








EGYPT CASE STUDY

Review of Technology-Based Interventions
to Address Child Marriage and Female
Genital Mutilation

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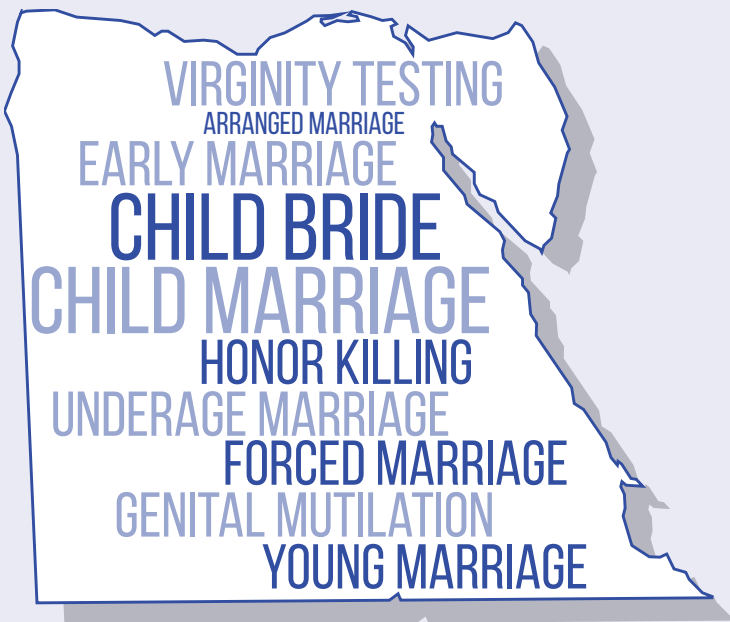
EGYPT

EGYPT OVERVIEW

	Child marriage prevalence¹ (girls married before the age of 18 years, as a proportion of all girls)	17%
	FGM prevalence² (proportion of women and girls aged 15–49 years)	87%
	Internet users³ (proportions of the adult male and female populations)	72% of men 67% of women
	Mobile phone ownership⁴ (proportions of the adult male and female populations)	83% of men 76% of women
	Level of government support for digital literacy⁵ (scale 0–3) ⁶	High: 3

NEWS ABOUT HARMFUL PRACTICES: WORD CLOUD MAPS AND NUMBERS OF REPORTS

FIGURE 1. GDELT word cloud. Most common words portrayed in the reports of the global media for both FGM and child marriage with relation to technology in Egypt (2014–2022)



Note: This word cloud map was produced with data from the Event Database of the GDELT project, which monitors the world's broadcast, print, and web news in over 100 languages; identifying the people, locations, institutions, topics, publications, sentiments, numbers, quotations, pictures, and occurrences linked to events worldwide. After filtering the database for a comprehensive pool of keywords related to FGM and child marriage and technology in Egypt, the most common words portrayed in the reports related to these issues are mapped in a country word cloud. The bigger the font size, the more frequently the word appears.

FIGURE 2. Number of reports covering the topic of child marriage in Egypt, compared with other countries (2014–2022)

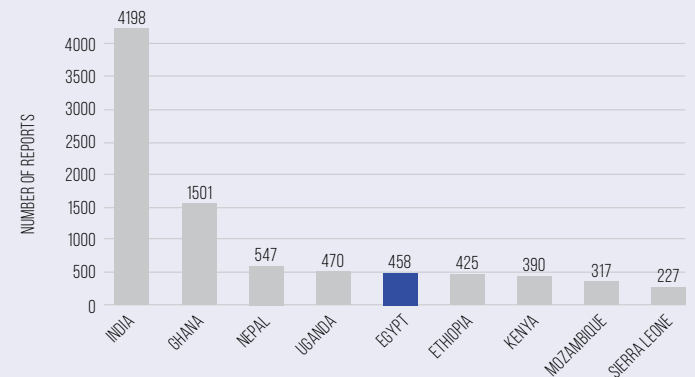
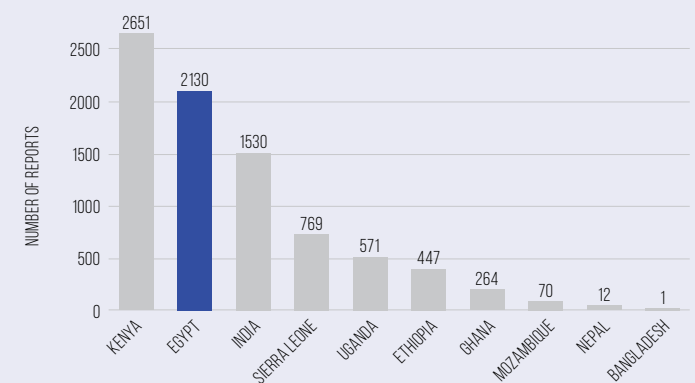


FIGURE 3. Number of reports covering the topic of FGM in Egypt, compared with other countries (2014–2022)



Note: After filtering the GDELT project database for the actors, actions, and associated reports pertaining to child marriage and/or FGM in Egypt, it can be observed that there are a total of 458 reports corresponding to child marriage and 2,130 reports corresponding to FGM in the country.

THE CONTEXT OF CHILD MARRIAGE AND FGM IN THE COUNTRY

Egypt is the third largest African country in terms of population, with a total of 102 million inhabitants.⁷ Child marriage and FGM are both prevalent in the country.

According to the most recent data, the total number of girls and women who were married before age 18 is 8.1 million, meaning that 1 in 6 women are wed before their 18th birthday (17 per cent). There is a critical point between the ages of 15 and 18 when these rates spike, taking into account that only around 2 per cent of girls in Egypt are married before they turn 15.⁸ Girls who live in poor, rural households and whose vulnerability is further exacerbated by low education, are at the highest risk of child marriage.⁹ Although the minimum legal age for marriage has been set at 18 since 2008, the practice of child marriage is yet to be criminalized.¹⁰ In 2014, Egypt developed the National Strategic Plan for the Prevention of Early Marriage in order to reduce child marriage rates by 50 per cent by the year 2020, but the implementation of this strategy has been cut short due to political issues and the sensitivity of the matter.

For its part, FGM is a much more widespread and acute issue in the country. The percentage


of women and girls aged 15 to 49 that have been subjected to FGM stands at a critical 87 per cent, with the rural (93 per cent) and poorest (94 per cent) populations being the most affected.¹¹ Furthermore, 71 per cent of FGM is reported to take place during the ages of 10 to 14. Within the African continent, Egypt is one of the top five countries with the highest levels of FGM.¹² The incidence of FGM in the country is related to closely held religious beliefs in which FGM is portrayed as a rite of passage to adulthood, a salvaging of a girl's virginity and an enabler to protect her family's honour.¹³ In this regard, FGM has also been interpreted as a potential driver of child marriage, since it signals a girl's readiness and suitability for marriage. Nevertheless, there are signs that (small) changes are occurring. Younger generations (15–19 years old) are suffering less FGM than older generations.¹⁴ In parallel, women's support for the continuation of the practice has also been reduced by almost 15 percentage points in the last 20 years. Despite FGM being prohibited and criminalized since 2008, this has had little to no effect on prevalence reduction, a situation that is compounded by the fact that the practice has been highly medicalized in the country with almost 80 per cent of procedures being conducted by health personnel.¹⁵

THE TECHNOLOGY ENVIRONMENT IN EGYPT

Egypt's technological environment has rapidly evolved during the last 10 years, growing from its already strong foundations. First and foremost, overall electricity access in the country has reached 100 per cent and has not gone down since 2016.¹⁶ This has definitely aided in the increase of household internet adoption (measured by the proportion of households that have access to the internet and that have used it in the past 12 months), which currently stands at 76 per cent. Nevertheless, an access gender gap favouring men still persists, with 72 per cent of men having access to the internet versus only 67 per cent of women.¹⁷

Mobile services are also widespread in Egypt. Network coverage in the country is particularly strong with 3G technology reaching 99.2 per cent of the population (second only to South Africa





coverage levels on the African continent) while 4G networks cover up to 96 per cent of Egyptians.¹⁸ Likewise, access to mobile phone services (i.e., subscriptions to a mobile telephone service) is high in the country with 93.2 subscriptions per 100 inhabitants, but still under the 110 subscriptions average for the MENA region.¹⁹ Nevertheless, Egypt is still lagging behind in access to smartphones. Although the majority of men (60 per cent) and women (51 per cent) in the country own a smartphone, the rest of the population only has access to basic phones or feature phones that prevent them from adequately using mobile internet and even downloading the most basic apps from an online app store.²⁰ Additionally, both mobile phone ownership and mobile internet use present a gender gap in the country. While 83 per cent of men own a mobile phone, just 76 per cent of women do, which means that the 63 per cent to 55 per cent gap between men and women in mobile internet usage is a compounding barrier when developing FGM and child marriage digital interventions.²¹ According to the 2021 Global System for Mobile Communications (GSMA) Consumer Survey, only 15 per cent and 20 per cent of women report using their mobile phone to obtain information and use health services, respectively.²² Women predominantly use their devices for communication (e.g., network calls, online calls, video calls, SMS, social networking) and entertainment (e.g., games, video, music).²³ This is in line with studies that have found that the most effective communication channels to convey information about harmful practices such as child marriage are not actually the new media

(e.g., smartphones or social media) but rather interpersonal communication (e.g., talking directly with doctors and health promoters) and traditional media channels such as radio and TV.²⁴

The high indices of mobile service and internet adoption go hand in hand with the government efforts to develop digital literacy in the country. The Economist Impact classifies Egypt as one of the leading countries in digital strategy and digital literacy development. Egypt's Vision 2030 strategy outlines a plan to elevate digital literacy in the country, not only through the embedding of digital skills curricula in primary and secondary education, but also through capacity-building for teachers. Against this backdrop, the Ministry of Education has (with the support of USAID) created science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) training for teachers and administrations in basic education.²⁵ In spite of this political and governmental buy-in related to digital skills' development, only 53.5 per cent of individuals in the country have standard ICT skills.²⁶ Additionally, the World Economic Forum (WEF) has classified Egypt as a country with a medium level (4.66) of digital skills.²⁷ However, it is not only digital skills that are preventing Egyptians from taking advantage of these types of technologies; as standard literacy skills are reported to be the main barriers to acquiring and using mobile phone devices.²⁸ Although Egypt has e-inclusion strategies related to improving female internet access and adoption, there are still steps to be taken in creating and implementing action plans for gender-sensitive digital skills' development.²⁹

MAPPING OF TECH INTERVENTIONS

The interventions mapped in this section stem from an initial landscape exercise conducted jointly by UNFPA and UNICEF, followed by a systematic review of publicly available data and information on technology-driven and technology-enabled interventions addressing child marriage and/or FGM in Egypt. The compiled information was curated and complemented with insights emerging from key informant interviews conducted with local stakeholders.

CODING TYPE OF INTERVENTION

- [◎] Technology-driven intervention/solution (tech is a core element)
- [●] Technology-enabled intervention/solution (tech is secondary to the intervention, there are other non-tech components)

♀ FEMINIST LENSES

The seventh column of the interventions table below identifies how organizations have included feminist lenses into the design and implementation of the interventions by highlighting four key aspects:

1 Consultation with experts and/or community leaders	Consultations with gender or thematic experts and/or local leaders were conducted during the development, implementation, and/or monitoring and evaluation of the interventions.
2 Consultations with target group(s)	The interventions incorporated, at any stage, consultations with the populations targeted, especially girls and women of different ethnicities, ages, sexual orientations, classes, and other social markers.
3 Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) instruments	Monitoring and evaluation activities were carried out to measure the intervention's progress and sustainability, and/or to generate disaggregated information, gender-sensitive/responsive indicators, and/or gender analysis frameworks.
4 Women and/or girl-led organization(s)	The intervention was designed and/or implemented, partly or completely, by a women and/or girl-led organization(s).

Additional descriptive information about the feminist lenses and potential intersectional approach (i.e., addressing ethnicity, language, class or other aspects of the target group's identity) is provided within the table, following the general description of each intervention, which can be identified by the use of this symbol [♀]. This analysis is based on information collected during semi-structured interviews with local stakeholders and/or publicly available information.

UNICEF & UNFPA FGM AND CHILD MARRIAGE DOCUDRAMAS (360 EDUTAINMENT) / 2018 – ONGOING / ⦿

SUPPORTING ORGANIZATION(S)	IMPLEMENTING ORGANIZATION(S)	HARMFUL PRACTICE(S)	LOCATION(S)	IMPACT AREA	TYPE OF TECHNOLOGIES USED	FEMINIST LENSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UNICEF UNFPA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UNICEF UNFPA 	Child marriage & FGM	Nationwide	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Individual-level empowerment Family and community engagement 	Video screening / documentaries	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Consultations with experts and/or community leaders M&E instruments (i.e., to assess the impact of the intervention in the target group)

Before and during the pandemic, UNICEF individually and the Joint Programme as a whole have rolled out docudramas pertaining to FGM and child marriage in Egypt. During early 2020, before the pandemic, UNICEF screened docudramas on topics such as FGM and child marriage in clubs of 30 people, which were attended by girls and their parents.³⁰ These showings later transitioned to open venues in order to comply with physical distancing measures in the country. Likewise, the Joint Programme produced docudramas that were later used by religious leaders to harmonize and raise awareness on different messages related to the discontinuation of FGM practices in the country. The theory of change behind these tools is that the probability of social and behavioural change on sensitive topics, such as harmful practices, is more likely when girls and their families hear mutually reinforcing messages that depict people like them.³¹ Specifically, the docudrama series titled "Ahl El-hetta" is being implemented by UNICEF to change attitudes towards topics such as FGM, child marriage, gender equality, violence against children and child labour, among others. The docuseries consists of 20-minute episodes. After the screenings, trained facilitators open a discussion about the main topic of the series where the local community shares its different points of view and approaches to the subjects. So far, more than 60,000 attendees have been reached.³²

♀ This intervention integrates an intersectional feminist approach by directly consulting with experts in the development of scripts for the docuseries especially when it comes to sensitive issues such as FGM and child marriage. Furthermore, the project implements pre and post-viewing assessments to ascertain if attitudinal changes effectively take place.

DAWWIE INITIATIVE / 2019 – ONGOING / ○

SUPPORTING ORGANIZATION(S)	IMPLEMENTING ORGANIZATION(S)	HARMFUL PRACTICE(S)	LOCATION(S)	IMPACT AREA	TYPE OF TECHNOLOGIES USED	FEMINIST LENSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNICEF • UNFPA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Council for Childhood and Motherhood • National Council for Women 	Child marriage & FGM	21 Governorates in Egypt	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Individual-level empowerment 2. Family and community engagement 3. Service development and strengthening 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virtual training (e.g., online training, through the use of computers, etc.) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consultations with experts and/or community leaders 2. Consultations with target group(s) 3. M&E instruments (i.e., to assess the impact of the intervention in the target group)

The Dawwie Initiative is a project implemented by the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood (NCCM) and the National Council for Women that seeks to empower girls through the provision of safe spaces where they can share their aspirations and stories and also receive support and knowledge on issues related to health, marriage, bodily integrity and well-being, among others.³³ The package of activities included in the Dawwie Initiative range from providing safe spaces for girls to share their experiences and engage with family and communities, to digital literacy trainings to help girls and boys safely navigate the cyber world (i.e., Dawwie Digital Literacy Toolkit), to guidance on where to find essential services such as health, youth and cultural centres.³⁴

♀ This intervention integrates an intersectional feminist approach through the development of its key pillars: voice and skills. All activities, ♀ whether they are storytelling activities or capacity-building activities, are designed by experts. Also, most of the activities are implemented and consulted with both the boys and the girls that the programme targets. Finally, the project has created and incorporated from the outset a monitoring and evaluation framework that is used to assess the impact of the intervention in the 21 governorates it operates in.



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RIDE ON COURSE: REMOTE SELF-GUIDED CURRICULUM TO PROMOTE ADOLESCENT WELL-BEING / 2020 / ○

SUPPORTING ORGANIZATION(S)	IMPLEMENTING ORGANIZATION(S)	HARMFUL PRACTICE(S)	LOCATION(S)	IMPACT AREA	TYPE OF TECHNOLOGIES USED	FEMINIST LENSES
N/A	Terre des Hommes	Child marriage	Egypt and Jordan	1. Service development and strengthening	Virtual trainings	N/A ³⁵

Terre des Hommes created a remote, self-guided course titled “RIDE ON” that sought to promote adolescent well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic; a fundamental aspect in supporting child marriage programming when there was little to no physical access to girls and adolescents.³⁶ Specifically, it was created to help child protection professionals support adolescents (12–18 years) in order to address anxiety and feelings of insecurity or disconnection.³⁷ The project was first launched in Jordan and Egypt during the health emergency, given the course’s adaptability to reach hard contexts, and is currently being translated into Arabic. UNICEF and UNFPA have stated that the tool could be scaled up to attend to child marriage prevention programming in the region.³⁸

REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND FAMILY PLANNING INFORMATION FOR FACTORY WORKERS IN ALEXANDRIA / 2021 – 2023 / ○

SUPPORTING ORGANIZATION(S)	IMPLEMENTING ORGANIZATION(S)	HARMFUL PRACTICE(S)	LOCATION(S)	IMPACT AREA	TYPE OF TECHNOLOGIES USED	FEMINIST LENSES
The Population Council	The Population Council	Child marriage & FGM	Alexandria, Egypt	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Individual-level empowerment 2. Family and community engagement 3. Service development and strengthening 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mobile technology • WhatsApp 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consultations with experts and/or community leaders 2. Consultations with target group(s) 3. M&E instruments (i.e., to assess the impact of the intervention in the target group)

Based on a similar pilot test study in Port Said carried out by the Population Council, the organization has developed a new project in Alexandria to raise the awareness of factory workers around the subject of family planning and reproductive health. According to a representative from the Population Council in Egypt, factory workers are chosen as the main target group given that they are mostly a young population and Egypt has recently had an increase in fertility trends since the year 2014. Peer educators are the basis of this intervention, in which they send out a series of 36 messages on reproductive health and family planning that cover specific subjects such as FGM and child marriage. The messaging strategy is carried out through face-to-face meetings with peer educators and also through two-way targeted messaging via WhatsApp in which the factory workers can consult peer educators about the messages shared. According to a baseline measurement carried out before the implementation of the intervention, around 90 per cent of workers have access to a smartphone, while 75 per cent to 80 per cent of the workers actively use WhatsApp to communicate. Flyers and face to face messaging will also be made available for those not interested in receiving messages or for those whose WhatsApp usage is low. The Population Council expects to reach 20,000 male and female factory workers from 10 different factories in an industrial zone in Egypt. The project will then be evaluated after six months of service delivery through the comparison of knowledge levels between workers from the target 10 factories and the workers from five additional control factories.

♀ This intervention integrates an intersectional feminist approach by directly consulting with the female and male factory workers about the content of the interventions. Messaging through WhatsApp is worded in such a way that it is not gender-specific and as such, if the women deem it relevant, they can be forwarded to their spouses in an attempt to tackle family dimensions affecting actions taken towards responsible reproductive health and family planning. Finally, health committees from the factories also review and assess the pertinence of the messaging and the flyers shared with the factory workers.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Demographic and Health Survey (2014), as cited in UNICEF (2022a), *Egypt country profile*
- 2 Demographic and Health Survey (2014), as cited in UNICEF (2020e), *Egypt country profile*
- 3 Gallup (2020), as cited in Economist Impact (2022)
- 4 GSMA (2022a)
- 5 Economist Impact (2022)
- 6 The score on government support for digital literacy, on a scale from 0–3 (low to high), reflects a government plan or strategy to address digital literacy for students and/or teachers – through the design and development of courses in ICT skills, computer science, programming or other classes for students; and through ICT capacity-building courses for teachers. A zero score indicates that the government does not have such a plan/strategy, neither for students and nor for teachers; a score of 1 reflects a plan for student digital literacy but without including teacher capacity-building; a medium score of 2 indicates a current plan for both; and the highest score of 3 reflects a plan addressing both students and teachers, and with the courses and capacity-building starting at the primary school level.
- 7 Statista (2020)
- 8 Demographic and Health Survey (2014), as cited in UNICEF (2022a)
- 9 UNICEF and UNFPA (2021b)
- 10 Metwally et al. (2021)
- 11 Demographic and Health Survey (2014), as cited in UNICEF (2020e)
- 12 Norbakk and Tønnessen (2020)
- 13 Suzuki and Meekers (2008)
- 14 Demographic and Health Survey (2014), as cited in UNICEF (2020e)
- 15 Demographic and Health Survey (2014), as cited in UNICEF (2020e); Fahmy, Badr and Vermandere (2021)
- 16 World Bank (2020d)
- 17 Gallup (2020), as cited in the Economist Impact (2022)
- 18 ITU as cited in the Economist Impact (2022)
- 19 ITU as cited in the Economist Impact (2022); World Bank (2020e)
- 20 GSMA (2022a)
- 21 Gallup (2020), as cited in the Economist Impact (2022)
- 22 GSMA (2022a)
- 23 Ibid.
- 24 Metwally et al. (2021)
- 25 Economist Impact country research (2021), as cited in the Economist Impact (2022)
- 26 World Bank (2019b)
- 27 World Bank (2019a)
- 28 GSMA (2022a)
- 29 Economist Impact country research (2021), as cited in the Economist Impact (2022)
- 30 UNICEF and UNFPA (2021b)
- 31 UNICEF and UNFPA (2019c)
- 32 UNICEF (2021c)
- 33 UNICEF (2020f)
- 34 Dawwie (n.d.)
- 35 Organization/intervention not interviewed
- 36 UNICEF and UNFPA (2021b)
- 37 Terre des hommes (2020)
- 38 UNICEF and UNFPA (2021b)

REVIEW OF
**TECHNOLOGY-BASED
INTERVENTIONS**
TO ADDRESS CHILD MARRIAGE AND
FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION

