Update on the context and situation of children

Despite the persistent and wide-reaching consequences of the pandemic, Egypt’s reforms stabilized the economy during 2021; Egypt was the only country in the MENA region to post a positive real GDP growth in 2020[1]. Structural reforms, targeted subsidies, and interventions in the most vulnerable regions (especially in upper Egypt)[2] contributed to a reduction in the poverty rates between 2018 and 2020. Poverty measures as per the national definition and extreme poverty registered a drop from 32.5% to 29.7% and 6.2% to 4.5% respectively[3]. With three in every ten Egyptians in monetary poverty and a similar proportion of children in multidimensional poverty, there remains a big task before the government to address the poverty issue.

[Demography]
Recognizing the high rate of growth of the population (2.6% per year) and the high fertility rate (3.1 in 2018[4]), and that Egypt’s population could reach 120 million (including 43 million children and 24 million adolescents) by 2030[4], a national strategy has been formulated to limit population growth and improve demographic characteristics by reducing the fertility rate from the current 3.4 children per woman (per 2017 census data) to 2.4 children by 2030 and 1.9 children by 2052[5].

[Government programmes/social safety]
In a continuation of existing schemes which provide a safety net to protect the most vulnerable, expanded measures were adopted by the Government to support groups made more vulnerable by the pandemic. The Government scaled-up the flagship conditional cash-transfer scheme, “Takaful” [6] – supporting an additional 100,000 families to reach a total of 3.3 million beneficiaries as an immediate response to COVID-19; and the Decent Life Initiative (Hayah Karima)[7] which targets 58 million low-income most underprivileged citizens with multi-faceted development assistance and enhanced livelihoods opportunities.

[Budget allocation]
In 2020/21, the share of national budget allocated to education remained almost at the same level as of 2019/20 (at 10.4%), social protection (19%) and health (6.2%) but has fallen by 3.6, 8 and 0.1 % points, respectively, compared to 2015/16 budget[8]. On a positive note, the public investment component of public expenditure, where the share of investment towards education and health are located, has been on a steady rise since 2016.

[Health]
Whilst Egypt has witnessed significant reductions in maternal mortality ratio (42% reduction between 2000 and 2017), infant mortality (56% decrease between 2000 and 2018) and neonatal mortality rates in the last two decades, Egypt Voluntary National Review 2021 notes a worrying trend in slight increase in IMR and NMR over 2015-19. Additionally, the ‘double burden’ of malnutrition and stunting at 17.5% (2018)[9] coexists with high overweight/obese rates.

[Education]
The pre-university education system in Egypt is one of the largest globally in terms of student and teacher numbers. In 2019/2020 about 23.6 million students were enrolled in around 56,600 schools, with the system supported by more than a million teachers[10]. (HDR 2021 – pp 50/51). Participation in primary education was close to universal, the net enrolment ratio (NER) stood at 100.2%.[11] with a Gender Parity Index (GPI) of 1.06 (gender equality)[12]. The NER in pre-primary education was 28.5% (in 2019/20), far less than the target set by the Egyptian government of 80 per cent by 2030[13]. This low gross enrolment rate in pre-primary education indicates that more than two thirds of children aged 4–5 do not enjoy their right to early education and did not receive the required cognitive, social, emotional, and language skills in Egypt. Since 2020, digital learning platforms have been rapidly developed, but utilisation is still relatively low; when surveyed, only 26% of parents said their children’s schools had introduced remote learning.
opportunities and the number of children reporting to have accessed any platforms was as low as 61%. Egypt continues to have very high class density (53 students at primary and 49 at lower secondary stages in 2020) owing to increasing number of students, which is a major contributing factor of low quality of education[14]. Together with allocating more resources, Government is making efforts in overhauling the education system since 2018, by rolling out reform in the education sector (Education 2.0).

Women’s empowerment remains one of the most significant national priorities. According to the latest Global Gender Gap analysis[15]. Egypt is ranked 129 out of 156 countries [16]. The key issues remain lower labour-force participation of women (especially among youth) and significant gender disparity in the labour market, with the female unemployment rate (at 21.7%) five times higher than the male unemployment rate (4.8%) in 2019. By the end of 2020 employment levels had reverted to pre-COVID levels[17]. 2021 survey findings indicate that during lockdown nearly 20% of women reported an increase in domestic violence [18]; more than 10% of parents reported an increase in behaviours such as crying and aggressiveness in their children.

[Migrants, Refugees and Asylum Seekers]

Egypt is a country of transit and destination for migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. As of November 2021, 269,826 refugees and asylum seekers were registered in Egypt (around 38% children, 4.2% are UASC) from 64 nationalities. Syrians remain the largest group (50%), mostly living in urban areas alongside host communities. Government estimates indicate approximately 6 million migrants are currently in Egypt[19].

[2] https://www.presidency.eg/en/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B1%D8%A6%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%A9/%D9%85%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%AF%D8%B1%D8%A9-%D8%AD%D9%8A%D8%A7%D8%A9-%D9%83%D8%B1%D9%8A%D9%85%D8%A9/
[3] https://www-capmas-gov-eg.translate.goog/Pages/StaticPages.aspx?_x_tr_sl=ar&_x_tr_tl=en&_x_tr_hl=en&_x_tr_pto=nui,sc
[4] CAPMAS population projection
[8] Ibid.
[9] Egypt VNR 2021
[12] The GPI is the ratio of female to male GERs, with a GPI of 1.0 indicating full gender parity, and a lower measure indicating lower girls’ enrolment compared to boys.
[14] Egypt VNR 2021
https://www.weforum.org/reports/ab6795a1-960c-42b2-b3d5-587eccda6023
[17] UN Common Country Analysis 2021 (not yet published)
Major contributions and drivers of results

In 2021, UNICEF continued its focuses on prevention of the spread of COVID-19 and mitigating negative socio-economic impacts on the population, as well as ensuring Egypt’s progress towards the SDGs. The high poverty rate required UNICEF’s immediate support to Government social protection programs to protect vulnerable households, and to generate key evidence needed to respond promptly to these new challenges. The unprecedented pressure on the primary health care (PHC) system and the drop in utilization of PHC at the beginning of the pandemic meant that renewed improvements to quality and accessibility of PHC systems remained a key focus in 2021. UNICEF continued to focus on supporting and strengthening national education and child protection systems to continue delivering quality public services despite COVID-19 challenges, and prioritise direct services to the most vulnerable. UNICEF also delivered behaviour change programming to foster positive parenting and girls’ empowerment, contributing to key national initiatives.

In close partnership with WHO and Gavi, UNICEF played a key role in procuring and managing COVID vaccination in Egypt, including through the COVAX facilities. UNICEF provided technical support to the Ministry of Health and Population (MoHP) to develop and implement the Egypt National Deployment and Vaccination Plan and ensure timely and successful deployment of the vaccines to all people living in Egypt, including refugees, migrants, asylum seekers, and other foreign residents. 29 million people were vaccinated, including foreign residents, of whom 16.8 million are fully vaccinated[1], through UNICEF’s support to establish 1,393 vaccination posts, procurement of over 75 million vaccines and other necessary medical and hygiene supplies, equipping cold and ultra-cold chains and training 540 health providers and community health workers on proper vaccination.

Primary Health Care (PHC) facilities were also rehabilitated for WASH services to improve COVID-19 preventive measures.

To support vaccine deployment, encourage registration for vaccination, correct misinformation, promoting awareness and healthy hygiene practices and to answer questions raised by the public, UNICEF delivered COVID-19 Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) campaigns with updated messages, reaching 106 million with an engagement of 3.5 million. UNICEF also campaigned on preventive measures and how to be safe during Ramadan, and co-produced with IOM, UNESCO, WHO, UNDP and MoHP a series of videos highlighting safe practices during COVID-19. Additionally, to further amplify the call for COVID-19 vaccination with MoHP, UNICEF partnered with the private sector, leveraging the digital platform of Talabat, a leading online food delivery platform in Egypt. For one month, Talabat’s online platform was used to generate awareness and demand to COVID-19 vaccine reaching an estimated 4 million.

Due to the impact of COVID crisis, UNICEF has temporarily shifted its support to social protection to focus on the expansion of the government’s Takaful and Karama cash transfer programme (TKP), and on the social protection interventions coordination for COVID-19 responses beyond cash transfer with Ministry of Social Solidarity (MoSS), which also included contributory schemes such as pensions, social insurance, among others. This resulted in the extension of the non-contributory social protection to cover 3.8 million families (5.1 million children) in 2021, and the allocation of 4.5% of GDP targeted social protection for poor and vulnerable families and children[2].

In partnership with Ministry of Finance (MoF), Ministry of Planning and Economic Development (MoPED), University of Cairo, J-Pal, American University in Cairo, and the National Statistical Organization (CAPMAS), and private researchers, UNICEF developed analysis, including those

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[19] https://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContent/1/1234/446665/Egypt/Foreign-Affairs/Egypt-proudly-hosts--million-migrants,-refugees-Fo.aspx
confidential, on poverty, public briefs and organized seminars with national and international experts to place children’ rights and deprivations at the center of the policy debate and policy making. UNICEF’s advocacy with the Government of Egypt and with CAPMAS to fill data gaps on child-related SDGs have shown results as GoE’s survey on social indicators. The Egypt Family Health Survey, which replaces the Demographic Health Survey implemented in 2014, has started data collection on ground with UNICEF’s collaboration on finalizing tools and providing supplies. The lately revamped technical support and capacity building to the Child Unit in CAPMAS, will bring the updated data sets on children and SDGs in the dashboards and mobile applications into public domain. Additionally, UNICEF completed the repeated phone-based assessments (RTM) on tracking the impact of COVID-19 on children’s well-being to provide a pulse of the situation and support the Government in its response. The RTM was considered as a global good practice by UNICEF Regional Office and the Head Quarters and was included in a report on ‘Situation and Programmatic Monitoring Adaptations in COVID-19’.

To ensure Child Survival and Early Development, and to prevent COVID-19 reversing the trend in improved child survival, UNICEF continued to focus on strengthening primary health care (PHC) systems and maintaining health and nutrition services in 2021, in addition to supporting the GoE in its medical response including COVID-19 vaccine deployment.

In collaboration with MOHP, UNICEF implemented a package of high impact interventions (training of health workers, health managers, provision of supplies and equipment, WASH facility rehabilitation, and community engagement) in 200 of the 4,600 identified deprived communities of Haya Karema. As a result, 1,055,152 children and women received essential health care, including prenatal, delivery and postnatal care, essential newborn care, immunization, treatment of childhood illnesses and HIV care through, and a total of 133,251 live births took place in UNICEF-supported facilities and programs.

UNICEF continued to support the GoE in other areas essential for the progress towards the SDGs. To ensure Egypt remains polio free UNICEF supported the delivery of 59 million doses of oral polio vaccine in addition to campaign costs and planning support across two rounds of campaigns. To support the government capabilities to better plan, monitor and ensure access to potable water and proper wastewater management for the communities, UNICEF provided capacity building and technical support to the Water and Wastewater Holding Company (WWWHC) which is responsible for all domestic water and waste-water connections to establish an online system for the development of dynamic plans, monitoring and follow-up WASH activities. As a result, 398,816 children have improved their WASH practices.

Furthermore, the National Food and Nutrition Strategy 2022-2030, the first since 2017, was developed with strong input and coordination from UNICEF. As a result of UNICEF’s continuous advocacy and technical support, the Ministry of Health and Population (MoHP) increased budget allocations for micronutrient supplementation for mothers and children. UNICEF contributed to developing and rolling out innovative nutrition training packages, which raised the capacities of 840 health care providers. As a result, 505,204 caregivers of children aged 6-23 months were counselled on IYCF, and 398,816 children in 360 primary schools in two governorates have improved nutrition awareness.

UNICEF continued its partnership with the private sector in reaching children and caregivers with key messages. For example, the publishing house, Nahdet Misr, integrated UNICEF health, hygiene, nutrition, and positive parenting messages within 16 million books produced and distributed in 2021. An estimated 3 million parents and 6 million children from grades 1 - 6 were reached with these messages.

To reinforce cross-sectoral ECD policies, a plan of action and budget were developed for the ECD national strategy and endorsed by the national ECD committee chaired by National Council for Childhood and Motherhood (NCCM). In partnership with the Ministry of Youth and Sports (MoYS) and MoSS, civil society organizations, Federation of Egyptian Industries (FEI) and ILO, a total of 11,108 children and over 107,000 parents benefitted from ECD centers in 2021, which were scaled up from the childcare models developed by UNICEF to be adopted by the private sector.

To ensure children aged 3 to 6 continue adequate learning and stimulation during the COVID-19 pandemic, UNICEF supported 20,766 children (49.5% girls) with comprehensive interventions. Of
which, around 3,195 (50% girls) refugee children in 50 Kindergartens (KG), benefitted from educational supplies and 13,884 (50% girls) refugee children benefitted from education cash grants to support continuation of KG education. 1,586 (47% girls) students in 20 KGs benefitted from improved learning environment through rehabilitation interventions and 2,101 (50% girls) children in 55 KG refugee schools received hygiene supplies to ensure COVID-19 safety in schools.

To ensure that caregivers of children are adequately engaged to maximize and sustain effects of results, in 2021, UNICEF scaled up the operationalization of a Social and Behavioral Change Model on parenting which resulted in over 160,000 children interacting with over 55,000 parents who were engaged with the UNICEF parenting programme. 2,000 social and community workers and 4,000 volunteers were trained and over 126,000 community members engaged with the programme face-to-face. Over 625,000 people have been engaged in feedback mechanisms established by the government with UNICEF support, to prevent and respond to COVID-19 direct and secondary impact.

**On learning and protection area of work**, UNICEF has worked on both system level, supporting the GoE in improving quality and coverage of services, as well as at supporting at the service delivery level, ensuring most vulnerable have access to quality services.

UNICEF has strengthened the national education system through evidence, policy dialogue, and technical assistance. This year, UNICEF became the coordinating agency, on behalf of the Ministry of Education and Technical Education (MoETE), for the Education Sector Analysis (ESA) and Education Sector Plan; forming and co-chairing the first Local Education Group (LEG) and leading the ESA to completion. UNICEF continues to support the rollout of the reform, focusing on delivering quality learning to vulnerable children through pre-primary inclusive education and Community-based Education. This included the development of the pre-primary inclusive education model in collaboration with MOETE and development partners, in addition to revamping the CBE model in alignment with education 2.0 reform. A total of 1,337,0340 children (50% girls) in primary education benefitted through UNICEF’s technical support to the national education reform, which will eventually benefit more than 23 million students.

Simultaneously, 753,873 vulnerable children and youth (49% girls) were supported directly through UNICEF programs. 701,676 children (48.5% girls) [3] had access to quality education in nine governorates through UNICEF support. UNICEF’s COVID response facilitated safe school reopening, with 552 schools receiving WASH rehabilitation benefitting 475,518 students (49% girls); 191,853 children (50% girls) receiving either hygiene supplies (161,865), cash grants (13,884), educational supplies (15,827) or learning support (277). To ensure continuity of learning, 3,771 teachers were trained[4], benefitting close to 72,760 students (50% girls). UNICEF supported 28,128 refugee and migrant children (21% girls) and 6,177 children (77% girls) in community-based-schools with educational supplies and learning opportunities. To support students in refugee community schools, UNICEF launched the Learning Passport and provided digital content on formal and non-formal education including content on gender equality.

Furthermore, a total of 52,197 (50% girls) vulnerable young people benefitted from multiple initiatives designed to help them gain the necessary skills, including life skills, and experience meaningful participation. The life skills toolkit included themes to foster gender equality and social cohesion. 31,700 young people (18.7% refugees/migrants, 49.5% girls) ages 10-24 were reached through Meshwary, a partnership between UNICEF and the Ministry of Youth and Sports, now endorsed by the Prime Minister, which provides training opportunity on life, employability and entrepreneurial skills as well as comprehensive career guidance services among others. An additional 4,277 adolescents (8% refugees/migrants, 88.7% girls) ages 10-18 participated in UNICEF’s Sports for Development programme, focused on social cohesion and girls’ empowerment; and 16,220 participated in civic engagement and volunteering initiatives, of which 4,583 participated as leaders and 2,863 delivering COVID-19 related essential information to communities. 1,720 youths from 57 universities and Meshwary were trained to deliver life-skills training to peers in underserved communities. UNICEF continued to engage with the private sector on facilitating internships for young people including those in contact with the law. One hundred youth and adolescents were reached with hands-on training and skilling opportunities through Deloitte Egypt and Mylerz.

UNICEF strengthened child protection (CP) systems by supporting Government of Egypt (GoE) to
adopt, amend, and operationalize child-friendly laws/policies. Technical and financial support and advocacy contributed to adopting law criminalizing Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) medicalization, introducing amendments to the Child Law on judicial treatment and alternative care, addressing the intersection between violence against women (VAW) and violence against children (VAC) in Personal Status Law and promoting a newly-drafted alternative care law. Policy change was complemented with launching the Alternative Care Strategy, developing M&E and costed framework of EVAC National Plan of Action (NAP), and operationalizing Annex SOPs on children on the move (CoTM).

UNICEF provided capacity development opportunities for social service workforce and other child protection stakeholders in different sectors including justice, education and health, leading to provision of improved case management services to more than 13,000 children at risk, victims of violence and children in contact with the law; in-person psychosocial support for over 25,000 Egyptian and migrant children and over 6,000 children through remote COVID-19 response. Over 1.6 million people were engaged through community mobilization platforms including knocking door campaigns to promote FGM elimination.

UNICEF enhanced the positioning of the National Girls’ Empowerment Initiative, Dawwie. Co-led by NCW and NCCM, Dawwie is a comprehensive community engagement package to involve children, adolescents, youth, parents, community members and policy makers on social and behavioral change for gender equality and girls’ empowerment as a root to tackle multiple socio-economic vulnerabilities. The premiere of the Dawwie short film, “It Takes a Village” at the Gouna Film Festival resulted in enhanced attention on the girls’ empowerment portfolio among key stakeholders. Additionally, UNICEF scaled up community dialogue interventions in partnership with faith-based organizations resulting in 53,000 community members engaged in viewing clubs focusing on harmful practices, 15,000 community members engaged face-to-face and over 32,000 online with Dawwie activities. Over 7,000 boys and girls have been trained face-to-face and 3,300 online, on digital literacy focusing on gender equality. UNICEF campaigning on FGM, Safer Internet (#AmaniDotCom), Social Inclusion (#DiverseButUnited) and Dawwie on its social media platforms, reached 44 million users and engaged with 4 million users.

In addition to advocacy for social inclusion, equitable education and how poverty can prevent children from living up to their full potential, UNICEF has put a specific focus on a) gender issues and b) COVID awareness. Under the ongoing advocacy against FGM and for girls’ empowerment, UNICEF launched four gender equality and FGM campaigns reach was 34 million. Led by the national partners and sister UN agencies, UNICEF launched #EndFGM and #ProtectHerFromFGM national campaigns. This advocacy, which was part of UNICEF’s holistic approach to address FGM through technical and financial support contributed to adopting law criminalizing Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) medicalization[5].

[1] Statistics as of 06 December 2021
[2] According to the published budget 2021/22 subsidies grants and social benefits add to 4.5% of GDP. This percentage includes, among others, subsidies and grants for social services (including TKP) Cash transfers (2.5% of GDP); subsidies (1.7% of GDP). Based on own calculation from the economic classification of the public budget 2021/22.
[3] 20,766 Pre-primary/Early Grade, 680,910 grades 1 - 9
[4] 1,841 on blended learning, 1,170 teachers (54% refugees) on Preparedness, 760 on LSCE
UN Collaboration and Other Partnerships

UNICEF is part of the UN country team, working under the umbrella of the GoE – UN Cooperation Framework. In 2021 UNICEF supported the Mid-Term Review of the current UN Cooperation Framework and the development of the 2023-2027 Cooperation Framework. UNICEF authored analytical papers that informed the Country Common Analysis (CCA) as well as through engaging with other UN agencies throughout the development process of the UNSDCF. The Cooperation Framework places rights, wellbeing and development of children and youths, including those of vulnerable children, such as children with disabilities, girls, migrants and refugees, and children facing violence or at risk, as central areas of work, crosscutting across the outcomes.

UNICEF works closely with other UN agencies under the current cooperation framework. UNICEF worked closely with WHO to support MoHP in preventing the spread of COVID-19 and mitigating its impact including in supporting in the planning and implementation of the COVID-19 vaccination deployment plan and in Risk Communication and Community Engagement to ensure vaccine demand and safe behaviors. UNICEF also works with UNHCR, ILO and IFC to support children on the move; with UNODC on a joint programme on juvenile justice and another with ILO on employability skills for migrant and refugee youth as well as with UNFPA on FGM.

UNICEF also partnered widely with CSOs, to further strengthening community-based Child Protection structures through CSO partners[1], to ensure the continued provision of child protection services on the national level; and with NGO[2] in implementing projects related to the distribution of education learning materials, providing trainings, and providing life skills education through the established Learning Hub. A notable new partnership is with a national youth-led NGO[3], which helped to cascade the youth skilling programme, Meshwarya, in 57 universities at the national level. This partnership brought together UNICEF’s employability skills package with 130 of Enactus’ youth leaders who provided peer-to-peer training to 1,300 youth volunteers. The approach ensured further inclusion of youth not only as participants but as active shapers of the programme.

UNICEF also partnered with Al Azhar University, a regional and global hub for religious studies and leadership, in programmes such as positive parenting, ensuring diverse channels to reach the communities and amplify and sustain results at the community level.

UNICEF strengthened partnerships with the private sector[4], leveraging not only financial support, but also non-financial business for results. These non-financial partnerships, estimated at the value of $2.3 million, supported COVID-19 vaccination uptake, hygiene promotion, nutrition as well as training 100 vulnerable young people.

UNICEF was also able to leverage existing partnerships with development partners to support the short term COVID-related response whilst also addressing longer-term health system reform.

[1] Including ACDA, EASC, NFFCD, Caritas, ERC, EFACC, Rakhawy, TdH, etc.
[2] Including Catholic Relief Services and CARE.
[3] ENACTUS
[4] In 2021, UNICEF strengthened its existing partnerships with Allianz, Carrefour, Nahdet Misr, Gouna Film Festival, Deloitte Egypt, Johnson & Johnson and Mylerz amongst others. We further explored new partnerships with the Egyptian Food Bank (EFB), Talabat and Novo Nordisk.

Lessons Learned and Innovations

The COVID-19 pandemic has clearly demonstrated the importance of robust and resilient and shock-responsive national systems, including healthcare systems, social protection, education, child protection systems, as well as communication systems that allow direct engagement with communities. These systems need to be able to withstand and respond to crisis to ensure the continuity of essential services to the communities, especially for those most vulnerable. UNICEF continues working at the system level, further supporting the Government of Egypt in ensuring that the systems are resilient and
shock-responsive and at the same time, focusing interventions where possible in the most vulnerable communities to ensure that the voiceless and least visible are not left behind. Crucially, UNICEF started to reap the benefits of a strategic shift from a predominantly service-delivery mode to more investments in systems strengthening and capacity-building for sustainable solutions and broader impact. This is paired up with aligning the reporting on results according to the GoE’s ambitious initiative, Haya Karima, to develop the rural areas of Egypt. This aims at accelerating key results for the most vulnerable children and highlighting UNICEF’s contribution to the national plans and initiatives. Innovative approaches were developed, particularly regarding support to the healthcare system, provision of child protection services, girls’ empowerment, engaging youth and adolescents, learning and others.

UNICEF supported the MoHP in strengthening the PHC system and targeted its high impact interventions based on poverty maps and later expanded to Haya Karima areas. In social protection, the COVID crisis highlighted the need for UNICEF to expand its involvement beyond social assistance (Takaful and Karama), and support MoSS in its efforts to expand contributory schemes to cover more vulnerable families. To do so, UNICEF partnered with ILO who has the mandate and expertise to work on contributory schemes, as well as responding positively to requests for technical secondments on contributory schemes. To ensure that all children continue learning during COVID, UNICEF supported the MoETE in enhancing the use and effects of the MoETE’s remote learning platform, through contributing to the development of the Family Guide, a guide to parents on how to manage distance learning with their children during the pandemic, providing teacher on blended learning, and accessing on the utilization of the platforms through a nationwide survey. To ensure inclusion of every child, UNICEF has advocated for children without a national ID to access the platform, which translated into the discussion of technical solutions to secure unrestricted access for migrant and refugee children in 2022. UNICEF also continued strengthening the child protection system through piloting the case management approach in more governorates and enhancing the capacity of the national child protection stakeholders, community-based child protection structures and mechanisms. UNICEF with these national and community structures ensured continuity of child protection services to adopt social coping mechanisms facing COVID-19.

UNICEF also worked on building and strengthening nationally owned systems for communication and engagement with the communities and people directly. Under the leadership of MoPED and in partnership with MoSS and MoHP, UNICEF supported the integration of RapidPro[1] with the national birth/death registry system. This allows real time engagement with the communities, including those most vulnerable without an internet connection or a smartphone, on COVID-19 prevention and response, registration of newborn children, immunization reminders, cash transfer conditionality and tracking positive parenting behaviors among trained parents.

In 2020 and 2021, UNICEF, through one of its research partners, used Computer Assisted Telephone Interviews (CATI) to conduct a ‘Real Time Monitoring’ of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on a number of social indicators including the challenges children faced in terms of household income, violence at home, learning engagement among others. The survey also included refugees and migrants that allowed UNICEF and its partners to understand rapidly the different needs of these communities. A dedicated survey focusing on the learning engagement of children, including refugee children, which informed UNICEF and MoETE on the use of the national learning digital platform. Through these experiences, UNICEF has set up the Learning Passport, an online learning platform established in collaboration with Microsoft, to serve the most marginalized children in Egypt, particularly 20,000 refugee and migrant students attending refugee community schools. Meanwhile, UNICEF launched a campaign to combat the new threats children may face in the online world, named Amani Dot Com[2].

Furthermore, pilot models through UNICEF’s support in partnership with national and other key stakeholders, proved to be crucial in advocacy efforts that lead to policy change and nation-wide scale up. As an example, the case management system approach established by MoSS, which serves as a one-stop shop for various services including child protection services, led to the issuance of the ministerial decree stipulating it as a national model for the provision of comprehensive package service under the same roof. This one-stop shop model was proposed to the Prime Minister’s Office as the
model for Haya Karima villages targeting the most vulnerable communities in Egypt. UNICEF is currently working on implementation of a variety of ECD pilot models including on-site childcare service, shared childcare facilities, outsourcing, and childcare allowance. These models are designed based on the business case study conducted in partnership with the Federation of Egyptian Industries (FEI) and ILO and are designed to be adopted by the private sector through demonstrating the pilot’s proof of concept and support of the FEI network.

One of the recommendations of from UNICEF partners regarding UNICEF’s ongoing focus on girls’ empowerment is that more outreach to the local level is needed. UNICEF is the first UN agency to initiate a discussion with the Haya Karima Foundation to conclude an agreement to implement Dawwie initiative in villages, which is expected to reach 40 villages in four different governorates to engage 50,000 children and community members in its first phase only.

[1] RapidPro is a SMS based communication platform designed to send and receive data using basic mobile phones, manage complex workflows, automate analysis and present data in real-time.