



# EGYPT SOCIAL PROGRESS INDICATORS

*Measuring Progress Towards Improved Wellbeing In Egypt*

**ESPI Annual Report 2020**

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# INTRODUCTION

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Egypt has set an ambitious development agenda articulated in the government’s “Vision 2030”—and embraced the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Despite these efforts, the macroeconomic reforms introduced in recent years—with the support of the International Monetary Fund (IMF)—supposedly to stabilize the economy, have severely strained living conditions for average Egyptians, with millions experiencing deprivations of their economic and social rights and necessities for a dignified life. In addition, Egypt’s recent economic growth and ongoing reform efforts were interrupted and slowed by the Covid-19 pandemic, posing various sustainable and equitable development challenges.

While the government of Egypt took actions to contain the spread of the virus and adopted some economic mitigation measures, accompanied by certain measures to reduce disproportionate impacts on women, the lack of action on pre-existing challenges re-accelerated trends of inequality during the Covid-19 pandemic. Precautionary measures to contain the spread of the virus, including partial lockdowns and restrictions, resulted in an economic slowdown and reduced tax revenues, which in turn stretched the government’s budget and social expenditure in particular.

Compared to ESPI’s 2018-2019 Annual [Report](#), this report finds that many gaps and policy trends identified as necessary for progress in the realization of economic and social rights remain unattended. For instance, the government of Egypt has failed to improve domestic resource mobilization and redirect public spending. Poverty and inequality have increased as well as reliance on regressive taxes. Moreover, investment in pre-university education and public healthcare remain below the constitutionally mandated minimum. Strengthening

legal protection of socioeconomic rights remains unresolved, as illustrated by the failure to amend Law 119 (2008) to operationalize the constitutional right to adequate housing. The 2018-2019 report also stressed the need to increase participation, transparency and good governance and ensure that policies are based on the needs and informed by the voices of average Egyptians – none of which have been forthcoming. Lastly, the sometimes low and intermittent availability and reliability of some data in order to measure socioeconomic progress remains concerning.

With that said, there have been some areas of improvement in socioeconomic indicators. For example, youth unemployment decreased from 26.5% to 16.7%. In addition, the real wage index increased as average weekly wages increased nominally from 1104 EGP in 2018 to 1283 EGP in 2019. Notably, Egypt’s corporate tax rate remains a more positive area, since it is above the minimum tax rate of 20% recommended by experts. As for health, the average score of hospitals assessed in terms of the Egyptian Hospitals Community Assessment

Portal increased to 52.9% from 48%. Lastly, the mortality rate for children under 5 decreased, and the gross enrolment rate in pre-primary education increased by 0.9%.

Key findings from this report highlight significant gaps in laws, policies and resource allocation that hinder sustainable development and the fulfillment of economic and social rights in Egypt, especially for the most disadvantaged groups. The failure to address these issues expeditiously risks inequalities being further exacerbated by the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. Such gaps are manifest, for example, in the high gender wage gap, the lack of protection for women from discrimination in the workplace, and the lack of sufficient action to combat female genital mutilation.

The ongoing Covid-19 pandemic exacerbated the drivers of poverty and gendered and spatial inequality in Egypt, consequently widening the wealth gap between women and men, as women now face yet additional constraints to acquiring and controlling wealth. Women's formal labor force participation in Egypt is relatively low, rendering women particularly vulnerable in the current global and national economic crisis. Amid the Covid-19 pandemic, women's economic and social security were disproportionately affected due to their disproportionate responsibility for childcare, elder care, and other forms of unpaid domestic labor. In Egypt, women's labor force participation rate is at 24.7% (men's is at 77.0%), one-half of employed women work in informal employment with minimal wages and limited or no access to social protection mechanisms, while 21.2% work part-time (compared to 11.7% of men). Poor participation of women in the formal labor force makes Egyptian women vulnerable, heavily impacts their social security, and threatens their livelihoods, considering that 18.1% of households in Egypt are women-led.

In light of this report's findings, it is apparent that the experience of those being left behind, before the pandemic and post-Covid-19, is not captured by the narrow set of economic indicators used by international financial institutions and other economic actors to measure progress in Egypt, with women and girls being disproportionately affected by these oversights. Without a complete picture, the potentially damaging side effects of economic and other policies risk being overlooked, ultimately undermining sustainable development. Henceforth, the Egypt Social Progress Indicators (ESPI) gives a better understanding of Egypt's overall progress on socio-economic issues; it provides an essential tool for advancing a rights-based development agenda that avoids narrow debates and false dichotomies between securing macroeconomic stability and addressing socioeconomic exclusion.

The available indicators paint a concerning picture of the socioeconomic situation in Egypt, as experienced by the average

citizen. The majority of the Egypt Social Progress Indicators show weak or no progress, and even where there are notable areas of progress, a closer analysis shows glaring inequalities in the enjoyment of these improvements across wealth quintiles, gender, and geography. This report summarizes the indicators' findings and presents an overview of the types of changes and reform (including legislative, policy and legal changes) necessary to create a fairer, more equitable and more thriving Egypt.

## What is ESPI?

ESPI stems from a vision of Egypt where legislative, political, economic, and social policies and processes are designed to create a fair and equitable distribution of resources and opportunities, so that every person can lead their life with dignity. This vision is grounded in various sources, including, most importantly, the Egyptian Constitution and Vision 2030, both of which express a firm commitment to achieving sustainable development by securing citizens' economic and social rights and by strengthening governance, equality, and social justice.

ESPI monitor sustainable development progress in Egypt across six topics — economic policy; labor; urbanization; education; health; food, water, and agricultural land incorporating a cross-cutting gender analysis for each topic and providing a multidimensional view of socioeconomic well-being in Egypt. By complementing traditional economic indicators, ESPI offers a practical tool for evidence-based policymaking. Specifically, benchmarking progress helps identify and build momentum on those areas where improvement is most needed.

ESPI proudly prioritizes innovation in its approach to measurement, particularly in the following aspects:

- **Multidimensionality:** ESPI cover a breadth of topics to offer a holistic picture of social progress.
- **Action-oriented Indicators:** ESPI measure outcomes of the socioeconomic well-being and determinative legal, policy, financial, human resource, and institutional inputs.
- **Rigor:** ESPI reveal new insights by combining existing data from official national and international agencies with objective, credible, and well-sourced analyses conducted by independent researchers.
- **In-depth Contextualization:** the indicators are accompanied by comprehensive commentary that contextualizes and explains the data.

# ESPI METHODOLOGY

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ESPI applies a rights-based approach to measuring sustainable development and monitoring social progress through a set of indicators that balance international norms, guidelines, and best practices, with national and local development priorities and relevance to communities. ESPI are action-oriented, measuring both:

- outcomes of socioeconomic well-being; and
- the drivers of outcomes, including legal, policy, financial, human resource, and institutional inputs and outputs.

The indicators of ESPI are based on national and international sources and standards, including the Egyptian Constitution, international treaties ratified by Egypt, Egypt's national development agenda, Vision 2030, and the targets and indicators of the Sustainable Development Goals. The OPERA framework, developed by the Center for Economic and Social Rights, which includes four dimensions of analysis: Outcomes, Policy Efforts, Resources, and Assessment, also guides ESPI.<sup>1</sup> Within this framework, a mix of indicators – quantitative and qualitative, fact-based and perception-based – ensures that ESPI provides a holistic picture of social progress.

Data is gathered mainly from two sources: for quantitative indicators, ESPI draws from socioeconomic and administrative data produced by the Egyptian government and relevant international bodies; and for qualitative indicators, ESPI compiles objective, credible, and well-sourced expert analyses conducted by independent researchers. Sources of benchmarks include Egypt's development targets, including those

articulated in Vision 2030; international commitments, such as the SDGs; and recommendations and guidelines from international bodies. Where there was internationally comparable data on an indicator but no suitable benchmark sources, benchmarks were established by comparing Egypt to other lower-middle-income countries (LMICs) in its income group.

ESPI use a four-color scale to measure Egypt's progress on a specific indicator. Each indicator is assigned a color score representing the degree of progress on the measured issue: No progress—red, Weak progress—orange, Partial progress—yellow, Good progress—green. All quantitative and qualitative indicators are accompanied by comprehensive commentary that contextualizes and explains the data, making ESPI one of the most in-depth metrics of its kind.

Please visit the [ESPI website](#) to learn more about indicators selection, benchmarking and scaling, and data collection and scoring.

## What is presented in this report?

This report details the 2019-2020 updates to ESPI and, for the first time, provides a comparison of Egypt's social progress to the baseline established by ESPI in 2018. It summarizes the main findings of the 2019 and 2020 data and gives an overall snapshot of the mix of progress and regression that took place in Egypt over the past year. The report reviews updates to the indicators of each of the six topics

and provides in-depth analyses of featured indicator updates, with a corresponding visualization of progress or regression. The report concludes with a set of recommendations and next steps for Egypt to advance towards meeting its own sustainable development goals and international norms and

standards to improve the social and economic well-being of Egyptians, particularly the poor and most vulnerable.

In 2020, data were available to update most ESPI across all the six topics. Of these updated indicators, four regressed to the 'No Progress' category, one regressed to 'Weak Progress', and one progressed to 'Partial Progress'. The remaining indicators for which data was available maintained the same score between 2018 and 2019, although many exhibited regressions within the scope of their respective scores. Overall, of the 52 indicators reviewed in this report, 17 were scored as 'No Progress'; 20 were scored as 'Weak Progress'; 13 received a score of 'Partial Progress'; one indicator was awarded a score of 'Good Progress'; and one remained unscored due to insufficient data.



Photo: Wallace Howe/Flickr

# MAIN FINDINGS

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The 2019 and 2020 ESPI present an overall picture of weak progress, with regression in many areas, little or no change in others, and progress in few. The country's performance on the macroeconomic indicators is particularly telling. Such indicators concern the mobilization of resources necessary to finance Egyptians' social and economic rights. Egypt failed to improve and regressed in this respect, even though it grew its gross domestic product (GDP) and decreased its budget deficit since 2018. The poor performance on many ESPI topic areas is therefore hardly a matter of external consequences or constraints but of inadequate social investment by the government.

Some of the ongoing drivers of Egypt's insufficient social investment include the Egyptian government's continued pursuit of regressive taxation policies, the country's overreliance on natural resource exports, and the external pressures of rising debt servicing costs. Total tax revenue has risen over the past year, but the share of effective corporate tax declined, meaning that a larger share of taxes increased through indirect taxation, which disproportionately affects the poor. Egypt's social policy reforms to make room for debt servicing have reduced social expenditure and created a general climate of austerity. The reforms curbed welfare spending and cash transfer coverage and increased the reliance on the private sector to provide basic social services such as education, housing, sanitation, and health care. Combined with higher prices of basic services such as water, sanitation, electricity, and gas, these compounded factors resulted in an upsurge in poverty and a decline in social well-being for Egyptians, particularly the poor and most vulnerable.

While ESPI show a general regression trend, there are some

areas of progress in Egypt. For example, Egypt's Corruption Perception Index score improved, a helpful step for encouraging investments and partnerships to revitalize the Egyptian economy. In the area of health, Egypt also managed to improve the overall quality of services provided in major public hospitals, according to crowd-sourced data. Additionally, the government launched and began implementing its new social health insurance policy, expected to result in population-wide improvements in health insurance coverage.

Acknowledging these incremental gains, the protection of human rights through law and policy in Egypt leaves room for improvement. Since 2018, ESPI found a general decline in labor protections, with continuing gaps in labor laws and policies leaving workers in the private and informal sectors—the majority of the workforce—with little to no labor protections. In the absence of the necessary protection in law, workers face systemic obstacles to exercising labor rights in practice. Gender inequality and discrimination continue to be rooted in Egyptian society, with in-

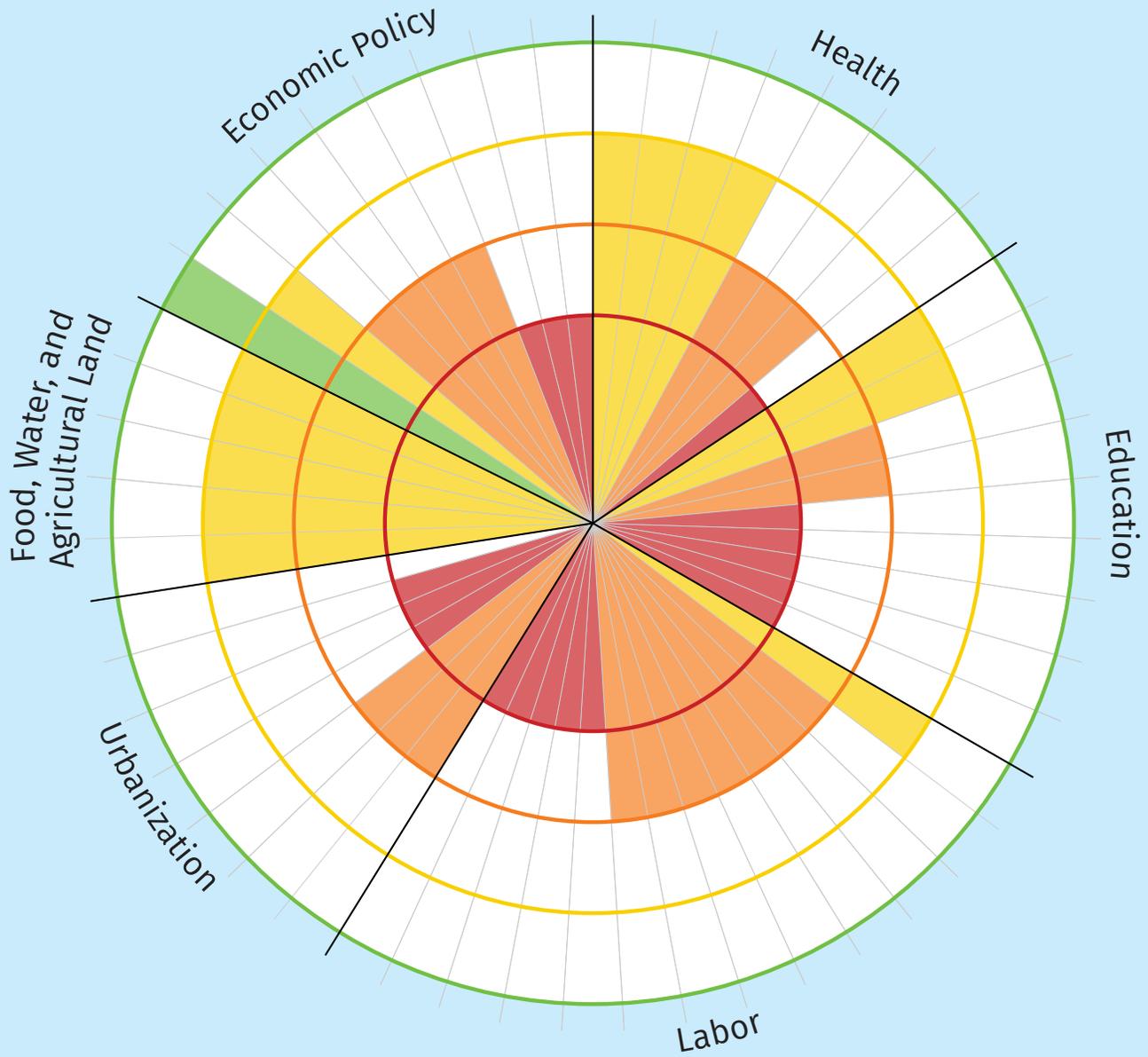
sufficient action on the part of the government to address them. Women's participation in the formal labor force is extremely low at only 15.6% (based on 2019 data), lagging far behind other LMICs. The estimated gender wage gap based on weighted average pay in the top three formal professions for women is also relatively high at 0.92 (based on 2019 data). Undoubtedly, these figures underestimate the problem, given that the agricultural sector, which amounts to 30% of total female employment, is excluded from official wage statistics.

Compared to last year, this year's ESPI findings reflect a worrying overall trend of regression that requires government action turnaround by enacting and implementing laws and policies to improve social and economic well-being in Egypt. The following sections review the updates to ESPI across the six topic areas. The final section lays out recommendations on concrete steps that the Egyptian government can take to improve average Egyptians' social and economic well-being.



Photo: Flickr / Aleksey Gureev

# PROGRESS OR RETROGRESSION OF INDICATORS





INDICATORS

# Economic Policy



The 2020 ESPI find little to no progress in Egypt’s performance on economic indicators compared to the 2018 findings, which showed that Egypt’s economic policymaking has been inadequate to realize Egyptians’ economic and social rights. Out of the eight Economic Policy indicators for which yearly data was available, ESPI detect regression in six, reflecting a worrying picture of the Egyptian economy. Total tax revenue as a percentage of GDP has risen,<sup>2</sup> but this is partly due to increased reliance on indirect taxation,<sup>3</sup> which disproportionately targets the poor. Austerity measures were intensified through policies such as reduced cash transfers to low-income families, alongside the rising percentage of overall government spending on debt servicing.<sup>4</sup> The Egyptian economy’s structural problems seem to worsen on a macroeconomic level, including macroeconomic stability, unemployment, and ability to mobilize maximum available resources for public investments in socio economic rights, as evidenced by Egypt’s increasing overreliance on natural resource exports.<sup>5</sup>



**Percentage of the population below the national poverty line**  
**Weak progress**

### **Poverty leapt from 27.8% in 2015 to 32.5% in 2018**

According to Egyptian standards, the poverty line is the minimum income necessary to bear the cost of basic goods and services (food, housing, clothing, education, and health), whether for individuals or families. This threshold is currently set at EGP 735.6 per person per month (approximately \$45).<sup>6</sup> ‘Good Progress’ means less than 15% of

the population is below the poverty line, and ‘No Progress’ means more than 40% is below the poverty line.

Evidence suggests that extreme poverty remains a problem in Egypt. According to the latest data available (complete results for Household Income Expenditure and Consumption (HIECS) survey spanning two years in Egypt) the poverty rate in 2017-2018 was 32.5%, up from 27.8% in 2015.<sup>7</sup> Poverty is highly concentrated in Upper Egypt (51.9% of the rural population and 30% of the urban population in Upper Egypt are categorized as poor, compared to 27.3% and 14.3% in the Delta).<sup>8</sup> In November 2016, the Egyptian

government liberalized the exchange rate, and as a result, inflation rose by 72.6% between 2015 and 2018,<sup>9</sup> with food price inflation rising by 89.1%.<sup>10</sup> The percentage of people living in extreme poverty, or those whose total income is less than the cost of essential food, is estimated at 6.2% in 2017-2018, an increase from 5.3% in 2015 and 4.4% in 2013.<sup>11</sup> The published income and spending data for 2017-2018 did not provide detailed data on poverty among women but, given the persistently high unemployment of women compared to men (In 2018, unemployment rates among women were 19.6% compared to 6.4% among men), it can be inferred that poverty among women is high. It is worth noting that in 2020, the government issued updated poverty statistics that show a lower poverty rate. However, those statistics only span nine months and do not capture poverty rates starting March 2020, when the pandemic hit. Therefore, ESPI is using the results of the full 2018 HIECS survey (published in 2020) as the source of the main findings for this indicator.

It is noteworthy that the social insurance system in Egypt is not yet able to effectively tackle high poverty as it only covers 44.1% of the poor.<sup>12</sup> This is especially evident in Egypt's policy shift from comprehensive support to cash transfers, which lacks the comprehensive measures to prevent disadvantaged groups from falling into poverty.

Given the extreme poverty levels across Egypt in previous years, a relative recovery was hoped for in 2020; however, the economic ramifications of the Covid-19 pandemic re-accelerated the troublesome trend. The economic impacts of Covid-19 exacerbated the drivers of poverty and gendered spatial inequality, widening the wealth gap between men and women as women face more systematic constraints to acquiring and controlling wealth. One survey revealed that over 73% of the population experienced a

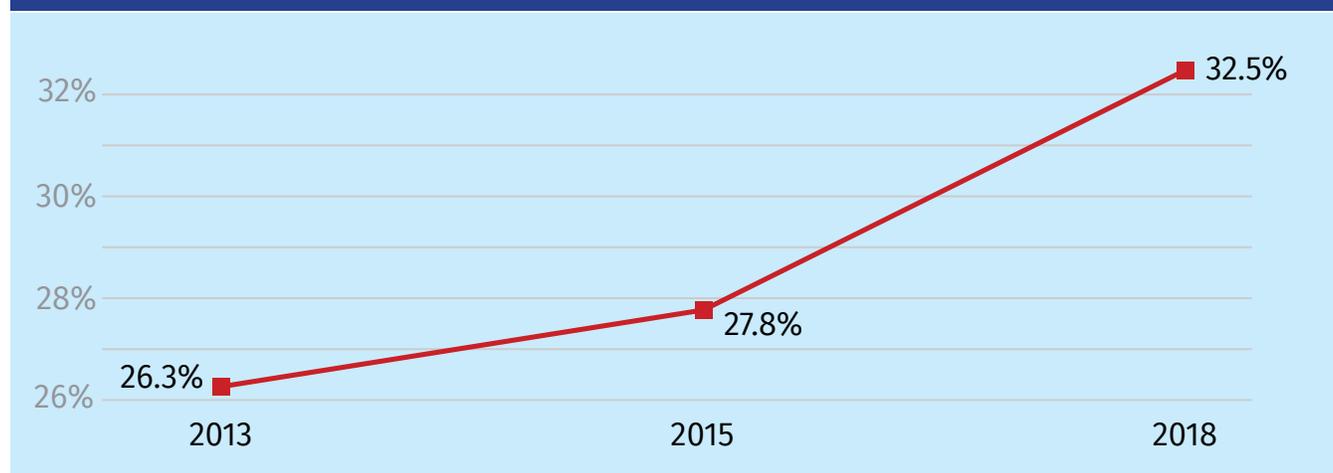
decrease in income and about 26% reported job loss and unemployment due to the pandemic, with a higher proportion among women.<sup>13</sup> The majority of the respondents had to request aid from friends or family to cover their household expenses, as the government of Egypt was unable to provide sufficient government emergency response. Over 92% of the respondents reported switching to cheaper food, about 90% of households reduced their diets, and many reduced the amount of food per meal or the number of meals per day (approximately 36% and 20% of households, respectively).<sup>14</sup> These patterns of deprivation are disproportionately more prominent in rural areas that already suffer from reduced access to appropriate sanitation, thus making residents of rural Egypt more likely to experience worse health outcomes of the pandemic.

## LIST OF ECONOMIC POLICY INDICATORS

Snapshot of 2020 indicators findings, according to the latest available data. For more, visit the [economic policy page](#) on ESPI's website.

- 
**Effective corporate tax rate**  
 The effective corporate tax rate improved in 2019 to 20.5% compared to 16.9% to 16.3% in the last five years.<sup>16</sup>
- 
**Egypt's Open Budget Survey Score**  
 Open budget score increased to 43 in 2019, marking a 2 points improvement.
- 
**Direct taxes as a percentage of total taxes**  
 The share of direct taxation decreased to 42% in 2019 compared to revenues recorded in 2018.<sup>17</sup>

FIG 2. Percentage of the population below the national poverty line (2013-2018)



Source: CAPMAS (2019)<sup>15</sup>

**○ Egypt's Corruption Perception Index Score**

Egypt's score improved from 32 in 2017 to 35 in 2019,<sup>18</sup> enough to increase the country rankings from 117th to 105th.<sup>19</sup>

**○ Percentage of the population below the national poverty line**

Poverty increased from 27.8% in 2015<sup>20</sup> to 32.5% in 2018.<sup>21</sup>

**○ Estimated percentage of poorly covered by cash transfer programs**

Cash transfer coverage shrank rapidly from 49% of the poor in 2015<sup>22</sup> to 41% of the poor in 2019.<sup>23</sup>

**▼ ○ Natural resource dependence**

Egypt became increasingly reliant on natural resources, as the share of exports increased from 31% in 2016/2017<sup>24</sup> to 34% in 2017/2018.<sup>25</sup>

**○ Tax revenue as a percentage of GDP**

Tax revenue as a percentage of GDP decreased to 13.8% at the end of FY 2018/2019,<sup>26</sup> compared to 14.2% in FY 2017/2018.<sup>27</sup>

**○ Egypt's Wealth Gap**

Credit Suisse changed its methodology for measuring the Gini coefficient for Egypt, which resulted in a drop from 90.9%<sup>28</sup> to 75.6% in 2019.<sup>29</sup> Therefore, and since the methodology of the calculation remains inaccessible to the public, comparison with the previous year would be misleading.

**○ Debt servicing as a percentage of total government expenditure**

Debt servicing costs continued to mount as they claimed roughly 46% of total government spending in 2019, a marked increase from 44.7% the year before.<sup>30</sup>



Photo: Wallace Howe



## INDICATORS

# Labor



ESPI 2019 labor indicators find no improvement in labor conditions since 2018, with nearly all the indicators following a regression trend in protecting labor rights, reflecting the government’s inability to implement or improve the laws that protect labor rights. Over the past year, the Egyptian government did not take action to address documented violations against the right to organize and the right to strike<sup>31</sup> and did not take sufficient steps to foster an enabling environment for women to participate in the labor force and protect them against gender-based discrimination in the workplace. Additionally, real wages declined substantially,<sup>32</sup> contributing further to the trend of rising poverty in Egypt. The participation of women in the workforce also declined,<sup>33</sup> although youth employment is slowly but steadily on the rise.<sup>34</sup>



**Real wage index**  
**No progress**

*Egypt’s average real wage declined significantly in 2018, with an index score of just 1.06*

Wages represent a vital source of household income for millions of Egyptians. Therefore, they significantly influence people’s living standards and play an essential role in reducing poverty and inequality. The real wage index measures how annual changes in wages are affected by inflation. It is calculated by converting the average weekly wage for the current year from ‘nominal’ to ‘real’ terms using the consumer price index (CPI) and dividing it by the average weekly wage for the previous year to produce the index. The scale was constructed based on whether wages

are growing, stagnating, or declining year-to-year. Specifically, ‘Good Progress’ means wages are growing, while ‘No Progress’ means declining.

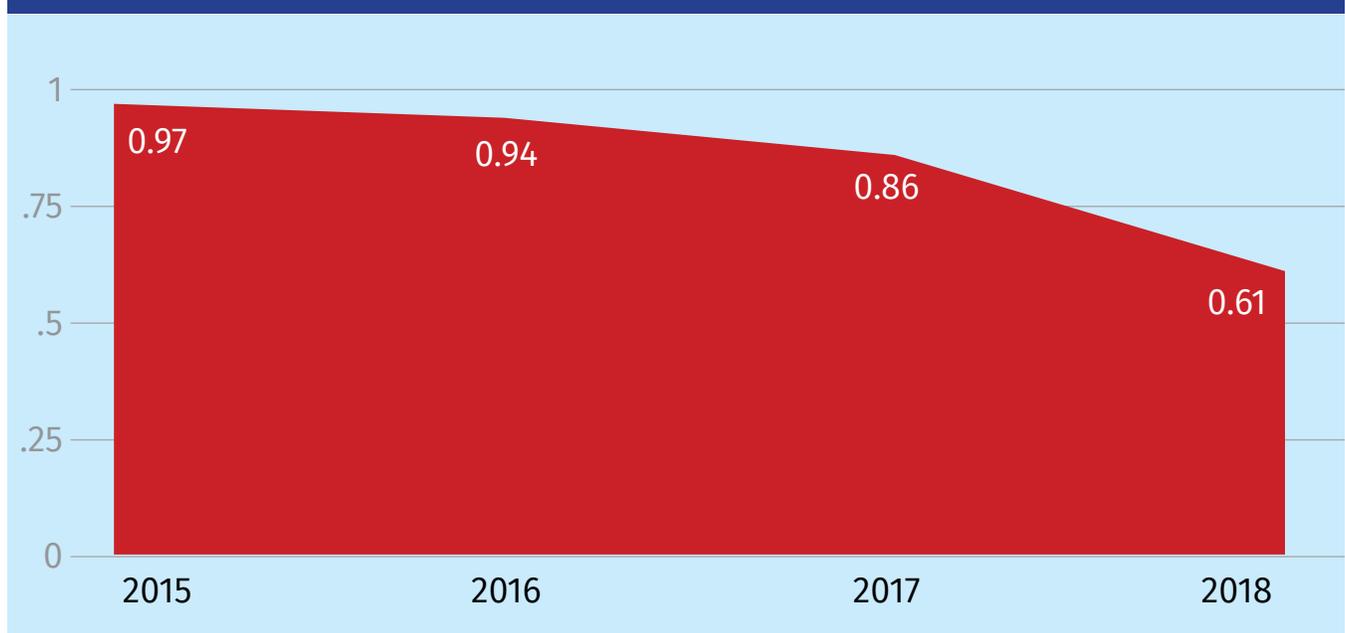
According to the latest published labor data in 2019, Egypt’s average real wage declined significantly in 2018 with an index score of just 1.06,<sup>35</sup> compared to the index score of 0.86 in 2017.<sup>36</sup> This represents a 29% decrease in just one year, further weakening the ability of working families to meet their basic needs. The Prime Minister issued a decision to make the minimum wage for government workers 2,000 EGP per month, which is at best a third of a family’s needs.<sup>37</sup> The decision, however, did not address workers in the private sector, who make up 88.8%<sup>38</sup> of the workforce and have a minimum wage of just 700 EGP.<sup>39</sup>

## LIST OF LABOR INDICATORS

This is a snapshot of the main findings for the 2020 labor indicators. For full analysis visit the [labor indicators page](#) on ESPI website.

- **Publication of labor statistics**  
 The publication of labor statistics declined to weak progress in 2020, from its score of partial progress in 2018. Some labor statistics were not published at regular and appropriate times, the latest statistics were not freely available, and the necessary labor data were not collected across the full range of required areas and topics.<sup>41</sup>
- **Youth unemployment rate**  
 Youth unemployment rate decreased since 2016 from 25.9%<sup>42</sup> to 24.8% in 2017<sup>43</sup> and 22.5% in 2018,<sup>44</sup> corresponding with a general decrease in the total unemployment rate.
- **Protection for women against discrimination at the workplace**  
 Egypt's score is based on the 2018 findings; no new data is available to update the indicator.
- **Protection from arbitrary dismissal in law**  
 Egypt's score is based on the 2018 findings; no new data is available to update the indicator.
- **Protection of the right to organize in law**  
 Egypt's score is based on the 2018 findings; no new data is available to update the indicator. The application of Law No. 213 on the Right to Organize continues to restrict the rights of specific groups of workers to organize and is inconsistent with international norms.
- **Gender wage gap (estimate based on the weighted average of women's pay in professions where women are most employed)**  
 In 2018, women earned 0.897 EGP for every 1.00 EGP that men made in all formal sectors,<sup>45</sup> an increase from the 2017 gender wage gap of 0.926.<sup>46</sup> However, the data to measure this gap reflects only work in the formal sectors and does not include informal sectors such as agriculture or unpaid work.
- **Action on providing an adequate minimum wage**  
 A decision was issued to increase the minimum wage for government workers to 2,000 EGP per month, representing at best a third of a family's needs, but it did not address the vast majority of workers who work in the private sector—88.8%<sup>47</sup> of the total workers.

FIG 3. Real Wage Index (2015-2018)



Source: CAPMAS (2019)<sup>40</sup>

**○ Women's labor force participation rate**  
The participation rate of women in the workforce steadily decreased from 18.3% in 2018 to 15.6% in 2019.<sup>48</sup>

**○ Real wage index**  
Egypt's average real wage for workers decreased substantially in 2018 to 0.61,<sup>49</sup> compared to the previous year's real wage index of 0.86.<sup>50</sup>

**○ Protection of the right to work and unemployment benefits in the law**  
There is no new data available to update the indicator. Although some articles of the Constitution were amended, unemployment benefits were not considered, and no decision or law was issued regarding benefits for unemployed job seekers.

**○ Protection of the right to strike in law**  
Egypt's score is based on the 2018 findings; no new data is available to update the indicator.

**○ Obstacles to exercising labor rights in practice**  
The Egyptian government continues to violate labor rights, including the rights to organize and to strike, as documented by labor unions.<sup>51</sup>

**○ Action to combat child labor**  
Egypt's score is based on the 2018 findings; no new data is available to update the indicator. The government failed to take concrete actions to implement the National Plan to Combat Child Labor and Family Support, and there are no recent statistics on child labor available.



Photo: WorldFish/Flickr



## INDICATORS

# Urbanization



The findings of this year's (2020) urbanization indicators show an overall trend of regression. Access to affordable housing in Egypt continues to erode, as some policy areas need substantial improvements to ensure Egyptians are protected from rising housing prices<sup>52</sup> and rising rent.<sup>53</sup> These prices are taking up an increasingly larger share of the total income of Egyptian households and, combined with the rising costs of other essential goods and services, are driving many into poverty. Access to drinking water in rural areas is recorded as closely approaching that of urban areas, but data on water safety in rural and urban areas is unavailable.<sup>54</sup> Evictions and expropriations of housing remain on the decline, but the government must strengthen its laws on the right to housing to prevent further violations.<sup>55</sup> Some new laws protecting the right to secure residential tenure were enacted but have not been implemented in practice, resulting in no material change for average Egyptians. The pandemic only exacerbated the issue of affordability in respect of housing, especially in light of the government's policy to impose a 1% flat-rate 'pandemic tax' on net income.

### House price-to-income ratio No progress

**The housing unit price-to-income ratio increased by 13.6% in 2019**

This indicator measures the affordability of buying a housing unit, which is a fundamental component of the right to adequate housing and entails that housing costs must be "at such a level that the attainment and satisfaction of other basic needs are not threatened or compromised."<sup>56</sup>

For housing costs to be affordable, they must not rise to a level that jeopardizes the enjoyment of basic rights, such as access to food, education, and health. Egypt has a distorted and unequal property market, and housing affordability has been a subject to deterioration over the past two decades. Although the right to adequate housing is enshrined in the 2013 Constitution, and the government has committed to providing affordable housing to poor and low-income people, the deregulation of the housing market has led to a rise in housing prices compared to income.<sup>57</sup>

The most common method to measure housing affordability is the Housing Price-to-Income ratio (HPI), which calculates the ratio of the median free-market price of a dwelling unit and the median annual household income.<sup>58</sup> ‘Good Progress’ means a house price to income ratio of 6 to 8, and ‘No Progress’ means a house price to income ratio greater than 12. The crowd-sourced global index estimates that the unit price-to-income ratio increased from 12.68 in 2018 to 13.60 in 2019, i.e., a 7.25% increase, with some variation across cities and regions.<sup>59</sup> Announcement No. 12 of the New Urban Communities Authority (NUCA) shows that the price for social housing units was increased to EGP 197,000, an increase of more than 7% in unit cost compared to previous years.<sup>60</sup>

## LIST OF URBANIZATION INDICATORS

This is a snapshot of the main findings for the 2020 urbanization indicators. For full analysis visit the [urbanization indicators page](#) on ESPI website.

- 
**Protection to secure residential tenure in law**  
 Egypt issued new codes and legal amendments in 2019 that strengthen tenure security; however, these have not been implemented in practice.<sup>62</sup>
- 
**Percentage of target population settled in new cities**  
 Egypt’s score is based on the 2018 findings; no new data is available to update the indicator.

- 
**Action to improve affordability in social housing projects**  
 Egypt’s score is based on the 2018 findings; no new data is available to update the indicator. There has been no change in the related policy; consequently, the conditions surrounding affordability in social housing projects—including access to water and other basic services—remain the same.

- 
**Obstacles to exercising due process rights during evictions**  
 There has been no improvement regarding the pivotal points on forced eviction raised by the UN Special Rapporteur in her mission to Egypt in 2018;<sup>63</sup> Therefore, the situation remains the same.

- 
**House price-to-income ratio**  
 The unit price-to-income ratio increased from 12.68 in 2018 to 13.6 in 2019, a 7.25% increase.<sup>64</sup> Also, NUCA announced that the unit price for social housing increased by more than 7%.<sup>65</sup>

- 
**Percentage of household spending on average residential market rent**  
 Egyptians, on average, spent 39% of their income on rent in 2017<sup>66</sup> and are facing further economic pressure due to the rise in prices for basic services such as water,<sup>67</sup> electricity,<sup>68</sup> and gas.<sup>69</sup>

- 
**Percentage of units allocated for rent in government social housing projects**  
 There was insufficient data to make a robust judgment.

FIG 4. House price-to-income ratio (2015-2019)



Source: NUMBEO Property Prices Index<sup>61</sup>



## INDICATORS

# Education



This year's (2020) education indicators show little to no progress in education indicators compared to the 2018 and 2019 findings. There is a decline in Egypt's public expenditure on pre-university education,<sup>70</sup> reflecting the worrying trend of reductions in public spending, descending to levels well below that of other LMICs. Relatedly, the indicators show a rise in classroom density and the ratio of students to teachers,<sup>71</sup> both indicators of declining quality of public education as a result of low public investment in this sector which jeopardizes both the right to education and the rights of the child. Low public investment in educational infrastructure, materials, and human resources exacerbate unequal access to quality public education, which disproportionately affects the poor and most vulnerable, particularly girls. The indicators for which data was available show regression since 2018 but within the scope of the same score. Data for the update of this set of indicators is based on findings from the 2019-2020 academic and financial year.

 **Public expenditure on pre-university education as a percentage of GDP**  
**No progress**

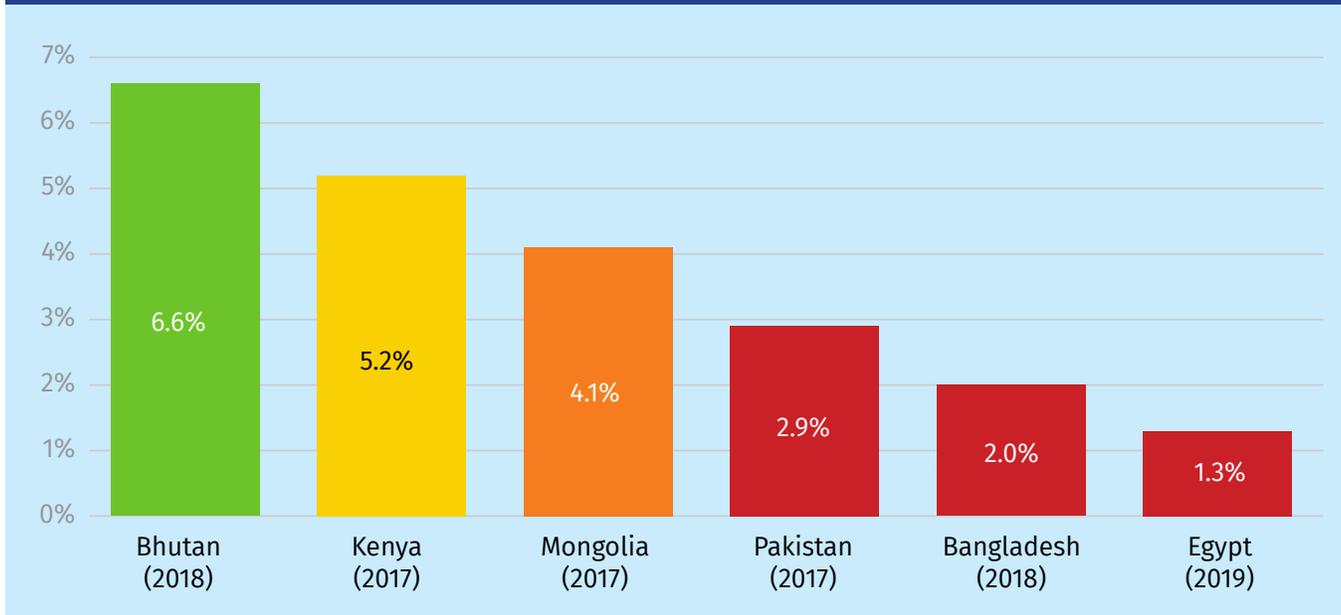
***Egypt's 2019-2020 allocation to pre-university education amounts to just 1.52% of GDP***

This indicator measures expenditure on pre-university education as a percentage of GDP. The Egyptian Constitution enshrines the right to education and obliges the government to allocate a minimum of 4% of GNP for pre-university education.<sup>72</sup> Egypt's Vision 2030 also aims to raise public expenditure on pre-university education to 5% of GDP by 2020 and 8% by 2030.<sup>73</sup> The scale is designed to measure progress and compares Egypt's performance to peer LMIC)

and against self-identified national commitments in the Egyptian Constitution. 'Good Progress' is set at 6% of GDP, in line with the best performing LMICs. 'No Progress' is set at less than 4% of GDP, inspired by Egypt's constitutional obligation.

In the Financial Year 2019/2020, Egypt's allocation to pre-university education amounted to just 1.52% of GDP, according to the Ministry of Finance.<sup>74</sup> In 2017/2018, Egypt allocated approximately 1.7% of GDP,<sup>75</sup> and in 2018/2019 1.4% of GDP,<sup>76</sup> illustrating the trend of steady regression in public expenditure in Egypt in recent years. Low public expenditure on education mainly affects the quality of education for poorer households, which depend on public education because they cannot afford private schools. Egypt's low expenditure on pre-university education also

**FIG 5. Public expenditure on pre-university education as a percentage of GDP among lower-middle-income countries (latest available data: 2017, 2018, 2019)**



Source: UNESCO 2017, 2018;<sup>77</sup> Ministry of Finance 2019<sup>78</sup>

contributes to the regression in other indicators, such as classroom density and the student-to-teacher ratio.

## LIST OF EDUCATION INDICATORS

This is a snapshot of the main findings for the 2020 education indicators. For full analysis visit the [education indicators page](#) on ESPI website.

**Student-to-teacher ratio in primary school**  
The student-to-teacher ratio increased to 29.1:1 in 2019/2020, a regression from 27.3:1 the previous year.<sup>79</sup>

**Percentage of teachers with educational training in primary schools**  
There was a decline in the percentages of teachers with educational training in 2019/2020 (80.9%).<sup>80</sup>

**Enrollment rate in pre-primary education (kindergarten), gross**  
The enrollment rate in pre-primary education in 2019/2020 was 28.5%.<sup>81</sup> This marks a 0.9% increase in enrollment since 2018/2019.<sup>82</sup>

**Action to combat violence in schools**  
Egypt's score is based on the 2018 findings; no new data is available to update the indicator.

**Drop-out rate in compulsory education**  
Egypt's score is based on the 2018 findings; no new data is available to update the indicator.

**Percentage of schools operating on a full school day system**  
Only 40.01% of the total schools in Egypt were operating on a full school day in the academic year of 2019/2020, marking no progress from the previous year.<sup>83</sup>

**Classroom density in primary school (average number of students per class)**  
Classroom density increased to an average of 50 pupils per class in 2019/2020, a regression from 48.9 the previous year.

**Public expenditure on pre-university education as a percentage of gross domestic product (GDP)**  
Public expenditure on pre-university education decreased to 1.52% of GDP in 2019/2020,<sup>84</sup> indicating regression of 1.42% from the previous year.<sup>85</sup>

**Public expenditure on teachers' wages as a percentage of gross domestic product (GDP)**  
Public expenditure on teachers' wages in the 2019/2020 budget was 1.28%,<sup>86</sup> and in 2018/2019 was 1.28% marking no significant increase.<sup>87</sup>



## INDICATORS Health



According to crowd-sourced data, this year's health indicators show Egypt has improved the quality of services in significant hospitals—particularly those in Port Said.<sup>88</sup> This progress is connected to Egypt's implementation of the pilot phase of its new health insurance law.<sup>89</sup> It should be noted however that Port Said is not necessarily representative because it has a population density which is amongst the lowest in the country and it has a higher average income than most other governorates. The level of health insurance coverage at only 58.8% is still concerning. In addition, out of pocket expenses have increased as a percentage of health expenditure from 58.9% to 62.7%. This has a particularly deleterious effect on those belonging to poor households; however, there is no available data at present on the socioeconomic impacts of Egypt's implementation of the new health insurance law. Additionally, Egypt has promised since 2018 to increase investment in health expenditure, but this has not yet materialized in Egypt's budget.<sup>90</sup> Due to a lack of available data, most indicators retained the same score from 2018 and have not been updated.



### Out of pocket health expenditure (OOP) as a percentage of health expenditure No progress

This indicator is intended to assess the financial accessibility of health goods and services. Actual out-of-pocket expenditure includes all out-of-pocket payments, including medicine, medical services, tests, etc.

According to the World Bank health expenditure data from 2019 – the latest available data – out-of-pocket (OOP)

health expenditure made up 62.7% of total health expenditure in Egypt. This is an increase from the figure recorded in the previous indicator update where out of pocket expenditure made up 58.9% in 2016 – showing that households are expected to shoulder an ever-higher portion of health costs. This level of expenditure is quite high in comparison to other LMICs, and especially impacts access to health for people living in poverty. According to estimates, the poorest 20% of households in Egypt spend 21% of their income on health needs.

## LIST OF HEALTH INDICATORS

This is a snapshot of the main findings for the 2020 health indicators. For full analysis visit [health indicators page](#) on ESPI website

### Under-five mortality rate (deaths per 1,000 children)

Egypt's score is based on the 2018 findings; no new data is available to update the indicator.

### Maternal mortality rate per 100,000 live births

Egypt's maternal mortality rate score has not changed, marking no significant improvement or decline from last year; there is conflicting data on whether the actual number has increased or decreased.

### Average score of the 'Community Assessment Portal for Egyptian Hospitals' (percent of criteria met)

Egypt's score is based on 2019 data; the average score of hospitals assessed (total of 601) was 52.9%, an improvement from 48% (for a total of 209 hospitals) in 2017.<sup>92</sup> No new data is available for 2020 due to the limitations in accessing hospitals during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### Difference in diarrheal treatment rates between boys and girls

Egypt's score is based on the 2018 findings; no new data is available to update the indicator.

### Action to combat female genital mutilation (FGM)

Egypt's score is based on the 2018 findings; no new data indicate any progress or retrogression regarding this indicator.

### Percentage of the population covered by social health insurance

Egypt's score is based on the 2018 findings; no new quantitative data is available to update the indicator. Improvement is anticipated based on government commitments, but this has not yet translated into improvements in data, which have remained unchanged since 2018.

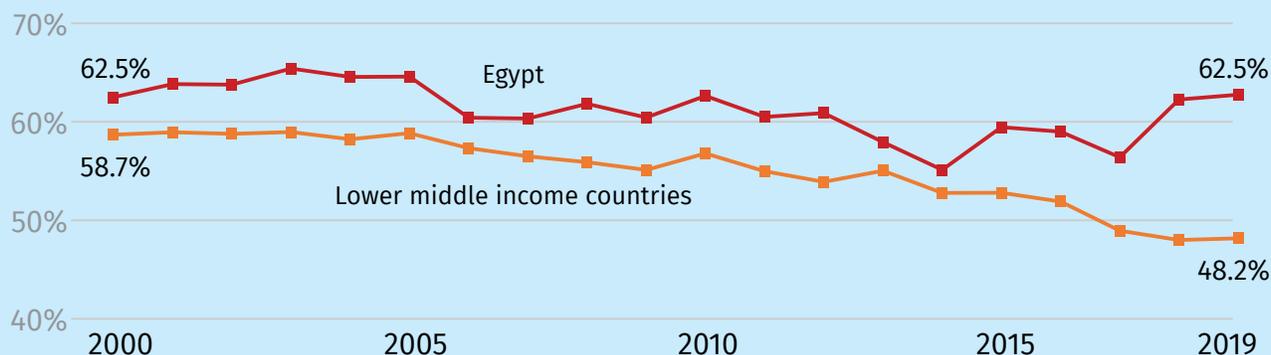
### Out-of-pocket expenditure on health as a percentage of total current health expenditure

Egypt's score is based on the 2018 findings; no new data is available to update the indicator. Improvement is anticipated based on government commitments, but this has not yet translated into improvements in data, which have remained unchanged since 2018.

### Public health expenditure as a percentage of GDP

Egypt's government spending on health as a percentage of GDP is 3.72% (245.5 billion EGP), according to the latest data available from the FY 2020/2021 budget plan published by the Ministry of Finance, marking a significant improvement from 1.4% in previous years.<sup>93</sup> However, the government expanded the definition of 'health spending' in the 2020/2021 budget plan. If one uses the previous definition which would exclude money spent on debt servicing, then the actual spending on health as a percentage of GDP is only 1.5%, which is only half of the constitutional guarantee of 3% of GDP.

FIG 6. Out-of-pocket expenditure (% of current health expenditure)



Source: World Bank<sup>91</sup>



## INDICATORS

# Food, Water, and Agricultural Land



On food, water, and agricultural land, ESPI find that Egypt’s performance is relatively high compared to peer LMICs—particularly for indicators related to nutrition.<sup>94</sup> Nevertheless, the most recent data on these indicators are from the 2014 Demographic Health Survey (DHS), and since then, food prices have increased, raising concerns that Egypt’s performance on these indicators may have regressed. Food accessibility and affordability worsened during the pandemic as Egypt experienced increased food prices. For example, the prices of vegetables and the grain and bread group increased by 25% each. Water and sanitation indicators also show Egypt’s progress compared to other LMICs in terms of essential services; however, Egypt falls short of meeting SDG criteria for safely managed services, and the data highlights urban-rural inequality.<sup>95</sup>

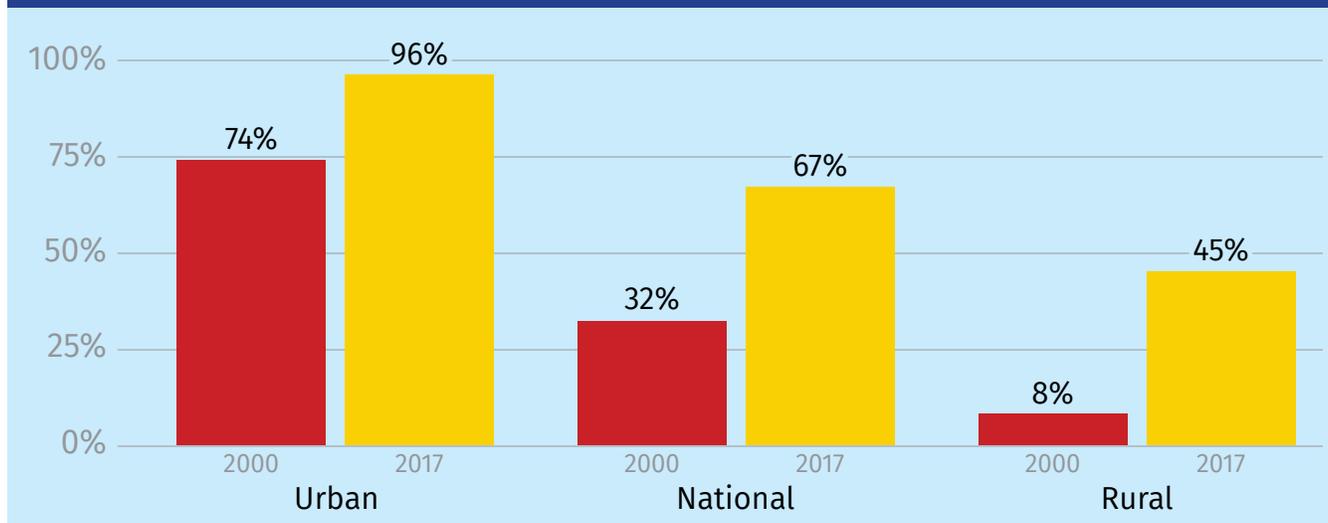
Since the first year of data collection for food, water, and agricultural land indicators in 2018, there have been no updates to the quantitative data for a year-to-year comparison. However, the 2020 updates offer qualitative analysis on gender and geospatial inequalities as well as the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. The pandemic has exacerbated existing concerns about the safety, availability, and affordability of water. In 2020 the UN ESCWA estimated that 9.9 million people in Egypt lack the facilities to wash their hands with soap and water. Women and girls have been disproportionately affected given the burden they face in most households when it comes to collecting water. The pandemic has also magnified geospatial inequalities particularly the disparity in enjoyment of the rights to food and water between those who live in urban areas vis a vis those living in rural areas.



### Percentage of rural population with sewer connections Partial progress

This indicator measures the percentage of rural residents who enjoy drainage services connected to the sewage network, compared to the national average. Access to sanitation for all people, including marginalized and vulnerable groups, is an internationally recognized right.<sup>96</sup> While sanitation services connected to sewers is considered “improved sanitation,” it does not necessarily constitute safely managed sanitation, or equitable access to sanitation, particularly for women, girls, and other vulnerable groups. The scaling of this indicator is based on universal access: ‘Good Progress’ represents equal access between the rural population and the national average, and ‘No Progress’

**FIG 7. Percentage of rural, urban and national population with sewer connections (2000, 2017)**



Source: UNICEF, WHO (2019)

represents a gap that is more than half the national average.

According to the latest data, the average percentage of people with access to sanitation connected to sewers in rural areas is 45%, compared to the national average of 67%, while urban access is 96%.<sup>97</sup> However, the available data does not help determine the percentage of the rural population that lacks access to safely managed sanitation services, a challenge that disproportionately affects marginalized and poor members of the community, especially women and girls.<sup>98</sup> Egypt's Vision 2030 aims to reach 100% access to sanitation by 2030.<sup>99</sup> While this goal is respectable, it does not address equitable access to sanitation, which must be addressed, particularly in light of the rising costs of sanitation services in Egypt.<sup>100</sup>

## LIST OF FOOD, WATER, AND AGRICULTURAL LAND INDICATORS

This is a snapshot of the main findings for the 2020 food, water, and agricultural land indicators. For full analysis visit the [food, water and agricultural land indicators page](#) on ESPI website.

### Prevalence of stunting among children under five

According to Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) data from 2014, the prevalence of stunting was 21.4%, indicating partial progress compared to other LMICs; however, increases in stunting occurred in some governorates between 2008 and 2014.<sup>101</sup>

### Prevalence of anemia among children under five

Prevalence was approximately 32% in 2016, reflecting an overall trend of partial progress compared to previous years and other LMICs.<sup>102</sup>

### Percentage of rural to urban population with access to water on-premises

In 2017, the percentage of the rural population with water on-premises was 98%, compared to 99% of the urban population.<sup>103</sup> It is worth noting that the water cannot be determined as safely managed because no information has been made available on water contamination for the past two decades.

### Proportion of the rural population with available drinking water when needed

In 2017, the proportion of the rural population with available drinking water when needed was 67%, compared to a national average of 71%.<sup>104</sup> It is worth noting that the water cannot be determined as safely managed because no information has been made available on water contamination for the past two decades. The Covid-19 pandemic exacerbated the safety and availability of water and magnified geospatial inequalities.

### Percentage of rural population with sewer connections

The proportion of the rural population with sewer connections is 45%, compared to a national average of 67% and an urban average of 96%, marking an enormous rural-urban gap in quality sanitation and water services.<sup>105</sup>

# CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

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The ESPI 2020 update provides, for the first time, a comparison of ESPI scores to the baseline established in 2018 across the six topics — economic policy; labor; urbanization; education; health; food, water, and agricultural land. Egypt continued to exhibit weak progress and further regression across some indicators in 2020. While this regression changed the scores of some indicators, it mainly occurred within the scope of the indicators' respective 2018 scores. For a number of indicators, it also reflected a multi-year regressive trend. Despite some areas of progress, the overall regression in most ESPI indicators since 2018 presents a troubling picture of declining social well-being in Egypt and should spur the Egyptian government to take urgent action.

Certain structural issues highlighted in the previous report remain unaddressed. Chief amongst these is the failure to improve domestic resource mobilization and redirect public spending. Over-reliance on regressive taxes contributed to increased poverty and inequality. In the previous report it was noted that “Egypt must increase public investment to strengthen social protection schemes and improve access to quality public services, with a focus on combating persistent inequalities.” This recommendation remains as relevant now as it was then. Implementing the social health insurance law remains essential as does curbing out of pocket expenses for healthcare. Investment in fundamental rights, such as healthcare and education, continues to be less than the constitutionally prescribed minimum.

There were, however, improvements in respect of some indicators. With regards to health, the average score of hospitals assessed in terms of the Egyptian Hospitals Community Assessment Portal increased from 28% to 52.9%. In

terms of labor, youth unemployment decreased from 26.5% to 16.7%, and weekly real wages increased from 1104 EGP in 2018 to 1283 EGP in 2019. In terms of education, the gross enrolment rate in pre-primary education increased by 0.9% compared to the prior year. Lastly, one area that remains relatively commendable in terms of economic policy is the effective corporate tax rate of above 20%, not far below the statutory rate.

One of the most persistent findings of ESPI across all topics is deep gender disparities. With the Covid-19 pandemic, gender disparities increased across Egypt, with women and children living in poverty and facing additional difficulties accessing healthcare services and sanitation needs. At the same time, several structural barriers limit women from participating – or participating equally – in the formal and informal economic sectors. Evidence suggests that Egyptian women experienced a high gender wage gap during the pandemic and a lack of protection from workplace dis-

crimination; although it remains challenging to quantify the gender wealth gap due to a lack of official data. Data also show that most women experienced job loss, reduced income and were unable to access economic resources, making them unable to fully or equally enjoy their rights as Egyptian citizens. Thus, women's experiences are interconnected with other economic and geographic disparities and are reinforced by Egyptian laws and policies.

The recommendations below detail a set of concrete actions that the Egyptian government can take to reverse this regressive trend and build positive momentum to improve Egyptians' social and economic well-being. The recommendations are summarized below in the following cross-cutting categories:

1. strengthening legal protection of socioeconomic rights;
2. increasing coverage of key social programs;
3. improving domestic resource mobilization and redirecting public spending;
4. enforcing more robust regulation of the private sector;
5. improving data coverage, reliability, and availability; and
6. increasing participation, transparency, and good governance.

Further, more detailed recommendations on each topic can be found on the ESPI website.

Progress in 2020 continued to be weak or non-existent for the majority of the indicators. Even where progress exists, the picture is often complicated by notable variance in the equity of outcomes and access depending on geography, gender, and socioeconomic group. Significant gender disparities were found across all thematic areas of ESPI; therefore, a combination of gender-specific policies across multiple areas is needed to ensure that women and girls are not left behind in Egypt's development plan.

### **1. Strengthening legal protection of socioeconomic rights**

While Egypt's Constitution guarantees many socioeconomic rights – such as the right to health, work, and education – legislation often fails to offer solid legal protection to ensure the proper realization of those rights in practice. Therefore, Egypt should strengthen the implementation of the legal protections it provides and enact new laws as needed.

The government of Egypt should implement policies that focus on bridging gaps in the availability, accessibility and quality of health goods and services hindering access to healthcare for the poorest families. Egypt should expand legal protection for workers to exercise their rights to organize and strike, repeal all laws that criminalize this activity, and sanction employers for violating labor rights, including arbitrary dismissal based on trade union membership. It is imperative to strengthen legislation on the right to work, provide unemployment benefits equivalent to the minimum wage, and amend legislative frameworks to protect women working in all sectors and fields of work, with clear non-discrimination rules and substantial fines for violating them. Egypt should strengthen its legislation prohibiting all forms of child labor, focusing on mechanisms and methods of applying the law. The government should also develop a fairer system for registering properties—including informal settlements—to strengthen security of tenure while adopting and implementing laws to prevent forced evictions associated with government housing projects.

### **2. Increasing coverage of key social programs**

ESPI show that social programs essential for tackling poverty and inequality fall short in terms of their coverage and comprehensiveness. The importance of extending their reach and efficacy is especially crucial given that the stringent IMF-backed reform program has been followed by an overall increase in the cost of living, exacerbated by inflation and currency fluctuations. To make progress, Egypt should enact comprehensive and holistic social protection systems that protect all people from poverty in times of economic crisis while ensuring gender and geographical inclusion. The necessity of expanding social protection was heightened by the Covid-19 pandemic, which shifted the estimations of the expected poverty rate in Egypt between 38% and 44.7% in 2021. If these estimates are correct, the number of people living in poverty covered by existing programs will reduce considerably. It is, therefore, necessary for Egypt to revise the criteria for eligibility for its social protection schemes and have comprehensive measures in place to assist poor and marginalized households affected by the pandemic.

Egypt should expand the coverage of cash transfer programs essential for preventing poverty, particularly in the context of high inflation, and implement multi-option subsidized housing programs, including some for rent and rental ownership. It is imperative that Egypt links education and labor policy in a clear national employment plan by providing vocational training according to the needs of the labor market, while also alleviating the care burden on women through the provision of social care institutions that enable women to pursue economic opportunities. Egypt must fully implement the new health insurance law to provide universal access to healthcare and lower out-of-

pocket payments. To address malnutrition, the government should expand the food subsidy program and provide subsidies on foods high in micronutrients, such as fruits and vegetables.

### 3. Improving domestic resource mobilization and redirecting public spending

ESPI's 2020 indicator commentaries include a number of actionable recommendations focused on increasing effective resource mobilization in ways that would contribute to reducing inequality and ensuring economic policy contributes to social progress. To achieve this, Egypt must make structural economic reforms to increase the share of direct taxation, diversify the economy, and expand spending on social welfare programs.

Egypt should implement progressive tax reforms, including strengthening taxation to close the gap between effective and statutory corporate tax rates and relying less on indirect and regressive taxation. Egypt must diversify the economy and stimulate investment in sectors with significant labor intensity, such as manufacturing, construction, agriculture, and other productive sectors. Egypt should increase public investments to strengthen social protection systems and improve access to high-quality public services. It should increase public expenditure on education to reduce classroom density and the ratio of students to teachers and invest more in the health sector to meet the minimum constitutional obligation of 3% of GNP to ensure universal access to quality public sector health services. Egypt should also increase public investment in water and

sanitation services, especially in rural, marginalized, and unplanned urban areas, where they are critically needed.

### 4. Enforcing more robust regulation of the private sector

Establishing more concerted and effective regulation over private sector activities to ensure their activities are in line with sustainable development will be instrumental to achieving and sustaining progress across different socioeconomic areas. For example, the performance of the private sector during the Covid-19 pandemic reflects challenges in the services pricing system, weak government oversight, and the Ministry of Health's inability to mandate pricing ceilings to the private sector, as is the case in most countries. Therefore, Egypt should establish laws and policies to ensure that the operations of private sector entities do not impinge upon the rights of Egyptians.

Egypt should support workers in their rights to organize and strike by implementing the laws to protect these rights and expanding these laws to cover workers in the private and informal sectors. Considering the rising cost of goods and services, the government must take a more active role in reducing inflation, ensuring that wages increase at the same rate as the consumer price index, and implementing a livable minimum wage across economic sectors. Egypt must also reduce the gender wage gap, including measures to oversee equal pay and promotion, especially in the private sector. The government should increase taxes on real estate to free up housing inventory in the private sector and reinstate some kind of rent control or rent stabilization sys-



Photo: Blazej Adamowski/Flickr

tem to protect private tenants against unreasonable rent increases. Along with implementing Egypt's new health insurance law, the government should also establish standardized contracting arrangements with the private sector to ensure that services provided through this sector are financially accessible.

### **5. Improving data coverage, reliability and availability**

One major challenge to measuring progress towards socioeconomic well-being in Egypt is data availability and reliability and the lack of coverage of particular issues or population groups. Egypt must strengthen socioeconomic information by ensuring the availability and quality of data to accelerate progress, considering the prolonged pandemic deepened access gaps and inequalities. All work statistics should be made available and disaggregated by gender, geographical regions, and sectors. This is essential for monitoring the government's progress towards achieving its targets, for example, women's participation in the labor force and the youth employment rate. Additionally, Egypt must measure and publish child labor statistics to apply quantitative and measurable goals for reducing child labor in line with Egypt's Vision 2030. The national statistical bureau should also publish more disaggregated data on health outcomes frequently and regularly and collect and publish data on water quality in rural and urban areas.

### **6. Increasing participation, transparency, and good governance**

For these policies to be successful, increased public participation is required to ensure they are based on the needs and informed by the voices of average Egyptians. For example, it is essential to increase the participation of women in the labor force and ensure women doing unpaid domestic work are not excluded from participation. Supporting community monitoring and accountability mechanisms and creating platforms for citizens' participation are also included in the transparency section of Egypt's Vision 2030 plan. Establishing mechanisms that make these aspirations concrete and allow for public participation at all levels of policymaking is challenging but foundational for sustainable development policies to achieve their intended outcomes. In addition, establishing community monitoring mechanisms across ESPI topic areas and participatory needs assessments is also needed before implementing broad-reaching policies. For example, studies on the feasibility and accessibility of new reforms, be it in the health sector, urban areas development or social protection programs, are essential for successful policy reform strategies.

### **What's next for ESPI**

The 2020 updates to ESPI scores and commentaries have presented a picture of weak progress with some regression compared to Egypt's 2018 performance. These findings call for urgent action by the Egyptian government to reverse this trend and improve Egyptians' social and economic well-being. The 2020 ESPI findings also provide a well-researched platform that can support civil society groups in their efforts to advocate for the implementation of these recommendations and others and hold the Egyptian government accountable for its actions and commitments to sustainable development and human rights.

To ensure that ESPI always reflect the latest norms in the field and apply cutting-edge measurement methodologies and techniques, the ESPI team looks forward to a bi-annual update and refinement of the indicators. Such updates will include benchmarking and scoring internationally comparable data, norms, and standards as they become available annually or periodically.

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