leaders at the central level and in the villages of the targeted governorates, to qualify them to spread awareness of the population issue in an informed religious discourse through awareness sessions "Dawar sessions". (2021-2023)
 - Cooperation with the Egyptian Pediatric association in developing, preparing and printing a scientific manual on topics of the family counseling and balanced upbringing program in cooperation with the Egyptian Pediatric association.
 - Awareness-raising campaigns on family counseling and balanced upbringing with the aim of correcting misconceptions about the use of violence against women within the family from a religious and social perspective, and raising awareness of the rights of the child to equal care.
 - Holding 113 event in Ramadan nights that included awareness messages on the population issue, benefiting 59,568 citizens. (2021-2023)
 - "2 Kefaya (Two [children] is enough) initiative, which is a project developed by the Ministry of Social Solidarity, is being launched as part of the population and development strategy 2015-2030.(9.3 million knocking door visit to raise the awareness about family planning from 2018 to 2022).
 - 308 awareness session in the field of public and reproductive health and prevention of infectious diseases {28.046 beneficiaries}.
- 4. Does your government or organization regularly collect and analyze disaggregated data and information on maternal mortalities and morbidities, including in the context of covid-19 pandemic? please elaborate on good practices and challenges in this regard.**
- a) The Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS) is the main authority for collecting and publishing data, and there is a unit for sustainable development in CAMPAS devises several indicators related to sustainable development including the women's empowerment and gender equality indicators, in addition to existence of an EOU
 - b) Since the National Council for Women is the national machinery concerned with proposing the government public policy on women's development pursuant to Law No. 30 of 2018, NCW has established the "Women policy tracker on Responsive Policies and Programs During COVID-19 Pandemic which includes an analysis of the status quo especially with regard to promoting the compilation of data designed by sex, age and disability, disaggregated data on COVID-19, including tracking the emergency response measures, support policy research & social innovation; monitoring & evaluating the impact of the COVID-19; and conduct public opinion surveys in order to recognize the differences in exposure and treatment & help design the preventive measures accordingly. And also to serve the following purposes:

- 1) Monitor all issued policies and procedures responsive to the needs of Egyptian women directly and/or indirectly in light of the efforts made to reduce the spread of COVID-19.
 - 2) Design an easier tool that can be used as reference to all women related issued policies that can be used by decision makers for a more collaborative & comprehensive vision on means of moving forward.
 - 3) Document the efforts & highlight the outcome of the coordinated efforts of the government on women related policies to protect them & their families from the COVID-19.
 - 4) Reflect on all those policies with necessary supporting programs & initiatives.
- c) The International Organization for Migration participated in the "Study of Patterns of Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices (KAP) of the Population towards the COVID-19" with the Ministry of Health and Population, the World Health Organization, the United Nations Population Fund, UNICEF and UN Women.
 - d) The major women related responsive policies and measures taken by the Egyptian Government Since the outbreak of COVID-19, the Ministry of Health and Population (MoHP) in collaboration with all the concerned bodies constantly issues measures and programs to combat the spread of the virus. Moreover, MoHP issues all the data on the numbers of COVID-19 cases transparently and disaggregated by sex & age; in addition to producing awareness raising videos & info graphs about the virus.
 - e) In partnership with the National Council for Women and UN Women, The Egyptian Center for Public Opinion Research – Baseera conducted a survey on Women and COVID-19 Pandemic in Egypt. The poll was conducted on a national representative sample of 1518 females in the age group +18 during the period from April 4th to April 14th 2020, with the aim of measuring the effect of COVID-19 on women's lives.
- 5. Please elaborate on the main cause that may have led to poor maternal health outcomes in the context of covid-19 pandemic in your country and/or context? Please also describe the impact of covid-19 pandemic response on the availability and accessibility and quality sexual and reproductive health, including maternal health services for women and girls.**

The COVID-19 outbreak has an impact on both men and women. However, it impacts women in different ways. In Egypt, women make up around 42.4% of human doctors and 91.1% nursing staff of who are actually working for the Ministry of Health, in addition to 73.1% of nursing staff in hospitals and therapeutic facilities in the private sector are women. Women in the health sector are more likely to be exposed to the virus and dealing with enormous stress balancing paid and unpaid work roles.

- f) Furthermore, overwhelmed health services may limit access to family planning services and to contraceptives, potentially leading to a rise in fertility rates and the socio-economic impact on individuals, households and communities. COVID-19 is expected to interrupted access of women to reproductive healthcare services and commodities. Given that pregnant women are more likely to have contact with health services (antenatal care and delivery), they can be greatly exposed to infections in health facilities which may discourage attendance.
- g) Ministry of Health & Population has provided personal protection equipment to the personnel working on family planning campaigns & services as prevention from the COVID19.
6. Please provide information on whether there is a particular group of women in your country and/or context who have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic and response measures when accessing sexual and reproductive health including maternal health services. (For instance, adolescents, women living with HIV, indigenous women, racial and ethnic minority women, women from rural areas, persons with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities etc.)

The groups of women who have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic and response measures when accessing sexual and reproductive health are include the following:

- **Migrant women:** The International Organization for Migration in Egypt has worked to strengthen referral systems with migrant communities, embassies in Cairo and NGOs to the International Organization for Migration in Egypt in order to obtain urgent financial and housing assistance, in cooperation with the Ministry of Health and the World Health Organization, distributed 3000 flyers and posters on measures to prevent COVID-19 in six different languages covering the main languages of migrant communities in Cairo and Alexandria in addition to 35,000 pamphlets in Arabic to raise awareness about the virus and the referral pathways that have been developed with partners. The Egyptian Red Crescent Society, in partnership with the International Organization for Migration in Egypt, provided support to women and men migrants, and host communities by distributing personal hygiene kits and food and non-food commodities in numerous governorates. The mission has also coordinated with the Ministry of Social Solidarity to provide the basic needs of social welfare institutions. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, under the guidance of the Cabinet, works to ensure that the lives of migrants and refugees are not exposed to any direct effects of the COVID19 through support provided by the health care system and that no measures are taken to return the migrants to their countries. United Nations concerned organizations also provide basic services and health care for refugees in Egypt.

- **Rural women:** The Ministry of Health and Population, in cooperation with the Ministry of Local Development, established and equipped 45 health units in 45 villages in the governorates of the first phase of the presidential initiative "A decent life" worth around 550 million pounds, in line with the comprehensive health insurance model approved by the Ministry of Health, with the aim of providing medical supplies, medicines and covering the governorates who are most in need given the COVID19.
- **Elderly and people with disabilities:** The Ministry of Health and Population, in coordination with the Ministry of Social Solidarity, provided ambulances, tests and hospital beds for any of the elderly or people with disabilities, and directed a technician to take care of COVID19 tests in elderly shelter due to the inability to transfer cases sometimes.
Ministry of ICT launched a technological center for people with disabilities which provide 24-hour response service to people with disabilities about any COVID-19 related inquiry including anyone who might be having COVID-19 symptoms & link them to the concerned health entities in Egypt through the Application titled "Wasel" dedicated for the deaf & people with hearing impairment.
- **People with Mental illness:** Ministry of Health has dedicated one of its hospitals to COVID19 patient who have mental illness. The Hospital has trained medical staff who are able to provide special treatment to the patients.
- **Women in prison:** Visits have been resumed in all public prisons, taking into account preventive, precautionary and health measures. Prisoners also benefit from national health campaigns such as the 100 Million Health Campaign to eliminate Hepatitis C virus and non-communicable diseases such as diabetes, high blood pressure and obesity, and conduct the necessary medical tests and examinations as well as provide the necessary treatment to all prison inmates free of charge

The Ministry of Health announced the allocation of 34 centers to provide vaccination services with vaccines for the COVID-19 throughout the week, and that the priority in obtaining vaccines will be for health sector workers, oncology patients, and people with chronic diseases, provided that the state shall cover the costs of the vaccine for the beneficiaries and beneficiaries of the "Takaful & Karama" program and for people with chronic diseases.

The Ministry of International Cooperation launched the "Mask" initiative in cooperation with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and civil society organizations with the aim of involving women in Upper-Egypt in the production of masks as part of the societal efforts to confront the pandemic.

7. **What measures have your government or organization undertaken in order to mitigate the impact of covid-19 pandemic on maternal health? Please elaborate on any lessons learned, good practices as well as challenges faced.**

In this regard, the lessons learned, good practices as well as challenges faced are:

- The Ministry of Health through its hospitals are making safe deliveries for pregnant women who were affected by COVID19 and immediate interventions were taken. It is worth mentioning that 1st cesarean delivery done for a COVID19 pregnant woman was in 5th of April 2020
- Visits have been resumed in all public prisons, taking into account preventive, precautionary and health measures. Prisoners also benefit from national health campaigns such as the 100 Million Health Campaign to eliminate Hepatitis C virus and non-communicable diseases such as diabetes, high blood pressure and obesity, and conduct the necessary medical tests and examinations as well as provide the necessary treatment to all prison inmates free of charge
- Al Azhar el Sharif issued a decree of giving exceptional leave for mothers of children less than 12 years old, pregnant women & people with chronic disease. This is in light with resuming working amid the recent announcement of the Prime Minister of Egypt to the coexisting plan.
- The Ministry of Health, Population and Health Insurance decided to grant exceptional leave to pregnant women whose pregnancy passed 28 weeks (7 months) until the date of birth.
- Ministry of Health has issued awareness raising to early married couples to advise them to delay pregnancies at times of COVID19.
- The National Council for Women, in cooperation with the UN Women launched the "Mental Health Prioritization" initiative, with several partners, including Safe Kids and Shezlong-therapist app, and Egypt Today magazine, and the initiative was launched on the social networking sites of the Council and the partners. A number of psychologists and concerned institutions to support the mental health of Egyptian women and raise awareness among women & men on the importance of mental health in general in light of the spread of the current COVID19 and the initiative comes as an important part of the Government awareness raising efforts.
- The general healthcare authority, which is one of the new comprehensive health insurance system authorities, working under the supervision of the Ministry of Health & Population, signed a memorandum of understanding with the general federation of non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The MOU aims at raising awareness about COVID19 & means of preventing & limiting its spread. The MOU was signed to enhance coordination of governmental entities (represented in the healthcare authority) & non- governmental entities (represented in the federation of NGOs) efforts. The agreement also includes training and raising the capacities of volunteers and delivering necessary medicine to the elderly & people with chronic disease who are beneficiaries of the health insurance system. It also participates in sanitizing premises determined by the healthcare authority & dedicated necessary equipment to do so.

- MoHP announced taking special measures on dispensing medicines for chronic diseases, formula milk and Family planning methods (contraceptives) for three months; accessibility needed reproductive healthcare services for women.
- Ministry of Health & population launched a mobile application "Egypt's Health" which is the official platform for awareness raising against COVID-19 & a guidance the necessary steps to be taken incase infected by the virus & means of contacting the authorized health staff.
- The President instructed as part of a set of decrees and directives aimed to address the new COVID-19 to launch campaigns for raising the awareness of citizens for guidance and providing precise information, and strengthen health control according to the highest standards, at the points of entry to the country; Awareness raising & promoting data & knowledge to include women beneficiaries.
- The Ministry of Health and Population updated the "Egypt's health" application, adding services to help with reporting, adding a list of hospitals, how to reach the nearest hospital, the alert feature in case of entering affected areas, instructions for home quarantine and daily follow-up with patients.
- The National Council for Women with the Ministry of Health & Population, World Health Organization, UNFPA, Extra news & Egypt Today Magazine launched a campaign to raise the awareness of the public on COVID19 from a medical/scientific dimension through the production of videos featuring expert medical doctors from different specialties.
- The Ministry of Health and Population has activated the "Call Center" service to Egypt's health application, and created an electronic system to link units and centers with hospitals, and the issuance of the application for remote consultations and telemedicine clinics.

