



**First Report: 14 March-6 April 2020**

## **WOMEN POLICY TRACKER ON RESPONSIVE POLICIES & PROGRAMS DURING THE NEW COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

### **Introduction**

The COVID-19 outbreak has an impact on both men and women. However it impacts women in different ways. In Egypt, women make up around **42.4% of human doctors** and **91.1% nursing staff** of who are actually working for the Ministry of Health, in addition to **73.1% of nursing staff in hospitals and therapeutic facilities in the private sector are women**<sup>1</sup>. **Women in the health sector are more likely to be exposed to the virus and dealing with enormous stress balancing paid and unpaid work roles.** Furthermore, overwhelmed health services may **limit access to family planning services and to contraceptives**, potentially leading to a rise in fertility rates and the socio-economic impact on individuals, households and communities. COVID-19 is expected to **interrupted access of women to reproductive healthcare services and commodities**. Given that pregnant women are more likely to have contact with health services (antenatal care and delivery), they can be greatly exposed to infections in health facilities which may discourage attendance.

COVID-19 poses a **serious threat to women's engagement in economic activities**, especially in informal sectors, and gender gaps can be increased in livelihoods. In Egypt, 18.1% of women are heads of households<sup>2</sup>. 40.9% of females' total non-agricultural employment is in informal employment and 33.9% of females' employment is vulnerable employment. Meanwhile 6.7% of female employment in industry; 36.4% of females' employment is in agriculture; while 56.8% of female employment in services;<sup>3</sup> Egyptian women also represent 70% of the paid care sector workforce (mainly as teachers, health and social workers). Moreover, the paid care sector in Egypt represents around 28–31 % of overall female employment. **Women are almost four times more likely than men to work in the paid care sector.** <sup>4</sup>

Recognizing that, the Egyptian government started to take stringent procedures and measures to contain and prevent the spread of COVID-19 according to the pace of its spread, while considering all segments needs and women in specific during the execution of those measures. The government was particularly keen to integrate & mainstream all the needs of Egyptian women into the entire decision making process needed and the implementation of programs in order to ensure women's empowerment & protection against the socio-economic and psychological repercussions of the new COVID-19 pandemic.

During the meeting held on 22 March 2020 in celebration of the Egyptian Women's Day, the speech of the President of the Republic conveyed a number of messages that in general represent a mechanism to face the risks of spread of COVID-19. The President also issued a set of economic and social protection

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<sup>1</sup> CAMPAS 2018

<sup>2</sup> CAPMAS 2020

<sup>3</sup> LMS

<sup>4</sup> LMS



decrees to support and protect all society, and recognized the role and status of the Egyptian woman and the importance of continuing her supportive role during this current phase.

Since the National Council for Women is the national machinery concerned with proposing the government public policy on women's development pursuant to Law No. 30 of 2018, NCW has prepared a policy paper regarding Egypt's rapid response to women's situation during COVID-19 outbreak, which includes an analysis of the status quo. In this paper, NCW has presented a number of proposed response measures, whether immediate or middle-term responses, for concerned all line ministries & government institutions, regarding the following pillars:

1. **Impact on human endowment (health, education and social protection)** through applying/upscaling the already existing support programs regarding all health aspects including psychological, mental & physical as well as reproductive health care services; social protection programs; particularly response measures for older women; women with disabilities; pregnant women, and women of reproductive age, and education, to deal with the consequences of the school lockdown and the potential girls' dropout.
2. **Women's voice & agency (Violence Against Women, Leadership and Representation in decision making during crisis management)** women's participation in the decision making process can enhance the health security control mechanisms, examination and protection of health, and ensure women's accessibility to the relevant information. Also response measures can be adopted to provide psychosocial, legal and advisory support for women who may be subject to violence resulting from the implications of social conditions generated by the precautionary measures taken to respond to COVID-19 outbreak.
3. **Impact on economic opportunities:** the proposed response interventions depend on the already existing mechanisms as well as introducing new ones to support the women workers whose livelihoods have been affected or whose income from freelance work has declined. Alternative solutions should be proposed to address the economic downturn and its impact on working women in the formal or informal sector.
4. **Promoting data and knowledge:** promoting the compilation of data designed by sex, age and disability-disaggregated data on COVID-19, including tracking the emergency response measures, support policy research & social innovation; monitoring & evaluating the impact of the COVID-19; and conduct public opinion surveys in order to recognize the differences in exposure and treatment & help design the preventive measures accordingly.

In this regard, NCW established the "Women policy tracker on Responsive Policies and Programs During COVID-19 Pandemic" to serve the following purposes:

- 1) Monitor all issued policies and procedures responsive to the needs of Egyptian women in light of the efforts made to reduce the spread of COVID-19.
- 2) Design an easier tool that can be used as reference to all women related issued policies that can be used by decision makers for a more collaborative & comprehensive vision on means of moving forward.
- 3) Document the efforts & highlight the outcome of the coordinated efforts of the government on women related policies to protect them & their families from the COVID-19
- 4) Reflect on all those policies with necessary supporting programs & initiatives



## The major women related responsive policies and measures taken by the Egyptian Government

Since the outbreak of COVID-19, the Ministry of Health and Population (MoHP) in collaboration with all the concerned bodies constantly issues measures and programs to combat the spread of the virus. Moreover, MoHP issues all the data on the numbers of COVID-19 cases transparently and disaggregated by sex & age.

(14 March 2020)

- The President issued a decree on **suspending classes in universities and schools** for two weeks; as protection for the children allowing the mothers to rest assure of their safety.
- The Ministry of Social Solidarity (MoSS) issued a decree on the **lockdown of nurseries** for two weeks; *as protection for the children allowing the mothers to rest assure of their safety.*

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(16 March 2020)

- The Prime Minister issued Decree No. 719 of 2020, including inter alia:
  - o The number of **employees in government authorities and bodies shall be reduced** under the set of the precautionary measures taken by the government to prevent the spread of COVID-19;
  - o Pregnant **women or those looking after one child or more of less than 12 years** shall be granted an **exceptional leave** for as long as the Decree remains in force; *allowing all working mothers to be able to do their family duties without losing their jobs.*
  - o **Women employees looking after their children with disabilities** shall be granted a leave pursuant to a circular; *allowing mothers of children with disabilities to be able to take care of their children without losing their jobs.*
- MoHP announced taking special measures on **dispensing medicines for chronic diseases, formula milk and Family planning methods** (contraceptives) for three months; *accessibility needed reproductive healthcare services for women*

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(19 March 2020)

- Ministry of Social Solidarity (MoSS) announced **intensifying the precautionary measures** for children in foster homes and providing all the health precautions and awareness-raising leaflets, including welfare homes, correctional institutions, orphanages, **nursing homes, social protection facilities**, people with disabilities, and **women shelters; protection of elderly women and women with disabilities living in the shelters; Preparedness to any potential case of violence against women through secured concerned shelters.**



(22 March 2020)



- The President instructed as part of a set of decrees and directives aimed to address the new COVID-19 to **launch campaigns for raising the awareness of citizens** for guidance and providing precise information, and strengthen health control according to the highest standards, at the points of entry to the country; **Awareness raising & promoting data & knowledge to include women beneficiaries.**
  - MoSS announced **increasing the number of beneficiaries of conditional cash transfer** from Takaful and Karama Program to **100,000 households**; **Social protection especially for women heads of households**
  - MoSS announced **increasing the monthly income for rural women leaders** from EGP 300 to EGP 900 per month; **increased support to women rural leaders on ground**
  - MoSS announced **integrating women aged 65 and above in nursing homes** under the umbrella of social protection; **protection of elderly women**
  - MoSS announced **increasing the number of beneficiaries of soft loans and loans with negligible interest rates** to set up micro enterprises so that they can improve the living standard of their families; **economic opportunities to include women in need to microfinance loans**
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(24 March 2020)

- Extending the suspension of classes in schools and universities and lockdown of nurseries of whatever type;
  - The Ministry of Manpower (MoM) announced the steps of **registration of irregular workers** on MoM website to receive an **exceptional allowance of EGP 500**, as part of the government plan to protect them due to being affected by the COVID-19; **providing economic support to include women irregular workers**
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(26 March 2020)

The Prime Minister issued Decree No. 776 of 2020 on **establishing a workers' emergency benefits fund and forming a committee for the irregular workers affected by the economic repercussions** of the new Coronavirus, composed of (the Minister of Planning and Economic Development, Minister of Manpower, Minister of Social Solidarity, NCW President, Chairman of Information and Decision Support Center, Head of the Suggestion and Complaints Committee of the National Wage Council, and a member of the Administrative Control Authority). Including NCW in this committee reflects the government's belief in the **importance of women's voice & agency through representation, participation & involvement in the process of decision making and taking into account the needs of Egyptian women** while designing the policies and strategies aimed to respond and mitigate the impacts of the new Coronavirus.

**The Committee shall be responsible for the following:**

- o **Collect the data of the workers** affected by the economic repercussions of the new Coronavirus, and take the necessary actions in coordination with the various concerned bodies to offer financial and social support to the workers to overcome the crisis.



- **Coordinate the efforts and initiatives** introduced by financial institutions, companies, businessmen, non-governmental institutions and other concerned bodies so that the aids are delivered to those eligible.
  - **Coordinate with the Workers' Emergency Benefits Fund** to ensure the existence of a consolidated database for the affected workers to avoid double disbursement.
  - **Develop policies for workers' compensation in case of partial or full lockdown** of the facilities in which they work, in coordination with the concerned funds and accounts.
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(29 March 2020)

- The President issued a decree on **increasing the monthly allowance for medical professionals by 75%** and establishing a risk fund for medical professionals; **Economic benefits to include women health care providers (doctors & medical professionals)**
  - The President announced the **disbursement of exceptional bonuses from "Tahya Misr" Fund for all the workers in quarantine, fever and chest hospitals and central labs** all over Egypt; **Economic benefits to include women health care providers**
  - The Financial Regulatory Authority (FRA) issued a set of resolutions on the activity of microfinance for the benefit of 3.1 million citizens, including:
    - **Reduce or postpone the installments due from the clients by 50%** of the value of each installment for microfinance clients.
    - **Exempt microfinance clients who make timely payments from the commission of the prepayment of indebtedness or reducing the administrative fees** to renew the existing funding; **economic opportunities benefiting women in microfinance**
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(2 April 2020)

- The President instructed to provide **additional support to the health sector** and enhance the financial conditions of the health workers, doctors and nurses, by **increasing the bonuses granted to medical interns** during their internships in university hospitals under the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHEO) and Scientific Research and Al-Azhar University hospitals, to **EGP 2200 per month, instead of EGP 400**, as of December 2019 class; **economic benefits to include women doctors**
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(5 April 2020)

- The MoH launched **2 hotlines to provide necessary psychological support** to citizens at home; **psychological support programs to include women beneficiaries**



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(6 April 2020)

- The President instructed to **provide allowances of 500 EGP for irregular workers** who might be impacted by the COVID-19 for 3 consecutive months; **economic benefits to include women irregular worker.**
- The President instructed to upscale **decent housing by building 250,000 new housing unit and another 100,000 housing unit** for the people living in unsafe habitat; **Social protection intervention to include women beneficiaries**

The National Council for Women will continue tracking & monitoring all issued policies & programs that mainstream & respond to the needs of women during this crisis. NCW commits to a strong coordination with all concerned ministries and bodies to support the implementation of those policies as well as suggesting new polices in favor of Egyptian women.