



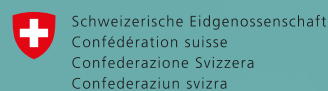
Implementing SDGs for children in Egypt: Towards a child-friendly justice system

*High Level Policy Dialogue
Launch of the Key Findings of the Strategic Review*



9 June 2022
Cairo, Egypt

Summary



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 Policy Dialogue

The Policy Dialogue presented and discussed the preliminary Key Findings of the Strategic Review "Implementing SDGs for children in Egypt: Towards a child-friendly justice system" with the Egyptian stakeholders. It also aimed at exchanging on the findings and recommendations with international peers and experts.

The High Level Policy Dialogue was opened by H.E. Minister Nivine El Kabbag, Minister of Social Solidarity, H.E Yvonne Baumann, Ambassador of Switzerland in Egypt, Dr. Tatyana Teplova, Head of Division and Senior Justice Counsellor at the OECD, Dr. Tarek Tawfik, Deputy Minister of Health and Population and Supervisor of the NCCM, Justice Hossam Sadek, Vice Minister of Justice for International Cooperation and Counsellor Hossam Shaker, Head of Child Protection Office, Public Prosecution Office.

The policy dialogue brought together over 130 participants of High Level and Senior representatives from key national stakeholders: the Ministry of Justice (MoJ), the Ministry of Social Solidarity, the Public Prosecution Office (PPO) and the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood (NCCM), as well as judges, prosecutors, social workers and representatives from the Ministry of International Cooperation.



Summary of discussions

The dialogue highlighted the commitment at high level to achieve the objectives of the cooperation which is based on a participatory approach involving all key stakeholders to reach comprehensive findings and recommendations.

Methodology of the Key findings and Strategic Review:

The Key Findings present an overview of the preliminary outcomes and recommendations of the Strategic Review expected to be finalised by the end of 2022. The final report will consider a range of essential components of a child-friendly justice system assessing whether and to what extent it meets the rights and needs of children.

The analytical framework used to conduct the review includes the OECD Frameworks on People-centred Justice, Child-friendly Justice and Sound Public Governance.

As part of these Frameworks, identifying legal needs of children and enabling them to participate in the design and delivery of services is an important step, whether they are in conflict with

the law, victims or witnesses, and in the civil and administrative sphere.

Key Takeaways:

“Family and Community are vital pillars of Child Justice; it is a multiple-actor system where raising awareness is very important to place the child at the center” as highlighted by H.E Minister El Kabbag.

Social and psychological workers are a very important part of the child-justice system to support children regarding any issues whether related to family, troubling experiences, reintegrating into the community or any mental health issue. Hence, there is a crucial need to enhance their capacities, case management methodologies and practices, update the follow-up and monitoring of their work, establish new regulations and electronic regulatory system and strengthen qualified workers and services.

Children’s right to participation needs to be activated and taken into consideration to ensure the children’s voices are well heard and applied, in conformity with the principle of the best interest of the child.

There is room to enhance the relevant work on international custody disputes and children related issues, especially on how to deal with these kinds of family disputes while focusing on the best interest of the child. Further coordination and technical support are needed to support the work of the Goodwill Offices Committee within the Ministry of Justice which is in charge of family and domestic disputes when a foreign element is present in the facts of the dispute, such as parents from different nationalities or foreigners living in Egypt.

For criminal matters, the procedures may benefit from being shorter and faster, and different forms of alternative measures should be applied more often and avoid detention and only apply it as last resort.

It is important to ensure the existence of specialised capacity development programmes on child rights and how to deal with children, including a strong focus on child and family-centred approaches.

The exchange of good practices and tailored best practices is a good tool for the improvement of legal systems, the formulation of new effective policies and adaptation of existing practices to be in compliance with international standards.

The participants also discussed the importance of ensuring that there are no gaps in the law concerning the child’s eligibility to present a complaint, report a crime and be heard.

The issue of child protection in the digital world, has also been raised as it has become pervasive and needs to be regulated. Further exchanges on good practices from different countries in this area would be beneficial. Therefore, it was underlined that it would be useful to include OECD recommendations to protect children in the digital environment.

It is equally important to provide protection to children refugees as further highlighted by the participants.



Exchange of good practices:

Aspects of the Canadian and Swiss child justice systems were presented by OECD peer officials focusing on children’s best interest and their physical, emotional, psychological safety and well-being.

The amendments to the Canadian Divorce Act moved away from the approach based on “custody” and “access” and adopted a child-focused approach, as well as new ways to guarantee the child’s voice is heard.

The preamble to the Canadian Youth Criminal Justice Act refers to the need for community, families, parents, and others to play a role in finding solutions to youth crime. Young persons under the age of 12 are not subject to criminal responsibility in Canada.

The Canadian system uses the Extrajudicial Measures (diversion) for non-violent offences whenever adequate to hold a young person accountable, which have proven to be effective.

Canada’s Criminal Code includes a wide range of criminal procedures that prioritise the best interests of child victims and witnesses in criminal proceedings through measures including testimonial aids, publication bans, and alternative ways of providing testimony.

Canada established Child Advocacy Centres throughout the country since 2010, where there is collaboration between law enforcement, child protection, medical and mental health professionals. They provide an integrated, individualised response for children and youth who have experienced child abuse and their families.

An inclusive justice system requires the application of many principles such as the Rule of Law, good governance, institutional coordination, whole of government approach and commitment to SDGs.

The Swiss peer pointed out that the role of social workers should be given further weight and attention.

She also highlighted the importance of capacity-building according to specialisation by law and the existence of relevant training institutes, mandatory trainings and written guidance. Including child rights curriculum at university is also an important aspect.

In Switzerland, as in several other countries, the one-stop-shop where different services are under one roof including child prosecutors and judges, social workers, child police officers, is an important tool to ensure the protection of children’s rights.



Key recommendations

- Enhance institutionalisation and systematise existing coordination mechanisms to secure sustainability of the system in the medium and longer-term;
- Strengthen policy alignment in child justice through the adoption of a whole-of-government approach that fosters multi-sectoral cooperation. It should consider sound mechanisms for implementation, oversight, and accountability, as described in the OECD People-centred Justice, Child-friendly justice and Sound Public Governance Frameworks;
- Increase clarity of roles of each institution, including the established procedures for case management;
- Further improve capacities of key entities in need of support, including the NCCM Child Helpline, the Child Protection Committees and others;
- Develop outreach initiatives to raise awareness in Egypt in relation to children’s rights and existing protection mechanisms to strengthen a child rights culture in Egypt;
- Consider strengthening the availability of legal aid for children, including beyond children in conflict with the law, such as covering protection and civil cases; as well as the quality of social and psychological support available;

- Continue working towards the development of diversion mechanisms and sound alternative measures that can be applied for children in conflict with the law, underpinned by the necessary legal structures and resource allocation;
- In order to improve and facilitate the child justice pathways followed by children across different legal areas, It is crucial to provide clear information to children; integrate further services and specialised protocols, clarify the roles of national institutions related to the protection of children at risk and strengthening mechanisms to ensure a child's voice is heard in civil and administrative spheres;
- Recommendations based on the OECD Framework on people-centred Justice and its child-friendly version that are applicable to all justice services include: commitment to evidence-based planning for child justice, to enable the delivery of child-friendly justice services that are tailored to their legal needs, adapted to their age and level of development and their communities; strengthening child participation in the creation of policies; monitoring the impact of initiatives that are implemented to learn lessons and improve the responsiveness of services.



Next steps

- A High-level launch of the final Strategic Review, foreseen by the end of 2022, with the project stakeholders and international actors.
- Development of tailored Good Practices Guidelines and Roadmap building on the recommendations of the Strategic Review by mid-2023.
- Capacity-building, training sessions and policy dialogues focusing on specific aspects of the child-justice system in the last quarter of 2022 and in 2023.

For more Information

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