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FEEDBACK REPORT ON THE ANTI-DOPING POLICY ADVICE PROJECT

COUNTRY ASSESSMENT REPORT

SAUDI ARABIA

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The ideas and opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors; they do not necessarily reflect the views of UNESCO and do not commit the Organization in any way.

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❖ Introduction

Saudi Arabian Anti-doping Committee (SAADC) was established in 2004 to act as the independent national anti-doping organization for Saudi Arabia for planning, coordinating, implementing, monitoring and advocating improvements in doping control in Saudi Arabia and vigorously pursuing all potential anti-doping rule violations as well as planning, implementing anti-doping information, education and prevention programs and promoting anti-doping research as per WADA code and UNESCO convention.

There is a need to implement measures and tools to assess such objectives and how to implement policies and programs in fighting against doping in Saudi Arabia. This assessment report will focus on effectiveness and efficiency, with respect to the proper measures adopted by SAADC, the institutions involved, the policies, strategies managed within SAADC against doping. It is based on both a qualitative and quantitative approach. It will address all gaps in fighting against doping in Saudi Arabia as well as recommendations and suggestions and areas of improvement and future plan for better fighting against doping at the national level, international level, training and education and research level.

1. THE FIGHT AGAINST DOPING AT NATIONAL LEVEL

There is existing collaboration put in place between Saudi Arabian anti-doping Committee (SAADC) and Saudi Food and Drug authority (Saudi FDA), Saudi customs, Saudi sport federations and Military sectors (sport departments), Ministry of interior, Ministry of defense and Ministry of national guard in regarding doping control and education. However, such collaboration is not optimal and there is a need for wider cooperation and collaboration.

There is no existing direct collaboration with crime and police departments, however, it is case by case cooperation, and task force will be formed to investigate such particular case in relation to crime and drug abuse or if there is information about selling prohibited substances in sports halls centres. Otherwise crime and police investigation is outside the scope of SAADC. Issues related to alcohol and drugs in Saudi Arabia are responsibilities of drugs control commission and usually outside the scope of SAADC. We recommend such cooperation to be done in a structural frame work to be more efficient and productive.

Customs services in Saudi Arabia usually responsible for release of all goods, materials and drugs entry though the Saudi borders (lands or airport borders), there is a direct and strong collaboration between customs and Saudi FDA for releasing and registrations of all drugs. Saudi FDA has an office in the borders to implement such policy. SAADC is not involved in such collaboration with customs, there is a lack of information regarding the seizing of the prohibited substances by customs, and we do not know the magnitude of the problem because customs services do not communicate with SAADC directly to inform us about such information. Performances enhancing substances usually are not priority for customs and usually not to be seized if they imported for individual use.

There is potential and planned future collaboration between SAADC and Saudi FDA, first collaboration started in Dec 2014 by a meeting between the president of SAADC and vice president of Saudi FDA regarding the food and vitamins supplement, regulations and supplement registration and we are currently planning to collaborate more with Saudi FDA regarding prohibited substances use and control in the community. We know such collaboration still in its beginning but it is going to be

expand in near future, one of Saudi FDA executive leaders is already officially member of SAADC board and he is working as a link between SAADC and Saudi FDA.

There is no direct official collaboration between SAADC and educational institutions, public and private research institutes, such cooperation is lacking, however many universities academic staff and doctors voluntarily cooperating with SAADC, they are usually members of SAADC committees such TUE committee, hearing committee and research committee.

We recommend strongly that such cooperation widen and expand to involve cooperation in educational activities of universities directed to young students in regard to prohibited substances and doping. Doping control should be part of educational curriculum of sport department of the universities.

Doping research usually is not priority in research centres in Saudi Arabia. Funding usually going to more important health problems in the community, however, this year,

SAADC successfully obtained funding from king Abdullah international medical research centre to conduct study about the prevalence and attitude of prohibited substances use among athletes in Saudi Arabia.

There is very good collaboration between SAADC and sports governing bodies and sports organisers and federations, SAADC has positive imaging and respect for its roles among such bodies and federations and we never had lack of cooperation with them. Excellent and strong cooperation and communications and good support

However, we observe that some of governing bodies and sports organisers and federations lack of the awareness of some doping policies and lack of experience of dealing with complicated cases. SAADC usually help in resolving such issues.

SAADC usually gives full support for governing bodies and sports organisers and federations in education and increase such awareness and how to deal with complicated cases.

Fight against the trafficking of forbidden substances for use by athletes: production, movement, importation, supply and distribution of forbidden substances and methods is usually the job of customs and Saudi FDA as part of their general job for fighting against trafficking of goods, materials and drugs in Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Arabia is huge country (almost have of Europe area) and has long land borders with many countries including Iraq, Jordan, Yamen, Red see and Arabian Gulf states, Saudi border authorities are unable to capture all doping substances entered to Saudi Arabia.

The distribution of forbidden substances and methods in the community difficult to tackle it and prevent it, there is great effort done by the drug control authorities regarding fighting against drugs in the community but other prohibited substances are not priority and SADDC has no power to observe or control of distribution of forbidden substances and methods among the Saudi population. Ministry of communications is responsible about Internet monitoring and mainly block the non-ethical websites. Sale website for doping substances usually are not monitored and easy accessible by athletes and general population.

We suggest to strengthen the relationship between SAADC and customs, Saudi FDA, Saudi border authorities and ministry of communications to fight against importing and distribution of all doing substances in the community. Customs should have a representative member in SAADC board.

Currently there are no specific measures aimed at preventing and limiting the use and possession by athletes themselves of forbidden substances and methods. All measures currently available (e. g. education) are at the community level not for individualised athletes.

However, a positive result of adverse analytic findings among single athlete is excellent educational opportunities for his colleagues in the same team or other athletes to be aware and educated about use doing substances and its sequences.

For professional athletes, we recommend to terminate their contracts if they declared positive for prohibited substances as we believe this will be excellent measure to prevent and limit athletes from use or possession forbidden substances.

Measures taken against athletes' staff who breach anti-doping rules clearly stated in the code and implanted very well , however, athletes 'staff breach anti-doping rules is not common in Saudi Arabia , there is only single case in Saudi Arabia this season (2014-2015).

Measures aimed at establishing good practices for the trade and supply of food supplements are mainly the job of Saudi FDA, SAADC is not directly involved in such measures, however, there is future planned cooperation between SAADC and Saudi FDA in this regards.

The measures aimed at establishing good practices for the trade and supply of food supplements still weak in Saudi Arabia, you can buy any supplement from the trade pharmacies without control or prescription, we are working hard with Saudi FDA to make such roles tight and implant such policies. There is a need to restrict sale of food supplement to specific centres under the supervision of Saudi FDA and ministry of health.

SAADC funded directly by the Saudi government, Saudi Arabian National Olympic Committee to implement the Saudi national anti-doping program. This is a fixed annual funding. Funding also comes from local or regional events organized in Saudi Arabia and arranged by the organizing committee to allocated specific budget for that particular event. Overall: funding is reasonable and cover all expenses and activities, however, the indirect funding is not in regular bases and usually non-sustainable. In SAADC, we are looking for increase the number of the tests but we are limited by the funding sources and by the human resources and infrastructures.

SAADC suggested in several occasions to Saudi sport federations to withdraw sport-related financial support to athletes or teams during the duration of a suspension warranted by a breach of anti-doping rules but this not implemented very well. Unfortunately, this is outside the boundaries of SAADC

We suggest that withdrawal (e g salary stopped) should be implemented very well at least at the level of elite professional athletes. SAADC needs to be aware if such action undertaken by the sport federations. There is a need to design or formulate official checklist form including financial support withdrawal and feedback.

Withdrawing financial support to sports organisers or anti-doping agencies who are not compliant with the World Anti-Doping Code or with anti-doping rules adopted pursuant to the Code is very important step in fighting against doping in sport, no such experience happened before in Saudi Arabia because all sport federations compliant with WADA code, but if it is happened, SAADC will communicate with Saudi Olympic committee to take action.

SAADC is solo organizer for all activities of doping in Saudi Arabia. There is no other body in Saudi Arabia responsible about doping control at the national level.

Agreements concluded by sports governing bodies or anti-doping authorities allowing for the control of their members by accredited teams in others States do not exist in Saudi Arabia because SAADC is the only body in Saudi Arabia fully responsible about doping control. SAADC has enough resources to conduct all tests by our capacities.

There is no accredited laboratory in Saudi Arabia, therefore, Support to sports organisers or anti-doping agencies for the analysis of samples taken by an accredited laboratory does not exist in Saudi Arabia.

2. THE FIGHT AGAINST DOPING AT INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

SAADC is member of WADA and member of UNESCO convention in fighting against doping in sport. SAADC is also present in most on the international meetings and conferences organized by WADA and by continental federations and RADO. SAADC has positive image and reputation in the international anti-doping community and has strong cooperation, supporting and facilitating international cooperation with anti-doping federations and compliance with WADA code. SAADC is fully support such cooperation up to high standards and access, communication with all international organizations in doping control, or organizing meetings and symposiums.

SAADC has an excellent example of support and cooperation with WADA including comply with the code, sharing information and donations. Funding of WADA shared equally with the Olympic movement usually paid by the Saudi government (Saudi Olympic committee), it is increasing every year. SAADC has no problem in this regard. SAADC totally facilitating doping tests performed on competing or non-competing athletes by WADA or anti-doping agencies within the national territory, However, WADA usually delegate SAADC to conduct such test on their behave.

SADDAC facilitating cross border movement of accredited anti-doping teams in many sport events around the world and I think this functional very well without any problems. Safe cross border transport of samples is very efficient and working well without any problems, we have a private professional carrier in this regard. SAADC has very good and efficient cooperation with international organizations of doping tests.

There is no accredited laboratory in Saudi Arabia but SAADC fully cooperate with the accredited laboratories mainly Swiss laboratory without any problems , Saudi Arabia has all capabilities to set laboratories according to the international standards but there is already new laboratory operated in Qatar state which will be enough to cover our region. Currently there is no written agreement available in Saudi Arabia for support and backing of reciprocal tests between anti-doping agencies but there is support for reciprocal tests and cooperation between anti-doping agencies based on competitions and we think is working effectively so far.

In the regional level, SAADC is part of RADO. RADO including the following countries, Saudi Arabia , Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Oman and Yemen. It is a very good example for regional cooperation and mutual recognition in compliance with WADA code in response to all issues related to doping control in our region. They are nearby countries sharing the same culture and the same language and easy travel among members. We meet in several occasions per year and in during competitions and there is full cooperation and support to each other in our region.

3. EDUCATION AND TRAINING

SAADC organized many Course, workshops, seminars and exhibitions and using social media and website as stated in the interim report concerning the whole sport community in general (sport ethics, negative health impacts) and more particularly athletes and their staff (tests procedures, athlete's rights and responsibilities, lists of forbidden substances and methods) relative to the fight against doping

Overall, education implementation is very efficient, doping prevalence rate decreased from 6% in 2012 to 2% in 2014 as result of active educational programs and awareness campaigns.

The image of SAADC and doing control in media became positive and supportive as result of education and training programs and because of the credibility of SAADC among people working in the media.

However, still there is a gap, students in the schools and universities do not receive enough education about doping control and this need to be considered in the educational curriculum by the ministry of education. Codes of conduct, codes of good practices, and codes of ethics from all sources are usually part of educational programs and have the same promotion of other materials.

Involvement of athletes and their staff in the fight against doping is still limited in Saudi Arabia and not implemented very well. Doping still considered in the community as negative image on the athletes who previously was using prohibited substances even after completion of sanction period and retouring back to sport activities. Such athletes usually refuse to be involved in fight against doping.

SAADC tried to convince such athletes to be part of educational program in fight against doping but we are not yet successful, we have one failure case. We encourage media to try to change such negative attitude as well we enhance athletes to be part of education against doping and consider such attitude as positive.

SAADC supporting the creation of training and educational programs by sports organisers. However, this is not yet optimal as not all sport organizers create educational programs for their athletes. In Saudi Arabia, we have around 180 sport clubs and not all of them they do have the capabilities of conducting such programs.

There is no formal educational programs regarding doping control in the schools and universities but educational materials has been introduced to sport institutions but still not formal and there is need for extra effort to implement it fully as part of educational materials.

4. RESEARCH

Research and scientific committee established in 2013 to deal with scientific affairs as well as studies and researches. It serves as the scientific reference to SAADC, the main objective of which is to obtain the required information about prohibited substances and prohibited methods, in addition to other scientific studies and researches and provide SAADC with such information.

The committee chaired by the vice president of SAADC and a member from Saudi FDA and a voluntary professor from the college of the pharmacy. Currently, the committee conducting a study among athletes across the country about: Prevalence, knowledge and attitude of prohibited substances use among Saudi sport players. The study received ethical approval and funding from king Abdullah international medical research centre.

There is a gap in the research to address doping violations in this part of the world including Saudi Arabia. This gap may occur because all regional anti-doping committees including SAADC are newly established and developing early experience about doping; in addition, research has not been a priority. There is no research address prevention, screening, social and behavioural aspects, consequences on health, non-doping training techniques, doping forecasting. There is no known estimate of the number of adult athletes who intentionally use doping in Saudi Arabia and the region. However, sport federations, sport authorities, and experts have reported frequent cases on multiple occasions, and it is believed that doping and drug abuse are common among Saudi athletes. Without the availability of a study in our country to address the use of performance enhancing substances in the general population, it is impossible to conclude that use of performance enhancing substances is more common in Saudi athletes than the general population.

There is a need to conduct more research program in Saudi Arabia regarding doping from all aspects and there is a need for more cooperation with research centers, universities, relevant sport organisations and researchers in this regards.

Research programs must comply with international ethical rules and in compliance with principles of the Code and the use of results by athletes and sports organisations.

❖ Conclusion

Based on this assessment report, SAADC has a successful role in fighting against doping in Saudi Arabia.

It has great achievements in regarding implementing the WADA code and UNESCO convention particularly by conducting the national anti-doping program as well as training and education.

SAADC has full support from the Saudi Olympic committee and from national sport federations with good reputation and respect. SAADC also has very effective and efficient cooperation with international community including all sport federations.

SAADC has limited role in fighting against doping outside its boundaries. It has limited cooperation with other governmental organizations and has no capacity in prevention or stopping trafficking of forbidden substances or distribution of prohibited substances in the community.

There is a lack of cooperation with educational institutions, research centres. We recommend such cooperation to be done in a structural frame work to be more efficient and productive. Doping control should be part of educational curriculum of sport institutions.

There is a need to conduct more research programs in Saudi Arabia regarding doping from all aspects and there is a need for more cooperation with research centres, universities, relevant sport organisations and researchers in regard to prevention, screening, social and behavioural aspects of doping in the community.