

ECPAT



COUNTRY OVERVIEW

A report on the scale, scope and context
of the sexual exploitation of children

September, 2025



EGYPT

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PREFACE

Recent years have seen unprecedented progress towards embedding children's right to protection from sexual exploitation more deeply into the global agenda, including the global mandate to eliminate the sexual exploitation of children enshrined in the Sustainable Development Goals adopted by world leaders in 2015.

ECPAT Country Overviews on the sexual exploitation of children provide an effective tool for advocacy at all levels as well as for monitoring, including on government commitments made in the Sustainable Development Goals to end violence against children in all its different forms by 2030.

ECPAT Country Overviews are first and foremost, a desk review exercise that gather and present the existing publicly available information into a comprehensive summary of all forms of sexual exploitation of children in a country. The desk review is complemented with information retrieved through qualitative interviews with key informants. ECPAT Country Overviews provide an assessment of achievements and challenges in implementing counteractions

- including with the participation of children themselves - to eliminate the sexual exploitation of children. ECPAT Country Overviews also suggest concrete priority actions urgently needed to proactively advance the national fight against sexual exploitation of children and enable the monitoring of the implementation of international instruments on child rights related to sexual exploitation that have been ratified by the State. Furthermore, the ECPAT Country Overviews provide well-organised information and research, which can be used in preparing alternative reports and submissions for human rights mechanisms at global, regional and national level.

During the process, drafts are shared with ECPAT members, relevant local organisations, and experts working on the ground who review the content and supplement the information with other local sources and analysis. ECPAT International greatly relies on the contributions of all those involved in producing these reports and would like to express its profound appreciation for their invaluable inputs.

This ECPAT Country Overview for Egypt incorporates insights from 19 key informants, including representatives from international non-governmental organisations and local civil society organizations. The draft report - and particularly the recommendations derived from the findings - were then shared with the interviewed participants to ensure alignment with the main priorities identified for strengthening the prevention of and response to child sexual exploitation in Egypt.

AT A GLANCE

The Arab Republic of Egypt lies in the northeastern part of the African continent and is the most populous country in the Arab world, with an estimated 114.5 million people. Egypt's demographic profile is notably young with 38% of the population under the age of 18, as of 2023. Widespread poverty continues to undermine the rights and wellbeing of children. In 2022, roughly around one in twelve children were living in multidimensional poverty, lacking not only income but also access to education, proper housing, and essential services.

Many children in Egypt remain at risk of harm including sexual exploitation due to a complex web of economic hardship, social norms, inadequate legal protections, and systemic barriers to justice. This report sheds light on the multifaceted and often underreported realities of child sexual exploitation and abuse in Egypt, particularly as they intersect with poverty, gender inequality, displacement, risks from digital, Internet and communication technologies, and gaps in law and policy.

Poverty continues to drive harmful practices such as child labour and early and forced marriage. Families, struggling to survive, may turn to child marriage, particularly of girls, as a means to deal with financial pressure. At the same time, children living and working on the streets face daily risks of exploitation, including coercion into sexual activities in exchange for food, shelter, or safety. Refugee and migrant children are particularly at risk, with gender-based violence reported frequently among these communities. Boys also suffer abuse and exploitation, though their experiences are often silenced due to social stigma.

Legal frameworks such as Egypt's Child Law, Penal Code, and anti-trafficking legislation provide important foundations, but they remain fragmented and insufficient in several key areas. The law does not comprehensively address emerging threats such as online grooming, live streaming of child sexual abuse, or sexual extortion. For instance, key terms such as "child sexual abuse material" remain undefined or outdated, minimising the severity of these crimes. Legal provisions risk criminalising adolescents engaged in consensual, age-appropriate relationships, rather than protecting them.

While the government has undertaken prevention and awareness efforts, including campaigns against child marriage and initiatives to strengthen inter-agency coordination, access to protection and justice remains uneven. Most support services are concentrated in urban centres, while survivors in rural or marginalised areas face isolation, blame, and lack of support. There are also critical gaps in ensuring children's right to participate in decisions affecting them, and in recognising survivors as key partners in reform efforts.

This report aims to contribute to national, regional, and international efforts to end the sexual exploitation of children in Egypt. It emphasises the urgent need for comprehensive legal reform, greater investment in child protection systems, and meaningful participation of children and survivors in shaping effective responses.

INTRODUCTION

The Arab Republic of Egypt, (hereinafter Egypt), lies in the northeastern part of the African continent. It is the most populous country in the Arab world and the third most populous country in Africa, with a population of approximately 114.5 million people.¹ Egypt's population is quite young, with 38% under the age of 18,² as of 2023.³ In 2025, Egypt's gross domestic product reached 347 billion U.S Dollars, reflecting a 3.8% increase from the previous year.⁴ Despite this economic growth, poverty still affects many children, placing them at greater risk of violence and other children's rights violations. In 2022, around one in 12 children under 10 years of age – 1.9 million - were experiencing multidimensional poverty, a measure which considers not only income but also factors like education, living standards, and access to basic services.⁵

Poverty, among other factors, heightens the risk of children becoming involved in child labour. In 2022, one in ten children between the age of 12 and 17 were working, mainly in the agricultural and industrial sectors.⁶

A key informant interviewed for this overview shared that in low-income and rural areas, children are seen as adults at

an earlier age and sent to work. Children involved in labour may experience psychological and physical damage resulting from violence abuse, exploitation and sexual harassment, with the majority of working children enduring poor and unsafe working conditions.⁷

According to key informants interviewed for this report and other sources, poverty is also connected with child, early and forced marriages, with families in Egypt facing economic hardship and resorting to early marriage for their daughters as a way to ease the financial burden.⁸ Child, early and forced marriage decreases opportunities to access education, while school dropout further increases the risk of child marriage.⁹ Although dropout rates for girls are declining compared to the past, they remain nearly twice as high as those for boys, with the latest available estimates for 2020 indicating that 1.1% of girls left school before high school compared to 0.6% of boys.¹⁰

Traditional gender roles contribute to gender-based violence in Egypt.¹¹ Certain traditional practices, such as male heirs receiving twice the share of female heirs, disadvantage women, perpetuate inequality

1 UNICEF.(2024).*The State of the World's Children 2024 Statistical Compendium*.

2 Children are defined as being under the age of 18 as specified in: The Arab Republic of Egypt.(2008, July).*Law No.12 of 1996 Promulgating the child law amended by law No.126 of 2008*, Article 2(2) and The Arab Republic of Egypt.(2014). *Constitution Of The Arab Republic of Egypt 2014*. Article 80.

3 UNICEF.(2024).*The State of the World's Children 2024 Statistical Compendium*.

4 International Monetary Fund (IMF). (n.d).*Egypt datasets*. IMF DataMapper.

5 IsDBI & OPHI.(2022, June). *Exploring multidimensional poverty in Egypt using the global MPI (Brief No.6)*.

6 Elsayed, W.(2024). *Breaking the cycle of child labor in Egypt: Exploring social and economic factors associated with child labor in Egypt for a sustainable future*. Sustainable Futures, 8, 100235.

7 Ibid.

8 OHCHR.(2022, July 26). *Submission by the Government of Egypt on the vulnerabilities of children in relation to the implementation of the SDGs*.OHCHR.El Hussein, I.A., Gamal El-Din, A., & Amin, K.Z.(2020).perspective. Review of Economics and Political Science.

9 UNICEF Egypt.(2018).*Policy for action: Ending child marriage*.UNICEF.

10 Mohamed, N.(2023). *Education in Egypt: Addressing the barriers to a better future*. Broken Chalk.

11 El Feki, S., Heilman, B.and Barker, G., Eds.(2017) *Understanding Masculinities: Results from the International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES) – Middle East and North Africa*.Cairo and Washington, D.C.: UN Women and Promundo-US

and reinforce patriarchal structures as well as the devaluation of women's roles in society, leaving them dependent on male relatives.¹² Due to prevailing cultural norms in Egypt, open discussion and education about sex, sexuality, and reproductive health are often limited, contributing to the persistence of certain harmful or unhealthy practices.¹³ In addition, this situation contributes to a "culture of silence" around sexuality, making it difficult for children to reach out for information and support.¹⁴

Female genital mutilation, sometimes performed by medical professionals,¹⁵ is a widespread practice.¹⁶ Notably, key informants reported that some families resort to performing hysterectomies on girls with intellectual disabilities as a precaution against potential sexual assault. Together, these factors continue to undermine the rights, safety, and well-being of girls in Egypt.

¹² Committee on the Rights of the Child Secretariat.(2024, April 15). *Submission on Egypt for consideration by the Committee on the Rights of the Child at its 96th session (6 May – 24 May 2024)*.Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

¹³ UNICEF Egypt. (2023.).*Medical deception*. UNICEF Egypt.

¹⁴ Riad, G., & Forden, C.(2021).*"If we didn't talk, we would be like ostriches burying our heads in the sand": Attitudes toward sexuality, gender, and sex education among child protection social workers in Egypt*. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 129, 106205.

¹⁵ UNICEF Egypt. (2023.). *Medical deception*. UNICEF Egypt.

¹⁶ UNFPA Egypt. (n.d.). *Female genital mutilation*. UNFPA Egypt.

SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN IN EGYPT

EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN IN PROSTITUTION¹⁷

This form of exploitation consists of a child performing a sexual act in exchange for (a promise of) something of value (money, objects, shelter, food, drugs, etc). It is not necessarily the child who receives the object of exchange, but often a third person. Moreover, it is not necessary that an object of exchange is given; the mere promise of an exchange suffices, even if it is never fulfilled. In order to avoid the risk of stigmatising children exploited in/for prostitution, or of inadvertently legitimising such practices, it is preferable to use terms other than “child prostitution” to define this phenomenon, in particular in non-legal contexts. “Exploitation of children in prostitution” or “exploitation of children for prostitution” represent a more appropriate way to address the issue, because it underlines the element of exploitation of the child and leaves no doubt as to the fact that the child is not to be held responsible for the acts that follow from their situation.¹⁸

Despite the absence of recent data, anecdotal evidence and reports indicate that children in Egypt are at risk of exploitation in prostitution, especially those involved in “seasonal” or “temporary” marriages and street-connected children.^{19,20}

Temporary marriages, also known as tourism or transactional marriages, occur when wealthy men, mostly from Gulf States like Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates, travel to Egypt and pay families to marry underage girls, typically between the ages of 11 and 18.²¹ Some parents, often grappling with socio-economic challenges, may feel they have no alternative but to involve their children in these marriages, perceiving them as a means of survival or income generation.²² In an academic study published in 2018, parents interviewed in the Darrasa neighbourhood of Cairo, whose daughters were forced to engage in tourism marriage, indicated that they had received between 4,000 – 8,000 Egyptian pounds (US\$ 80-165 as of August 2025) and a gold gift.²³

Several key informants interviewed for this overview also noted that street-connected children are highly exposed to sexual exploitation both by adults as well as older street-connected children. This exploitation often involves coercion in exchange for food, shelter, or other necessities, exacerbated by their lack of protection and support. According to a key informant working for a feminist rights-based organisation, sexual violence is sometimes used among the children themselves as a form of humiliation, punishment, or domination. Despite the lack of recent data on the exploitation of street-

¹⁷ In line with the Terminology Guidelines, the term ‘exploitation of children in prostitution’ is to be preferred instead of ‘child prostitution’. Interagency Working Group on Sexual Exploitation of Children. (2025). *Terminology Guidelines for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse*. Second Edition Section E. Bangkok: ECPAT International.

¹⁸ Interagency Working Group on Sexual Exploitation of Children. (2025). *Terminology Guidelines for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse*. Second Edition Section E. Bangkok: ECPAT International.

¹⁹ Charpenel, Y.(2016). *Prostitution: Exploitation, persecution, repression*. Fondation Scelles, Economica.

²⁰ United Nations.(2011, June 7).Children’s rights committee reviews reports of *Egypt under Convention and Protocols on involvement in armed conflict and sexual exploitation*. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

²¹ U.S.Department of State.(2024) *2024 trafficking in persons report: Egypt*.

²² Hussein Hassan Soliman, Nagwa Ibrahim Alsharqawi & Mustafa Ahmed Younis (2018) *Is Tourism Marriage of Young Girls in Egypt a Form of Child Sexual Abuse? A Family Exploitation Perspective*, Journal of Child Sexual Abuse, 27(2), 122-140, DOI: 10.1080/10538712.2018.1425945

²³ *Ibid*.

connected children in prostitution in Egypt, the increase in the number of these children following the economic downturn after the Arab Spring²⁴ raises concerns about perpetrators of sexual crimes against children taking advantage of their situation.

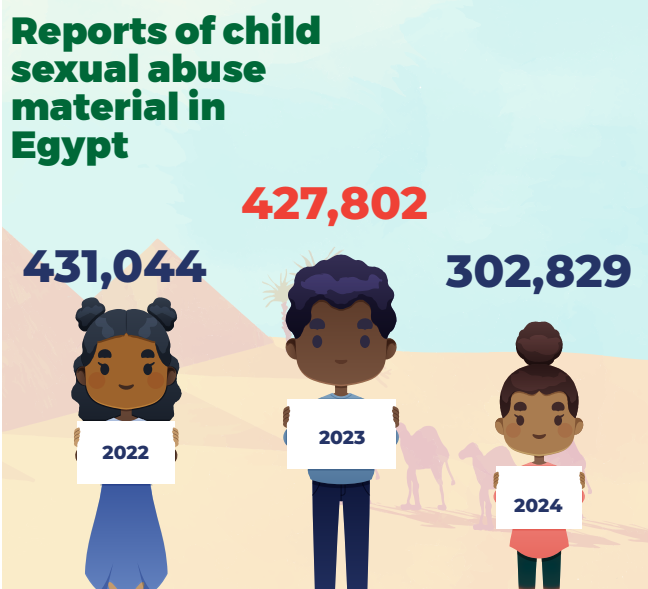
TECHNOLOGY-FACILITATED CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE

Technology is an increasingly pervasive element in sexual offending against children, and it is becoming rare that no technology at all is used at some stage of the preparation, commission, or further dissemination (in the case of child sexual abuse material) of the sexual exploitation or sexual abuse of a child. Although not always used to facilitate or commit a sexual crime, the overarching role of technology in facilitation means that it can cover crimes committed in both digital and non-digital environments.²⁵

Technology-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse includes an evolving range of practices including conduct related to child sexual abuse material (e.g. production, distribution, dissemination, possession of, etc.), grooming children online for sexual purposes, live streaming of child sexual abuse. Related concepts can include online sexual extortion, the non-consensual sharing of self-generated sexual content involving children, unwanted exposure to sexualised content, among others.

As of 2023, it was estimated that 72.7% of the population in Egypt used the Internet.²⁶ Although there are no recent statistics on children's use of the Internet in Egypt, global data indicates that children's Internet usage is increasing worldwide,²⁷ suggesting that Egypt is likely experiencing a similar trend.

Despite the evident benefits of widespread mobile phone use and Internet connectivity for children, including access to information and educational tools, there is a growing concern about potential risks, particularly related to child sexual exploitation. Recent figures partially highlight the scale of the problem. CyberTipline reports indicated fluctuations in cases of online child sexual exploitation in Egypt over the past several years. In 2022, there were 431,044 reports of child sexual abuse material in Egypt;²⁸ this number surged to 427,802 in 2023²⁹ before dropping significantly to 302,829 reports in 2024.³⁰ While the 2024 figure represents a sharp decrease compared to the previous year, it still reflects a concerning level of child sexual abuse material's reports originating from Egypt



²⁴ ECPAT International.(2020). *Regional overview: Sexual exploitation of children in the Middle East and North Africa*.

²⁵ Interagency Working Group on Sexual Exploitation of Children. (2025). *Terminology Guidelines for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse. Second Edition* Section G. Bangkok: ECPAT International.

²⁶ International Telecommunication Union (ITU). (n.d.). *Country ICT data: Egypt*. ITU DataHub.

²⁷ International Telecommunication Union (ITU). (2023). *Youth Internet Use*.

²⁸ National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. (2022). *2022 CyberTipline Reports by Country*.

²⁹ National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. (2023). *2023 CyberTipline Reports by Country*.

³⁰ National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. (2024). *2024 CyberTipline Reports by Country*

As early as 2016, child helplines in the Middle East and North Africa region highlighted key concerns for children, including cyberbullying, online sexual harassment, trolling, grooming, and sexual extortion.³¹ They also emphasised that the lack of oversight on online platforms poses a major child protection concern, as children often browse the Internet without their parents' knowledge.³² A 2019 study by a cybersecurity company revealed that around 50% of Egyptian parents were confident their children knew how to navigate the internet safely, and 31% reported that they did not feel the need to monitor their children's Internet activities.³³

However, according to some key informants, there is a general lack of awareness, both among parents and communities, about the nature of digital abuse, coupled with an overreliance on restricting access to technology instead of building children's digital literacy or safety skills. Moreover, informants noted that children and their families do not fully understand or recognise technology-facilitated child sexual abuse and exploitation and even when they do, would not know how or where to report it. These crimes are often exacerbated by victim-blaming, cultural stigma, and limited awareness especially in rural communities where tribal customs and minimal parental guidance make it difficult for children to speak out. In many cases, online sexual violence is resolved through out-of-court settlements.³⁴

SALE AND TRAFFICKING OF CHILDREN FOR SEXUAL PURPOSES

Article 3 (c) of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (Trafficking Protocol) specifies that the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation is considered trafficking in persons even if it does not involve any of the means stipulated for adult victims.³⁵ In other words, the Protocol recognises that children can never be willing participants to their own exploitation.

For its part, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography deals with the 'sale of children', defined as "any act or transaction whereby a child is transferred by any person or group of persons to another for remuneration or any other consideration".³⁶

Both concepts are often used in conjunction and without any clear distinction. However, despite a certain overlap, sale of children' is not identical to 'trafficking'. The 'sale

31 Child Helpline International, & UNICEF.(2016). *A new reality: Child helplines report on online child sexual exploitation and abuse from around the world*. UNICEF.

32 *Ibid*.

33 Daily News Egypt.(2019). *50% of parents in Egypt trust their kids' internet usage*.

34 Davidson, J.(2016, November). *Child online protection in the MENA region* (Regional report). Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention.

35 UN General Assembly. (2000, November 15). United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, *Annex 2: Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (Palermo Protocol)*. Res. 55/25 of 15. Art. 3 (a) and (c).

36 UNGA. (2000, May). *Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography*. Article 2 (b).

of children' always involves some form of commercial transaction, which trafficking in children does not require, but does not necessarily include the purpose of exploiting a child (e.g. sale of children for illegal adoption). Therefore, 'sale of children' is not necessarily related to sexual abuse and sexual or other forms of exploitation. Lastly, the 'sale of children' can take place without physically moving the child out of their social environment, whereas trafficking inherently depends on the movement of the child.³⁷



Egypt is both a destination and transit country for victims of human trafficking to Europe.³⁸ According to the 2024 Trafficking in Persons Report by the US Department of State, the Egyptian government identified 217 trafficking victims in 2022, including 51 victims of trafficking for sexual purposes. Of the total number of victims, 164 were children; however, no information was provided on the specific purposes for which these children were trafficked. During the same period, the Egyptian government did report referring 29 victims of trafficking of children for sexual purposes to government shelters for children, where they received psychological support.³⁹

Despite these efforts, according to key informants interviewed for this overview, significant gaps remain in the identification and protection of trafficking victims, particularly among vulnerable groups such as migrants, refugees, and street-connected children who are trafficked from other countries to Egypt.

Evidence from 2010-2015 indicate temporary marriages as a purpose of trafficking of children, with foreign men travelling to the Middle East and North Africa region or Egyptian girls being trafficked to the Gulf States.^{40,41} When these temporary marriages ended, girls were often abandoned without legal permission to stay in the destination country, leaving them isolated and at risk of further exploitation.⁴² A key informant reported the existence of organised networks facilitating child trafficking for the purpose of such marriages, involving intermediaries such as lawyers, taxi drivers, sheikhs, and brokers who serve wealthy Arab clients. Key informants also shared how in some areas like Hawamdeya and rural Giza, brokers or intermediaries play a central role by arranging temporary marriages with girls as young as 13, forging documents like birth certificates to bypass legal age restrictions, and coordinating with families for financial gain.

Although legal reforms attempted to address child marriage, they primarily penalise the official registration rather

³⁷ Interagency Working Group on Sexual Exploitation of Children. (2025). *Terminology Guidelines for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse. Second Edition, Section J*. Bangkok: ECPAT International.

³⁸ U.S.Department of State.(2024). *2024 trafficking in persons report: Egypt*.

³⁹ U.S.Department of State.(2024). *2024 trafficking in persons report: Egypt*.

⁴⁰ CEDAW. (2010, February 5). *Concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, 7.CEDAW/C/EGY/CO/7*. ILO.(2015).Egypt. ILO.

⁴¹ Olivier Peyroux.(2015).*Trafficking in Human Beings in Conflict and Post-conflict situation*, 21.Caritas Research.

⁴² IOM.(2014). *Pilot Study – Tourist Marriages in Yemen*, 25.Sana'a, Yemen: IOM.

than criminalising the act itself,⁴³ allowing informal and unregistered marriages to persist and trafficking of children to happen.

SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN IN TRAVEL AND TOURISM

The term “sexual exploitation of children in (the context of) travel and tourism” refers to sexual exploitation of children that is embedded in a context of travel, tourism, or both. The offence can be committed by either foreign or domestic tourists and travellers and longer-term visitors.⁴⁴ The United Nations Tourism Framework Convention on Tourism Ethics recognises that the exploitation of children conflicts with the fundamental aims of tourism and should be strongly combated with the cooperation of all the States concerned.⁴⁵

In 2024, Egypt’s tourism industry saw significant growth, with 15.7 million tourists arriving in the country. In addition, tourism revenues increased, reaching \$14.1 billion in 2024, compared to \$6.3 billion in the previous year.⁴⁶ The growth of the travel and tourism sector, while contributing positively to economies, also raises concerns among experts who suggest it might provide opportunities for individuals who travel to commit sexual crimes against children.⁴⁷ The issue is not limited to international movement but also includes domestic travel,

business or leisure trips, temporary working contracts, visits to remote rural areas or religious pilgrimages and voluntourism packages.⁴⁸

Much of the documented exploitation in the context of travel and tourism in Egypt focuses on “tourism marriage” (temporary child marriages to foreign visitors as mentioned above).

According to a key informant, there are cases of girls under the age of 18 coerced into “tourism marriage” during peak tourist seasons. These arrangements are reportedly driven by foreign visitors seeking young, virgin girls in exchange for money.

Additionally, key informants highlighted community-level perceptions and rumours surrounding child sexual exploitation in the context of travel and tourism, particularly in specific areas of the country. A representative from a civil society organisation shared:

“People say tourists come and exploit boys - especially boys from an area called Edfu Center. And even the people in that area, I suspect, see their boys as men, as they say. That’s what’s commonly believed, even though they are still children.”

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Interagency Working Group on Sexual Exploitation of Children. (2025). *Terminology Guidelines for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse. Second Edition* Section I. Bangkok: ECPAT International.

⁴⁵ United Nations Tourism. (2019). *UNWTO Framework Convention on Tourism Ethics*. UN Doc. A/RES/707(XXII). Art. 5 (3)

⁴⁶ State Information Service. (2025, January 8). *A record 15.7 million tourists visited Egypt in 2024*.

⁴⁷ ECPAT International (2021). *Summary Paper on Sexual Exploitation of Children in Travel and Tourism*. Bangkok: ECPAT International.

⁴⁸ ECPAT International. (2022). *How voluntourism may facilitate the sexual exploitation of children*. ECPAT International.

This reflects how local perceptions may normalise or obscure exploitative dynamics, blurring the lines between childhood and adulthood, and making the issue harder to detect or address. Another key informant working in child protection emphasised the challenges in addressing such cases due to broader systemic pressures linked to the importance of tourism in the country:

**“
There’s a level of
suppression happening
regarding these violations/
cases related to the travel
and tourism sector because
of the sensitivity
related to tourism.
”**

Within this broader tourism landscape, an emerging trend is “voluntourism”.⁴⁹ The term refers to an industry that merges unskilled volunteering with tourism.⁵⁰ It encompasses a variety of activities ranging from short to longer-term visits in the context of travel and tourism, whether international or domestic.⁵¹ Voluntourism is a globalised activity that crosses multiple State borders and legal jurisdictions, meaning no single country can regulate it alone. Protecting children in the context of voluntourism requires international cooperation, with both countries of origin and of destination for volunteers taking

steps to regulate the aspects of the supply chain that fall within their jurisdiction. While there is limited research on voluntourism in Egypt, the presence of numerous online platforms advertising opportunities to volunteer in contact with children in the country raises important child protection concerns. Although travellers may have good intentions, voluntourism may negatively impact children, in some cases opening venues for perpetrators to sexually exploit children, in orphanages and other settings where children are present.⁵²

CHILD, EARLY AND FORCED MARRIAGE

Child marriage is a marriage or union in which at least one of the parties is a child. It also refers to the act of marrying off children, usually young girls, with or without their consent.⁵³ Child, early and forced marriage can be understood both as a form of or as a pathway to sexual exploitation.⁵⁴

Available data on child marriage in Egypt shows that between 2015 and 2023, 16% of women aged 20-24 were married before 18,⁵⁵ with rural regions experiencing higher rates.⁵⁶

A major challenge in combating child marriage in Egypt is the widespread use of unregistered Islamic marriages. Although in 2008, Egypt’s Child Law raised the legal marriage age for girls to 18, prohibiting

49 ECPAT International. (2025). *Protecting children in travel and tourism. Global case study: How to regulate the issue of voluntourism with children?* ECPAT International in partnership with Better Care Network.

50 Terminology Guidelines for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse. (2025). *Terminology Guidelines Second Edition*. Bangkok: ECPAT International. 104.

51 *Ibid.*

52 *Ibid.*

53 Interagency Working Group on Sexual Exploitation of Children. (2025). *Terminology Guidelines for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse. Second Edition* Section L. Bangkok: ECPAT International.

54 ECPAT International. (2020). *Summary paper on Child Early and Forced Marriage as a Form of, or Pathway to Sexual Exploitation of Children*. Bangkok: ECPAT International.

55 United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF). (2024). *The State of the World’s Children 2024*. UNICEF.

56 Girls Not Brides.(n.d.).*Egypt*. Child Marriage Atlas.

the registration of child marriages,⁵⁷ families often circumvent this restriction by arranging a religious marriage and delaying official registration until the girl reaches the age of 18.⁵⁸ This practice results in a significant number of child marriages remaining unregistered, leading to serious legal and social consequences for both the girl being married off⁵⁹ and any children born from these unions. For girls, unregistered marriages pose severe economic and psychosocial risks, including increased vulnerability to sexual abuse and a lack of legal protection. Children born from these marriages face additional challenges, as they cannot obtain birth certificates, limiting their access to essential rights and services. A 2017 study highlighted the obstacles this situation creates for child protection service providers. While authorities may identify cases of child marriage, they cannot intervene effectively because there is no legal documentation to support legal action.⁶⁰ While culturally framed as religious or protective, these marriages may mask exploitative dynamics and contribute to the systemic denial of children's rights to protection, autonomy, and bodily integrity.



SEXUAL ABUSE AND EXPLOITATION OF BOYS

Globally, factors associated with debilitating socio-economic conditions, heteronormative frameworks, beliefs and attitudes, notions of masculinity, family maltreatment, migration, and lack of awareness and stigma are identified as some of the key factors that multiply the risks for sexual abuse and exploitation of boys across the world.⁶¹

No comprehensive data on the sexual abuse and exploitation of boys in Egypt exist. However, some isolated, and in some cases dated, studies offer insight into the presence of boys among children subjected to sexual abuse. For example, a 2022 study examined cases of child sexual abuse in the Alexandria Governorate during 2020, indicating that 29% of the victims were boys.⁶² Another more dated study, analysing 1832 records of child sexual abuse from a medicolegal department in Cairo from 2005 to 2011, showed that 57.9% of the victims were boys, with over two thirds being in the age group 6 to 12.⁶³

According to the key informants interviewed for this overview, sexual abuse and exploitation of boys in Egypt is significantly underreported due to strong cultural norms that discourage disclosure. Ideas of masculinity are closely tied to strength and emotional restraint, making it particularly difficult for boys especially adolescents to disclose victimisation. While younger boys may be more likely to speak out, older boys

⁵⁷ The Arab Republic of Egypt. (2008, July). *Law No.143 of 1994 on Civil Status amended by law No.126 of 2008*. Page 52.

⁵⁸ Zawia3. (2023.). *Unofficial marriage in Egypt*.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*.

⁶⁰ United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). (2017). *Child marriage in the Middle East and North Africa: Egypt country brief*. UNICEF Middle East and North Africa Regional Office.

⁶¹ ECPAT International. (2021). *Global Boys Initiative: A global review of existing literature on the sexual exploitation of boys*. Bangkok: ECPAT International.

⁶² Hamouda, A., Hassan, A., Mohamed, I., & Alwakil, M.(2022). *Alleged child sexual abuse in Alexandria Governorate, Egypt, in 2020* *Al-Azhar International Medical Journal*, 3(11), Article 3.

⁶³ Elgendy, I.S., & Hassan, N.A.(2013). *Medicolegal study of child sexual abuse in Greater Cairo, Egypt, during a 7-year period: 2005-2011*. *American Journal of Forensic Medicine and Pathology*, 34(4), 335-341.

often remain silent out of fear of being perceived as weak or “unmanly”. Fear of retaliation and social stigma further silence boys who have been subjected to sexual abuse and exploitation. Culturally, abuse against boys is treated with greater leniency than that against girls, who are viewed as bearers of family honour, while boys are expected to defend themselves. As a result, cases involving boys are often handled informally, with minimal procedures. However, according to a key informant, the psychological toll is significant, as boys may become withdrawn, distrustful, and struggle with mental health issues. The informant further shared:

Boys may be abused even if they’re adolescents and not [younger] children. They feel that if they speak out about the abuse, it will damage their masculinity or how their friends see them. They don’t understand that it was a clear violation. So yes, boys are even more repressed in talking about their experiences of violence or exploitation.⁶⁴

SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN IN HUMANITARIAN SETTINGS

Egypt has become an important transit and destination country for refugees and asylum seekers hosting one of the largest urban refugee populations in the world,⁶⁵ with 992,000 registered refugees and asylum-seekers as of June 2025, primarily from Sudan and Syria.⁶⁶

Armed conflicts, political instability, and economic hardship have driven people from Palestine, Sudan, Syria, South Sudan, Ethiopia, Iraq, and Yemen to seek refuge in Egypt, where they face significant barriers in accessing basic needs, livelihood opportunities, and essential services.⁶⁷ A key informant noted that some families reported having to exchange basic necessities - such as food, shelter, or services - for exploitative favours. The power imbalances in such situations may place children, particularly girls, at heightened risk of sexual exploitation and abuse.

Research indicates that ongoing conflicts, especially in Syria and Sudan, combined with refugee and asylum-seeker status, increase the risk of early and forced marriage as a survival strategy for families.⁶⁸ One study exploring the drivers and consequences of child marriage among displaced Syrian refugees in Egypt, found contrasting trends: while displacement challenges have driven some families to arrange early marriages, relocation to urban areas has, in some cases, weakened the social norms that support child marriage, resulting in delayed marriages for some Syrian families.⁶⁹

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.(2024).*Refugees and asylum-seekers registered with UNHCR Egypt.*

⁶⁶ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Egypt Fact Sheet (June 2025). *UNHCR Egypt Fact Sheet.*

⁶⁷ UNHCR.(n.d.).Egypt. UNHCR Egypt.

⁶⁸ Elnakib, S., Abou Hussein, S., Hafez, S., Elsallab, M., Hunersen, K., Metzler, J., & Robinson, W.C.(2021).*Drivers and consequences of child marriage in a context of protracted displacement: A qualitative study among Syrian refugees in Egypt.* BMC Public Health, 21(674).

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

In addition to these patterns, interviews with key informants revealed deeper concerns. In their experiences, refugee and migrant children and families often expressed a clear preference for engaging with international organisations over local Egyptian authorities, citing mistrust and perceived discrimination and racism. Interviewees also highlighted that sexual and gender-based violence is not only common but normalised in migration routes and settlement contexts. For instance, one key informant described how girls often endure sexual assaults during irregular migration journeys due to their inability to pay smugglers and are also vulnerable in housing arrangements where they are forced to share accommodations

with men due to inflated rents and limited availability. This sometimes results in transactional arrangements involving sexual exploitation in exchange for shelter.

According to key informants legal and procedural barriers in host countries around reporting and bureaucracy further compound these challenges. A key informant also emphasised the widespread nature of trauma among refugees, especially those who have endured early-life or developmental trauma, encompassing physical and sexual violence, war, and torture.

INTERNATIONAL, REGIONAL AND NATIONAL COMMITMENTS AND LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

Status of ratification of relevant international and regional instruments, reporting to human rights bodies and engagement with the special procedures of the Human Rights Council		
International Instruments		Date of ratification/accession
Convention on the Rights of the Child - 1989		6 th of July 1990
Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography - 2000		11 th of July 2002
ILO Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labour - 1999 (No.182)		6 th of May 2002
UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and children – 2000 (supplementing the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime)		1 st of March 2004
Regional Instruments		Date of ratification/accession
African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights		20 th of March 1984
African Charter on the Right and the Welfare of the Child		9 th of May 2001
African Youth Charter		9 th of March 2015
Human Rights Bodies	Date of latest submitted report	Comments
Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC review)	March 2023	Main recommendations by the Committee on the Rights of the Child relevant to the sexual exploitation of children: » Strengthen detection, reporting, investigation, protection and judicial interventions in all cases of violence against children.

Human Rights Bodies	Date of latest submitted report	Comments
		» Put in place accessible, confidential and child-friendly mechanisms to facilitate and promote the reporting of violence against children. » Adopt comprehensive legislation to criminalise all forms of violence against children. » Further strengthen and enforce penalties for neglect of children and for placing children at risk of harm. » Enhance awareness of child sexual abuse and exploitation among both members of the public and professionals, including in the digital environment. » Strengthen the professional capacity and software tools to detect and investigate child sexual exploitation and abuse.⁷⁰
Committee on the Rights of the Child (OPSC review)	June 2024	Main recommendations by the Committee on the Rights of the Child relevant to the sexual exploitation of children: » Strengthen efforts to prevent, detect and eliminate offences under the Optional Protocol. » Conduct in-depth, multidisciplinary research across diverse groups to understand the scope of sale of children, exploitation of children in prostitution, and child sexual abuse material, and use the findings to design a comprehensive, targeted prevention and response strategy. » Strengthen efforts to implement existing regulatory framework and to take all administrative, social and other measures necessary to prevent and eliminate sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism. » Revise and bring the Penal Code and other relevant legislation into full compliance with the Optional Protocol. » Establish effective mechanisms and procedures for the early identification of children subjected to sexual exploitation.

⁷⁰ Committee on the Rights of the Child. (2024, June). *Concluding observations on the combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of Egypt*

Human Rights Bodies	Date of latest submitted report	Comments
Human Rights Council – Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review	April 2025	Main recommendations by the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review relevant to the sexual exploitation of children: » Ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure (Namibia); » Continue efforts to ensure that children are protected from the worst forms of child labour (Cyprus); » Continue to strengthen efforts to combat trafficking in persons, particularly in women and children, and provide effective protection and assistance to victims of trafficking (Chad); » Sustain efforts to eliminate violence against children and women by expanding support services and strengthening enforcement mechanisms (Islamic Republic of Iran); » Accelerate the process of establishing specialised child courts with adequate human, technical and financial resources (Mongolia); » Promote the protection of children's rights in conflict zones, ensuring their safety, especially in the digital space [...] (Dominican Republic); » Enact, as a matter of priority, legislation banning child marriage (Romania); » Criminalise marital rape (Iceland).⁷¹

⁷¹ UN General Assembly. (2025, April 1). *Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic. Egypt*

NATIONAL LEGISLATION

In line with international standards, Egypt defines children as all individuals under the age of 18.⁷² Egypt's legislation is based on the principles of Sharia, the fundamental religious concepts of Islam, as specified in the Constitution.⁷³ The law affirms that "the best interests of the child and his protection shall be a primary consideration in all decisions and procedures".⁷⁴ However, some key informants noted that societal perceptions often diverge from these legal standards. Informants shared that in many communities, children from impoverished backgrounds are frequently treated as adults and expected to contribute economically through work or marriage.

The age of sexual consent is set at 18 years for both boys and girls, with no close-in-age exemption provided for consensual relationships among teenagers.⁷⁵ Accordingly, those who commit sexual acts (indecent assault in the text of the law) against a child are sanctioned with detention, though the law does not specify the length of imprisonment. If the child is under seven years old, or if the perpetrator is a relative or responsible for the child, the punishment is temporary hard labour.⁷⁶ In cases where violence has been used, the penalty will be temporary or permanent hard labour.⁷⁷

The protection of children against sexual exploitation in Egypt is covered in the Penal Code, the Child Law and the Law Regarding Combatting Human Trafficking. Nonetheless, several shortcomings remain.

As further explained below, these include the lack of provisions on the criminalisation of grooming and sexual extortion, the lack of a definition of child sexual abuse material and limited criminalisation of live streaming of child sexual abuse. Furthermore, while Egypt is a popular tourist destination, the law is silent with regards to the protection of children against sexual exploitation in the context of travel and tourism.

A key informant emphasised that overall implementation of legislation on child sexual abuse and exploitation remains inconsistent, with law enforcement and justice authorities not always taking cases of sexual abuse seriously unless involving extreme violence or coercion. In addition, informants reported that prosecutors and legal officials frequently change, leading to inconsistent enforcement of child protection laws. In rural areas of Upper Egypt and in Bedouin communities, children subjected to sexual abuse and exploitation often face intense stigma, are blamed for their experiences, or fear criticism for speaking out, factors that significantly reduce reporting.

Exploitation of children in prostitution

Sex work is illegal in Egypt for both men and women.⁷⁸ Any person who habitually "engages in debauchery or prostitution" faces three months to three years of imprisonment and a fine.⁷⁹ Advertising sexual services through any form is also criminalised, with a maximum penalty of three years of imprisonment and/or a fine.⁸⁰

⁷² Arab Republic of Egypt. (2008, July). *Law No. 12 of 1996 Promulgating the Child Law, as Amended by Law No. 126 of 2008*. Article 2; Arab Republic of Egypt. (2014). *Constitution*. Article 80.

⁷³ Arab Republic of Egypt. (2014). *Constitution*. Article 2.

⁷⁴ Arab Republic of Egypt. (2008, July). *Law No. 12 of 1996 Promulgating the Child Law, as Amended by Law No. 126 of 2008*. Article 3.

⁷⁵ Arab Republic of Egypt. (1937). *Law No. 58 of 1937 Promulgating the Penal Code*. Article 269.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ *Ibid.* Article 268.

⁷⁸ Arab Republic of Egypt. (1961). *Egypt: Law No.10/1961, on the Combating of Prostitution*.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.* Article 9.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.* Article 14.

Knowingly working or living in a premise used for prostitution is also criminalised.⁸¹ While debates around the legalisation of sex work are a separate argument, it is important to highlight that adult sex work, whether criminalised, decriminalised and/or regulated, has effects on the exploitation of children in prostitution, which frequently occurs adjacent to adult sex work - legal or otherwise.⁸² In Egypt, any person who incites an individual that has not reached 21 to engage in debauchery or prostitution, assists, or facilitates it, faces one to five years of prison and a fine.⁸³ It is also illegal to incite a man under 21 years of age, or a woman irrespective of age, to leave Egypt, facilitate this for them, and employ them for the purpose of prostitution.⁸⁴ A person assisting in these acts could face between one and five years in prison.⁸⁵

When it comes to exploitation of children in prostitution, legislation punishes anyone who exploits a child sexually or commercially with a period of labour of at least five years and a fine,⁸⁶ therefore criminalising intermediaries and facilitators. Those who physically and sexually exploit the child remain liable for detention under provisions related to statutory rape.⁸⁷ Furthermore, using a computer or the Internet, as well as information networks or cartoons to induce or exploit children to engage in prostitution is also criminalised. This offence is punished with an imprisonment of minimum two years and a fine between 10,000 and 50,000 Egyptian pounds (US\$ 210 and 1040 as of August 2025).⁸⁸ Exposing children to sexual exploitation is also punishable by a minimum of six months' imprisonment and a fine.⁸⁹

Technology-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse

The Child Law punishes importing, exporting, producing, preparing, viewing, printing, promoting, possessing, broadcasting child sexual abuse material with imprisonment for a period of minimum two years and a fine of minimum 10,000 Egyptian pounds (US\$ 210 as of August 2025).⁹⁰ Mere possession without the intention to distribute, as well as access are therefore criminalised.

It should, however, be noted that the Child Law does not define child sexual abuse material.⁹¹ In addition, it uses the inadequate and outdated terms “pornographic material using children” and “pornographic activities”. Although still used in many legal systems, these expressions are misleading because they minimise the seriousness of the corresponding offences. They suggest that recordings/images of child sexual abuse are only a form of pornography, and not recordings/images of serious crimes. The term child sexual abuse material should therefore be used instead, as it is in the present analysis. In addition, the existing provisions criminalising child sexual abuse material, do not include an exemption for consensual exchanging of self-generated sexual content among teenagers within a romantic relationship. This compounded with the lack of close-in-age exemption to the age of sexual consent and the fact that criminal responsibility is set at 12 years old in Egypt,⁹² may lead to the prosecution of children sharing sexual content consensually and within the context of their sexual agency and development.

81 *Ibid.* Article 13.

82 ECPAT International. (2020). *Summary Paper on Sexual Exploitation of Children in Prostitution*.

83 Arab Republic of Egypt. (1961). *Egypt: Law No.10/1961, on the Combating of Prostitution. Article 1 (B)*.

84 *Ibid.* Article 3.

85 *Ibid.*

86 Arab Republic of Egypt. (2008, July). *Law No. 12 of 1996 Promulgating the Child Law, as Amended by Law No. 126 of 2008. Annex, First: Additions to the Penal Code, Article 291*.

87 Arab Republic of Egypt. (1937). *Law No. 58 of 1937 Promulgating the Penal Code. Article 269*.

88 Arab Republic of Egypt. (2008, July). *Law No. 12 of 1996 Promulgating the Child Law, as Amended by Law No. 126 of 2008. Article 116-bis (a)*.

89 Arab Republic of Egypt. (2008, July). *Law No. 12 of 1996 Promulgating the Child Law, as Amended by Law No. 126 of 2008. Article 96 (6)*.

90 *Ibid.* Article 116-bis (a).

91 International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children. (2023). *Child Sexual Abuse Material: Model Legislation & Global Review – 10th Edition, 2023*. 57.

92 *Ibid.* Article 94.

The existing legal provisions on online grooming of children for sexual purposes are too vague to fully encompass this phenomenon. Indeed, the Child Law criminalises using digital media to induce children to engage in pornographic activities or anyone using a computer or the Internet to engage or use children in illegitimate activities or immoral acts.⁹³ These provisions fail to explicitly criminalise the process of building trust that perpetrators use to lure children into an in-person meeting, as well as situations where sexual abuse happens online, for example, if a child is coerced, manipulated or convinced to send sexual content via online platforms.

The Egyptian legislation does not include any specific provision on sexual extortion of children nor livestreaming of child sexual abuse. However, on the latter, the Child Law punishes anyone using a computer, the Internet, or information networks to prepare, save, process, display, print, promote or publish pornographic activities with at least two years in prison and a fine.⁹⁴ These provisions broadly criminalise the use of technology for various acts related to “pornographic activities” and despite having the potential to cover live streaming of child sexual abuse, they are rather ambiguous leaving room for interpretation. Egypt should therefore explicitly criminalise both those who request or access the live streaming of child sexual abuse and those who carry it out, including in cases where no materials are downloaded or stored.

Sale and trafficking of children for sexual purposes

The Law Regarding Combatting Human Trafficking criminalises all forms of trafficking of children, including the sale, offer for sale, purchase or promise thereof, use, transport, delivery, harbouring, reception, or receipt, whether within the country or across its national borders, of a child for the purpose of all forms of sexual exploitation.⁹⁵ The offence is constituted even without the use of force, violence, fraud, abuse of power, payments, etc.⁹⁶ This definition is in line with the Trafficking Protocol.⁹⁷ Penalties range from five years⁹⁸ to life in prison and a fine.⁹⁹

Also applying to trafficking of children, the law provides a sentence of imprisonment for people who hid one of the perpetrators, objects or funds or tried to hide traces of the offence.¹⁰⁰ It also criminalises, with the same penalty, the person responsible for the management of a legal person if the offence has been committed by one of its employees.¹⁰¹ Moral persons are jointly liable and responsible for paying damages if the offence was committed by one of the employees in their name and for their benefit. The legal person’s activities may also be suspended for up to one year.¹⁰²

The Trafficking and Child Laws also punish anyone who buys or sells a child or offers a child for sale with a minimum of five years’

93 Arab Republic of Egypt. (2008, July). *Law No. 12 of 1996 Promulgating the Child Law, as Amended by Law No. 126 of 2008*. Article 116 bis (a).

94 *Ibid.*

95 Arab Republic of Egypt. (2010). *Law No. 64 of 2010 Regarding Combating Human Trafficking*. Article 2.

96 *Ibid.* Article 3.

97 UN General Assembly. (2000). *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime*. Article 3.

98 Arab Republic of Egypt. (2008, July). *Law No. 12 of 1996 Promulgating the Child Law, as Amended by Law No. 126 of 2008*. Annex, First: Additions to the Penal Code, Article 291.

99 Arab Republic of Egypt. (2010). *Law No. 64 of 2010 Regarding Combating Human Trafficking*. Article 6.

100 *Ibid.* Article 8.

101 *Ibid.* Article 11.

102 *Ibid.*

imprisonment and a maximum of life in prison.¹⁰³ The offence is constituted even in the absence of intent to exploit the child. The term “sale” is, however, not defined. People who engage or induce in the act of selling, even if not committed, can also be prosecuted.¹⁰⁴

Sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism

Egypt has very few legal provisions on the protection of children against sexual exploitation within the context of travel and tourism. This lack of adequate legislative measures – along with limited public awareness of the issue – was already raised as a concern back in 2011 by the Committee on the Rights of the Child.¹⁰⁵ The country is not a signatory to the UN Framework Convention on Tourism Ethics,¹⁰⁶ and its National Strategy for Sustainable Tourism 2030 does not address sexual exploitation of children.¹⁰⁷ While the strategy emphasises environmental sustainability, it lacks sufficient attention to social dimensions, including child protection. True sustainability in travel and tourism should extend beyond environmental concerns to include safeguards such as regulating voluntourism and protecting children.¹⁰⁸

Companies and their employees engaged in acts amounting to child trafficking for sexual purposes are liable to prosecution,¹⁰⁹ including in the context of travel and tourism. However, specific legislation and

provisions for the licensing or regulation of travel and tourism industry, including tour operators, would provide a stronger framework by directly targeting and defining offences related to child sexual exploitation in these contexts.

In Egypt, there is a lack of ethical tourism regulations by touristic agencies. No hotels, tour operators or travel agencies based in Egypt have become members of The Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism – an international multi-stakeholder initiative providing awareness, tools and support to the tourism industry to prevent the sexual exploitation of children.¹¹⁰ Egypt implemented a “charter of honour” for tourism workers, comprising standards and guidelines on preventing offences covered in the Optional Protocol, but it has not been disseminated widely.¹¹¹ Moreover, a key informant discussed efforts to develop and adopt locally an ethical code of conduct for the tourism sector modelled on the basis of other existing instruments in other countries,¹¹² however, as of May 2025 the Ministry of Tourism has not yet mandated the adoption of such a code across the tourism sector.

Child, early and forced marriage

In Egypt, the legal age for marriage is set at 18 for both boys and girls.¹¹³ However, the law provides only for “disciplinary punishment”

¹⁰³ Arab Republic of Egypt. (2008, July). *Law No. 12 of 1996 Promulgating the Child Law, as Amended by Law No. 126 of 2008*. Annex, First: Additions to the Penal Code, Article 291; Arab Republic of Egypt. (2010). *Law No. 64 of 2010 Regarding Combating Human Trafficking*. Article 6.

¹⁰⁴ Arab Republic of Egypt. (2008, July). *Law No. 12 of 1996 Promulgating the Child Law, as Amended by Law No. 126 of 2008*. Annex, First: Additions to the Penal Code, Article 291.

¹⁰⁵ Committee on the Rights of the Child. (2011). *Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 12, paragraph 1 of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography*.

¹⁰⁶ United Nations Tourism. (2019, September). *The Framework Convention on Tourism Ethics and its Optional Protocol: Depositary section*.

¹⁰⁷ Arab Republic of Egypt, State Information Service. (2023, November). *National Strategy for Sustainable Tourism 2030*.

¹⁰⁸ Ecpat International. (2023). *A global call for robust child protection structures in travel and tourism*.

¹⁰⁹ Arab Republic of Egypt. (2010). *Law No. 64 of 2010 Regarding Combating Human Trafficking*. Article 11.

¹¹⁰ The Code. (n.d.). *Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism*.

¹¹¹ Committee on the Rights of the Child. (2011). *Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 12, paragraph 1 of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography : concluding observations : Egypt*.

¹¹² Accor. *Ethics and Corporate Social Responsibility Charter*.

¹¹³ Arab Republic of Egypt. (2008, July). *Law No. 12 of 1996 Promulgating the Child Law, as Amended by Law No. 126 of 2008*. Annex, Second: Additions to the Civil Status Law, Article 31-bis.

for those who register marriages of children below 18.¹¹⁴ The law criminalises anyone who is consciously lying about the age of one of the spouses within the marriage contract, before the competent authority, with a penalty of up to two years' detention or a fine.¹¹⁵ It is unclear here whether the provision would also apply to children lying about their age. Furthermore, any person who contracts a marriage while knowing that one of the spouses has not reached the age of 18 can face detention or a fine.¹¹⁶ Finally, the absence of explicit provisions criminalising marital rape means that child sexual abuse within a child marriage may go unpunished, as the Egyptian Constitution stipulates that no act can be considered a crime nor punished unless it is defined by law.¹¹⁷

In April 2022, the Egyptian Cabinet approved a draft law criminalising underage marriages. Under this bill, parents who marry their child, officiators conducting such marriages, and adults who marry or incite a child to marry would face at least one year in prison and a fine.¹¹⁸ The draft law also requires marriage officiators to report any customary marriage involving children to the public prosecution, or face a minimum of six months in prison and a fine.¹¹⁹ As of August 2025, there appears to be no new development about the draft law.

Extraterritorial jurisdiction and extradition law

In Egypt, the Penal Code applies to any person who committed an act outside of the territory, that makes them accomplice of an offence committed inside Egypt.¹²⁰

Furthermore, if an Egyptian committed an offence abroad that is also punishable in the State where it was committed (principle of double criminality), they can be prosecuted if they come back to Egypt (active extraterritorial jurisdiction),¹²¹ unless they were acquitted by a foreign court.¹²² This applies to crimes such as rape, sexual assault and harassment, abduction and kidnapping of children for sexual purposes.¹²³ However, it should be noted that double criminality, when required in cases of sexual exploitation of children, can make extraterritoriality and extradition inapplicable in practice, if the offences are not criminalised in one of the countries or qualification differs from country to country, allowing perpetrators to escape prosecution.¹²⁴

While the Child Law does not explicitly include provisions on extraterritoriality, it specifies that the provisions of the Penal Code and Criminal Procedure Law apply where no provision is prescribed.¹²⁵ This means, however, that offences of sexual exploitation of children under the Child Law, such as those related to child sexual abuse material, cannot be prosecuted by Egyptian authorities when committed outside of Egypt. Amending this law to incorporate clear provisions on extraterritorial jurisdiction and extradition is therefore essential to ensure comprehensive protection for children against sexual exploitation, regardless of where offences occur. This would close critical legal gaps, enable consistent prosecution of offenders across borders, and align Egypt's framework with international standards, ultimately reducing opportunities for perpetrators to evade justice.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ Arab Republic of Egypt. (1937). *Law No. 58 of 1937 Promulgating the Penal Code. Article 227.*

¹¹⁶ Arab Republic of Egypt. (1937). *Law No. 58 of 1937 Promulgating the Penal Code. Article 227.*

¹¹⁷ UN Development Programme. (2018). *Egypt: Gender Justice & The Law.* 16.

¹¹⁸ Library of Congress. (2022). *Egypt: Cabinet Approves Draft Law on Criminalizing Underage Marriage.*

¹¹⁹ Sadek, G. (2022). *Egypt: Cabinet Approves Draft Law on Criminalizing Underage Marriage. [Web Page] Retrieved from the Library of Congress.*

¹²⁰ Arab Republic of Egypt. (1937). *Law No. 58 of 1937 Promulgating the Penal Code. Article 2 (1).*

¹²¹ *Ibid.* Article 3.

¹²² *Ibid.* Article 4.

¹²³ *Ibid.* Articles 267, 268, 269, 283 and 289.

¹²⁴ ECPAT International. (2022). *Extraterritorial jurisdiction and extradition legislation as tools to fight the sexual exploitation of children.*

¹²⁵ Arab Republic of Egypt. (2008, July). *Law No. 12 of 1996 Promulgating the Child Law, as Amended by Law No. 126 of 2008. Article 143.*

The Law on Trafficking also applies to non-Egyptians who commit the crime of human trafficking, if the act is punishable in the State in which it occurred in cases where: the victim was Egyptian; the preparation of the crime was in Egypt.¹²⁶ The Law on Trafficking is the only Egyptian piece of legislation that includes provisions on passive extraterritorial jurisdiction (based on the nationality of the victim).

Egyptian general law lacks detailed provisions on extradition. However, the country has concluded numerous bilateral treaties and is a party to several multilateral extradition agreements. Typically, for extradition to be granted, the offence must meet a minimum threshold of severity and be criminalised in both jurisdictions.¹²⁷ Furthermore, Egypt does not extradite its nationals or individuals granted political refugee status.¹²⁸

¹²⁶ Arab Republic of Egypt. (2010). *Law No. 64 of 2010 Regarding Combating Human Trafficking*. Article 16.

¹²⁷ See, for instance: Republic of India. (2008). *Extradition Treaty between The Republic of India and The Arab Republic of Egypt*. Article 2.

¹²⁸ Arab Republic of Egypt. (2014). *Constitution*. Article 91.

NATIONAL RESPONSE TO THE SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN

COORDINATION AND COOPERATION

Coordinating body/ National plan/ International agreement	Relevant activities related to sexual exploitation of children
Coordinating bodies	
National Coordinating Committee for Combating and Preventing Illegal Migration and Trafficking in Persons	Established in 2017 under the Prime Minister and based within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, this Committee is tasked with developing national strategies and overseeing efforts to combat illegal migration and human trafficking. The Committee includes 26 ministries and agencies, along with United Nations organisations, and focuses on coordinating nationwide efforts, including administrative oversight. ¹²⁹
The National Council for Childhood and Motherhood	This Council serves as the highest authority responsible for coordinating child rights activities at the national level. ¹³⁰ It works to strengthen child protection initiatives, which include the Girls' Education Initiative and combating female genital mutilation. ¹³¹
Child Protection Committees	A general committee for childhood protection is established in each Governorate, chaired by the Governor, and having as members the directors of the security, social affairs, education, and health directorates, as well as representatives from the civil society concerned with childhood affairs, and any other party as deemed necessary by the Governor. These committees are responsible for formulating the general policy for childhood protection in the Governorate and following up the implementation of this policy.¹³² The sub-committees for childhood protection, established in each department or police district, monitor all cases of children at risk and take the necessary preventive and therapeutic interventions for all these cases, as well as follow up measures.¹³³

¹²⁹ National Coordinating Committee for Combating and Preventing Illegal Migration and Trafficking in Persons. (n.d.). [Home](#).

¹³⁰ The National Council for Childhood and Motherhood.(n.d.).Motherhood. Human Rights Studies.

¹³¹ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).(2011, June 7). [Children's Rights Committee reviews reports of Egypt under Convention and Protocols on involvement in armed conflict and sexual exploitation](#).

¹³² Article (97) of the Child Act No.126 of 2008

¹³³ Article (97) of the Child Act

Coordinating body/ National plan/ International agreement	Relevant activities related to sexual exploitation of children
Ministry of Social Solidarity	The Ministry of Social Solidarity oversees services aimed at supporting at-risk children and their families. It is the primary entity responsible for overseeing and managing alternative care services, including residential and family-based care, both through direct services and partnerships with non-governmental organisations. ¹³⁴
National Action Plans	
National Action Plan Against the Worst Forms of Child Labor and Supporting Family (2018–2025)	The National Action Plan Against the Worst Forms of Child Labor was developed with the objective of countering human trafficking, including targeted interventions addressing the forced marriages of children and the reduction of the use, procurement, or offering of child sexual abuse material. ^{135,136}
National Strategy for Combating and Pre- venting Trafficking in Persons (2022– 2026)	The National Strategy for Combating and Preventing Trafficking in Persons was introduced to tackle human trafficking. It envisions creating an integrated Egyptian system to combat human trafficking in all its forms by addressing its root causes, strengthening security and judicial efforts, and ensuring the protection and rehabilitation of victims in line with Egypt's constitutional and legal guarantees. Its mission is to develop a comprehensive national policy that combines scientific methodology with respect for Egypt's identity, sovereignty, and security, while preventing trafficking, ensuring accountability for traffickers, and offering support to victims through coordinated efforts with relevant national agencies. ¹³⁷
Strategic Framework and National Strategy for Childhood and Motherhood (2018– 2030)	The strategic framework is Egypt's long-term vision to achieve child and women's rights, covering a 12-year period (2018–2030). The National Strategy for Childhood and Motherhood aims to build the government capacity of relevant government agencies related to child protection. Female genital mutilation and child marriage are priority areas.¹³⁸ To achieve the objectives of the strategic framework and National Strategy, a four-year national action plan was designed for implementation based on the priorities set for each cycle. The most recent action plan was implemented from 2018 to 2022, and no new plan has been adopted since.

¹³⁴ Gale, C.(2021, January). *The national child protection system and alternative child care in Egypt*. SOS Children's Villages.

¹³⁵ International Organization for Migration (IOM).(n.d.). *Action to support the National Coordinating Committee on Combating and Preventing Trafficking in Persons (NCCTIP) to create a safe and secure environment in Egypt*.

¹³⁶ Government of the Arab Republic of Egypt Represented by The Ministry of Manpower.(2018). *National Action Plan for Combating the Worst Forms of Child Labour in Egypt and Supporting Family (2018 – 2025)*.

¹³⁷ National Coordinating Committee for Preventing and Combating Illegal Migration and Trafficking in Persons (NCCPIM & TIP).(2022). *The launch of the third national strategy on combating and preventing trafficking in persons (2022-2026)*.

¹³⁸ Permanent Mission of the Arab Republic of Egypt to the United Nations.(2019). *Submission on forced marriage*. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

Coordinating body/ National plan/ International agreement	Relevant activities related to sexual exploitation of children
Civil Society Networks	
The Egyptian Coalition for the Rights of the Child	The Egyptian Coalition for the Rights of the Child is composed of around 100 member organisations from various governorates. The coalition focuses on raising public and governmental awareness about children's rights, monitoring the enforcement of child protection laws, and supporting the capacity-building of organisations working on child welfare. At the national level, the coalition collaborates with ministries such as Education, Health, and Interior. At the local level, it relies on its member networks to work with local government officials, assist in capacity-building for civil society organisations, and carry out advocacy campaigns. The Coalition also contributes to Egypt's Universal Periodic Review submitted to the UN and is part of larger networks such as the Child Protection Network and the Inter-Agency Working Group, which coordinates refugee response in Egypt. ¹³⁹

¹³⁹ Gale, C.(2021, January). *The national child protection system and alternative child care in Egypt*. SOS Children's Villages.

As shown above, various entities in Egypt, including government departments, national agencies, and civil society networks, are actively working towards the protection of children's rights, focusing mostly however on sale and trafficking of children for sexual purposes, ending child marriage and reducing female genital mutilation.¹⁴⁰ The Egyptian government has strengthened its initiatives against sexual exploitation of children through a multi-sectoral approach. However, one key informant noted that one of the main gaps is the lack of specialised and well-trained personnel dedicated to child protection issues; according to the informant many of those working in the Child Protection Committees hold additional responsibilities within their role as government employees, which can lead to a lack of prioritisation for child protection cases.

Key informants highlighted that current response mechanisms for child sexual exploitation and abuse remain inadequate. While awareness initiatives are widespread, according to the informants there is an urgent need to strengthen response and empowerment programmes for communities and stakeholders.

Although the national action plans outlined above include specific measures to address various child protection issues, as of August 2025, there is no available information on their implementation, progress, or evaluation.

Prevention measures, awareness-raising and education

The Egyptian government has implemented various prevention, awareness-raising, and educational initiatives to protect children from sexual exploitation. Notable examples include the signing in 2022 of a Memorandum of Understanding between the National Coordinating Committee for Combating and Preventing Illegal Migration and Trafficking in Persons and UNICEF to strengthen protection for children at risk of illegal migration,¹⁴¹ the 2020 "Together Against Trafficking" campaign encouraging citizens to report trafficking through existing hotlines,¹⁴² and, as reported by key informants, training for social workers and schoolchildren. In addition, interviewees shared that the national preschool curriculum now includes child protection and sexuality education, while dedicated media campaigns aim at shifting societal attitudes.

Other initiatives include the Lessa Nawara campaign,¹⁴³ launched in 2021 to combat child marriage in villages across Egypt, and the 2020 #AmaniDotCom campaign promoting online safety for children, particularly girls.¹⁴⁴

Civil society has contributed through projects like Save the Children's 2017 #SpeakUp campaign against sexual harassment¹⁴⁵ and workshops by UNFPA, the National Council for Women and Care Egypt, for religious leaders addressing female genital mutilation and violence against women and girls.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁰ European Union.(2023). *Action Document for EU support to Resilience of future generations: Annual Action Programme for 2023 in favour of Egypt [Annex IV of the Commission Implementing Decision]*. European Union Neighbourhood and Enlargement.

¹⁴¹ UNICEF. (2022.). *Signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between NCCPIMTIP and UNICEF*. UNICEF Egypt.

¹⁴² National Coordinating Committee for Preventing and Combating Illegal Migration and Human Trafficking (NCCPIM&TIP). (2020.). *Launching Wave II of the national awareness-raising campaign: Together against human trafficking*.

¹⁴³ UNICEF Egypt. (2021, October 11). *Campaign promoting safer internet use for children launches on International Day of the Girl Child*. UNICEF.

¹⁴⁴ UNICEF Egypt.(2021, October 11). *Campaign promoting safer internet use for children launches on International Day of the Girl Child*. UNICEF.

¹⁴⁵ Save the Children.(2017, November 25). *Save the Children launches second #SpeakUp campaign against sexual harassment*. Save the Children Egypt.

¹⁴⁶ United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).(2023, November 29). *Religious leaders trained on combating FGM and other forms of violence against women and girls*.

Despite these positive steps, efforts remain dated and fragmented, lacking integration into long-term, sustainable programmes that address deeper social and institutional drivers of child sexual exploitation and abuse.

CHILD PROTECTION, ACCESS TO JUSTICE AND RIGHT TO REMEDIES

National complaint mechanisms

In Egypt, written or oral complaints made by the victim or the representative are necessary for a criminal lawsuit to be started.¹⁴⁷ In cases where the victim is younger than 15 years old, the complaint is made by their guardian or by the public prosecution.¹⁴⁸ Complaints are sent to the public prosecution and accompanied with relevant investigations of the crime documented in reports.¹⁴⁹ The Criminal Procedure Code also provides that every person who witnesses a crime, against the life or property of an individual is bound to report it to an office of judicial police. This means that any person who sees a crime of sexual exploitation of a child, must report it. There is however no mention of a penalty in case of non-compliance.¹⁵⁰ In the case of trafficking of children for sexual purposes, anyone who had knowledge of the crime and did not notify the competent authority would be sanctioned, with at least six months prison and a fine.¹⁵¹

By law, each department or police-district, should have a sub-committee for childhood protection, including security, social, psychological, medical and educational representatives.¹⁵² The child helpline general

department, guaranteed in the law, is responsible to receive children's complaints in cases in which children are victims of crimes.¹⁵³ The child helpline 16000 is available 24/7 to report cases of children in danger.¹⁵⁴

In cases of child sexual exploitation, complaints can be submitted to the sub-committees for childhood protection or through the Child Helpline (16000). Once a complaint is received, the case is assessed for seriousness, and the child and their parents or guardians may be asked to testify. If legal action is deemed necessary, the General Committee for Childhood Protection reviews the case.¹⁵⁵

An online complaint mechanism has also been established by the Public Prosecution Office.¹⁵⁶ According to key informants these services have received some positive feedback, with the child helpline in particular recognised as an effective channel for children to seek help. However, improvement in terms of availability and greater outreach is needed to ensure that more children and families know about and trust these resources. One key informant noted:

I believe the Child Helpline needs to be more effective. Personally, I have called them multiple times, especially about beggars on the street with small children. No action was taken, even though they took down the information from us.

147 The Arab Republic of Egypt.(1905). *The Code of Criminal Procedure*. Article 3.

148 *Ibid.* Articles 5 and 6.

149 *Ibid.* Article 24.

150 *Ibid.* Article 7.

151 The Arab Republic of Egypt.(2010). *Law No.(64) of 2010 regarding Combating Human Trafficking*. Article 12.

152 The Arab Republic of Egypt.(2008, July). *Law No.12 of 1996 Promulgating the child law amended by law No.126 of 2008*, Article 97.

153 *Ibid.*Article 97.

154 Child Helpline International.(n.d.). *Egypt: Child Helpline Egypt*.

155 *Ibid.* Articles 96 and 99.

156 UNITED NATIONS OFFICE ON DRUGS AND CRIME.(2019). *Independent project evaluationImproving the Criminal Justice Response to Violence against Women in Egypt*.

Consultations with key informants for this overview further highlighted gaps in communication and resource allocation between non-governmental organisations and the national helplines that receive complaints. Importantly, interventions can only be initiated by the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood. According to the key informants, this restriction limits non-governmental organisations to a monitoring role and places them at risk if they attempt to intervene directly.

With regards to timeframes to present a complaint, unless otherwise stated by specific law, the Code of Criminal Procedure provides a statute of limitations of ten years from the date of the commission of felonies provided for in the Penal Code,¹⁵⁷ which include only some crimes of sexual exploitation. Indeed, crimes related to exploitation of children in prostitution or child sexual abuse material, as included in different legal documents, are not covered by this provision. The Child Law and Law on the Combatting of Prostitution do not include specific statutes of limitations for prosecuting offences. This open-ended timeframe is crucial, since it acknowledges the realities of child sexual abuse cases, where victims may take time to disclose their experiences - often waiting until they are older, emotionally prepared, or in a supportive environment.¹⁵⁸

Beyond procedural barriers, such as statutes of limitations, some of the key informants noted that in practice many children and families choose not to report abuse due to fear of negative consequences from both authorities and their communities. Victims are often blamed, and there is a strong fear that seeking justice could cause further harm or social disgrace. Social stigma and the pressure to protect family honour frequently discourage legal action, sometimes resulting in informal settlements or marriages between the child and the perpetrator to avoid perceived shame associated with sexual abuse and

exploitation. According to key informants, children from marginalised groups, especially LGBTQIA+ youth, face heightened risks and barriers to reporting, as the lack of legal protections can make reporting abuse unsafe and potentially more dangerous for them.

Further, key informants noted that informal or customary settlement and reconciliation procedures are often preferred over formal reporting, further limiting access to justice. Structural barriers within the legal system compound these challenges. For instance, children cannot pursue litigation without legal representation, and only fathers can grant power of attorney, even in cases of intra-familial abuse. This dependency denies many children agency and leaves them vulnerable when paternal support is absent or constrained.

One informant explained that while civil society organisations offer legal aid and advocacy support, they frequently encounter resistance from law enforcement authorities. In some cases, advocates are forced to align themselves with police biases just to ensure that a case is processed or taken seriously. While joint training with law enforcement has improved cooperation in some areas, trust in the system remains fragile and uneven across different regions. Several key informants reported that law enforcement officers often discourage reporting, question the validity of laws – such as those against female genital mutilation, and dismiss abuse cases unless they involve extreme violence. Child victims especially refugees are sometimes mocked or not taken seriously. As a result, families frequently handle abuse privately due to fear of backlash, distrust in the justice system, or doubts about its effectiveness.

Child-centric justice

The Constitution guarantees free access to the justice system and legal counsel and states that justice is a protected and

¹⁵⁷ The Arab Republic of Egypt.(1905). *The Code of Criminal Procedure*. Article 279.

¹⁵⁸ United Nations Children's Fund and International Rescue Committee (2023) *Caring for Child Survivors of Sexual Abuse Guidelines*. New York: UNICEF.

guaranteed right for all.¹⁵⁹ It further instructs the State to establish a judicial system for child victims and witnesses of crime.¹⁶⁰

The Child Law guarantees the right of the child to be heard in all matters related to them, including judicial procedures and to access information.¹⁶¹ The law also provides details on children in conflict with the law's right to legal assistance,¹⁶² but remains quite brief on the existing protection measures for children subjected to sexual exploitation, as well as their families or entities that help bring their case to the court.¹⁶³ Furthermore, while several judicial services exist in Egypt, such as the Child Courts and prosecution offices, they remain limited to the largest urban centres, including Cairo, Giza and Alexandria.¹⁶⁴

Child victims and witnesses of crimes have the right to be heard and treated with dignity, sympathy, with full respect of their physical, psychological and moral safety, at all stages of investigation, trial and implementation. They also have the right to protection, health, social and legal assistance.¹⁶⁵ The same rights are guaranteed within the Law Regarding Combatting of Human Trafficking according to which efforts must be made to ensure that the victim is physically far from the perpetrators. Furthermore, anyone revealing the identity of the child victim and putting them in danger can be imprisoned.¹⁶⁶

The law also guarantees the rights to physical, psychological and mental safety; information on administrative, legal and judicial procedures; and to be heard

and considered during all stages of proceedings.¹⁶⁷ Child victims and witnesses shall enjoy protection of their data and privacy.¹⁶⁸ Anyone, who publishes in the media any information, such as pictures, data or drawings, related to the identify of a child at risk, or in conflict with the law, when the case is being examined by the authorities, will be punished with a fine.¹⁶⁹ The Law Regarding Combatting of Human Trafficking also provides that appropriate premises to host the victims must be available, separate from those of the perpetrators, to allow the former to receive their families, lawyers and representatives of the competent authorities.¹⁷⁰

Access to recovery and reintegration

Egyptian law provides only limited provisions on the recovery and reintegration of children who have been subjected to sexual exploitation. The Child Law briefly refers to "rehabilitation and reintegration in society of child victims and witnesses of crime, in accordance with the UN Guidelines on Justice for Child Victims and Witnesses of Crime."¹⁷¹ However, no specific details are provided on the implementation of this provision.

Similarly, the Law regarding Combatting of Trafficking mandates care, education, rehabilitation, and reintegration for trafficking victims, including safe repatriation.¹⁷² A victim support fund, mandated by law to provide financial assistance to trafficking victims,¹⁷³ was

¹⁵⁹ The Arab Republic of Egypt.(2014).*Constitution Of The Arab Republic of Egypt 2014*. Articles 54 and 97.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.* Article 80.

¹⁶¹ The Arab Republic of Egypt.(2008, July).*Law No.12 of 1996 Promulgating the child law amended by law No.126 of 2008*, Article 3c.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*Section 8.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*Article 97.

¹⁶⁴ OCDE.(2023).*Towards a Child-friendly Justice System in Egypt : Implementing the Sustainable Development Goals*.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*Articles 116 bis and 125.

¹⁶⁶ The Arab Republic of Egypt.(2010).*Law No.(64) of 2010 regarding Combating Human Trafficking* .Article 9.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, Article 23.

¹⁶⁸ The Arab Republic of Egypt.(1905).*The Code of Criminal Procedure*. Article 113 bis.

¹⁶⁹ The Arab Republic of Egypt.(2008, July). *Law No.12 of 1996 Promulgating the child law amended by law No.126 of 2008*, Article 116 bis.

¹⁷⁰ The Arab Republic of Egypt.(2010). *Law No.(64) of 2010 regarding Combating Human Traffickin*. Article 24.

¹⁷¹ The Arab Republic of Egypt.(2008, July). *Law No.12 of 1996 Promulgating the child law amended by law No.126 of 2008*, Article 116 bis.

¹⁷² The Arab Republic of Egypt.(2010).*Law No.(64) of 2010 regarding Combating Human Trafficking*. Article 22 and 26.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.* Article 27.

formally established by Presidential decree and published in the Official Gazette in August 2024.¹⁷⁴

Shelter services remain limited. The National Coordinating Committee for Preventing and Combating Illegal Migration and Trafficking in Persons in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Solidarity, National Council for Childhood and Motherhood, operates Egypt's only specialised human trafficking shelter in collaboration with the Egyptian Red Crescent.¹⁷⁵ The shelter was funded by the Embassy of Denmark, under the umbrella of the SPHERE project with a capacity to accommodate 30 women, their children (under 12), and young girls.¹⁷⁶ The shelter provides a range of services, including psychological counselling and healthcare, and is staffed by professionals like female psychologists, social workers, and medical staff. The government has also partnered with non-governmental organisations to expand shelter availability, including 10 shelters for women and children subjected to trafficking and 78 other shelters (18 for girls, 28 for boys, 19 for men, and 13 for women) nationwide.¹⁷⁷ Furthermore, since 1993, the Nadeem Centre provides psychological and rehabilitation support to victims of (domestic) violence and torture.¹⁷⁸

Despite these initiatives, international bodies such as the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women expressed concerns about the lack of physical and psychosocial rehabilitation centres and

support services available for victims of sexual abuse and exploitation in Egypt, particularly in rural areas.¹⁷⁹ Government shelters often impose restrictive admission requirements (e.g., valid ID, exclusion of marital rape cases), while shelters by non-governmental organisations are more flexible but face funding and capacity limitations.¹⁸⁰

Key informants emphasised the absence of tailored programmes for the rehabilitation and reintegration of children subjected to sexual exploitation. Child reception centres, which are mostly intended to provide an alternative to detention for children who are suspected for committing crimes, often fail to function as intended due to bureaucratic delays and a lack of follow-through, leaving children effectively stuck in limbo without access to appropriate care or services.¹⁸¹ One key informant also discussed that while many organisations provide psychological support, legal aid, and life skills training, significant gaps remain in immediate medical care and comprehensive reintegration services.

Access to compensation

According to Egypt's Constitution, victims of crime are entitled to fair and reasonable compensation.¹⁸² The Egyptian Criminal Procedure Code puts in charge the public prosecution to undertake precautionary measures and to transfer requests of possible cases of compensation to the

174 [Facebook Page](#). (3 September 2024). *Resolution of the President of the Arab Republic of Egypt No. 349 for the year 2024 to organize the Fund for the Victims of Human Trafficking*.

175 United Nations Network on Migration. (n.d.). *Dedicated shelter for victims of trafficking in persons*.

176 International Organization for Migration. (2020). *IOM Egypt contributes to the enhancement of the first shelter for victims of trafficking in Egypt*.

177 U.S. Department of State. (2024). *2024 trafficking in persons report: Egypt*.

178 *Elnadeem Against Violence and Torture*.

179 Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. (2021). *Concluding observations on the combined eighth to tenth periodic reports of Egypt*.

180 Nazra for Feminist Studies. (2016). *Women Survivors of Violence: Where to Go? Problems Facing Shelters for Women in Egypt and Gaps in Responses to Needs of Women Survivors of Violence*.

181 *Ibid.*

182 The Arab Republic of Egypt. (2014). *Constitution Of The Arab Republic of Egypt 2014*. Article 99.

competent criminal court.¹⁸³ According to the Code, whoever sustains a damage because of a crime, has the right to claim compensation before the end of the criminal proceedings.¹⁸⁴ If the person asking for compensation has no legal representative, the court may appoint an attorney to represent the victim, without any costs.¹⁸⁵

In its last concluding observations in 2024, the Committee of the Rights of the Child recommended that Egypt ensure that all children have access to legal support and age-appropriate information on access to remedies, including compensation.¹⁸⁶

183 The Arab Republic of Egypt.(1905).*The Code of Criminal Procedure*. Article 208 A.

184 *Ibid.*

185 *Ibid.*Article 252.

186 Committee on the Rights of the Child.(2024, June). *Concluding observations on the combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of Egypt*

CHILDREN'S AND SURVIVORS' PARTICIPATION

Overall, limited information is available on children and survivors' participation in addressing child sexual exploitation and abuse issues in Egypt.

The 2024 Concluding Observations by the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child urged the Government to ensure that children have a meaningful role in shaping policies and programmes related to the Sustainable Development Goals.¹⁸⁷ Specifically, the Committee recommended expanding platforms like the Egyptian Children's Forum and the Children's Parliament to allow for more empowered participation of children in decision-making at all levels - within families, communities, and schools. Despite these recommendations, limited information is available on the current state of the Egyptian Children's Forum and the Children's Parliament, indicating a gap in the implementation and visibility of these important platforms.

Key informants highlighted a significant disconnect between policy commitments and practical implementation regarding child participation. While children may be engaged in awareness activities, learning about rights, reporting mechanisms, and codes of conduct, their role in shaping policies or protection systems remains minimal. According to the informants, national efforts to embed child participation in policymaking have so far yielded limited tangible results, with participation often remaining consultative rather than genuinely collaborative. Children are still largely treated as recipients of information instead of active stakeholders in decision-making. According to an interviewed civil society representative, while non-governmental organisations have supported child-led initiatives in care institutions and child-friendly spaces, these efforts tend to be localised and have yet to influence broader systemic change.

¹⁸⁷ Committee on the Rights of the Child.(2024, June).*Concluding observations on the combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of Egypt*

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

International and regional legislation, commitments and coordination to ending sexual exploitation of children

- ➔ Sign and ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a Communications Procedure.
- ➔ Sign and ratify the Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and registration of Marriages.
- ➔ Sign and ratify the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa and the African Union Convention on Cyber Security and Personal Data Protection.
- ➔ Ensure that children are fully protected from child marriage, including those taking place under customary practices, by adopting and enforcing legal safeguards. The draft law criminalising underage marriage, approved by the Cabinet in April 2022, offers an important example of measures that could be advanced to achieve this protection.
- ➔ Ensure that adolescents are not criminalised for consensual peer relationships by introducing a close-in-age provision (maximum three years) within the age of sexual consent framework.
- ➔ Sanction and prosecute all cases of child marriage conducted under customary practices.
- ➔ Amend the Penal Code to define and criminalise child sexual abuse material, including any content that sexualises or exploits a child even if it does not explicitly depict abuse; online grooming of children for sexual purposes; sexual extortion of children; and live streaming of child sexual abuse.
- ➔ Ensure that laws on sexual offences against children are enforced equally to protect all children, regardless of gender.

National response to the sexual exploitation of children

- ➔ Integrate all forms of child sexual exploitation into existing national action plans, with clear objectives to tackle technology-facilitated child sexual abuse and exploitation, sexual exploitation in travel and tourism, and exploitation of children in prostitution.
- ➔ Engage community and religious leaders in areas where child marriage – including temporary- are more prevalent, equipping them with knowledge about the harms of child marriage and involving them in local advocacy.
- ➔ Promote responsible travel practices by encouraging travel companies to adopt child-safe policies and safeguards to prevent exploitation.
- ➔ Provide comprehensive support for children subjected to sexual exploitation through a national case management system. This should include a service map of available services and ensure that all relevant professionals can make appropriate referrals to these services. In parallel, raise public awareness about these services—such as psychological

support, legal aid, medical care, and shelters—so that children and families know how to access help.

- ➔ Provide age-appropriate, rights-based sexuality and relationship education in schools, with active collaboration among teachers, health professionals, and communities. The curriculum should cover healthy relationships, bodily autonomy, consent, and online safety, and be regularly updated based on children's perspectives and emerging research.
- ➔ Expand tailored services and training for frontline professionals to address the often-overlooked sexual abuse and exploitation of boys.

- ➔ Strengthen coordination by fostering partnerships between government bodies, non-governmental organisations and international organisations to maximise resources and impact.
- ➔ Reinforce local child protection committees with dedicated funding, technical training, and full-time staff to fulfil their mandates effectively.
- ➔ Ensure that child protection policies and procedures are a mandatory condition for licensing any facility that hosts children, supported by effective monitoring programmes in all places under state regulatory authority.

Access to justice and right to remedies for children subjected to sexual exploitation

- ➔ Ensure that all authorities involved in child protection, including police officers, staff receiving children's reports, prosecutors and other relevant professionals, receive comprehensive training on child-centric approaches to justice.
- ➔ Establish dedicated channels for receiving children's complaints, whether related to sexual abuse or other issues, staffed by psychological and social specialists with expertise in childhood, and implement a "No Wrong Door" approach so that any public service point can accept and respond to a child's complaint.
- ➔ Increase investment in child protection by establishing more geographically accessible facilities, ensuring that children everywhere can access timely and specialised support
- ➔ Promote collaboration between social services and the Public Prosecutor's office by developing clear procedures for sharing information on children identified as being at risk.

Children's and survivors' participation

- ➔ Support and fund the active involvement of children and youth in the design, monitoring, and assessment of policies and programmes, including prevention campaigns on child sexual exploitation.
- ➔ Strengthen the National Children's Parliament to ensure it has a meaningful and influential role in policymaking, with its recommendations systematically considered in government decisions, especially those related to child welfare, safety, and education.
- ➔ Implement survivor-led projects and initiatives to challenge stigma and the culture of silence around child sexual exploitation.

Research needs and agenda

- ➔ Fund and conduct comprehensive research on sexual exploitation of boys, sexual exploitation within humanitarian settings, and risks associated with travel and tourism, such as voluntourism.
- ➔ Conduct analytical studies on social stigma and the influence of cultural and religious norms on reporting and help-seeking behaviours, particularly in cases involving boys or exploitation within the family.
- ➔ Adopt a participatory approach in research that enables children to express their experiences and perspectives on the threats they face and the solutions they propose for their protection.
- ➔ Create a central database to facilitate information sharing and coordination among government agencies, non-governmental organisations, and international partners.
- ➔ Develop a core set of indicators to track progress at the national, regional and local levels on the protection of children against sexual exploitation, to identify specific needs and priorities.
- ➔ Ensure that evaluation findings from national plans and strategies are publicly available and used to guide policy and programme development.



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