

Is Egypt leaving no one behind? Tracing Egypt's progress in SDG indicators

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Abstract. The Sustainable Development Goals SDGs are the latest of a series of global attempts by the United Nations to persuade nations around the globe to work towards a more sustainable future. In 2019, the Egyptian ministry for planning and economic development signed a partnership with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) to create a series of reports on Sustainable Development Goals SDGs localization in Egypt. The series consists of a report for each of the 27 governorates covering the progress in SDG indicators. Each report identifies SDGs indicators and their targets tailored according to the governorate's conditions. This paper traces the progress in these indicators with special focus on Egypt's governorates with the largest vulnerable populations namely El-Menya, Sohag and Assiut governorates in Upper Egypt. The results show that the rate of progress varies across governorates and indicators. A notable remark is that not all seventeen SDGs are included in the report. The report discusses only eleven of the SDGs while disregarding the remaining six i.e. goals 9,10, 12, 13,14, 15. This in itself can be an indicator of the need for more progress in these areas specifically. Moreover, in the goals discussed in the report not all the indicators proposed by the UN are introduced and reported. The paper shows that Egypt's most vulnerable governorates are working on achieving the SDGs but still have a long way to go.

1 Introduction

Egypt is committed to sustainable urban development that aligns with the SDGs. Periodical assessment of urban and rural conditions using SDG indicators is essential to ensure effective governance and updating of strategic plans and development policies. The SDGs are meant to be interdisciplinary and inclusive and as such their indicators cover a wide variety of measurable aspects that should be integrated into governance policies. This is especially important in city governance and urban development policies as urban areas now host the majority of the world population. The integration of SDGs in governance policies can be reflected in traditional physical planning e.g. masterplans and landuse plans but is also reflected in aspects of social inclusion and climate change awareness and mitigation measures. The regular assessment of progress in SDGs is essential to ensure balanced regional and national development and implementation of disaster risk reduction strategies in both urban and rural areas.

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The UN-Habitat world cities report of 2022 highlights that cities in developing countries and especially those in warm climates suffer from challenges related to limited resources and weak governance. These challenges deem these cities more vulnerable to disasters, especially those related to climate change and global warming, than other cities that contribute more to global warming [1]. The SDGs are meant to support cities worldwide and ensure that these cities and their residents are not left behind in the progress towards global sustainable development.

Egypt is one of the developing countries of the global south that host many cities facing these challenges. This is especially evident in cities present in governorates in Egypt’s southern part commonly labelled as Upper Egypt due to its topographical nature. These governorates have the majority of poor and vulnerable population present in the national population and consequently have the highest difficulty in achieving the SDGs. The following Fig. 1 is a graph showing the distribution of poor, vulnerable and middle-class population among Egyptian governorates with the upper Egyptian governorates e.g. Sohag, Assiut, El-Menya hosting the majority of poor and vulnerable population of them. Nevertheless, there are continuous government efforts to bridge the gap and create more balanced national and regional development. Assessment of the progress in SDGs indicators towards the set goals can enhance our understanding of the socio-economic conditions in these governorates. Consequently, this will affect development planning from the regional scale to the neighbourhood scale in various aspects e.g. prioritizing certain services’ allocation, creating context-sensitive and inclusive development strategies.

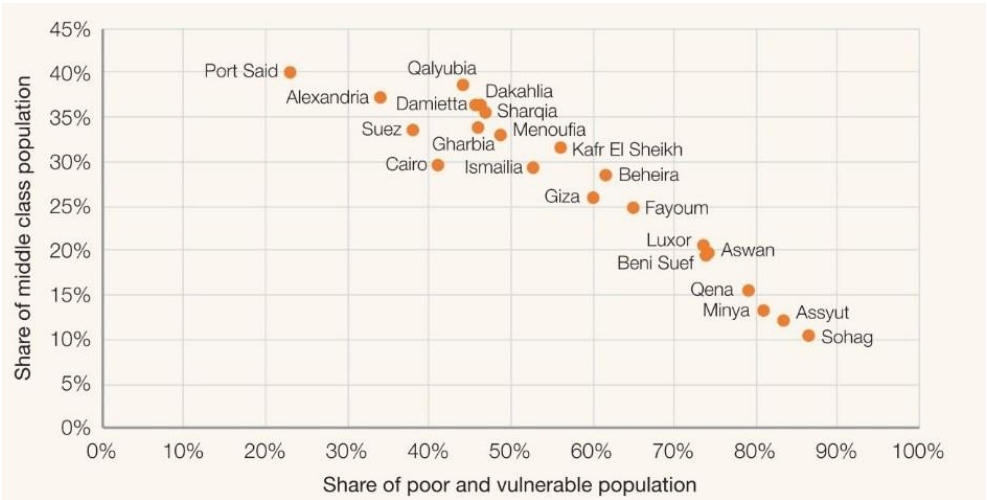


Fig. 1. Egyptian governorates' distribution of poor, vulnerable and middle class population in 2015 [2] based on HIECS, 2015

These three governorates El-Menya, Assiut, Sohag combined form around 16% of the total population, share in the total GDP by around 15% and their main activity is agriculture [3–5]. The following Table 1 shows the detailed distribution among the three governorates.

Table 1. Percentage of national population, share in GDP and main activity for El-Menya, Assiut, Sohag

Governorate	EL-Menya	Assiut	Sohag
Percentage of national population	5.9% [3]	4.7% [4]	5.3% [5]
Share in GDP	12.2% [3]	1.7% [4]	1.6% [5]
Main activity	Agriculture [3]	Agriculture [4]	Agriculture [5]

2 SDGs in Egypt on the national level

Egypt is taking part in the international commitment to the SDGs. One of the most recent signs of this commitment is hosting the COP27 event in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt. To guide countries worldwide in their quest to achieve the SDGs, the UN published a global indicator framework in 2020. For each of the 17 SDGs, the framework lists a set of targets and indicators [6]. In an effort to continuously assess the progress towards achieving the SDGs in Egypt, the Ministry of Planning and Economic Development, supported by United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), set on a project for annual assessment reports. The reports are formulated to introduce a set of indicators for each goal and identify the most recent actual situation for the indicators in each governorate as well as set future targets as per each governorate’s context-specific conditions. While the indicator framework formulated by the UN provides a total of 247 indicators distributed among all 17 Sustainable Development Goals, the Egyptian indicators introduced in the report are only 32 covering only 11 of the 17 SDGs. More specifically goals 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15 are not mentioned in the Egyptian governorate reports. The following Fig. 2 shows the total number of indicators per each goal listed in the Egyptian governorate reports compared to the total number of indicators as per the UN framework.

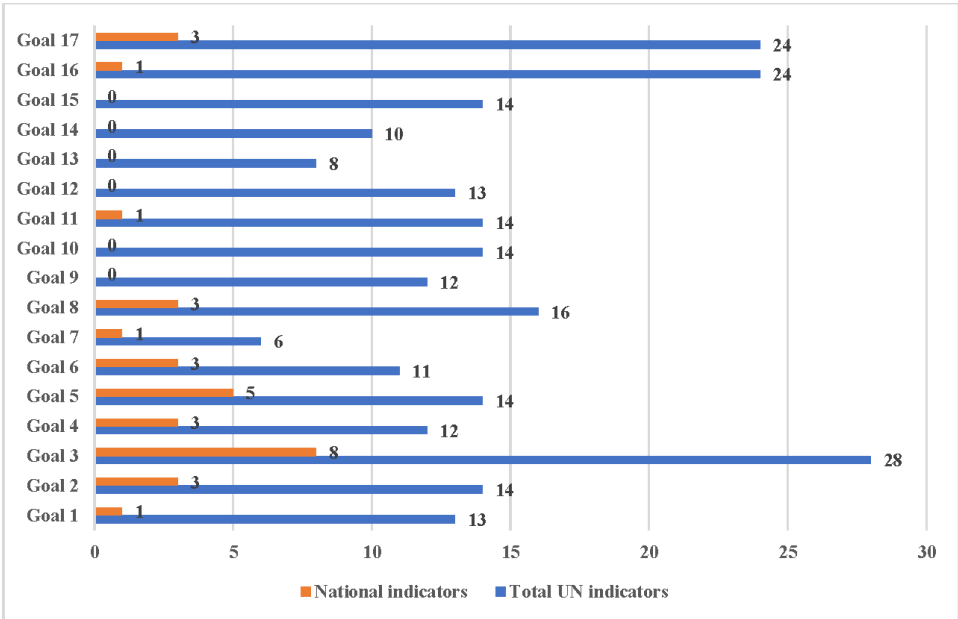


Fig. 2. SDGs Indicators in Egyptian national reports vs SDGs indicators in UN framework (figure by Author, 2023) based on [3–5]

3 SDGs in Egypt’s most vulnerable governorates

The reports developed in 2019 by Ministry of Planning and Economic Development with the support of United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), identify 32 indicators and the target goals for each governorate in each of them [3–5]. The reports also provide recommendations to accelerate goal achievement. The report introduction mentions that the first edition of 2020 is the beginning of an annual series, however, the author couldn’t find any follow-up reports. This study focuses on the three reports covering the SDGs progress in the three governorates hosting the majority of vulnerable population in Egypt namely El-Menya, Assiut, and Sohag.

The first goal of the SDGs is ‘End poverty in all its forms everywhere’. The report provides only one indicator for this goal which is the percentage of population under poverty line. It is shown that over 50% of the population in 2018 is below poverty line with values of 55%, 67% and 60% for El-Menya, Assiut, and Sohag respectively [3–5]. These values are even higher than the national average of 33%. Although the report mentions a progress, it is a very slight one ranging from 0.7% in Assiut to a 5% decrease in Sohag. The report sets a target for progress to be reached by 2030 for each governorate. The target percentages are 23% for El-Menya and 26% for both Assiut and Sohag [4,5]. The following Fig. 3 shows the current and target percentage of population under poverty line in the three governorates and also indicates the current national average. The UN framework suggest 13 indicators for this goal including population covered by social protection, population with secure tenure rights and local government adoption of disaster risk reduction strategies among other indicators. The indicators framework also asserts the importance of disaggregation of the data by age, sex, religion, etc. to ensure equity and equality so that no one is left behind in achieving the SDGs.

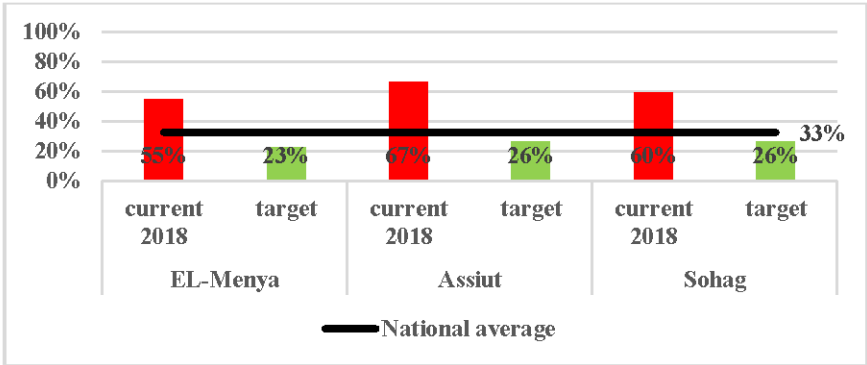


Fig. 3. Percentage of population below poverty line in El-Menya, Assiut and Sohag (figure by Author, 2023) based on [3–5]

The second goal is End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture [6]. There are three indicators introduced in the report for goal 2. However, the report only provides data from a 2014 census without assessment of previous or following years for progress evaluation. First is the percentage of children suffering from malnutrition. It is shown that in 2014 the percentages were 16%, 35.30% and 25.4% for El-Menya, Assiut, and Sohag respectively [3–5]. Assiut and Sohag are higher than the national average which is 23% [4,5]. The report sets target percentages for 2030 which are 8.7%, 16.9% and 12.2% for El-Menya, Assiut, and Sohag respectively. The following Fig. 4 shows the forementioned percentages for the three governorates.

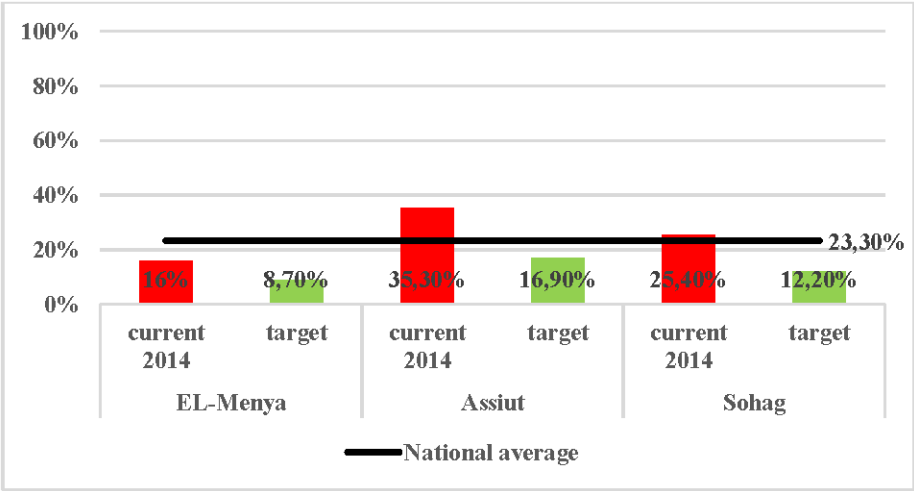


Fig. 4. Percentage of children suffering from malnutrition (figure by Author, 2023) based on [3–5].

The second indicator is percentage of children suffering from stunting which reaches 26.8%, 10.50%, 32.3% in 2014 for El-Menya, Assiut, and Sohag respectively [3–5]. Assiut is the only one of them below the national average of 21.5%. The target percentages for the three governorates are 12.8%, 6.4%, and 15.4% for El-Menya, Assiut, and Sohag respectively to be reached by 2030. Third indicator is percentage of children suffering from anaemia. According to 2014 surveys, El-Menya and Sohag have percentages of 26.8% and 32.3% respectively which are higher than the national average of 21.5%. Meanwhile Assiut has a relatively low percentage of 10.5% and a relatively lower target percentage for 2030 which is 6.4%. The target percentage for El-Menya is 12.8% while that for Sohag is 15.4%.

It is noticeable that despite that the three governorates’ main activity is agriculture, the national reports don’t provide any indicators related to food security nor to sustainable agriculture. The UN framework provides 14 indicators including average income of small-scale food producers, Proportion of agricultural area under productive and sustainable agriculture, Number of plant and animal genetic resources for food and agriculture secured in either medium- or long-term conservation facilities, Agricultural export subsidies and food price anomalies [6].

Nevertheless, all three indicators presented are focused on children nutrition and ignore the rest of the goal relating to food security and sustainable agriculture.

Goal 3 is Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages. While the UN indicators framework introduces 28 indicators, the Egyptian reports only provide eight indicators for this goal. For two indicators all three governorates have already achieved their 2030 targets in 2018 which are the mortality rates for newborn children and children under five years old [3–5]. Another indicator in the governorate report is the total reproduction rate in which Sohag has achieved the target in 2018 as in the previous two indicators. Meanwhile El-Menya and Assiut are still working to achieve their targets by 2030. The fourth indicator is maternal deaths related to childbirth per 100,000 newborns. All three governorates are still working on achieving their 2030 targets for this indicator. Assiut and Sohag are at rates of 62 and 50 respectively which are higher than the national average of 43. El-Menya is below the national average but still has to decrease its rate from 40 to 31 to achieve its 2030 target for this indicator.

The fifth indicator is the rate of deaths related to road accidents. The report shows that there is a decrease in the rate in all three governorates, but they still haven’t reached their

targets. In El-Menya the rate decreased from 5.8 in 2015 to 3.9 in 2018 and the target rate is 2.4 [3]. As for Assiut, the rate is higher, and the reduction is lower as it decreased from 10 in 2015 to 9.9 in 2018 and the target rate is 2.6 [4]. While in Sohag the rate decreased from 8.6 in 2015 to 5.6 in 2018 working towards the target rate of 2.4 [5]. The sixth indicator is the number of doctors per 10,000 residents. This indicator shows a high level of deprivation in the three governorates. In El-Menya the number of doctors per 10,000 residents was 6.1 in 2015 and slightly increased to 6.3 in 2017. While in Assiut the number was 7.7 in 2015 and also slightly increased to 8.7 in 2017. As for Sohag, the situation is of increasing difficulty as the number of doctors decreased from 6.4 in 2015 to 5.7 in 2017. This indicator highlights the vulnerability in healthcare for the population of these three governorates as they are far from achieving their targets which are 30.3, 35.3, 31.9 by 2030 for El-Menya, Assiut, and Sohag respectively [3–5]. The discussed percentages and target values are represented in the following Fig. 5.

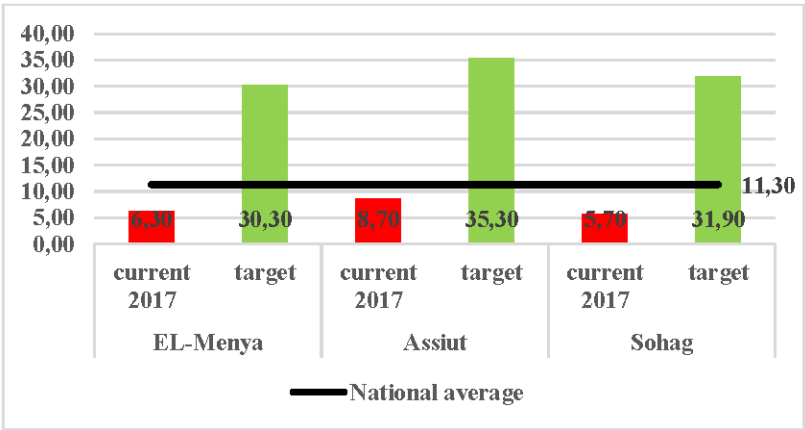


Fig. 5. Number of doctors/ 10,000 residents (figure by Author, 2023) based on [3–5]

The seventh indicator is percentage of child births supervised by skilled medical staff. All three governorates display a high percentage in this indicator with values of 74%, 82%, and 87% for El-Menya, Assiut, and Sohag respectively [3–5]. However, they are all lower than the national average of 91.5% and none of them has reached the target of 100%. The eighth indicator is percentage usage of tools of pregnancy control. The national average for this indicator is 58.5% which is higher than the values of all three governorates. El-Menya is at the highest value of them at 51.3% while Assiut and Sohag are at 41.4% and 31% respectively. The target values are 67%, 54.1% and 40.5% for El-Menya, Assiut, and Sohag respectively [3–5]. The UN indicators suggest a wider set of indicators for this goal, but some of them maybe more relevant to specific countries where certain pandemics are commonly spread e.g. Tuberculosis and Malaria and tropical diseases. However, other indicators are important and relate to basic needs and healthcare but are not addressed in the Egyptian governorate reports e.g. Coverage of essential health services, Mortality rate attributed to household and ambient air pollution, Suicide mortality rate, Age-standardized prevalence of current tobacco use among persons aged 15 years and older, and Proportion of the target population covered by all vaccines included in their national programme.

Goal 4 is Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. The Egyptian governorate report provides three indicators for this goal. The first is percentage of illiteracy in males. All three governorates are above the national average at percentages of 29.5%, 28.4% and 26.1% for El-Menya, Assiut, and Sohag respectively [3–5]. The second indicator is percentage of illiteracy in females. In this indicator also the illiteracy percentages are higher than the national average of 21.2% with values of 45.4%, 41.3%, 41.5% for El-Menya, Assiut, and Sohag respectively [3–5]. The disaggregation of illiteracy percentages into males and females highlights the difference as the rates of female illiteracy are higher than male illiteracy rates in all three governorates by 15.9%, 12.9%, 15.4% for El-Menya, Assiut, and Sohag respectively. The following Fig. 6 shows the percentages for male and female illiteracy and visualizes the difference in values displayed by disaggregation.

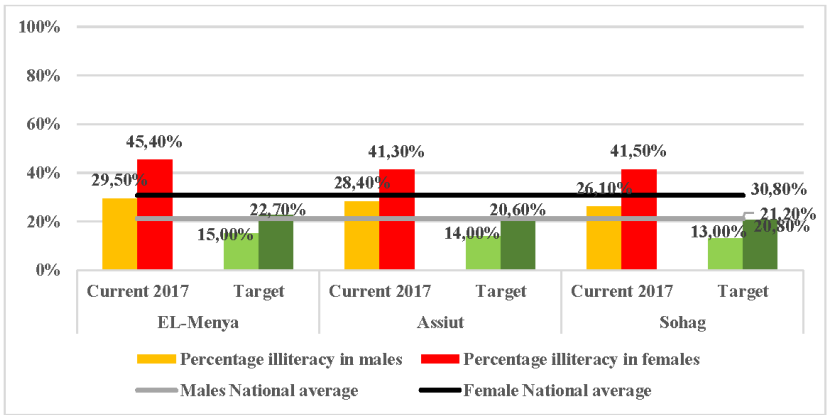


Fig. 6: Percentage illiteracy in males and females (figure by Author, 2023) based on [3–5]

The third indicator is schools equipped for handicapped students. This indicator shows very low percentages in all three governorates by values of 3.2% for El-Menya, 4.2% for Assiut, and 12.6% for Sohag [3–5]. As the current percentages are very low, the target values will require a lot of effort and funding to be reached by 2030 as they aim for an increase ranging between 20-37%. These values are displayed graphically in the following Fig. 7.

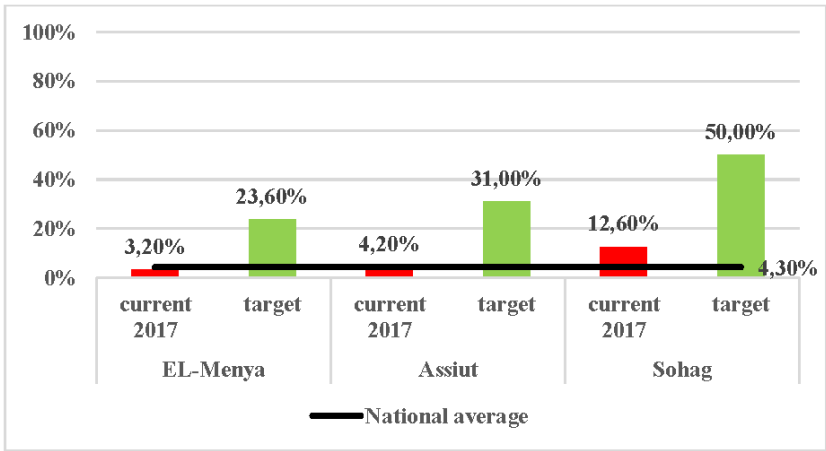


Fig. 7. Percentage of schools equipped for handicapped (figure by Author, 2023) based on [3, 4, 5]

The UN framework recognizes 12 indicators for this goal which include Completion rate (primary education, lower secondary education, upper secondary education), Participation rate of youth and adults in formal and non- formal education and training, Proportion of teachers qualified in basic education by education level [6].

Goal 5 is Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. The government report provides five indicators for this goal mostly related to female health conditions and violence or abuse against women. First is percentage of women suffering from physical violence which is above the national average of 25.7% in all three governorates at values of 29.4%, 32.1%, and 38.7% for El-Menya, Assiut, and Sohag respectively [3–5]. Second indicator is percentage of girls subject to genital mutilation where again all three governorates are above the national average. The values are 59.9%, 73.3% and 80.2% for El-Menya, Assiut, and Sohag respectively while the national average is 56.3%. While the target values for all three governorates in women suffering from physical violence is 0%, the target values for the second indicator are relatively high at percentages of 40%, 49%, and 53% for El-Menya, Assiut, and Sohag respectively [3–5]. The third indicator is percentage of girls subject to early marriage (10- 18 years) for which the national average is 1.5%. the values displayed for all three governorates are not far from the national average as they range between 1.9% in El-Menya and 1.3% in Sohag. All three governorates aim at achieving 0% by 2030. The fourth indicator is percentage of married women taking decision to use pregnancy control. The percentages in all three governorates are relatively high at around 97% which coincides with the national average, but they still have to reach the target of 100%. The last indicator is percentage married women taking decision on their health conditions in which El-Menya takes the lead with 82% which coincides with the national average. Meanwhile Assiut and Sohag have percentages of 61% and 69.8% respectively. The target value for all three governorates is 100%.

The UN framework introduces 14 indicators for this goal while some of them, like those mentioned, focus on health conditions, others relate to aspects of political participation and security of constitutional and tenure rights e.g. Proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments and local governments, proportion of women in managerial positions, share of women among owners or rights-bearers of agricultural land. The examination of such indicators may reveal disparities between males and females in these categories.

Goal 6 is Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all. The government localization report introduces only three indicators for this goal while the UN framework provides eleven indicators. The first indicator in the governorate report is percentage of families owning a private bathroom for which all three governorates display percentages above 90% which is close to the target percentage of 100%. The second indicator is Percentage population with accessibility to water and soap in which all three governorates are lower than the national average of 89.7% with values of 73.5%, 86.6% and 76.3% in El-Menya, Assiut, and Sohag respectively [3– 5]. They all still must improve their conditions to reach the target of 100% by 2030. The third and last indicator is percentage of families with access to treated drinking water. The report shows that all three governorates have already achieved their targets of 100% coverage.

Goal 7 is Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all. The reports introduce only one indicator for this goal which is the percentage of families with access to electricity services. It is shown that the percentage in 2014 in all three governorates is close to 100% with exact values of 99.4%, 99.9% and 99.2% in El- Menya, Assiut, and Sohag respectively [3–5]. However, the report doesn't introduce any indicators relating to the affordability, reliability, and sustainability of the electricity network. Meanwhile, there are discussions and complaints especially among lower income groups and residents of small or satellite settlements regarding the reliability and affordability of electricity. These aspects are critical and should be addressed as during the past years the state developed several

electricity stations some rely on conventional carbon resources e.g. gas and coal while others rely on renewable energy e.g. solar powered.

Goal 8 is Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all. The Egyptian governorate reports examine three indicators for this goal. First is the percentage male unemployment in which EL-Menya and Sohag already surpassed their target percentages going to a low of 3.8% in EL-Menya and 4.7% in Sohag. Meanwhile, Assiut with a 7.7% value is higher than the national average of 6.8% and still has to work on achieving 5.7% by 2030. The second indicator is percentage of female unemployment which is significantly higher than male unemployment. Assiut maintains the same pattern as it displays the highest values in female unemployment by 34.1% surpassing the national average of 21.4%. EL-Menya is the first one among the three governorates to achieve its target in this indicator by lowering female unemployment to 14.6% while Sohag coincides with the national average. Assiut and Sohag need to work on achieving their goals of 15.7% and 11.2% respectively by 2030. The percentages of male and female unemployment are shown in the following Fig. 8.

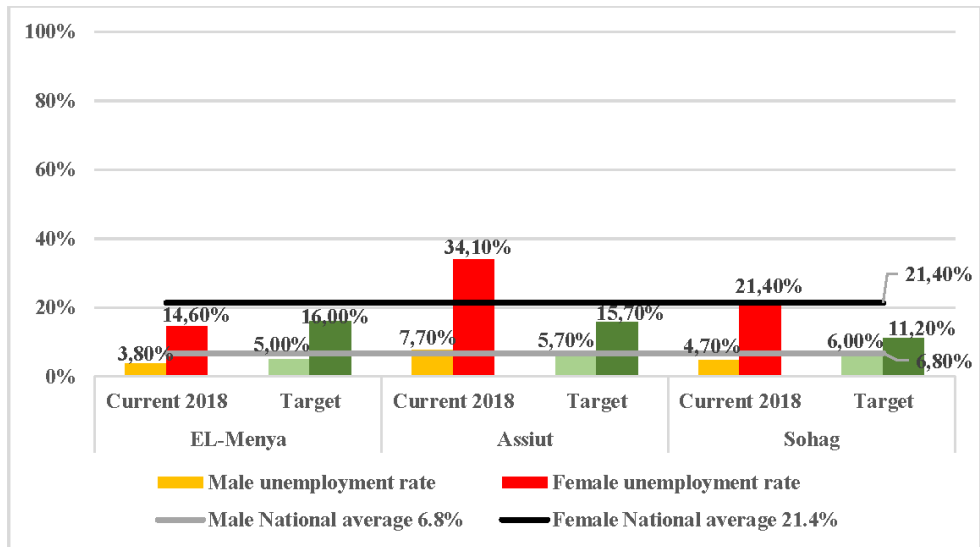


Fig. 8. Percentage male and female unemployment (figure by Author, 2023) based on [3–5]

The third and last indicator for this goal is female participation in the workforce. It is shown that EL-Menya is taking the lead by 27% which surpasses the national average of 23%. Assiut and Sohag display lower values of 16% and 14% respectively. All three governorates are yet to reach their target percentages by 2030 which are 40.5%, 23.6% and 21.1% for EL-Menya, Assiut, and Sohag respectively [3–5]. The disaggregation of data in these three indicators highlights the disparities between the male and female workforce. Meanwhile the UN framework proposes 16 indicators for this goal which may reveal other disparities if studied. The rest of the indicators include proportion of informal employment in total employment, by sector and sex, average hourly earnings of employees, by sex, age, occupation and persons with disabilities, proportion and number of children aged 5–17 years engaged in child labour, by sex and age, Proportion of adults (15 years and older) with an account at a bank or other financial institution or with a mobile-money-service provider.

Goal 11 is Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable. The report lists one indicator for this goal which is percentage of unsafe informal settlements. Moreover, the percentages in all three governorates are lower than the national average of

0.9% at values of 0.2, 0.6, 0.4 for El-Menya, Assiut, and Sohag respectively. The report doesn't provide any other indicators relating to other aspects of this goal like resilience and sustainability. Also it doesn't discuss any other aspects of inclusivity and safety other than removing unsafe informal housing and providing alternative housing for their residents. The UN framework provides a set of 14 indicators for this goal including proportion of population that has convenient access to public transport, ratio of land consumption rate to population growth rate, proportion of cities with a direct participation structure of civil society in urban planning and management that operate regularly and democratically, proportion of local governments that adopt and implement local disaster risk reduction strategies, and expenditure on the preservation, protection and conservation of all cultural and natural heritage. The UN framework mandates aggregation of data categorized by sex, age and persons with disabilities to ensure equitable access and sustainable development for all residents.

Goal 16 is 'Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. The report provides only one indicator for this goal, which is percentage of children, of ages ranging between 1 to 14 years old, subject to physical violence. The percentages in the three governorates with values of 93.2%, 92.7% and 95.1% for El-Menya, Assiut, and Sohag respectively. These noticeably high values are close to the national average of 93%. The 2030 targets for each governorate range between 46% for El-Menya and Assiut and 47% for Sohag. The report doesn't provide other indicators that can guide the achievement of this goal and suffices with this one indicator despite that the UN framework proposes 24 indicators for this goal. The UN indicators cover a variety of aspects like proportion of population that feel safe walking alone around the area they live, Proportion of seized, found or surrendered arms whose illicit origin or context has been traced, proportion of persons who had at least one contact with a public official and who paid a bribe to a public official, proportion of population satisfied with their last experience of public services, Proportion of population who believe decision making is inclusive and responsive, existence of independent national human rights institutions in compliance with the Paris Principles.

Goal 17 is Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development. The Egyptian governorate reports provide three indicators for this goal which are percentage usage of mobile phones, percentage usage of computers, and percentage usage of internet. The percentage of mobile phone users is the highest among all three indicators with values of 53.3%, 57.3%, 59.4% for El-Menya, Assiut, and Sohag respectively [3–5]. The values for the other two indicators are way below 50% of the governorate population. For the percentage of computer users, the values are 17%, 20.5%, and 20.6% for El-Menya, Assiut, and Sohag respectively [3–5]. While for the percentage of internet users the percentages are 16.3%, 19.1% and 20% for El- Menya, Assiut, and Sohag respectively [3–5]. The following Fig. 9 shows the discussed percentages.

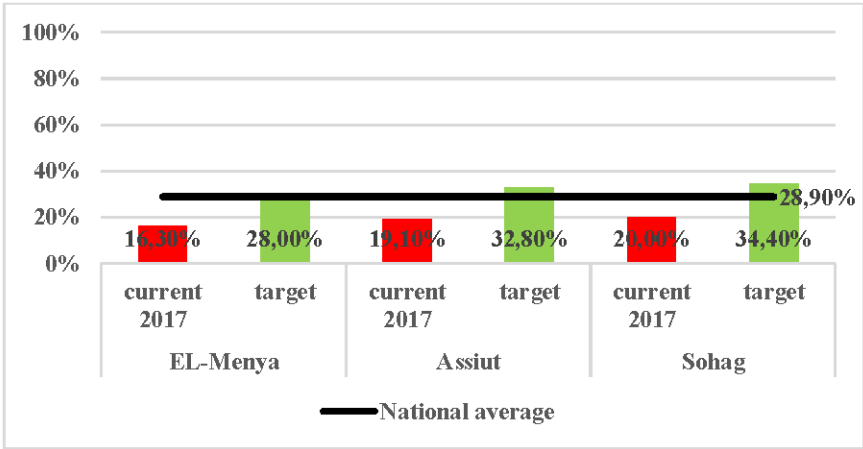


Fig. 9. Percentage of Internet users (figure by Author, 2023) based on [3–5]

The UN framework provides 24 indicators for this goal, however, many of them are to be assessed on the national level not the local level e.g. debt service as a proportion of exports of goods, Total amount of funding for developing countries to promote the development, transfer, dissemination and diffusion of environmentally sound technologies and services, developing countries’ and least developed countries’ share of global exports, dollar value of all resources made available to strengthen statistical capacity in developing countries. As for the three indicators in the Egyptian governorate reports, the percentages in the three governorates are considerably low which is also the case for the national average. This is a critical aspect that needs to be addressed nationally as it implies the large digital divide that can hinder overall national development and international integration within the global economy in a highly digitized world where internet access has become a necessity [7]. This is especially imminent with the ongoing development of the New Administrative Capital city which is meant to be a smart city [8]. For this capital city to be inclusive and accessible, enhancement of the countries overall smart networks as well as the community’s accessibility to technology is essential.

4 Discussion and conclusion

Egypt is committed to the global endeavor of achieving the SDGs and as a developing country with high rate of urbanization it’s cities are considered vulnerable to the effects of global warming and climate change despite no being highly contributing to them. As part of the SDGs commitment, Egypt’s ministry for planning and economic development partnered with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) to create assessment reports on the governorate level to track the progress of achieving the SDGs. These reports were meant to be annually published, however, only the first version was published in 2020 and no updates were published since then. This research focuses on the reports for the three most vulnerable governorates within the overall vulnerability of the Egyptian cities. these three governorates are El-Menya, Assiut and Sohag which are located in the South of Egypt commonly known as Upper Egypt. This research develops a comparative analysis of the available indicators in the three governorates to trace the areas of progress as well as the areas of regress towards achieving the SDGs.

The three governorates’ main activity is agriculture which is an important activity as it relates to various critical topics like food security, water security, climate change, national

export, and economic development. The SDGs and many of their indicators are related to agriculture e.g. goal 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture and goal 11 which includes Supporting ‘positive economic, social and environmental links between urban, peri-urban and rural areas by strengthening national and regional development planning’. However, the reports on Egyptian governorates don’t provide any indicators relating to agriculture in any of the SDGs. The reports not only wholly dismiss six of the SDGs with all their related indicators, but also dismiss many indicators in the SDGs presented in the reports. Apart from the six goals that are not mentioned in the report, the eleven goals that are mentioned in the report are assessed using a very limited number of indicators that is much fewer than the indicators introduced in the UN indicators framework. The indicators presented in the national reports range between 4% of the total number of 24 indicators in goal 16 and 36% of the 14 indicators in goal 5.

The indicators examined in the Egyptian governorate reports show disparities in terms of sex upon data disaggregation into males and females. This is clearly evident in goal 4 where the female illiteracy percentages are 12-16% higher than the male illiteracy percentages and in goal 8 where the female unemployment is 10-26% higher than the male unemployment percentages. The UN framework highlights the importance of data disaggregation to discover similar disparities to be able to counter act to ensure no one is left behind in the process of global sustainable development. Other indicators don’t provide the suggested disaggregation and as such lack this added dimension to ensure that Egyptian governorates are taking equity and equality into consideration while working on achieving the SDGs.

This research shows that Egypt’s most vulnerable governorates are making progress towards achieving equitable sustainable development guided by the SDGs. Nevertheless, the progress is not consistent across all goals and indicators as some goals show early target achievement while others are far from their target goals for 2030. Moreover, the absence of many of the indicators present in the SDGs UN framework makes the progress assessment inaccurate. Similarly, the absence of six of the seventeen development goals from the national governorate assessment reports ignores important aspects like goal 15 which focuses on combating desertification, and halting and reversing land degradation which is especially relevant to these three governorates whose main activity is agriculture. The disregard of these aspects can hinder the development of more efficient governance strategies that ensure balanced regional and national development.

For Egypt to achieve the SDGs, especially in its most vulnerable governorates, reports on progress of achieving the indicators is an essential basis to ensure efficient tracking across all governorates. However, the reports should be continued on a yearly basis as they were meant to be when they were first published. Moreover, the indicators provided in the reports should cover more aspects and provide data disaggregation as suggested in the UN framework to ensure that progress is across all the seventeen goals and that it is equitable and honours the SDGs slogan of ‘leaving no one behind’. The results from these reports should be integrated into planning and governance to ensure timely enhancement and redirection of existing plans and strategies if needed and thus support equitable and balanced regional and national sustainable development. Future research should integrate these results with physical urban surveys of existing landuses. This can help identify where certain land uses can be changed to allocate the needed services to help bridge the gaps in the examined indicators e.g. provide schools to decrease illiteracy percentages, provide hospitals to increase percentages of doctors to residents and provide better healthcare coverage. Also physical changes and social awareness related to disaster risk reduction and climate change mitigation are important to be addressed. Integration of the social aspects with the aspects of governance and physical planning is essential to ensure that Egypt achieves its targets for SDGs indicators by 2030.

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