Haissam Chraiteh – Country Chair, Sanofi Algeria



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17.10.2018

Tags: Algeria, Manufacturing, Sanofi, Strategy

Haissam Chraiteh, country chair for Sanofi Algeria, expands on Sanofi's ground-breaking foothold in Algerian local production, and how its partnership with the authorities ultimately manifests itself in better provision for patients.

What are your impressions of the Algerian market after two years here as country chair for Sanofi Algeria?

From a business point of view, Algeria has a great deal to offer. Not only is this the second largest market on the African continent, but it is also a heavyweight when compared to the Middle Eastern markets. One of the characteristics that immediately stands out in Algeria is the sheer importance the authorities place on securing access to healthcare for patients. This is rather exceptional within the region. Algeria is one of the only countries where care is provided universally and covered by the state. Also distinctive is the maturity of the local healthcare infrastructure. Because of a robust contextual environment, enterprises like Sanofi are able to generate more of an impact than would otherwise be the case. This really encourages us to go the extra mile and strive for success.

How would you describe Sanofi's legacy in Algeria?

Looking at Sanofi over the last 27 years, we were an early mover in embracing the concept of local production way before localization became enshrined as a core government priority. We strongly believe that being close to the patient helps us better serve the local needs. We also believe we have talented Algerian workforce allowing us to manufacture our product locally with the same high quality standards as the one we have worldwide.

Most of all, our participation in the country healthcare economy has been multifaceted. We also believe that healthcare is a right for everyone when you live in city suburbs or in rural areas. We have set up projects in preventative medicine with the mobile clinic allowing to perform diagnostics for diabetes and cardiovascular diseases in remote areas.

Beyond our commitment to the Algerian economy and our strive to reduce inequality between urban and rural areas we have also launched a clinical research academy, supporting the build of foundations for future advancements in clinical research within Algeria. We are simultaneously working with medical professionals to improve the quality of life of patients, providing nutritional education and awareness on how to best avoid complications. Our engagement has been total.

Our partnership with the authorities is based on our mutual trust and goals to improve the life of Algerian patients. We have a long heritage in Algeria and we try, whenever we can, to make a difference in people’s life. Beyond the treatment itself, our purpose in Algeria is empowering the lives of those who have health challenges by protecting, enabling and supporting them, so they can live life to its full potential.

One piece of recent exciting news is the expansion of your industrial footprint, by upgrading your present facilities. Tell us about these developments.

We decided that, after a sustainable growth in Algeria, the time was ripe to invest in a high-grade industrial complex capable of manufacturing different forms all the way up highly sophisticated products. The new 6-acre facility is earmarked to manufacture more than 100 million units per year with an investment of over 85 million euros. When officially opened this October, the factory is ranked as the largest industrial complex of pharmaceutical production and distribution in Africa.

We already own two existing production plants – one located at Oued Smar specializing in solid forms, and another in Ain Benian dedicated to liquid forms. Our continuous investment in local production will considerably enhance our capacity for local manufacturing and thus ensure domestic availability and security of supply of our products in large volumes. All in all, this is a

great statement of Sanofi’s long-term engagement in Algeria for patient welfare. Furthermore, with the support of authorities, this industrial complex will also be brought to be developed with new forms and new ranges of products in the future.

How do these projects link in with the Algerian authorities’ bold ambition to make the country a biopharma hub?

Sidi Abdellah has actually been designated one of those spots where a potential future biopharma cluster can take root. Ambitions of this magnitude take time to materialize and the first step is about putting in the foundations and a supporting ecosystem. Sanofi has again been quick out of the starting blocks to embrace the long-term aspirations of the Algerian authorities. We took decisive steps to localize the state-of-the-art production with latest generation therapies. We believe that it is fundamentally important to align nearly with the ambitions of the local stakeholders and that means not only the government, but also the rest of the healthcare industry. We are very keen to understand healthcare needs on the ground and be at the forefront of driving this spirit of innovation. This is a country with massive expectations. As a health journey partner, we aim to be that true partner that supports the country in manifold ways with its development trajectory.

So you haven’t been encountering any real risks or hurdles when pressing ahead with your localization strategy?

We have adopted a step-wise, logical and sequential approach. We are keen to be a pioneer in helping and enabling Algeria to scale the pharmaceutical manufacturing value chain and that means starting by putting the right foundations in place as R&D activities.

For that, it requires skilled personnel on the ground who are trained to undertake clinical research activities in line with international norms and standards. This is very much the space that we are focusing on right now with our clinical research academy. We aim to contribute to the global effort supporting the Algerian clinical research to be recognized internationally. By doing this we will open the door to Algeria really delivering on its true clinical trials potential. The vision is not just for handful of clinical trials to be conducted on Algerian soil, but rather for this country to become a premier and much sought-after clinical trials destination. Our mission, right now, is to make a difference by supporting Algerian specialists with prerequisite training required to be able to

conduct successful clinical research in the future. In other words, we are simultaneously growing and deepening our scientific footprint in Algeria, in parallel to our industrial footprint.

You mentioned that you want this local affiliate to be the showcase for other local offices to aspire to. How far is Algeria in the life sciences sector from becoming a role model for the region?

Algeria is already at the stage where it projects leadership. Algeria has forged strong relationships with other African states, so the groundwork is already in place**.** There is also the wealth of knowledge, and infrastructure, which renders the country well suited to assuming a regional leadership role in the life sciences domain. Other countries will be competing strongly to host the new pan-African Medicines Agency, but Algeria is most definitely a strong candidate.

What do you want to be remembered for as country chair of Sanofi in Algeria?

My objective is to see how we can move the needle for Sanofi in Algeria, two or three steps further. The legacy will be perhaps the industrial footprint and breaking new ground in Africa for the production of innovative products. I am a pharmacist by background and training, so I want to be sure that I have done something that will be of benefit to the patient and public health. If I can say that we have contributed to do something positive for them, I will be very satisfied with my legacy.

Can you give us an example of some of your initiatives for healthcare prevention?

Our two mobile clinic dedicated to diabetes and cardiovascular can diagnose a patient in a couple of hours, instead of someone waiting a longer period and having to travel from an area to another to undergo tests. This delivers a real benefit when it comes to simplifying care pathways, because ordinarily a citizen would have had to visit several specialists before they would get to the point at which the test would be performed. We have specialists from other African countries who come and observe how these mobile clinics operate as a sharing best practice, which demonstrates that we are fast becoming a role model and our activities a benchmark that other countries will be seeking to emulate and replicate.

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