

Assessing the Impact:

The National Human Rights Strategy After Two Years



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Two Years After the Launch of the NHRS What Has Been Achieved So Far?

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Prelude

In a changing world, knowledge is accumulating day by day, driven by acceleration of reliance on technology, adoption of governance principles, as well as growing spread of modern technologies. This makes human rights protection not a luxury, but a necessity that all Egyptian state institutions must be familiar with. Undoubtedly, the fruits reaped from respecting human rights and enhancing trust among members of society outweigh the costs of delaying actions addressing the challenges ahead. Linking the economic and social development plan for the year 2022-2033 to the National Human Rights Strategy reflects the clear vision of the Egyptian state to achieve the outcomes targeted by the Strategy in its four axes. The Ministry of Planning and Economic Development is currently working on issuing a spending guide that takes into account the human rights dimension and includes human rights standards in the project proposals submitted by implementing agencies. This is a very important step that makes human rights a priority for decision-makers in the country.

We believe that assessing the Strategy solely in its second year through absolute terms, such as labeling it as "valueless" or, conversely, as a "comprehensive solution to all concerns and challenges in an unprecedented timeframe," falls short of providing accurate judgments. Nevertheless, I remain steadfast in my conviction that two years after its inception, the Strategy serves as a beacon of hope, offering the potential to enhance human rights conditions and tackle the obstacles impeding the achievement of its intended objectives. Achieving these outcomes will not only have an internal impact but will also put into action a set of recommendations accepted by Egypt within the framework of the UPR, as well as the recommendations submitted by the UN treaty bodies.

There is a link between the measures adopted by the authorities entrusted with the implementation of the National Human Rights Strategy and the path that Egypt has taken for years in strengthening its relationship with international human rights mechanisms. Even the working groups that were previously said to be concerned with sensitive issues such as enforced disappearance were received by Egyptian government institutions such as the Permanent Supreme Committee for Human Rights

As to the second year of the Strategy, I was briefed on the efforts and measures undertaken by the entities entrusted with implementing the Strategy, such as reaching the decisive stages in formulating legal amendments that affect the path of legislative development in the Strategy, including the amendments to the Code of Criminal Procedure, and establishing controls for the justifications for pretrial detention and adopting better alternatives to this issue that has ignited much controversy over the recent years. This has

prompted the Technical Secretariat of the National Dialogue to place this issue on its agenda in the second phase of the National Dialogue. The draft of the new labor law also constituted a good step to guarantee women's rights in workplaces and reduce the worst forms of child labor. I was also briefed on the measures taken by the concerned authorities to implement the targeted outcomes in accordance with the institutional development process, especially the closure of 27 prisons out of a total of 43 prisons in Egypt, according to official data, and the transfer of those prisons' inmates to rehabilitation centers. The near completion of an investigation into the Civil Society Case No. 173 of 2011 leaves only 10 organizations whose investigations have not yet been completed, according to the Ministry of Justice. Efforts also continued with regard to the path of capacity building and education in the field of human rights, but challenges facing the optimal implementation of the National Human Rights Strategy remain, especially in light of the continued absence of an executive action plan that defines the roles of all institutions and sets the time frame for implementing the outcomes targeted by the NHRS.

11 September 2023 marks the launch of the 54th session of the Human Rights Council. Egypt has always participated constructively in this non-contractual human rights mechanism, having been a member twice before. The NHRS has been mentioned in the Human Rights Council, both in interactive dialogues with special procedures and in public discussions. This is a testament to the importance of the Strategy.

The Strategy, and the consultative process that preceded its establishment, are the result of the follow-up letters that the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights directs to countries every four and a half years to review their human rights records. Since 2017, these letters have stipulated the necessity of developing plans to improve not only national human rights work but also its implementation.

Philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre famously said, "*If you want peace, prepare for war.*" Similarly, we say that improving human rights conditions requires preparing for any challenges that may arise when dealing with these conditions.

Two years after the launch of the NHRS, I wrote down my observations. We still need efficient and governance institutions that work for the public good. The practical application of the outcomes of the National Strategy is the solution. If this is achieved, the hopes placed in the Strategy will be fulfilled, and human rights will become facts in reality, contributing to improving the human rights situation in Egypt.

Ayman Okeil
September 2023

Introduction

Following up on the implementation of the outcomes of the National Human Rights Strategy is essential to measuring the achievement of the targeted objectives and accelerating their implementation. Two years after the launch of the Strategy by the President of the Republic on 11 September 2021, the authorities entrusted with implementing its results have taken a number of measures and procedures. However, some of these measures and procedures have not been adequately reflected in legislation, public policies, or executive implementation. Human rights are no longer a luxury. In May 2023, the secretariat of the National Dialogue received a wide range of proposals related to public freedoms and human rights, including economic and social rights, cultural rights, and civil and political rights.

The outcomes of the first phase of the National Dialogue, released in August 2023, explicitly stated that supporting human rights is an outcome that requires implementation by all state institutions. These outcomes were submitted to the President of the Republic, who welcomed them and promised to take the necessary measures to implement what is possible. Attempts to implement the results of the Strategy coincided with the activation of the Presidential Pardon Committee, which had released more than 1,500 people by July 2023, including some who had been sentenced by courts.

The second year of the National Human Rights Strategy, the activation of the Presidential Pardon Committee, and the launch of the National Dialogue undoubtedly represented a clear impetus to address the challenges facing human rights in Egypt. These developments have also helped to dust off some of the issues that had previously been considered taboo. Those interested in engaging, participating, and building Egypt with international human rights mechanisms, such as the Human Rights Council, whose fifty-fourth session begins on 11 September, the second anniversary of the launch of the National Human Rights Strategy, and the treaty bodies of the United Nations, which reviewed Egypt's civil and political human rights file this year for the first time in over a decade, should take note of these developments.

Egypt still considers the Universal Periodic Review mechanism to be of particular importance. On 4 March 2023, the Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs for Human Rights, International Social and Humanitarian Issues and the Head of the Technical Secretariat of the Permanent Supreme Committee for Human Rights delivered a voluntary mid-term report to the Universal Periodic Review mechanism. In this report, he referred to the National Human Rights Strategy and Egypt's response to a number of recommendations.

This confirms the position that the Strategy enjoys in the current Egyptian institutional framework.

However, the National Strategy still lacks a clear definition of each party's responsibility in implementing the assigned tasks. Some government agencies still turn a blind eye to their responsibilities within the framework of implementing the results of the National Strategy, particularly with regard to the weakness of capacity-building programs in the administrative apparatus and the failure to establish human rights units in some ministries, despite parliamentary demands. Some ministries are reluctant to move forward in investing in the results of the National Human Rights Strategy to improve human rights conditions and address the challenges facing them.

Although a few days after the issuance of the Strategy document, the Prime Minister announced the formation of a small executive working group to supervise the implementation of the National Human Rights Strategy, the members of this group, the institutions within its framework, and the nature of its work have not yet been announced.

The absence of an executive action plan two years after the launch of the Strategy is a major challenge to measuring the progress made in achieving its results and determining the entities that are supposed to work on implementing it within a specific time frame.

The Strategy was entrusted with moving forward in achieving 226 outcomes in the four axes of the Strategy, which are: (1) civil and political rights; (2) economic and social rights; (3) the human rights of women, children, youth, and persons with disabilities; and (4) education and capacity building in the field of human rights.

This must be achieved by engaging in three implementation tracks: legislative development, institutional development, and education and capacity building in the field of human rights.

The National Human Rights Strategy attempted to address the challenges included in each axis separately by highlighting the strengths and available opportunities, building on them, and identifying the challenges facing these opportunities, to reach outcomes that can be achieved within the time frame for implementing the Strategy. These outcomes reached (226 results).

The axis on civil and political rights includes the largest number of results in the Strategy (71), which gives an insight into the nature of the rights that require priority. The release of those held in pretrial detention and some of those against whom judicial rulings were issued in the second year of the Strategy, as well as the end of the investigation with all civil society organizations except ten organizations in the case known as the foreign financing case, are all positive steps. Additionally, the proximity to adopting laws related to

civil and political rights, such as amendments to the criminal procedure laws that include setting controls for the practice of pretrial detention and adding more advanced alternatives to it, are also positive developments.

However, the authorities entrusted with implementing the Strategy still need to follow the jurisprudence of priorities, especially the demands supported by the National Council for Human Rights and civil society, such as discussing the law on freedom of information and the protection of witnesses and whistleblowers. Although these are outcomes in the Strategy, before that they represent a constitutional right clearly stated in the amended Egyptian Constitution of 2019.

In a related context, according to attributed data, the Ministry of Social Solidarity is currently working on establishing an academy for non-governmental organizations to enhance the institutional and human capacities of civil society organizations, including human rights organizations. However, this academy has not been established at the time of writing this report.

The Strategy distributed the achievement of its outcomes over five years, which is the time frame for the first phase of the National Human Rights Strategy. However, it did not develop an executive action plan to achieve these results and specify the responsibilities that fall on each party entrusted with implementing these results.

Maat noted progress in the second year of the Strategy in achieving the outcomes that require a legislative path compared to the draft laws that were referred for discussion in the first year. However, some draft laws requested by the National Council for Human Rights, civil society and some other stakeholders remained neglected, among these projects include a draft law on freedom of information, statistics and official data, as well as a comprehensive law on eliminating violence against women.

Since the launch of the National Human Rights Strategy, Maat has closely followed its implementation as a civil society organization. We have documented the efforts aimed at achieving the Strategy's vision by following up on its implementation and evaluating the measures aimed at achieving its outcomes, even in the absence of an executive action plan, which is the most important challenge in achieving progress. We do this to monitor and document the progress achieved in implementing the Strategy's results, as well as the concerns and challenges facing its implementation.

A year after the launch of the National Human Rights Strategy in September 2022, Maat issued a report tracking the implementation of the Strategy. We are now the second edition, two years after the launch of the Strategy. This report focuses primarily on measuring the progress achieved in implementing the results of the National Human Rights

Strategy in its second year, in accordance with the three implementation paths on which the Strategy is based to advance the promotion and protection of human rights.

The report also discusses the challenges facing implementation, as well as our recommendations and visions, which are based on reality without maximizing or downsizing any efforts made by the institutions concerned to implement the objectives of the Strategy.

Methodology

The report relied on an indicator to measure the Egyptian state's response to activating the targeted objectives of the National Human Rights Strategy. This indicator counted the number of outcomes in the four axes that constitute the structure of the Strategy, which are 226 that are supposed to be achieved within five years, that is, by September 2026, which is the timeframe for implementing the Strategy in its first phase.

The targeted outcomes were distributed on the indicator according to the three implementation tracks in the Strategy, which are: the legislative track; institutional development track; and education and capacity building track.

The index awarded 10 points for each target achieved through legislative and institutional measures carried out by the entities entrusted with implementing the Strategy, and awarded 5 points for each target where the agencies entrusted with implementing the Strategy have begun positive measures and steps to implement it, but they have not been completed and do not appear to be in the process of being completed until the report is issued. No points were awarded for the outcomes where the entities entrusted with implementing the Strategy did not take any steps in light of the three paths to be achieved.

The report also relied on a mechanism to follow up on the progress made in implementing the Strategy by scanning the decisions and measures issued in light of the implementation of the results of the Strategy on the website of the Permanent Supreme Committee for Human Rights in the period from 11 September 2022 until September 2023, and the websites of the entities entrusted with implementing the Strategy. In addition, the report scanned the decisions issued by the weekly meetings of the Council of Ministers since September 2022 and reviewed the issues of the Official Gazette. The analytical vision contained in the report remains based on collecting documented evidence, official data, and statistics.

For the purposes of this report, the "first axis" refers to the axis related to civil and political rights; the "second axis" refers to the axis related to economic, social, and cultural rights; the "third axis" refers to the axis related to the human rights of women, children, youth, people with disabilities, and the elderly; and the "fourth axis" refers to the axis related to building capabilities and education in the field of human rights, which are the terms mentioned in the Strategy.

First: Paths for Implementing the NHRS

The National Human Rights Strategy was based on three operational tracks to achieve its objectives: Legislative track; Institutional development track; capacity-building and human rights education. Maat noted that there is a disparity in the efforts made during the second year of launching the Strategy, and according to each of the three paths, even with the wide abundance of draft laws that were referred by the Council of Ministers and some national councils such as the National Council for Women to the House of Representatives. However, the Council adopted only a law that would partially serve to achieve a targeted outcome in the second axis on economic, social and cultural rights, namely the law establishing the Egyptian Intellectual Property Authority. We acknowledge legislation alone cannot achieve the desired outcome and that its implementation is crucial for enforcing these legislations. Approving legislation is a positive step towards achieving the objectives that pass through the legislative development process. The organization responsible for implementing results that pass through the legislative development process scored 50 points on Maat's index to measure progress in achieving the results during the second year of the Strategy, compared to about 25 in the first year.

The outcomes that require institutional building and development remained the most effective in the second year since the launch of the Strategy, which is confirmed by the measures documented by Maat during the period covered by the report. However, this path also faced challenges that we will explain in the section devoted to it, delaying the implementation of a set of outcomes from the Strategy. However, the entities entrusted with implementing the results that pass through the institutional development path achieved 345 points in the second year of the Strategy, compared to about 310 points achieved by these entities in the first year.

Regarding the path of capacity building and education in the field of human rights, there is no doubt that the training programs and plans to spread the culture of human rights have been implemented by some of the agencies concerned with implementing the outcomes of the Strategy, such as the Ministry of Social Solidarity, Planning and Economic Development and the Ministry of the Interior, in cooperation with other stakeholders such as the Supreme Standing Committee for Human Rights and the National Council for Human Rights. There is no doubt that these programs partly contributed to raising the capabilities of some public employees and made some young people, especially in universities, aware of the National Human Rights Strategy. However, it is important to acknowledge that even after two years since the Strategy was launched, there still exists a noticeable lack of awareness regarding human rights culture, and this could be what caused the President to

call on a number of ministries concerned with working to intensify their efforts in promoting a culture of human rights during the period covered by the report. This is confirmed by the number of points obtained by the entities entrusted with achieving the results that pass through the path of capacity building and education in the field of human rights, obtaining only 30 points in the second year of the Strategy compared to approximately 45 points in the first year, as the paths with the least points achieved on the indicator for measuring progress in Achieving the results of the Strategy. The total number of points obtained by the entities entrusted with implementing the results of the Strategy according to the three implementation paths is shown in the first table below. The number of points obtained by these entities two years after the launch of the Strategy reached 805 points, with 425 points in the second year and approximately 380 points in the first year of a total of 2,260 points that these parties are supposed to achieve by September 2026, which is the end of the first phase of the Strategy.

Table 1: Points on the indicator for measuring the achievement of Strategy outcomes

Points scored according to the three paths of the Strategy	First-year	Second year	To be achieved by the end of the 1 st phase
Legislative development path	25	50	330
Institutional development path	310	345	1510
The path of capacity building and human rights education	45	30	420
Total	380	425	2260

1. Legislative Development Path

The National Human Rights Strategy aimed to issue and amend approximately 33 pieces of legislation that would serve the achievement of the outcomes in the four axes of the Strategy. These legislations were distributed among the axis on civil and political rights, with (19) legislation; the second axis on economic and social rights, with (6) legislation; and the third axis, on the rights of women, children, youth, people with disabilities, and the elderly, with (8) legislation.

In the second year of the Strategy, eight draft laws, amendments, or additions to existing laws were discussed in three axes of the Strategy, such as the House of Representatives or the bodies entrusted with presenting projects in the ministries, as well as in the national dialogue. This compares to about four draft laws that were referred to the House of Representatives in the first year of the Strategy. See the second table below, which shows these projects, the stage the draft law has reached, and the party submitting this project.

Table 2: Draft laws discussed in the second year of the Strategy

Draft law	Implementation phase	Project Provider
Amending the Criminal Procedure Code - Adding legislation providing alternatives to pretrial detention - Adding a legal amendment granting appeals to trials in criminal cases - Adding articles stipulating the controls for pretrial detention	Final drafting stage (House of Representatives)	Council of Ministers
New child law draft	Initial stages of discussion The Ministry of Social Solidarity	Ministry of Solidarity
A draft law to regularize the conditions of domestic workers	Initial stages of discussion Ministry of Labor	Ministry of Labor
New labor law draft	Final drafting stage	Council of Ministers
Amending the Penal Code	In the final stages	The National Council for Women and

Draft law	Implementation phase	Project Provider
"To tighten the penalty for harassment in the workplace"		approval of the Council of Ministers
Issuing legislation prohibiting the pretrial detention of children over 15 years of age	Under discussion	The Ministry of Social Solidarity
Draft law establishing the Discrimination Commission	Discussed and included in the outcomes of the National Dialogue	Human Rights Committee of the National Dialogue
Project to establish the Egyptian authority for Intellectual Property.	Adopted after approval by the House of Representatives and signature by the President of the Republic	Council of Ministers

The above table shows the discussion of seven draft laws, some of which are in their final stages, such as the draft amendments to the Code of Criminal Procedure, including the addition of articles on alternatives to pretrial detention. This may achieve the second target in the second sub-item on personal freedom in the first axis on civil and political rights, but that it will not be achieved until the draft amendments are approved. These amendments also include articles that tighten controls on the practice of pretrial detention, which is an implementation of the first outcome in the same sub-clause on personal freedom. The draft amendments also included an article that stipulates adding the degree of appeal to trials of crimes issued by all types of courts. This article, if its presence in the final version of the amendments is agreed upon, may achieve the result that the Strategy targeted in the third sub-item on strengthening litigation and fair trial procedures, which refers to the necessity of issuing a law that allows the resumption of criminal trials in all types of courts. Other draft laws that were discussed in the second year of the Strategy in preparation for its adoption included the Draft of the New Labour Law, which stipulates crucial amendments that guarantee the rights of women and some other groups, such as children. The Council of Ministers also approved an article tightening penalties for harassment in the workplace to be added to the Penal Code, but the final approval of the House of Representatives is awaiting the draft law adding this article to the Penal Code.

Other draft laws related to a draft law to regularize the conditions of domestic workers, which is being discussed within the framework of the Legal Committee of the

Ministry of Labor in preparation for presenting it to Parliament. As well as the draft law on the Discrimination Commission, which was agreed upon in the national dialogue and was included in the outcomes of the first phase of the dialogue. The law on establishing the Egyptian authority for Intellectual Property is the only law that has been adopted, which partially achieves the fifth target outcome regarding developing legislation related to the protection of intellectual property contained in the eighth sub-item on cultural rights in the axis on economic, social and cultural rights of the Strategy. We clarify that the “partial” phrase related to the fact that achieving the previous outcome will not come with the issuance of a single law, as the number of legislations that need to be re-amended or approved about intellectual property cannot be limited to one law.

Maat believes that although the discussion of previous draft laws represents progress compared to the first year of the Strategy towards implementing the outcomes that require a legislative path, the House of Representatives is supposed to accelerate the pace of discussion of draft laws that achieve outcomes in the National Human Rights Strategy. However, it seems that the Council is giving priority to other legislation; this is evident in its approval of 188 draft laws submitted by the Council of Ministers and members of the Council during the third session of the second legislative term from October 2022 to July 2023, which falls within the period covered by the report. Although this number of legislations gives an impression of the efforts made by Parliament, there are concerns that these projects included only a very limited number of projects included in the outcomes of the National Human Rights Strategy.

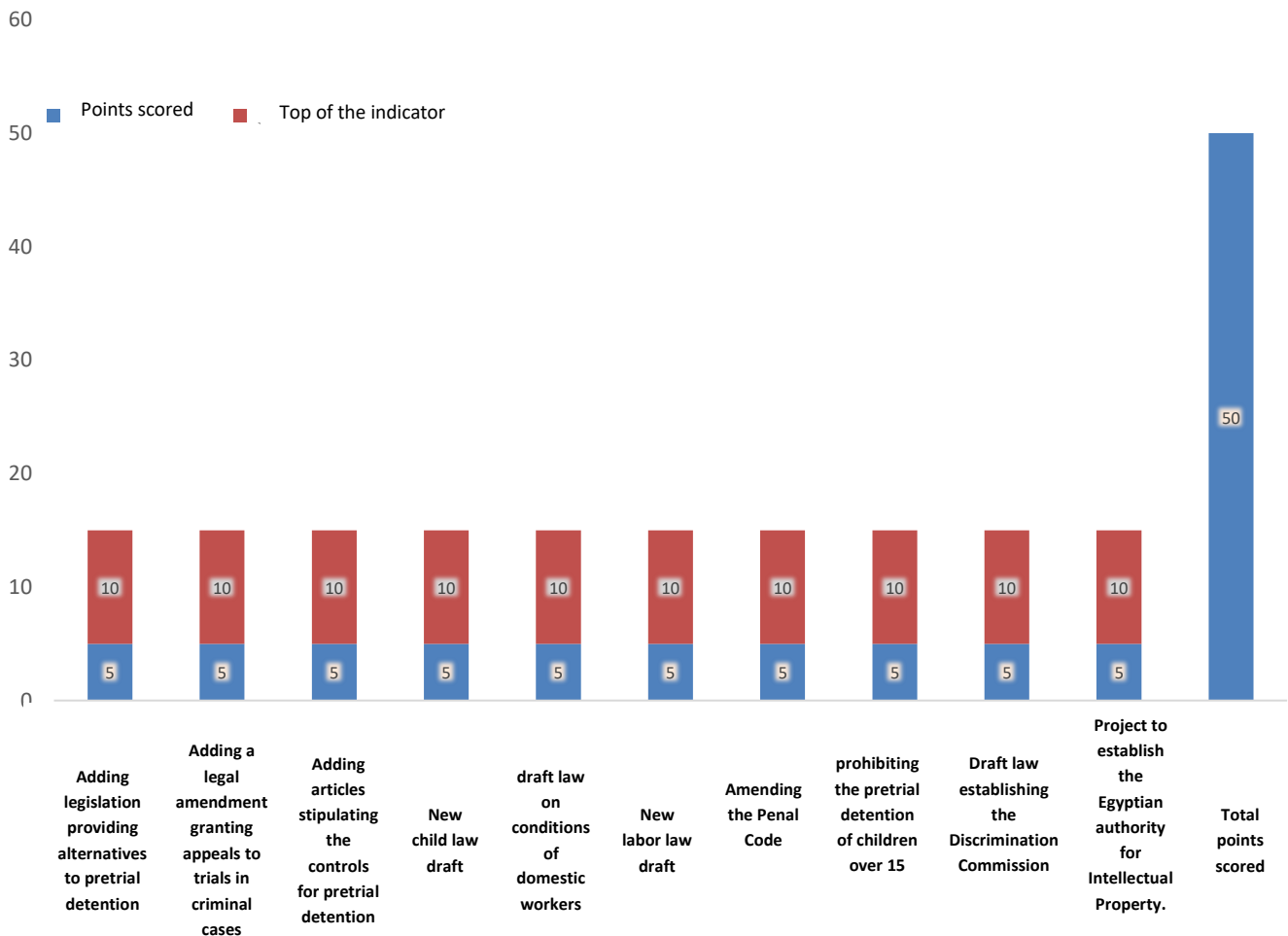
Some of the legislation targeted by the National Human Rights Strategy was postponed until the fourth session scheduled for October 2023. There was an opportunity for the House of Representatives to adopt four laws related to the outcomes of the National Human Rights Strategy that were discussed since the first year of the Strategy. However, there was no agreement on the phrasing of all articles of these projects before the end of the third session on July 12, 2023. The four draft laws are the Early Marriage Prevention Law; The Elderly Rights Law; and some amendments to the Labor Law that guarantee the right of women in the private sector to have equal rights to leave as their counterparts in the public and governmental sectors. Additionally, there was a draft law proposed to settle commercial and civil disputes through alternative mechanisms to ease pressure on the courts.

Some believed that the failure to issue any laws that would achieve outcomes regarding the path of legislative development in the second year of issuing the Strategy is due to the nature of the laws targeted by the National Human Rights Strategy, especially

the required amendments to the Penal Code, the new Labor Code, and the Personal Status and Criminal Procedure Code. These draft laws contain a large amount of text that requires time for agreement. However, until the date of writing this report, there has been no agreement reached on these laws. On the other hand, some argued that the entity responsible for achieving the objectives through legislative development did not prioritize the amendments or new laws that were intended to be issued or revised by the Strategy.

The entities entrusted with implementing the Strategy obtained (50) points According to the indicator adopted by Maat to measure progress on the legislative development path, compared to about (25) points obtained by the same authorities in the first year of the Strategy, and this is evident in the first figure below.

Figure 1 - Legislative development path indicator



It is noted from the above figure that in the second year of the Strategy's launch, the organization responsible for implementing the outcomes gained 50 points, mainly due to proposed amendments in the draft Criminal Procedure Law, which is awaiting approval by the next session in October 2023. These changes involve adding a degree of appeal for criminal cases, exploring advanced options for pretrial detention, and including articles related to setting controls for pretrial detention justifications. The amendments to the Criminal Procedure Law earned 15 points and are expected to receive full points once approved by the Council and signed by the President of the Republic then published in the Official newspaper. Additionally, another entity responsible for amending Chapter Three of the Children's Law regarding social protection acquired five points since a new Children's Law with amendments concerning social protection is currently under discussion by the Ministry of Social Solidarity.

The draft law comes as an alternative to Draft Law No. 12 of 1996, amended by Law No. 126 of 2008. The draft law also includes special provisions for strengthening the judicial system for child witnesses, which could contribute to achieving the outcome contained in the third sub-section on fair trials in the first axis of civil and political rights. However, the draft law has not yet been submitted to the Council of Ministers in preparation for referring it to the House of Representatives.

The Ministry of Labor (formerly known as Manpower) is currently discussing a proposed law for domestic service workers that allows the integration of domestic workers who are not currently covered by labor laws into the formal economy and ensures that their rights are protected by their employers and employment offices. Accelerating the implementation of this law would help achieve the outcome of defining the conditions of domestic workers, as outlined in the third sub-paragraph on the right to work within the economic, social, and cultural rights section. The achievement of this result represents the implementation of a number of recommendations presented to Egypt by the treaty bodies of the United Nations and within the framework of the universal periodic review mechanism.

The organization responsible for implementation also gained five points on the index due to an amendment made to the draft of a new labor law, which provides additional protection for the rights of women in the workforce. For example, the draft law states in Article 95 that if five or more women are employed, the employer must display a copy of the regulations for employing women in the workplace. However, the Joint Committee of the House of Representatives decided that regardless of the number of women working,

the regulations for employing women should be displayed. The law is expected to be approved in October 2023 during the fourth session.

In general, during the period covered by the report, the Council discussed the draft labor law, and it came in five books, which included fourteen sections, containing sixteen chapters that included 267 articles aimed at addressing the gaps included in the current Law No. 12 of 2013 and its amendments: in addition to investigating the balance between the two sides of the employment relationship, linking the wage to the production process, and establishing a specialized judicial system to handle labor disputes promptly. In addition to linking the labor law, social insurance, and pensions, union and labor organizations criticized the draft labor law to be issued, claiming that it does not solve the problem of irregular employment and does not impose an obligation on the private sector to pay the minimum wage. It was not subject to broad societal dialogue.

The body entrusted with implementing the result related to the establishment of the Discrimination Commission also received 5 points, as the outcomes of the National Dialogue that were published in August 2023¹ to the public stated that the fifth paragraph of the outcomes of the National Dialogue stated that it's crucial to implement Article 53 of the Constitution to establish and regulate the Discrimination Commission. The outcomes are the importance of establishing the Commission based on the constitutional text that guarantees equal rights and freedoms for all citizens regardless of their religion, gender, ethnicity, language, social status, or other considerations.

Some may be surprised that a full score (10 points) was not given to the draft law establishing the Egyptian Intellectual Property Authority after its approval by the President. However, this is because the intended outcome required multiple legislations related to intellectual property to be amended, and the draft law was among several pieces of legislation that are supposed to be worked on to grant the full score of 10 points.

Achieving full points according to the top of the index remains linked to the final approval of these projects, as these projects did not receive the final approval of either the Council or the President of the Republic, and therefore were not published in the Official newspaper. Draft laws that were considered a priority by civil society organizations and the National Council for Human Rights remained in place, and no decision was taken on these projects, including the law on the right to exchange information, statistics, and official data; law on preventing and combating violence against women; as well as the law to protect whistleblowers and witnesses, which are laws that were not on the agenda of the House of Representatives during the third session of the second legislative term, which was adjourned in July 2023 by decision of the President of the Republic.

¹ What is Egypt's National dialogue? <https://hrightsstudies.sis.gov.eg/national-dialogue/what-is-egypts-national-dialogue/>

2. Institutional Development Path

Development represents a decisive tool in building institutions and in the efficient work of the administrative apparatus and leads to the advancement of human rights. While working on this publication, Maat followed the measures and procedures initiated by the authorities entrusted with implementing the outcomes of the National Human Rights Strategy; specifically, those results that require executive actions or measures related to the institutional development process and by following up on the outcomes, the achievement of which requires institutional development. Maat found that the National Human Rights Strategy included (151) outcomes whose implementation requires the participation of the executive body and working on them within the framework of institutional development. The agencies entrusted with implementing the outcomes in the institutional development path obtained (345) points in the second year of the launch of the Strategy, compared to about 310 points in the first year, which represents slight progress, while the agencies entrusted with implementing the Strategy are supposed to obtain 1,510 points by September 2026, which is the time frame for the end of the first phase of the National Human Rights Strategy. In the third table below, the total points obtained by the entities entrusted with achieving the outcomes of the Strategy, which require institutional development, are 655 points out of a total of 1,510 points that must be achieved by the end of the time frame for the first phase of the Strategy.

Table 3: Points achieved according to the institutional development path

Institutional development path	Points scored	Points required according to time range (5 years)
First-year	310	1510
Second year	345	
Total	655	

1.2 path of institutional development in the axis of civil and political rights

This sub-section of the report focuses on the progress achieved in implementing the outcomes within the axis of civil and political rights, the implementation of which requires institutional development, as well as some of the challenges facing the path of institutional development in general.

Maat noted that the authorities responsible for achieving the intended outcomes have taken several steps, procedures, and measures that align with the path of institutional

development. In the first axis related to civil and political rights, Maat noted that with regard to the outcome concerning the right to life and physical safety of individuals residing in social care homes. This outcome aims to enhance their protection. During the reporting period, the Ministry of Social Solidarity initiated a training program to enhance the skills of their rapid intervention team, which handles reports of violations against social care home residents, including homes for the elderly. Additionally, the Ministry actively participated in a 16-day campaign against violence towards women and girls to raise awareness about protecting individuals in social care homes. However, despite these efforts, there were still reported instances of violence against residents during this period, indicating a need for additional reporting mechanisms to be established.

Maat also noted that in light of working to achieve the outcome contained in the first subparagraph on the right to bodily integrity and contained in the first axis, which relates to benefiting from the framework for reviewing the most serious crimes for which the death penalty is imposed. In June 2023, the Permanent Supreme Committee for Human Rights organized a three-day panel discussion to strengthen criminal justice in the Egyptian legal framework, including a review of the most serious crimes for which the death penalty is imposed. Various stakeholders participated in this event, such as judges and members of the National Council for Human Rights, as well as representatives of civil society.

With regard to the outcome in the same sub-item of the axis on civil and political rights related to increasing and developing psychological rehabilitation programs for victims of violence. Maat noted that the Ministry of Social Solidarity signed a cooperation protocol with various local and international civil society organizations to enhance workers' skills in women's shelters and counseling centers across the country to provide a range of psychological, social, and legal counseling services to victims of violence. The Senate study conducted in February 2023 also recommended expanding the establishment of specialized units that focus on rehabilitating and reintegrating victims of violence. Additionally, efforts have been made to establish safe women's units in Egyptian universities, such as the one established at Suez Canal University in cooperation with the United Nations Population Fund on May 11, 2023. These units provide a safe environment for victims of physical, psychological, and sexual violence.

About the outcome of generalizing the implementation of the project for remote review of pretrial detention orders without going to court, is contained in the second subparagraph of the first axis on civil and political rights. Maat reported that the Ministry of Justice in Egypt is working towards implementing a project for remote review of pretrial detention orders without requiring physical presence in court. This project allows the

accused to present their defense before the judge remotely, whether they are being considered for release or renewal of detention. In February 2023, the Ministry of Justice opened a court complex in Cairo with advanced technology to facilitate remote pretrial detention renewals. According to the Minister of Justice, this project will be implemented in all Egyptian courts in stages.

Regarding the outcome contained in the third sub-paragraph on enhancing fair and equitable litigation and trial procedures in the first axis, related to expanding the use of technology in Egyptian courts. The President of the Republic directed on May 8, 2023, during his meeting with the Minister of Justice, to enhance the use of modern technology and artificial intelligence techniques to improve the litigation system in Egypt, specifically in converting speech to written text during judicial sessions. This would help reduce any delays in procedures. Although this approach has already been tried in some courts but has not been finally generalized.

Regarding the outcome stated in the third sub-paragraph related to the right to litigation and a fair trial, the first axis on civil and political rights includes a goal to raise public awareness about Article 161 bis of the Penal Code, which stipulates punishing anyone who carries out an action or abstains from an action that would cause discrimination between individuals or against a group of people because of gender, origin, language, religion, or belief.” Maat noted limited efforts to raise awareness of this article, which consisted of introducing this article during the national dialogue sessions when discussing the proposal to establish a commission to eliminate discrimination, which was fully integrated into the outcomes of the first phase of the national dialogue.

The outcome in the fourth sub-item in the first axis on civil and political rights aims to improve the treatment of prisoners by continuing to develop and modernize prison facilities, as well as establishing new prisons to reduce overcrowding. This would help enhance the living conditions and healthcare for prisoners. In the context of continuing work to achieve this result, the number of prisons in Old Masama that were closed until August 2023 reached about 27 prisons out of 43 prisons, according to government data, which represents 62.8% of the total current prisons. This took place in parallel with the transfer of inmates in those prisons to correctional centers, which currently stand at five, with the expansion of establishing correctional and rehabilitation centers. The entity entrusted with implementing this result has received five points out of ten points. To receive full points, all remaining prisons need to be closed and all inmates need to be transferred to the planned correctional and rehabilitation centers under the Ministry's plan.

With regard to the outcome in the same fourth sub-item, which relates to the continuation of visits to prisons by the National Council for Human Rights and community organizations in accordance with the relevant legal controls. The National Council for Human Rights has continued to conduct these visits in coordination with the Ministry of Interior and the Public Prosecution, and members of the National Council have sometimes been allowed to engage in dialogue with inmates, but the need remains to intensify these visits, allow entry to all wards and dialogue with all inmates, and not limit these visits to correctional centers. The entity entrusted with implementing this result also obtained five points out of ten points for this result according to the index adopted by Maat.

Regarding the outcome related to the same fourth sub-item regarding the expansion of holding religious and cultural seminars for prison inmates in coordination with the Ministry of Endowments. Maat has noted that the entity entrusted with implementing this result continues to hold religious and cultural seminars during the second year since the launch of the Strategy while expanding the establishment of places Dedicated to the practice of religious rituals within correctional and rehabilitation centers. However, these seminars remained linked to national and religious occasions and were not held outside of these occasions except within a narrow scope. Therefore, the entity entrusted to implement this result needs to expand beyond national and religious events and not restrict the scheduling of these seminars only to specific dates.

Regarding the goal of increasing the number of prison inmates enrolled in industrial technical schools within the prison sector. The Minister of the Interior has issued Resolution No. 1042 of 2023 to create six new correctional and rehabilitation centers in the city of 15 May in the Helwan region of Cairo. This will be followed by the establishment of technical and industrial schools. It is expected that the process of transferring inmates to the new correctional and rehabilitation centers will coincide with their enrollment in these schools, and obtaining full points for this result requires accelerating the pace of establishing the six new centers.

Regarding the outcome in the fourth subparagraph, which is related to increasing the number of convicts who enjoy a period of external rest, the Egyptian government indicated in the mid-term report submitted to the Universal Periodic Review Mechanism that the state is working to implement the principle of granting the inmate (prisoner) a 48-hour leave without guard for a visit to his family and return to prison on the condition of good conduct, but no information is available whether this application has entered into force or not and is still being worked on.

Regarding the outcome in the fifth sub-item on freedom of opinion and expression in the first axis, which relates to strengthening the climate and culture of pluralism and the diversity of opinions and visions regarding various public issues. Maat noted that the period following the start of the national dialogue sessions was characterized by strengthening the culture of pluralism supported by encouraging discussions related to ending pretrial detentions and releasing prisoners of conscience, as well as allowing members of the Civil Movement, an opposition group in Egypt, to freely appear in both government and private media to discuss political and economic matters.

Regarding the outcome of increasing coordination and integration between development partners (government, private sector, civil society, and donors) contained in the seventh subsection on the right to form associations. Maat reported that some steps have been taken by entities responsible for implementing this Strategy. These steps include establishing the Civil Alliance for Development Work and ratifying the law to formally establish it. The total funding received by civil society until April 2023 reached 16.2 billion pounds for about 1,288 associations and civil society organizations from about 1,832 donors. Most of this funding went to development organizations working on economic empowerment projects and improving the social conditions of individuals. In the framework of working to achieve the same result, the Ministry of International Cooperation, in cooperation with the United Nations country team in Egypt, signed the “Strategic Framework for Cooperation for Sustainable Development 2023-2027,” which was worked on for about two years, after the launch of the National Human Rights Strategy. This framework aims to support Achieving sustainable development goals in accordance with Egyptian priorities, by enhancing social protection and implementing the right to development, working to support the ability to adapt to climate change, the economic and social empowerment of women, implementing government principles, and the ability to achieve the principle of leaving no one behind. Egypt received an invitation to join the Global Development Promotion Center, known as GDPC, which would enhance coordination between partners regarding development policies. The Ministry of International Cooperation is currently working to achieve this result by establishing a mechanism to coordinate these efforts among development partners, but this mechanism, despite its announcement in April 2023 has not been established yet.

With regard to the outcome related to strengthening communication between the government and civil society organizations working in the field of human rights is contained in the seventh sub-item in the first axis of the National Human Rights Strategy. Maat noted some positive measures aimed at achieving this result, and among these measures and

recent procedures, on August 22, 2023, the Ministry of Justice announced the end of investigations into the case known in the media as a “foreign financing case” with 75 organizations, and the Ministry confirmed in its statement that there is no basis for filing a criminal case. This decision would cancel the preservation orders, cancel all decisions banning travel, placing on arrival watch lists, or seizing funds issued in these investigations. The investigating judge will likely end with 10 other organizations, which are the remaining organizations in the foreign financing case. Although it is a positive step and comes from many efforts to narrow the gap between civil society, especially those that have special fields of work for human rights, and the government, there are still allegations regarding the cumbersome procedures that require registering these organizations. Closing this case and preventing some of the restrictive measures facing civil society organizations working on human rights would fully achieve the intended result.

Regarding the outcome of continuing restoration work for religious, Islamic and Jewish archaeological sites, the Ministry of Endowments (Awqaf) continued to develop 517 mosques, the most prominent of which are the Mosque of al-Hakim bi Amrillah, Amr Ibn El Ass Mosque, and the Al Zahir Baybars Mosque. Maat also noted the measures taken by the Ministry of Tourism to restore a number of projects Christian and Jewish religious sites, including the Fortress of Babylon; and the Ben Ezra Temple in Cairo Governorate, which was opened on August 31, 2023. As well as the Monastery of Prince Tawadros, the Monastery of the Virgin Mary, the Monastery of Mary Girgis, the Monastery of the Martyrs, the White Monastery, the Church of the Virgin Mary, and the Church of Abu Sefein in Sohag Governorate, the Monastery of St. Paul in the Red Sea Governorate, and the Monastery of the Angel. Michael Aswan Governorate, and a number of other monasteries, the Church of the Virgin Mary in Kafr El-Sheikh Governorate, the Church of Deir Abu Hans, Monastery Abu Fana in Minya Governorate, and the Monastery of El-Ganadla in Asyut Governorate.

Regarding the outcome related to monitoring media materials that involve discrimination or incitement, Al-Azhar Observatory has implemented a wide range of various measures to spread the concepts of religious freedom and consolidate the culture and values of dialogue, tolerance, and respect for religions. They closely follow and analyze the activities of terrorist and extremist groups related to religious freedom issues and release a monthly report on the activities of these groups. The Ministry of Endowments and the Egyptian Church have also condemned any incidents that promote discrimination or hate speech.

As for the outcome related to coordination between religious institutions in Egypt, Maat noted an attempt to integrate efforts, both between Islamic religious institutions and

Christian religious institutions, and there continued to be joint convoys launched by religious institutions to spread the spirit of tolerance and values of citizenship, especially in the border areas. On December 18, the Sheikh of Al-Azhar welcomed an expanded dialogue between the Cathedral Church and the Al-Azhar Foundation.

Regarding the result of the committee in charge of regularizing the status of churches has continued its efforts to legalize more churches and their service facilities that have not yet been subject to regulation.” contained in the eighth subsection on freedom of religion and belief in the first axis. The main committee for regularizing the status of churches continued its work in legalizing churches and their service facilities. On May 15, 2023, the committee announced the legalization of 216 churches and affiliated buildings, bringing the total number of churches and their affiliated buildings, since the start of the committee’s work until now, to 2815. This supports the achievement of this outcome.

Maat also noted attempts to work to achieve the outcome contained in the sub-item on the formation of political parties, especially building the capabilities leadership, and organizational skills of members and cadres of political parties in the field of elections. The national dialogue has already incorporated plans in its agenda for reforming the political party system, to overcome the two main challenges that the Strategy aimed to overcome- firstly, the insufficient human and financial resources available to parties, and secondly, the weak societal presence of parties.

Regarding the outcome of implementing more youth initiatives aimed at promoting and supporting the values of citizenship and belonging, as well as implementing more activities that would form community awareness of religious freedom issues, consolidating national identity, and rejecting intolerance and extremist ideas.” Some Egyptian universities sent convoys to the villages most in need among the activities of these convoys were holding awareness sessions on the values of citizenship, accepting others, and spreading the values of tolerance. The outcomes of the National Dialogue included a separate section on the preservation of Egyptian identity, which included a number of recommendations concerning the establishment of national strategies and the drafting and preservation of a document on identity.

Challenges Preventing the Implementation of some of the Outcomes in the Axis of Civil and Political Rights

1.2.2 Law on Freedom of Information, Statistics and Official Data

The National Strategy for Human Rights, in the fourth subsection of the axis on civil and political rights, aimed to issue a law for the freedom of circulation of information and official documents. Some stakeholders, such as the National Council for Human Rights and civil society organizations, considered that this law represents a necessity to regulate the circulation of information, statistics, and official data. It called on Parliament to discuss the draft law, but two years after the launch of the Strategy, the draft law no longer represents a priority for the body entrusted with implementing this result in the National Human Rights Strategy. There were signs that the draft law could be placed on the national dialogue agenda, but this did not happen at least in the first phase.

The legislative environment in Egypt is devoid of a law regulating the right to freedom of circulation of information and official documents, which has led some journalists to be imprisoned as a result of their diligence on some issues. Despite the Supreme Media Council presenting a draft law for freedom of circulation of information more than two years ago, it has not been discussed in the corridors of Parliament and is considered a major reason for Some journalists work diligently and publish false information, and then they are punished with claims of publishing false news, promoting rumors, and harming the public interest. Approval of the draft law would support the right of citizens, journalists, and researchers to access; circulate; and transmit information from official sources.

2.2.2 The continued weakness of political parties

The National Human Rights Strategy identified two significant obstacles that political parties faced: the first was a lack of human and financial resources, while the second was their limited societal presence. The reluctance of political parties was seen as a major contributing factor to the lack of genuine party competition in Egyptian politics. Despite addressing this issue in the national dialogue and proposing amendments to the party law, current parties are still criticized for their lack of competent or popular members and internal regulations. We see a need to amend the current political parties law to give parties the ability to develop their resources from multiple sources, in addition to facilitating the possibility of merging these parties to work effectively rather than remaining fragmented entities.

2.2.3 High fees for litigation

The implementation of the outcomes in the sub-item on litigation and fair trial procedures in the first axis on civil and political rights faced clear challenges that may

discourage some individuals from going to the courts in the first place. During the reporting period, Maat observed that litigation fees had increased more than tenfold, according to testimonies of a number of lawyers, either by increasing the fees that were already in place or by introducing other new fees. This led to individuals being reluctant to resort to the judiciary, as lawyers were forced to increase fees. For example, the price of stamps rose from 1.5 pounds to 15 pounds, as well as an increase in the price of contract stamps. In addition, filing a lawsuit in administrative courts used to cost 150 pounds, but now costs around 650 pounds as a regular fee. This is for example but not limited, and this in turn affects a sub-clause in the first axis of civil and political rights related to strengthening litigation procedures and enhancing fair and equitable trials.

2.2 Axis on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Regarding the outcome related to enhancing coverage of health services nationwide, especially in rural, remote, and border areas. Maat noted the implementation of the Ministry of Social Solidarity, in cooperation with the UN Development Programme (UNDP), an awareness program for community development, which targets about three million people in 580 Egyptian villages to work on a range of issues, including strengthening health care and reproductive health, especially in remote and rural areas. Most Egyptian governorates also organized free medical convoys in remote and border areas, within the framework of the Decent Life Initiative.

Regarding the target of improving the quality of health facilities, the statements of the Presidential Initiative for a Decent Life aim to build hospitals and health units, equip them with equipment, and operate them with medical personnel, in addition to launching medical convoys and providing health services. Regarding the target related to increasing the rates of medical service for recipients of treatment at state expense, the government continued to implement treatment programs at state expense. Official statistics indicate that the Ministry of Health issued 1800000 decisions for treatment at state expense during the period covered by the report, and this procedure contributes to implementing the result related to increasing the rates of speedy provision of medical services to patients treated at state expense.

Regarding the outcome of completing the implementation of the 100 Million Health Initiative contained in the first sub-item of the second axis on economic, social, and cultural rights, Maat noted the continuation of work on implementing the initiative, as a presidential initiatives to detect Hepatitis C for school students continued, and the number of students who were detected reached about 263000 students until January 2023. The Ministry of Health and Population also examined about 237000 children born within the 100 Million

Health Initiative to detect genetic diseases in newborns. In general, work on the initiative continued during the reporting period, by focusing on the most vulnerable groups and in the representative and border areas.

With regard to the outcome of developing a sound management system for waste, including the safe disposal of hazardous waste and increasing the participation of the private sector in the field of solid waste collection and development, the Ministry of Environment launched during the period covered by the report an electronic application for the Waste Management Regulatory Authority affiliated with the Ministry of Environment, which provides a number of waste-related services, including issuing a license to practice the activity of collecting and transporting non-hazardous waste, and issuing licenses to establishments operating in the collection and transport of non-hazardous waste. The authority is responsible for establishing and managing the national system for managing waste information and data in coordination with the ministries, relevant authorities, and local administration units, through the authority's supervision of the management and dissemination of this information and data in a way that makes this information and data available. In the same context, Maat noted that the Ministry of Environment, through the National System for Waste Information and Data Management through the electronic application of its Waste Management Regulatory Authority, has determined the pricing for the service of issuing a license to practice the activity of collecting and transporting the non-hazardous waste, and issuing licenses to operating establishments so that the pricing ranges between 5,500 to 200000 pounds.

In the framework of working on the same result, Maat noted the approval of the Council of Ministers in March 2023 of the draft decision of the President of the Republic regarding the framework agreement between the Arab Republic of Egypt and the Secretariat of the "Basel" Convention with regard to controlling the transport of hazardous waste across borders and their safe disposal, with regard to Basel Convention Regional Centre for Training and Technology Transfer.

Regarding the outcome of reducing the illiteracy rate, Maat noted that the illiteracy rate currently stands at 23.8%, according to the head of the General Authority for Adult Education, but the disparity is noted in the illiteracy rate for girls compared to boys, as the illiteracy rate for males reached 19.4, while the illiteracy rate for females reached 28.3, making the average illiteracy rate for both sexes 23.8%. The government continues to work on the literacy of 56,000 people in 2022-2023 while continuing initiatives and campaigns aimed at reducing the percentage to more than that.

Regarding the outcome contained in the sub-item on the right to education in axis II of the Strategy, which relates to expanding the establishment of schools for all educational levels in all regions, the economic development plan stipulates allocating 4.2 billion pounds to establish, develop and expand 8,400 classrooms in all educational levels. However, according to official data, Egypt is still suffering from a deficit in the number of classrooms, and according to World Bank estimates in October 2022, the current classroom deficit is estimated at about 117 classrooms that must be built in about five years.

Regarding the target related to raising enrollment rates, reducing dropout from the educational process, and narrowing the educational gap between urban and rural children, despite the Ministry of Education's attempts to limit withdrawal from education, official data vary regarding estimating enrollment and dropout rates. According to the data, 149,000 students drop out of education every year, including 28,000 students in the primary stage, and 121,000 students in the preparatory stage. According to other data issued by the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS) in its pre-university education report issued in January 2023, the total number of dropouts from education in the primary and preparatory levels reached 68,831 male and female students. The report indicated that the number of students who dropped out of primary education reached 25,380 students, including 14,797 male students and about 10,401 female students, while about 43,351 students dropped out of middle school, including 16,631 male students and 26,720 female students.

Regarding the outcome of developing the technical education and vocational training system, increasing specializations and linking education to the needs of the labor market, the Ministry of International Cooperation, in partnership with the European Union, continued implementing the TVET program to support and reform technical and vocational education and training. The program works with more than 25 government agencies and more than 30 partners to implement the mission of reforming technical education and vocational training in Egypt. Through a clear vision for the future, the program brings together the best local and international practices. The number of students who were trained within the framework of the program reached about 104000 students, 10000 teachers were trained and about 100 schools and centers were developed within the framework of the program as well. The continuation of this program would lead to the implementation of this outcome, however, the technical development Strategy, which the Ministry claimed was under preparation, has not yet been published.

Regarding the outcome related to increasing job opportunities contained in the third sub-item on the right to work from axis II, the Ministry of Labor, in partnership with the

International Labor Organization, is preparing to launch the National Employment Strategy, which is said to provide information on about 145 professions. Some government agencies also continued to organize or sponsor employment forums during the period covered by the report, however, unemployment levels decreased only slightly during the period covered by the report.

With regard to the target outcome contained in the sub-item on the right to work related to achieving tangible progress with regard to integrating the informal economy into the formal economy, and establishing an accurate database of informal employment, Maat noted that an accurate database for irregular workers has not been established, despite statements attributed to the Ministry of Labor that this database is soon to be established. However, this database has not been established, and the number of irregular workers registered with the Ministry still does not exceed more than 331000, according to statements by Reda Al-Arabi, Executive Director of the Ministry's Irregular Employment Accounts Management Unit in January 2023. The informal economy still holds 40% of the GDP according to data from the Ministry of Planning and Economic Development in December 2022.

Regarding the result related to identifying and filling gaps in the coverage of social protection programs for target groups, the Ministry of Social Solidarity reported an increase in total support by about 203 billion pounds during the period from 2020 to 2023, and the number of beneficiaries of the Takaful and Dignity conditional cash support program also increased, as it began in 2014 with 1.795 million families and reached approximately 5.3 million families this year. The cash support budget also developed from 3.4 billion pounds in the 2014-2015 budget to 31 billion pounds in the 2023-2024 budget. In April 2023, the Ministry of Finance reported raising the social support and protection budget to 529.7 billion pounds, an increase of 48.8%, to mitigate the effects of inflation on the most vulnerable groups.

Regarding the outcome of increasing the awareness of groups benefiting from social protection programs about the positives of family planning, the Ministry of Solidarity, especially through social pioneers, worked on campaigns to educate beneficiaries of some of the Ministry's programs about family planning. In addition, 9.3 million family awareness visits on family planning issues have been implemented since the start of the "2 Enough" project, in partnership with 108 civil society organizations in awareness campaigns and the provision of reproductive health services. 400,000 women also visit the "2 Enough" clinics affiliated with civil society organizations to obtain family planning and reproductive health services. According to data attributed to the Ministry of Solidarity, 310,000 women used

family planning methods, representing 78% of the number of women attending the “2 Enough” clinics.

Regarding the outcome of expanding support for the Takaful and Dignity program to target families suffering from multidimensional poverty, with the economic empowerment of families who are able to work to get out of the poverty line, Maat noted a set of measures aimed at eliminating multidimensional poverty in Egypt. Social security allocations in the 2023-2024 budget increased to 31.2 billion pounds, compared to about 22.2 billion in the 2022-2023 budget. However, the entity entrusted with implementation did not score the full ten points on this score, given that the program did not cover all families suffering from poverty, which the Ministry of Solidarity estimated in its report on the Ministry’s achievements at approximately 9.1 million families.

Regarding the outcome related to developing the social security system and the insurance and pension system to include all target groups, Maat noted that the recent increases to improve wages included allocating 55 billion pounds to increase pensions by 15% as of April 2023, in order to ease the burdens on poor families, and reduce the effects of inflation resulting from the Russian-Ukrainian war and the depreciation of the currency. The number of pensioners in Egypt is about 10.8 million people in October 2022. However, given that the number of workers in Egypt reaches about 27 million workers, the number of those enrolled in the social insurance system who can reap social security benefits is less than 14 million workers only, which adds more burdens to the insurance system and makes it vulnerable to non-sustainability.

Regarding the outcome of strengthening social protection policies to provide assistance in emergencies and crises, the Legal Committee in the Ministry of Labor is currently preparing a draft law that establishes an emergency relief fund for irregular workers. The draft law aims to assist the social worker category, especially in times of emergency, in a way that enhances social protection and health care for them.

Regarding the outcome related to reducing encroachment on agricultural lands, the agencies entrusted with implementing this result continued to carry out campaigns to remove encroachment on agricultural lands. The draft agricultural law presented to the House of Representatives in October 2022 also aimed to prevent encroachment on agricultural lands by tightening the punishment for violators and obliging companies that provide basic services, such as electricity and water, to disconnect service on property built on agricultural land.

Regarding the outcome of providing reserves of strategic commodities, reserve levels of commodities remained safe amid presidential directives to maintain a period of at least

six months in reserve for all food commodities. The government also concluded deals to supply wheat, which strengthened the presence of these basic commodities.

Regarding the outcome of reducing food waste rates, Maat noted some awareness campaigns to reduce this practice. However, estimates by the UN Agriculture Organization continue to indicate that an average of 91 kilograms is wasted annually for every Egyptian, and according to estimates by the National Center for Criminal Investigations, the percentage of food wasted is increasing on special occasions, holidays and festivals; At least 60% of edible food is wasted, and therefore the entity entrusted with implementing this result still needs additional steps to achieve this result.

With regard to achieving work to provide the right to food, Maat noted the measures aimed at providing food commodities to people with limited income and the poor in light of the unprecedented levels of inflation and high prices, as the Ministry of Local Development continued to implement the Sanad Al-Khair initiative to provide goods to citizens at reduced prices. According to data attributed to the Ministry of Local Development, the initiative led to the provision of food commodities at low prices ranging between 20 to 25% in rural villages and popular areas. The Council also approved the Prime Minister's draft decision to form the National Committee for Food and Nutrition Systems, which aims to establish a sustainable national system for food and nutrition systems to reach better levels of nutrition and better indicators of food security by 2030, through coordination between all ministries and government agencies.

Regarding the targeted outcome of increasing the average availability of safe drinking water for the population, raising the quality of drinking water, and increasing the number of water desalination plants, this result has been partially achieved, as the average per capita share in Egypt remained 530 cubic meters as of March 2023, which is less than the global average. However, the government has been working to increase water desalination plants, as there are 76 existing seawater desalination plants, with a total capacity of 831.69 thousand cubic meters per day. The government also directed 2.5 billion pounds during the current fiscal year to establish and develop 27 desalination plants, in the governorates of Matrouh, Port Said, and Kafr El-Sheikh during the fiscal year 2022-2023. It also directed the authority entrusted with participating in implementing this result to make public investments in the plan for the current fiscal year 2022/2023 to develop safe drinking water and sanitation services amounting to 97.1 billion pounds, in order to achieve and implement many development projects, programs and initiatives and the completion of more than 240 sanitation projects. The World Bank and the Asian Bank also finance the sustainable sanitation services program, targeting poor villages in six governorates.

Regarding the target result, “Development of sanitation infrastructure projects” contained in the sixth sub-item on the right to water, Maat noted that the Decent Life Initiative was targeting in its assessment of the poorest villages included in the first phase of the initiative, 377 villages that have sanitation services and water networks. Regarding the outcome of developing unsafe slum areas, according to government data, unsafe slum areas have been eliminated after spending about 63 billion pounds to develop unsafe slum areas, which numbered about 357 areas in 25 governorates².

Regarding the outcome of increasing the number of housing units for all segments, the Social Housing and Mortgage Finance Fund revealed on February 15, 2023, the executive position of the One Million Housing Units Project, as the Fund explained the completion of the implementation of 619000 housing units, and the construction of 247 other units is still ongoing, it is planned that the state will begin constructing 134,000 new units during the coming period. The Fund also warned that 509000 families, representing 2.5 million low- and middle-income citizens, have received new housing units within the framework of the project. The Social Housing Fund also continued to issue advertisements for social housing during the period covered by the report, while opening grievances regarding people who did not meet the conditions. However, there is still an estimated shortage of about 2.5 million housing units in housing directed to those with the lowest incomes, taking into account that the high demand for these units is closely linked to the housing increase.

Regarding the outcome related to tightening penalties for violating the conditions of exploitation and housing for social housing units, campaigns on residential units in new cities continued, during which a large number of citizens rented the units allocated to them or changed their activity from residential to commercial or administrative. The Social Housing Fund reported in August 2023 that whoever violates this decision will be punished by imprisonment for a period of not less than one year and a fine of not less than 20000 pounds and not exceeding 100,000 pounds, or one of these two penalties, along with deprivation of the obtained housing unit. The law stipulates that “it is not permissible to dispose of the housing unit acquired by a citizen except after 7 years have passed and getting written approval from the Fund stating that he has obtained a release from all obligations and has paid for the services prescribed in this regard.”

Regarding the outcome of building the capabilities of human rights units, Maat noted the steps aimed at establishing these units in ministries that have not yet been established. However, there are still some ministries that are relatively late in establishing these units,

including human rights units in the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Labor, and the Ministry of Business Sector.

Table 4: Human Rights Units According to Relevant Ministries

Ministry	Human Rights Unit
Ministry of Social Solidarity	✓
Ministry of Planning and Economic Development	✓
Ministry of Justice	✓
Ministry of Foreign Affairs	✓
Ministry of Endowments	✓
Ministry of Migration	✓
Ministry of Education	✓
Ministry of Higher Education	X
Ministry of Health	X
Ministry of Youth and Sports	✓
Ministry of Environment	X
Ministry of Housing	X
Ministry of Local Development	✓
Ministry of Culture	X
Ministry of Commerce and Industry	X
Ministry of Business Sector	X
Ministry of Labor	X

Regarding the result targeting the distribution of cultural services in various parts of the country in a balanced manner, especially the remote, border and most needy areas, Maat noted the adoption of the “People of Egypt” project to spread cultural services among the citizens, especially in the border areas, and integrating them with the people of other regions for the age group from 18 to 35 years.

With regard to the outcome of the sub-item on cultural rights, which is related to increasing awareness of the importance of intellectual property and its protection, the authorities entrusted with implementing this result have begun working to achieve it. The Ministry of Justice, in cooperation with the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), held the first regional conference on modern judicial trends in the field of intellectual property during the period from 5 to 7 March 2023, besides establishing the

Egyptian Authority for Intellectual Property. The National Intellectual Property Strategy was also launched during the same period covered by the report in a manner consistent with international standards, which may constitute an incentive to stimulate creativity in various fields and specializations.

Regarding the outcome in the sub-item on protecting and developing heritage crafts and increasing the support provided to them, the authorities entrusted with implementing this result continued to organize exhibitions of heritage crafts during the period covered by the report. The Ministry of Social Solidarity also signed cooperation protocols with several parties to provide support to these crafts, but the full points in this result were not achieved due to the need to increase support for these industries.

3.2 Challenges Preventing the Realization of Some Economic and Social Rights

1.3.2 Weak Market Control Mechanisms

The National Human Rights Strategy, in the 5th sub-section entitled “The Right to Food” from the axis of economic and social rights, aimed to strengthen control over markets as a result that could guarantee the flow of goods at affordable prices. However, one of the concerns is the weakness of these mechanisms at the present time, which has made the prices of basic goods rise on a daily basis without justification. According to the directions of the Ministry of Supply and Internal Trade in February 2023, merchants urged the announcement of all the prices of goods and products available for sale in a clear way, but this did not happen. Before that and in a public session, members of the House of Representatives accused the Minister of Supply of failure to control prices in January 2023. The minister justified this weakness by the lack of inspectors covering all markets across Egypt, given that these inspectors have not been appointed since 1996, that is, for nearly three decades.

2.3.2 Unsustainable Food Systems

In the Arab regional meeting, which was held during the period covered by the report on food systems, Ambassador Mohamed Negm, Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs, identified the challenges facing Egypt regarding the right to food. He pointed out that Egypt faces accumulated challenges with regard to food systems and maintaining their sustainability, as it is a food-importing country in the first place, which coincides with the continued increase in housing and the scarcity of rain. Maat shares what Ambassador Muhammad Najm acknowledged in his views, and also stresses the necessity of working to implement the outcomes of the national dialogue related to food security, especially the distribution of the increase in the number of contract agricultural crops.

3.3.2 Failure to Reach the Percentages Stipulated in the Constitution for Spending on Education and Health

Maat noted the continued non-compliance with the percentage stipulated in the amended Egyptian Constitution for 2019 in terms of spending percentages on education and health. Article 19 of the Constitution stipulates that “the state is committed to allocating a percentage of government spending for education of no less than 4% of the gross national product, which will gradually increase to be consistent with global rates. According to Article 18, the state is committed to allocating a percentage of government spending on health of no less than 3% of the gross national product, which will gradually increase until it is consistent with international rates. However, the Ministry of Finance is expanding the concept of spending on education to include what is being spent on any educational

activities by all ministries and affiliated departments and other public bodies such as service or economic bodies or even scientific and research centers, in addition to the spending of public sector companies and the public business sector owned by the state. Likewise, on the issue of health, the Ministry of Finance's definition of health spending extends to include, for example, spending on drinking water and sanitation services and other activities that do not fall directly within the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Health. It was also reported that the Ministry considers the two sectors' share of loan installments and interest to be spent on education and health, which is an unrealistic increase in the budget of the two sectors. Returning to the 2023-2024 budget shows an increase in what was allocated to both education and health, but in the declared value (nominal value) only and not the real value. As a specific example, nominal spending on education increased from 193.7 billion pounds to 229.9 billion pounds between 2021/2022 and 2023/2024, with a growth rate of .19%. On the other hand, real spending on education increased from 108.6 billion pounds to 108.9 billion pounds during the same period, with a growth rate of only 0.3%, which did not reach the specified rate.

As for the health sector, the severity of the discrepancy between nominal and real spending increases, as declared spending on health increased from 135.6 billion pounds to 147.8 billion pounds between the years 2021-2022 and 2023-2024, with a growth rate of 9%, but this increase did not compensate for the negative effects of the increase in inflation rate, so the result was a decline in real spending by 10.7% from 114.3 billion pounds to 102.1 billion pounds during the same period mentioned above. What constitutes a cause for concern is that not reaching the percentages stipulated in the Constitution delays making clear progress in two basic items in the axis of economic and social rights in the national Strategy, namely the education and health items, which represents also a decline in achieving 2 SDGs, which are SDG 3 of good health and SDG 4 of good education.

3.4.2 Shortage of Healthcare Personnel

The health system is still suffering from a shortage in the number of doctors, which means delaying the achievement of the outcome related to increasing the numbers of human doctors and nursing staff members in the government health system. The rate of doctors in Egypt is 9 doctors per 10,000 citizens, while the global rate of the World Health Organization is 23 doctors per 10,000 citizens; this shortage in the number of doctors is fueled by the continuous migration of doctors. Egypt is trying to increase the number of nursing staff by expanding the colleges that serve this purpose. Data from the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics in May 2023 indicate that the rate of increase in nursing staff members in Egypt is 12.6%, which is the rate of increase in nursing staff

members in Egypt due to the expansion of the establishment of nursing colleges. In the period from 2022 until the end of July 2023, more than 4,000 doctors resigned, and this number has increased annually and quadrupled since 2016, and then these doctors migrated to other countries. To deal with this crisis, the Egyptian Minister of Health decided in March 2023 to form a committee, headed by him, to stop the migration of doctors and work to improve their conditions. A number of government officials and union members attributed the migration of doctors to the low wages of some of them and the lack of a law for medical responsibility.

3.5.2 Partial Cancellation of Support Provided for Social Housing

The Council of Ministers' approval in February 2023 to adopt the selling prices of residential units for social housing according to free pricing may affect the provision of subsidized service to the segments most in need. Although the Social Housing Fund denied canceling the total subsidy, it drew attention to the fact that the decision concerns specific areas and some units remaining from the previous advertisements. This support, if completely abolished, may affect the outcomes in the sub-item on the right to housing in the axis on economic and social rights and may undermine the efforts made recently by the government to promote the right to housing.

3.2 Axis on the Human Rights of Women, Children, Youth, People with Disabilities, and the Elderly

Regarding the outcome mentioned in the first sub-item of the axis on the human rights of women and children, Maat noted some measures taken by the concerned parties to implement this result to expand reproductive health programs while strengthening partnerships in this framework. The Ministry of Health and Population praised the cooperation with Pathfinder International, in partnership with the Family Planning and Reproductive Health Program called “Usra” which is a program funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development with an amount of \$39 million. The program aims to facilitate citizens’ access to sufficient information about voluntary family planning, medical consultations, contraceptives, and related services while enhancing knowledge of reproductive health. The program also aims to reach 10.6 million people in 10 Egyptian governorates within 5 years. The 2 Enough Program, which provides free family planning and reproductive health services, continued during the period covered by the report.

Regarding the outcome related to enhancing coverage of health services nationwide, especially in rural, remote, and border areas, the Ministry of Social Solidarity, in cooperation with the UN Development Programme, implemented an awareness program for community development, which targets about three million people in 580 Egyptian villages to work on a range of issues, including enhancing health care and reproductive health, especially in remote and rural areas. Most Egyptian governorates also organized free medical convoys in remote and border areas, within the framework of the Decent Life Initiative. However, according to union data published by local Egyptian newspapers, 450 rural health units in Upper Egypt and remote areas do not have a single doctor, which means that 1,800 villages are suffering from a shortage of health services. Maat also noted a shortage in some specialties in rural and remote areas, including specialties of anesthesia, radiology, analysis, general surgery, and intensive care doctors.

Regarding the outcome related to implementing awareness campaigns specifically for mental patients, the Decent Life Initiative launched the first initiative to support mental health. The Ministry of Solidarity also reported in January and February 2023 the launch of a campaign aimed at preventing the stigmatization of mental patients, however, the Ministry has not taken executive steps to launch the campaign yet.

With regard to the related outcome, and to complement the efforts made by the entity entrusted with implementing this result in the first year of launching the Strategy, this entity took similar steps to enhance the implementation of this result. The World Bank announced a grant worth \$9.13 million from the Global Environment Fund to expand the

scope of the Air Pollution and Climate Change Management Project in Greater Cairo; this grant would enhance the environmental benefits of the original project, both at the local and public levels, by improving the management of electronic and healthcare waste.

With regard to achieving the outcomes related to the social empowerment of women, Maat noted the completion of the Ministry of Health and Population's development of the national program for monitoring maternal mortality concerned with identifying the direct causes of death during pregnancy, childbirth, abortion, and the so-called postpartum period, as Maat noted numerous reports praising the reduction in the maternal mortality rate in Egypt. In the context of working to raise awareness of various diseases, Maat noted that the Ministry of Health implemented an advertising campaign aimed at raising awareness of the seriousness of breast cancer and the importance of continuous screening and encouraging women to go to health units. The National Committee for the Eradication of Female Genital Mutilation also launched the National Plan to Eradicate Genital Mutilation 2022-2026, in partnership with the National Council for Women (NCW) and the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood (NCCM).

With regard to achieving the outcomes to achieve the economic empowerment of women, the draft labor law that was discussed in the Parliament during the period covered by the report includes the principle of the right to equal pay, and adding an article prohibiting all forms of sexual harassment, violence, attacks, harassment, and abuse of power in the workplace, beside adding an article granting paternity leave, and another allowing a system of flexible working procedures and hours, the standards and conditions of which are specified in the work regulations. The NCW also began the implementation phase of the digital savings and lending program by holding qualification courses that include savings and lending methodology and financial education in 13 governorates. The Council also continued to work on a door-knocking campaign entitled "Entrepreneurship for Rural Women." The government is also considering developing a proposal to reduce working hours to about six hours for four categories in the public and private sectors, including breastfeeding mothers.

Regarding the outcome of benefiting from the female police force to support security plans in various fields, Maat noted that the Minister of Interior, in the recent movement, appointed a woman with the rank of Major General to the position of Director of the Human Rights Department in the Ministry of Interior. Various reports also instructed the women police to reduce harassment crimes and work to combat domestic violence. Regarding the targeted outcome of developing family courts, Maat noted that the entity entrusted with implementing this outcome, which is the Ministry of Justice, continues to

work on implementing this outcome by developing family courts and establishing others during the period covered by the report.

Regarding the outcome related to raising awareness of children’s rights, Maat noted that many concerned governmental and national agencies, specialized national councils, and civil society organizations have made continuous efforts to raise awareness among all segments of society about the rights of children and protect them from all forms of violence, abuse, and harmful social practices. Maat also monitored requests from the Solidarity Committee of the House of Representatives urging the government to raise awareness of children’s rights and encourage initiatives that work to consolidate their rights.

As for the outcome of reducing the continuation of practices belonging to the worst forms of child labor, Maat noted some of the measures taken by the government to limit these practices, such as awareness campaigns and other initiatives. The new draft labor law to be issued also includes a ban on children working before reaching the age of 15 with the possibility of training at the age of 14 without restricting their access to education. However, combating the worst forms of child labor in Egypt continues to require further efforts to eliminate this phenomenon and to achieve the results targeted by the National Human Rights Strategy in this context, in light of the absence of the effective influence of the labor force offices in the governorates, which are, according to Article 137 of Executive regulations of the Children’s Law No. 12 of 1996 amended by Law No. 126 of 2008, mandated of conducting permanent monitoring of the employer to ensure his compliance with the employment of children with the provisions of the law and the regulations, specifically the provisions related to the specified working hours, the employer’s good treatment of children, and not causing physical or psychological harm to the children working for him. However, in most cases, labor force offices do not carry out these roles, contrary to the view expressed by the International Labor Organization (ILO) that eliminating child labor in a manner consistent with SDG 8.7 requires strong labor inspection systems, as inspection rarely reaches the areas of workers in the informal economy, where the majority of children work.

Regarding the result targeting a study to encourage the expansion of the application of the system of alternative foster families for orphaned children, Egypt has set a goal of abolishing orphanages by 2025 and replacing them with alternative care families. 37 care homes were closed in 2022, according to data from the Ministry of Social Solidarity. In general, Maat noted some reports that praise the role of the Egyptian government in implementing the best interests of children. An example of this is the allocation of

investments in the State Plan for Economic and Social Development 2022-2023 of more than 7 million pounds to develop policies related to child protection in Egypt.

About the outcome of reducing unemployment rates among young people and developing their capacities to suit the labor market, the outcomes of the National Dialogue announced in August 2023 stipulated the need to link students' graduation projects in colleges, institutes, and schools concerned with entrepreneurship with a focus on agribusiness projects because of the related provision of food security. It stipulates that the entrepreneurship culture should be publicized, and young people should be encouraged to understand and apply it through schools, youth centers, and various media. It stipulates that an investment fund should support the financing of start-ups created by young people.

About the outcome of strengthening services for young people in border governorates and remote areas, it noted that public investments worth 1.9 billion pounds strengthened youth services in border and remote areas. About the target of the sub-item on enabling young people to participate in public life, the Government has invested 33 million pounds in 4 civic education centers in different governorates. It has also directed 25 million pounds to establish and develop sports cities in the governorates and 100 million pounds for youth city facilities.

As regards the outcome of promoting the participation of persons with disabilities in the disability focus, Egypt nominated expert Hiba Hijras for the post of Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities, and the expert is likely to be appointed as rapporteur. About the outcome of enhancing the enjoyment of the right to adequate employment by persons with disabilities, the Ministry of Labour continued to recruit persons with disabilities according to appropriate available jobs. From January to July 2023, 8,000 persons with disabilities were recruited.

About the target result, the development of integrated services for persons with disabilities, the Ministry of Social Solidarity announced in February 2023 the introduction of integrated service cards for persons with disabilities according to specific colors. Each color refers to the proportion and degree of disability; the usual blue color has been determined for severe and severe disabilities, green for moderate disabilities, and purple for minor disabilities.

The disability card gives a person with disabilities many advantages, as a means of enabling the holder to combine two pensions, integration in schools and universities, appointment of 5% of the number of employees, exemption from taxes, customs fees on cars, and exemption from taxes. In addition to obtaining suitable government housing,

customs exemption on compensatory devices, reduction on transportation and communications and dealing with the holder in front of all government agencies that he is disabled, free disclosure in hospitals, discounts on subscriptions of youth centers and sports clubs, and free entry.

About the objective of "Strengthening legal assistance to older persons and facilitating their access to litigation," Maat noted that the Ministry of Justice prepared the premises of the judicial authorities and bodies, made them available to older persons and persons with disabilities in a manner commensurate with their needs and provided them with all services in an accessible manner. The Ministry of Justice has also allocated assistance offices for the service of persons with disabilities and older persons in all the Republic's magistrates' and magistrates' courts, and many staff have been trained in all courts to provide legal assistance to persons with disabilities and facilitate all their work. The outcome of encouraging the expansion of care homes for older persons, Maat noted the existence of 338 senior citizens' homes and clubs, benefiting more than 32 thousand elderly people.

3.3 Challenges Preventing the Implementation of Some of the Women and Children's Rights

3.1 Failure to introduce comprehensive law on women's protection from violence

The National Human Rights Strategy (NHRS) in the Women's Clause aims to enact a comprehensive law to combat all forms of violence against women. No one discussed this law two years after the National Human Rights Strategy. After the National Dialogue session on domestic violence, a group of women's organizations and some parties denounced what they called "disregard for national dialogue," debates on the Law on Violence against Women. Maat notes that the discussion of a comprehensive law to protect women from violence was necessary, owing to the high rates of violence to which Egyptian women were subjected. According to the latest survey conducted by the Central Mobilization and Statistics Agency, 34% of women who had been married had experienced physical or sexual violence; it achieves the 7a third theme of the National Human Rights Strategy.

3.2 Poor control over worst forms of child labor

According to official statements, Egypt suffers from limited numbers of labor inspectors, as well as a poor ability to follow up on the worst forms of child labor; it requires raising the performance of labor inspectors who monitor child labor in hazardous establishments and occupations to improve their professional capacities and to proceed with the appointment of a many of inspectors to bridge the gap between the current number of inspectors and the assumed number, taking into account the ILO's technical recommendation that there should be one inspector per 15,000 workers in developing economies, Egypt is therefore required to work on the employment of several other labor inspectors.

4.2 Capacity Building Axis

About the objective of sub-item I, "Establishment of a national human rights database on the compilation, compilation, and cataloging of laws, codes of conduct, relevant international and regional conventions and instruments acceding to them, and judicial applications in the application of human rights standards and safeguards issued by Egyptian higher courts. Maat noted that the Ministry of Justice had established a national legislative base and that the Human Rights Department of the Attorney General's Office had continued to update a central database, compiling data and information on most crimes related to human rights violations and those accused thereof, and the outcome of investigations, criminal sentences, and classification by established scientific requirements.

It also established a database on enforced disappearances, two databases for the crimes of trafficking in human beings and smuggling of migrants, and a database on torture, cruelty, and unjust detention. However, this rule remained inaccessible to the public.

About the outcome of the same sub-item of the Decade for Partnerships with the Private Sector and the Civil Society in Promoting Societal Culture in Human Rights Principles and Values, it noted the signing by the Ministry of Social Solidarity of several protocols for cooperation with some civil society human rights organizations to promote community culture with human rights in this outcome realization. About the outcome of sub-item V on technical support in human rights to national training institutions for capacity-building of civil servants, Maat supports some national bodies, the Local Development Centre of the Ministry of Local Development, human rights departments in the ministries, and the Egyptian governorates. However, Maat still notes that this support is limited and requires more.

3. Capacity-Building & Human Rights Education Path

The course of human rights education and capacity-building is the basis for any national human rights Strategy and operational action plans as guided by the President of the Republic on December 12, 2022, Minister for Foreign Affairs Sameh Shoukry, working to spread the culture of human rights in Egypt.

With legislation, public policies, and rhetoric urging respect for and promotion of human rights, such legislation and policies must be transformed into reality, and personnel aware of these legislation and policies and the importance of their implementation. The Strategy therefore devoted a full focus to education and capacity-building, especially for members of the police, law enforcement, and judicial and administrative bodies.

During Maat's classification of the results targeted in the four pillars of the Strategy, it was found that (42) an outcome could be achieved by advancing the course of education and capacity-building. In the second year of the Strategy's launch, it followed up on the efforts of the government agencies mandated to implement the Strategy in the course of education and capacity-building, in cooperation with the specialized national councils, or cooperation with international organizations.

These efforts (efforts related to the dissemination of a culture of human rights, capacity-building, and the organization of events in detail and the executing entity in the table below) consisted of workshops and lectures for the dissemination of a culture of human rights, consistent with the majority of the results targeted in the first subtheme of Axis IV, or university students.

In addition to establishing training to build the capacity of staff in the various ministries and the governorates, this is in line with target No. 5 of the fifth subtheme on strengthening training programs for administrative personnel and educating them in the fourth axis, and finally organizing events and seminars to publicize the national human rights Strategy.

The mandate holders for the implementation of the Strategy in the education and capacity-building trajectory won 30 points in the indicator adopted by Maat in the methodology of the report compared with some 45 points in the first year of the Strategy and is expected to reach 420 points by September 2022.

Table 5: Points made in capacity-building and human rights education path

Capacity-building and Human Rights Education Path	Points Scored	Points are required according to the time limit (5 Years)
First Year	45	420
Second Year	30	
Total	75	

The previous table shows a decline in the operationalization of capacity-building and human rights education in the second year of the Strategy, compared to the first year. This may be driven by some stakeholders' lack of enthusiasm for or awareness of the importance of the Strategy, which forms the basis of national human rights strategies. However, some ministries continued to play their part in trying to operationalize some results that require capacity building and human rights education through programs and training courses organized by them such as the Ministry of Planning and Economic Development, the Ministry of Interior, the Social Solidarity Zones and finally the Ministry of Local Development. In April 2023, the Human Rights Sector of the Ministry of Interior held more than six courses and lectures for officers working in the various sectors and departments of the Ministry to spread the culture of human rights among these officers. The continuation of these courses undoubtedly increases the likelihood of achieving the results targeted by the National Human Rights Strategy (NHRS) related to the training of members of the Police Service, which states that the Police Service's capacity-building and training in adherence to internationally recognized human rights values and principles should continue. The Ministry of Planning, Solidarity, and Local Development, in cooperation with the National Council for

Human Rights or the Standing High Committee on Human Rights, also held similar training sessions. However, a number of facts documented by Maat during the reporting period show the continuing weakness of the human rights culture of some workers in government and private institutions, especially social welfare homes, which calls for further steps to train public officials in all sectors of the world in the field of human rights so that the culture of human rights is reflected in reality. The National Council for Human Rights, as the national human rights institution, has a crucial role to play in stimulating human rights education and capacity-building, particularly in light of the Council's European Union-funded projects aimed at trying to participate in the implementation of the National Human Rights Strategy, particularly the dissemination of a human rights culture.

Table 6: Capacity-building and education activities

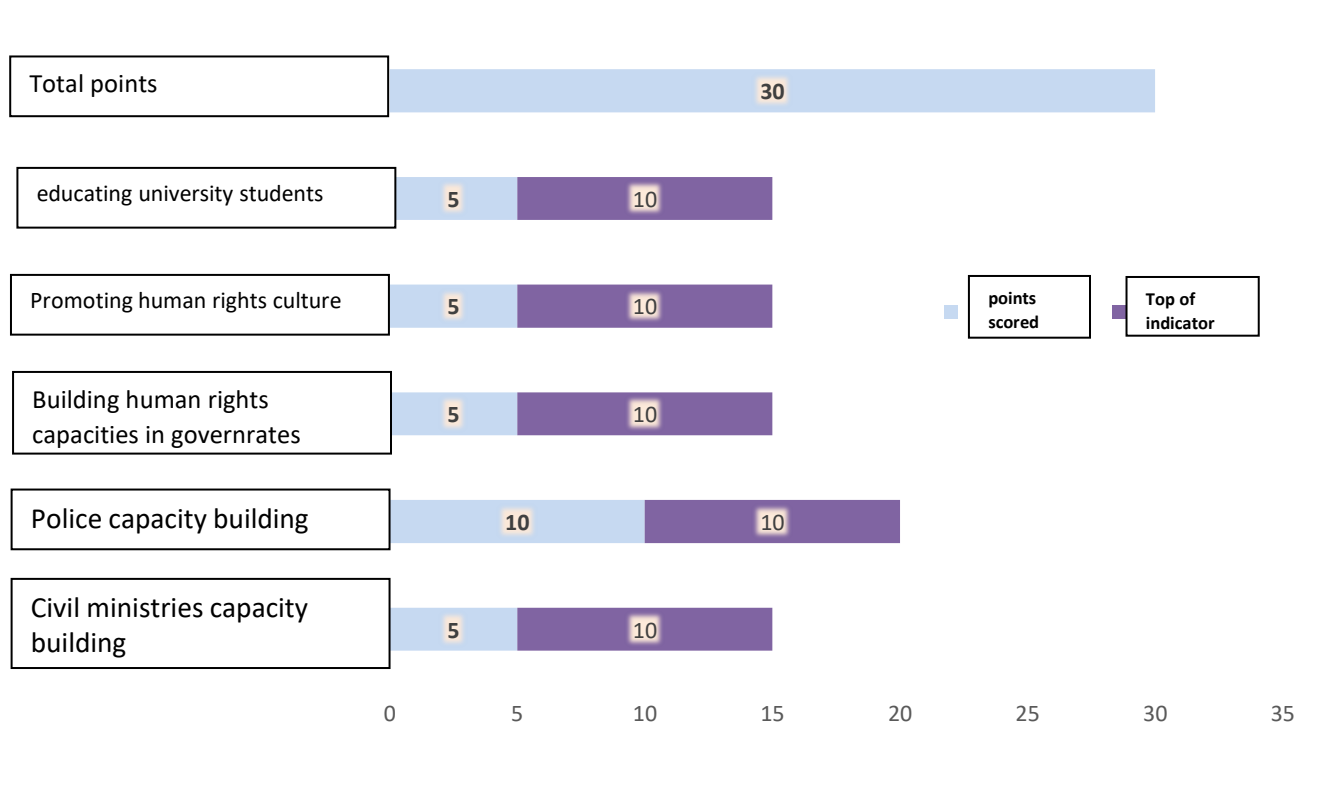
Activity	Subject	Implementing Entity	Target group
Capacity-building training programs and courses	Capacity-building in human rights for Ministry of Social Solidarity personnel	National Council for Human Rights in cooperation with the Ministry of Social Solidarity	23 staff members, including 19 women, serving in leadership positions in the Ministry of Social Solidarity, including directors of citizen service departments, heads of central departments of the Ministry's General Office, and social workers
	Introduction to the United Nations Standard Minimum Principles for the Treatment of Prisoners (Nelson Mandela Rules); to learn about States' experiences with the internal inspection mechanism, as described in the handbook for assessing compliance with the Nelson Mandela Rules	United Nations Counter-Narcotics Office in cooperation with the Ministry of the Interior	Workers in reform and rehabilitation centers.

Activity	Subject	Implementing Entity	Target group
	and understanding the rights and treatment of inmates in accordance with the Law on the Organization of Community Reform and Rehabilitation Centres and the United Nations Model Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners.		
	Training week to activate human rights units in governorates	Ministry of Local Development and Permanent High Commission on Human Rights	28 Heads of Human Rights Units
	Capacity-building for provincial staff	Human rights units in the Red Sea, Fayoum and Western governorates	Number of workers in the governorates of Fayoum, Red Sea, and West
	Human rights fundamentals of the Ministry of Planning's staff, as the first stage of a series of training programs involving all Ministry staff and affiliates, aimed at strengthening the human rights process in Egypt and intensifying national capacity-building efforts and training in this area in accordance with the principles formulated in the National Human Rights Strategy.	Ministry of Planning in cooperation with the National Council for Human Rights	The staff of the Ministry of Planning and Economic
	spreading of human rights culture among members of the interior	Ministry of Interior	Officers and cadres of the Ministry of Interior

Activity	Subject	Implementing Entity	Target group
	Training course on citizenship and human rights values within the framework of the project to promote the values of citizenship and social participation of young people in Delta governorates	General Information Authority Ministry of Solidarity in Cooperation with Civil Society	60 people, including girls, in Delta governorates
Workshops	Capacity-building and training in reporting to the Committee on Economic and Social Rights	OHCHR and the Permanent High Commission on Human	Relevant ministries
	Capacity-building in the field of human rights	ICRC and the Ministry of Interior	Police Academy Students
	Capacity-building in tracking national recommendations and implementation plans	Office of the High Commissioner and the	Number of staff of the Permanent High Commission on Human Rights
Cooperation protocols	Protocol of cooperation for capacity-building and research on human rights	National Council for Human Rights and Ministry of Social Solidarity	Employees of the Ministry of Solidarity, its affiliated bodies and NGOs in six
	Protocol of cooperation for the dissemination of a human rights culture	National Council for Human Rights and a number of Egyptian universities	Number of university students
Seminars	Strengthening the role of youth in the dissemination of human rights	National Council for Human Rights in cooperation with Ain Shams University	Number of students from Ain Shams University
	Dissemination of human rights culture in governorates	National Council for Human Rights and some provincial human rights units	Staff of provincial human rights units

The above table shows the efforts of those responsible for implementing targeted outcomes that require education and capacity-building, activities of those responsible for implementing results that require capacity-building and human rights education, such as some ministries such as the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Planning and Social Solidarity, in cooperation with the National Council for Human Rights and some international bodies such as the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. However, there is a need to prepare and launch a national plan for human rights education that would achieve the target of the second sub-item on integrating the human rights component of education into the fourth focus on capacity-building and human rights education. There is also a dearth of scientific research and studies that develop human rights curricula and integrate them into pre-university and tertiary education curricula to achieve the outcome of the second sub-item of Axis IV, which is the result of the expansion of research and scientific studies on the development of methodologies for the teaching of human rights materials.

Figure 2: Capacity Building and Education Index in the field of human rights



Second: Challenges Facing the National Human Rights Strategy

Two years after the launch of the National Human Rights Strategy (NHRS), the implementation measures and steps taken by the implementing agencies to achieve 226 targeted outcomes were distributed to the four pillars of the Strategy's structure. However, operationalizing these results through the Strategy's three paths continues to face fundamental challenges that delay the achievement of the results. Overcoming these challenges is not difficult but requires complementarity of efforts among all stakeholders and the application of directives issued by the executive branch, whether the President of the Republic or the Prime Minister. In general, these challenges are:

1. No Operational Action Plan

For the second year, the lack of an operational action plan is the challenge to operationalize some of the targeted outcomes of the National Human Rights Strategy. Some outcomes are unclear on who is mandated to implement them, and others require partnership. Having demonstrated this challenge in the first year of the Strategy's launch, other stakeholders paid attention to this challenge to operationalizing the Strategy. For example, in May 2023, the National Council for Human Rights said that the National Human Rights Strategy calls for an executive destination plan that works to achieve the objectives. In July 2023, the National Council for Human Rights President said that the National Human Rights Strategy will be valuable if it is followed by operational steps. At the National Dialogue session held on September 3, 2023, some participants demonstrated the previous view, considering that the Strategy, although a document of particular importance, needed to be implemented and demanding agreement on an implementation plan that included follow-up on the implementation of the outcomes contained therein.

2. Poor Basic Education

Maat noted that during the second year of the Strategy, those responsible for implementing the outcomes of capacity-building and human rights education focused on the issue of the dissemination of a human rights culture among university youth, forgetting that this culture is supposed to start from school or early education as kindergarten. Work has not yet begun on the target of the first subitem of Axis IV on education and capacity-building for the preparation of a national plan for human rights education.

3. Debt crisis

High levels of debt affect human rights, particularly economic and social rights. In Egypt, debt and debt interest servicing have been rapidly consulted due to successive crises such as COVID-19 and the Russian-Ukrainian war. Egypt's high external debt carries additional burdens affecting the realization of economic and social rights. There is a direct correlation

between high debt servicing and maintaining the stability of the financial system. It also limits the State's ability to spend on social sectors, especially education and health, Debt service is deducted by interest and loan premiums from 81% of total general expenses in the current fiscal year budget 2024/2023. The interest on the debt in the state budget 2022-2023 was about 690.2 billion pounds, compared to 579.6 billion pounds in the budget for 2021-2022, an increase of 19%, which reduces spending on economic and social rights and limits development efforts. In the interactive dialogue with the independent expert on the effects of external debt at the 52nd session of the Human Rights Council, held from 27 February to 4 April, Egypt acknowledged the challenges faced as a result of the increased cost of debt and the vicious circle of the increase in foreign debt and acknowledged that these debts had an impact on human rights. Egypt also acknowledged in its voluntary report for 2021 that government debt, along with multiple crises such as COVID-19, is a challenge in achieving sustainable development goals. These goals intersect with fundamental human rights, such as the right to health, education, and decent work, which naturally affects the most vulnerable and primary care groups.

4. Economic Challenges

The economic challenge is one of the challenges facing the operationalization of some of the objectives of the National Human Rights Strategy, particularly the economic and social rights theme. The Russian-Ukrainian war increased the effects of the economic challenge. The war affected supply chains, reduced the Egyptian currency's rate against foreign currencies, and the ensuing procedures for liberalizing the Egyptian currency's exchange rate against other currencies. Economic growth then shrank, and the Government couldn't meet its commitments, with the cost of living and prices of services and foodstuffs rising to levels never reached. According to a report issued by the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics in November 2022, the Russian-Ukrainian War reduced 20% of Egyptian family income due to unemployment, the suspension of certain projects, and some wage reductions. Despite the Government's attempts to provide alternatives to averting the economic crisis, significant numbers remain adversely affected, which has affected the operationalization of a set of results in the national human rights Strategy. The economic crisis led to higher inflation rates, which reached 36.5% in July 2023, affected by a 68% rise in food and beverage prices, and prices of some commodities reached unprecedented levels, making some of the lowest-income groups compelling.

5. The challenge facing CSOs in reconciling their situation

Among the challenges Maat has noted is the closure of the electronic system for the harmonization of civil society organizations by the Civil Work Practice Act. The number of

civil society institutions that have completed all documentation of reconciliation on paper and electronically amounted to "32924", of which 55 were foreign organizations out of a total of 35,770. There are official statements indicating that the number of civil society organizations, including civil society groups reaches "52 thousand associations and foundations, and with the closure of this system on April 11, 2023, the remaining organizations remained inconsistent with the situation under allegations that the electronic registration system was not highly efficient and was not supervised by trained staff.

6. Technological illiteracy of some administrative staff

Maat noted that one of the challenges to some of the outcomes of the National Human Rights Strategy implementation was the lack of knowledge among administrative staff and public officials of modern means and techniques. For example, several lawyers complained that the application of the electronic archiving plan, which was hoped to speed up the litigation procedure, contributed to the slowdown of these procedures because old employees are not good at dealing with modern technological means. It takes old staff a month to do things that might be done by those who are good at dealing with computers and the Internet in a maximum of two or three days. According to testimonies from some lawyers, reliance on technology reduces time, but what happened is the opposite. It happened again during the trade union elections, where a website was being set up for the Ministry of Manpower to register eligible candidates' data. The procedure was an experimental step towards the electronic registration of trade union organizations and candidates and the conduct of the election process electronically.

However, some directorates have refrained from filing some electoral projects with the public associations' lists, resulting in the inability of candidates to register electronically, thereby refusing to receive their applications and paper documents and depriving them of the right to stand for election. However, Maat noticed the Ministry of Labour Office's response to candidates who were unable to register electronically because they did not have their names on the "electronic registration system" by receiving their papers.

7. Lack of up-to-date official statistics on some of the outcomes contained in the Strategy;

Among the challenges facing the National Human Rights Strategy are the scarcity and non-updating of data on some of the Strategy's outcomes; for example, the Strategy aims to reduce the worst forms of child labor. However, the latest survey of child labor in Egypt, conducted by the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics and the International Programme for the Elimination of Child Labour in 2010, published results in 2012 and concluded that about 1.6 million children between the ages of 12 and 17 were involved in

Egypt. However, these data still need to be updated. The phenomenon cannot be assessed in the light of irrelevant and non-nominal data. Egypt currently has 41 million children, the highest child rate in the Arab region. The other evidence is the Strategy objective in the sub-item on women's rights in Axis III to expand data collection at the national and local levels, which has not been achieved in practice. So, there is a need to update official data and statistics could help stakeholders to assess objectively the issues.

8. Some ministries' continued slowdown in the establishment of human rights units

Maat noted that some ministries in the Egyptian government were slowing down the establishment of human rights units despite parliamentary demands and despite the recommendation of the Standing High Committee on Human Rights, as there was no information on steps taken by the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Labour with its new name.

In December 2022, the Ministry of Culture appealed to the Central Management and Administration Agency to establish the Ministry of Culture's General Department for Human Rights. However, it was not established until the end of the second year of the launch of the Strategy the task of developing operational plans around mechanisms for the national human rights Strategy implementation. The Ministry of Health, despite repeated parliamentary demands for the establishment of the Ministry's Human Rights Unit, has not done so.

9. Need to update the Strategy document

Maat noticed using the 78-page Strategy document includes phrases that contradict some laws already adopted. For example, the Strategy document still uses the term "prisoner," whereas it changed to "inmate" in amendments to the Prisons Act. The Strategy document also uses the term "prison sector," while it changed to "community protection sector." The word "prison" was also changed to "Correction and Rehabilitation Centre." Some argued that the Strategy document should be updated to include these changes.

Third: Role of Civil Society in the Follow-up to the National Human Rights Strategy

In his speech on the sidelines of the launch of the National Human Rights Strategy, President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi declared 2022 the Year of Civil Society and called on civil society organizations during the same speech to continue their participatory work with state institutions to achieve sustainable development at all levels, and to raise awareness of human rights culture. Civil society plays a central role in the follow-up and implementation of national human rights action plans, the third aspect of the State and the private sector in economic and social development. It is supposed to be entrusted with participating in implementing a number of the National Human Rights Strategy's outcomes. Civil society, including NGOs, trade unions, and political parties, has been mentioned more than 40 times in the National Human Rights Strategy document. Civil society can play a constructive role in operationalizing the outcomes of the National Human Rights Strategy through three roles:

1. Follow-up and monitoring

Although the responsibility for monitoring the implementation of the results in the National Human Rights Strategy rests primarily with the Egyptian State, represented by the Permanent High Commission on Human Rights and the three authorities, Executive, Legislative, and judiciary," however, as part of the Strategy's follow-up process, civil society should welcome him as the first stakeholder representative to make the follow-up to the results more substantive. At the same time, civil society should be prepared for this process through organizations capable of undertaking monitoring work and sharpening the attention of those mandated to implement the Strategy to operationalize the results due to the Strategy. The Strategy implementation can be followed up by monitoring and documenting the actions, policies, and measures submitted by the Egyptian Government to implement the plan and issuing quarterly or annual reports on the Government's progress in achieving the outcomes and reminding the Government of the results that have not been submitted for implementation and make practical recommendations, including proposals for bills to the Government on legislation that the Strategy aims to enact or amend.

2. Evaluation of implementation

Maat reviewed the United Nations Manual of National Human Rights Action Plans; it found that the factor in the implementation of national human rights action plans is the extent of consultation with civil society organizations. Civil society is responsible for assessing the national Strategy implementation, and it has to determine whether the Government's legislation and policies were applied in practice. Hence, civil society has to assess the Strategy implementation by assessing the impact of policies, measures, and legislation approved by the Government in reaching the Strategy's target results on the ground and by

indicating the target results that the Government has not initiated any policies or measures on their implementation.

3. Contribution to implementation

Egypt's Sustainable Development Agenda 2030 recognized the role of civil society in participating in the national strategies and policies development and the implementation process. Civil society can play a role in the implementation of the National Human Rights Strategy, to build the participatory relationship that began with the promulgation of the Private Employment Practice Law No. 149 of 2019 and the subsequent Executive Regulation of the Law and to participate in the promulgation of the National Human Rights Strategy and the proclamation of 2022 as a year of civil society and the President's call on State institutions to adopt a participatory approach with civil society organizations in a way that contributes to the achievement of sustainable development goals at all levels.

Civil society organizations can contribute and participate in the Strategy implementation through a series of measures and steps:

1.1 Proposed bills

Civil society, including political parties, can play a role in implementing the outcomes of the Strategy's legislative path by proposing bills targeted by the Strategy's outcomes. For example, in Outcome No. 7a, the Strategy aimed at the sub-theme of women's rights in the third line of the Strategy, " A comprehensive law to protect women from violence." Civil society organizations representing one of their areas of work, "Women," could propose a bill addressing the issue. Civil society organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council at the United Nations can also recommend amending laws that contradict the core vision and principles of the Strategy, including the Egyptian Constitution and international and regional conventions. These organizations could propose a bill establishing the Anti-Discrimination Commission, as provided in Article 53 of the Egyptian Constitution and paragraph 14. a) From the concluding observations on the combined eighth to tenth periodic reports of the Egyptian State.

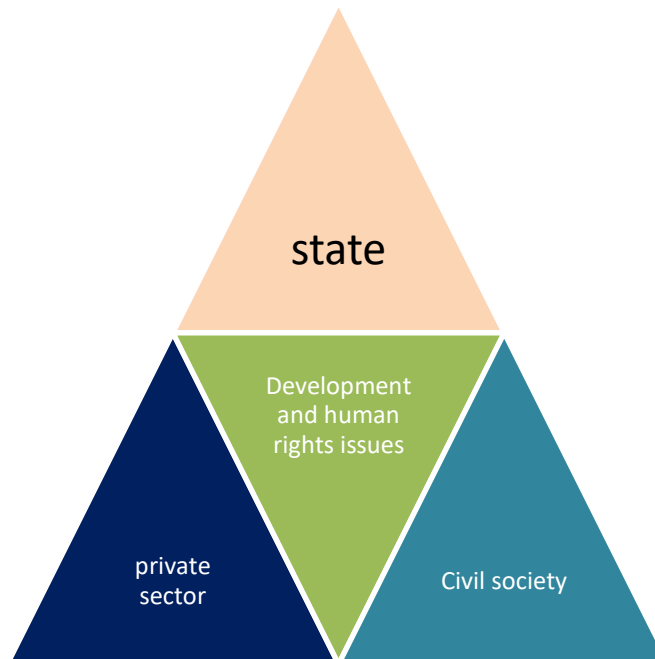
1.2 Participation in institutional development

Civil society should have a role in promoting access to outcomes that require operational actions and practical measures, concerned that operational and practical actions are not the service role played by civil society organizations but allow them to be an integral part in the formulation of public policies that would improve people's living lives and addressing their issues, that is not a substitution of the State's role, but an intersection with a system that accepts all views. But it would be an operationalization of sub-theme I, outcome No. 7, of theme IV of the Strategy, which aimed to "partnering with the private sector and civil society

in promoting community culture with human rights principles and values." This outcome proved that the Strategy's developers went beyond the traditional concept of partnership that confined this partnership between the State, the private sector, and civil society to development issues (see figure below) to partnership in improving human rights conditions, including economic and social rights.

In a related context, civil society can propose national strategies and plans in sub-topics mentioned by the National Human Rights Strategy, such as preparing the national plan for human rights education at the various educational levels in line with Target Result No. 1 in the second sub-topic on integrating human rights components into the different stages of education in the fourth axis.

Figure 3: Partnership in Development and Human Rights Issues



3.3 Participation in Education & Capacity Building

Civil society can also play a great role in contributing to the implementation of the outcomes of the Strategy, which requires education and capacity building in the field of human rights. These outcomes are estimated at 42 in the strategy document, according to the classification of Maat. However, education and capacity building should not be limited to organizing two-to-three-day workshops, which is what was indicated by a study issued by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The study criticized the limitation of capacity building to holding few-day workshops and stressed that long-term training would establish strong institutions and make employees aware of their rights and the rights of other citizens. In line with the above, civil society in Egypt can engage in the

process of developing and designing training programs and plans in capacity building for government institutions and human rights education. Maat believes that among the outcomes perceived as a priority in this context is conducting training exercises discussing the international agreements ratified by Egypt, and training local employees on the principles and provisions included in these agreements.

Recommendations

- Adding priority legislation in the axis of civil and political rights on the agenda of the House of Representatives fourth session, such as the Law on Freedom of Information, Statistics, and Official Data; Whistleblowers and Witnesses Protection Law; a comprehensive law to combat all forms of violence against women;
- Considering the situation of civil society organizations that were unable to reconcile their situation after the closure of the electronic system on 11 April 2023;
- Develop an executive action plan for the Strategy to achieve the outcomes included therein and clarify the roles assigned to each party to implement the targeted outcomes thereof within the time frame for achieving each outcome;
- Conducting a community dialogue with the participation of specialized national councils, civil society organizations, and legal scholars to revise and review the Penal Code passed in 1937 to be in line with the rapid changes in the philosophy of punishment and deterrence and to provide alternative punishments, such as a non-custodial sentence for minor crimes;
- Considering the speedy issuance of draft laws targeted by the National Human Rights Strategy, especially amendments to the Code of Criminal Procedure, the Draft of the New Labour Law, the draft of the new child law, and the draft law preventing early marriage;
- Consider accelerating the pace of adopting the National Strategy for Human Rights Education in line with the outcomes targeted in the Strategy;
- Consider urging ministries that have not established human rights units to accelerate the process of establishing these units and training human cadres to assume their tasks;
- Consider updating the Strategy Document to amend phrases and terms contained therein that have already been changed under legislation adopted by the House of Representatives;
- Considering the creation of a new ministerial portfolio concerned with human rights, so that its minister would serve as a link between the various ministries and agencies in Egypt to advance human rights as targeted by the NHRS;
- Consider holding a community discussion that includes all stakeholders to consider the dilemma of the debt crisis and its impact on human rights, namely economic and social rights;

- Consider increasing the resources of government research institutions concerned with conducting research and surveys related to some issues such as child labor, and accelerating the pace of conducting modern and comprehensive surveys;
- Urging the Ministry of Social Solidarity to clarify its position on the Academy of Civil Society Organizations, which the Ministry announced its establishment, but has not taken any actions in this regard.