



# UNITED TO END CERVICAL CANCER IN EGYPT

## 2022-23 Programs of Scale Grant Recipient

### Strategic goal

This program aims to ultimately reduce the number of cervical cancer cases in Egypt by implementing a four-year campaign to increase awareness about cervical cancer and how to prevent it. The program will encourage the use of the HPV vaccine and promote screenings among women and girls in the greater Cairo region. The implementation experience and data collected through this program will inform an evidence-based national strategy by the Egyptian government toward eliminating cervical cancer.

### The issue

Cervical cancer, usually caused by the human papillomavirus (HPV), is considered one of the most preventable cancers. But 85% of the deaths it causes in low- and middle-income countries occur because routine HPV vaccinations and cervical cancer screenings aren't available, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). Many Egyptian women are unaware of HPV or have misconceptions about the incidence of and mortality rates associated with cervical cancer. This leads to a low demand for HPV vaccinations and cervical cancer screenings. Social and cultural stigmas that link diseases or viruses such as HPV to sexual promiscuity also affect women's choices about vaccination or screening.

### Program background

The Egyptian Ministry of Health and Population has recently made reducing the incidence of cervical cancer a priority as part of a national commitment to improve women's health. The program is modeled after a presidential initiative in Egypt on breast cancer that increased women's visits to clinics and now offers routine breast health services. However, the lack of awareness and information about cervical cancer and HPV may impede a national vaccination campaign.

Efforts by the Rotary Club of El Tahrir have shown that misconceptions about HPV and cervical cancer are easily debunked by using materials that are culturally sensitive and by including local women as leaders of the campaigns. United to End Cervical Cancer in Egypt will increase awareness and dispel myths about HPV, leading to more demand for vaccination, cervical cancer screenings, and treatment. These efforts will

demonstrate the need for a national immunization program and help determine the best way to deliver these services.

Rotary Egypt is well-suited to lead the first cervical cancer prevention program in Egypt starting in the greater Cairo region, because Rotary members bring significant networks and technical experience in disease prevention and treatment, as well as intimate knowledge of target communities, to their work in eliminating this preventable disease.

### **Sponsor**

The Rotary Club of El Tahrir

Rotary Club El Tahrir will implement the program with their partners District 2451 in Cairo and Egyptian clubs, including, but not limited to, the Rotary Clubs of Giza Metropolitan, Cairo Royal, and Kasr El-Nile.

### **Implementing partners**

Egyptian Ministry of Health and Population Presidential Initiative for Cancer Early Detection (PICE)

The Egyptian Society of Colposcopy and Cervical Pathology

Cairo University's Obstetrics and Gynecology Department

Sona3 el Khair Development Foundation

### **The intervention**

Based on the WHO's global strategy to accelerate the elimination of cervical cancer, United to End Cervical Cancer in Egypt focuses on three interventions: awareness, vaccination, and screening.

Key program activities include:

- Raising awareness about the importance of the HPV vaccine and regular screenings for cervical cancer
- Administering HPV vaccines to girls ages 9-15
- Screening women for HPV ages 25-64
- Referring cases of cervical cancer for further treatment in specialized cancer institutes

The program also includes training health care workers, school administrators, and school staff about HPV and cervical cancer and the need for preventive care. This enables people in key positions to counsel women and girls in a culturally sensitive manner.

Data collected through the program activities will lead to a more comprehensive understanding about the causes and incidence of HPV and cervical cancer in the greater Cairo region. It will also provide insight into effective prevention measures and what skills and knowledge are still needed. The data will offer evidence for the national health ministry and other stakeholders to make these services sustainable for the long term.

and demonstrate the effectiveness of a national HPV immunization and screening program.

### **Key measurable results**

- Outcome: Increase the awareness of and knowledge about HPV and cervical cancer among girls, parents, teachers, and the general public in the greater Cairo region. This will be achieved by conducting culturally sensitive educational sessions in schools and community centers and targeting 4 million people through multimedia broadcast campaigns.
- Outcome: Increase the use of the HPV vaccine. This will be accomplished by purchasing and administering the vaccine to 32,000 girls ages 9-15.
- Outcome: Increase the use of screening services to detect cervical cancer cases earlier in target areas across Greater Cairo. This will be achieved by screening 10,000 women between the ages of 25-64 for HPV and referring those with cervical cancer for further screening and treatment.
- Outcome: Strengthen the capacity of the health system to provide screenings and treatment for HPV and cervical cancer. This will be achieved by providing sensitivity training for 15,000 health care professionals.
- Outcome: Gather more information about the incidence of HPV and cervical cancer, the level of vaccination, and people's attitudes about them to inform a national strategy toward eliminating cervical cancer. This will be achieved by collecting and analyzing data from the program activities and participants for the health ministry and other stakeholders.

### **Why was this program selected?**

After Egypt's successful campaign to screen 10 million women for breast cancer, Rotary members and partners now have an opportunity to leverage the government's interest in women's health and to demonstrate the need for HPV vaccinations and cervical cancer screenings to be part of a national health strategy.

Almost 350,000 women worldwide died from cervical cancer in 2020. According to the International Agency for Research on Cancer, about 90% of those deaths occur in low- and middle-income countries like Egypt.

Globally, Rotary clubs and districts are engaged in activities to prevent these deaths. So in addition to its effects in Egypt, United to End Cervical Cancer will serve as an example for members in similar cultural contexts who want to expand cervical cancer efforts in their own countries.

"By increasing awareness and promoting preventive care for cervical cancer, we can save lives and create healthier communities in Egypt," said Dr. Amal El-Sisi, Professor of Pediatrics, Consultant Pediatric Cardiology Cairo University and member of the Rotary

Club of El Tahrir. “As we gather data for the first time on the HPV and cervical cancer burden in the Greater Cairo area, we are gaining crucial insights into the overall prevalence in Egypt. Upscaling our efforts will enable us to reach more women and girls in Egypt and empower them with the knowledge and tools they need to take control of their health.”

**Contact**

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