

Case study

EXPLORING CLIENT APPROACHES TO GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND RESPONSE

CLIENT:

TAQA Arabia

Energy, **EGYPT**



Egypt



Economy name:
Arab Republic of Egypt

Main business city:
Cairo

Region:
Middle East & North Africa

Income level:
Lower middle income

Population (2019):
100,388,073

Female population:
49,665,476 (49.5%)

Labor force participation rate:
22.1% female
70.9% male

Proportion of wage and salaried workers:
65.9% female
69.9% male

Proportion of self-employed workers:
34.1% female
30.1% male



Global rankings

| | |
|--|----------|
| Women, Business and the Law Indicator* | 45.0/100 |
| Gender Inequality Index† | 102/162 |
| Global Gender Gap Index‡ | 134/153 |
| Middle East and North Africa Gender Gap Index‡ | 8/19 |
| Wage equality‡ | 22/153 |
| Economic participation and opportunity‡ | 140/153 |



Women, Business and the Law*

| | |
|---|-----|
| Can a woman get a job in the same way as a man? | No |
| Does the law prohibit discrimination in employment based on gender? | Yes |
| Is there legislation on sexual harassment in employment? | Yes |
| Are there criminal penalties for sexual harassment in employment? | Yes |
| Are there civil remedies for sexual harassment in employment? | No |
| Is there legislation specifically addressing domestic violence? | No |



Gender-based violence‡

| | |
|--|-----|
| Prevalence of lifetime domestic violence | 26% |
| Prevalence of child marriage | 17% |

Unless otherwise indicated, all data for this overview were taken from WBG, World Development Indicators:

Labor force participation rate, female (% of female population ages 15+) (modeled ILO estimate), (2020)

Labor force participation rate, male (% of male population ages 15+) (modeled ILO estimate), (2020)

Wage and salaried workers, female (% of female employment) (modeled ILO estimate), (2020)

Wage and salaried workers, male (% of male employment) (modeled ILO estimate), (2020)

Self-employed, female (% of female employment) (modeled ILO estimate), (2020)

Self-employed, male (% of male employment) (modeled ILO estimate), (2020)

* WBG, Women, Business and the Law Indicator (2020)

† UNDP, Gender Inequality Index (2018)

‡ WEF, Global Gender Gap Report (2020)

§ UN Women, Global Database on Violence Against Women (accessed on September 22, 2020)

Gender-Based Violence (GBV)

Egypt

COUNTRY CONTEXT

There are two main legislative documents that protect, support, and empower women in Egypt – the Criminal Code of 1937 (and its amendments) and the Egyptian Constitution of 2014.¹

The Criminal Code of 1937 was modified in 1999 to abolish a provision that allowed rapists to avoid criminal punishment by marrying their victim. In 2011, a Presidential decree increased the penalties under the Criminal Code for multiple offenses against women, including sexual assault, rape, kidnapping, and public sexual harassment. In 2014, a further amendment introduced a minimum six-month sentence for any person who carried out a sexual or obscene gesture, including through the use of modern means of communication. The minimum sentence doubles if the person is found to have engaged in repeated acts of sexual harassment; and further increases if the harassment is proven to have been done with the intent of gaining sexual gratification or through the use of force to receive sexual gratification.²

Each year, an estimated 7.8 million Egyptian women suffer some form of violence perpetrated by a partner, family member, someone in their community, or a stranger in a public space.^{3, 4} More than one-quarter (26 percent) of ever-married women report having experienced some form of physical violence.⁵ Battery and assault account for 18 percent of all reported cases of physical violence against women. Murders account for 76 percent. Reasons given for why the violence occurred include honor crimes (42 percent), leaving the home without the permission of the husband (7 percent), and seeking a divorce (3 percent). Husbands are the most common perpetrators. A woman's parents and parents-in-law are also frequently involved.⁶

Globally, Egypt ranks second highest for rates of sexual harassment.⁷ In 2013, a government study found that more than 99 percent of Egyptian women and girls surveyed said they had experienced some type of sexual harassment during their lifetime.⁸ In this same study, 82 percent of women said they did not feel safe in the street and 86 percent said they did not feel safe when using public transportation.

Female genital mutilation (FGM) is prohibited in Egypt under Article 242 of the Criminal Code. This amendment was introduced in 2016 to strengthen a previous prohibition against FGM that had been introduced in the Child Law of 2008. The practice nevertheless remains widespread. Data from 2014 showed that 87 percent of all women between 15 and 49 years of age had been subjected to FGM. The prevalence rate is lower among younger women – 70 percent among the 15 to 19 age group and 82 percent among the 20 to 24 age group.⁹

Women's Empowerment

Women in Egypt have lower rates of literacy than men – 65 percent compared to 82 percent.¹⁰ According to the 2017 census,

almost 31 percent of Egyptian females over the age of 10 are illiterate. This compares to almost 19 percent for men of the same age. Illiteracy rates are higher for women in rural areas (39 percent) and higher again in Upper Egypt (45 percent in Minia and 44 percent in Beni Suef).¹¹

Women have significantly lower rates of participation in the labor force than men. Only 26 percent of women are engaged in employment. This is approximately five percent higher than at the end of the twentieth century, but still falls a long way behind the participation rate of men at 79 percent.¹² Women are disproportionately represented in the public sector and informal economy – 50 percent of employed women work in the public sector compared with 20 percent of employed men¹³.

Marriage is a major cause of low labor participation for women in Egypt. Many single women abstain from employment because they and their families believe that engaging in paid work could decrease a woman's prospects of getting married. For working women, marriage regularly means an exit from employment due to social expectations about gender roles for married women.¹⁴

There is a strong bias towards employing men in the private sector. Concerns about security and long working hours pose an obstacle for increased female participation. Working women are also affected by violence. Domestic violence accounts for a loss of half a million working days for employed women; and almost 4 percent of the female workforce suffer violence while at work.¹⁵

Benban Solar Park Project Background

TAQA Arabia operates in the Benban Solar Park, which is located approximately 650 km south of Cairo and 40 km north of the city of Aswan. Benban is a US\$4 billion project covering an area of 37.2 sq km.

Construction at the park began in February 2018 and was completed in November 2019. There are 32 plots with 16 different developers. The park is part of Egypt's Feed-in Tariff (FiT) program and is crucial to the country's goal of producing 20 percent renewable energy by 2022. It is currently the third largest photovoltaic solar park in the world and the largest solar plant in the Mediterranean and North Africa region, with the capacity to power approximately one million homes.

At the peak of construction, there were between 8,000 and 10,000 workers on site each day. The majority of the workforce came from Aswan and the surrounding regions.

A Facility Management Company (FMC) is responsible for managing the logistical, environmental, security, health and safety aspects, and community relations of the park. The FMC has developed a Grievance Mechanism Procedure and Stakeholder Engagement Plan to promote a consistent approach to managing worker grievances and community consultations across all the developers.

Case Study: TAQA Arabia Energy, EGYPT

PROJECT BACKGROUND

TAQA Arabia is a Cairo-based company that constructs and operates energy infrastructure in the form of gas transmission and distribution, conventional and renewable power generation and distribution, and the marketing of oil and lubricants. TAQA Solar – the renewable energy arm of TAQA Arabia – was responsible for the greenfield development of a 50-megawatt photovoltaic plant in the Benban solar park. In July 2017, IFC approved a US\$15-20 million investment for the project, which is also supported by investments from development banks from Finland, Austria, Bahrain, and China. The TAQA project commenced commercial operations in February 2019.

HOW TAQA ARABIA WORKS TO PREVENT GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

TAQA recognized a need to consider specific risks for women as part of the project's environmental, social, and health and safety requirements. The company identified the project location - a remote desert environment - and the socio-cultural norms of the local communities in Upper Egypt as specific threats to women's safety. Within the communities and among project personnel, there is strong cultural resistance to challenging gender norms, discussing GBV, and empowering women.

To mitigate risks when travelling to and from the Benban Solar Park, TAQA provides employees with company transportation. Workers have been appointed as bus supervisors to observe and report any health and safety issues.

In November 2017, TAQA introduced its Code of Conduct to help the company ensure the health and safety of its workers and members of neighboring communities. To further protect its

employees, the company introduced an internal grievance complaints mechanism a year later.

Code of Conduct

TAQA's Code of Conduct forbids all forms of harassment, GBV, and child exploitation on the worksite, at the workers' camp, and in the surrounding communities. Workers are required to treat others with respect regardless of, among other characteristics, race, gender, and disability.

Specific behaviors covered by the Code include the use of language or behavior that is abusive, sexually provocative, demeaning, or culturally inappropriate – regardless of whether this behavior is targeted at women, men, or children. Harassment is defined as unwelcome sexual advances, touching or conversations. The grooming of children and the engagement of sexual activity with children through digital media are explicitly banned.

The company has committed to provide each worker with a copy of their Code of Conduct during induction and requiring them to sign it at that time. In doing so, workers consent to a police background check. A violation of the company's Code of Conduct is considered an act of gross misconduct and can lead to termination of employment or criminal prosecution.

Grievance Mechanism

The company's grievance mechanism is used to manage complaints relating to harassment, discrimination, and intimidation. Workers can report a formal grievance via email, phone or fax, by writing a letter or by discussing the incident during a meeting or toolbox talk. Grievance boxes are also made available on site. Details of the grievance mechanism are explained to workers at the time of recruitment. TAQA has committed to keep this grievance mechanism operational throughout the lifecycle of the project.



Two of TAQA Arabia's nine-person executive committee are women, including the company's CEO.

TAQA Solar employees two women working in operations and maintenance on their Benban plot. These are generally considered male roles in Egypt; and typically a solar plot of this size would only expect to employ up to 15 staff in total. The company also hosts female vocational students to work in their plot.



Case Study: TAQA Arabia Energy, **EGYPT**

If a worker chooses to discuss a grievance with their supervisor informally, the supervisor is required to respond within three days. Formal grievances are submitted through one of the available channels and are referred directly to the Human Resources (HR) department to coordinate a response. After a grievance has been submitted, it is categorized into one of three levels:

- Level one grievances are those for which there is already a management approved response and an answer can be provided immediately.
- Level two grievances are those considered to be one-time incidents that will not affect the company's reputation.
- Level three grievances include repeated or widespread incidents, or incidents that may result in a negative impact on the company's activities or reputation.

The HR Manager is responsible for investigating grievances, documenting outcomes, and reporting to management. If a worker is not satisfied with the outcome, they can escalate their complaint to the FMC, which coordinates labor issues across the solar park.



Case Study: TAQA Arabia Energy, **EGYPT**

References

- 1 See: <https://www.loc.gov/law/help/sexual-violence-against-women/egypt.php>
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 See: <https://egypt.unfpa.org/en/node/22540>
- 4 UNFPA, *The Economic Cost of Gender Based Violence Survey Egypt*, (2015)
- 5 The DHS Program, *Egypt Demographic and Health Survey*, (2014)
- 6 UN Women, *Women's Empowerment through Stage Animated Awareness and Lobbying "WESAL" Draft Desk Review on Gender Based Violence in Egypt*, (2012)
- 7 UN Women, *Study on Ways and Methods to Eliminate Sexual Harassment in Egypt*, (2013)
- 8 (n 3)
- 9 The World Bank, *Women Economic Empowerment Study*, (2018)
- 10 See: <https://www.usaid.gov/egypt/gender-equality-and-womens-empowerment>
- 11 (n 9)
- 12 (n 10)
- 13 The World Bank, *More Jobs, Better Jobs: A Priority for Egypt*, (2014). See: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/egypt/publication/more-jobs-better-jobs-a-priority-for-egypt>
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 Ibid.

These case studies were produced by IFC's Environment, Social and Governance Advice and Solutions Department. The content of this publication was developed by IFC Environmental and Social Specialists with support from [Factive Consulting](#). Appreciation is extended to the featured companies for giving us the opportunity to share their approaches to addressing challenging issues and the lessons they have learned.

ABOUT IFC

IFC—a member of the World Bank Group—is the largest global development institution focused on the private sector in emerging markets. We work in more than 100 countries, using our capital, expertise, and influence to create markets and opportunities in developing countries. In fiscal year 2020, we invested \$22 billion in private companies and financial institutions in developing countries, leveraging the power of the private sector to end extreme poverty and boost shared prosperity. For more information, visit www.ifc.org.

© International Finance Corporation 2020. All rights reserved.

2121 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.

Washington, D.C. 20433

Internet: www.ifc.org

The material in this work is copyrighted. Copying and/or transmitting portions or all of this work without permission may be a violation of applicable law. IFC does not guarantee the accuracy, reliability or completeness of the content included in this work, or for the conclusions or judgments described herein, and accepts no responsibility or liability for any omissions or errors (including, without limitation, typographical errors and technical errors) in the content whatsoever or for reliance thereon. This publication contains links to external websites and external websites may link to this publication. IFC does not accept responsibility for any content on external websites.