

WHO BAHRAIN NEWSLETTER

Image

'Yalla Namshi' campaign to celebrate Bahrain Sports Day



**World Health
Organization**

Bahrain



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A close-up photograph of a person's hands weaving palm leaves into a basket. The person is wearing a gold watch on their left wrist. A smartphone is visible on the surface next to the basket. The background is a light-colored, textured surface.

Championing local efforts to achieve better health for all



Welcoming notes from WHO Representative

It is my pleasure to welcome you to this edition of the WHO Country Office newsletter, highlighting the collaborative efforts undertaken in the first half of 2025 to promote, provide and protect health and well-being in Bahrain. This year marks the start of implementing WHO's Fourteenth General Programme of Work (GPW 14), which sets our global strategic direction for 2025–2028, with a renewed focus on advancing health equity, strengthening resilience, and delivering impact at country level. These priorities came into sharp focus at the 78th World Health Assembly in May, where Member States adopted the landmark WHO Pandemic Agreement—an unprecedented step toward stronger, more equitable global health preparedness.

Here at home, the country office has continued to work hand in hand with national counterparts to advance shared priorities. The Director-General's visit in February marked a key milestone in our partnership, reinforcing Bahrain's leadership in primary care innovation and the use of advanced technologies. We also signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Royal University for Women, further expanding WHO's collaboration with academia to strengthen the health system, women's health, and public health education.

Simultaneously, we advanced efforts to create health-supportive environments and address the social determinants of health. This included officially recognizing the Capital governorate as the first healthy governorate in the Eastern Mediterranean Region and supporting evaluation missions in Muharraq governorate and at the University College of Bahrain to expand the Healthy Cities and Health-Promoting Universities networks. Health observances were an opportunity to engage communities—from Bahrain Sports Day to World No Tobacco Day—raising awareness and promoting healthier lifestyles through youth-led advocacy.

Additionally, we remained steadfast in our commitment to health system strengthening. Our efforts included building national capacity in cause of death registration and coding, providing technical guidance for the National Health Survey's data analysis, convening a multisectoral consultation on monitoring environmental health indicators, and training physicians in the use of the WHO Trauma Registry Tool to enhance trauma care and data quality.

I would like to thank Dr Tasnim Atatrah, who concluded her tenure as WHO Representative in Bahrain in February 2025. Her dedication and leadership laid the groundwork for many of the achievements featured in this newsletter.

We remain grateful for the Government of Bahrain, our UN partners, and all stakeholders for their continued collaboration. Together, we move closer to achieving Health for All.

Dr Assad Hafeez
WHO Representative, a.i. in Bahrain



**We remain steadfast in our
commitment to health system
strengthening.**



Dr Assad Hafeez
WHO Representative, a.i. in Bahrain

19–27 MAY 2025, GENEVA, SWITZERLAND

WHA78 concludes with historic **Pandemic Agreement** and stronger global health commitments



At the Seventy-eighth World Health Assembly (WHA78), convened under the theme “One World for Health”, WHO reaffirmed its commitment to equity and solidarity in global health—ensuring that all people, everywhere, have a fair chance at a healthy life.

Bahrain takes vice presidency role at WHA78 highlighting regional leadership

H.E. Dr Jalila bint Al Sayyed Jawad Hassan, Minister of Health, led Bahrain’s delegation to WHA78 and was elected Vice President of the Assembly, representing the Eastern Mediterranean Region. This recognition not only highlights her leadership and dedication to advancing public health, but also reflects Bahrain’s proactive engagement within WHO governing bodies and its ongoing contributions to multilateral dialogues on key global health priorities—including pandemic preparedness, universal health coverage (UHC), and health systems resilience.

Member States approve resolutions on UHC, climate change, AMR, and more

WHA78 demonstrated a strong commitment to advancing WHO’s global health agenda across a wide range of pressing issues. Member States adopted key resolutions on UHC, antimicrobial resistance (AMR), mental health, and digital health—extending the Global Digital Health Strategy to 2027. The Assembly also approved a landmark Global Action Plan on Climate Change and Health (2025–2028), along with a new global target to halve the health impacts of air pollution by 2040. First-ever resolutions on lung and kidney health were endorsed, aligning with the focus of the upcoming UN General Assembly on noncommunicable diseases.

Additional resolutions addressed rare diseases, social connection, and lead elimination, as well as expanded regulation of breast-milk substitute marketing, particularly in the digital space. Member States also recommitted to eradicating Guinea worm disease and established two new global health days: World Cervical Cancer Elimination Day and World Prematurity Day.





WHA78 adopts historic Pandemic Agreement to boost global preparedness

A historic milestone of the Assembly was the adoption of the first-ever WHO Pandemic Agreement, marking the culmination of three years of intergovernmental negotiations. The Agreement establishes a framework to strengthen global coordination for pandemic prevention, preparedness, and response, with a focus on equitable and timely access to vaccines, therapeutics, and diagnostics. In the coming year, Member States will consult on the Pathogen Access and Benefit Sharing system, an annex to the Agreement that aims to enhance equitable access to medical advancements.

The WHO Pandemic Agreement is the second international legal agreement negotiated under Article 19 of the WHO Constitution. The first was the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, adopted in 2003 and entered into force in 2005.

Momentum grows towards sustainable financing for WHO

Amid a shifting global financial landscape, Member States approved a 20% increase in assessed contributions at WHA78 to strengthen WHO's financial stability. Further reinforcing this commitment, a high-level pledging event during the assembly saw global health leaders pledge over US\$210 million for WHO's Investment Round.

The fundraising campaign is aimed at supporting the implementation of WHO's Fourteenth General Programme of Work, the Organization's strategic framework for 2025–2028. The new pledges build on the US\$1.7 billion already mobilized since the launch of the Investment Round in May 2024, demonstrating growing momentum towards sustainable financing.

Bahrain leads regional dialogue on maximizing impact of health financing



**15-17 APRIL 2025,
MANAMA, BAHRAIN**

Bahrain hosted the second regional health financing forum, bringing together policymakers, senior leaders from the health and finance sectors, and global experts to address the growing challenges of health care financing across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and Eastern Mediterranean regions (EMR).

Under the theme “Increasing value for money in health spending”, the forum was organized by the World Bank, in partnership with the WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean and the Global Fund. It was hosted by the Ministry of Finance and National Economy, as well as the Supreme Council of Health.



The forum was inaugurated by H.E. Lieutenant General Dr Shaikh Mohammed bin Abdullah Al Khalifa, Chairman of the Supreme Council of Health, who emphasized Bahrain’s commitment to advancing sustainable and equitable health financing reforms. In a recorded message, Dr Hanan Balkhy, WHO Regional Director, emphasized the urgent need for innovative, equitable, and sustainable health financing strategies to expand access to essential services, reduce out-of-pocket costs, and advance universal health coverage (UHC) in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Bringing together delegations from 14 countries across the Region, along with representatives from South Korea, Estonia, and Indonesia, the forum served as a dynamic platform for exchanging experiences and exploring innovative strategies to enhance efficiency, equity, and sustainability in health financing. Discussions spanned a range of critical topics, including pricing of essential health products, private sector engagement, and improvements in health care quality and pharmaceutical spending.

WHO played a central role throughout the forum. Dr Awad Mataria, Director of UHC/Health Systems for EMR, contributed both as a speaker and moderator in sessions focused on increasing value for money in health spending and financing in fragile settings. Dr Fethiye Gulin Gedik, Coordinator for Health Workforce Development, led a session on identifying and addressing workforce inefficiencies. Joining virtually, Dr Kalipso Chalkidou, Director of Health Financing at WHO Headquarters, participated in discussions on strengthening the Region’s health data ecosystem to drive better value for money.



Regional leaders gather in Bahrain to boost local **medicine and vaccine** production

12 MAY 2025, MANAMA, BAHRAIN

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THE REGIONAL
DIRECTOR'S REMARKS



The Ministry of Health hosted the Arab Forum for the Development of the Pharmaceutical and Vaccine Industry, in collaboration with the Gulf Health Council, the League of Arab States, and WHO.

The forum was inaugurated by H.E. Dr Jalila bint Al Sayyed Jawad Hassan, Minister of Health, and Dr Hanan Balkhy, WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean. In her opening remarks, H.E. Dr Hassan highlighted His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa's vision to foster Arab solidarity and address humanitarian challenges, underscoring the need for pharmaceutical self-reliance through infrastructure investment and localized vaccine production.

The forum convened representatives from health ministries, pharmaceutical and vaccine producers, private sector stakeholders, and international organizations to assess the current state of the pharmaceutical and vaccine industries in Arab countries. Discussions focused on enhancing international support for local manufacturing, addressing the challenges facing Arab pharmaceutical firms, and overcoming regulatory and technical barriers to growth.

The forum concluded with a set of actionable recommendations, including investing in research and development, enhancing infrastructure and workforce training, aligning regulatory frameworks across Arab countries, promoting foreign investment, ensuring the availability of raw materials, and fostering collaboration between academia and manufacturers.

This event builds on the Bahrain Declaration endorsed at the 33rd Arab Summit in 2024, which calls for advancing health care in conflict-affected areas and strengthening regional pharmaceutical and vaccine industries. The Declaration also emphasizes the importance of enhancing equitable access to essential medicines, developing local production capacity, and fostering regional cooperation—all key steps toward improving health security across Arab countries.

"I commend Bahrain's leadership and the League of Arab States for incorporating vital provisions in the Bahrain Declaration of the 33rd Arab Summit—aimed at improving health care for conflict-affected populations, ensuring access to essential medicines and treatment, and fostering a resilient regional pharmaceutical and vaccine industry."



Dr Hanan Balkhy
Regional Director for the
Eastern Mediterranean Region



WHO Director-General visits Bahrain to deepen strategic health collaboration



26–27 FEBRUARY 2025, MANAMA, BAHRAIN

Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General, made his second official visit to Bahrain since the establishment of the country office in 2021, reaffirming the longstanding and growing partnership between the Organization and Bahrain.

The visit included a series of strategic meetings with senior government officials, including HRH Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister; H.E. Lieutenant General Dr Shaikh Mohammed bin Abdullah Al Khalifa, Chairman of the Supreme Council of Health; H.E. Dr Jalila bint Al Sayyed Jawad Hassan, Minister of Health; and H.E. Dr Abdullatif bin Rashid Al Zayani, Minister of Foreign Affairs. Discussions focused on advancing collaboration across key priorities, including pandemic preparedness, noncommunicable disease prevention and management, and improving health service delivery for crisis-affected populations.

A notable milestone spotlighted during the visit was Bahrain's pioneering use of CRISPR gene-editing technology to treat a sickle cell anaemia patient. In a virtual meeting with patient Amjad Al Mahari—





also attended by H.E. the Minister of Health— Dr Tedros praised his resilience and commended Bahrain's leadership in adopting cutting-edge medical innovation. He underscored the global significance of this achievement in positioning Bahrain at the forefront of genomic medicine and its potential to reshape treatment pathways for hereditary blood disorders.

Dr Tedros also toured Halat Bu Maher Health Centre and the Royal Medical Services, gaining firsthand insights into Bahrain's integrated service delivery across primary health care and secondary care levels. The visits showcased national initiatives such as the "Choose Your Doctor" programme, which strengthens continuity of care and supports early disease detection. These innovations reflect Bahrain's commitment to achieving universal health coverage through strong primary care, data-driven service delivery, and equitable access to health services.

Culminating a visit rich in strategic dialogue and collaboration, the outcomes reaffirmed the strong and growing partnership between WHO and Bahrain. The visit underscored WHO's continued commitment to supporting Bahrain in advancing its national health priorities, strengthening health system resilience, and driving progress toward achieving Health for All.

WHO and Royal University for Women partner to advance public health and women's well-being



29 APRIL 2025, RIFFA, BAHRAIN

The WHO Country Office and the Royal University for Women (RUW) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to strengthen collaboration on health systems, women's health and well-being and public health education.

The MoU aims to promote health research, knowledge sharing and capacity-building — particularly through RUW's Women's Research Centre — while advancing gender-responsive health policies and prioritizing women's health in national and regional dialogues.

Deepening WHO's collaboration with academic institutions in Bahrain, the agreement reflects the Organization's core mission to promote, provide and protect health and well-being for all. It aligns with WHO's Fourteenth General Programme of Work (2025–2028), which prioritizes health equity and resilient health systems.

This collaboration builds on WHO's global academic engagement, which includes more than 800 collaborating centres in over 90 countries. Bahrain is home to two such centres: the University of Bahrain's WHO Collaborating Centre for Nursing Development—designated in 1990 as the first in the Eastern Mediterranean Region—and the Arabian Gulf University's WHO Collaborating Centre for Health Professionals' Educational Development, designated in 2019.

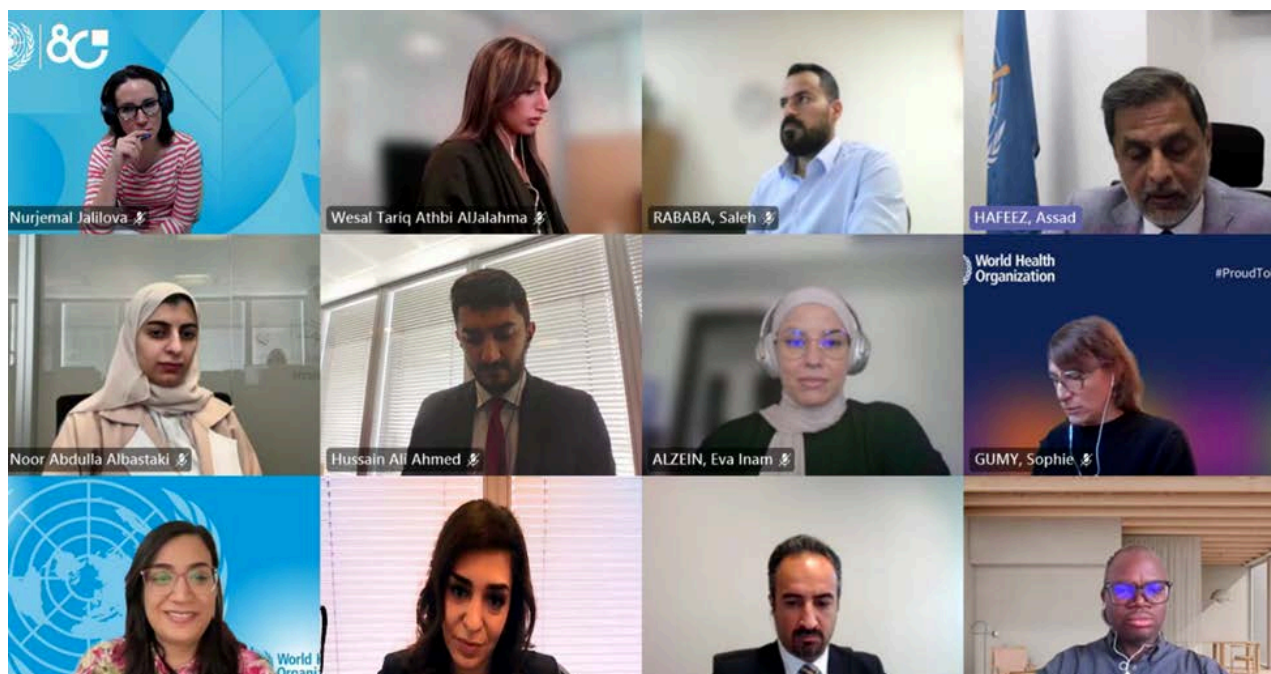
"This MoU with WHO reflects our shared vision for a healthier society paving the way for impactful research through collaboration with the RUW Women's Research Centre that place women at the centre of public health discussions in the Region."



Professor Riyad Hamzah,
RUW President



WHO advances environmental health SDG monitoring through technical consultation



29 MAY 2025, MANAMA, BAHRAIN

In collaboration with the Ministry of Sustainable Development and the United Nations Resident Coordinator Office, the WHO Country Office convened a technical consultation to strengthen Bahrain's national statistical capacity for monitoring environmental health-related Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) indicators, in line with internationally recognized methodologies and reporting standards.

Bringing together experts from multiple sectors, the consultation engaged around 15 specialists and statisticians from the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Sustainable Development, the Supreme Council for Environment, and the Information and eGovernment Authority, with technical guidance provided by WHO experts from the global and regional levels. Discussions focused on key environmental health indicators: 3.9.1 (mortality due to air pollution), 3.9.2 (mortality from unsafe water and sanitation), 3.9.3 (mortality from unintentional poisoning), and 11.6.2 (urban air quality – PM2.5 and PM10).

The consultation underscored the critical role of accurate and timely data in informing health policies and enabling effective SDG monitoring. While Bahrain's advanced digital health infrastructure offers a strong foundation, participants noted the need to enhance alignment with international definitions, calculation methods, and metadata standards. Key opportunities identified included leveraging existing platforms, such as the National Health Survey, to incorporate additional environmental health indicators and enhance data availability. Strengthening cooperation between the health and environmental sectors was also recognized as crucial for integrated and efficient reporting.

This session followed an earlier technical consultation held by WHO in March 2024, which addressed broader health-related SDG indicators, including 3.1.1 (maternal mortality ratio), 3.4.1 (noncommunicable diseases mortality rate), and 3.6.1 (mortality from road traffic injuries). That engagement focused on building statistical capacity and aligning Bahrain's health information system with international SDG reporting frameworks— objectives that continue to inform and complement the work undertaken in the May 2025 session.

Better Data, Better Health: WHO strengthens cause of death registration and coding capacity



9–12 FEBRUARY 2025, MANAMA, BAHRAIN

The country office partnered with the Ministry of Health to deliver a comprehensive four-day training workshop on cause of death registration and coding. It aimed to enhance the accuracy and reliability of mortality data by equipping physicians and medical coders with the specialized knowledge and practical skills required to register cause of death in line with international standards.

The workshop was inaugurated by Dr Samya Ali Bahram, Assistant Undersecretary for Public Health at the Ministry of Health, and Dr Eman Aly, Technical Officer for Health Information and Statistics at the WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean. In their opening remarks, both speakers emphasized the critical importance of accurate and standardized mortality data for understanding the burden of disease, detecting emerging health threats, and informing effective health policies.

Approximately 30 participants from both health and non-health sectors attended the training, including physicians and medical coders from the Ministry of

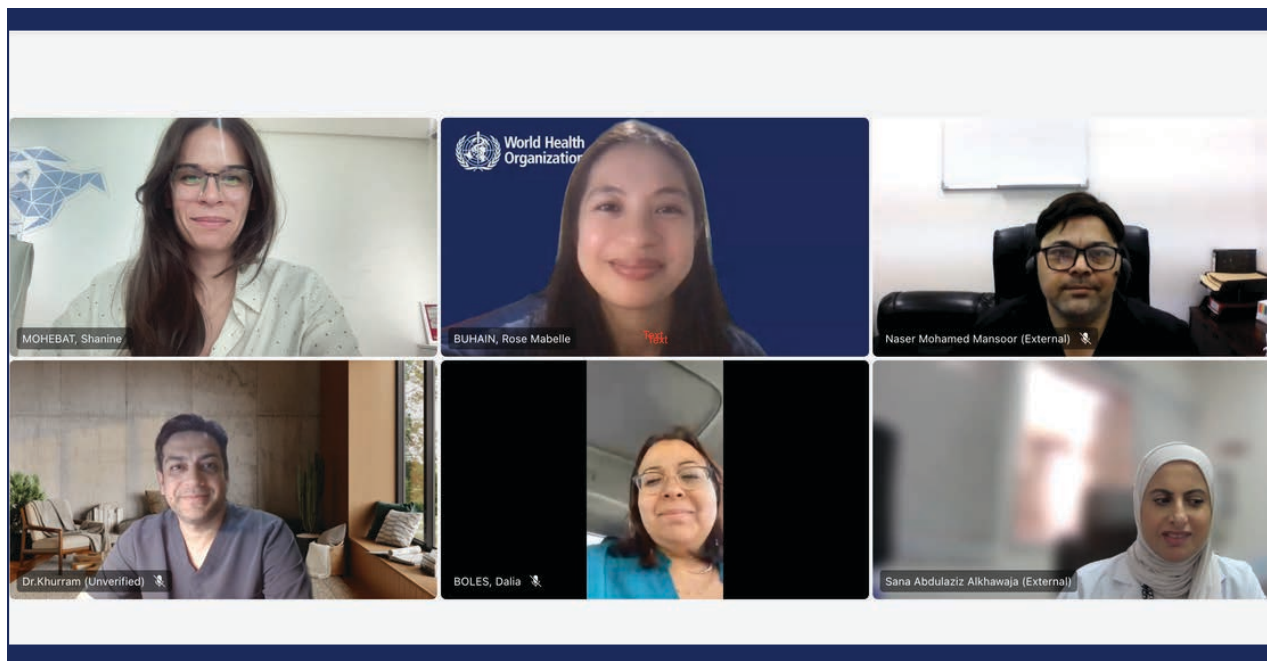
Health, Primary Health Care Centres, Government Hospitals, the Ministry of Interior, and the Public Prosecution.

Divided into two main segments, the first two days of the workshop focused on enhancing skills in cause of death registration, with participants trained to accurately complete the WHO international form of medical certificate of cause of death (2016). The second half concentrated on the International Classification of Diseases (ICD), the global standard for mortality and morbidity statistics. Participants engaged in practical coding exercises using the ICD Field Implementation Tool (ICD-FIT), gaining hands-on experience and receiving expert feedback on their coding practices.

This workshop marks a significant advancement in strengthening the country's health information system by ensuring that mortality data is accurately recorded, coded, and analyzed with greater precision and consistency. Enhanced quality of mortality data will support Bahrain in monitoring disease trends more effectively, allocating resources efficiently, and designing targeted interventions that address the population's evolving health needs.



Tracking trauma to save lives: WHO tool piloted at Salmaniya Medical Complex



28 APRIL 2025, MANAMA, BAHRAIN

The country office conducted a specialized training session for three physicians from Salmaniya Medical Complex (SMC) on the WHO Trauma Registry Tool, supporting national efforts to improve trauma care and enhance the quality of data on the causes, patterns, and outcomes of traumatic injuries. As the first government hospital in Bahrain to pilot the tool, SMC is paving the way for broader adoption across the national health system.

The training focused on serious trauma and injury cases, marking the first step in introducing the tool at the hospital. The three physicians will serve as master trainers, leading internal capacity-building efforts to train additional emergency department staff. The trauma registry tool is expected to be piloted at SMC during 2025, with plans to expand its use to cover all trauma cases by 2026.

The WHO Trauma Registry Tool is a web-based platform designed to systematically collect, manage and analyze case-level data from emergency care visits. Its structured approach to data collection will support SMC in monitoring care quality, identifying service gaps, and implementing evidence-based improvements in emergency and trauma care.

WHO CLINICAL REGISTRY

BACKGROUND

Efforts to improve clinical outcomes for the acutely ill and injured are currently hindered by a lack of data. [WHO Health Systems Research 2016](#) calls on countries to implement mechanisms for standardized data collection to monitor the burden of disease and identify high-priority mechanisms for improving the coordination, safety and quality of emergency care worldwide.

This work requires an understanding of how emergency care services are utilized at national and sub-national levels as well as the refined ability to identify current gaps in care across specific prehospital and facility settings. The lack of standardized case-based data on initial patient presentation and management in emergency units leaves limited opportunity for comparison, aggregation and performance monitoring at facilities and across health system levels.

UTILITY OF REGISTRIES TO IMPROVE QUALITY OF CARE

Registries are data repositories with a built-in analytic function that use case-level data to identify potentially preventable deaths. They can collect integrated data – from prehospital settings to emergency unit visits and inpatient stays. First, data are collected on patient presentation, care and outcome. Second, these data are analyzed to determine if poor outcomes were potentially preventable. These reports can be rapidly fed back to clinical teams for review and targeted education. Such quality improvement cycles are iterative, directly informing corrective actions over time.

ABOUT THE WHO CLINICAL REGISTRY

To respond to the need of countries and support systematic quality improvement of emergency care, the WHO Clinical Registry was developed. WHO Clinical Registry is a platform for systematically collecting, aggregating and analyzing case-based emergency care encounters. Currently, the platform captures only facility-based data but will be expanded to collect prehospital data in the future. The platform is free to users and built on the open-source [DHIS2](#) software.

KEY FEATURES

Multi-lingual and multi-platform

WHO Clinical Registry interface is multi-lingual and can be easily translated across 28 languages through modification of user account settings. The platform offers different types of operation (online, offline) and mobilities (web-based, Android mobile app). The WHO Clinical Registry mobile app allows for offline data entry in low connectivity settings that can be synced periodically when stable Wi-Fi is reached.

Please visit <https://www.who.int/emergencies/trauma-registry> or contact emergency@who.int for more information

Learn more about the WHO Clinical Registry tool

Strengthening evidence for health policy: Bahrain moves forward with National Health Survey



To support Bahrain's ongoing National Health Survey (NHS), the country office convened a meeting with the Ministry of Health and the Information and eGovernment Authority, focusing specifically on data analysis.

The meeting brought together senior officials from the Ministry of Health, including the Assistant Undersecretary for Public Health, Dr Samya Ali Bahram, along with WHO experts from both the regional and country levels, among them Eman Aly, Technical Officer for Health Information and Statistics, Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean.

During the meeting, WHO provided technical guidance on analytical approaches, advised on methods to ensure data accuracy and consistency, and facilitated discussions on interpreting preliminary findings to help ensure that survey results effectively inform national health planning and monitoring.

The NHS is a comprehensive effort to assess Bahrain's health status, risk factors, and health care access, providing essential data to guide health programmes, resource allocation, and progress towards national and global goals, including the Sustainable Development Goals.

Preparation for the survey began in 2021, with WHO providing continuous support to the Ministry of Health and the Information and eGovernment Authority at every stage. In 2024, efforts focused on supporting the adaptation of the World Health Survey Plus questionnaires to national data requirements and priorities, refining methodologies, and overseeing the official Arabic translation of the modified questionnaires to ensure linguistic clarity, cultural relevance and potential usability as a regional resource.

As Bahrain continues to implement the NHS throughout 2025, WHO remains committed to supporting national efforts to strengthen the health information system, ensuring that robust, high-quality data informs decisions that advance the health and well-being of the population.



WHO supports national forum on Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative



7 MAY 2025, MANAMA, BAHRAIN

The country office attended a national forum on the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI), co-organized by the Ministry of Health and the American Mission Hospital. It convened over 100 health professionals to discuss progress and next steps in implementing BFHI across Bahrain.

The country office attended a national forum on the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI), co-organized by the Ministry of Health and the American Mission Hospital. It convened over 100 health professionals to discuss progress and next steps in implementing BFHI across Bahrain.

Inaugurated by Dr Samya Ali Bahram, Assistant Undersecretary for Public Health at the Ministry of Health, and Dr George Cheriyan, Corporate CEO of the American Mission Hospital, the forum built on the momentum of the BFHI training held in November 2024. During that training, WHO and the Ministry of Health equipped more than 40 physicians, nurses, midwives, and allied health professionals with the required skills to assess facility compliance with BFHI standards.



**Read more about the
Baby Friendly Hospital
Initiative here**



Capital governorate recognized as **first healthy governorate** in the Eastern Mediterranean Region



Discover how
Bahrain is shaping
healthier
environments



Healthy Cities Initiative

In a milestone achievement for public health in Bahrain, WHO officially recognized the Capital governorate as the first in the Eastern Mediterranean Region to receive the prestigious Healthy Governorate designation.

During a ceremony attended by senior government officials, Dr Tasnim Atatrah, WHO Representative in Bahrain at the time, presented the award certificate to H.E. General Shaikh Rashid bin Abdulla Al Khalifa, Minister of Interior, in the presence of Rashid bin Abdulrahman bin Rashid Al Khalifa, Governor of the Capital governorate, and H.E. Dr Jalila bint Al Sayyed Jawad Hassan, Minister of Health.

Following the awarding ceremony, the Capital Governor hosted a celebratory reception. It served as a meaningful tribute to the collective efforts behind this national milestone, providing an opportunity to honor individuals and institutions from across health, education, local government, community groups, and civil society, whose contributions were instrumental in securing the Healthy Governorate designation.

The Capital governorate's achievement in receiving this status reflects the strategic support and close coordination provided by WHO to advance the implementation of the Healthy Cities programme as a vehicle for advancing health equity, addressing social determinants of health, and tackling key risk factors for noncommunicable diseases.

This recognition marks a significant progression in Bahrain's implementation of the WHO Healthy Cities programme, reflecting a strategic shift from city-level initiatives to a comprehensive, governorate-wide approach. It builds on earlier milestones, including the designation of Umm Al Hassam as Bahrain's first Healthy City in 2018 and Manama's distinction in 2021 as the first capital in the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region to receive the title. In 2022, A'ali and Busaiteen/Al-Sayah were also recognized as healthy cities, demonstrating Bahrain's growing commitment to sustainable urban health.



WHO and Capital Municipal Council convene to celebrate **Healthy Governorate** status



15 JANUARY 2025, MANAMA, BAHRAIN

The WHO Country Office met with the Capital Municipal Council to mark the governorate's recent designation as the first healthy governorate in the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region.

Chaired by Council President Engineer Saleh Tarada and Vice President Dr Kholoud Al Qattan, the meeting served as a platform for meaningful dialogue on Bahrain's progress under the WHO Healthy Cities programme.

Representing the country office, Dr Deena Alkhamis, Public Health Officer, and Ms Shanine Mohebat, Health Promotion Officer, highlighted the country's achievements to date— detailing the programme's nine core domains and outlining strategic pathways to expand the initiative across other governorates.

Council members engaged in a substantive discussion on the WHO Healthy Cities programme's objectives, evaluation process, and the importance of municipal leadership in promoting health through multisectoral collaboration.

The meeting concluded with congratulations extended to Bahrain's national leadership, the Ministry of Interior, and the Capital governorate for their continued commitment to Health for All.



Muharraq governorate moves closer to WHO Healthy Governorate designation



The Muharraq governorate received a two-day mission led by WHO experts from the Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean and the country office, alongside representatives from the Ministry of Health. The mission aimed to assess the governorate's eligibility for recognition as a healthy governorate under the WHO Healthy Cities programme.

As part of the mission, the WHO joint evaluation team visited several implementation sites across Muharraq, where they observed programmes, interacted with community members, and reviewed documents to understand the governorate's role in creating supportive and enabling urban environments for health. Key sites included a natural reserve, parks, industrial zones, and community and elderly centres.



This in-country evaluation followed a self-assessment process, jointly supported by the WHO Country Office and the Ministry of Health, which was initiated during a technical meeting with the Muharraq governorate in January 2025. Serving as the foundational step toward the Healthy Cities status, the self-assessment evaluates progress across 80 indicators spanning nine domains – including community organization and mobilization, intersectoral collaboration, information availability, and environmental health. To qualify, cities must meet at least 80% of these defined indicators.

Muharraq's journey towards achieving the Healthy Governorate status began in 2019 with the signing of a formal letter of collaboration, committing to the WHO Healthy Cities programme. As the third governorate in Bahrain to undergo WHO evaluation—following the Capital and Northern governorates—Muharraq's progress reflects the country's growing momentum in implementing the Healthy Cities programme and advancing multisectoral efforts to promote health, well-being, and sustainable urban development.

**WHO is committed to
promoting, providing and
protecting health for all.**

Dr Assad Hafeez
WHO Representative, a.i.in Bahrain



Bahrain expands Health-Promoting Universities initiative with WHO evaluation at UCB



23 FEBRUARY 2025, SAAR, BAHRAIN

A joint regional and country evaluation team visited the University College of Bahrain (UCB) to assess its eligibility for Health-Promoting University status. The team comprised experts from the WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean, the WHO Country Office, the Ministry of Health, and the Higher Education Council.



During the field visit, the evaluation team engaged with UCB staff and students, observed programmes, and reviewed documents to understand the university's role in fostering and promoting a health-conducive working and learning environment. This visit followed an earlier technical visit in January 2025, during which the Ministry of Health and the country office provided guidance to support UCB in completing its self-assessment—an essential first step towards achieving the Health-Promoting University designation.

The WHO Health-Promoting Universities initiative recognizes the vital role of higher education institutions in advancing public health and sustainable development. By embedding health into campus life, universities can make a meaningful contribution to the well-being of students, staff, and the broader community.

Upon successful completion of the evaluation process, UCB will become the seventh academic institution in Bahrain to achieve this distinction. Bahrain currently has six recognized health-promoting universities: Ahlia University, American University of Bahrain, Arabian Gulf University, Kingdom University, Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland – Medical University of Bahrain, and University of Technology Bahrain.



WHO highlights **Health-Promoting Universities** initiative at UCB conference



24 APRIL 2025, MANAMA, BAHRAIN

The country office participated in the second University College of Bahrain (UCB) International Conference, organized under the theme “Sustainable business futures: Innovating for a greener tomorrow”. The event brought together over 100 participants from academia, government, and industry, providing a dynamic platform to explore the intersection of innovation, strategy, health, and education in shaping a more sustainable future.

The conference featured keynote speeches, presentations, and panel discussions that covered a wide range of topics, including digital transformation, business innovation, and education. As part of a multidisciplinary panel on “Integrating strategy, health, and education frameworks for sustainable development”, Ms Shanine Mohebat, Health Promotion Officer at the WHO Country Office, presented the Health-Promoting Universities initiative. She highlighted how the programme enables academic institutions to integrate health into their campus culture, and commended Bahrain’s leadership in this area, noting that six universities in the country have already been officially designated as healthy universities.

WHO’s participation in the UCB conference reaffirmed its commitment to supporting sustainable development through promoting a Healthy Settings approach. It also highlighted the importance of empowering academic institutions as key partners in advancing public health and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

WHO contributes to RUW conference on leadership, innovation, and sustainability



11–12 MAY 2025, MANAMA, BAHRAIN

WHO experts at the regional and country levels participated in the third biennial Women and Society Research Conference, hosted by the Royal University for Women (RUW) under the patronage of the Supreme Council for Women.

Held under the theme “Advancing leadership, innovation, and sustainability”, the two-day conference brought together over 100 students and faculty members to celebrate the leadership of Bahraini women and their pivotal contributions to sustainable development, showcasing the nation’s commitment to gender equality and social inclusion.

As part of WHO’s contributions, Dr Arshad Altaf, Technical Officer for Science Information and Dissemination at the Regional Office, delivered a presentation on the Eastern Mediterranean Health Journal (EMHJ), a monthly, open-access, peer-reviewed journal published by WHO to support health policy and practice through regionally relevant research and information.

Complementing this, Ms Shanine Mohebat, Health Promotion Officer at the WHO Country Office, delivered a presentation on the global standards in nursing and midwifery, aligning with the 2025 World Health Day theme, “Healthy beginnings, hopeful futures”. The presentation emphasized the vital role of nurses and midwives in strengthening maternal and child health and advancing sustainable development.

By contributing to such multidisciplinary dialogue, WHO continues to support national efforts that position women—particularly in nursing and midwifery—as key partners in achieving Health for All.



WHO and Arabian Gulf University strengthen health communication capacity



14 APRIL 2025, MANAMA, BAHRAIN

To build the capacity of future health care professionals in strategic health communication, the WHO Country Office and the Arabian Gulf University (AGU) jointly organized a training session focused on designing and delivering effective public health campaigns.

Held on AGU's campus, the session brought together approximately 20 nursing and medical students. Participants received hands-on training in crafting impactful health messages using storytelling techniques, digital content development, and video production. Drawing on the 2025 themes of two major global health campaigns—World No Tobacco Day ("Unmasking the appeal: Exposing industry tactics on tobacco and nicotine products") and World Health Day ("Healthy beginnings, hopeful futures")—students learned how to translate complex health topics into accessible and engaging formats for use in both patient education and academic learning.

This training session reflects the growing partnership between WHO and AGU to promote health literacy and empower students to serve as advocates within their professions and the broader community.



WHO Global Health Days

Global public health days and weeks offer great potential to raise awareness and understanding about health issues and mobilize support for action, from the local community to the international stage. There are many world days observed throughout the year related to specific health issues or conditions. Here is a snapshot of some of the days that were marked by the WHO Country Office in Bahrain.

World Health Day



Bahrain champions maternal and newborn health on World Health Day 2025

On the occasion of World Health Day (7 April), the WHO Country Office attended a national event held by the Ministry of Health highlighting maternal and newborn health, in line with the 2025 theme, “Healthy beginnings, hopeful futures”.

The event was inaugurated by H.E. Dr Jalila bint Al Sayyed Jawad Hassan, Minister of Health, and attended by H.E. Lieutenant General Dr Shaikh Mohammed bin Abdullah Al Khalifa, Chairman of the Supreme Council of Health, senior officials, health care professionals, and representatives from national health institutions.

Emphasis was placed throughout the event on the crucial role of immunization in safeguarding maternal and child health, highlighting vaccines as an essential public health measure that ensures healthy development and protects against life-threatening diseases.

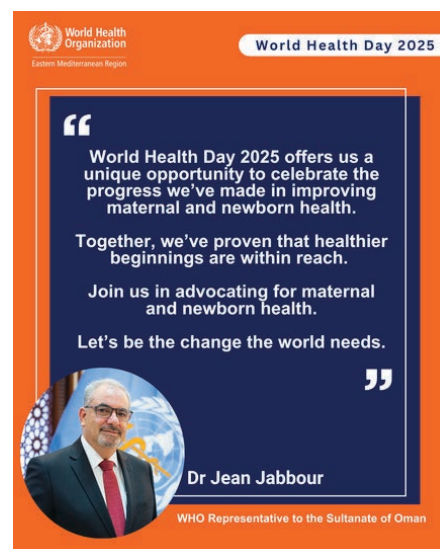
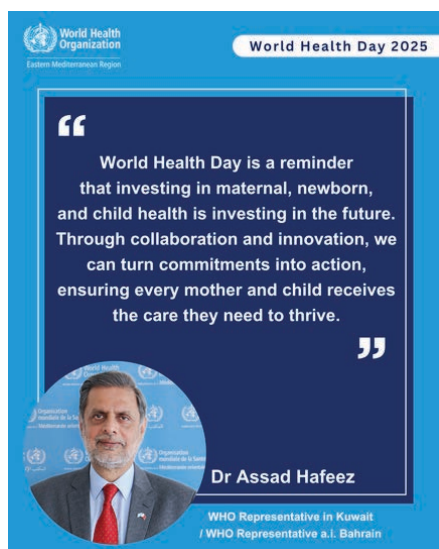
As a key partner in maternal and child health, WHO joined national counterparts in advocating for stronger, integrated approaches to end preventable deaths and ensure healthier futures for mothers and newborns. The event served as a platform to reaffirm WHO’s commitment to supporting Bahrain’s efforts through evidence-based strategies and community-focused health promotion.

World Health Day 2025 marked the launch of a year-long campaign calling for intensified, coordinated efforts to end preventable maternal and neonatal deaths and to strengthen health systems in support of long-term, equitable outcomes for women and infants.



Regional collaboration and community voices define WHO's World Health Day 2025 campaign in Bahrain

World Health Day 2025 (7 April) marked the launch of WHO's year-long global campaign on maternal and newborn health. In alignment with this initiative, the country office kicked off a dynamic, multi-platform communications campaign grounded in regional collaboration and community-centered storytelling to amplify key messages and engage the public.

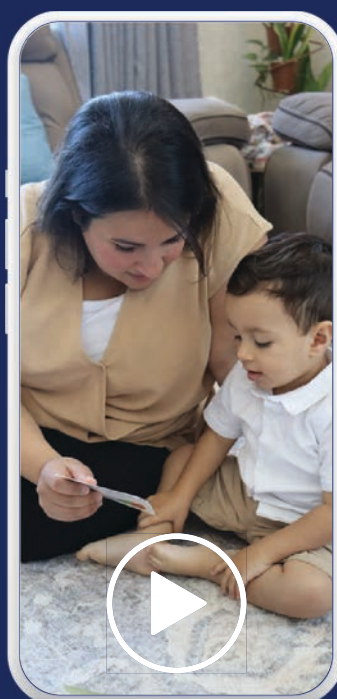


ONE GCC, ONE MESSAGE FOR WORLD HEALTH DAY

In a notable step toward strengthening regional solidarity, the WHO country offices in Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, and Qatar joined forces to mark World Health Day with a single, coordinated social media post featuring quotes from the WHO Representatives. By speaking with one voice across four countries, this initiative underscored the importance of regional cooperation in promoting maternal and child health, and highlighted intercountry collaboration as a cornerstone of effective strategies in this area.

MATERNAL VOICES FOR A HEALTHIER FUTURE

As part of its community engagement for World Health Day, the WHO Country Office amplified national voices through two video testimonials featuring Bahraini mothers and their children. Through their personal stories, these mothers bring to life the everyday realities of maternal and child health in Bahrain, making global messages resonate at the community level. Shared across different social media platforms, these testimonials reached nearly 1,000 viewers, underscoring the power of community-driven storytelling in public health advocacy.



WHO celebrates **nurses and midwives** as cornerstones of health systems

To mark International Nurses Day (12 May) and the International Day of the Midwife (5 May), the WHO Country Office led and contributed to a series of events celebrating the vital role of nurses and midwives in building resilient and people-centred health systems.

5 MAY 2025

Ms Shanine Mohebat, Health Promotion Officer at the country office, was featured in a published article on WHO's internal global platform (WHO Intranet). Drawing on her experience as a registered midwife in Canada, the piece highlights the importance of continuity of care, home-based postpartum support, and empowering women through informed decision-making. It also emphasizes the vital role midwives can play as primary care providers in improving maternal and newborn health when enabled to practice to their full potential.



11 MAY 2025

WHO participated in a panel discussion on "Global standards and international guidance on nursing and midwifery", hosted by the College of Health and Sport Sciences at the University of Bahrain. As a panelist, the country office highlighted the WHO Regional Director's flagship initiative on building a resilient and sustainable health workforce, emphasizing the role of academic institutions in strengthening education, retention, and leadership in nursing and midwifery. More than 200 students, faculty members, and health professionals attended the event.





13 MAY 2025

WHO participated in a celebration organized by the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland – Medical University of Bahrain to honor the contributions of nurses. As part of the event, the country office delivered a keynote presentation showcasing major findings from the newly released State of the World's Nursing Report 2025 and outlining the WHO Regional Director's flagship initiative on investing in a sustainable and resilient health workforce. Attended by over 100 students and faculty members, the event sparked dynamic discussions on how academic institutions can play a transformative role in advancing workforce development.

15 MAY 2025

WHO participated in a vibrant student-led celebration at the Arabian Gulf University, recognizing the inaugural year of its nursing programme. The event featured educational booths, exhibits on Bahrain's nursing history, and interactive activities to honor the country's nursing contributions. Attended by University President Dr Saad Al Fuhaid, the event engaged the broader community and underscored the university's commitment to advancing nursing education in Bahrain.



22 MAY 2025

WHO shared a compelling student-produced video on its official social media platforms to highlight the essential role of nurses and midwives in delivering quality maternal and newborn care. Created by University of Bahrain student, Malak Mohammed Alnashaba, the video was selected as the winning entry in a student competition launched by the country office to strengthen health literacy through digital communication. The video garnered over 11,900 views, helping to raise awareness about the importance of investing in the nursing and midwifery workforce to improve health outcomes.



WHO promotes safe walking and cycling during the 8th UN Global Road Safety Week

18-22 MAY 2025

To mark the 8th UN Global Road Safety Week (12–18 May), the WHO Country Office contributed to global and regional advocacy efforts by developing and disseminating a bilingual social media video (in Arabic and English) promoting safe walking and cycling as essential components of healthier, safer, and more sustainable transport systems.

Aligned with the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2021–2030, the video highlights how active mobility supports public health and the environment by preventing disease, improving mental well-being, increasing access to opportunities, and reducing climate impact. It gained significant visibility, with over 2,000 views across platforms and widespread reposting by the WHO Headquarters, the WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean, and the United Nations in Bahrain.



WHO highlights World Blood Donor Day 2025 with social media campaign

14 JUNE 2025

To mark World Blood Donor Day 2025 (14 June), the country office launched a social media campaign documenting the WHO team's visit to the blood donation clinic at Salmaniya Medical Complex (SMC), where they donated blood in support of voluntary, life-saving donations.

Aligned with this year's theme, the campaign aimed to raise awareness about the importance of safe blood supplies and encourage community participation. The video was viewed over 3,000 times and reposted by the WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean, amplifying its reach across the Region.



WHO engages British School students on World No Tobacco Day 2025



11 MARCH 2025

To mark World No Tobacco Day (31 May), the country office delivered two awareness-raising lectures, on 11 March and 3 June, for high-school students at the British School of Bahrain, in line with this year's theme, "Unmasking the appeal: Exposing industry tactics on tobacco and nicotine products".

The sessions, attended by over 200 students, shed light on the deceptive marketing tactics used by the tobacco industry to attract young people, despite the well-known health risks of tobacco use. Through engaging discussions and real-life examples, the lectures examined industry strategies, including product engineering, manipulative branding practices, and targeted digital media campaigns, designed to normalize tobacco use and increase its appeal among young people. The lectures sparked ongoing reflection

and classroom dialogues on tobacco industry tactics, encouraging students to advocate for healthier, smoke-free environments in their communities.

By highlighting the global campaign's call to action, these events contributed to a broader effort to empower young people in Bahrain to resist the tobacco industry's influence and make informed health choices, advancing the country's public health targets and commitment to the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control.

**Click here to learn
more about the
Tobacco Free
Initiative**



WHO participates in nationwide "Yalla Namshi" walks as part of Bahrain Sports Day celebrations



4-25 FEBRUARY, BAHRAIN

As part of Bahrain's annual Sports Day celebrations, the Ministry of Health launched the "Yalla Namshi" ("Let's Walk") initiative to promote nationwide participation in physical activity. Held every Tuesday throughout February 2025, the campaign encouraged individuals across all governorates to walk for at least 20 minutes, emphasizing the role of regular physical activity in enhancing health and supporting human development.

The WHO Country Office actively participated in all four walking events, joining local communities and health officials in each governorate. Walks were held on 4 February at Prince Khalifa Park (Muharraq governorate), 11 February at the Water Garden (Capital governorate), 18 February at Abu Subuh Beach (Northern governorate), and 25 February at Zayed Town Park (Southern governorate). Each event drew over 100 participants, including representatives from the Ministry of Health, Primary Health Care Centres, civil society organizations, and community groups.

By promoting inclusive participation and reinforcing the health benefits of physical activity, the "Yalla Namshi" initiative reflects Bahrain's continued commitment to preventing noncommunicable diseases and building healthier, more active communities in alignment with national and global public health priorities.







WHO supports Bahrain's preparations for the Second National Human Rights Plan

28 MAY 2025, MANAMA, BAHRAIN

As part of Bahrain's preparations for its Second National Human Rights Plan (2027–2031), the country office participated in a high-level virtual workshop on the rights of vulnerable groups, hosted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Development.

The workshop was inaugurated by H.E. Osama bin Saleh Al-Alawi, Minister of Social Development, and chaired by H.E. Ambassador Dr Yousef Abdulkarim Bucheeri, Director-General for Legal Affairs and Human Rights at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It convened over 200 participants from government institutions, UN agencies, and civil society to explore opportunities for strengthening legal and institutional frameworks aimed at protecting and promoting the rights of vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities, older persons, and children.

Dr Assad Hafeez, WHO Representative, ai, delivered an intervention during the workshop, reaffirming that health is a fundamental human right for all people and recognizing Bahrain's ongoing efforts to advance health equity. He emphasized the importance of removing financial and social barriers to care and called for more substantial investment in primary health care and digital solutions to advance the health and well-being of vulnerable populations. Dr Hafeez reaffirmed WHO's continued support to Bahrain in promoting an inclusive, rights-based health system.

This workshop is part of a broader, multi-sectoral consultation process led by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to inform the development of Bahrain's Second National Human Rights Plan, addressing areas such as youth empowerment, labor rights, education, digital technologies, and the rights of women—ensuring that the plan reflects the diverse needs of society and upholds Bahrain's commitment to advancing human rights across all sectors.



UNCT Bahrain retreat accelerates shift to UNSDCF implementation

The United Nations Country Team (UNCT) in Bahrain, including the WHO Country Office, held a strategic retreat to launch the implementation phase of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2025–2029. This two-day meeting brought together UN heads of agencies and technical teams, along with key national counterparts, to coordinate efforts and align priorities for the new programming cycle.

The UNSDCF 2025–2029 outlines the strategic direction for the UN's partnership with Bahrain over the next five years, focusing on inclusive human development, economic diversification, good governance, and environmental sustainability. The retreat served as a platform to operationalize this shared vision, featuring discussions on optimizing inter-agency coordination, strengthening collaboration with government counterparts and engaging the private sector, civil society, and academia. Participants also explored ways to improve operational effectiveness, including the implementation of the UN Funding Compact, the use of pooled financing mechanisms, and strategies for resource mobilization.

The retreat concluded with a set of strategic next steps to guide the implementation of UNSDCF, including the alignment of agency-specific workplans with UNSDCF priorities, refinement of inter-agency coordination mechanisms, and identification of cross-cutting opportunities for joint programming —thereby reinforcing a cohesive, results-driven approach to delivering coordinated UN support under the new cooperation framework.



28–29 APRIL 2025, MANAMA, BAHRAIN

WHO supports national dialogue on financing for sustainable development

In preparation for the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD4), taking place from 30 June to 3 July 2025 in Seville, Spain, the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) convened a national preparatory workshop to facilitate dialogue on Bahrain's priorities and strategic positioning. The workshop also served as a platform to explore innovative financing mechanisms aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

During the workshop, participants from various sectors engaged in discussions that underscored Bahrain's leadership in Islamic finance, FinTech innovation, and sustainable finance regulation. They concluded that the country's readiness to pilot instruments like SDG-linked sukuk —combined with its growing adoption of environmental, social, and governance standards and digital financial solutions— positions Bahrain as a regional hub for inclusive and resilient development finance.

A key outcome of the workshop was the consensus to convene a roundtable to review Bahrain's commitments and develop a national roadmap for implementation, coordination, and impact monitoring.



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OFFICIAL MEETINGS

FROM JANUARY - JUNE 2025



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- 1 HRH Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Crown Prince and Prime Minister
- 2 H.E. Lieutenant General Dr Shaikh Mohammed bin Abdullah Al Khalifa, Chairman of the Supreme Council of Health, and H.E. Dr Jalila bint Al Sayyed Jawad Hassan, Minister of Health
- 3 H.E. Rawan bint Najeeb Tawfiqi, Minister of Youth Affairs
- 4 Shaikh Rashid bin Abdulrahman bin Rashid Al Khalifa, Governor of the Capital governorate
- 5 Ali bin Sheikh Abdulhussein Al Asfoor, Governor of the Northern governorate

- 6 Salman bin Isa bin Hindi Al Mannai, Governor of the Muharraq governorate
- 7 Dr Saad bin Saud Al Fuhaid, President of the Arabian Gulf University
- 8 Dr Christelle Comair, Head of Women's Research Centre at the Royal University for Women
- 9 Dr Fuad Al-Ansari, President of University of Bahrain
- 10 Professor Hassan AlHajhoj, President of Kingdom University



WHO Bahrain Advances Health for All



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11 Dr Hassan Almulla, President of the University of Technology Bahrain

12 Professor Mansoor Alaali, President of Ahlia University

13 Dr Rana Sawaya Zeitounie, President of University College of Bahrain

14 Professor Sameer Ootom, President of Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland - Medical University of Bahrain

15 Dr Mohamed Elsayed, WMO Regional Representative

16 Dr Ebrahim Ali Alnawakhtha, Secretary-General of the Supreme Council of Health

17 H.E. Dr Jalila bint Al Sayyed Jawad Hassan, Minister of Health

18 Dr Samya Ali Bahram, Assistant Undersecretary for Public Health, Ministry of Health

19 Ali bin Sheikh Abdulhussein Al Asfoor, Governor of the Northern governorate



Celebrating a remarkable tenure: Farewell and best wishes to **Dr Tasnim Atatrah**

The WHO Country Office extends its deepest gratitude to Dr Tasnim Atatrah, former WHO Representative, for her outstanding leadership and unwavering dedication to advancing WHO's strategic priorities in Bahrain. Her vision, commitment, and collaborative spirit were catalysts for transformative progress — expanding initiatives like Healthy Cities and Health-Promoting Universities, strengthening community engagement, and propelling Bahrain's journey toward a stronger, more resilient health system and a healthier future for all.

Dr Atatrah's legacy is reflected in the many milestones achieved during her tenure, and her contributions will continue to inspire our work. We thank her sincerely for her remarkable service and wish her continued success in all that lies ahead.



Thank you! From the WHO Bahrain Country Office

Inaugurated in July 2021, the WHO Country Office in Bahrain is the 20th WHO country office to open in the Eastern Mediterranean Region, and the 152nd WHO country office globally. Guided by WHO's Fourteenth General Programme of Work, the office provides strategic and technical support to the Government to provide, protect and promote health and well-being.

It collaborates with national health authorities, United Nations partners, and other health-related stakeholders to accelerate progress towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and ensure that no one's health is left behind.



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