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E/ESCWA/CL2.GPID/2022/1/POLICY BRIEF.3

# BUILDING FORWARD BETTER

## Long-term care for older persons in the Arab region

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*This brief is based on PDR 9, available at:*
*https://www.unescwa.org/publications/population-development-report-9*

# Long-term care (LTC)

## What is LTC?

- LTC services allow for older persons to continue participating in the social, economic and public spheres.
- They are crucial in supporting older people through their life course and as their care needs change over time.

## Challenges

- In addition to the ongoing socio-demographic changes in the region, the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly affected the global LTC market.
- The scarcity of information and statistics on formal LTC services in the Arab region makes it challenging to develop evidence-based policies.

## Opportunities

- With culturally sensitive and high-quality LTC services in place, the burden on the family is shared and reduced, and older persons are better able to 'age in place'.

### Fully-independent older people

- Community participation
- Later life learning
- Day centres
- Home support services
- Preventative services
- Digital literacy

### Older people with care needs

- Home care
- Day care
- Home support services
- Supported living
- Family support services
- Community support

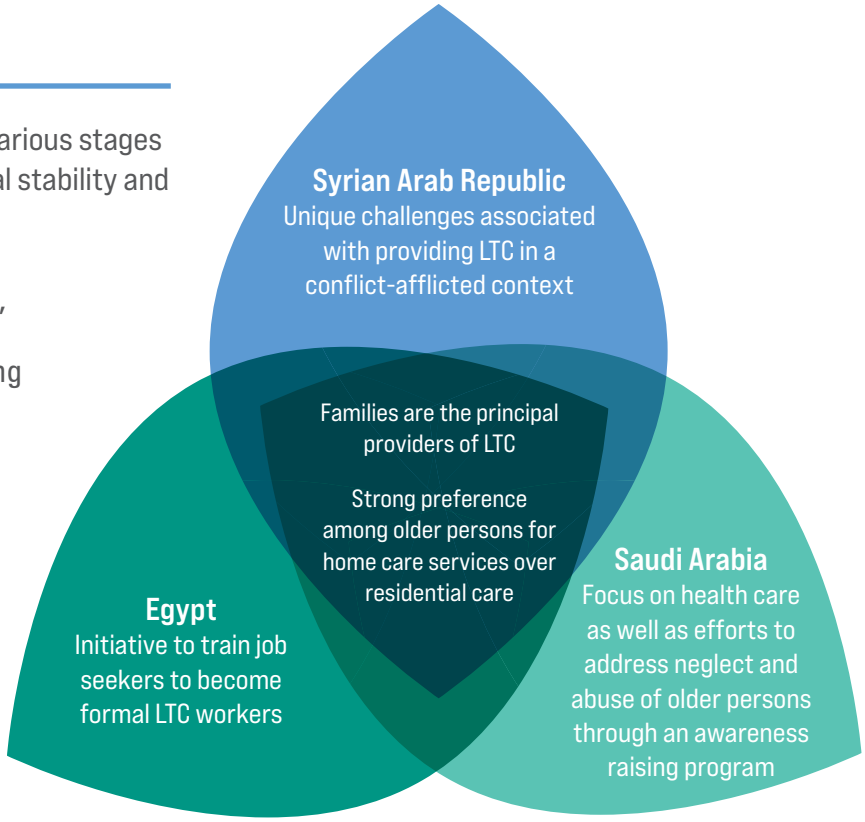
### Older people with complex needs

- Care homes
- Nursing homes
- Palliative care
- Family support services
- Specialist care services (e.g. dementia care)

# Case studies

Three case studies represent countries at various stages of the ageing transition, economic and social stability and sub-regions, among other characteristics.

- **Syrian Arab Republic:** moderate ageing, low income, and relatively low health care expenditure per capita, transitioning from a prolonged conflict.
- **Egypt:** low-middle income populous country in the North Africa region.
- **Saudi Arabia:** high-income Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) country.



# Formal LTC markets in the Arab region

## Key messages

- Families in the region provide care to older persons. Nevertheless, formal LTC markets are emerging.
- The increasing numbers of older persons coupled with evolving living arrangements have created more demand for formal LTC services.

## Challenges

- The lack of structures and regulations in the current LTC economy carries significant safeguarding risks related to the quality of care and jobs.
- The costing model indicates that countries in the region are required to devote considerable funds to respond to current changes in their population structures.

## Opportunities

- LTC provision is reliant on human interactions and relationships. It is one of the few sectors that will continue its reliance on human labour despite technological advances that have replaced many jobs with machines and robotics.

> Globally, it is estimated that nearly 40 per cent of projected job opportunities in the coming three years will be in the care economy (World Economic Forum).

**Goal: develop culturally sensitive and high-quality LTC services**

**Policy recommendations**

**Short-term**

- Assess the current provision of LTC services.
- Design policies that reduce the financial burden on family caregivers.
- Promote innovation and technology to serve older persons' needs.
- Promote the self-care and independence of older persons.
- Design pilot programmes, with a focus on home care support.
- Incorporate informal caregivers into the LTC economy.
- Design LTC training programmes and standards.
- Assess the suitability and viability of existing funding models.

**Medium-term**

- Pilot, implement and evaluate a diverse set of services.
- Establish equality in access and utilization of LTC services.
- Ensure the diversity of the LTC workforce.
- Set up and expand registration and regulatory standards.
- Create a range of job roles and career opportunities.
- Analyse the cost effectiveness of different services.

**Long-term**

- Adopt a recurrent process of evaluation and improvement of LTC services.
- Encourage investment in research on geriatrics and long-term care.
- Ensure transferability of certificates and skills.
- Work in partnership with training institutions, older people and the workforce to enhance training programmes.
- Build infrastructure for specialized LTC services.
- Develop sustainable funding models.

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22-00409B