



Towards a child-friendly justice in Egypt: Implementing SDGs for children

*Training for Judges and officials from the
Ministry of Justice*

 27 July 2023
Cairo, Egypt

Summary



Project overview

The project "Towards Child Friendly Justice in Egypt" aims at enhancing the judicial capacity, institutional coordination and effectiveness of the Egyptian child justice system. Aligned with Egypt's Vision 2030, the National Child Strategy and the UN SDGs, the project is implemented by the OECD with the financial support of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. The project also builds on the work of the MENA-OECD Governance Programme and rule of law support to Egypt. It facilitates high-level engagement in support of effective implementation of the objectives of the Strategic Framework and National Plan for Childhood and Motherhood in Egypt 2018-2030.



Objectives of the training

The training provided a hands-on approach on how to improve the participation and interaction of children with the justice system, aligned with international standards and good practices from OECD countries. The training gathered representatives from the Ministry of Justice, judges from various branches, and the Ministry of Social Solidarity, alongside OECD peers from Canada and Australia.

The training outlined mechanisms for improved coordination between the child judges and relevant court actors, including how to:

- engage directly with child defendants, witnesses and complainants.
- review, assess and incorporate social and psychological report recommendations.

Key takeaways

- Child participation in legal proceedings and the incorporation of child-friendly tools is key to enhance the child friendly justice system.
- OECD good practices on child's right to a fair trial and international tools were presented, including practice learnings on how to increase usage of innovative communication aids (dictionaries to explain legal, technical concepts in plain English and visual aids).
- The Canadian child justice system was also presented, where young people are separated from the adult based on the principle of diminished moral blameworthiness or culpability.
- In Canada, measures of accountability are consistent with young persons' reduced level of maturity and their need for support and guidance.
- It is essential that a child charged with an offence is dealt with in a manner which takes full account of his age, level of maturity and intellectual and emotional capacities, and that steps are taken to promote his ability to understand and participate in the proceedings.¹
- Social and psychological reports are an essential aspect of the judicial proceedings. They need to be reliable and informative. The newly developed template report by the Ministry of Social Solidarity, aims to provide comprehensive information for courts to make well-informed decisions.

V v United Kingdom; T v United Kingdom (2000) ¹
30 EHRR 121

- Effective coordination between judges and social workers is a key element to ensure that courts receive essential information to determine suitable sentences in alignment with the child's best interest.
- The discussions also delved into mechanisms available to the judiciary when reports are deemed inadequate, such as interviews with social workers and children.
- Drawing from OECD good practices, the training explored avenues to review, assess and incorporate social and psychological report recommendations into sentences.
- Participants highlighted the role of different national strategies mentioning the right of a child to be heard, understand proceedings and express opinions and emphasising the significance of children's voices.

Putting Theory into Practice: The Mock Court Exercise

The seminar included an interactive and practical component that allowed participants to engage directly with the subject matter. The Mock Court exercise offered a hands-on opportunity for participants to simulate real-life scenarios involving child participation in legal proceedings. Through case study analysis, attendees were able to apply the insights and concepts discussed earlier in the seminar to tangible situations. This exercise deepened participants' understanding of child-friendly justice processes and enabled them to navigate the complexities and challenges that may arise during actual court proceedings. By providing a dynamic learning experience, the Mock Court exercise further solidified the seminar's objective of enhancing participants' capabilities and fostering a child-centred approach within Egypt's justice system.



- Proper coordination between stakeholders was underlined by the Ministry of Justice as an enabler for a child justice system responding to the needs of children.
- When dealing with children, it is crucial to take into consideration, their age, level of maturity, different circumstances and traumas they have been through.

Next steps

- The training concluded with a commitment to ongoing efforts in promoting child participation in legal proceedings.
- This training served as a valuable platform for knowledge exchange, fostering understanding, and collaboration to create a child-friendly justice system in Egypt.
- The Ministry of Justice is committed to the implementation of the key recommendations highlighted in the OECD Strategic Review and the forthcoming roadmap and tailored guidelines.