

# Egypt: Design, implementation and child-sensitivity of social protection responses to COVID-19<sup>1</sup>

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**This One Pager is part of a series** based on the report ‘Social protection responses to COVID-19 in MENA: Design, implementation and child-sensitivity’, developed in partnership by the IPC-IG and UNICEF MENARO (Bilo, Dytz, and Sato 2022). The study reviewed the design and implementation features of the social assistance measures implemented in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region up to the end of March 2021, and the extent to which they took children’s needs and vulnerabilities into account.

The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on Egypt’s economy. Recorded at 5.65 per cent in 2018–2019, the real growth rate declined to 3.6 per cent in 2019–2020, and 3.3 per cent in 2020–2021 (World Bank 2021). Moreover, representing more than half of the population, children and youth (0–24 years) are among those most affected by the negative consequences of the pandemic.

In reaction to the COVID-19 crisis, Egypt introduced a number of social protection responses. Up to the end of March 2021, the IPC-IG mapping of social protection responses to COVID-19 in the Global South<sup>2</sup> identified 19 social protection responses in Egypt (10 social assistance, 7 labour market and 3 social insurance measures).

One of the main social assistance responses consisted of vertical and horizontal expansions of Egypt’s flagship conditional (*Takaful*) and unconditional (*Karama*) cash transfer programmes, by providing top-ups and including new beneficiaries (560,000 households) using the programmes’ waiting lists in combination with a revision of the proxy means test threshold to ensure eligibility for those most affected by the crisis. Also, the government increased payments to women community leaders who support the implementation of *Takaful* and *Karama* in rural areas from EGP350 (USD18.80) to EGP900 (USD48.30)<sup>3</sup> per month. Moreover, over 1.5 million informal workers benefited from a monthly emergency grant of EGP500 (USD26.80) from the Ministry of Manpower,<sup>4</sup> complemented by an additional transfer of the same amount financed and distributed by the Zakat Fund to 30,000 informal workers. A database of 77,600 vulnerable households rejected by the *Takaful* and *Karama* programmes was shared with international partners, to include them in parallel cash assistance programmes.

As per the IPC-IG and UNICEF MENARO assessment, Egypt had the second highest number of child-sensitive measures provided by the government in MENA (6), which means the responses had one or more of the following features: paying per capita transfer values, explicitly targeting children or having linkages to health, education, nutrition or child protection services.

One-off in-kind assistance was distributed by the Ministry of Social Solidarity in collaboration with charities to 3,800,000 pregnant and

lactating mothers, and households with children under 2 years. It is also noteworthy that the horizontal expansion of *Takaful* was not a temporary measure, and families will continue to benefit from the programme in the longer term.

Based on the analysis of the social assistance responses to COVID-19, some of the key lessons learned for Egypt in terms of shock-responsive and child-sensitive social protection are the following.

- Although Egypt adopted multiple child-sensitive protection measures, the number of children covered was low compared to the number of children living in poverty, marking a substantial gap between those in need and those covered.
- The lack of accurate information on informal workers in Egypt and lack of clarity of the eligibility criteria for cash assistance made it difficult to reach the most vulnerable. At the same time, many government databases did not share their information publicly (Khalil and Megahed 2021). This calls for increased efforts to ensure more comprehensive data collection and improved data-sharing across institutions in times of crisis.
- In general, the value of emergency transfers was inadequate to cover the basic needs of most households during the pandemic. For instance, the Exceptional Cash Assistance protected individuals in beneficiary households against extreme poverty for the equivalent of only 25 days, based on the USD3.20/day poverty line.
- Food assistance programmes were often provided as ad hoc distributions and not through a structured programme capable of providing regular support. It is important to implement programmes capable of supporting regular access to safe and nutritious food for children and their families.

## References:

Bilo, C., J.P. Dytz, and L. Sato. 2022. “Social protection responses to COVID-19 in MENA: Design, implementation and child-sensitivity”. *Research Report*, No. 76. Brasília and Amman: International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth and United Nations Children’s Fund Middle East and North Africa Regional Office.

Khalil, H., and K. Megahed. 2021. “Employment Security in Egypt in Light of the COVID-19 Pandemic: Rethinking Policies and Practices.” *Social Protection in Egypt: Mitigating the Socio-Economic Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic*. Accessed 13 July 2022. <[https://fount.augegypt.edu/faculty\\_journal\\_articles/503](https://fount.augegypt.edu/faculty_journal_articles/503)>.

World Bank. 2021. “GDP growth (annual %) — Egypt, Arab Rep.” World Bank website. Accessed 13 July 2022. <<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG?locations=EG>>.

## Notes:

1. For the full list of references and a description of all social protection measures mapped, see the full study.

2. See: <<https://socialprotection.org/social-protection-responses-covid-19-global-south>>.

3. All values in US dollars at the exchange rate of 3 June 2022.

4. In the IPC-IG mapping, this measure was considered a labour market response due to the methodological criteria adopted.