



Towards Child-Friendly Justice in Egypt: Understanding the justice needs and child-centred pathways

High Level Policy Dialogue

9 November 2021



Cairo, Egypt
& online participation

Highlights



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Embassy of Switzerland in Egypt



The project "Towards Child Friendly Justice in Egypt" aims at **enhancing the judicial capacity, institutional coordination and effectiveness of the Egyptian child justice system**. Aligned with Egypt's Vision 2030, the National Child Strategy and the UN SDGs, the project is implemented by the OECD with the financial support of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. The project also builds on the work of the MENA-OECD Governance Programme and rule of law support to Egypt. It facilitates high-level engagement in support of effective implementation of the objectives of the Strategic Framework and National Plan for Childhood and Motherhood in Egypt 2018-2030.



Objectives of the High Level Policy Dialogue

The Policy Dialogue aimed to enhance coordination between key national stakeholders through the engagement of high level representatives. The first session of the dialogue presented existing mechanisms and practices in the area of institutional coordination among key stakeholders and highlighted the crucial role of cooperation across different sectors to ensure a seamless child-friendly justice system. During the second session, participants had the opportunity to share experiences, discuss the challenges and priorities of different child justice pathways, and explore opportunities for improvement. The session included the presentation of good practices from an OECD peer country, Switzerland, through Swiss child judge Anne-Catherine Hatt, on the challenges and opportunities to strengthen a child-friendly justice system. OECD staff and experts also presented the international standards with respect to children in contact with the law and the impact on national child justice systems, as well as strategies and coordination mechanisms that promote child-centered civil, administrative and criminal justice pathways.

The policy dialogue brought together 86 participants from key Egyptian institutions, including the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood, the Ministry of Justice, the Public Prosecution Office, the Ministry of Social Solidarity, the National Institute for Governance and Sustainable Development and the Ministry of International Cooperation, along with representatives from Egyptian Judiciary (child judges), Civil Society Organizations, Child Protection Committees, as well as international experts and OECD representatives.



Key Takeaways from the Policy Dialogue:

Good governance and institutional coordination:

- While child justice stakeholders have been conducting key efforts to enhance coordination, the participants emphasised the **need for a more institutionalised system through identified coordination mechanisms and clearer scoping of the roles of each institution**.
- A whole-of-state coordination for child-friendly justice should not only be limited to justice institutions but also **involve other stakeholders and support services** to enable justice for children, as outlined by the OECD.
- The Ministry of Justice has established two child courts in Cairo and Giza; the participants stressed the importance to build on ongoing efforts to ensure these are functioning according to international standards and to **establish further child-friendly courts and prosecution offices** in other governorates.
- Committees were established in different Egyptian institutions to amend the current Child Law. It is crucial to adopt a **whole-of-government approach in the amendment of the Law** including the application of restorative justice and alternative measures by child judges and prosecutors, and to ensure coherence with the national child strategy, Egypt Vision 2030 and SDGs.

- The participants underlined the opportunity to address the challenges related to the regular rotation of child prosecutors, child judges and Child Protection Committees staff, by **enhancing specialization and developing continuous and targeted training programmes**.
- Participants also addressed the need to **improving and strengthening the existing infrastructure to ensure effective application of alternative to custody measures**.

Reinforcing capacities towards a child friendly approach:

- Provide targeted **capacity-building and training programmes** aligned with international standards to judges, social and psychological experts, child helpline staff and other officials involved in the child justice system to be qualified and able to deal with children.
- **Ensuring protection rather than criminalisation** was presented as one of the main pillars of the Swiss Juvenile system by Judge Anne-Catherine Hatt, Swiss Juvenile Court, while sharing a case study of a child-friendly pathway for a juvenile offender in her country.
- **Reinforcing the follow-up role of social and psychological experts** to provide rehabilitation services and help children reintegrate in society and **create an accreditation system/model** to ensure they are well trained and have the expertise to deal with children in contact with the law were also emphasised as key priorities by the attendees.
- **Increasing awareness-raising** of parents, teachers and practitioners working with children and **ensuring further-reaching legal aid** were also stressed as important elements for more sustainable and child-centred results.
- **Working closely with civil society**, children, families, communities and NGOs is crucial to apply a child-centered integrated model to protect children



against violence before a crime is committed as highlighted by the OECD.

- In the context of the current digital transformation efforts, the Egyptian institutions emphasised the importance of creating a database for the cases of children in contact with the law and to identify **better mechanisms for data collection**.

Next steps

- Building on the policy dialogue, the project stakeholders committed to pursue the discussion to ensure a whole of government coordination approach for the child justice system.
- The key stakeholders will capitalize on case studies and good practices presented during the policy dialogue and adapt them to the Egyptian context to continue improving the child justice system in Egypt. They also requested further good practices from OECD member countries on child justice pathways, restorative justice and models of social inquiry reports which are delivered by social observers.
- The challenges and priorities raised during this policy dialogue will feed into the OECD preliminary Strategic Review that is currently under preparation and will be presented to the Egyptian institutions by the end of the year.
- The Ministry of Justice prioritise the creation of child-friendly courts and currently working on the 3rd court in Upper Egypt.
- The Public Prosecution Office stressed the importance of creating child friendly rooms and is currently working with the UNICEF on the creation of 30 child rooms in Public Prosecution offices.
- The NCCM is joining forces with the Supreme Council for Media to start a campaign to raise awareness on child rights and child protection.
- The Ministry of Social Solidarity commits to share the draft amendments of the Child Law with the involved institutions for review.

For more Information

- [Library - Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development \(oecd.org\)](https://www.oecd.org/)
- [OECD/Open Society Foundations \(2019\), Legal Needs Surveys and Access to Justice, OECD Publishing, Paris.](#)
- [Egyptian Law no. 12 of 1996 promulgating the Child Law amended by Law no. 126 of 2008](#)