

14th session of the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing

Guiding questions on the normative content related to the right to health and access to health services

1. How is the human right of older persons to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health defined in the national and local legislation in your country?

Article (18) of the Egyptian constitution states that “every citizen has the right to health and to comprehensive health care which complies with quality standards. The State shall maintain and support public health facilities that provide health services to the people, and shall enhance their efficiency and their equitable geographical distribution”. A comprehensive health insurance system covering all diseases for all Egyptians was applied in 2018, and the Law regulate citizens' contribution to or exemption from its subscriptions based on their income rates.

According to the Egyptian law of the protection of elderly rights, the elderly have the right to receive quality preventive and therapeutic care, per the laws and rules of health insurance, and the state shall bear the expenses for the treatment of the elderly in the first care in accordance with the cases and conditions issued by a decision of the competent minister of Health Affairs. Hospitals and medical centres affiliated with the Ministry of Health and other government agencies are committed to providing preventive and therapeutic services to the elderly.

The Ministry of Health is committed to coordinating with the concerned authorities to provide care and provide psychological support to the elderly and is working to take the necessary measures to eliminate any psychological or mental disorder that may be exposed. Additionally, the law includes the right of the elderly to do sport and to participate in recreational activities to protect their health.

2. The human right to health encompasses both access to health care and attention to the material and other conditions which are necessary for its full enjoyment. What provisions have been made to ensure that older persons enjoy access, on an equal basis with others, to social protection, adequate water and sanitation, adequate housing and health education?

There is no discrimination according to age in Egypt to enjoy access, on an equal basis with others, to social protection, adequate water and sanitation, adequate housing and to health education. According to the Egyptian Constitution, all citizens are equal before the Law. They are equal in rights, freedoms and general duties, without discrimination. Discrimination and incitement of hatred is a crime punished by Law. Therefore, the Ministry of Social Solidarity, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Supply and Internal Trade make many initiatives and social care projects to guarantee that the elderly get and enjoy their rights equally. Also, some NGOs run various projects to benefit the elderly and their activities are conducted in different governorates.

The presidential initiative "100 Million Health" is one of the most important health interventions introduced by the State represented by the Ministry of Health and Population in the past few years. The first initiative for the elimination of the C virus and the detection of non-communicable diseases was launched in October 2018 parallel to the presidential initiative to eliminate waiting lists, followed by many public health initiatives aimed at raising health awareness among citizens of the importance of following healthy lifestyles and avoiding risk factors causing non-communicable diseases. The importance of early detection, as well as the availability in case of detection of a disease to avoid complications. As well as raising awareness and reducing the causes of the spread of infectious diseases. Not only that, but the "100 million health initiative" has included many services including psychological support services for certain groups of society such as the elderly.

The initiative of "100 Million Health" for the treatment and early detection of people with hepatitis C virus (HCV) and non-communicable diseases (NCDs) has been a "turning point" in Egypt's healthcare system. In addition to this, in 2023, the Ministry of Health launched the 100 Healthy Days campaign to target the 105 million people living across the country. The 100 Healthy Days campaign aims to

boost the overall health of Egyptian people by providing them with free healthcare services, including early detection and treatment of cancer.

3. What are the key normative elements of the human right of older persons to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health? Please provide references to existing standards on elements:

The Ministry of Health and Population in Egypt has established special care centres and departments (Healthcare and geriatrics) for the elderly to ensure that their special needs of the elderly are met. The "continuous health care for the Elderly" program has been launched to improve the quality of healthy life for the elderly over 65 years old. Improving the healthy lives of the elderly will be through early detection of the most common health problems at this age stage, through 401 medical centres distributed among all health departments in 21 governorates as a first stage.

The package of medical services provided to the elderly includes the detection of non-communicable diseases such as hypertension, diabetes, heart disease, nephropathy and gastrointestinal diseases, and malnutrition (anaemia, obesity), in addition to psychological and nutritional assessment.

The program also provides services of general clinical examination, calculation of body mass index, eye examinations, oral and dental examinations in addition to examinations (measurement of haemoglobin, fat and cholesterol, kidney function, random blood sugar analysis), as well as conducting electrocardiogram examinations, ultrasound on the abdomen and pelvis.

The program includes providing health education and psychological support services to promote the health of the elderly, raise awareness of the health problems of the elderly and how to prevent them, as well as providing nutritional advice in terms of eating meals at specific times and balanced nutritional content necessary for the health status.

Patients are handed a health follow-up card, for periodic follow-up of the health condition, mainly 2 annual visits. The referral of patients to hospitals is done if needed for advanced medical interventions. There is coordination between the "continuous health care for the Elderly" program and the "100 million health" initiatives to obtain all the necessary medical services within the initiatives.

Any person can submit a complaint to the National Council for Human Rights if there is any violation of health rights. Urgent measures are taken to solve and end the violation in cooperation with the concerned agencies.

According to the Egyptian law of elderly, the competent ministry is committed to providing a hotline to report any risks that threaten the security, safety, dignity, and lives of the elderly, whether the person reporting is the elderly person himself or someone else, while taking all guarantees to quickly respond to the complaint and inform the competent authorities, in coordination with the ministry concerned with health.

Additionally, NGOs working in the social rights field play a vital role in taking care of older persons, and they offer free health and social services as well.

The application of legal instruments and national policies is a must to enjoy the right to health, and having adequate trained human resources and funds is a real need to fulfill and promote human rights.