



Empowering Egyptian Women



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“The national duty and historic responsibility makes it incumbent upon us to promote empowering women.” This was a historic speech by President El-Sisi in 2017 which represents a commitment to an unprecedented local, regional, and international transformation of the issue of empowering Egyptian women within the framework of the 2014 constitution, which guarantees citizenship, equality, equal opportunities, criminalization of violence and discrimination. The constitution has been translated into a national strategy for the empowerment of Egyptian women, called “Egypt Vision 2030.” The United Nations has announced that Egypt is the first country globally to launch its national strategy as part of the Sustainable Development Goals.

In parallel, the “Egyptian Women’s Observatory” has been established to ensure monitoring of the strategy’s implementation through accurate and continuous monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Numerous indicators and figures serve as proof of the progress achieved in empowering Egyptian women, as shown by the National Strategy for Women’s Empowerment 2030 in its midterm review by the Egyptian Women’s Observatory. The most notable achievement is seen in the field of political empowerment and leadership in recent years, as the representation of women in the Egyptian parliament has risen to 28%, surpassing the global average for women in parliament, which is 25.6% and advancing Egypt to the second rank in the Middle East and North Africa in this regard in 2021.

The representation of women in the upcoming local councils is due to reach 25% and the President has doubled the Senate appointments of women to 14%. The highest percentage of women in the Cabinet has reached 25%, while female deputies and ministers are at 27%, and female deputies of governors are at 31%. In addition, women make up 26% of the diplomatic corps in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and 44% of the National Council for Human Rights.

Moreover, the judiciary system has witnessed a long-anticipated historic step with the decree to appoint women in the State Council and the Public Prosecution for the first time in Egypt’s history. In recent years, the dreams of Egyptian women have been fulfilled, overcoming the barriers against women to assume leadership positions for the

first time. This includes appointing a female National Security Advisor to the President. It is the first time for a woman to occupy such a high position, as well as the appointment of two women as governors of the Beheira and Damietta governorates. Appointments of women in leading positions include the following: the President of the National Council for Human Rights, the first woman to lead a Civil Chamber of the High Court of Appeal, the first female as the head of the Economic Court, Assistant Minister of Justice for Women’s and Children’s Affairs

Similar achievements are realized on the economic empowerment of Egyptian women. Since economic empowerment of women is one of the state’s top priorities, this issue has witnessed many positive indicators. Women in Boardrooms index recorded a growth rate of 28.5% compared to 13% in 2020. Women make up 46% of the beneficiaries of projects implemented by the Small, Medium, and Micro Enterprises Development Authority. The financial inclusion efforts led to an increase in the number of women dealing with the financial sector from 5.9 million to 16 million women, with a growth rate of 171% over the past five years. The number of women with bank accounts reached 16 million, receiving more than 45 million financial services (whether banking, electronic wallets, prepaid or other services), and the number of women holding bank cards reached 15 million. Additionally, 5.7 million women own electronic wallets, as of March 2022, and the percentage of women with bank transaction accounts reached 45.7% in 2021. “Tahweesha” was launched as the first digital savings app in Egypt for groups of women, and it was connected to the banking systems to facilitate access to women in different villages. For the first time, the representatives of the National Women’s Council became bank agents in villages.

Furthermore, Egypt launched several international tools as incentives to bridge the gender gap and enhance the partnership between the public and private sectors to economically empower women in partnership with the World Economic Forum. Egypt is the first country in the Middle East and North Africa to launch the incentive. It is noteworthy that Egypt is also the second country in the world to introduce the Gender Seal Award for private and public institutions of the United Nations Development Program which aims at recognizing the outstanding performance of these organizations and achieving tangible results in gender equality. Other related initiatives include the Egyptian Gender Seal based on the gender equality model in partnership with the World Bank, and the “Empowering Women Principles” in collaboration with the United Nations Women’s Agency.

On the social level, the social empowerment plan for women witnessed positive indicators, as data indicate the disappearance of the gender gap in enrollment rates between the academic years 2010/ 2011 and 2019/ 2020. The financing features of the women’s agenda from the state’s general budget confirm Egypt’s interest in empowering and protecting Egyptian women. The allocations for women’s health programs increased, and allocations were also introduced for childcare services. There are 35.3 million women benefiting from bread support and 31.4 million women benefiting from the ration card, and 75% of the beneficiaries of the “Takaful and Karama” program are women. After childbirth, female workers in the private sector are paid 75% of the last salary by social insurance funds for three months.

It is crystal clear that the New Republic Plan has witnessed the launch of the largest developmental programs in Egypt, based on an analysis of women status and their needs. For example, the “Decent Life” initiative was launched in 2021, with EGP 800 billion allocated to target 58 million beneficiaries, 50% of them are women. The initiative aims to improve the standard of living for the needy and the needy. It was followed by the launch of the National Project for the Development of the Egyptian Family, with EGP 2.9 billion allocations for women and it is being implemented in “Decent Life” initiative villages. Additionally, the Presidential Health Initiatives “100 Million Health” and “Egyptian Women’s Health” were launched, reaching over 23 million women through breast cancer screening and non-communicable diseases, resulting in a 50% reduction in women entering stages three and four of breast cancer. Convinced that investing in girls is the greatest investment and contribution for the present and future of the country, Mrs. Intisar El-Sisi announced in March 2022 the adoption and sponsorship of the National Framework for Investing in Girls Initiative to raise awareness and provide training, empowerment, and protection. The initiative succeeded in reaching over 60 million views through electronic media and



In March 2022, Mrs. Intisar El-Sisi announced the adoption and sponsorship of the National Investment Framework for Girls; the initiative aims to raise awareness and provide training, empowerment, and protection for Egyptian women. The initiative succeeded in reaching over 60 million views through electronic media and 95,000 beneficiaries in the governorates. Last March, this national framework was launched under the United Nations auspices amidst great international acclaim

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Given that all efforts to empower women will not achieve their goals without providing protection from all forms of violence against them, the protection plan against violence witnessed many achievements and positive indicators. The National Strategy for Eliminating Violence against Women was adopted, approved by the Cabinet and with the participation of several ministries, and the Monitoring Report was launched in 2021. Several national strategies were adopted, including the National Strategy for Eliminating Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), combating early marriage, human trafficking, and illegal immigration. Egypt also launched the “Economic Cost Survey of Violence against Women,” being the first Arab country to conduct such a survey. Special units were established to eliminate violence against women in the National Council for Women, the Ministry of Justice, directorates of the Ministry of Interior, human rights and violence elimination directorates in the governorates’ security directorates, and a hotline linked to the Ministry of Interior’s violence against women management was activated. Moreover, an integrated unit for protecting women from violence and 8 safe shelter centers for women survivors of violence, 3 specialized clinics for violence within the Forensic Medicine Authority (Cairo, Alexandria, and Mansoura), and 31 units to combat harassment at government universities were established. In addition, women-friendly markets were introduced and safe cities for women were enforced, as well as 8 medical care centers in university hospitals and 27 digital branches for notaries of the public prosecution were opened. Furthermore, the first national coordination committee for eliminating female genital mutilation (FGM) was established, including all relevant government agencies, law enforcement authorities, Al-Azhar Al-Sharif, the three Egyptian

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churches, development partners, and civil society. The committee aims to unify visions and coordinate efforts to eliminate FGM. The percentage of FGM in the age group from 0 to 19 years old decreased from 21% in 2014 to 14% in 2022, and the expected percentage of females to undergo FGM decreased to 27% in 2021 compared to 56% in 2014.

In the domain of human rights, the National Coordination Committee for Combating and Preventing Illegal Immigration and Human Trafficking was formed and specialized criminal chambers were established in the Courts of Appeal across the country to hear human trafficking cases after the Law on Combating Illegal Immigration and Smuggling of Migrants was approved. Additionally, the first shelter for human trafficking victims was established and hotlines for reporting these crimes were activated. A presidential campaign to raise awareness about the dangers of illegal immigration and the rights of domestic workers was launched. Egypt has also launched the Basic Services Package for Women and Girls who face violence, being among the first 10 countries nominated to test the United Nations Population Fund and United Nations Women's Basic Services Package. The first national referral model for reporting cases of violence against women was also prepared.

Besides that, over the past eight years, laws and legislation have also been enacted for Egyptian women. The Inheritance Law was amended to include provisions for punishing those who withhold inheritance from those entitled to it and will have a significant impact on women. In addition, the Civil Service Law granted maternity leave for four months instead of three, and a law was passed to combat alimony evaders. Similarly, to achieve greater economic empowerment for women, ministerial decisions were issued, including decisions by the Minister of Manpower to cancel previous discriminatory decisions against women and to lift the ban on women's access to some professions, and businesses, explicitly stating women's right to work at night upon request. These rights are considered in the context of equal opportunities and gender equality in the workplace, ensuring the right to health and social care and providing all the necessary measures and services related to work, such as safe transportation, occupational safety, and the rights of working mothers. For instance, the General Authority for Financial Control issued decisions requiring women's representation in the boards of directors of companies' federations and public bodies working in the insurance and non-banking finance sectors, which stipulates that women representation should not be less than 25% or two women. Incentives were provided to companies whose beneficiaries of their services were 25% or more women. The Central Bank also issued decisions amending governance rules to form bank boards of directors and stipulating that there should be at least two women on bank boards of directors. Gender equality was strengthened in all banking services, including loan and credit services, and a mechanism was provided for complaints without discrimination in this regard. To achieve more social empowerment for women, many laws and decisions were issued, including the Social Insurance and Pension Law, amending the law to protect female prisoners and their children. Moreover, laws were introduced to safeguard the rights of the disabled with the foundation of the National Council for Persons with Disabilities, and the establishment of a fund to support persons with disabilities. For example, the Minister of Education's Circular letter was issued to ensure the mother's right to educational guardianship without a court ruling in cases of marital separation. Also, the Central Bank's Circular decision to regulate transactions related to guardianship of money facilitated financial procedures carried out by the guardian (in most cases women) under the guardianship decision. Moreover, the Attorney General has issued a decision to cancel the use of some records and replace them with electronic records to facilitate and simplify the procedures of the documentary cycle for family prosecutors throughout Egypt in order to quickly resolve disputes related to marital residence and custody, and to facilitate the fulfillment of all the rights of the custodial woman without burdens or trouble. It is remarkable that several laws have also been issued to achieve more efforts to protect women from violence, including amending the articles related to rape, indecent assault, and exposure, and the amendments came to broaden the scope of criminalization for violence against women, and to criminalize sexual harassment, and define its concept for the first time under the law. Moreover, kidnapping, public and private indecent acts, and discrimination have also been criminalized. In a related domain, a law has been issued to criminalize all forms and types of human trafficking,



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including smuggling of migrants, attempting to do so, or mediating in such activity, toughing its penalty if women are among the smuggled migrants. Furthermore, a law to combat cybercrime has been issued and it is the first Egyptian legislation to address crimes committed through the Internet and electronic telecommunication sites and covering crimes committed against women, such as harassment, online tracking, and violation of personal privacy.

Moreover, several laws have been enacted to protect personal data, ensure non-disclosure of victims' data in cases of harassment, violence, and indecent assault, and criminalize and define bullying for the first time. In addition, new laws were introduced to toughen and broaden the scope of criminalization in the crimes of genital mutilation and harassment.

In 2022, the Cabinet approved a bill to criminalize child marriage. Recently, the House of Representatives finally approved the government's bill to amend some provisions of Law No. 26 of 1975 regarding Egyptian nationality, by amending Articles 4 in its first and third items articles and Article 6 in a way that achieves equality between men and women in the procedures of granting and acquiring Egyptian nationality. Several important decisions have also been issued, including the decision of the Prime Minister to establish the Permanent High Committee for Human Rights, and the establishment of the "Integrated Unit for Protecting Women from Violence". The Grand Sheikh of Al-Azhar also issued a decision to prohibit the transfer of working women from their workplace to another place without their consent, except after presenting justifications for the transfer. In addition, the Financial Regulatory Authority has issued an ethical charter to prevent sexual harassment, violence, and harassment within the companies listed in the Egyptian Stock Exchange or working in non-banking financial activities. Likewise, the



Financing Women Agenda from the state budget highlights Egypt's interest in empowering and protecting Egyptian women. The allocations for women's health programs increased, and allocations were introduced for childcare services. There are 35.3 million women benefiting from bread subsidy, and 31.4 million women benefiting from the ration card. 75% of the beneficiaries of the "Dignity and Solidarity" program are women. for (after childbirth

Ministry of Transport has issued the national code of conduct for users, operators and workers in facilities and means of transportation to ensure the safety and security of male and female citizens in public transportation, especially combating all forms of harassment, violence and harassment in facilities and means of transportation.

Considering that awareness is an intimately related to strategic planning, positive indicators have also been achieved, including the success of the National Council for Women in achieving 104 million average reach through awareness campaigns on social media, in addition to the "Femininity is Strength" campaign, which reached 135 million views, and the "Because I'm a Man" campaign to integrate men and boys in women's empowerment issues, which achieved more than 17 million views on social media. The Council has also succeeded over seven years in achieving 48 million awareness communications through more than 5 million doors. The number of beneficiaries of its services during 2022 has reached more than 12 million in the governorates."

"For the first time in Egypt, awareness campaigns to combat electronic crimes have been launched in partnership with Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube platforms. There are also awareness campaigns about the rights of persons with disabilities in the recently adopted law, and other campaigns on the ground and on social media. Furthermore, the "Media Ethics Code" has been launched to introduce a media policy that works to achieve balance and highlight positive images of women and their achievements.

While many countries around the world suffered from the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, Egypt led this file with great professionalism. Egypt was the first country worldwide to issue a rapid response policy towards the situation of women under the COVID-19 virus, and the first globally to issue a monitoring mechanism for the measures taken by the state in response to women's needs. Since the National Council for Women is the entity responsible for proposing the general policies of the state regarding women's development under Law No. 30 of 2018, the council has prepared a policy paper on Egypt's rapid response to the situation of women during the COVID-19 outbreak. The paper included an analysis of the current situation and presented a number of proposed response measures, whether immediate or medium-term, to all executive ministries and relevant government institutions within the following areas: the impact on the human component (health, education, and social protection), women's effectiveness and decision-making, violence against women, leadership, women representation in decision-making during crisis management, the impact on economic opportunities, and enhancing

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data and knowledge.

The file of women, climate change, and the environment has witnessed many achievements. Egypt launched its international initiative on women, the environment, and climate change in March 2022 under the auspices of the UN Commission on the Status of Women. Egypt also hosted last year's climate conference, which launched the presidential initiative "African Women and Climate Adaptation."

In the field of intellectual property, Egypt has launched its national strategy for intellectual property in cooperation with the World Intellectual Property Organization. It also launched a protocol for cooperation, the first of its kind, to enable women entrepreneurs in local communities, which reflects positively on encouraging women and girls to innovate in scientific fields. Work is also underway to register a collective trademark for the craft of "Tolly" (handmade weaving) under the name of the Egyptian woman.

The Egyptian woman has an important role in combating corruption. I will never forget the words of the President of the Republic when he said, "Every time a woman is appointed to a position in the government, the governorate, or in any task, she proves that she is most responsible, the most efficient, and the most devoted, and the least corrupt. There is no corruption at all."

In this context, based on the vision of Egypt's anti-corruption strategy for 2019/2022, the National Council for Women has prepared a specialized training guide to support the role of Egyptian women in the field of preventing and combating corruption. It aims to provide general knowledge about preventing and combating corruption, and to prepare Egyptian women to play a distinctive role in implementing Egypt's anti-corruption strategy, enhancing the integrity and the transparency, clarifying the concept of corruption and its types, and its impact on development, and linking it to the gender equality perspective. The guide also highlights the link between corruption and the spread of violence against women, as some studies indicate that gender equality is an important tool to help prevent corruption.

Internationally, Egypt has achieved many accomplishments in relation to empowering women. In 2020, the Women's Development Organization became a member of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, and its activity is now put into effect. Egypt also heads the ministerial conference for women in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the Executive Council of the Women's Development Organization. Egypt also holds the position of Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, and Director of the International Organization's headquarters. Additionally, Egypt won a membership in the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

In conclusion, Egyptian women proudly present their achievements to the world, from overcoming stumbling blocks to reach decision-making positions, launching strategies, policies, and programs, and passing legislation. Indeed, the Egyptian woman has become a dreamer without barriers, trusting that she is supported by political will and leadership and believing that empowering women is an inherent right among their rights."