



General Assembly

Distr.: General
10 June 2022

English only

Human Rights Council

Fiftieth session

13 June–8 July 2022

Agenda item 3

**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Written statement* submitted by Al Gora Community Development Association, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[23 May 2022]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only. The views expressed in the present document do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations or its officials.



Women economic empowerment as an approach for gender equity and eliminating all forms of discrimination against Bedouin women in North Sinai

Pursuant to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination that is based on the principles of the dignity and equality inherent in all human beings, and to promote and encourage universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion, considering that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaims that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights and that everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms, without distinction of any kind, in particular as to race, colour or national origin, work should be focused on eliminating all forms of discrimination against women especially in Arab countries where the gender gap still quite huge.)¹⁾

Gender inequality—the disparities between males and females in opportunity and security—has serious cost implications and these are negatively effecting the human and economic development. Gender equality has become a more visible issue for the Arab, and more generally MENA countries following the Arab Spring (2). The economic, social and psychological wellbeing and empowerment of girls and women in a country may provide a useful indicator of a nation's progress towards Sustainable Development Goal 5 on gender equality and subsequently where it stands with regards to accelerating sustainable development.

Egyptian policymakers, in this respect, have achieved progress towards gender equality and girls and women's empowerment throughout the past few decades. Nonetheless, Egypt still has one of the highest levels of gender inequality in the world, ranking 134th out of 153 countries in the World Economic Forum's 2020 Global Gender Gap Report. Though the country's gender indicators have aligned with global trends of increased girl's participation in primary schools, female labour force participation remains very low in comparison to international benchmarks, in addition to persistent issues of gender-based violence, such as child marriage, female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) and domestic violence. (3)

In Sinai, the influx of moved families during the past five years has brought about multi-dimensional problems for both the new settled families that left everything behind and the host communities of the main three cities in North Sinai (Sheikh Zewaid – al Arish – Beir al Abed). Women and children are the main two segments mostly vulnerable and afflicted by terrorism repercussions in the Sinai as the deteriorated livelihood conditions and the shortage in basic services are dominant among families that left their living resources and their works, movement also exacerbated the difficulties they already face as a result of the surrounding unstable conditions, they are torn away from their usual surroundings and social support networks. The loss of income, possessions and official documents leaves them unable to meet even their most basic needs in a predictable way or access basic services. Some of the families in North Sinai resort to desperate measures – such as selling their assets, possessions, or moving back to dangerous areas – to survive.

To address this problem, Al Gora Community Development Association unleashed an ambitious program that focuses on improving the economic livelihood of people especially women living and working in North Sinai. By focusing on traditional industries where the region has a comparative advantage over other governorates, the activity is able to impact the quality and quantity of production, while assisting local entrepreneurs access value chains and distributors. The program targets fisheries, agriculture and the handicraft industries. By targeting these industries, the activity will reduce unemployment among women and youth; improve sustainability of regional fisheries and agriculture productions; and increase overall community income. Across the identified industries, the activity will fill knowledge and equipment gaps by procuring equipment, modernizing production, training key stakeholders, and developing strong linkages with domestic and international private sector partners for the sake of women economic empowerment.

Recommendations

- The focus of the government and funding agencies should be directed to upgrading livelihood conditions, downscaling economic difficulties, high rates of unemployment and poverty, scarcity of resources. Housing problems and shortage in drinking water supplies are still the most prominent problems faced by families especially women and children.
- Sinai population has suffered from water shortage for decades and securing water supplies has been a burden for Bedouin families especially women as they afford a large amount of their budgets on water either for drinking or household uses. The problem of water shortage exacerbated with the sudden movement of thousands of families and the appearance of new gatherings on the peripheries of cities and towns in North Sinai.
- Health problems among children and women add stresses and shocks on livelihoods and psycho-social well-being in addition to its physical effects. Cases of children and women with undiagnosed complaints were reported amid overcrowded and fragile medical and healthcare services in the densely populated cities of North Sinai where a large proportion of vulnerable families' members especially women suffer from psycho-social problems, especially post-traumatic stress disorder, and their needs in this regard are hardly met as little systemized care is provided in Sinai as a whole.

(1) International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination;

(2) GENDER INEQUALITY IN THE MENA: MYTHS VERSUS FACTS, Nezahat Kucuk, Eastern Mediterranean University, Department of Economics, Famagusta, T.R. Northern Cyprus, via Mersin 10, Turkey,

(3) Webinar brief | social norms and gender: what does global evidence tell us about shifting social and gender norms for improved development outcomes in favour of girls and women? ; Prepared for: Global Evidence for Egypt Spotlight Seminar Series: A collaboration between UNICEF Egypt and The Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab Middle East and North Africa (J-PAL MENA) at The American University in Cairo (AUC) March 9, 2021 | Cairo, Egypt.