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Egypt

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EGYPT

*Lila Meadows**
*Nadia Adib Bamieh***
*Janet E Lord****

1 Population indicators

1.1 What is the total population of Egypt?

86 895 099 million.¹

1.2 Describe the methodology used to obtain the statistical data on the prevalence of disability in Egypt. What criteria are used to determine who falls within the class of persons with disabilities in Egypt?

The 2006 census used a measure of mobility impairment to calculate the prevalence of disability in Egypt. Experts estimate that the actual number is likely to be much higher, as the census only accounted for impairment and did not include activity limitations or participation restrictions as part of its measure.

1.3 What is the total number and percentage of people with disabilities in Egypt?

The 2006 Egyptian census estimated that 1,8 per cent of the Egyptian population is living with disabilities. The UN estimates a much higher figure, estimating that 12 million people are living with some type of disability.²

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1 Central Intelligence Agency 'CIA World Factbook: Egypt' updated 22 June 2014, available at <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/eg.html> (accessed 12 August 2014).

2 WHO 'World report on disability 2011: Technical appendix A' 295, available at www.unicef.org/protection/World_report_on_disability_eng.pdf (accessed 20 August 2014).

According to the Government of Egypt's UPR Report in 2010,³ statistics for 2006 indicated that there are 475 576 persons with disabilities in Egypt, 170 360 of them females. A 2011 study of the World Health Organization (WHO), UNICEF, and local civil society organisations estimated the percentage of persons with disabilities to be approximately 11 per cent, or approximately 8.5 million persons.⁴

1.4 What is the total number and percentage of women with disabilities in Egypt?

The 2006 census indicated that of the 475 576 persons with disabilities in Egypt, 170 360 of them are females. The census did not include activity limitations or participation restrictions in its definition of disability.

1.5 What is the total number and percentage of children with disabilities in Egypt?

Information on this is not available as census data was not disaggregated as to age.

1.6 What are the most prevalent forms of disability and/or peculiarities to disability in Egypt?

There is little reliable data concerning the prevalence and forms of disability in the Egyptian population. A 2002 study commissioned by the Japan International Cooperation Agency found that mental disabilities comprised almost 75 per cent of all disability in Egypt with mobility impairment making up 15 per cent and visual and hearing impairment constituting the remaining 11 per cent.⁵

2 Egypt's international obligations

22.1 What is the status of the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in Egypt? Did Egypt sign and ratify the CRPD? Provide the date(s).

Egypt signed the CRPD on 4 April 2007. Egypt ratified the CRPD on 14 April 2008. The Government of Egypt and Egyptian disability advocates participated in the drafting of the CRPD within the Ad Hoc Committee.

On signature of the CRPD, Egypt entered the following statement as an Interpretive Declaration:⁶

³ Egyptian Government 'National report submitted in accordance with paragraph 15 (a) of the annex to Human Rights Council Resolution – Egypt' Human Rights Council Seventh Session Geneva, February 2009, A/HRC/WG.6/7/EGY/1 (National report).

⁴ WHO (n 2 above).

⁵ Japan International Cooperation Agency, Planning and Evaluation Department 'Country profile on disability: Arab Republic of Egypt' (March 2002), available at: <http://digitalcommons.ilr.cornell.edu/gladnetcollect/233/> (accessed 20 August 2014).

⁶ UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, *Report of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on its 1st session*, 8 October 2009, CRPD/C/1/2.

The Arab Republic of Egypt declares that its interpretation of article 12 of the International Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which deals with the recognition of persons with disabilities on an equal basis with others before the law, with regard to the concept of legal capacity dealt with in paragraph 2 of the said article, is that persons with disabilities enjoy the capacity to acquire rights and assume legal responsibility ('ahliyyat al-wujub') but not the capacity to perform ('ahliyyat al-'ada'), under Egyptian law.

Egypt has not signed or ratified the Optional Protocol to the CRPD. In its UPR Report in 2010, the Government of Egypt pledged to consider ratifying the Optional Protocol to the CRPD.⁷

2.2 If Egypt has signed and ratified the CRPD, when was its country report due? Which government department is responsible for submission of the report? Did Egypt submit its report? If so, and if the report has been considered, indicate if there was a domestic effect of this reporting process. If not, what reasons does the relevant government department give for the delay?

In view of Egypt's ratification of the CRPD in 2008, its first report was due on 3 June 2010. To date, it has not submitted its report to the CRPD Committee. The National Council on Disability Affairs is responsible for reporting Egypt's progress in implementing the CRPD. Due to political instability in Egypt since 2011 and several changes in national leadership, the government has yet to produce the report.

2.3 While reporting under various other United Nations' instruments, under the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, or the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, did Egypt also report specifically on the rights of persons with disabilities in its most recent reports? If so, were relevant 'concluding observations' adopted? If relevant, were these observations given effect? Was mention made of disability rights in Egypt's UN Universal Periodic Review (UPR)? If so, what was the effect of these observations/recommendations?

Egypt has submitted numerous reports to relevant human rights treaty bodies, including the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families. It is, however, late in submitting its periodic reports under current reporting cycles for all the human rights treaties within the UN system that it has ratified.

Egypt has, in past reports, to some extent made references to persons with disabilities. It has not, however, done so in any detailed, consistent or comprehensive manner.⁸

⁷ National report (n 3 above).

⁸ Egypt has participated in several conferences, raising issues that pertain to persons with disabilities including the World Conference of Human Rights (1993), the World Conference on Social Development (1993), the International Conference on Population & Development (1994), and the Regional Consultations on Violence Against Children (2005-2007).

Egypt is a party to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.

In Egypt's Universal Periodic Review, in 2010, Egypt includes a section on persons with disabilities.⁹ While it notes the ratification of the CRPD in 2008, it provides no information on efforts made to implement the CRPD domestically.

- 2.4 Was there any domestic effect on Egypt's legal system after ratifying the international or regional instrument in 2.3 above? Does the international or regional instrument that has been ratified require Egypt's legislature to incorporate it into the legal system before the instrument can have force in Egypt's domestic law? Have the courts of Egypt ever considered this question? If so, cite the case(s).**

The Ministry of Social Affairs capitalised on the momentum around disability issues and drafted the Law for Persons with Disabilities for consideration by the Egyptian parliament. Due to political unrest and regime changes, however, the law was never brought before Parliament. On 1 January 2014, the Egyptian Council on Human Rights drafted an amended version of the Law for Persons with Disabilities and organised a one day conference for comment on the draft. To date, no further action has been taken. The Law for Persons with Disabilities would act to supplement the provisions of the CRPD. According to article 151 of the Egyptian Constitution, treaties become binding domestic law upon ratification without any further implementing steps from the legislature after ratification and signature.

- 2.5 With reference to 2.4 above, has the CRPD or any other ratified international instrument been domesticated? Provide details.**

According to the article 151 of the Egyptian Constitution, treaties become domestic law upon ratification. The CRPD therefore, operates as domestic law in Egypt. Because of continued political transition, Egypt has not significantly reformed laws that would enhance its compliance with the CRPD.

3 Constitution

- 3.1 Does the Constitution of Egypt contain provisions that directly address disability? If so, list the provisions and explain how each provision addresses disability.**

Egypt's current Constitution was approved by popular referendum on 14 and 15 January 2014 and contains several provisions related to disability. The Constitution became effective on 18 January 2014 following announcement that the text was approved by general referendum. Chapter 2, article 81 directly establishes the 'rights of the disabled'. The article states:

The state shall guarantee the health, economic, social, cultural, entertainment, sporting and education rights of dwarves and people with disabilities. The state shall provide work opportunities for such individuals, and allocate a percentage of these

⁹ National report (n 3 above).

opportunities to them, in addition to equipping public utilities and their surrounding environment. The state guarantees their right to exercise political rights, and their integration with other citizens in order to achieve the principles of equality, justice and equal opportunities.

Article 80 establishes the rights of children and explicitly guarantees the rights of children who have disabilities, committing to both their incorporation into society and rehabilitation.

Article 214 establishes the National Council for Disability Affairs (NCDA), endowing the council with legal personality, technical, and financial independence.

Article 244 grants persons with disabilities 'appropriate representation' in the House of Representatives to be elected after adoption of the Constitution.

3.2 Does the Constitution of Egypt contain provisions that indirectly address disability? If so, list the provisions and explain how each provision indirectly addresses disability.

Egypt's current Constitution was approved by popular referendum in January 2014 and contains several articles that relate both directly and indirectly to disability.

- Article 9 ensures equal opportunity for all citizens without discrimination.
- Article 11 requires the state to protect and care for woman who are considered 'most in need' and, as such, this provision accords protection to women with disabilities who are particularly at risk.
- Article 16 commits the state to providing care, including job opportunities to those wounded in state security operations. This provision thus covers individuals who acquired disabilities in this context.
- Article 17 provides citizens the right to 'social securities to ensure a decent life, if they are unable to support themselves and their families in the event of the incapacity to work'. This provision would thus protect individuals with disabilities who are unable to work or support themselves.
- Article 18 entitles citizens to health and quality, comprehensive health care services. The article specifically commits the state to establishing 'a comprehensive health care system covering all diseases' and thus provides access to all individuals, including persons with disabilities.
- Article 19 requires the state to provide free educational services in accordance with global quality criteria. As such, students with disabilities would be entitled to free educational services.

4 Legislation

4.1 Does Egypt have legislation that directly addresses issues relating to disability? If so, list the legislation and explain how the legislation addresses disability.

The Social Welfare Law 79 of 1975 and subsequent amendments, in particular Law 25 (1977) and Law 92 (1980), are amongst those that deal specifically with persons with disabilities' welfare rights. The main function of these provisions is to ensure that people who acquire impairments through work related injuries or disease receive appropriate compensation and pensions.

The Law of Civilian Employees 47 of 1978 and the Law of Public Sector Employees 48 of 1978 include articles relating to the employment of workers with disabilities. These statutes were introduced to secure employment for disabled workers in state sponsored agencies and organisations.

Rehabilitation Law 39 (1975), amended under Law 49 (1982) raised the employment quota for disabled workers from 2 per cent to 5 per cent. The definition of disability under the Rehabilitation Law is 'any individual who became unable to depend on him/herself in performing his/her work or another type of work and remains in it. His/her inability to do so is the result of physical, mental, sensory or congenital impairment'.¹⁰

'Rehabilitation' in Law 39 is defined as presenting social, psychological, medical, educational, and professional assistance to all disabled persons and their families to enable them to overcome the negative consequences resulting from impairment.

Also the Egyptian childhood law number 12 for the year 1996 concerned the disabled children in its 6th chapter under the name 'Care and rehabilitation for the disabled child', articles (76) and (77) provides that disabled child have the right to:

- (1) Enjoy special social, health and psychological care, which increases their ability to depend on themselves and to facilitate their integration and participation in their society.
- (2) Rehabilitation, which includes all social, psychological, medical, educational and vocational services, required to help the disabled child and their families to overcome the consequences of their handicap.

The law determines that the state should provide rehabilitation services, technical aids and appliances free of charge and according to the budget allocated for this purpose. It provides that the Ministry of Social Affairs has the duty to establish the institutions and bodies required to provide rehabilitation services to children with disabilities. In addition, the Ministry of Social Affairs can provide certificates giving the rights to other bodies to open such institutions according to the regulations identified by the internal charter. On the other hand, the Ministry of Education is entrusted with establishing schools and classes to educate disabled children according to their abilities and potential, and the entry requirements, curricula, and examinations are to be decided by the internal charter.¹¹

4.2 Does Egypt have legislation that indirectly addresses issues relating to disability? If so, list the main legislation and explain how the legislation relates to disability.

Various pieces of legislation indirectly address issues related to disability insofar as they address, amongst others, access to social services for persons living in poverty, political participation for citizens, and access to employment.

¹⁰ Act 39 of 1975, amended by Act 49 of 1982.

¹¹ Act 39 of 1975, amended by Act 49 of 1982, art 78.

5 Decisions of courts and tribunals

- 5.1 Have the courts (or tribunals) in Egypt decided on an issue(s) relating to disability? If so, list the cases and provide a summary for each of the cases with the facts, the decision(s) and the reasoning.**

Information is unavailable on this issue.

6 Policies and programmes

- 6.1 Does Egypt have policies or programmes that directly address disability? If so, list each policy and explain how the policy addresses disability.**

Egypt does have a number of policies and programmes that directly address disability issues. These include the following:

- **Policies**
 - Five-year Strategic Plan for Inclusion of Students with Disabilities in Education (2007-2012): Ministry of Education.
 - Ministerial Decree for Inclusion of Students with Disabilities into the General Education System.
- **Programming**
 - The Egyptian government provides separate educational facilities for individuals with intellectual disabilities (covering the Autism spectrum), hearing disabilities, and visual disabilities. Students at segregated schools receive the same services as mainstream public schools but operate on an adapted curriculum.
 - The Ministry of Education supports inclusion in the public and private schools. The Ministry is gradually increasing the number of students with disabilities who are admitted to the general education system. At the post-secondary level students with disabilities are admitted to Egyptian state universities. Currently universities provide adapted services for students with visual impairments and are building capacity to become more inclusive of students with hearing impairment.
 - The National Federation for Scouts has special programmes and training for scout leaders working with scouts with disabilities.
 - Very Special Arts is a national NGO affiliated with the International Organization of Special Arts and Disability. Very Special Arts trains people with disabilities in all forms of art and organises annual national and international exhibitions focused on raising awareness about the abilities of people with disabilities.
 - Special Olympics have programmes to train and promote sports for persons with disabilities. Athletes from Egypt participate in national, regional, and international events, including in the winter games despite Egypt's warm climate.
 - The Egyptian Paralympic Foundation has programmes to train and promote athletes with disabilities.

6.2 Does Egypt have policies and programmes that indirectly address disability? If so, list each policy and describe how the policy indirectly addresses disability.

The Ministry of Telecommunications provides training and education for teachers working with students with disabilities. Al Azhar University provides specialised programmes in higher education for students with visual impairments.

7 Disability bodies

7.1 Other than the ordinary courts or tribunals, does Egypt have any official body that specifically addresses violations of the rights of people with disabilities? If so, describe the body, its functions and its powers.

The newly established National Council for Disability Affairs is an independent government council established by Prime Minister Kamal El Ganzouri in June 2011 to investigate issues related to persons with disabilities. Complaints and comments may be submitted to the body for investigation related to individual rights.

The Council also adopts a general comprehensive policy through the set-up of the different national committees and their sub-committees throughout the country that supports policies and services to promote issues such as inclusion in schools and universities, accessibility in all its forms, health services, employment, legal issues, raising awareness in the media, and collaboration with the Ministry of Health to set up comprehensive and inclusive centres for needed medical services.

7.2 Other than the ordinary courts or tribunals, does Egypt have any official body that though not established to specifically address violations of the rights of people with disabilities, can nonetheless do so? If so, describe the body, its functions and its powers.

The Egyptian National Council for Human Rights and the National Women's Council have the mandate to investigate issues related to persons with disabilities. The Egyptian National Council for Human Rights was established by Law 94 of 2003 and operates under a broad mandate to investigate human rights as they pertain to social, economic, civil, and cultural rights.¹² The National Women's Council was established by Presidential Decree 90 of 2000 with the mandate to investigate matters pertaining to the social, economic, cultural, health, and educational rights of women throughout Egypt.¹³

¹² Act 94 of 2004, art 8.

¹³ Presidential Decree 90 of 2000, art 5.

8 National human rights institutions, Human Rights Commission, Ombudsman or Public Protector

- 8.1 Does Egypt have a Human Rights Commission, an Ombudsman or Public Protector? If so, does its remit include the promotion and protection of the rights of people with disabilities? If your answer is yes, also indicate whether the Human Rights Commission, Ombudsman or Public Protector of Egypt has ever addressed issues relating to the rights of persons with disabilities.**

The National Council for Human Rights was established by Act 94 of 2003 as an independent body responsible for promoting, developing and protecting human rights, strengthening human rights values, and raising awareness of human rights. The Council enjoys 'A' status in accordance with the International Coordinating Committee of NHRIs.¹⁴ The Council does have a disability committee tasked with addressing the rights of persons with disabilities. The Council has hosted, in collaboration with disabled peoples' organisations, various seminars and conferences considering issues pertaining to the rights of persons with disabilities.¹⁵

The National Council for Women was established by Presidential Decree 90 in 2000 to support women's advancement and to strengthen the role of women in society. Its mandate includes recommending policies on women's development and on the formulation of the national plan for the advancement of women. The Council is also empowered by the establishing Presidential Decree to recommend and comment on draft laws and decisions, which affect women. In addition, the Council carries out national awareness-raising and training activities focusing on the promotion and observance of women's rights.

The Women's Ombudsman Office was established by the National Council for Women in fulfilment of Presidential Decree 90 of 2000. The office has a mandate to consider complaints of human rights violations against women. This office has received training on the rights of women and girls with disabilities.¹⁶

The National Council for Childhood and Motherhood (NCCM) established a hotline to report abuse regarding disability and also provides training and mentoring programmes related to childhood disability policies and laws.¹⁷

14 See OHCHR 'Chart of the Status of NHRIs: Accredited by the ICC' (28 January 2014), available at: http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/NHRI/Chart_Status_NIs.pdf (accessed 20 August 2014).

15 More information on the National Council on Human Rights is available at www.nchregypt.org (accessed 20 August 2014).

16 For more information on the National Council for Women and the Women's Ombudsmen office visit: <http://ncwegypt.com/index.php/en/home> (accessed 20 August 2014).

17 For more information on the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood visit: <http://www.nccm-egypt.org/> (accessed 20 August 2014).

9 Disabled peoples organisations (DPOs) and other civil society organisations

9.1 Do you have organisations that represent and advocate for the rights and welfare of persons with disabilities in Egypt? If so, list each organisation and describe its activities.

Egypt does have organisations that represent and advocate on behalf of individuals with disabilities. These include, amongst others, the following:

- NAS Foundation for Persons with Disabilities supports the rights of persons with disabilities and their families within their communities. At the national level, NAS designs and implements workshops and capacity building training of NGOs working in the field of disability and/or issues related to disabilities, and carries out activities related to the political participation of persons with disabilities, including a polling station audit study for accessibility. NAS developed the first legal sign language manual for persons with hearing disability in an access to justice project.¹⁸
- The Egyptian Association for the Deaf is the oldest NGO serving persons with hearing disabilities. Its activities include all issues related to the needs of this population.¹⁹
- The Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR) was established in 2002 to strengthen and protect basic rights and freedoms of the Egyptian people through advocacy, research, and litigation in the field of civil liberties, economic and social justice, democracy and political rights. The Initiative specifically addresses issues related to disability.²⁰

9.2 In the countries in Egypt's region, are DPOs organised/coordinated at a national and/or regional level?

DPOs in the Middle East have traditionally operated and coordinated reform at the national level. There are some mechanisms for cooperation and coordination at a regional level in which disability issues are sometimes considered including, for example, the Arab League.²¹ Other, non-governmental organisation networks of DPOs also exist and work to build relationships and collaborate regionally.

9.3 If Egypt has ratified the CRPD, how has it ensured the involvement of DPOs in the implementation process?

Efforts to adopt a national disability law have stalled during the current political crisis in Egypt. However, DPOs have been engaged in commenting on the draft legislation, to some extent. DPOs have convened their own meetings to discuss national disability law and policy reform.

18 For more information on NAS, visit the organisation's website at: www.nascenteregy.org (accessed 20 August 2014).

19 For more information on the Egyptian Association for the Deaf, visit their official Facebook page at: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/The-Egyptian-Association-of-the-Deaf/166671676715038> (accessed 20 August 2014).

20 For more information on the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights visit the organisation's website at: <http://eipr.org/en> (accessed 20 August 2014).

21 For more information on the Arab League, visit the organisation's website at: <http://www.arableagueonline.org/> (accessed 20 August 2014).

9.4 What types of actions have DPOs themselves taken to ensure that they are fully embedded in the process of implementation?

A representative of persons with disabilities was selected as a participant on the 50 member committee to draft the 2014 Egyptian Constitution. As a result, several constitutional articles were included in the final version that directly address disability, including articles 80, 214, and 244.²²

9.5 What, if any, are the barriers DPOs have faced in engaging with implementation?

DPOs, like other civil society organisations in Egypt, face some challenges in operating freely. Required registration, together with the requirement that any foreign funding be subjected to approval, has the potential to create barriers to civil society work.²³

9.6 Are there specific instances that provide ‘best-practice models’ for ensuring proper involvement of DPOs?

The work of organisations such as NAS in advancing the political participation of persons with disabilities and undertaking accessibility audits and election observation is exemplary and supports implementation of article 29 of the CRPD. NAS has also undertaken innovative access to justice projects, in particular training sign language interpreters to represent deaf persons in accessing justice and legal counsel.

9.7 Are there any specific outcomes regarding successful implementation and/or improved recognition of the rights of persons with disabilities that resulted from the engagement of DPOs in the implementation process?

Provisions directly addressing the rights of persons with disabilities have been included in the latest Egyptian Constitution²⁴ and reflect efforts by the DPO community to engage in national decision-making processes.

9.8 Has your research shown areas for capacity building and support (particularly in relation to research) for DPOs with respect to their engagement with the implementation process?

There is ample scope for capacity building and support efforts in order to support DPOs efforts to advance implementation of the CRPD. Amongst these, capacity building in internal DPO governance and administration, training in conducting human rights education to raise awareness of the CRPD, capacity building on how to engage effectively in monitoring efforts at regional and international levels, including training on the CRPD and UPR shadow reporting. Thematic areas where DPOs have expressed interest in capacity building include, amongst others, enhancing access to justice for persons with disabilities, advancing inclusive

²² See arts 80, 214, 244 of the 2014 Egyptian Constitution.

²³ See Law 84 of 2002, Associations and Community Foundations, Ministry of Social Affairs Decree 178 of 2002, and Implementation Regulation for Law 84 of 2002. English translations are available at: <http://www.icnl.org/research/monitor/egypt.html> (accessed 20 August 2014).

²⁴ See arts 80, 214, 244 of the 2014 Egyptian Constitution.

education, addressing accessibility in public accommodation, and undertaking disability law reform.

9.9 Are there recommendations that come out of your research as to how DPOs might be more comprehensively empowered to take a leading role in the implementation processes of international or regional instruments?

DPOs are still quite new to engaging in law and policy advocacy and are interested in obtaining training and capacity building on the rights of persons with disabilities under international human rights law, and the CRPD in particular, as well as how to engage effectively in international treaty body processes, for instance through shadow reporting.

9.10 Are there specific research institutes in Egypt's region that work on the rights of persons with disabilities and that have facilitated the involvement of DPOs in the process, including in research?

The National Council for Disability Affairs, the Egyptian Council for Human Rights, and the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights are all actively engaged in work on the rights of persons with disabilities and directly involve people with disabilities in their advocacy efforts. In March 2014 the American University in Cairo held a symposium on disabilities across the Middle East that attracted participants from across the region. The National Council for Childhood and Motherhood also engages DPOs in their training and mentoring programmes surrounding disability.

Helwan University has recently established a university-wide Disability Centre in which one division is devoted to disability rights. The Centre is working nationally, regionally and internationally on advancing research and inclusive programming.

10 Government departments

10.1 Does Egypt have a government department/departments that is/are specifically responsible for promoting and protecting the rights and welfare of person with disabilities? If so, describe the activities of the department(s).

The Ministries of Education, Social Affairs, and Manpower are all responsible for promoting the rights of people with disabilities in terms of creating programming and policies that are inclusive of the rights of persons with disabilities.

11 Main human rights concerns of people with disabilities in Egypt

11.1 Contemporary challenges of persons with disabilities in Egypt (for example, in some parts of Africa ritual killing of certain classes of PWDs, such as people with albinism, occurs).

Persons with disabilities in Egypt face a number of human rights challenges, amongst them, accessibility to the built environment and to information and communication about services. In rural areas especially, there is limited understanding about disability and issues of stigma and discrimination lead families to isolate and hide their children with disabilities. Lack of understanding about disability and lack of information about services is a persistent problem, especially in rural areas.²⁵

11.2 Describe the contemporary challenges of persons with disabilities, and the legal responses thereto, and assess the adequacy of these responses to:

- **Access and accommodation**

As noted in previous sections, access to the built environment is very challenging throughout the country, making social services difficult to access and community engagement a challenge. While Egypt does have accessibility standards and building codes pertaining to accessibility they are not uniformly implemented nor are they effectively enforced.²⁶

- **Access to social security**

Persons with disabilities receive special subsidies to purchase household products, wheelchairs, and prosthetic devices. Persons with disabilities also receive expeditious approval for the installation of new telephone lines and reductions on customs duties for specially equipped private vehicles.

- **Access to public buildings**

Access to public buildings is very challenging, especially given that many public buildings are in old structures that have not been retrofitted (for example, court houses, public offices, schools).

- **Access to public transport**

Persons with disabilities may ride government-owned mass transit buses free of charge, but the buses are not wheelchair-accessible and thus assistance from friends and relatives is needed.

25 N Hussein 'Al-Ma'brouk in rural Egypt: A socially constructed identity' (2012) 31 *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy* 168.

26 A Sherif et al 'Application of special needs design code: Accessibility vs inclusion in Egyptian public schools' (2007) paper presented and published at the Arch Cairo 4th International Conference 'Towards new architectural dimensions: Linking & bridging academia and the professional' Cairo University, Cairo, Egypt (March 2007).

- **Access to education**

There is no prohibition against discrimination on the basis of disability in education. In practice, schools are physically inaccessible and teachers are not trained in disability accommodation. In poor areas, school overcrowding is a serious problem, amplifying barriers for children with disabilities. The Ministry of Education has set up a special education department within the structures responsible for administering basic education. The department is mandated to ensure that educational services are provided to children with disabilities, together with appropriate skills and capacity training. There are currently 840 special education schools for the different stages of education.

- **Access to employment**

The government policy for employing persons with disabilities is based on a quota system (five per cent) for companies with more than 50 employees.²⁷ According to most sources, however, the employment quota is not enforced. Moreover, companies often place persons with disabilities on their payroll to meet the quota without actually employing these individuals.

- **Access to recreation and sport**

Egypt has a strong tradition of sport. Egypt has participated in the Paralympic Games for many years. Persons with disabilities also take part in sports through 40 clubs for persons with disabilities and 44 sports centres in various parts of Egypt. These clubs are overseen by the National Council for Persons with Disabilities and the relevant Egyptian parliamentary committee. Egyptian players and teams – both male and female – have won various international championships and medals at the Paralympic Games.

- **Access to justice**

Disability access is a new reform focus in Egypt and, consequently, there is a lack of knowledge and understanding about disability access amongst justice sector personnel and indeed amongst the Egyptian disability community as well. Research undertaken by NAS during an earlier project addressing accessibility of court proceedings for deaf or hard of hearing participants revealed multiple barriers that create an unwelcoming environment for all persons with disabilities. More work is required to implement court and other justice sector reforms that take into account accessibility concerns and prevent the undermining of democratic reform efforts. Barriers currently manifest in relation to accessibility of the Egyptian court system for persons with disabilities:

- Courts housed in old structures that present numerous barriers for persons with mobility impairments. This includes for example, narrow doorways, stairs, and inaccessible restrooms;
- Limited awareness of and participation in justice sector reform processes by DPOs;
- Lack of awareness or unintended insensitivity to disability-related concerns and needs amongst court personnel;
- Inflexible court policies, practices and procedures; and
- Inaccessible public information about courts and court services. This includes a lack of effective auxiliary aids and services for persons with disabilities (for example, assistive listening devices, alternate document formats, sign language interpretation and accessible websites).

27 Law 39 of 1975 Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons (amended 1982).

11.3 Do people with disabilities have a right to participation in political life (political representation and leadership) in Egypt?

DPOs are working to ensure that all people with disabilities have the ability to participate in political life. Several DPOs have participated in ensuring people with disabilities are able to access polling stations during elections. For example, in prior elections, the Egyptian Human Rights Council has accredited NGOs, including several DPOs, to participate in domestic electoral observation efforts.

11.4 Are people with disabilities' socio-economic rights, including the rights to health, education and other social services protected and realised in Egypt?

The government provides health care and rehabilitation in the form of free diagnostic and follow-up services which are provided at government health centres and clinics. The Ministry of Social Solidarity grants a disability allowance to the heads of families with a disabled person. A total of 381 585 families received the allowance in the 2007/2008 financial year. In addition, pocket money is given to blind students who enrol in Egyptian universities.

11.5 Specific categories experiencing particular issues/vulnerability:

- **Women with disabilities**

Women with disabilities in Egypt are especially at risk for marginalisation, discrimination and increased vulnerability. Stigma, particularly in rural areas, leads some families to hide women with disabilities due to shame. This stigma can lead to discrimination, a lack of access to rehabilitative services, and missed educational opportunities for women and girls with disabilities. Women with disabilities may also be at an increased risk of domestic violence, labour exploitation, and homelessness than other women in Egypt.

- **Children with disabilities**

Less than four per cent of children with disabilities in Egypt are able to access rehabilitative services. The lack of services and supports for disabled children and their families has led to further marginalisation of this population. Service providers working with children with disabilities in Egypt have noted that many families are poorly informed regarding how to help their child adapt to and overcome disabilities in every day activities and as a result keep their children in the home where they are socially isolated. Social isolation contributes to increased incidences of sexual abuse, exploitation, and lower school enrolment amongst children with disabilities.

- **Other (for example, indigenous peoples)**

The bi-directional link between disability and poverty is well documented. Despite the strong link, persons with disabilities are often left off of the development agenda. According to the UN, more than 48,9 per cent of Egyptians are living below the poverty line.²⁸ Long-term malnutrition of children between the ages of six months and five years affected 31 per cent of all children in 2011, an increase of 8 per cent since 2005.²⁹ The conditions of poverty not only cause disability, but also exacerbate its effects and constrain service delivery for the disabled. Access to

28 UNICEF Child poverty and disparities in Egypt: Building the social infrastructure for Egypt's future" (February 2010), available at: http://www.unicef.org/egypt/Child_poverty_and_disparities_in_Egypt_FINAL_-_ENG_full_report_-_23FEB10.pdf (accessed 20 August 2014).

29 As above.

education, vocational training, employment, justice, transport, and social security are all affected by the current levels of poverty in Egypt. While these issues are prevalent and affect disabled persons throughout Egypt, the effect is especially acute on rural Egyptians.

Egypt is home to close to half a million refugees.³⁰ Though the exact number of refugees in Egypt with disabilities is unknown, the nature of the conflicts driving refugees into the country suggests that these populations could face significant physical and mental health disabilities. As non-citizens, these individuals do not receive the full protection of the Constitution or the same entitlement to individual rights and public services. Due to the nature of the UNHCR resettlement process and the inability to return to their country of origin, most individuals who flee to Egypt live in a protracted refugee situation. For refugees with disabilities, this can mean years without proper rehabilitative care, lack of vocational and educational opportunities, and increased vulnerability.

Refugees with disabilities are highly vulnerable in Egypt and face major obstacles in accessing basic needs and services and, further, are rarely successful in seeking resettlement in third countries. More attention must be given to article 11 of the CRPD which requires states parties to protect persons with disabilities in situations of risk, which includes displaced individuals and their families.

12 Future perspective

12.1 Are there any specific measures with regard to persons with disabilities being debated or considered in Egypt at the moment?

Egypt is undergoing political transition and both constitutional and law reform efforts are ongoing. Political transitions represent both challenges and opportunities in terms of advancing the rights of persons with disabilities.

12.2 What legal reforms are being raised? What legal reforms would you like to see in your country? Why?

While there is a national disability law in draft form, it has not as yet been acted upon. Any disability law reform must comply with the general obligations set forth in article 4 of the CRPD and must, consonant with article 4(3) of the CRPD, include the participation of persons with disabilities and their representative organisations. Further, prior to the adoption of any national disability law, the legal framework must be assessed to determine all areas of inconsistency between the CRPD and domestic law.

30 United Nations High Commission on Refugees '2014 UNHCR country operations profile – Egypt' UNHCR Global Appeal 2014-2015 Egypt, available at <http://www.unhcr.org/528a0a2b0.html> (accessed 20 August 2014).