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الوفد الدائم للمملكة العربية السعودية
لدى الأمم المتحدة
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The Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the United Nations Office and Other International Organizations at Geneva presents its compliments to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and would like to refer to the letter received on the 4 March 2023 regarding the request for inputs regarding good practice case studies that demonstrate how States use human rights principles to conceptualize, design, implement and monitor and evaluate UHC. In that regard, the Permanente Mission has the honor to attach herewith the contribution of the Government of Saudi Arabia on the aforementioned letter.

The Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the assurance of its highest consideration.



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Most prominent measures taken by Saudi Arabia regarding to promote and protect right to health

This memorandum was prepared in response to the circular memorandum received from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), regarding OHCHR's intention to develop a policy brief in order to provide guidelines on the implementation of universal health coverage. Following is an account of the most prominent measures taken by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in this regard:

Universal coverage policies and programs that explicitly prioritize access to health care and financial protection for the most disadvantaged population groups, as advocated by the principle of non-discrimination.

- The Kingdom's efforts continue to improve the level of health services provided to beneficiaries, observing the principle of equality, and based mainly on the principle of need. These efforts focus on several areas, including maternal and child care, immunization programs, health care for the disabled and the elderly, health care for male and female students, mental health, health care in cases of accidents, emergencies and disasters, combating infectious and epidemic diseases, treatment of incurable diseases, organ transplantation, and other elements of comprehensive health care. They also cover issues related to the supporting infrastructure in this field.
- To ensure fair distribution of health facilities in all regions of the Kingdom and to enable all citizens to obtain health care, health services in the Kingdom observe the principles of fairness and service standard in distributing hospital projects starting from primary health care and secondary care, namely through general and central hospitals and specialized services. In this way, each region of the Kingdom would comprise a central hospital containing medical sub-specialties, in addition to medical cities which aim to provide tertiary specialized services and which are distributed to all basic sectors in the Kingdom. The basic immunization coverage indicator for children includes citizens and residents alike in all regions of the Kingdom.



Determining universal health coverage packages on the basis of human rights principles and the right to health

- The Kingdom's laws and institutions join hands in promoting the right to health for all citizens and residents on an equal basis. Article 31 of the Basic Law of Governance stipulates that the State is responsible for public health, and for providing health care for every citizen and his family in cases of emergency, disease, disability and old age. Out of this commitment, a legal and institutional framework has been built to respect, protect and fulfill the right to health. The Health Law, issued on 4/6/2002, aims to provide comprehensive and integrated health care to the entire population in a fair and accessible manner. The Cooperative Health Insurance Law, issued on 12/8/1999, laid down rules for the provision and regulation of health care for all residents in the Kingdom, all Saudis working in the private sector, as well as individuals with whom employment contracts were concluded, regardless of the amount of their wages.
- The Saudi Patient Safety Center was established to raise awareness of patient relationship, and to implement several strategies to improve health care. These include developing medical rehabilitation services in the Kingdom, and operating the hot line (937) at the Ministry of Health to provide a number of services, notably receiving and handling patients' reports, and providing round-the-clock medical consultations through physicians. To ensure fair distribution of health facilities in all regions of the Kingdom and to enable all citizens to obtain health care, health services in the Kingdom observe the principles of fairness and service standard in distributing hospital projects, starting from primary health care and secondary care, namely through general and central hospitals and specialized services. In this way, a central hospital containing medical sub-specialties would be located in each region of the Kingdom, in addition to medical cities which aim to provide tertiary specialized services and which are distributed to all basic sectors in the Kingdom. The basic immunization coverage indicator for children includes citizens and residents alike in all regions of the Kingdom around the clock.
- Many health facilities have also been established and developed in the Kingdom, including 16 hospitals specializing in obstetrics and gynecology. 99.7% of child births are



supervised by specialists. Moreover, primary health care centers spread across all regions of the Kingdom, reaching 2121 health centers by the end of 2021.

Increasing the available resources for health services proactively and gradually

- In implementation of the National E-Health Strategy, the State has provided the option of telehealth care so that everyone has the opportunity to obtain health care and to reduce the rate of hospital visits for non-emergency cases. This would contribute to reducing the spread of infections and increasing the rate of beneficiary satisfaction by reducing the effort and time required to obtain a medical consultation. Such services are carried out through smart device applications such as SEHA, and by calling the hot line (937) around the clock.
- The Kingdom also provides medicines to citizens free of charge in government facilities. People can also obtain medicines through the electronic medical prescription service (Wasfaty) through approved commercial pharmacies in the system to facilitate beneficiary access to this service at any time and in any place.
- One of the services that the Kingdom offers in the health field is the Unified Health File. This Health File is an essential axis on which the mechanism for providing health care in medical facilities depends. Health files play an important role in recording and keeping all patient information, such as examinations, diagnoses, treatment, follow-up reports, and other important medical decisions. The unified electronic health file system aims to keep all patient information and eliminate duplication of data entry. It also aims to improve the quality of health services delivered and to facilitate the work of health practitioners. This service uses the national identification number (for citizens) or the residence permit number (for residents) as a reference to the unified health file number at the national level.

Removing non-financial barriers to health services

The Kingdom laws contributed to promote and protect the right to the health, including patients and their families have the right to health care and to obtain health service according to evidence-based medicine (appropriate, continuous, organized and



specialized health service at every level of care, whether preventive or curative, and at the appropriate time, in accordance with the policies and procedures of eligibility for treatment and within the capacity of the facility and according to the laws regulating their operation).

- Each category of patients must be examined by a specialized medical team.
- Providing special equipment, tools and supplies that are suitable for the age group and health condition at the health facility.
- Obtaining all medical and nursing supplies, medicines, and consumables for medical care, such as oxygen cylinders and diapers.
- Providing an appropriate environment to help patients to adapt during their treatment period at the health facility.
- Receiving preventive care from diseases, including vaccinations for children and adults, preventive periodic examinations, and early detection of diseases.

Meeting the needs of specific population groups; actual examples of universal health coverage policies and programs seeking to meet the needs of diverse populations that require special attention in the conceptualization, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of universal health coverage. This includes women, children, migrants, refugees, LGBTs, and people with disabilities in all stages of universal health coverage design and implementation.

The Kingdom is keen on health care in all fields, especially those areas that need special attention, such as Reproduction and reproductive health:

- The State, represented by the Ministry of Health, provides health care services related to reproduction. These include the periods of pre-pregnancy, during pregnancy, childbirth, and postpartum. A woman has the right to choose whatever place for pregnancy and postpartum follow-up, whether in a government or private hospital, and the State will provide her with full rights in this regard. In appreciation of the need for some cases to treat diseases related to delayed conception, the State has drawn up the Law of



Fertilization, Utero-Fetal and Infertility Treatment Units to ensure provision of related services in a safe and fair manner. The Kingdom comprises several governmental and private centers for the treatment of infertility cases.

Health care for the elderly:

- The State has provided the elderly – people aged 65 and older – with special care programs in line with their needs. All relevant State sectors are keen to provide comfortable living conditions for the elderly who are unable to work, through the services provided by the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development. These include in-kind assistance to the needy, subsidies for obtaining medical devices, and a concession card to obtain services and privileges. It also provides home care services for the elderly, who can apply for these services through the social care platform or through the Ministry of Health. The State's concern with the elderly is not limited to the services provided to them; it seeks to educate the community about healthy nutrition for the elderly and mental health in old age. It also disseminates information about the elderly and the Coronavirus, and other awareness-raising campaigns. The Ministry of Health has launched several initiatives in service of the elderly, including the *Awlawia* (Priority) initiative to facilitate and accelerate procedures and services provided to some groups within health facilities.

Health care for people with disabilities:

- The State provides each citizen and his family with all rights, regardless of their circumstances. For this reason, it endeavors to protect the rights of people with disabilities and seeks to achieve well-being and a decent life for their families. It has drawn up the Disability Law, supported the social security system, and encouraged institutions and individuals to contribute to charitable work for people with disabilities.

- The State has been keen to provide rehabilitation services to help the disabled to achieve the maximum possible degree of functional effectiveness and to enable them to adapt to the requirements of their natural and social environment, as well as to develop their abilities to be self-dependent and to make them productive members as much as possible.



- The Ministry of Health has also provided disability prevention services, namely a set of medical, psychological, social, educational, media and regulatory measures aimed at preventing or limiting disability, early detection of disability, and minimizing its effects.
- The Ministry has launched several initiatives in service of people with disabilities. This includes the *Awlawia* (Priority) initiative to facilitate and accelerate procedures and services provided to some groups within health facilities, and the “We Are with You” initiative to serve the deaf and facilitate communication between deaf patients and their physicians.
