

Christelle Saghbini – Chairman & Managing Director, Sanofi Egypt & Sudan



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Christelle Saghbini, the newly appointed chairman & managing director of Sanofi for Egypt & Sudan, highlights her strategic roadmap for bringing access to innovative medicines to Egypt. She also explains how Sanofi is a strong partner in the government's efforts to improve the level of healthcare in the country.

You were appointed as the country manager for Sanofi Egypt eight months ago. How did you perceive your first few months in Egypt?

It has been a very exciting period and I am proud to be taking on this position. I spent most of my career in the pharmaceutical industry at Sanofi, working in different positions and markets, and it is an honour for me to be responsible for enabling access to our products for the Egyptian patients. I arrived in Egypt when the Ministry of Health rolled out the 100 Million Seha campaign; healthcare is really at the top of the agenda of the Egyptian government.

What have you determined as your strategic priorities and objectives?

The Egyptian market is fast-moving, which is creating a lot of opportunities. However, there are still a high number of unmet medical needs in the country. To meet these challenges, we have set out four main topics which we will focus on: The first one is developing the access for the Egyptian patients to our products, through partnering with the different stakeholders. Our second priority is about driving innovation. Sanofi is bringing innovative treatments and products to the market and will launch up to ten products within the next three years. Our main aim is to bring innovative care solutions to the patients, which goes beyond providing medication. The third topic is about building a sustainable model in Egypt. Sanofi has been continuously present in Egypt for 56 years and we are willing to invest in the country, as we see the potential of Egypt. Last but not least, Sanofi has a strong social responsibility in the country, which we continue to foster through different programs. Sanofi has been awarded the CSR award from the Federation of Egyptian Industries for adopting SDG. All this will only be possible by investing in our people, as they are the ones who make this happen every day.

What is Sanofi's current position in the Egyptian market and where do you see the strengths of the local affiliate?

Sanofi is amongst the top three pharmaceutical companies in the market and in a leading position in therapeutic areas like cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, rare diseases and CNS. We also have a prevention portfolio, based on vaccines, and we cover also acute diseases and consumer healthcare products. This strongly diversified portfolio is one of the key strengths of Sanofi in Egypt. The affiliate has 1200 employees, and we are proud that 82 percent of our products are produced locally and supplied by our manufacturing site that has a capacity of 120 Million units per year.

Sanofi's global CEO Oliver Brandicourt has recently announced the restructuring of the global business units (GBU), now having Primary Care GBU and a China & Emerging Markets GBU. How has this change trickled down to Egypt so far?

We are part of the China & Emerging Markets Global Business Unit, and the restructuring process has brought a better focus on emerging markets. Egypt ranks among the top three countries in Africa for Sanofi, meaning that the country is a high priority for Sanofi's emerging markets strategy, and we are contributing to the growth of this business unit.

What do you identify as the treatment areas that are most in demand in Egypt

The 100 Million Seha campaign has rightly screened chronic diseases like Hepatitis C, diabetes, hypertension and obesity, as we have a quite high prevalence of these diseases in Egypt. There are strong medical needs and we have an extensive portfolio in this area and we will continue to innovate. We also see higher epidemiology in Egypt for certain rare diseases like Gaucher disease than in other countries. Other treatment areas like oncology will become more important in the near future, like in many other parts of the world, and Sanofi is well prepared to support patients's journey for this kind of critical diseases.

Both the public and the private stakeholders have highlighted the responsibility of international companies in supporting national campaigns while Egypt moves towards universal healthcare. How does Sanofi support the different national campaigns of the government?

During the presidential visit of Emmanuel Macron in January 2019, Sanofi has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Health, to address unmet medical needs. The agreement has a focus on oncology and cardiovascular diseases from a holistic disease management perspective. While our job is to produce innovative medicine, access and compliance of the patient are key so they get the benefit out of our products in the best way. Our focus is on three different projects, the first one being awareness and screening for prostate and breast cancer patients; the second one is focusing on partnerships to improve the emergency care system for acute cardiovascular conditions in Egypt; the third one is to assess the potential feasibility to extend our local production footprint.

Moreover, Sanofi has been doing awareness campaigns for the last ten years, in particular for diabetes. This includes awareness for better diagnosis as well as advice for a healthier lifestyle and diabetes management. We are targeting different channels for our initiatives, such as radio, phones as well as social media platforms. Our KiDS program is focused on educating parents and teachers on the prevention of Type 2 Diabetes as well as management of children suffering from Type 1 Diabetes. So far, we recorded a total of 34,000 beneficiaries from this program.

Sanofi has a long-standing tradition of manufacturing in Egypt since 1962. Why does Sanofi believe Egypt is a place to be for manufacturing?

Sanofi producing in Egypt has been a part of the business model since its establishment, as we see it as necessary to supply the local demand and to create local employment, showing our commitment to the country. Moreover, we inaugurated our new distribution center last year that delivers now 500,000 boxes per day. We also have export activities to countries in the region like Sudan and the Gulf region.

Sanofi Egypt has won several awards as a top employer in Africa. How is Sanofi different from other pharma MNCs in terms of work environment?

Sanofi is very focused on talent development and there are several skills development programs in place, both internally and in partnership with external stakeholders. Future Access is one of our programs that helps pharmacy students receive training and mentoring by our employees to better prepare them for their first graduate job and to bridge the gap between the academic study & real-life work experience. In the last seven years, 5000 students have benefitted from this program and it also has helped our employees to develop leadership and mentoring skills.

As Country Manager of Sanofi in Egypt, you are heading an affiliate of one of the most innovative companies in the world. However, innovation is not only about the labs â?? it is also about the way you manage your business and your people. What does innovation mean to you?

Innovation is a topic dear to my heart and I think it relates to several aspects. It comes of course from research and development, which allows us to bring innovative treatments for patients. Innovation is also about developing integrated care solutions for better patient management. From the open innovation perspective, for the third year in a row, Sanofi is hosting a dedicated lab â??Tech for Healthâ?? at VivaTech to meet startups with which we aim to develop new solutions and health services even more adapted to the needs of each individual. The Egyptian affiliate has been participating in the regional competition Afric@tech and we are proud to say that most start-ups participating were coming from Egypt this year. The competition has seen 222 start-ups from Africa taking part, 38 of them from Egypt.

Also recently, we supported women in science initiative in Egypt to foster Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) among young researchers & scientists in Egypt while supporting access for women in the field of science.

Where would you like to see Sanofi Egypt in five years?

We want to develop access to treatments for Egyptian patients to improve healthcare in the country. In particular, we want to bring new innovative solutions to Egyptian patients. We will continue to invest in our people so that Sanofi Egypt remains a top employer in the African continent.

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