

**Participation of
H.E. Ms. Nivine El-Qabbage, Minister of Social Solidarity, Egypt
Webinar 18 May 2022**

The Minister noted that while the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated a triple health-education-economic crisis, it also provided an opportunity for a set of transformative social policy interventions in Egypt.

In responding to how the national social protection system adjusted during the pandemic to prevent deterioration of nutrition for the most vulnerable, the Minister cited Egypt's emergency response package, the cost of which amounted to 1.8 per cent of the country's GDP. Around \$320 million was allocated to provide necessary food supplies for the most impoverished individuals, especially in the rural areas.

The Minister highlighted the inclusive nature of the country's emergency social protection interventions. Egypt expanded its cash transfers to more than half a million households, amounting to two million additional individuals. The Government of Egypt provided four million households with food packages in coordination with partner NGOs. There was also food that was distributed on donation cards for the first thousand days in the lives of newborn children, as well as for pregnant and lactating mothers.

In connection with the food provided to vulnerable populations, the Ministry of Social Solidarity's economic empowerment opportunities have targeted small and micro-enterprise projects specifically oriented to food industry, husbandry and poultry production. The Ministry had more than 13,000 micro-enterprise projects, which helped seasonal or irregular labourers protect their income.

The Minister also highlighted how the Ministry has been leveraging additional technologies for greater social inclusion in Egypt. While Egypt is moving towards digital transformation in general, the COVID-19 pandemic period helped accelerate that transition. The Government has had a programme, supported by UNICEF Egypt, to enable the Ministry to create a digital communication channel with its beneficiaries through which it shares cultural and awareness issues concerning food and nutrition, especially for families.

The Minister underscored that the digital transformation of the past two years has been a positive development for the Ministry. For the first time, the Ministry's local offices at the village level are fully and electronically equipped, for data and information transfer.