



**COVID-19
RESPONSE**

Egypt COVID-19
*Response and Recovery Interventions of
the United Nations in Egypt*



**People's Stories from the Outbreak of COVID-19 till
July 2020**

The activities and initiatives – mentioned in this report – are implemented in close cooperation with our development partners and donors including (arranged in alphabetic order):
Canada, European Union, Finland, Germany, Japan, Netherlands, Switzerland, UK and USA

Overall COVID-19 Situation in Egypt



91,072
Total Number of
Confirmed Cases



4,518
Total Number of
Deaths



31,970
Total Number of
Recovered Cases

Source: Egyptian Ministry of Health and Population (25 July 2020)

- Egypt reported the first cases of COVID-19 on 14 February 2020 with initial daily increase of the number of confirmed cases, the government has introduced measures on 17 March 2020 to contain the outbreak.
- All schools and universities, monuments, including restaurants, churches, mosques and their attachments were closed. All cultural events and touristic trips were cancelled. A nighttime curfew between 8pm and 6am local time had been introduced. All airports were closed and air travel, including international flights have been suspended.
- The government also reduced by half the number of public sector employees coming to work. Supermarkets, bakeries and pharmacies remained open.
- These measures have been updated regularly to mitigate risks during Ramadan, Easter and Eid breaks. In addition, wearing facial masks became mandatory in public institutions.
- As a result of the lockdown measures, most of the economic sectors got affected, especially the tourism and oil sectors. In addition, the unemployment rate increased from 7.7 per cent in the first quarter of 2020 to 9.2 per cent by the end of April 2020 (Source: Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS)).
- In response to the economic contraction, the Egyptian government announced loosening its COVID-19 public health and safety regulations, issuing a new set of measures for the upcoming period, effective Saturday 27 June 2020. These decisions are aiming at preventing the spread of COVID-19 while limiting the impact on the livelihoods of Egyptians.



*Egyptian Markets during the lockdown – April 2020
(Source: Al-Ahram Portal)*

Fast Facts

- 73.5 per cent of Egyptian families see declining income due to COVID-19
- 26.2 per cent reported to be unemployed
- Over 50% employed workers work fewer than normal
- 48.2 per cent of families, especially in the rural areas, expected an income decline in next three months
- 50 per cent of Egyptian families borrow from others to counter the effects of the coronavirus
- 17 per cent of the Egyptian families rely on charity
- 5.4 per cent get the irregular employment grant

Source: CAPMAS COVID-19 Study released June 2020



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- With the aim of having a unified national cooperation vision to face the health and socio-economic implications of the COVID-19 outbreak under the UN Partnership Development Framework (UNPDF) 2018-2022, the Minister of International Cooperation H.E. Dr. Rania Al-Mashat chaired a high-level meeting with the heads of the four Results Groups of the UNPDF Steering Committee. The meeting was attended by the Minister of Planning and Economic Development, H.E. Dr. Hala El-Said, the Minister of Environment, H.E. Dr. Yasmin Fouad, the Minister of Social Solidarity, H.E. Dr. Nevein Elkabbag, the President of the National Council for Women, Dr. Maya Morsi, and the UN Resident Coordinator in Egypt, Mr. Richard Dictus. It was also attended by Ms. Randa Abulhosn, UNDP Resident Representative, Mr. Menghestab Haile, the Representative of the United Nations World Food Program (WFP), Mr. Nasredin Hag Elamin, the Representative of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the UN Women Head of Office a.i., Ms. Gielan Elmeseiri.
- The UNPDF is the framework of cooperation between the Government of Egypt (GoE) and the UN in Egypt that supports the national vision and efforts to achieve Egypt's development agenda from 2018 to 2022. It is based on four strategic pillars, namely inclusive economic development, social justice, women's empowerment, and environmental sustainability and natural resources management.
- This high-level coordination meeting aimed to address the socioeconomic impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak, discuss how to reduce losses and mitigate the negative impact of COVID-19 which would contribute to ensuring that development efforts are not interrupted and are on the right track to achieve their aspired goals, especially the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It also identified the national priorities of the Government of Egypt to mitigate the implications of the pandemic, *which focus on the poorest, most vulnerable and most affected by the crisis*.
- This includes to the informal workers, women heads of household, the elderly people, those with no pensions, children without social care, people living with disabilities and those living in informal and remote rural areas.



High Level Online Coordination Meeting between (from left to right) Minister of International Cooperation, Minister of Planning, Minister of Environment, President of the National Council of Women, the Resident Coordinator of the United Nations in Egypt and the Minister of Social Solidarity (April 2020, Source: Ministry of International Cooperation)

- Related activities comprise immediate interventions to protect the most vulnerable families with cash transfers, especially families headed by casual workers who lost their jobs after the outbreak of COVID-19, female-headed households and other vulnerable communities.
- The meeting also allowed to advance policy discussions on the 'new normal' imposed by COVID-19 outbreak. These discussions shall address funding requirements and financing shortages, better understanding of COVID-19 impact on the different economic activities and industries and how to mitigate its risks on the most vulnerable groups.
- To effectively address COVID-19 impacts, it was highlighted that there is a need for a coordinated awareness campaigns about the pandemic and its consequences.
- Similarly, the high-level coordination ensured the participation of the UN agencies in thematic policy discussions with the Government of Egypt to ensure the effectiveness of the rapid response during the crisis. This included the participation of UN Women Egypt, UNFPA, UNICEF and other UN agencies in providing technical assistance and inputs to the National Council for Women (NCW) policy paper on Egypt's Rapid Response to Women's Situation During the COVID-19 Outbreak.



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The United Nations Response Plans (SERP, LNOB, CPRP)

- The United Nations in Egypt developed the [Country Preparedness and Response Plan \(CPRP\)](#) to respond to the health crisis and to cover the health-related aspects for an initial 3-months period, starting from 1 April to 30 June 2020 and is adjusted as required based on the changing situation.
- The CPRP is developed in support of the GoE's National COVID-19 Preparedness and Responsiveness Plan, developed in February 2020, and is consistent with the different UN agencies' COVID-19 response plans. The CPRP's main purpose is to map existing preparedness and response capacity and identify key gaps to thereafter engage with national authorities and key technical and operational partners to address the gaps in preparing and responding to the COVID-19 outbreak in Egypt.
- Since COVID-19 is much more than a health crisis with drastic consequences on all socio-economic aspects, the UN in Egypt has developed the [COVID-19 Socio-Economic Response Plan \(SERP\)](#). The purpose of this plan is to support the GoE in addressing and mitigating the socio-economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic in Egypt on the most vulnerable groups living in Egypt. A related vulnerability analysis has been developed in the Leaving No-one Behind (LNOB) policy paper.
- The SERP has three modes of intervention, targeted policy advice, institutional support, and direct support to vulnerable groups. These interventions include activities related to the direct enhancement of social protection measures to harness the established social protection channels as the livelihoods of most of these groups are affected. It also includes activities that ensure the continuation of the delivery of quality basic services, including education and essential healthcare services. At the same time, it includes targeted support to specific sectors to ensure that those whose jobs are at risk and businesses facing closure can sustain the shocks.

Prosperity

Mitigate the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on industries, MSMEs and entrepreneurs.

People

Ensure the continuity of inclusive access to public services.

Planet

Alleviate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on agriculture and food security and safety.

Women

Support women and girls' access to economic opportunities and protection services

Strategic Objectives outlined in the SERP

- The [Leaving No-one Behind \(LNOB\) analysis](#) outlines the potential overall socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 with a special focus on selected groups in the society who will suffer additional vulnerability and inequality as a result of the pandemic. It concludes with policy recommendations on boosting economic recovery and reducing vulnerabilities.

The UN Resident Coordinator, Richard Dictus stressed "At this difficult time for many people in Egypt, the United Nations must immediately reach out to the most vulnerable people of society and help them as much as we can, to get through the next period. The needs are critical, and they are urgent, and this should be reflected in the support we offer".



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Health Preparedness and Response

The UN in Egypt prioritized the health response to COVID-19 through delivering a wide set of activities under the framework of the CPRP in close coordination with the World Health Organization (WHO). These activities covered country-level coordination, planning, and monitoring with the engagement of the Ministry of Health and Population (MoHP) to provide coordinated management of COVID-19 preparedness and response. In addition, numerous advocacy campaigns have been launched to increase people's awareness about the pandemic and provided related advice.

Provision of Medical Supplies to MoHP to Support Healthcare Workers

The United Nations in Egypt procured and delivered essential medical supplies to the MoHP to support the healthcare frontline workers.

On a parallel front, the American Chamber of Commerce Foundation in Egypt recently launched an initiative entitled "Private Sector and Businessmen Alliance Against COVID-19" that contributed through UNICEF to the government's stepped-up efforts by providing 25 ventilators, as well as 96,000 units of personal protective equipment (PPEs).

An additional support from different partners included availing logistic support for the delivery of supplies across Egypt, 201,600 bars of soap, 2,000 bottles of hand sanitizers and 55,340 liters of bleach for public hospitals, and childcare homes.

Fast Facts

More than 800,000 COVID-19 units of essential medical supplies were delivered including 500,000 pairs of gloves, 200,000 surgical masks, 2,000 N95 respirator masks, 96,000 surgical gowns and 3,000 coveralls, among other protective items.

Source: UNICEF Egypt



Provision of PPEs, Giza Governorate (Source: IOM)

Supporting Healthcare Workers

Doctors, nurses and healthcare workers are the frontline of COVID-19 response. WHO in cooperation with different UN agencies are working to ensure that those workers' well-being, safety, and protection are the priority of the response interventions. They were the most exposed group to get affected, since they were fighting at the frontlines against the pandemic. The support varied from the delivery of essential tools and PPEs to the provision of mental and wellbeing support.

- Dr. Ahmed Ismail is sharing lessons and warnings to all doctors and health workers during their work with the patients of COVID-19.
- Dr. Ismail visited a female patient, who is asthmatic and had bronchitis. A few days later, the patient experienced those tell-tale symptoms of COVID-19.
- "Unfortunately, I didn't protect myself," says Dr Ismail, who hadn't worn gloves or a mask while visiting the woman. "I didn't see it coming," he says ruefully.
- Dr. Ismail went to the isolation hospital designated for COVID-19 patients in Cairo, staying for several days with severe quarantine experience for weeks.
- Now fully recovered, he wants to share the lessons he's learned with healthcare workers facing the disease. Based on his own stressful quarantine experience, he counsels: "Whenever you are a patient, forget you are a doctor, behave like a patient."

Dr. Ahmed Ismail, one of the Egyptian doctors who got infected during his work



Mona Zaki, Actress,
UNICEF Goodwill
Ambassador

"To doctors, nurses, technicians and all workers in hospitals: to each and every one of you; thank you!"



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The UN in Egypt are currently conducting risk communication campaigns in close cooperation with the Government of Egypt to the public using all the available national media and communication tools (TV, Radio, Social Media, outdoor billboards, and branded buses). Furthermore, brochures and leaflets are being developed and distributed to various target groups across the country.

COVID-19 Information Campaigns

WHO, UNFPA and UN sister agencies released a set of information campaigns on the corona virus. These campaigns include everything about the virus, how to deal with it, answer all the questions related to the symptoms, medications, testing, isolation, nutrition, etc. These campaigns have been widely spread in media as one of the main references of the disease and reached over 15 million viewers (Source: UNFPA)

WHO issued the updated guidance following a review of available evidence and extensive consultation with international experts and civil society groups. It contains new information on the composition of fabric masks and other face coverings, based on research commissioned by the UN agency.

Sick? Stay Home Campaigns

WHO continues to recommend that anyone with COVID-19 symptoms should stay home and seek medical help.

People caring for them should wear a medical mask when they are both in the same room. "If it is absolutely necessary for a sick person or a contact to leave the house, they should wear a medical mask," said Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus (WHO Chief). Meanwhile, confirmed COVID-19 patients should still be isolated and cared for in a health setting, while all their contacts should be quarantined.

Food and Safety Campaigns

In the framework of UNIDO project entitled "Arab Food Safety Initiative for Trade Facilitation (SAFE)", UNIDO has produced a series of videos, in Arabic and English, to raise awareness and provide guidance about COVID-19 and Food Safety. The videos are destined to food safety and quality management teams in food production establishments, as well as owners and shop keepers of food retail establishments.

The videos include guidelines on adapting food safety management systems to the conditions of prevention and management of COVID-19 and in particular enhanced hygienic practices, food safety measures and physical distancing. The videos leveraged the information produced by various food safety authorities and risk assessment agencies, including the guidance developed by FAO and WHO.



COVID-19 Information Campaigns



Preventive Measures in Food Production Campaigns



Blood Donation Campaigns



Wearing Facial Masks Campaigns



Many COVID-19 patients suffered from the rejection by their communities which hindered the provision of medical care and prevent the disclosure of potential COVID-19 infections, both factors that could increase infection rates. Doctors and nurses also suffered from stigma.

In cooperation with the MoHP, multiple UN agencies released a series of campaigns to fight stigma in the community and raised awareness on the necessity of showing care and support to both, the patients and healthcare workers in the field.

In addition, UNFPA in close cooperation with the Government of Egypt released a song performed by the Pop-star Agham titled *هنعيش مع بعض* "We will live together" demonstrating various forms of showing support and how to stay connected during the pandemic. The lyrics echoes messages of unity and a call to protect ourselves, our families and our communities. The video reached over 3 million viewers within one week.

UNFPA also teamed up with several celebrities, including actors, singers and social media influencers, to amplify messages around the stigma associated with COVID-19. Over 15 celebrities participated in raising awareness about the root of the stigma and highlighting that it may prevent patients from seeking treatment.

Another campaign featured a day in the life of a pregnant woman, showing her doing regular chores, but while ensuring she sanitizes, or takes necessary precautions to protect herself. The video also provides information about pregnancy, childbirth and COVID-19.

Another campaign featured psychiatrist Dr. Nabil El Qot, explaining different ways to cope with the stress brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, reaching 5.2 million viewers.

UNFPA also launched an awareness campaign featuring 12 doctors from different specializations to protect against the COVID-19 outbreak.

The campaign is organized by the National Council for Women in cooperation with the MoHP, UNFPA, WHO, and with the support of the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation. The campaign is sponsored by Extra News and Egypt Today.

The campaign includes 12 videos featuring 12 different doctors, offering different tips to protect, prevent and respond to the COVID-19 outbreak. The videos include medical advice targeting pregnant women, cancer and heart patients, and even includes nutrition tips and tips on how to prevent burns due to the use of antiseptics and alcoholic substances during sterilization.



Pop-star Agham performing the song "we will live together"



Anti-bullying for the healthcare workers Campaign

COVID-19 is a serious disease and all people living with HIV should take all recommended preventive measures to minimize exposure to and prevent infection by the virus. UNAIDS in close cooperation with the MoHP and the National AIDS Program (NAP) took several preventive measures to support people with HIV during the pandemic.

The HIV health and medication services continued to support the provision of Gynecological & Antenatal Care services through outpatient clinics outside of the Fever hospitals.

- Dr Fatma Mukhtar, 55 years old, a female Gynecologist who has been providing gynecological services to women living with HIV as part of UNAIDS's programme on "enhancing the sexual and reproductive health of women living with and affected by HIV". This programme works on enhancing and facilitating the access of HIV patients and their families to the basic sexual and reproductive health services, focusing on family planning, antenatal care and safe delivery and provision of mental health support to them. This programme continued its activities during the outbreak of COVID-19 to ensure that the medical services are provided to HIV patients.
- In May 2020, Dr. Fatma received a new case of a homeless woman referred to her by the Abbaseya Mental Health Hospital. The woman tested positive for HIV and was also pregnant. She prescribed her with antiretroviral treatment to take during her pregnancy and coordinated her delivery at a public hospital in Eastern Cairo to be performed via cesarean section.
- Despite that hospitals were fully dedicated to receive COVID-19 patients, Dr. Fatma managed to coordinate the safe delivery of the baby.
- Today, the mother is out of the Mental Health Hospital and her child is healthy

"It was a difficult mission to coordinate the delivery due to the coronavirus, but fortunately we managed to deliver the baby safely, and after receiving an infant prophylaxis dose, he is now HIV negative." Dr. Fatma said.

In Egypt, UNAIDS has supported the provision and distribution of Hygienic Materials to People Living with HIV and affected populations (10,000 units for 3 months).

- Fadya, 34 years old, who wanted to get pregnant and have a child, is HIV positive for 3 years. She didn't know how to prevent her child from getting infected by HIV.
- Fadya said "I have been HIV positive for 3 years and have been taking my antiretroviral treatment from the fever hospital in Qalyubia every month since then. I wanted to get pregnant with my husband, so I was looking for a gynecologist to support me through the process to get a healthy child."
- NAP launched a hotline in cooperation with UNAIDS, has referred her to a gynecologist who conducted a medical examination and provided her with guidance on safe pregnancy for women living with HIV.
- In addition, the information sessions provided on safe pregnancy for women living with HIV leading to a safe labor and birth has provided her with the knowledge and information she was looking for. These sessions are delivered within UNAIDS's programme about "enhancing the sexual and reproductive health of women living with and affected by HIV".
- During her pregnancy, COVID-19 started to spread. She was so afraid that this might affect her delivery.

Fadya said, "when the coronavirus appeared, I got scared that I would not be able to give birth safely but thanks to the support of UNAIDS and the National AIDS program, I gave birth safely ago to my first child, and all this was free of charge".



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Delivery of Health Supplies and Cash-transfers During the Pandemic for the Dignity of the Most Affected Groups

- To mitigate the negative socio-economic impacts of this global health crisis on the most vulnerable communities and individuals, several immediate interventions were taken by various UN agencies in Egypt such as the delivery of health supplies and cash transfers were taken.
- The pandemic has hindered the access of women and girls to many services, including the hygienic products. In addition, women in the health sector are more likely to be exposed to the virus. Furthermore, overwhelmed health services limited access to family planning services and to contraceptives, potentially leading to a rise in fertility rates and the socio-economic impact on individuals, households and communities.
- As part of the UN response to COVID-19 pandemic, UNFPA Egypt country office mobilized several partnerships from the private sector to develop and distribute over 45,000 Hygiene/Dignity Kits to support frontline health workers. Another batch is set to be delivered to women and girls in Egypt to help them maintain their dignity and better cope with the stress brought on by the pandemic.
- In coordination with the MoHP, UNFPA distributed the kits to key vulnerable and most affected population groups. These include male and female frontline health workers, and will include women and girls, particularly those quarantined for prevention, screening and treatment, girls and young women in locked down areas, confined facilities, including children care institutions, orphanages and prisons. The first batch of kits were delivered to Abasseya, Imbaba, Helwan, Mansoura, Zagazig and Banha fever hospitals. The distribution also targets vulnerable girls and women in highly populated areas with disrupted water and sanitation facilities and refugees, asylum seekers and undocumented vulnerable migrants that have challenges accessing basic preventive supplies.
- On another front, the World Food Programme (WFP) provided unconditional cash assistance to community school families to protect their livelihoods from the COVID-19 economic shock and limit their dependence on negative coping mechanisms. Many of these families depended on casual labour for their daily sustenance and were severely affected by the economic crisis created by the pandemic, risking their ability to meet their families' basic needs.
- Similarly, aiming to protect frontlines as they provide necessary care to many, UNODC supported the Egyptian Forensic Medical Authority with Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs) and necessary sanitary material to prevent the spread of COVID-19 during examinations and operations in Egypt.



Ammar Adel, 22-year-old volunteer from Y-PEER, UNFPA's youth leadership network.

"Every morning we meet with the intention of packing as many kits as we can, to be delivered to the health workers who are working hard to protect us,"



Y-PEER volunteers managed to pack 11,000 kits in 10 days. (Source: UNFPA website)

- Farha Khalaf is the middle child in a family of 9 (7 brothers and sisters in addition to her father and mother). Her father used to be a janitor in the city. He could not work anymore due to kidney failure, and their only source of income was some agricultural work he used to do in nearby farms in their hometown of Minia.
- WFP started COVID-19 Emergency Response Programme to Community school students and teachers in April 2020 which provides monthly unconditional cash transfers of EGP 180 per child to the parents and the teachers.
- Farha's family has received 3 transfers to-date and were able to provide the needed medication and basic nutritional needs.

Farha's family, one of the Egyptian families who receive WFP's monthly cash after COVID-19 pandemic



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Women's Empowerment in the UN Response Plans

COVID-19 pandemic is having devastating social and economic consequences on women and girls. Quarantine and isolation policies increased the vulnerability to gender-based violence (GBV), increased the unemployment rates of women, overloaded women with the burden of unpaid care in addition to limited access to health insurance and low access to health information during the pandemic. These findings are outlined in two knowledge products released by UN Women in Egypt in cooperation with the National Council of Women (NCW) and Baseera entitled "Women's Needs and Gender Equality in Egypt's COVID-19" and "Response and Women and COVID-19" to highlight major challenges and opportunities for women during the pandemic



Secretary-General António Guterres
"Put women and girls at the centre of efforts to recover from COVID-19"

- Abir Leheta was one of the prominent women recognized by UN Women for her role in a male-dominated industry and her great success in chairing a leading company. She received guidance to businesses on how to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in the workplace, marketplace and community.
- In light of the COVID-19 crisis, she exerted efforts to ensure business continuity while protecting the health and safety of the employees and her stakeholders. The focus has been on the most vulnerable groups, such as people above a certain age, people with chronic health conditions, pregnant women... They have done a lot to raise awareness and to provide all the safety equipment, and sanitation to protect our people. Her priority was to keep all our employees and not to cut wages during this COVID-19 situation.

Abir Leheta is a wife and mother of two girls, aged 14 and 19. At the age of 42, Leheta was appointed as the Chair and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Egytrans, it is now considered one of the leading companies in Egypt in the male-dominated industry of transport and logistics.



- The coronavirus crisis had a huge, negative impact on Randa's life and the lives of those close to her. First, the Robot Academy centre suspended its activities since 14 March 2020, because it's a place where many children are gathered at the same time. She had to close the centre as she couldn't pay the rent. However, she shifted her activities to facilitating online activities for the children. She started by teaching them [the children] the basics of programming. Her goal is to introduce them to the languages of the future [programming languages].
- With the outbreak of the coronavirus and since her sister is a dentist, she was worried about her health, especially since there is a shortage in personal protective equipment, so she thought about using my 3-D printer to print facemasks and face shields for her sister. she found online designs, printed them, and gave them to her sister to use as a temporary solution.
- Her plans focus more of her efforts on the face shields because they provide an extra layer of protection

Randa Atef, 26, is one of the millions of women in Egypt who are innovatively adapting and responding to the coronavirus crisis. Randa Atef is a 26-year-old electrical engineer from El-Mahalla El-Kubra, Gharbia Governorate. Atef is cofounder of the Robot Academy, a skills-development centre that organizes robotics and electronics educational activities for the children of El-Mahalla.



- Karima Badawy, a 44 years- old married women with 4 children who lives in Qena governorate. She has been working at Ready Made Garment (RMG) factory in Qena that suspended its operations after COVID-19 leading to the job loss of the women employed by the factory.
- Ready Made Garment (RMG) factory, originally established from the generous contribution of the Big Heart Foundation (BHF), was converted for mask production with UNDP support and is the only facility in Qena producing masks. It provides less than 12,000 masks per day. This amount doesn't cover the needed number of masks for the population of Qena.
- To help fill the market gap and boost the factory's production capacity, UNDP Egypt launched the "Kemama" campaign, gathering funds to support ENID in employing more local women to produce more masks in the Southern region. Kemama campaign has raised nearly \$20,000 so far & a new production line, funded by the Government of Japan, is set to be added to meet the high demand for masks, while creating more jobs
- Shifting the factory's production from RMG's to masks has also sustained the livelihoods of the women employed by the factory who would've otherwise lost their jobs during the COVID19 crises.

- The role of young people becomes more important than ever in efforts to stop the spread of the virus and help mitigate its different consequences. For Egypt, a country where youth constitute about 60 percent of population, finding ways to engage young people and empower them can be decisive in the battle against the pandemic.
- Taking this into account, Mohamed Elkholy, 25, is working to find and scale up new ideas from the young people to counter misinformation and spread the right messages on the virus using new technological tools.
- Mohamed, a leading member of Y-Peer Egypt, is hosting [PEERCAST](#), a podcast program from youth to youth, that he hopes would open a new window for for raising awareness among young people on population issues using new technologies.



Mohamed Elkholy is using new technological tools engage young people in the fight against COVID-19.

“During this time everyone needs to be wearing a mask & be protected from COVID-19. This incentivizes us to work harder to produce more masks every day”. Karima Badawy, Qena Governorate



- Medical masks are very expensive – ranging from 3-5 EGP each. Each family has on average 5 members, and each would need several masks per day. Hence, each family will be paying an unaffordable amount of money only for medical masks not to mention the other precautionary measures required of them besides their daily expenses of food, etc.
- The Sewing Workshop thought of producing re-usable, viable and affordable masks to help families in their community in their efforts to protect themselves from COVID-19.
- Life Vision built on an existing pattern for fabricating re-usable mask shared by the project to engage the sewing workshop in proving a cost effective solutions. The result is that the 7 ladies of the Sewing Workshop in addition to 5 ladies working from home embarked on the production of 1000 masks that were distributed to project beneficiaries and to community members for their safety measures.
- The 12 ladies are extremely happy with this initiative because not only are they helping their community members to stay safe in an affordable way, but also because they are also benefiting from the daily income they are enjoying during the critical COVID-19 crises especially that most of these women's husbands have lost their income as a result of the crises.

Marianne Salah – 36, female, Team Leader of the Sewing Workshop “lifeVision”, from Abu-Qorqas El-Minya Governorate



Special Interventions during the Pandemic for People in Prisons and Prison Staff, People who Use Drugs, and Youth and Children in Juvenile Centers

Caring for people who use drugs during COVID-19

People who use drugs can be particularly vulnerable to COVID-19 due to underlying health issues, stigma, social marginalization, and higher economic and social vulnerabilities, including a lack of access to housing and health care. It was important to ensure the continuity of adequate access to health and social services for people who use drugs and with drug use disorders and to provide the continuum of care required as described in the International Standards for the Treatment of Drug Use Disorders (UNODC/WHO, 2020). The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) organized two online training sessions on the “epidemiological considerations and the roles and responsibilities of institutions involved in reducing drug demand during COVID-19” and the “roles of psychiatrists involved in drug demand reduction during the pandemic” in collaboration with the Fund for Drug Control and Treatment of Addiction (FDCTA) at the Ministry of Social Solidarity (MoSS).

Supporting COVID-19 preparedness and responses in prisons in Egypt

Close to 11 million prisoners worldwide — as well as the officers who are charged with ensuring their safe, secure, and humane custody — must not be forgotten during COVID-19 pandemic. Countries should recognize the risks which COVID-19 poses to closed settings. Understanding that prison health is public health, UNODC’s Regional Office for the Middle East and North Africa (ROMENA) in coordination with the Egyptian Ministry of Interior (MoI) organized a three-day online training on the International standards for the prevention of infection in the prison environments, including HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis C, viral Tuberculosis and COVID-19. The training aimed at complementing national efforts undertaken to address COVID-19 within closed settings as well as enhancing the capacities of several police officers, doctors, and officials working at the correctional and penitentiary institutions within the Egyptian Ministry of Interior (MoI) regarding the international standards to COVID-19 prevention.

Hand in hand with children and youth in juvenile centers during COVID-19

UNODC works to ensure that children are better served and protected by justice systems and that international standards and norms are applied to safeguard the rights of children in the administration of justice. UNODC delivered an online training to officials from correctional institutions and juvenile centers in Egypt aimed at strengthening their response to COVID-19 and protecting the children and youth in these centers from the spread of the virus following international health and human rights standards. Juvenile centers and correctional institutions could face several unique challenges in preventing COVID-19, such challenges include the concern of newcomers carrying the virus to the institution or facility, the difficulty of maintaining safe physical distancing when many individuals are living and working within the same closed settings, the dependency of the children and youth on family visits for emotional and mental support which would be restricted due to limiting any external visits and the lack of group-based activities and interactions.



Sterilization and disinfection efforts in all police buildings and facilities in Egypt (Source: Ministry of Interior)



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Dedicated Actions to Respond to the Increase of Gender-Based Violence during COVID-19 Outbreak

Gender-based violence (GBV) increased during the outbreak of COVID-19. Many women and girls have been subjected to sexual and/or physical abuse and violence during the crisis. The economic and social stress coupled with restricted movement and social isolation measures, have led to a substantial increase in GBV. The UN in Egypt took immediate actions to respond to the increase in GBV with the aim of ending and preventing this form of violence and most importantly providing support to those who have been subjected to any form of GBV.

Support National Entities to Respond to GBV

Since March 2020, UN Women Egypt cooperated with the National Council of Women (NCW) in strengthening the technical capacities of the Women's Complaints office (WCO) affiliated to NCW, including the establishment of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for recording and following up on complaints as well as extending its working hours to cover all weekdays from 9 am to 9 pm, compared to the previous practice (from 9 am to 3 pm only).

In addition, the GBV shelters developed by the Ministry of Social Solidarity (MoSS) received support from UN Women. This support included the endorsement of new protocols that ensure it takes into account the pandemic response. Currently, newly admitted women and their children are asked to isolate themselves for 14 days in one of the shelters rooms to see if they develop symptoms of COVID-19. UN Women has also provided computer tablets to MoSS to support its operations teams on the ground to enhance communication and coordination to better track and respond to the ongoing outbreak of the coronavirus. These measures have been key to ensuring essential services to survivors of GBV is uninterrupted and is carried out in a responsible manner as per WHO guidelines to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Provide Support to the Survivors of GBV

Due to the restrictions of movement caused by the pandemic and the increase in domestic violence, and in response to the need for quality affordable essential psychological support services to women survivors of violence, UN Women Egypt is engaging in a partnership with Shezlong, in coordination with the Women's Complaints Office of the NCW to provide quality specialized psychological and psychiatric online sessions for the survivors of GBV.

The online therapy sessions will also be granted to service-providers, to prevent burnout and ensure quality and timely responses to women and girls.

Similarly, UNFPA's Safe Spaces also continue to offer the essential package of services, addressing GBV, for the most vulnerable boys, girls, men and women especially those who were exposed to any forms of violence.

In addition, UN Women Egypt has established a partnership with "the House of Counseling for Awareness and Development". The partnership aims to provide free of charge group support to low income families (women and men) impacted by the pandemic social, economic and mental drawbacks. Before COVID-19 and to date, the institution is taking an active part in the network of psychological and psychosocial experts, that UN Women and the NCW established in 2019, where its counselors are actively receiving and supporting women survivors of violence, referred by national partners and key stakeholders in the response sector.

Online and Offline Campaigns to End GBV

The UN in Egypt launched series of campaigns to address COVID-19's impact on GBV and cyber harassment with the aim of encouraging the victims to speak and seek support including 10 social media short PSAs launched by UNFPA to address cyber safety of women & girls and provide psychological support to women and girls at risk or facing GBV.

Funds were also redirected to support one-time cash transfers for 5,000 social and outreach workers to cope with economic impact of the COVID-19 crisis. The social workers participate in community GBV and harmful practices campaigns which are currently on hold, such as door-knocking campaigns.



Online Campaigns of GBV during COVID-19 (Source: UNFPA website)



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Support to Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Egypt during the Pandemic

In Egypt, refugees and asylum-seekers are among the most vulnerable of the urban poor as they have limited livelihood opportunities. Currently, around 16 per cent of the refugee population in Egypt receives monthly multi-purpose cash grants through the Egypt Post Office to meet their basic living expenses. Therefore, UNHCR has ramped up its response across different sectors to soften the blow against vulnerable refugees and asylum-seekers and support national efforts to contain the repercussions of the pandemic. They used cash-based interventions to provide protection, assistance and services to the most vulnerable. Cash and vouchers help the displaced meet a variety of needs, including access to food, water, healthcare, shelter, that allow them to build and support livelihoods, and to facilitate voluntary repatriation.

Similarly, Syrian nationals at the UNFPA-supported Safe Spaces participated in an initiative to support their communities with the prevention of COVID-19 through sewing reusable facemasks, to be included in a dignity kit targeting women and girls from the Syrian and African communities.

In Egypt, UNHCR is pleading for 10.2 million USD to help deliver its supplemental life-saving services under the COVID-19. To date, only 6.7% has been covered, signaling a severe funding gap and a looming crisis. (Source: UNHCR, Egypt)

The Safe Spaces, operated by Etijah Youth and Development Consultancy Institute and the Ministry of Youth and Sports, as well as CARE International Egypt, are designed for women and girls to access gender-based violence response services – including psychosocial, legal, and referral to health services – as well as reproductive health services. It is a place where they can also socialize and re-build their social networks, integrate with their Egyptian peers, receive social support, and acquire different skills. The initiative aims to distribute 3500 kits at the Safe Spaces operated by CARE and 4500 for the Safe Spaces operated by Etijah and the Ministry of Youth and Sports.

- Zeinab a Syrian refugee responsible for her three children and two grandchildren.

- She started searching for any job that could help her with her family's living expenses, but the war in Syria didn't leave any opportunities for a woman like Zeinab. Left with no other choice, Zeinab packed her clothes and prepared her children and grandchildren to leave to Egypt in 2016. Zeinab's family are suffering to make ends meet, especially after the Coronavirus pandemic, their situation has worsened. The owner of the residence determined to evict them out after having struggled to pay the rent for several months.

- UNHCR started helping Zeinab with monthly cash assistance to cover her family's basic living expenses. She was able to pay the unpaid rent and secure a roof over her the heads of her children and grandchildren

- Moreover, the cash assistance is helping Zeinab to buy food for the family and get treatment for her boy who is suffering from depression. The money they get from UNHCR is their main source of income and they don't have relatives in Egypt or anyone to depend on.

- Kefah is a Syrian refugee living in Damietta with his family. He spend all his savings on his heart-operations in 2017.

- As a result of COVID-19, two of Kefah's daughters were laid off. The family use their monthly financial assistance of EGP 1600 to cover the rent and seek other channels of humanitarian assistance to meet the rest of their basic needs.

- UNHCR's monthly cash assistance helps the family of six pay their rent, especially during these extraordinary circumstances. The family also receives food assistance from WFP, which is currently disbursed in the form of cash instead of vouchers as an exceptional measure to protect refugees and asylum-seekers from overcrowding at hypermarkets. Kefah and his wife use just half of it to buy food items for their family while the rest is used to fill some of the gaps in other expenses.

Kefah Mahdy, a male Syrian refugee who lives in Damietta with his four daughters



Zeinab Fawaz, a female Syrian refugee, living in Alexandria with her three kids



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