

# Executive summary

Egypt has embarked on an ambitious plan to implement the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) relating to children, as illustrated by Egypt's National Childhood and Motherhood Strategy, its National Human Rights Strategy, and its Sustainable Development Strategy: Egypt Vision 2030. For children and young people, access to appropriate legal support is crucial not only for successfully resolving their legal problems, but also for combating poverty and exclusion by securing their rights to social protection, education, and health care. The pragmatic and forward-thinking nature of Egypt's recent efforts, all of which underscore the specificity of children's needs and rights, provide a strong impetus for the modernisation of public policies and legal frameworks. Building on these high-level commitments, Egypt is in a position to significantly advance access to justice for children, improve the quality of life of Egyptian children and secure inclusive and sustainable development for future generations.

Egypt has ratified the key international treaties on child rights, and has established a specialised child justice system through the enactment of the Child Law, as amended in 2008, to enhance the child-friendliness of all child justice services. Specialised justice services in the form of Child Courts, public prosecution and care institutions handle high volumes of child cases using approaches tailored to children and supported by the presence of social workers. The National Council for Childhood and Motherhood's (NCCM) Child Helpline is an important way for children to reach out for help and support, including to receive legal aid – which is guaranteed for child offenders – as well as social and psychological support. Egypt is making noteworthy efforts to raise further awareness of the status of children as rights holders and to build a child rights culture that enables their full empowerment and participation in the legal process. It is also improving inclusiveness by increasing the number of women in the judiciary and adapting its facilities to the needs of children with disabilities.

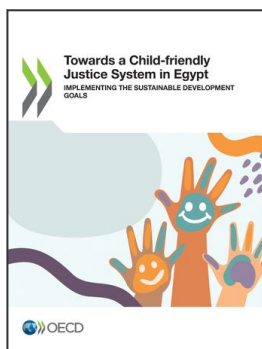
While current efforts are critical to strengthening the overall child-friendliness of the system in Egypt, several challenges remain around institutions, processes and the justice system's capacity, and psychosocial support. There is a need to enhance the clarity of the roles of each institution, to systematise protocols for managing and following up children's cases, and to empower the NCCM, Child Protection Committees (CPCs), and related institutions in their respective co-ordinator capacities. Limited data collection and use for strategic planning hinders the design of services that address the legal needs of children in Egypt. This makes it more difficult to improve the options and overall awareness of child participation in different legal processes, to expand child-friendly procedural arrangements during trials, and to strengthen the specialisation of professionals and facilities that children encounter when interacting with the justice system. Some additional challenges include the prolonged periods of children being held in pre-trial custody during investigations, and the insufficient availability of specialised legal representation for children. Furthermore, many services, such as specialised Child Courts and functioning CPCs, remain limited to the largest urban centres, including Cairo, Giza, and Alexandria.

To maximise the benefits of its efforts to make justice more child-friendly, Egypt may consider undertaking wider policy reforms and strengthening the judicial system's capacity to address these challenges. To this end, Egyptian stakeholders have created an inter-institutional committee to review specific provisions of the Child Law. To increase capacity in the system, Egypt could accelerate the establishment of Child

Courts and prosecution services, as well as child-friendly interview and waiting rooms, by expanding the current provision in large cities throughout the country. More child-friendly facilities would allow Egypt to develop the necessary infrastructure to better protect children at risk separately from child offenders, as well as to implement non-custodial measures for child offenders.

In relation to psychosocial support, the current system could benefit from increasing the number of psychological experts and providing additional training on specific topics for social workers and other experts. Stronger incentives could be introduced to attract and retain the best talent in the field of child justice, making it a more desirable specialty, as well as increasing mandatory training on child-friendly justice for judicial and prosecutorial staff. Egypt's efforts to enforce time limits for children held in custody through follow-up reports and on the inspection of care institutions are positive steps towards the related international standards, which could be consolidated through stronger co-ordination and information sharing among the entities involved.

Building on positive developments to date, Egypt's future strategies could be underpinned by a clear and evidence-based understanding of the existing legal needs of children and of the available services, and by ensuring sufficient capacity, infrastructure, and resources for children within the justice system.



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