



United Nations Population Fund



THE NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

**Report on the Activities Implemented
Through the Cooperation Project between
the National Council for Human Rights in
Egypt and the United Nations Population
Fund (UNFPA)
Regarding the Promotion and Protection of
Reproductive Rights**

**Report on the Activities Implemented Through the
Cooperation Project between the National Council for
Human Rights in Egypt and the United Nations Population
Fund (UNFPA)**

**Regarding the Promotion and Protection of Reproductive
Rights**

Report Contents

1. Workshop on Legal Provisions and proposed legislation to combat violence against Women.
2. Expert Meeting on legislation criminalizing child marriage
3. Consultative Expert Meeting on Legislation related to the Promotion of sexual and reproductive rights
4. Consultative Expert Meeting on Supporting the Rights of Marginalized and At-risk Women and Girls
5. Workshop on Human Rights Curricula (Reproductive Rights and Health)
6. Workshop on the Human Rights and Reproductive Health Component in Educational Curricula
7. Training and Capacity-Building for Teachers and Ministry of Education Personnel.

1. Workshop on Legal Provisions and Proposed Legislation to Combat Violence Against Women

Monday, 24 June, 2024

National Council for Human Rights Headquarters

Introduction:

The Social and Legislative Rights Committees, in collaboration with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), organized a workshop on legal provisions and proposed legislation to combat violence against women and to follow up on the implementation of national and international commitments.

In light of the National Human Rights Strategy's emphasis on protecting women from all forms of violence and harmful practices, the absence of a comprehensive law to combat violence against women remains one of the key challenges to eradicating all forms of such violence, despite the existence of a national strategy to combat violence against women.

In this context, reference is made to the recommendation in the concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), issued in November 2021, which urged the adoption of comprehensive legislation, in cooperation with women's civil society organizations, to criminalize all forms of violence against women.

Positive steps previously undertaken are worth noting, such as the enactment and amendment of several laws that provide legal protection for women against acts of violence. These include legislation addressing sexual harassment and female genital mutilation (FGM), which introduced stricter penalties for perpetrators, offered a clear definition of FGM, criminalized the promotion, encouragement, or incitement to commit the practice, and imposed aggravated circumstances related to the offender's profession. Complementary penalties such as closure of facilities and disqualification from practicing medicine or nursing have also been introduced, along with reinforced measures for investigation and prosecution in such crimes. Penalties for specific crimes, such as the abduction, rape, or sexual assault of women, have also been increased.

Within this framework, the workshop was held with the participation of a group of experts and specialists, as well as representatives of concerned ministries and specialized national councils, to discuss a draft comprehensive law on combating violence against women and to explore opportunities and challenges related to protecting and promoting the rights of women and girls.

Objective of the Activity:

- To discuss the draft law on combating violence against women and propose the necessary legal provisions to protect women from all forms of violence.
- To identify challenges and present proposals to ensure the implementation of national and international commitments.

Participants included representatives from the following entities:

- Ministry of Justice

- Ministry of Social Solidarity
- Parliamentary councils and their relevant committees
- Public Prosecution
- Specialized national councils
- Relevant civil society organizations
- A number of experts and academics

SWOT Analysis of the Workshop on “Legal Provisions and Proposed Legislation to Combat Violence Against Women.”

1. Strengths:

- **Multi-stakeholder collaboration:** The presence of representatives from the Ministry of Justice, Public Prosecution, the House of Representatives and the Senate, the National Council for Women, and civil society organizations reflects a high level of institutional cooperation. The issue of violence against women is being examined from legal, social, and political perspectives, enriching the discussions and enhancing the effectiveness of the recommendations.
- **Support from the United Nations and international entities:** The partnership with UNFPA and other UN entities provides significant technical and financial support, in addition to international expertise and lessons learned from other countries, which can be leveraged to develop effective strategies to eliminate violence against women in the Egyptian context.
- **Supportive Legal Framework:** The current Egyptian Constitution explicitly guarantees the protection of women's rights and supports gender equality. Laws such as the Penal Code impose stricter penalties for certain crimes against women, including sexual harassment and rape, which provides a solid legal foundation for enacting a more comprehensive law covering all forms of violence.
- **Availability of Reliable Studies Supporting Legislation:** Credible studies, such as “The Economic Cost of Violence Against Women” conducted by the Faculty of Mass Communication at Cairo University, serve as valuable references. These studies outline the socioeconomic impacts of violence, thereby facilitating legislative support through accurate data and statistics that can inform policy and justify the need for new laws.

2. Weaknesses:

- **Absence of a Comprehensive Law Addressing All Forms of Violence:** Current laws lack a comprehensive approach to cover all forms of violence, including psychological threats and domestic violence. The legal system addresses some crimes in isolation and

does not fully address the specific impacts of domestic violence, resulting in incomplete legal protection for women.

- **Underreporting Due to Stigma and Legal Gaps:** Victims often refrain from reporting incidents of violence due to fear of social stigma. Additionally, the current law does not provide effective protection for witnesses and whistleblowers, as there are no mechanisms in place to ensure confidentiality or full protection for victims and witnesses.
- **Weak Legal Implementation Infrastructure:** The National Council for Women relies on volunteer lawyers, which may affect the consistency and quality of legal support. The absence of a trained and sustainable legal team can hinder the effective execution of legal procedures and case management.
- **Limitations in Existing Laws:** Current laws may be insufficient to address emerging forms of violence, such as cyberbullying and violence through social media platforms, leaving women inadequately protected in these areas.

3. Opportunities:

- **Political Support from Top Leadership:** The political leadership's strong support for women's issues, including the President's assertion that he would not approve any law that undermines women's rights, enhances the prospects for enacting a comprehensive law to protect women, presenting a significant opportunity to pass proposed legislation with minimal opposition.
- **Issuance of a Comprehensive and Integrated Law to Combat Violence Against Women:** Introducing a comprehensive law aimed at fully protecting women from all forms of violence — whether physical, psychological, or digital — would represent a significant qualitative leap. It would establish an integrated legal framework that enhances protection and addresses gaps in current legislation.
- **Collaboration with Religious Institutions to Support Women's Rights:** The support of Al-Azhar and other religious institutions offers a valuable opportunity to strengthen societal acceptance of the new law. These institutions can help disseminate positive messages that reject violence and promote women's rights within a framework of religious and societal values.
- **Evidence-Based Recommendations to Support Legislation:** The workshop provides an opportunity to formulate recommendations grounded in data and research, which contributes to accelerating legislative reforms and ensures that new policies are effective and directly address all forms of violence in a clear and targeted manner.

4. Challenges:

- **Social Norms That Hinder Change:** Certain societal attitudes and inherited cultural norms continue to perpetuate violence against women and obstruct necessary legal and societal reforms, such as beliefs that justify domestic violence or blame women for incidents of harassment.

- **Incomplete Supportive Legislation:** Some supporting laws, such as those related to witness protection and information security do not adequately address women's specific needs, making it more difficult to report and pursue legal action.
- **Economic Challenges:** According to the report *The Economic Cost of Violence*, violence against women costs the country billions of Egyptian pounds. This presents a challenge in allocating sufficient budgetary resources to implement legislative reforms and ensure large-scale enforcement of the law.
- **Social Opposition from Certain Groups:** Some segments of society may oppose the tightening of penalties or the introduction of new legislation — particularly in rural areas or governorates with a more traditional character — which may hinder the implementation of the law and pose additional challenges for the authorities.

Recommendations for Combating Violence Against Women from the Workshop Report on the Proposed Legislation.



1. Establishment of a Comprehensive Legal Framework: Enacting a unified law to combat violence against women that includes precise definitions of all forms of violence and criminalizes them comprehensively, including domestic violence, workplace violence, and cyber harassment while strengthening penalties to deter such crimes and provide effective protection for victims.

2. Institutional Cooperation: Coordinating efforts among relevant ministries, the Public Prosecution, and civil society organizations to ensure the harmonization of efforts and avoid contradictions with existing laws, particularly the Penal Code and the Child Law.

3. Improving Reporting and Protection Mechanisms:

- Enforcing a law protecting witnesses and whistleblowers in cases of violence against women to ensure their safety during judicial procedures.
- Providing secure shelter mechanisms for victims, especially in cases of human trafficking, along with psychological and social support.

4. Awareness and Education: Strengthening awareness-raising programmes for women and families regarding their legal rights provide resources to encourage reporting of incidents, especially in rural areas and communities most influenced by traditional cultural norms that hinder reporting.

5. Integration of Comprehensive Victim Services: Establishing integrated units for the protection of women from violence that provide legal, health, and psychological services in collaboration with relevant ministries and institutions, in line with the Prime Minister's 2021 resolution.

6. Emphasizing the Role of Al-Azhar and Political Leadership: Promoting partnerships with religious institutions particularly Al-Azhar Al-Sharif to support women's rights within the framework of religious teachings and to reinforce their protection and status in society.

7. Ongoing Research and Data Updates: Conducting regular studies on the economic and social costs of violence against women, ensuring that policies and legislative reforms are informed by the most up-to-date evidence and data.

8. Capacity Building:

- Training judicial, law enforcement, and social work personnel to ensure a more sensitive and effective response to cases of violence against women.
- Providing training to volunteer lawyers supporting victims and build the capacity of legal staff within the National Council for Women.

9. Monitoring International Commitments: Working toward implementing the international recommendations related to women's rights that Egypt accepted during the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), with a specific focus on gender-based violence (GBV) and reproductive health.

10. Strengthening the National Referral Pathway: Ensuring the integration of services provided to victims through a national referral system, making access to care and protection services easy, fast, and appropriate in emergency situations



Participants in the Workshop on Legal Provisions and Proposed Legislation to Combat Violence against Women.

Entity	Name	Title
National Council for Human Rights (NCHR)	Ambassador Moushira Khattab	President of NCHR
	Ambassador Mahmoud Karem	Vice-President of NCHR
	Ambassador Fahmy Fayed	Secretary-General of NCHR
	Dr. Anas Gaafar	Secretary of the Legislative Committee of the Council
	Dr. Wafaa Benjamin	Secretary of the Social Rights Committee of the Council
United Nations Population Fund in Egypt	Ms. Germaine Haddad	Representative of UNFPA Egypt

Ministry of Justice	Counselor Ahmed Sanaa Khalil	Member of the Technical office at the Human Rights Sector in Ministry of Justice
Public Prosecution	Counselor Amer Gadou	Representative of the Public Prosecution
Ministry of Social Solidarity	Samah Refaat	Human Rights Unit at the Ministry of Social Solidarity
Senate	Senator Jameel Haleem	Member of the Human Rights and Social Solidarity Committee
	Senator Mohamed Farid	Deputy Chair of the Human Rights Committee
House of Representatives	Amal Salama	Member of House of Representatives
	Nashwa El Deeb	Member of House of Representatives
National Council for Women	Counselor Ahmed El Naggar	Court of Appeal President and Advisor to the National Council for Women
National Center for Social and Criminological Research	Dr. Wafaa Naeem	Professor of Sociology
National Council for Childhood and Motherhood	Dr. Hayam Nazif	Deputy Chair of the Council
National Population Council	Dr. Hala Azzam	Reproductive Health Consultant
National Council for Persons with disabilities	Ms. Dalia Atef	Head of the Women and Children Unit
Civil Society	Dr. Neveen Obaid	Chairperson of the Board of trustees of the New Woman Foundation

2- Experts' Meeting on "Legislation Related to the Criminalization of Child Marriage"

Tuesday, 24 September, 2024

National Council for Human Rights Headquarters

Introduction:

As part of the implementation of the joint cooperation program between the National Council for Human Rights (NCHR) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the Social Rights Committee in collaboration with the Research and Legislative Development Unit at the Council held a consultative expert meeting on legislation related to the criminalization of child marriage. This discussion focused on proposing amendments to the Child Law No. 12 of 1996 (as amended by Law No. 126 of 2008), the Civil Status Law, and the Penal Code. The aim is to propose solutions to reduce this phenomenon.

This briefing paper aims to shed light on the nature of child marriage, its root causes, its adverse impact on society, and the legislative framework that governs child protection in general and addresses the criminalization of child marriage in particular.

Definition of Child Marriage:

According to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, a child is defined as any person under the age of 18. Consequently, child marriage is any marriage in which at least one party is under the age of 18 before reaching full physical, psychological, and emotional maturity.

Causes of Child Marriage:

Several factors contribute to the spread of child marriage, particularly in rural areas, including:

- Poverty: which remains one of the primary drivers of the widespread prevalence of child marriage, especially in rural communities.
- Lack of access to education.
- Limited awareness of human rights.

Negative Consequences of Child Marriage

- Deprivation of education: Girls are denied their childhood and most of their rights, unable to live through normal developmental stages and forced to bear adult responsibilities.
- Health and social problems: Due to the child's fragile physical condition, this can lead to higher rates of miscarriage and poor fetal health. Furthermore, the girl's inexperience in raising children may result in increased numbers of street children and homeless minors.
- Legal issues: Failure to officially register or document the marriage may lead families to resort to customary (unofficial) marriage, which strips girls and their children of their legal rights.

- Population growth pressures: Early marriage extends the reproductive years of young girls, exacerbating population growth beyond the country's resources and capacity. It also perpetuates poverty, illiteracy, and ignorance.
- Poor families may deprive their children of education and push them into the labor market, thereby increasing child labor, school dropout rates, and exposure to violence, while further deteriorating the population characteristics of the country.

Legislative Framework for Child Marriage:

Article 80 of the Egyptian Constitution mandates that the Country is responsible for safeguarding children and protecting them from all forms of violence, abuse, mistreatment, and sexual or commercial exploitation. Alongside the Child Law No. 12 of 1996 and its amendment Law No. 126 of 2008, the Constitution establishes fundamental pillars for child and maternal protection, most notably social justice, equal opportunity, non-discrimination, freedom, and human dignity.

International Instruments for Child Protection

Internationally, both the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) prohibit child marriage. Article 16 of CEDAW explicitly guarantees protection against child marriage. Similarly, Article 21 of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child prohibits child or early marriage and engagement of girls and boys.

Egyptian Legislation

The Egyptian legislature has so far addressed the issue of child marriage cautiously, without directly prohibiting it through a clear and explicit legal provision. Current laws only set minimum documentation age requirements and impose penalties that are insufficiently deterrent. Thus, there is an urgent need to toughen penalties in relevant laws, alongside the development of a comprehensive and standalone draft law to address the phenomenon of child marriage, particularly by amending Article 227 of the Penal Code to increase the penalties for submitting false statements with the intent of proving that one of the spouses has reached the legal age of marriage, introduce new provisions in the Child Law and Penal Code that criminalize informal or customary marriages involving girls under 18.

Provide awareness programs and financial and emotional support to tackle child marriage, with involvement from government institutions or civil society organizations and discuss draft laws aimed at criminalizing child marriage and strengthening penalties for marrying minors.

Objective of the Activity

To discuss legislative frameworks and draft laws related to the criminalization of child marriage and underage marriage, and to develop proposed solutions in collaboration with legislative bodies.

Participants

- Relevant Ministries: (Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Social Solidarity, Ministry of Health and Population)
- Parliamentary Bodies: (Relevant committees from the House of Representatives and the Senate)
- National Councils: (National Council for Women, National Council for Childhood and Motherhood)
- Civil Society Organizations concerned with women's and children's rights
- National Center for Social and Criminological Research
- Experts and academics



SWOT Analysis of Legislation Related to the Criminalization of Child Marriage:

Strengths:

1. **Existing Legal Framework:** There are existing laws that lay the foundation for child protection, such as Article 80 of the Egyptian Constitution, which safeguards children's rights, and Child Law No. 12 of 1996, as amended by Law No. 126 of 2008.
2. **International Collaboration:** Cooperation with international organizations, such as the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), strengthens national efforts and lends international weight to addressing the phenomenon.
3. **Political Support:** The directives of the political leadership to expedite the enactment of legislation criminalizing child marriage provide strong political backing and legitimacy to legislative efforts.
4. **Diverse Stakeholder Participation:** The presence of a wide range of stakeholders, including the Ministry of Social Solidarity, the National Council for Human Rights, and civil society organizations, enriches the discussion and enhances the comprehensiveness of the resulting recommendations.

Weaknesses:

1. **Legislative Gaps:** Certain legal provisions are vague or conflicting, such as Article 227 of the Penal Code and Article 17 of the Litigation Procedures Law, which undermines the overall effectiveness of the legislative framework.

2. **Lack of Deterrent Penalties:** Existing penalties for violations are not sufficiently dissuasive, allowing the continuation of the practice despite ongoing efforts to combat it.
3. **Under-enforcement of Existing Laws:** The failure to fully enforce child protection laws and the absence of comprehensive criminalization of child marriage create legal loopholes that can be exploited to circumvent the law.
4. **Cultural and Social Challenges:** Deep-rooted traditions and customs, particularly prevalent in impoverished and marginalized areas, continue to fuel the practice of child marriage, impeding efforts to combat it.

Opportunities:

1. **Enactment of New Legislation:** The move towards issuing a specific law to define the legal age of marriage and criminalize child marriage represents an opportunity to address this phenomenon more effectively.
2. **Increased Public Awareness:** Awareness and educational campaigns, particularly through the education sector, may help shift harmful social norms and promote a culture of gender equality.
3. **Role of the Media:** Media outlets can play a vital role in raising awareness about the risks of child marriage and shedding light on its detrimental effects on individuals and society.
4. **International Partnerships:** Support and cooperation from international organizations, especially the United Nations, can provide additional resources to support anti-child marriage programs and bolster national sustainable development initiatives.

Challenges:

1. **Economic Situation:** The deterioration of economic conditions and the rising poverty rate contribute to the increased vulnerability of children to early marriage, which is often perceived as a way out of poverty.
2. **Legal Circumvention:** The use of unofficial documents, such as *defter al-tasadouq* (customary marriage logbooks), allows for circumvention of the law, making enforcement more difficult.
3. **Customs and Traditions:** In some communities, local culture reinforces child marriage as a socially or economically valuable practice, creating resistance to change.
4. **Lack of Awareness in Rural Areas:** Some rural communities lack awareness of the harmful consequences of child marriage, often viewing it as a viable solution to economic and social challenges, thereby perpetuating the practice.

Recommendations on Criminalizing Child Marriage (Based on the Workshop Outcomes)

Legislative Recommendations

- 1. Stricter Penalties:** Intensifying penalties for all parties involved in child marriage—including parents and marriage officiants—by amending *Article 227 of the Penal Code* to include imprisonment of no less than three years or a significantly higher financial fine.
- 2. Review Child-Related Legislation:** Revising and modernizing the Child Law and Penal Code provisions to align them with the Constitution and relevant international treaties, particularly in relation to protection from early marriage.
- 3. Abolishing the Marriage Confirmation Register:** Repealing Article 22 of the Marriage Registrars' Regulation, which permits the registration of marriages without specifying a legal minimum age, to prevent circumvention of the legal age threshold.
- 4. Reintroducing the Postponed Personal Status Bill:** Expediting consideration and parliamentary approval of the pending Personal Status Law, which includes a ban on marriage under the age of 18.

Social Recommendations

- 1. Launching Awareness Campaigns in Governorates:** Conducting intensive awareness campaigns in rural and remote areas in cooperation with civil society and religious institutions to educate communities about the health, educational, and legal risks of child marriage.
- 2. Encouraging Girls' Education:** Promoting and supporting programs that incentivize families to keep girls in school as a measure to reduce child marriage, particularly in economically disadvantaged regions.
- 3. Empowering Community and Religious Leaders:** Engaging religious leaders both Muslim and Christian to raise awareness of the harmful impacts of child marriage and clarify that such practices contradict religious values.

Economic Recommendations

- 1. Expansion of Economic Support Programs for Poor Families:** Providing financial support to the most vulnerable families, thereby reducing the economic pressures that may compel them to marry off their children at an early age.
- 2. Launch of Vocational Training Programs for Youth:** Implementing vocational training programs targeting young people especially girls to provide alternative livelihood opportunities, enable them to earn a decent living, and promote financial independence.

Educational Recommendations

- 1. Development of an Educational System that Promotes Positive Social Values:** Introducing curricula that emphasize children's rights, highlight the dangers of child marriage, and raise parental awareness on related issues.

2. Improvement of the Quality of Public Education: Increasing investment in educational infrastructure and upgrading public schools to create an attractive and safe learning environment that discourages school dropout.

3. Awareness Programs Targeting Schools: Designing school-based awareness programs that educate students about the risks of child marriage and motivate them to focus on education and building personal independence.

Health Recommendations

1. Health Awareness Campaigns on the Risks of Child Marriage: Organizing health education workshops and campaigns to raise awareness of the negative reproductive and psychological effects of child marriage.

2. Strengthening Youth Reproductive Health Services: Offering health consultations and reproductive services to families particularly girls with the aim of raising health awareness and fostering autonomy.

Media-Related Recommendations

1. Production of Awareness Media Content: Utilizing various media platforms to disseminate educational content on the risks of child marriage, including real-life stories of child marriage survivors.

2. Engaging Influencers and Public Figures: Collaborating with social influencers and public personalities to support campaigns against child marriage and amplify their reach and impact.

Recommendations for the Country

1. Activation of a Clear 2030 Sustainable Development Plan on Child Rights: Integrating child marriage prevention into national sustainable development plans and define actionable steps to monitor progress.

2. Coordination with International Entities to Benefit from Successful Experiences: Drawing on the experiences of countries that have successfully tackled child marriage, especially those that have adopted effective national strategies in this domain.



Participants in the expert meeting on legislation related to the criminalization of child marriage

Entity	Name	Title/Role
National Council for Human Rights (NCHR)	Ambassador Moushira Khattab	President of NCHR
	Dr. Anas Gaafar	Secretary of the Legislative Committee of the Council
	Ms. Nehad Abou El Qumsan	Member of the Legislative Committee of the Council
	Mr. Abd Al Gawad Ahmed	Member of the Legislative Committee of the Council
UNFPA- Egypt	Ms. Germaine Haddad	Representative of UNFPA Egypt
Senate	Senator Mohamed Farid	Deputy Chair of the Human Rights Unit at the Ministry of Social Solidarity
	Senator Jameel Haleem	Member of the Human Rights and Social Solidarity Committee
Ministry of Social Solidarity	Mr. Mahmoud Mahmoud Ibrahim	Deputy Chair of Human Rights Unit at the Ministry of Social Solidarity

National Council for Childhood and Motherhood	Dr. Hayam Nazif	Deputy Chair of the Council
National Council for Women	Counselor Ahmed El Naggar	President of Court of Appeal and Advisor to the National Council for Women
National Council for Persons with disabilities	Ms. Dalia Atef	Head of the Women and Children Unit
National Center for Social and Criminological Research	Dr. Rania Amer	Assistant Professor of Economics
National Institute for Planning	Prof. Magda Emam	Dean of the Center for Social and Cultural Planning
Academics	Prof. Wagida Anwar	Professor of Public Health – Ain Shams University

Consultative Expert Meeting titled: “Legislations Related to the Promotion of Sexual and Reproductive Rights”

30 October, 2024

National Council for Human Rights Headquarters

Introduction:

The World Health Organization defines reproductive health as “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity, in all matters relating to the reproductive system and to its functions and processes.” This definition was first introduced at the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) held in Cairo in 1994.

According to the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right to health:

“Sexual and reproductive health and rights constitute an integral part of the right of every human being to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. However, many barriers hinder individuals’ full enjoyment of sexual and reproductive health rights. These barriers are interconnected, deeply rooted, and operate at multiple levels, including clinical care, health systems, and the underlying determinants of health. Social and economic conditions, in addition to biological and other factors, significantly affect women’s sexual and reproductive health.”

It is important to stress that sexual health is not merely the absence of disease, but rather closely linked to multiple human rights – including the right to life, the right to be free from torture, the right to health, the right to privacy, the right to education, and the prohibition of discrimination. Both the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women have explicitly affirmed that a woman’s right to health includes her sexual and reproductive health.

This means that countries are under obligations to respect, protect, and fulfill the rights related to women’s sexual and reproductive health. Awareness-raising efforts must emphasize that healthy and respectful relationships built on mutual understanding, empathy, and consent are the cornerstone of sexual health and well-being. One of the key tools in fostering such relationships is comprehensive sexuality education – an educational process that covers the emotional, physical, and social aspects of sexuality. This empowers individuals, especially women and girls, to build healthy relationships and protect their sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Sexual health and well-being must be expressed freely and safely within relationships, without fear of violence. Gender-based violence remains a visible reality across Arab societies in general, and in Egypt in particular. Therefore, efforts to prevent and respond to such violence require robust legal support from the Country.

Sexual and reproductive health services are defined to include family planning, safe abortion (as permitted by national laws), cervical cancer screening, and delivery by a qualified healthcare provider, emergency obstetric care, counseling, and prevention of sexually transmitted infections.

International Legislations on Sexual and Reproductive Rights

Reproductive rights encompass a set of recognized human rights enshrined in national and international legal instruments and human rights frameworks. These fundamental rights include the freedom of spouses to decide, freely and responsibly, the number and spacing of their children, access to relevant information, knowledge, and means to exercise these choices, and the right to make reproductive decisions free from discrimination, coercion, or violence.

The most prominent legal provisions addressing sexual and reproductive rights include:

- Article 16 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) affirms that women shall have the same rights as men to freely and responsibly decide on the number and spacing of their children and to have access to information, education, and the means to enable them to exercise these rights.
- Article 10 of CEDAW further provides that women's right to education includes "access to specific educational information to help ensure the health and well-being of families, including information and advice on family planning."
- The Beijing Platform for Action emphasizes that the human rights of women include their right to have control over and decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality, including their sexual and reproductive health, without coercion, discrimination, or violence.
- General Recommendation No. 24 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women recommends that countries prioritize "the prevention of unwanted pregnancies through family planning and comprehensive sexuality education."
- General Comment No. 14 of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights clarifies that the provision of maternal health services constitutes a core obligation that may not be subject to any form of derogation, regardless of circumstances. Countries are under an immediate obligation to take deliberate, concrete and targeted steps towards the realization of the right to health in the context of pregnancy and childbirth.

Key Egyptian Legislative Measures to Promote Sexual and Reproductive Rights:

The 2014 Egyptian Constitution was the first to explicitly address women's issues, beginning with the Constitution's preamble. It includes more than twenty provisions that directly address women and guarantee equal opportunities, full participation in society, and equality with men in rights, free from discrimination.

- Article 11 provides:
 - The country shall ensure equality between women and men in all civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights, in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution.
 - The country shall take necessary measures to guarantee appropriate representation of women in elected councils, as prescribed by law.

- The country shall guarantee women the right to hold public office and senior administrative positions in the country, and to be appointed to judicial bodies and authorities, without discrimination.
- Egyptian women shall have the right to transmit their nationality to their children.”
- Article 214 affirms the independence and immunity of the National Council for Women, including the right to review all legislation related to women prior to promulgation.
- Article 17 requires the country to ensure the provision of social services.
- Article 19 raises the compulsory education age to the end of secondary school — a significant measure to address child marriage.
- Article 93 commits the country to the international human rights treaties, conventions, and instruments to which it is a party; these instruments acquire the force of law.
- The 2019 constitutional amendments reaffirmed non-discrimination on the basis of sex across all rights and duties, particularly in the amended Articles 8, 9, 17, 19, 74, 80, 81, 83, 180, 181, 214, and 244.

Relevant Laws and Regulations:

- Labor Laws:

Law No. 12 of 2003 (Unified Labor Law): Contains multiple provisions safeguarding the rights of women workers, including protections for their children, families, and health.

Law No. 81 of 2016 (Civil Service Law): Contains articles providing additional entitlements to working mothers, including an extended maternity leave of four months instead of three.

- Penal Code:

The Egyptian Penal Code includes provisions that afford legal protection to women and introduce stricter penalties for crimes such as assault, abduction, rape, sexual assault, female genital mutilation (FGM), sexual harassment, and acts resulting in miscarriage.

Amendments to provisions relating to sexual harassment, rape, and sexual assault were introduced through Law No. 11 of 2011, which amended articles 267, 268, 269, 269 bis, 289, and 306 bis (A) of the Penal Code.

- Assault, Battery and Psychological Violence:

The Penal Code criminalizes various forms of violence, including physical assault, battery, discrimination, and psychological violence, such as verbal abuse and insult. These acts are punishable under Articles 161 bis, 171, 176, 240, 241, 242, 307, and 308 of the Penal Code. The provisions are applied strictly and without discrimination based on gender, ensuring equal protection for all.

- Sexual Harassment

Over the past years, important legal measures have been taken to address sexual harassment, most notably the amendment introduced through Law No. 50 of 2014, which significantly

increased the penalties for such acts. Prior to this amendment, Law No. 11 of 2011 had not explicitly recognized the term "sexual harassment" in the legislation.

The 2014 amendment replaced Article 306 bis (A) and added Article 306 bis (B) to broaden the scope of criminalization of violence against women and to formally define sexual harassment in law. The new provisions criminalize verbal, physical, or visual acts, including those committed through telecommunication means that are directed at a woman with the intent of deriving sexual gratification.

If the offense is committed with this intent, it is punishable under the designation of "sexual harassment." Penalties range from six months to five years' imprisonment and/or fines of up to EGP 50,000. Aggravating circumstances, such as the offender being in a position of authority (professional, familial, or educational), acting in concert with others, or uses a weapon, are considered in accordance with Article 267, extending the criminalization to acts committed within familial, academic, or workplace environments. These steps represent significant progress in protecting women and girls in both public and private spaces.

- Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

FGM was criminalized in 2008 through amendments to the Penal Code. Article 242 bis provides:

“Without prejudice to the provisions of Article (61) of the Penal Code or to any harsher penalty prescribed in another law, any person who causes injury punishable under Articles 241 or 242 of the Penal Code through the act of female genital mutilation shall be punished by imprisonment for a period not less than three months and not exceeding two years, or by a fine not less than EGP 1,000 and not exceeding EGP 5,000.”

In 2016, under Law No. 78 of 2016, the penalty was increased, elevating the offense from a misdemeanor to a felony, with imprisonment ranging from five to seven years for anyone who performs female genital mutilation. If the act results in permanent disability or death, the penalty may reach fifteen years' imprisonment. A new provision, Article 242 bis (A), was introduced to penalize the requester of the procedure, holding accountable any person who solicits FGM, whether they are related to the victim or advocate for the practice generally. This amendment aims to deter all forms of incitement and complicity in the perpetuation of FGM.

Rape, Sexual assault, and Abduction:

Article 267 of the Penal Code criminalizes rape, prescribing life imprisonment (up to 25 years) or the death penalty as the maximum punishment. The legislator imposes harsher penalties in the following cases:

If the victim is under the age of 18;

If the perpetrator is a guardian, custodian, educator, or otherwise exercises authority over the victim, or is a servant of the victim or any of the above-mentioned persons;

And if the crime is committed by two or more persons.

Article 268 of the Penal Code criminalizes sexual assault and stipulates a prison sentence of up to 15 years. The penalty for sexual assault is increased to rigorous imprisonment if the victim has not attained the age of eighteen, or if the perpetrator is an ascendant of the victim, responsible for their upbringing, supervision, or holds authority over them, or is employed by the victim or any of the aforementioned persons. The penalty shall be life imprisonment if two or more aggravating circumstances are met.

In 2018, Article 289 of the Egyptian Penal Code was amended to provide that anyone who abducts a child without deceit or coercion shall be punished with rigorous imprisonment for not less than ten years. If the victim is a child or a female, the penalty is increased. Furthermore, Article 290 increases the penalty for abduction with deceit or coercion, especially if the victim is a female or a child, to life imprisonment or the death penalty.

Abortion:

Articles 260, 261, 263, and 264 of the Penal Code criminalize abortion with imprisonment or rigorous imprisonment.

- Law No. 126 of 2008 amending the Child Law No. 12 of 1996.
- Law No. 64 of 2010 on Combating Human Trafficking.
- Law No. 23 of 2012 establishing a health insurance system for breadwinning women, thereby recognizing and ensuring their right to healthcare coverage.
- Law No. 106 of 2015 amending some provisions of Law No. 396 of 1956 regulating prisons, which guarantees the imprisoned mother the right to keep her child with her until the age of four, and ensures visitation rights after that age. It also allows for postponement of the execution of the sentence until the child reaches the age of two.
- Comprehensive Health Insurance Law No. 2 of 2018, which guarantees free medical treatment to all Egyptians who are unable to afford healthcare, including women.
- Law No. 11 of 2019 issuing the National Council for Persons with Disabilities Law.
- Law No. 148 of 2019 issuing the Social Insurance and Pensions Law.

Several ministerial resolutions were also issued, including:

- Minister of Justice Resolution No. 1727, amending the notary public regulations and the marriage contract form. The amendment to Article 33 stipulates that the marriage officer may allow the spouses to agree on and include specific conditions in the marriage contract.
- Circular No. 29 of 12 November 2017, concerning the legal authority over the child's education being granted to the custodial parent.
- Minister of Justice Resolution No. 9200 of 2015, amending provisions of the executive regulations concerning documentation in the case of marriage between a foreign national and an Egyptian woman.
- Prison Bylaws Amendment No. 1058 of 2008, which increased both the number and duration of visits allowed for children of incarcerated mothers.

In conclusion, the Country has worked and is still working on supporting reproductive and sexual rights through legislation, initiatives, and awareness-raising campaigns. However, the journey toward fully realizing these rights remains ongoing, particularly in addressing cultural norms and inherited misconceptions passed down through generations. We all endeavor to strengthen reproductive and sexual rights and increase awareness of their importance.

Meeting Objectives:

- Reviewing Egyptian and international legislation to identify gaps related to reproductive health and rights, and propose necessary amendments or new laws in line with constitutional and international obligations.
- Enhancing protection mechanisms for the most vulnerable groups through effective legislative development and enforcement.

Participants:

- Relevant Ministries: (Ministry of Social Solidarity, Ministry of Health and Population, and Ministry of Justice.)
- Parliamentary Councils: (Relevant committees of the House of Representatives and the Senate.)
- Specialized National Councils: (The National Council for Women, the National Council for Persons with Disabilities, and the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood.)
- Representatives of Civil Society Organizations, experts, and academics.



SWOT Analysis of Legislations Related to Sexual and Reproductive Rights in Egypt Based on the Expert Consultative Meeting Report

1. Strengths:

- **Supportive Constitutional Framework:**
 - Article (11) of the Egyptian Constitution guarantees women's rights and equality, while Article (18) ensures the right to health.
 - Other provisions protect children and women from harmful practices (e.g., Article 80).
- **Country Commitment to Modernization:**
 - Political will to promote sexual and reproductive rights, as reflected in the 2023 International Conference on Population and Development.
 - Movement toward establishing specialized units for reproductive health and strengthening primary healthcare services.
- **Strong Institutional Cooperation:**
 - Coordination between the National Council for Human Rights and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).
 - Engagement of civil society organizations and experts in formulating recommendations.

2. Weaknesses:

- **Legislative Implementation Gaps:**
 - A notable gap between legislation and implementation on the ground, particularly in remote areas.
 - Weak monitoring and oversight mechanisms to ensure compliance with laws related to reproductive rights.
- **Lack of Community Education:**
 - Absence of structured and comprehensive sexual education in school curricula.
 - Limited awareness among target populations regarding the significance and impact of reproductive rights.
- **Cultural and Religious Resistance:**
 - Objections to sensitive issues such as abortion, sexual education, and domestic violence legislation rooted in cultural and religious sensitivities.

3. Opportunities:

- **Legislative Reform:**
 - Potential to review existing laws (e.g., the Child Law and the Personal Status Law) to align with international standards.
 - Prospects for enacting new legislation criminalizing child marriage and combating domestic violence.
- **Promoting Partnerships:**
 - Strengthening collaboration with civil society organizations and specialized associations to support legal implementation and raising awareness among communities.
 - International partnerships such as cooperation with UNFPA to support reproductive health programs.
- **Technology and Education:**
 - Leveraging technology to disseminate awareness about sexual and reproductive rights through educational platforms and social media.
 - Launching training programs for health and legal professionals to enhance their capacities in handling reproductive health issues.

4. Challenges:

- **Persistent Harmful Practices:**
 - Continuation of practices such as female genital mutilation (FGM) and child marriage in certain areas, despite the existence of prohibitive legislation.
- **Economic Challenges:**
 - Insufficient financial resources allocated to the development of reproductive health services, particularly in remote regions.

- The broader national economic context hinders the comprehensive provision of healthcare services.
- **Social and Cultural Barriers:**
 - Societal resistance to issues related to reproductive rights, such as abortion and sexual education.
 - Confusion between cultural values and international obligations, which may impede the enforcement of certain laws.

Key Recommendations of the Expert Meeting on Legislations Related to Sexual and Reproductive Rights:

First: Updating National Legislation to Promote Sexual and Reproductive Rights

1. Review of Existing Laws:

- Amending the **Child Law No. 12 of 1996** to ensure protection of children from harmful practices such as female genital mutilation (FGM) and child marriage.
- Updating the **Personal Status Law** to include provisions that uphold women's and family rights to reproductive health.
- **Abolishing the Marriage Authentication Register:** Repealing Article 22 of the Marriage Officers' Regulations, which permits the registration of marriages without age limits, in order to prevent violations of the legal minimum age.

2. Enactment of New Laws:

- Enacting a law that explicitly **criminalizes child marriage**, with deterrent penalties for all parties involved in the act.
- Introducing a law on **combating domestic violence** that provides comprehensive protection from gender-based violence, including domestic violence, sexual harassment, and so-called "honor crimes."
- Developing legislation **regulating abortion** in accordance with medical and legal standards that respect women's rights and individual circumstances.

Second: Enhancing Access to Sexual and Reproductive Health Services

1. Integrating Sexual and Reproductive Rights into Primary Healthcare:

- Providing reproductive health services as an integral part of primary healthcare, including access to family planning methods and reproductive health counseling
- Establishing **specialized units for sexual and reproductive health** under the supervision of the Ministry of Health and Population, offering comprehensive services including psychosocial support.

2. Integrating Sexuality Education into School Curricula:

- Developing educational curricula that address sexual and reproductive rights in an age-appropriate manner.
- Training teachers and specialists to deliver this content in alignment with cultural and religious values.

Third: Protecting the most Vulnerable Groups

1. Combating Harmful Practices:

- Ensuring effective enforcement of legislation prohibiting **female genital mutilation (FGM) and child marriage**, while ensuring their effective implementation on the ground and providing legal and social support to survivors.
- Increasing community awareness on the negative psychological and physical effects of such practices on girls.

2. Supporting the Rights of Persons with Disabilities:

- Implementing the provisions of **Law No. 10 of 2018** to ensure that persons with disabilities have access to appropriate sexual and reproductive health services.
- Providing accessible information and tools tailored to their specific needs.

Fourth: Intersectoral Collaboration

1. Partnership with Civil Society:

- Strengthening cooperation between government entities and specialized civil society organizations to provide legal, social, and psychological support to victims of violations.
- Supporting civil society organizations working in reproductive health to implement community awareness and legal guidance programs.

2. Joint Action among Ministries:

- Coordinating efforts among the Ministries of Health, Education, and Justice to ensure the effective implementation of laws and recommendations related to sexual and reproductive rights.

Fifth: Raising Awareness among the Community and Workforce

1. Training Judicial and Health Sector Personnel

- Implementing specialized training programs for judges and investigators on handling cases related to sexual violence and reproductive health, ensuring the sensitive and effective application of the law.
- Training healthcare providers to deliver family counseling and reproductive health services.

2. Implementing Awareness Campaigns

- Launching national initiatives to educate young men and women on sexual and reproductive rights to help mitigate health and social risks.
- Promoting the use of media and social media platforms to widely disseminate awareness messages.

Sixth: Enhancing the Quality of Health Services

1. Achieving Health Equity

- Ensuring the availability of reproductive health services in remote and border areas.
- Increasing coverage of primary healthcare centers to guarantee inclusive services for all population groups.

2. Promoting Preventive and Curative Services

- Providing modern contraceptive methods free of charge or at subsidized prices.
- Delivering tailored healthcare services to marginalized groups, such as survivors of sexual violence and people living with HIV/AIDS.

These recommendations present a comprehensive roadmap for improving legislation and services related to sexual and reproductive rights, while ensuring their practical implementation in a manner that upholds justice and dignity for all citizens.



Participants in the consultative expert meeting on legislation related to the promotion of reproductive and sexual rights

Entity	Name	Title/Role
National Council for Human Rights (NCHR)	Ambassador Moushira Khattab	President of NCHR
	Ambassador Mahmoud Karem	Deputy Chair of NCHR
	Dr. Wafaa Benjamin	Secretary of the Social Rights Committee of the Council
	Mr. Essam Sheeha	Member of the Legislative Committee of the Council
UNFPA- Egypt	Ms. Germaine Haddad	Representative of UNFPA Egypt
Ministry of Justice	Counselor Ahmed Sanaa Khalil	Member of the Technical office at the Human Rights Sector
House of Representatives	Shadia El Gamal	Member of House of Representatives
	Prof. Gehad Ibrahim	Professor of Education at Ain Shams University and Member of Parliament
Senate	Senator Jameel Haleem	Member of the Human Rights and Social Solidarity Committee
National Institute for Planning	Prof. Magda Emam	Dean of the Center for Social and Cultural Planning
Supreme Council of Culture	Dr. Ayman Foad	President of Court of Appeal and Member of the Supreme Council of Culture
National Council for Women	Counselor Hany Geogry	President of Court of Appeal and Member of the National Council for Women
	Dr. Saly Amgad	Member of the National Council for Women
National Council for Persons with disabilities	Ms. Dalia Atef	Head of the Women and Children Unit

Civil Society	Dr. Neveen Obaid	Chairperson of the Board of trustees, New Woman Foundation
	Dr. Mohamed Mahmoud Fahmy	Representative of the Specialized Federation of Egyptian Women
	Dr. Hala Adly Hussien	Representative of the Egyptian Colposcopy Society
	Dr. Iqbal ElSamaloty	Representative of the Egyptian Women's Union
Academics	Prof. Rehab Mohamed Abd Al Rahman	Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Faculty of Medicine, Ain Shams University
	Prof. Wagida Anwar	Professor of Public Health – Ain Shams University
	Prof. Karima El Shamy	Professor of Nursing Mansoura University

Consultative Meeting of Experts on Supporting the Rights of Marginalized and At-Risk Women and Girls

Monday, 30 September, 2024

National Council for Human Rights Headquarters

Introduction:

As part of the implementation of the joint cooperation programme between the National Council for Human Rights (NCHR) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the Committee on Social Rights, in collaboration with the Anti-Discrimination Unit, convened a consultative expert meeting on supporting the rights of women and girls most in need and at risk. The meeting aimed to explore mechanisms to uphold and protect the rights of all citizens from all forms of discrimination, in line with Egypt's national and international commitments and the objectives of the National Human Rights Strategy. The strategy includes key targets to protect women's health, empower women socially and economically, and safeguard them from all forms of violence and harmful practices. The meeting also addressed the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the related recommendations.

In this context, it is important to highlight that certain women and girls face compounded challenges and violations of their fundamental rights stemming from factors such as mental health conditions, substance abuse, physical disabilities, HIV/AIDS, and old age. Additionally, women and girls affected by forced displacement resulting from armed conflict endure profound suffering and vulnerability.

Therefore, the NCHR organized this expert meeting to discuss the challenges and violations faced by at-risk women and girls, identify pathways for their protection, and explore best practices for their empowerment and support.

Why Focus on This Group Specifically?

Marginalized and at-risk women, including women with disabilities, those living with chronic conditions such as HIV/AIDS, women who struggle with substance use, and refugee women affected by armed conflict—face a more complex set of health and social challenges than other women. These women often endure intersecting human rights violations ranging from poverty and social exclusion to inadequate access to healthcare services, in addition to being at higher risk of violence and exploitation.

In Egypt, such challenges form a tangible part of everyday life. In remote areas and vulnerable communities, women and girls frequently lack access to basic health services, particularly in the field of reproductive health. Moreover, the social stigma associated with certain conditions, such as drug dependency or HIV/AIDS, further isolates these women from healthcare systems and society at large. The same applies to women with physical or mental disabilities, who are often rendered "invisible" in public policies and planning.

Achievements and Challenges on the Ground:

While Egypt has made significant strides in recent years in promoting women's rights including the launch of the National Human Rights Strategy, which sets out ambitious goals for improving women's health and empowering them economically and socially vulnerable groups of women continue to face substantial challenges. For instance:

1. Limited Access to Health Services: Women in rural and marginalized areas continue to face limited access to health services, particularly those related to reproductive health. In many cases, they lack the information or the means necessary to access adequate healthcare, exacerbating their health conditions and those of their families.

2. Stigma and Social Violence: Women living with chronic conditions such as HIV/AIDS or those struggling with substance abuse face intense social stigma, placing them at greater risk of violence and social exclusion. These groups require robust legal and social protection, as well as psychological and medical support.

3. Violence Against Women with Disabilities: In Egypt, women with disabilities face a double burden of discrimination. They are often subjected to inappropriate treatment in their daily lives and often fall victim to violence or marginalization in the workplace, educational institutions, and even in accessing basic services.

4. Refugee Women In light of successive regional crises, Egypt has found itself compelled to respond to a large influx of refugees, including women and girls affected by psychological trauma as a result of armed conflict. This subgroup requires comprehensive health and psychological support to facilitate their rehabilitation and integration into society.

International Conventions and the Egyptian Constitution as Supportive Frameworks for Women's Rights

Egypt today stands on clear legal and constitutional foundations that support women's rights. The Egyptian Constitution guarantees equality and non-discrimination, and domestic legislation related to the protection of women reinforces this commitment. Furthermore, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) serves as one of the cornerstones of Egypt's international obligations.

Despite these frameworks, there remains a pressing need for more effective measures, not limited to legislation or policies, but extending to their tangible implementation on the ground and achieving social and human justice necessitates a focused approach toward the most vulnerable groups, ensuring them comprehensive and sustainable protection.

Objective of the Meeting:

To present the challenges faced by women most in need and at risk, and to explore mechanisms for the protection and promotion of their rights. The meeting also aims to propose concrete recommendations for the implementation of relevant national and international commitments.

Participants:

- Relevant ministries (Ministry of Social Solidarity, Ministry of Health and Population)
- Parliamentary bodies (concerned committees in the House of Representatives and the Senate)
- National councils and specialized agencies: (National Council for Women, National Council for Persons with Disabilities, National Council for Mental Health and Addiction Treatment, National Council for Childhood and Motherhood)
- Relevant civil society organizations
- Concerned United Nations entities
- Fund for Combating and Treating Addiction
- National Center for Social and Criminological Research
- A group of experts and academics

SWOT Analysis:

Strengths:

- Strong governmental commitment and presidential support for women's issues, including those affecting marginalized groups.
- Existence of national strategies and initiatives, such as the Decent Life initiative and the National Human Rights Strategy.
- Diversity of involved stakeholders and continued collaboration between governmental institutions and civil society organizations.

Weaknesses:

- Insufficient coordination among relevant stakeholders, which hampers the delivery of integrated and comprehensive services
- Limited financial and human resources allocated to support marginalized populations.
- Persistence of cultural stereotypes and social norms that hinder behavioral change within communities.



Opportunities:

- Increased international support and availability of technical assistance from UN agencies and other development partners.
- Growing media attention to issues related to violence against women.
- Potential to benefit from best practices and successful policy models implemented in other countries.

Challenges:

- Economic constraints that limit adequate allocation of resources to support marginalized groups.
- Increasing number of refugee and marginalized women as a result of ongoing regional crises
- Deep-rooted cultural norms and societal values that continue to obstruct shifts in perceptions of women's roles.

Recommendations of the Expert Consultation Meeting on Supporting the Rights of Marginalized and At-Risk Women and Girls:

First: Strengthening Legal and Legislative Frameworks

- Reviewing existing legislation to ensure comprehensive protection for marginalized women, with a focus on the most vulnerable groups including women with disabilities, chronic illnesses, refugees, and survivors of violence.
- Enacting new laws or amending current ones to ensure the protection of women's rights in the fields of employment, education, healthcare, and economic empowerment.
- Strengthening the implementation of international conventions such as CEDAW, and incorporate them into national legislation to ensure equality and prevent discrimination.

Second: Expanding Health and Social Services

- Establishing mobile medical and psychosocial units to provide reproductive health services and psychological support in remote and underserved areas.
- Training healthcare and social workers to work effectively with marginalized women, particularly those facing complex challenges
- Providing clear and accessible referral mechanisms linking women to essential health and social services, including specialized support services such as safe houses and temporary shelters.

Third: Combating Social Stigma and Raising Awareness

- Launching national media and awareness campaigns aimed at changing negative societal perceptions of women living with HIV, women with addictions, and women with disabilities.
- Engaging media outlets in addressing the issues of marginalized women in a constructive and objective manner, while showcasing empowerment success stories.
- Integrating human rights education and gender equality into school curricula to foster respect for diversity and women's rights from an early age

Fourth: Enhancing Opportunities for Economic and Social Empowerment

- Developing small and medium-sized enterprises that aim to economically empower women, ensuring access to safe and suitable employment opportunities.
- Facilitating access to micro and medium-sized financing for women in marginalized areas, along with providing training in entrepreneurship and business management.
- Organizing employment programs targeting refugee women and other marginalized groups to improve their living conditions and reduce vulnerability to exploitation

Fifth: Supporting Refugee and At-Risk Women

- Developing comprehensive protection policies for refugee women, including access to full psychological, social, and medical care.
- Providing specialized support centers for survivors of armed conflict, with a focus on rehabilitation and reintegration into society.
- Collaborating with UN agencies and international partners to ensure adequate funding and support for services targeting refugee women.

Sixth: Enhancing Cooperation and Partnerships among Stakeholders

- Strengthening cooperation between ministries and national councils (such as the National Council for Women and the National Council for Persons with Disabilities) to ensure integrated efforts
- Establishing partnerships with civil society organizations working in the field of women's rights and activate cooperation with international institutions.
- Creating a unified national platform for the exchange of information and best practices related to marginalized and at-risk women.

Seventh: Activating Monitoring and Follow-Up Mechanisms

- Developing a comprehensive database on marginalized women, including demographic, health, and economic data to better inform policies and service provision.
- Establishing a national mechanism to monitor the implementation of recommendations and assess impact, with the publication of regular and transparent reports
- Strengthening mechanisms for reporting and responding to gender-based violence, ensuring confidentiality and safeguarding the dignity of survivors.



Participants in the consultative expert meeting on supporting the rights of marginalized and at-risk women and girls

Entity	Name	Title/Role
National Council for Human Rights (NCHR)	Ambassador Moushira Khattab	President of NCHR
	Dr. Wafaa Benjamin	Secretary of the Social Rights Committee of the Council
	Dr. Ayman Zohry	Secretary of the Civil and Political Rights Committee
	Dr. Hany Ibrahim	Secretary of the Committee on International Relations
National Council for Childhood and Motherhood	Dr. Hayam Nazif	Deputy Chair of the Council

National Council for Women	Eng. Gehan Tawfik	Head of the Central Administration for the Office of the President of the National Council for Women
	Dr. Saly Amgad	Member of the National Council for Women
National Council for Mental Health	Dr. Ahmed Gamal Abou El Azayem	Member of the National Council for Mental Health
	Hanan Abd El Latif	Director of Public Relations
National Council for Persons with disabilities	Ms. Dalia Atef	Head of the Women and Children Unit
General Secretariat for Mental Health	Dr. Samar Fouad	Consultant psychiatrist
Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)	Dr. Walid Kamal	Country Director, Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)
Civil Society	Dr. Mohamed Hassan	Treasurer of the Egyptian Society for Cervical Endoscopy
	Dr. Neveen Obaid	Chairperson of the Board of Trustees of the New Woman Foundation
	Naglaa El Baytar	Chairperson of the Board of Directors of Watan Association
Ministry of Social Solidarity	Dr. Amr Othman	Chairperson of the Addiction Treatment and Abuse Fund
	Samah Refaat	Human Rights Unit at the Ministry of Social Solidarity
Ministry of Education	Dr. Mohamed Hassan Othman	Head of the General Administration for Human Rights and Equal Opportunities
Academics	Prof. Sherin Shawki	Senior Expert at the Social Research Center, American University in Cairo

	Prof. Karima El Shamy	Professor of Nursing, Mansoura University
	Prof. Gehad Ibrahim	Professor of Education at Ain Shams University

Workshop on University Curricula Addressing Human Rights and Reproductive Health and Rights

Wednesday, 28 August, 2024

Venue: National Council for Human Rights Headquarters

Introduction:

The Committee on Social Rights, in collaboration with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), organized an interactive workshop on academic materials and curricula addressing human rights and reproductive health and rights, as part of national efforts to align with international best practices. The workshop was held on Wednesday, 28 August 2024, at the headquarters of the National Council for Human Rights.

The Council seeks to raise awareness among university students about the principles and values of human rights, particularly reproductive rights and health, by fostering interactive dialogue and gathering students' feedback and proposals for improving such curricula. The Council reiterates its commitment to implementing the recommendations of the UN treaty bodies, which emphasize the importance of educating youth and students about human rights, as well as the recommendations of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) related to reproductive health and rights.

This interactive workshop reflects the priorities outlined in the National Human Rights Strategy, particularly the importance of awareness-raising and capacity-building in the field of human rights, which are considered fundamental pillars of any human rights system. Promoting and instilling a culture of human rights is essential to combating violations, especially those rooted in harmful cultural norms.

It is worth noting that throughout this year, the Council has organized several dialogue sessions aimed at raising awareness among students of New Giza University regarding human rights and reproductive health and rights. These sessions included a review and evaluation of the human rights curricula currently taught in Egyptian universities, with the aim of incorporating students' perspectives and recommendations into future curriculum development.

In this context, student associations from several medical faculties across Egypt, as well as students from other universities and faculties, were invited to present existing curricula and learn from relevant international experiences. This initiative will pave the way for a consultative meeting with the Supreme Council of Universities, the National Population Council, and the Ministries of Education and Higher Education.

Objectives of the Workshop:

- To promote awareness among university students on the principles and values of human rights, including reproductive rights and health.
- To foster interactive dialogue with students and gather their input and recommendations on curriculum development.
- To present best practices, experiences, and proposals in the field.
- To organize students into 3–4 working groups during the second half of the workshop, in preparation for a student competition to present curricula using youth-friendly audio-visual materials.

Participants:

- Representatives of student associations from medical faculties across Egypt and other university faculties (30 - 40 participants).
- Experts and academics.
- Members of the General Secretariat (of the National Council for Human Rights.)
- Representatives of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).



Integrating Reproductive and Sexual Rights into University Curricula: The Egyptian Context — Challenges and Opportunities:

Reproductive and sexual rights constitute a fundamental pillar of both public health and human rights. They directly contribute to the achievement of sustainable development in Egypt. With the increasing proportion of youth in society, promoting awareness of these rights within university curricula has become an indispensable necessity. This paper presents an overview of the Egyptian context, highlighting current experiences, as well as the challenges and opportunities for strengthening this integration.

Current Efforts to Integrate Reproductive Health and Rights into Egyptian University Curricula

In Egypt, university curricula have witnessed several attempts to incorporate topics related to reproductive health, although the level and quality of implementation vary

1. “Societal Issues” Course in Public Universities:

- The Supreme Council of Universities in Egypt has allocated a portion of the “Societal Issues” course to reproductive health and population-related topics.
- This course is not a core requirement for passing or graduation, which may affect students’ level of commitment and engagement.
- That said, there are promising models — such as Benha University — that have revised and presented this content in more engaging formats, helping to enhance students’ understanding of these issues

2. Horizontal Integration of Concepts in Private Universities:

- Some private universities have adopted a horizontal integration approach, incorporating concepts related to reproductive health and rights across various academic disciplines, such as medicine, pharmacy, and media studies.
- These institutions also organize dedicated activities and workshops for youth, which enhance practical understanding and student interaction with the topics.

3. Role of the Student Union of Medical Faculties:

- The Medical Student Union plays a central role in raising awareness and providing training related to reproductive and sexual health.
- The Union organizes awareness-raising activities and workshops on topics such as prevention of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), the importance of family planning, and culturally appropriate and scientifically grounded approaches to sexual health education.

Challenges to Integrating These Rights into University Curricula

1. Cultural and Social Sensitivity:

- These topics remain culturally sensitive within Egyptian society, which poses significant obstacles to addressing them openly and directly.

2. Limited Academic Commitment:

- The classification of the “Societal Issues” course as non-mandatory for passing or graduation reduces students’ engagement and limits the overall impact of the course content.

3. Lack of Resources and Funding:

- Many universities lack the financial and institutional support required to develop specialized and advanced educational content in this field.

4. Absence of Continuous Evaluation:

- The lack of mechanisms to assess the effectiveness of current programs hinders the ability to improve content or teaching methods.

Opportunities and Potential for Advancing Education on Reproductive and Sexual Health

1. Scaling Up Successful Initiatives:

- Initiatives such as those implemented by Benha University can be expanded, and the horizontal integration model adopted by some private universities can be replicated more broadly.

2. Partnership with the Medical Student Union:

- Strengthening collaboration with the Medical Student Union can help scale their outreach and activities, allowing for broader dissemination of knowledge across academic disciplines.

3. Launching Awareness Campaigns within Universities:

- The Supreme Council of Universities, in collaboration with civil society and students, can lead comprehensive and continuous awareness campaigns across campuses.

4. Revisiting and Enhancing Educational Content:

- The “Societal Issues” course can be redeveloped to become more comprehensive and interactive, incorporating practical projects or training activities to increase student interest and participation.

5. Integrating Technology in Education:

- Utilizing digital platforms and interactive applications can make content on reproductive health and rights more accessible and engaging for youth.

Integrating reproductive and sexual health and rights into Egyptian university curricula is a vital step toward youth empowerment and sustainable development. Despite existing challenges, current efforts such as the reform of the “Societal Issues” course, private university initiatives,

and the work of the Medical Student Union offer promising models. By improving educational content, engaging students, and expanding collaboration among stakeholders, tangible progress can be achieved in promoting health and social awareness across Egypt.

Recommendations of the Workshop on University Curricula on Human Rights (with a Focus on Reproductive Health and Rights):

First: Curriculum Development

1. Integration of Human Rights and Reproductive Health Concepts into Educational Curricula:

- Ensuring that these subjects are made compulsory rather than elective, and that they are classified as pass/fail courses to guarantee student engagement.
- Standardize the curricula across universities to minimize inconsistencies in content and methodology.
- Introducing these topics as early as preparatory and secondary education, with a focus on reproductive health and population issues.

2. Utilization of Innovative Educational Tools

- Incorporating visual documentation into curricula, such as videos, infographics, and podcasts, to simplify content and attract students' attention.
- Developing online platforms with interactive content on human rights and reproductive health.

3. Improvement of Teaching Methods

- Training academic staff in using interactive and youth-friendly teaching techniques.
- Involving students in educational activities and open discussions to tailor content to their needs.

Second: Promotion of Societal Awareness

1. Launching National Awareness Campaigns

- Implementing media campaigns targeting youth through social media platforms to clarify the importance of human rights and reproductive health
- Organizing seminars and workshops in rural areas and villages to raise awareness among students and local communities.

2. Collaboration with Student Organizations

- Supporting students in establishing human rights clubs within universities
- Organizing competitions and student research projects on reproductive health and human rights topics.

Third: Enhancing Educational Infrastructure

1. Establishment of Specialized Educational Units

- Providing specialized training clinics within universities to offer hands-on experience in reproductive health.
- Equipping laboratories with modern technological tools to support visual and interactive learning.

2. Provision of Required Resources

- Increasing university budgets to develop curricula and infrastructure related to these subjects.
- Supporting faculties through partnerships with international organizations such as the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

Fourth: Activation of the Role of Scientific Research

1. Promotion of Scientific Research on Population and Reproductive Health Issues:

- Establishing targeted research grants for students and academic staff.
- Organizing annual conferences to showcase research related to reproductive health.

2. Leveraging International Best Practices

- Studying and incorporating successful international models into the Egyptian educational curricula.



Participants in the Workshop on Curricula Related to Reproductive Rights and Health

Entity	Name	Title/Role
National Council for Human Rights (NCHR)	Ambassador Moushira Khattab	President of NCHR
	Ambassador Mahmoud Karem	Vice-President of NCHR
	Dr. Wafaa Benjamin	Secretary of the Social Rights Committee of the Council

	Dr. Ayman Zohry	Secretary of the Civil and Political Rights Committee
UNFPA- Egypt	Ms. Germaine Haddad	Representative of UNFPA Egypt
Supreme Council of Universities	Dr. Anas Gaafar	Member of the Supreme Council of Universities
Ministry of Social Solidarity	Mr. Mohanad Diab	Visual Documentation Advisor to the Ministry of Social Solidarity
Representatives of Student Unions from Various Universities	Forty medical students representing 12 different universities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cairo University - Ain Shams University - Alexandria University - Mansoura University - Benha University - Helwan University - Kafr El-Sheikh University - New Valley Modern University - New giza University - Delta University

Workshop on Integrating Human Rights and Reproductive Health into Educational Curricula

Thursday, 31 October, 2024

National Council for Human Rights Headquarters

Introduction:

The Social Rights Committee, in collaboration with the Cultural Committee and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), organized an interactive workshop addressing the inclusion of human rights and reproductive health within school curricula at the preparatory and secondary education levels. This initiative falls within the broader context of strengthening national efforts in alignment with relevant international best practices.

Through this workshop, the Council aims to contribute to the development of a more informed educational community regarding key issues that affect the future of upcoming generations. It also seeks to equip educators with the necessary tools and knowledge to effectively integrate these topics into educational content, while promoting student awareness of the values and principles of human rights, including reproductive rights and health.

The organization of this interactive workshop reinforces the commitments outlined in the National Human Rights Strategy, which underscores the importance of awareness-raising and capacity-building as foundational pillars of any human rights framework. Promoting and embedding a culture of human rights is essential to combating violations, particularly those rooted in harmful cultural norms and misconceptions.

The Council reiterates its commitment to implementing the recommendations of UN treaty bodies, which have emphasized in their reports the necessity of educating students and youth on human rights. This includes recommendations from the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) pertaining specifically to reproductive rights and health.

It is also worth noting that the Council had previously conducted a review of the national curricula from a human rights perspective, with the objective of enhancing educational content as a key instrument in instilling human rights values and spreading related culture. Proposals and recommendations were accordingly submitted to the Ministry of Education.

Workshop Objectives:

- Raising Awareness: Enhancing the awareness of teachers and curriculum experts regarding issues related to population, reproductive health, and human rights.
- Curriculum Development: Supporting the integration of these topics into school curricula in a comprehensive manner.
- Capacity Building: Strengthening the capacities of teachers and trainers to deliver these subjects in an effective and engaging way.
- Encouraging Dialogue: Fostering dialogue between students and teachers on the importance of these issues and how to address them in daily life.

Participants:

- 30 participants from the Ministry of Education representing the following departments:
- Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Department
- Central Department for Curriculum Development
- Sustainable Development Department
- Members of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunities departments across directorates and educational districts
- Consultant for Philosophy and National Education
- In addition to representatives from:
- The National Council for Human Rights
- The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)



Expected Outcomes:

- Practical plans and specific proposals for incorporating topics related to population, reproductive health, and human rights into school curricula.
- Establishment of a network of educators and specialists committed to promoting these issues within education systems.
- Enhanced awareness and understanding among participants of the importance of these topics and their impact on sustainable development.

SWOT Analysis of the Workshop on Integrating Human Rights and Reproductive Health into Curricula:

First: Strengths:

1. Institutional and Legislative Support:

- Collaboration among the National Council for Human Rights, the Ministry of Education, and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).
- Availability of a conceptual framework on population and reproductive health endorsed by the Ministry of Education.

2. Successful Pilot Models:

- Implementation of a reproductive health supplement for first-year preparatory students in Aswan Governorate.
- Training of teachers, social workers, and psychologists on reproductive health and human rights concepts.

3. National and International Commitment:

- Inclusion of human rights and reproductive health in school curricula in line with the National Human Rights Strategy and UN recommendations.

4. Educational Resources:

- Availability of training manuals for both trainers and trainees.
- Integration of concepts into subjects such as Social Studies and Science.

Second: Weaknesses:

1. Cultural Challenges:

- Resistance from some parents to teaching reproductive health concepts, especially in culturally conservative regions.

2. Geographical Disparities:

- Implementation limited to specific areas (e.g., Aswan), resulting in a lack of nationwide coverage.

3. Low Awareness:

- Limited understanding among educators and students due to traditional teaching methods.

4. Lack of Integrated Implementation:

- Absence of a unified vision for incorporating human rights concepts consistently across all curricula.

Third: Opportunities:

1. International Support:

Potential to leverage technical assistance from UNFPA and other international organizations.

2. Scaling Up Successful Models:

Expanding Aswan's pilot model to other governorates based on evaluation and refinement.

3. Community Awareness:

Launching awareness campaigns to educate communities on the importance of teaching human rights and reproductive health.

4. Technology and Innovation:

Utilizing modern technologies such as visual documentation and digital platforms to deliver content in engaging, interactive formats.

5. Institutional Partnerships:

Strengthening cooperation with the private sector and civil society organizations to support educational initiatives.

Fourth: Challenges:

1. Community Opposition:

Persistent cultural traditions rejecting the integration of reproductive health topics into education.

2. Economic Constraints:

Limited financial resources to expand training programs and curriculum development nationwide

3. Lack of Sustainability:

Risk of initiative discontinuation due to changing governmental priorities or insufficient funding.

4. Policy Implementation Gaps:

Lack of coordination among different departments within the Ministry of Education.

Workshop Recommendations

1. Curriculum Development:

- Integrating human rights and reproductive health as core subjects.
- Standardize curriculum content nationwide to ensure consistency.

2. Expanding Training Programs:

- Conducting Training of Trainers (ToT) programs for teachers and social workers.
- Offering educational sessions for parents to encourage acceptance of reproductive health education.

3. Promoting Institutional Collaboration:

- Establishing a permanent committee between the National Council for Human Rights and the Ministry of Education to monitor implementation.
- Activating partnerships with international agencies to support and fund educational projects.

4. Geographical Expansion:

- Scaling up the Aswan pilot to all Egyptian governorates.
- Developing tailored programs to address the specific needs of rural and culturally sensitive regions.

5. Leveraging Technology:

- Utilizing digital media such as educational videos, podcasts, and interactive applications to simplify content delivery.

6. Launching National Awareness Campaigns:

- Organizing media campaigns to highlight the importance of human rights and reproductive health education.
- Engaging students as "Human Rights Ambassadors" in their schools and communities.

7. Periodic Curriculum Evaluation: Conducting regular studies to assess the effectiveness of updated curricula and ensure continuous improvement.



Participants in the Consultative Workshop on the Human Rights and Reproductive Health Component in Educational Curricula

Entity	Name	Title/Role
National Council for Human Rights (NCHR)	Ambassador Moushira Khattab	President of NCHR
	Dr. Nevin Mosaad	Member of the Cultural Committee of the National Council for Human Rights
	Dr. Wafaa Benjamin	Secretary of the Social Rights Committee of the National Council for Human Rights
	Dr. Hany Ibrahim	Member of the Social Committee of the National Council for Human Rights
UNFPA- Egypt	Dr. Germaine Haddad	Representative of UNFPA Egypt
	Dr. Maha Mowafy	Reproductive Health Programme Officer UNFPA Egypt
Ministry of Education	Dr. Wafaa Abd El salam	Director of the Sustainable Development Department at the Ministry of Education
	Dr. Mohamed Hassan Othman	Head of the General Administration for Human Rights and Equal Opportunities
	70 participants from Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Departments across various governorates	Directors of Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Departments

Training and Capacity Building for Teachers and Ministry of Education Staff

“Human Rights and Reproductive Health”

November, 2024

As part of ongoing efforts to promote human rights concepts and enhance the capacities of Ministry of Education personnel, the National Council for Human Rights, in collaboration with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), organized a specialized capacity-building training on reproductive rights and health. The training emphasized the application of a human rights-based approach, targeting teachers and staff members from various educational directorates.

Objectives:

This training aimed to:

- Enhance knowledge on reproductive rights and health, and raise awareness of their vital role in the lives of individuals and communities.
- Provide conceptual frameworks on how to apply a human rights-based approach within the educational context.
- Equip participants with the information and tools necessary to promote rights-based and health-related awareness in schools.
- Enable education personnel to integrate these concepts into curricula and school activities in support of human rights principles.
- Build the capacities of trainees to offer guidance and support to students on matters related to reproductive rights and health.
- **Training Facilitators:**
The sessions were delivered by members of the National Council for Human Rights and certified trainers accredited by the Ministry of Education.
- **Training Content:**
Core international human rights conventions, Reproductive rights and health, Regional experiences in integrating reproductive rights and health into school curricula and the Ministry of Education’s training manual on reproductive rights.

First Training: Capacity Building for Teachers and Ministry of Education Staff

Date: 12–13 November, 2024

Target Participants: 30 teachers and Ministry of Education staff members from various educational directorates.

Location: Cairo Governorate



Second Training: Capacity Building for Teachers and Ministry of Education Staff

Date: 19–20 November, 2024

Target Participants: 30 teachers and Ministry of Education staff members from various educational directorates.

Location: Port Said Governorate



Third Training: Capacity Building for Teachers and Ministry of Education Staff

Date: 26–27 November, 2024

Target Participants: 30 teachers and Ministry of Education staff members from various educational directorates.

Location: Sohag Governorate



-Expected Training



Outcomes:

1. Enhancing the awareness of Ministry of Education staff regarding the concept of reproductive rights and the importance of applying a human rights-based approach in educational policies.
2. Improving the skills necessary to integrate issues of reproductive rights and health into school curricula and educational activities.
3. Strengthening the ability to provide appropriate guidance and support to students in making informed, independent, and responsible health-related decisions.
4. Improving the quality of education by developing curricula and learning environments that promote human rights and respect cultural and social diversity.

Certified completion certificates were awarded by the National Council for Human Rights and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) upon successful completion of the training.

