

Consistency of the MOH Policies and Strategies with the UN Sustainable Development Goals

The initiatives and policies of the Ministry of Health contribute to achieving many of the goals of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including Goals 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 11, 12, 14, and 17. It is also worth noting that all mentioned in the report below is based on the Voluntary Report on Sustainable Development of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which was published in 2023 ([Click here](#)).

Ministry of Health Institutional framework and Current major initiatives:

- The health policy framework in Saudi Arabia is based on the Health Care Law and the National Health Strategy. The Health Care Law stipulates the provision of comprehensive and accessible health care services to all the population. The National Health Strategy sets out the vision, goals and objectives for the development of the health sector. Key priorities include developing a national health information system, improving primary health care services, expanding public-private partnerships and promoting healthy lifestyles.
- The Health in All Policies initiative was launched in 2017 to prioritize population health in all policies and regulations. Furthermore, the Health Sector Transformation Program was launched under Vision 2030 in 2021 and aims to restructure the health sector into a comprehensive, effective and integrated health system that focuses on the health of the individual and society. The Saudi government has developed a set of policies and programs (as shown in the figure below). Source: Voluntary Report of the Kingdom 2023, paragraph 2, page 53.

The Ecosystem of Policies and Programs in the Healthcare Sector				
Non-Communicable Disease Prevention Program	Maternal and Child Health Program	Healthy Life Program	National Strategy for Health Care Development	
	National Anti-Smoking Program	National Tuberculosis Control Program	National Center for Mental Health Promotion	
National Nutrition and Physical Activity Strategy	School Health Awareness Program	Emergency Health Services Program	National Sports Activities Program	
		National E-Health Strategy	Telemedicine Program	
			National Cancer Control Plan	

Source: *The Kingdom's Voluntary Report 2023, Paragraph No. 2, Page 53*

- The Ministry of Health has launched initiatives in line with the third goal of the Sustainable Development Goals, “Good Health and Well-Being”. These initiatives aim to achieve inclusiveness in service delivery and leave no one behind. The Government of Saudi Arabia is implementing several major public health initiatives with the aim of improving access to social services.
- These initiatives also aim to improve the quality of life of the elderly, including increasing access to healthcare services and improving access to social services. Access to healthcare services for people with disabilities has also been improved, including the establishment of specialized healthcare facilities and the development of assistive technologies to improve the provision of healthcare services for this group. Telemedicine and digital health solutions have been promoted to improve access to healthcare services, especially in rural and remote areas.
- The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has witnessed remarkable developments in the field of maternal and child health, thanks to a set of programs and initiatives that have contributed to achieving tangible positive results. Among these programs are:
 - **Immunization Program:** This program has contributed significantly to reducing the incidence of infectious diseases among children, which has led to a decrease in infant and child mortality rates.
 - **Infectious Disease Control Programs:** These programs have reduced the spread of infectious diseases among children, thus improving their overall health and reducing mortality rates.
 - **Primary Health Care Programs:** Through these programs, mothers and children were provided with the necessary health care, which contributed to early detection and treatment of diseases, thus improving maternal health and reducing maternal mortality rates.
 - **Breast Cancer Early Detection Program:** This program has contributed to increasing the chances of recovery from breast cancer through early detection of the disease, which has led to a decrease in mortality rates resulting from this disease.
 - **Early Childhood Policy:** This policy covered multiple aspects of child health and growth, including nutrition, breastfeeding, and early detection of developmental delays, which has contributed to improving the growth of young children and enhancing their capabilities.

Source: *The Kingdom's Voluntary Report 2023, Paragraph No. 1, Page 54.*

Communicable Diseases:

- **Saudi Arabia is working to combat infectious diseases**, with specific goals to eliminate tuberculosis by 2035 and eliminate hepatitis C as a public health threat by 2030.
- **The Ministry of Health has allocated significant resources to the National Tuberculosis Control Program**, which reported 1,970 cases of pulmonary TB in 2021. To address latent TB, the program launched a project to detect and treat high-risk groups,

resulting in the screening of more than 54,000 individuals and the treatment of nearly 2,800 positive cases.

- **In line with the World Health Organization's global goals, Saudi Arabia also aims to eliminate hepatitis C by 2030.** The Ministry of Health reported 1,960 cases of hepatitis C virus (HCV) in 2021. The country has implemented a HCV elimination project that focuses on improved detection through integrated screening of the entire population and high-risk groups. As a result, more than 13 million individuals have been screened, and more than 6,500 cases have been identified and treated. The new class of drugs has revolutionized the management of HCV, offering a cure rate of over 90% and preventing complications and transmission. The following detailed example provides more information.

Source: The Kingdom's Voluntary Report 2023, Paragraph No. 2, Page 54.

Non-Communicable Diseases

- Non-communicable diseases currently account for 73.2% of deaths in the country, with cardiovascular disease being the leading cause. As the population ages, demand for high-cost health services increases.
- The government has launched several initiatives to prevent lifestyle diseases targeting smoking, unhealthy diet, and physical inactivity. In 2018, the Saudi Food and Drug Authority developed a healthy food strategy to promote healthy lifestyles and reduce the consumption of salt, sugar, and saturated and trans fatty acids. This strategy, along with other nutrition policies, aims to empower consumers and create a healthier food environment to combat non-communicable diseases.
- The "Vital Community" initiative within the Quality of Life Program encourages citizens to participate in physical activities, supports sports groups and federations, and promotes women's participation in community sports.
- The National Committee for Combating Smoking, established in 2007, oversees the implementation of the MPOWER5 Tobacco Control Framework Agreement. Saudi Arabia has achieved a high level of implementation, with best practices in providing cessation assistance, warning about the dangers of smoking, and enforcing the ban on tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship. Saudi Arabia was the first in the Eastern Mediterranean Region to implement standardized tobacco packaging in 2019 and has established a WHO Collaborating Centre for Standardized Packaging. In addition, the number of smoking cessation clinics has increased, and virtual cessation services have been established to facilitate access to treatment services and integrate these clinics with other health care providers.

Source: The Kingdom's Voluntary Report 2023, Paragraph No. 3, Page 54.

Road Safety

- Road accidents have always been a major challenge that threatens the lives of citizens and residents. In its quest to provide a safe and sustainable environment, the Kingdom has adopted a comprehensive strategy to enhance road safety. This strategy includes a set of initiatives and programs aimed at reducing traffic accidents and minimizing the losses resulting from them.
- The Kingdom aims to reduce road traffic fatalities to less than 8 per 100,000 people by 2030, as well as reduce associated injuries and losses.
- In 2017, the Saudi government established the Ministerial Committee for Road Safety to oversee the implementation of the National Road Safety Strategy and collaborate with relevant authorities.
- The National Center for Road Safety was established in 2018 to further improve road safety.
- Other key initiatives include the establishment of the Saher automated system by the Ministry of Interior, a road safety training program, and the development of the National Strategy for Transport and Logistics to place Saudi Arabia among the most advanced countries in terms of road quality and safety

Source: The Kingdom's Voluntary Report 2023, Paragraph No. 1, Page 56.

Research and infrastructure development

- The Health Research Center was established to advance health research, while national research centers focus on infectious and non-communicable diseases and epidemics.
- Under Vision 2030, the government plans to invest more than \$65 billion in health infrastructure and aims to increase private sector contributions, targeting the privatization of several hospitals and primary health centers.
- The National Unified Procurement and Supply Company (NUPCO) is responsible for purchasing and supplying pharmaceutical supplies and medical devices and seeks to enhance the efficiency of government spending by investing in logistics, digital infrastructure, and localizing pharmaceutical industries. NUPCO has played a crucial role during the COVID-19 pandemic and has launched several health service projects, including an advanced drug storage and distribution center in partnership with King Abdullah Economic City.
- King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology is implementing the Saudi Genome Program, which aims to reduce the incidence of genetic diseases using advanced genomic technologies, leading to improved healthcare delivery, personalized medicine, reduced costs, and enhanced quality of life, while positioning the Kingdom as a global leader in genomic research and personalized medicine based on artificial intelligence.

Source: The Kingdom's Voluntary Report 2023, Paragraph No. 2, Page 56.56.

Digitization

- The Ministry of Health is implementing an ambitious program to digitize healthcare, with more than 500 health centers and hospitals being linked to electronic systems. Initiatives include the Seha Virtual Hospital, which supports 130 hospitals and provides more than 30 specialized services, and the establishment of virtual clinics that can be accessed through the Sehhaty app.
- The government has also invested heavily in digital health technology and infrastructure, ensuring that all health information systems are fully electronic. Seha Virtual Hospital is one of the largest virtual hospitals in the world, monitoring health sector indicators in real time to make decisions and follow up on emergency responses immediately.

Source: The Kingdom's Voluntary Report 2023, Paragraph No. 1, Page 57.

Sustainable Development Goal 1 aims to “eradicate poverty and intersects with the third goal of good health and well-being”:

In this context, the percentage of total government spending on basic services (education, health, and social protection) shows a general increase over the years. This demonstrates Saudi Arabia's commitment to investing in basic services, which is vital to addressing poverty, improving health, and ensuring the quality of education.

Source: The Kingdom's Voluntary Report 2023, Paragraph No. 1, Page 34.

Initiatives in Goal 1 that intersect with good health and well-being are:

- Housing support program.
- Food, fuel and water support program.
- Special needs support program.

Source: The Kingdom's Voluntary Report 2023 AD. The last 3 points in the second column of the table, page 3434.

Sustainable Development Goal 2 “End hunger, achieve food security and raise awareness of healthy nutrition to maintain health”:

- **Healthy Food Strategy:** The Saudi Food and Drug Authority (SFDA) has launched a strategy to reduce sugar, salt, saturated and trans fatty acids in food products, which are major causes of weight gain. The strategy has promoted voluntary commitment agreements from several major private sector companies. Restaurants and cafes have also introduced calorie information for foods on their menus.
- **Food Policies:** The Ministry of Health has issued nutritional guidelines for citizens, including the “Dietary Guidelines” and “Healthy Food Proportions,” available on its website.

- Restaurants, food suppliers and producers are now required to display nutritional information on products, helping consumers understand their ingredients and nutritional value.
- The Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education have collaborated on the Rashaqa program to reduce obesity among school-age children.
- The Quality of Life program (under Vision 2030) has targeted obesity by encouraging increased participation in sports activities.

Source: The Kingdom's Voluntary Report 2023, Paragraph No. 2 of the table, page 45.

Sustainable Development Goal 4 “Improving the Quality of Education”:

The following initiatives are part of the fourth goal on health:

1. Early Childhood Development Initiative:

- The Virtual Kindergarten Platform (Rawdati) was established in 2019, providing distance learning opportunities for young children using digital technologies and interactive materials.
- Early Developmental Learning Standards for ages three to six have been developed to guide institutions in understanding children's knowledge, behaviors, and expected skills.
- The Mother and Child Education Program supports mothers in nurturing their children's mental, physical, emotional, and social skills. The Personal Safety Program, developed in collaboration with Al-Ghad for Children (AGFUND) and UNICEF, promotes safety values and skills in children, teachers, and parents in a healthy learning environment.
- The Kindergarten Learning Environment Improvement Program, in partnership with King Abdulaziz University, assesses the quality of educational environments in public and private kindergartens.
- The Ministry of Education has set educational standards for kindergarten schools and created a national framework for the early childhood curriculum. This has enabled the development of more early childhood schools that provide high-quality learning opportunities for all children.

Source: The Kingdom's Voluntary Report 2023, last paragraph, page 62.

1. Children with special needs:

The Ministry of Education has implemented several measures to ensure comprehensive access to education for children with special needs. These steps include:

- Opening early intervention centers in kindergartens for early support and integration,
- Launching Taiba Educational City for people with special needs in partnership with the private sector,
- Opening Sanad City for people with disabilities in Makkah Al-Mukarramah.
- A curriculum has been developed specifically for students with special needs, offering new books and study materials such as English, digital skills, social studies, and physical education. Sign language has been integrated into the family education curriculum, along

with life skills for all educational levels, and promoting the integration of students with special needs into regular schools.

- Service support centers have been established in various cities to provide the necessary resources and assistance for students with special needs.

Source: The Kingdom's Voluntary Report 2023, Paragraph No. 1, Page 63

2. Through the "Quality of Life Program", the government focuses on supporting physical activity in schools and universities, especially for girls.

Source: The Kingdom's Voluntary Report 2023, last paragraph, page 65.

Sustainable Development Goal 5 "Gender Equality":

One of the initiatives of the fifth goal that intersects with the Ministry of Health is:

- **Women's health and improving women's access to health services:** The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has made significant progress in enabling women to access high-quality health care services, including reproductive health services and protection from gender-based violence.

Source: The Kingdom's Voluntary Report 2023, Paragraph No. 4, Page 73.

- **Maternity leave, breastfeeding breaks, and working conditions that meet women's needs:** To eliminate work-related discrimination, the Labor Law has established a number of rights and duties. The law includes provisions relating to maternity leave, breastfeeding breaks, and working conditions that meet women's needs. The employer is prohibited from terminating a female worker's service during maternity leave or during illness resulting from pregnancy or childbirth, as well as women working in mines or quarries. A number of ministerial decisions have also been issued to further regulate women's working conditions. These decisions include directives on employing female workers at night, women's participation in workers' committees, and the spatial environment for women's work.

Source: The Kingdom's Voluntary Report 2023, Paragraph No. 3, Page 75.

Sustainable Development Goal 6 "clean water and sanitation":

- Efforts have focused on improving water quality, including measures to reduce the impacts of pollution, improve water treatment processes, and access to safely managed sanitation services.
- The government has invested heavily in building and upgrading wastewater treatment plants to improve wastewater management.

Source: The Kingdom's Voluntary Report 2023, Paragraph No. 2, Page 81.

- **Wastewater Treatment:** The government has invested in improving wastewater management to reduce the impact of wastewater on public health and the environment, and to provide ample quantities of tertiary treated water, which can be reused in a range of applications, including agriculture, industry and urban activities. In 2020, Saudi Arabia entered into a partnership to build the first independent wastewater treatment plant, which aims to be a model for future wastewater initiatives in the private sector, with a treatment capacity of up to 350,000 cubic meters of wastewater per day

. Source: *The Kingdom's Voluntary Report 2023, Paragraph No. 3, Page 81.*

Sustainable Development Goal 8 “Decent Work and Economic Growth”:

- **Initiatives related to occupational safety in the Kingdom** that would reduce the rate of injuries and deaths resulting from the work environment.

Source: *The Kingdom's Voluntary Report 2023, page 102*

- **National Policy to Prevent Child Labour in the Kingdom:** In April 2021, the Council of Ministers approved the adoption of the National Policy to Prevent Child Labour in the Kingdom, which aims to provide a safe environment that supports childhood and a society in which children enjoy all their rights. This policy is in line with the Kingdom's international obligations under ILO Conventions No. 138 and 182. In conjunction with the policy, Saudi Arabia also developed a National Action Plan to Prevent Child Labor in the Kingdom.

Source: *The Kingdom's Voluntary Report 2023, last paragraph in the second table, page 104.*

Sustainable Development Goal 10: “Reducing Inequality”

- **Equality Policy in Providing a Safe Work Environment for All “National Occupational Safety and Health Policy”:** This policy aims to create a safe and healthy work environment for all workers, including Saudis and expatriates.

Sustainable Development Goal 11: “Sustainable Cities and Communities”

- **The government has launched initiatives to promote healthy and active lifestyles and improve the overall quality of life in cities.** These are the “Green Saudi Arabia” and “Green Riyadh” environmental initiatives and are investing in cities to enhance their competitiveness and potential. These investments include the creation of green spaces, sidewalks and recreational areas.

Source: *The Kingdom's Voluntary Report 2023, Paragraph No. 3, Page 163.*

- **The government is working to promote the use of technology to improve the delivery of healthcare services, such as telemedicine, electronic health records and smart healthcare.** This is part of the government's initiative to promote various smart city technologies to improve urban living and raise the quality of life.

Source: The Kingdom's Voluntary Report 2023, second point from the right, page 136.

Sustainable Development Goal 12 “Responsible consumption and production”:

- The Kingdom adopts policies to protect human health and ensure environmental sustainability by effectively managing hazardous waste.

Source: The Kingdom's Voluntary Report 2023, Paragraph No. 1, Page 145.

Sustainable Development Goal 14 “Life Below Water”:

- This goal seeks to prevent and reduce marine pollution and is important for the health of marine ecosystems. A healthy environment in general is linked to human health.

Source: The Kingdom's Voluntary Report 2023, Paragraph No. 1, Page 163.

Sustainable Development Goal 17 “Partnerships for the Goals”:

- **The Kingdom has been a major contributor to the creation of the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access Facility (COVAX)**, a structure that ensures equitable access to vaccines worldwide. In addition, Saudi Arabia has provided medical and humanitarian aid to many countries in need, including sending medical teams and supplies to support local health systems.

Source: The Kingdom's Voluntary Report 2023, Paragraph No. 1 below the table, page 190.

- **Saudi Initiative to Combat AIDS in the Gulf countries:** The initiative aims to enhance opportunities for health support dedicated to combating HIV in the Gulf. The initiative was launched by the Ministry of Health, in coordination with the Executive Office of the Council of Ministers of Health for the Gulf States, following several international conferences held over the years, which monitored aspects and experiences of countries combating AIDS.

Source: The Kingdom's Voluntary Report 2023, Paragraph No. 1, Page 191.

- **Clean Cooking Fuel Solutions:** Saudi Arabia launched this initiative with the aim of providing clean cooking solutions such as LPG and renewable energy to 750 million people around the world as an alternative to traditional cooking methods such as charcoal and wood, which can harm the environment due to their excessive carbon emissions as well as human health, especially women, by causing respiratory diseases.

Source: The Kingdom's Voluntary Report 2023, Paragraph No. 2, Page 191.

- **Supporting global health** initiatives is also an important area of interest for Saudi Arabia. The Kingdom has contributed to providing medical and humanitarian aid to countries in need. Furthermore, Saudi Arabia is committed to enhancing data accessibility and transparency through initiatives such as the National Strategy for Statistical

Development, the National Open Data Portal, and the Saudi Data and Artificial Intelligence Authority (SDAIA). To encourage global companies in the health and other fields and to respond to global health emergencies.

Source: The Kingdom's Voluntary Report 2023 AD, the penultimate point, page 191.

The efforts of the Ministry of Health also contributed to achieving many goals in partnership with the United Nations, including:

Regarding the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, it has prepared metrics and analyses in cooperation with the United Nations, including:

- **In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Saudi government has implemented strict containment measures to protect the population:**
 1. **Lockdown and Business Closure:** Lockdown and business closures were imposed.
 2. **Remote Work:** Non-essential employees were required to work remotely.
 3. **Social Distancing and Masks:** Social distancing and mandatory mask wearing were implemented.
 4. **Bans and Restrictions:** Public gatherings were banned, travel restrictions were imposed, and prayers in mosques were suspended.
 5. **Impact:** Although these measures significantly impacted daily life, they were necessary to manage the pandemic and protect public health during this challenging time

Source: The Kingdom's Voluntary Report 2023, Paragraph No. 2, Page 195.

- **The Ministry of Health in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has implemented a wide range of proactive measures to confront the epidemic:**
 1. **Health services:** Free services including PCR testing, diagnosis and treatment, and a 24-hour hotline were provided to all citizens and residents, regardless of legal status.
 2. **Emergency response:** A national emergency response committee was established, and COVID-19 treatment was provided to all.
 3. **Testing and tracing:** Over 45 million PCR tests were conducted through extensive testing and tracing initiatives. Mobile applications and expansion of laboratory capacity were crucial.
 4. **Healthcare infrastructure:** Primary healthcare centers, hospitals, quarantine facilities, referral hospitals, field hospitals, and ambulance teams were equipped to respond to COVID-19.
 5. **Private and digital healthcare:** Private healthcare, home health care, and telemedicine were activated to support the MoH's efforts. Digital healthcare services, including applications such as Tabaud and Tetamaan, were used to limit in-person visits and monitor cases.

6. **Vaccination campaign:** A comprehensive national vaccination campaign was launched using traditional and modern means of communication, with efforts to raise awareness of vaccines and combat hesitancy.
7. **Communications:** Clear and realistic communication campaigns helped dispel myths and keep the public informed through mass media, SMS, hotlines and e-portals.

Source: The Kingdom's Voluntary Report 2023, Paragraph No. 3, Page 195.

- **Digitization:** The government has focused on digitization and innovation to improve health outcomes and the healthcare system, such as implementing telemedicine platforms and electronic medical records.

Source: The Kingdom's Voluntary Report 2023, paragraph 1 below the chart, page 196.

- **Saudi Arabia has played a major role in the international response to COVID-19 by:**
 1. **G20 Leadership:** Chaired the G20 Extraordinary Summit in March 2020, where G20 leaders committed to taking necessary health measures and pledged \$10 trillion to support the global economy.
 2. **Global Contributions:** Under Saudi Arabia's leadership, the G20 pledged \$21 billion to combat the pandemic through various initiatives.
 3. **Collaboration and Donations:** Saudi Arabia has worked closely with the United Nations and other organizations, providing more than \$1 billion in bilateral assistance, donations, and funding for vaccine research.
 4. **Support for the World Health Organization:** Saudi Arabia has donated \$90 million to the World Health Organization to support the COVID-19 Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan (SPRP) and the WHO office in Yemen.

Source: The Kingdom's Voluntary Report 2023, Paragraph No. 3, Page 196.

- **Saudi Arabia has prioritized protecting the most vulnerable groups during the COVID-19 pandemic by:**
 1. **Universal access to healthcare:** Providing free COVID-19 testing and treatment for all, including those with irregular residency status, ensuring equal access for all.
 2. **Supporting vulnerable groups:** This approach helped mitigate the impact of the pandemic on migrants and other vulnerable populations.
 3. **Financial assistance:** Development funds and banks allocated SAR 4 billion in social loans to support low-income families during 2020.

Source: The Kingdom's Voluntary Report 2023, Paragraph No. 4, Page 196.