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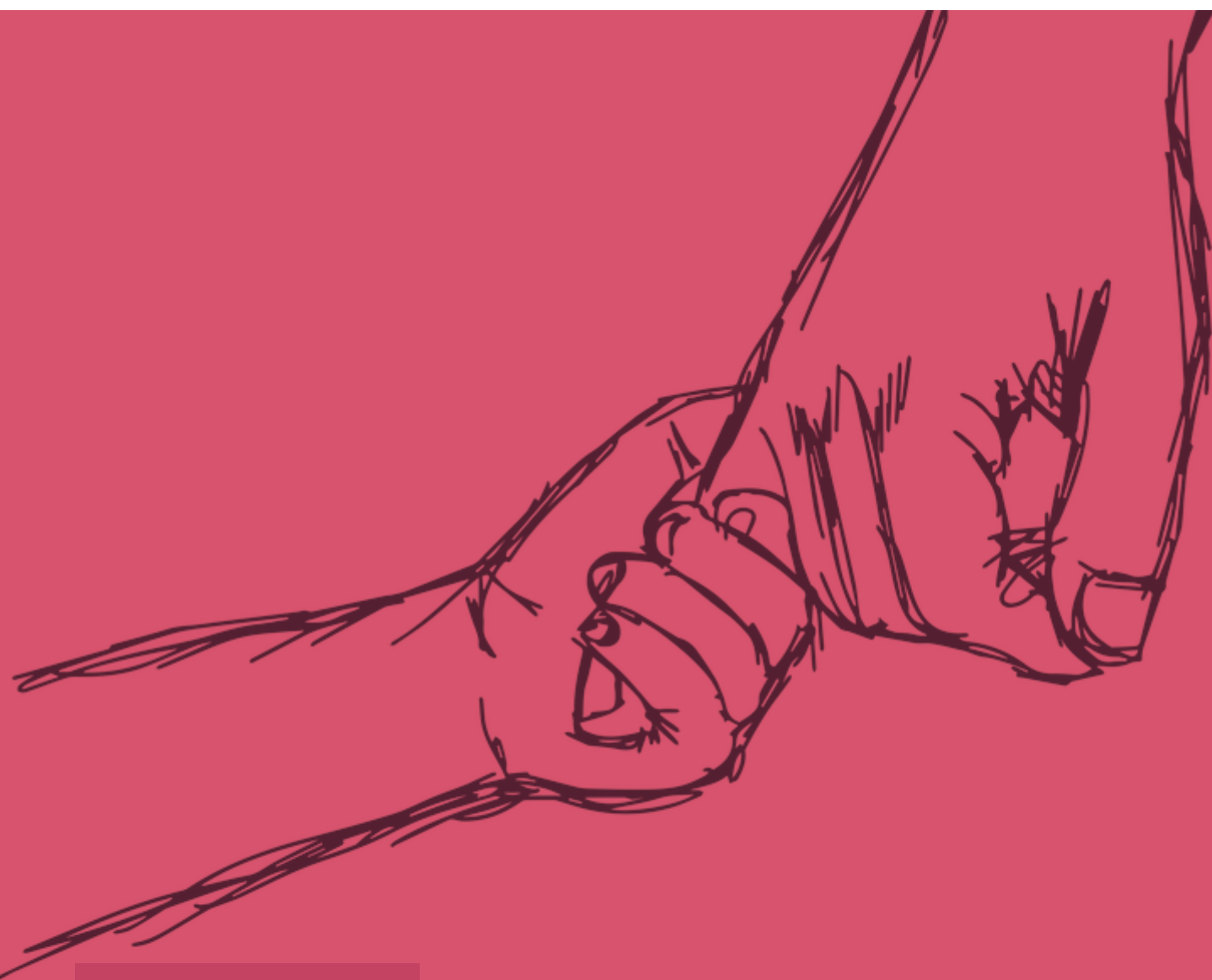
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THE PUBLIC POLICY HUB

Developing Monitoring and Evaluation Dynamic Systems for Alternative Families with Fostered Children

A Policy Paper



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Executive Summary

Since 2016, the Egyptian Government has made many improvements to the Alternative Families System that aims to provide children without parental care with families. Yet, these families still face some obstacles in the monitoring and follow-up system after fostering.

Our paper sheds light on these obstacles; the roots and solution. We depend on qualitative methodological approaches, based on a purposive sample of key informants consisting of governmental officials, national and international entities, using in-depth interviews as the main tool for data collection, and surveys. As a result of our research, we found that there are limitations which affect the increasing number of abandoned children and make it harder for the families to take the decision of foster parenting or

worse, the deficiencies in the follow-up and monitoring system may lead to child abuse for the fostered children, such as the lack of skillful social workers. In addition, there is a dilemma in the Supportive role vs. the Supervisory role of the monitors. Finally, negative societal stereotyping towards abandoned children was identified especially by government officials in the MoSS.

This paper recommends reviewing the existing monitoring and follow-up strategies, upgrading the existing human capital, criteria of their selection, and related systems, and developing a national awareness campaign, especially through social media channels, to work on eliminating the effect of the social stigma towards the concept of fostered children.

Global Context and Background

A. Alternative Families: An International Perspective

The presence of vulnerable children is a global phenomenon. It has been reported by the UNICEF that globally, more than 120 million children are deprived of their biological families for different reasons. Those are the most marginalized groups throughout society.

A vulnerable child is one who is not protected by his/ her biological parents whether living on the streets, in residential institutions or exploited at any kind of work (Boothby et al., 2012). Children are often pushed out of their family homes due to poverty, abuse, or failure in education. Others are separated from their parents in their transit to adulthood on their own accord (Megahead & Cesario, 2008). Since child abandonment occurs universally and practiced across all generations. Infants are often abandoned by their biological parents for reasons such as poverty, culture, and a loss of interest in parenting (Browne, Chou, & Vettor, 2006). In Egypt, child abandonment

is the result of three main reasons:

1. Carelessness or lack of interest in parenting (Sujimon, 2002).
2. Poverty and emergencies which decrease the parental ability to care for a child.
3. Unwanted pregnancies which force parents to let go of their children (Megahead & Cesario, 2008). Often, the reason for not wanting such pregnancies may be due to the traditions they believe or their dislike for an illegal marriage.

Global Context and Background

B. Alternative Care in the United Nations Convention on Rights of the Child:

The United Nations reaffirms the fundamental human rights, the dignity and worth of every human. It exists to promote social progress, better standards of living and freedom for all. The family is considered as the fundamental group in society and the natural environment for the growth and well-being of all its members and particularly children and should be afforded the necessary protection and assistance so that it can fully assume its responsibilities within the community.

Indeed, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which took effect in 1989, emphasizes the role of nation states in securing and preserving the rights of children. Many countries, including Egypt, have ratified the CRC. The CRC provided five main principles:

1. A 'child' is defined as any individual under 18 years of age.
2. Non- Discrimination: the CRC applies to all children regardless of their race, religion, or abilities.
3. The best interest of the child is the base for any decision concerning the child's wellbeing.
4. The states should ensure the rights to life, development, and survival of the child.
5. A child's participation should be guaranteed in any realm he/ she will be involved in.

Furthermore, the convention included two articles concerning foster care, (articles 20 and 21) which are relevant for this policy paper.

Article 20 declares the following:

1. A child temporarily or permanently deprived of his or her family environment, or in whose own best interests cannot be allowed to remain in that environment, shall be entitled to special protection and assistance provided by the State.

2. State parties shall in accordance with their national laws ensure alternative care for such a child.
3. Such care could include, inter alia, foster placement, kafalah of Islamic law, foster care, or if necessary, placement in suitable institutions for the care of children. When considering solutions, due regard shall be paid to the desirability of continuity in a child's upbringing and to the child's ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic background.

Article 21 on the other hand affirms the following:

State parties that recognize and/or permit the system of foster care shall ensure that the best interests of the child shall be the paramount consideration and they shall:

1. Ensure that the foster care of a child is authorized only by competent authorities who determine, in accordance with applicable law and procedures and on the basis of all pertinent and reliable information, that the foster care is permissible in view of the child's status concerning parents, relatives and legal guardians and that, if required, the persons concerned have given their informed consent to the adoption on the basis of such counselling as may be necessary;
2. Recognize that inter-country foster care may be considered as an alternative means of child's care, if the child cannot be placed in a foster or an adoptive family or cannot in any suitable manner be cared for in the child's country of origin;
3. Ensure that the child concerned by inter-country foster parenting enjoys safeguards and standards equivalent to those existing in the case of national foster care

Global Context and Background

4. Take all appropriate measures to ensure that, in inter-country foster parenting, the placement does not result in improper financial gain for those involved in it;"
5. Promote, where appropriate, the objectives of the present article by concluding bilateral or multilateral arrangements or agreements, and endeavor, within this framework, to ensure that the placement of the child in another country is carried out by competent authorities or organs.

These United Nations guiding principles streamline the standard practices of state authorities that provide alternative care. The guiding principles also emphasize the state's responsibility as the sole duty bearer of children without care. It is considered the state's responsibility to allocate adequate financial resources to maintain and strengthen the children's wellbeing and to respond to long- and short- term emergency situations for children without parental care.

Many studies have indicated that a permanent family care setting is the best for the child's wellbeing, physically and psychologically. According to Fluke et al. (2012), permanent family care is defined as the overall provision of unconditional, loving and nurturing commitment toward the child by adult parents who provide lifelong support to the child without care. It is therefore the state's responsibility to take all necessary measures to ensure that the legislative, policy and financial conditions exist to provide alternative care options with a priority to family- and community-based solutions. Moreover, states should maintain high quality standards in the provision of different forms of alternative care whether residential care, foster alternative care, or Kafala.

C. Alternative Care in Other Developing Countries

The focus of the present paper is to develop a system for monitoring alternative families. A review of other countries' experiences is

therefore essential in this regard. Countries were selected based on their strong leadership and governance structures, being signatories to major international treaties, in particular the UNCRC, and having legal guides for alternative family care. The following alternative family care guidelines are worthy of note:

- In Armenia, the Revised Family Code, the Law on Child's Rights, and the Law on Social Assistance provide an umbrella framework for protecting the rights of every child to live in a family environment.
- In Ghana, the Care Reform Initiative (CRI) was launched under the National Plan of Action (NPA) for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC).
- In Moldova, the main piece of domestic legislation is Law no. 140/2013 on the special protection of children at risk and children separated from their parents.
- In Uganda, the principal legislation governing care for children separated from their parents is the Children Act, Cap 59 (amended 2016). This legislation is further supported by the National Alternative Care Framework (2012) as well as the National Action Plan on Alternative Care for Children (2016/2017).

While the aforementioned countries have laws for children foster care and alternative family care, the laws have not included adequate provisions for child care. An assessment by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) acknowledges that none of the countries have policy frameworks guiding informal kinship care and supervised independent living. Although the national policy documents are generally in line with the United Nations guidance, the dissemination, implementation, and enforcement of such policies at the subnational levels is insufficient.

Global Context and Background

Service delivery is much weaker than the leadership and governance components.

In the four countries, the USAID recommended different approaches for maintaining service quality standards and monitoring the quality of the services as well as providing more documentation of the penalties of those who do not follow the defined standards. The responsibilities of social workers, for instance, are clear, but roles related to prevention and reunification and para roles need more clarity.

The training mechanisms of the four countries are also highlighted as areas that needed improvement:

- In Armenia, The Armenian association of social workers, which is responsible for in-service training and capacity building of local government social workers, conducts trainings for case managers and community social workers as the first level of development in the system.
- In Ghana, community social workers have worked through university social work program, which evaluates them, then they may be given the job.
- In Moldova, the staff members have been screened by the national social work agency to provide a systematic training program to improve their capacity.
- In Uganda, all in-service training were delivered in the context of programs for vulnerable children implemented by NGOs.

In all four countries, action plans were prepared to address six main components:

1. **Leadership & governance:** Leadership and governance were achieved by developing guidelines or policies that strengthen governing bodies and provide stronger alignment amongst central, local governments and NGOs.
2. **Service delivery:** Service delivery was improved through the development of new procedures and quality safeguards to ensure equitable implementation at a subnational level.
3. **Workforce:** Several training schemes were organized for the workforce to develop

quality standards, whilst new requirements were instituted for workforce recruitment and retention.

4. **Monitoring and evaluation:** Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms were developed using electronic solutions to enhance indicators.
5. **Social norms:** efforts were made to improve awareness of social norms and develop strategies for communication and advocacy as well as increase funding for social norms campaigns;
6. **Financial resources:** The financial capacity of agencies was also addressed.

D. Alternative Care in Egypt

In Egypt, institutional care for orphaned children and children whose families cannot care for them are within the domain of residential care centers. Islamic family laws against foster care have thus far necessitated the replacement of general child **adoption** in Egypt with the Kafala and foster care systems. Thus, the Egyptian government clearly differentiates between two systems of legal guardianship and fostering of orphaned children. Guardianship refers to the assignment of a child to blood relatives whereas foster care placement comes in three different forms: financial support to children in the residential care, contractual agreement between a residential home and a child's family to fully support him/her in his/her own home, and other contractual agreement between a child's family and government under the supervision of the Ministry of Social Solidarity (MoSS) to support the child, (Megahead & Cesario, 2008; Ali, 2015). Since 2018, the MoSS has been following a consistent plan of providing unaccompanied children and orphans with alternative families rather than residential care in orphanages and foster homes. The former minister of the MoSS, Ghada Wally, announced the overall state's plan towards the closure of orphanages altogether by 2025 (Tawfeek, 2018). As optimistic as the plan might sound, the MoSS has been developing amendments to both the child law and the overall alternative care system in Egypt that should facilitate

Global Context and Background

and increase the number of families willing to foster. According to the Legal Consultant of the ministry, there is a surge in the number of families filing for foster care over the past two years. Nonetheless, the ministry's capacity to follow up and support these families remains limited and inefficient especially when it comes to recognizing what is best for the child's interest. Among the amendments that have been developed over the past years is the digitalization of the application form filed by the potential family. This allows the ministry to facilitate and ensure the quality of the prospective family through a set of interviews, and peer-to-peer meetings where the potential family meets with an existing family to share their experience with fostering. What is yet to be developed is a Monitoring and Evaluation system that combines both home visit efforts with other monitoring effective activities. The existing system entails a visit to the foster families by a social worker at least once every quarter in the first few years, then bi-annually until the child is 18 years old. According to Al-Qamary, the current system is not efficient since some families move residence without notifying the ministry while some other families find regular visits to be somewhat intrusive and not for the child's best interest. M&E experts in Alternative Family Systems, suggest that home visits is an approach that cannot be entirely eliminated. This means looking to alternative approaches that complement home visits. The aim of this policy paper is to explore these alternatives based on best international practice and views from local stakeholders.

E. Egyptian Policies and Legislation:

Legally, newborns are integrated in the Egyptian foster care system, while the older children and adolescents are placed in foster care only under rare circumstances. According to the legislative framework that governs all children-related issues under the Egyptian Child Law (ECL) of 1996, amended in 2006, and further amended in 2016, and the final draft 2020, the MoSS is the main entity re-

sponsible for the social issue in general and children without parental care.

In Egypt, the state's role in ensuring alternative care for children is clear. Articles No. 4 and 96 in the Egyptian Child Law (ECL) clearly defines the role of the government in securing alternative care for children deprived of care. According to the second chapter of part three of the Egyptian child law, alternative care consists of three components: Alternative Families System (AFS), Child Club, and Social Care institutions for children without parental care (Egyptian Factsheet Journal, 1996). Article No. 96 states 14 cases in which the child in danger should be considered. Specifically, articles 96.2 and 96.6 states cases related to alternative families' care (Egyptian Factsheet Journal, 2008).

The Alternative Family System in Egypt faces several challenges. In 2016 amendments were made to the law which decreases the required marriage duration to host a child to 3 years. Moreover, the required age for single females, whether divorced, widowed or unmarried has been reduced from 45 years old to 30 years old under the condition that the committee approves their eligibility (Egyptian Factsheet Journal, 2016b). Technically, an online system was introduced to receive families' requests, track all cases starting from submission of the request until a decision is made whether in acceptance or rejection.

Despite these legal amendments, there is a persistent challenge in relation to the social work workforce in terms of sufficiency, efficiency, and sense of motivation to carry out daily tasks (Forden, 2016). This workforce challenge is compounded by the lack of a system for monitoring children in alternative families. According to Abdel Aziz, (2019), the MoSS representatives could not track around 5% of the children that were placed in the Alternative Families System (AFS) on their regular monitoring visits. In a nutshell, the program of alternative families in Egypt has had several improvements since 2016.

Global Context and Background

Nevertheless, challenges such as the inability to track some of the children, the lack of competent and sufficient workforce, the negative stereotypes and stigma towards abandoned children who are one of the main target

groups of the program, and the inability of mothers to register their children in case of not having a marriage certificate continue to stall such improvements (Abdel Aziz, 2019).

Methods

The main approach to writing this policy paper included in-depth phone interviews with alternative families, meetings with representatives from the Ministry of Social Solidarity and practitioners from NGO's.

We conducted six in-depth phone interviews, which is the main tool in our research, through which we asked them about the problems that may face with the foster parenting, their needs, their satisfaction with the current system, and their suggestions for

better roles and regulations.

We performed two meetings, one with Mr. Mohamed El Qammary, the Legal Consultant of the Ministry of Education, and Mrs. Amina Tarraf, Associate to the Minister of Social Solidarity for social policies.

Our sample of surveys consists of 10 responses that we gathered through spreading the survey on social media platforms.

Problem Statement

Despite the ongoing effort made by the MoSS to improve the alternative care system in Egypt, a lot remains to be done when it comes to the monitoring and evaluation of both existing and potential alternative families. Both field and desk research show that the frequent field visits made by social workers from the ministry to the alternative families could be improved in several ways. On the one hand, many families report feeling intruded on and supervised by the ministry. On the other hand, social workers face many challenges when doing the visits. Incompetence of social workers, lack of motivation and low compensations are among the many issues that confront MoSS when it comes to the M&E of families. At the moment, the MoSS is conducting a yearlong training for social workers on the new system. However,

the main issue with the current M&E system is that it is more supervisory rather than being supportive of families. The purpose of this policy paper is to analyze the pitfalls of the current system while at the same time recommending alternative solutions based on best practices across the globe as well as feedback from families, social workers and other stakeholders.

Problem Statement

A. Supportive vs. Supervisory roles

One of the most recurring issues emphasized by both NGOs and families is the issue of privacy. This issue varies from visiting the families without prior notice, asking the neighbors about the family and the child, and school visits without notifying the parents. Even though it is the ministry's role to ensure that the child is not subjected to any form of abuse, playing a supervisory role is not effective when evaluating the families. Another issue that was highlighted by the families was that of disclosure. While the child has the right to know that he/she is adopted, reports of social workers revealing a child's fostering status without notifying the family have often caused trouble and made such families reluctant to reach out for help on how to deal with the issue of disclosure. It is important therefore, for the ministry's M&E system to support the families in knowing the challenges that they go through when raising the child instead of focusing solely on inspection and intrusion.

B. Lack of Skilled Workforce

The lack of skilled workforce was another issue that came to the fore. According to a representative from the MoSS, each social worker manages nearly 4000 families. This makes the social workers overburdened beyond their capacity. In addition, the existing social workers do not have adequate training home visit techniques to ensure child safety through observation in case of doubt, while avoiding being intrusive. Another issue that was emphasized by one parent is the lack of knowledge on the part of social workers regarding the legal and institutional framework of alternative families, like the necessary procedures for obtaining a passport for the child in case of travel.

C. Social Stigma against Foster Care

Due to social and religious misconceptions the Egyptian society is still yet to learn and accept the concept of foster parenting, not just the Kafala system. This issue demotivates many potential families who could be willing to foster but concerned about how they would be socially perceived. Since social workers are part of the society, sometimes they are the ones who discourage potential families from applying for foster care. Moreover, the Egyptian media have been negatively portraying fostered children and orphanages for years.

Stakeholder Analysis

Three major stakeholders are identified within the alternative families' structures of Egypt: the Ministry of Social Solidarity, Non-Governmental Organizations and alternative families.

A. The Ministry of Social Solidarity (MoSS)

The MoSS is responsible for setting and applying the rules and regulations of the monitoring system. It is also responsible for setting the criteria of social workers who represent the implementers of the monitoring system.

B. NGOs

NGOs those are responsible for the orphan-

ages. They receive funds from the MoSS and act directly with the beneficiaries: orphanages, social workers, and alternative families. NGOs lack skillful manpower, training, and lack funds aside from the funds they receive from MoSS.

B. Alternative Families

They are selected based on very strict criteria. After being selected, families usually face problems with the monitors who are responsible for follow-up visits, also other problems, like finding a way to skip the follow-up visits, which may affect the wellbeing of the fostered kids.

Policy Options/ Analysis of Alternative Interventions

The policy options provided here were developed from both desk study of best practices and feedback from stakeholders. The latter included qualitative data gathered through interviews and surveys from government representatives, alternative families and potential key actors like active local NGOs is the way to get accurate and reflective data to rely on for recommendations and data collection. An initial interview with an official from the MoSS was conducted for background information about the required policy changes for the M&E system. At a later stage, data obtained from surveys and interviews were also conducted to test the feasibility of the proposed alternatives.

Findings from our inquiries suggest that M&E challenges in alternative family care are multidimensional. Many of them are institutional and family-related.

A. Alternative 1: Increasing the Number of Skilled Social Workers

Description: Two challenges were identified here. The presence of unskilled staff as field workers as well as low financial compensation. The lack of skill could be addressed by advocating for the engagement of NGOs and their volunteer members, who are interested and able to take part in the assessment process for alternative families. The partnership with NGOs could be designed such that NGO volunteers serve as job shadows with government social workers where the government workers could rely on those volunteers for doing assessments and share in the filed visits for sometimes, until the volunteers are gradually able to become fully acquainted with the process.

This could be implemented through 2 streams of actions as the following:

1. Formulating and applying a selection criterion for qualified social workers and enhancing their skills through capacity-building training that reinforce their capabilities to implement the monitoring process and lead volunteers efficiently.

Policy Options/ Analysis of Alternative Interventions

The role of the government social worker will be as follows:

- I. The social worker will shadow and lead the volunteers across all engagement activities with alternative families.
 - II. Data management for all inputs and follow-up results registered through meetings and/or engagement with alternative families and their fostered children.
2. Volunteers will be involved in the process of M&E and trained by local NGOs, whose volunteers are graduates from higher institute of social work, to serve as a one year after graduation in public service.

Benefits to be delivered to volunteers

- I. Certification from the MoSS
- II. Accessibility and exposure to new experience of monitoring and follow-up for alternative families

- III. Trainings in major topics (e.g., data collection and analysis- conducting assessments)
- IV. Collaboration with NGOs and working through established entities
- V. A financial reward to be offered to those volunteers by the end of the volunteering period (a one year as a public service engagement)

The role of Volunteers

- I. Perform field visits
- II. Train and guide families to best-use the M&E online system
- III. Provide mentoring to alternative families in the areas of pedagogy and psychology
- IV. Reporting, data entry and, 1st phase verification for data entered by the alternative families on the online system
- V. Conduct a quarter meeting with the social worker for updates and follow-up

Opportunities	<p>The MoSS will issue a list of criteria for the desired social workers who could participate in the monitoring and assessment process. This means that a qualified social worker will be responsible for this process which maintains professionalism in the process. NGOs will cooperate by assigning volunteers to social workers to assist in the Monitoring and Evaluation process of alternative families. An agreement should be established between any local NGO and the MoSS where the NGOs' role is to provide capacity building training to government social workers and their volunteers to participate in the assessment process.</p>
Challenge	<p>This process needs clear criteria and guidelines to be followed and reviewed by the ministry each quarter to make sure the system is running as planned, and that NGOs are having proper participation and effective role while cooperating with the social workers.</p>

Policy Options/ Analysis of Alternative Interventions

Political Feasibility	This needs that the capacity of the MoSS to be able to accommodate volunteers and to have all parties inside the ministry to cooperate and manage NGOs in a way that makes their participation transparent and organized.
Administrative Feasibility	The MoSS should work on a rewarding system for social workers who perform well, provide shadowing to volunteers and achieve effective communication with families. This will serve as an encouragement and also generate some competition amongst social workers.

B. Alternative 2: Decreasing the Social Stigma

Description: The social stigma associated with the foster care of children often serves as a deterrent for a lot of would-be alternative families. Hesitant about the fear of societal judgments could be addressed through a series of actions:

1. The MiSS could organize a public event to gather all interested stakeholders and organizations which support alternative families and the foster parenting of children. Through this event, the MoSS will declare

the launching of an awareness campaign that serves the cause.

2. Having the MoSS as a patron and supporter for this campaign will encourage many organizations to take the lead, which will bring attention to the issue at stake. Moreover, coordination with the media and religious entities should be promoted.

Supportive pages on social media could be of a great advocating role like "Yalla kafala/ Kafal/ Dar el eftaa" which are active and effective in working on the cause.

Opportunities	This alternative could be achieved by gathering all interested players for that cause as a first step and calling them to join the campaign. Here the MoSS could establish a code of conduct for all participants to abide by and to draw the main strategy for the campaign and the next steps as well. There are supporting partners who could be a leading example for working on supporting and advocating the foster parenting of children by alternative families, (pages like kafala/ Yalla Kafala).
Challenge	The mindset of the public is a major hindrance to the foster care of such ideas. Besides, media content like channels' programs, advertisement and media production needs to be reviewed and enhanced. There should be a general code of conduct to be followed in all media productions and programs so as not to stigmatize the idea of fostering with any negative connotations that are exposed to the community. Coordination among all government bodies is needed to support this idea.

Policy Options/ Analysis of Alternative Interventions

Political feasibility

The government and the MoSS specially, should support any campaign and event that advocates for the foster caring of children by alternative families and a national day could be assigned for that aspect by giving awareness and support to that cause specially. Religious awareness as well should be a great arm of support to the cause on different channels, through their page on social media "Dar el-eftaa" due to its high credibility and being an official channel of wide reach for the population.

C. Alternative 3: Effective and Diversified Evaluation System

Description:

The present monitoring mechanisms appear to be too intrusive for some alternative families. This sometimes makes them angry, leading to an avoidance of contact with the government, which makes it hard to make the necessary follow-ups and reviews.

This challenge could be addressed by establishing diversified channels of monitoring and evaluation. Four channels are proposed:

1. An online system which contains the background data of all alternative families as well as the necessary evaluation tools and forms. Families can fill the follow-up forms online and submit them through the on-
2. Organizing virtual meetings with families every quarter of the year (3-month intervals).
3. Organizing field visits bi-annually (every 6 months) to the homes of alternative families. Each visit should be registered on the online system, noted in point 1.
4. School visits to be organized every semester after coordinating with the school administration and the family and ensuring confidentiality during the visit.

line system. One social worker may be assigned to 40 alternative families. This worker will be responsible for reviewing the forms filled by the families every two months.

Opportunities

Online forms and virtual meetings are low-cost options with an improved reach. It does not require the expertise of several experienced agents. This means that the ministry could follow up directly on the cases and view the follow-up tools and reports. This alternative offers privacy and respect for families. To improve this alternative, a complaint mechanism should be established on the system to solicit feedback from families.

Challenge

This alternative requires good ICT infrastructure and internet connectivity at all times and training for users to be accustomed to the system. Any lack of commitment or the inability of families to fill in forms could be a challenge

Technological feasibility

The MoSS needs to cooperate with big entities to supply and provide the needed facilities to improve operations. Due to the improvement in digitization across government bureaucracies and the emergence of Covid-19, the use of this alternative can be very beneficial.

Frameworks of Policy Alternatives

A. Institutional Framework

The recommended policies will be applied through the main body of the MoSS office in each governorate, NGOs will be engaged in providing volunteers and capacity building training for alternative care the monitoring system issued by the ministry.

The Ministry of Communication could cooperate by installing an internet network as infrastructure to be used by all administrations of the MoSS for documenting and following up with alternative families through an online system.

B. Financial and/or Resource Allocation Framework

The policies recommended for a better Monitoring and Evaluation system for the alternative family's needs that can be divided into human and non-human resources.

C. Human Resources

An administrative team of the ministry should acquire a capacity building training from the MoSS on how to better conduct the field visit for alternative families' homes. Volunteers and social workers will be engaged in conducting evaluations under the supervision of the MoSS.

D. Non-human Resources

- An infrastructure for internet networks to be installed at the location of the concerned MoSS administrations where this could be done through a cooperation with the Ministry of Communications, a database system for the data registration of alternative families and follow-up forms where this could be done through a developer who could design these forms on demand.

- Capacity building trainings for social workers about how to conduct assessments and use the online system for documentation.
- Diversify the sources of funding and supporting local NGOs and associations to approach CSR departments and develop activities that create revenues to be used as a support tool for the volunteers who will join the M&E program.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper sought to investigate the existing issues surrounding the monitoring and evaluation of alternative families in Egypt in order to recommend developed efficient interventions. Based on the feedback received from both semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions, the paper has revealed that the main issues with the current system to be three-fold: lack and inefficiencies associated with social workers, the lack of support for existing and potential families, and the social stigma associated with foster care in Egypt. Notwithstanding these issues, the study also revealed that several opportunities exist that could help address these issues. Among these opportunities is the current political will that is conducive to enhancing the Alternative Families' system. This comes in line with the government's vision and willingness to deinstitutionalize foster care and close orphanages by 2025. Made possible by the amendment of the Egyptian Child Law (ECL) in 2016, the government has taken positive steps to facilitate the process of fostering and make it more accessible for potential families. Added to this is the active role being played by the NGO community towards the development of the entire system. Through the development of a detailed guideline for MoSS, NGOs are helping to increase the number of families, supporting them and providing a form of monitoring towards the families. Building upon these efforts, this paper has suggested the following recommendations for the MoSS to improve the efficiency of the Monitoring and Evaluation system for alternative families:

1. Training and employing volunteers from NGOs to support social workers: Training the social workers of the MoSS about the new guide has already been taking place since late 2019. Based on this, the study has recommended employing the services of volunteers to complement the work of the existing social workers. The rationale behind this recommendation is two-fold. On the one hand, this will help address the issue of lack of M&E work-
- force. The training of social workers could also be outsourced to specialized NGOs like Wataneyyah and Face.
2. Raising awareness of the public about the issues of alternative care: This can be done through close collaboration with media players, celebrities, and religious figures to influence public opinion about the issue of foster parenting. We recommend reaching out to the popular TV and radio channels as well as religious programs since they all contribute to shaping the public opinion.
3. Diversifying the tools of Monitoring and Evaluation: In order to reduce frequent visits in ways that invade the privacy of families, the ministry should consider using alternative methods to facilitate the monitoring process. This could be done through using online mediums to keep track of the families and conduct quarterly online meetings with the parents instead of relying solely on home visits.

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THE PUBLIC POLICY HUB

Where Rigour Meets Creativity

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It is designed to develop a cadre of well-informed and seasoned policy developers and advocates, while simultaneously fostering and promoting creative solutions to the challenges facing Egypt today. The project provides a processing unit or hub where policy teams are formed on a regular basis, combining experienced policy scholars/mentors with young creative policy analysts, provide them with the needed resources, training, exposure, space, tools, networks, knowledge and contacts to enable them to come up with sound, rigorous and yet creative policy solutions that have a greater potential to be effectively advocated and communicated to the relevant policymakers and to the general public.

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