

WHO NEWSLETTER

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

Q1 2025

DR. HANAN BALKHY, WHO REGIONAL DIRECTOR FOR THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN, MADE HER FIRST OFFICIAL VISIT TO KUWAIT



SINCE ASSUMING HER LEADERSHIP ROLE, DR. HANAN BALKHY REINFORCES KUWAIT'S GROWING PARTNERSHIP WITH THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION AND REAFFIRMS WHO'S COMMITMENT TO INCLUSIVE, PEOPLE-CENTERED HEALTH SYSTEMS.

At the heart of our work this quarter were strategic dialogues with key partners and national stakeholders. These conversations have laid the groundwork for a series of collaborative actions, reflecting our commitment to a whole-of-society approach to health. From ministries to academic institutions and healthcare professionals, we are fostering collective accountability in addressing the evolving health needs of the population.

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“PROGRESS IN HEALTH IS NEVER ACHIEVED IN ISOLATION – IT IS BUILT ON TRUST, COLLABORATION, AND THE UNWAVERING COMMITMENT TO LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND.”

- DR. ASSAD HAFEEZ, WHO REPRESENTATIVE IN KUWAIT

It gives me great pleasure to present the first quarterly newsletter of 2025, highlighting the significant progress and collaborative achievements made by WHO in Kuwait between January and March. This period has been marked by productive engagements, meaningful partnerships, and impactful initiatives that align with our shared vision of advancing health for all.

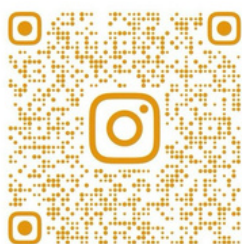
We are proud to have signed a Memorandum of Understanding during this period—a reflection of Kuwait’s commitment to evidence-based health policies and international best practices. This agreement spans across critical areas including nutrition, epidemic control, climate and health, and antimicrobial resistance. They serve as robust frameworks for action and underscore the importance of intersectoral collaboration in tackling complex health challenges.

We also focused on strengthening national efforts to promote early cancer detection, emphasizing the role of prevention, screening, and awareness in saving lives. In addition, our continued support for enhancing emergency preparedness and response capacities remains a cornerstone of our collaboration with national authorities. The ability to respond swiftly and effectively to public health emergencies is not only vital for national security but also essential in reinforcing public trust in health systems.

This quarter, we further cultivated partnerships aimed at advancing healthcare accountability and medical excellence. By fostering dialogue on quality of care, patient safety, and data-driven decision-making, we are working closely with our counterparts to support a resilient, transparent, and people-centered health system.

As we reflect on these milestones, I extend my sincere appreciation to our partners and the wider health community for their continued support and collaboration. Together, we remain committed to building a healthier, more resilient future for Kuwait and beyond.

With warm regards,
Dr. Assad Hafeez
WHO Representative in Kuwait



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STRENGTHENING SCIENCE FOR BETTER HEALTH: WHO KUWAIT AND KISR SIGN LANDMARK RESEARCH MOU



The World Health Organization (WHO) Office in Kuwait and the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to deepen collaboration in research and innovation across critical areas of public health. This new partnership brings together WHO's global expertise and KISR's national research capabilities to address pressing health challenges through evidence-based, locally driven solutions.

Driving Innovation and Building Capacity

Beyond research, the MoU also paves the way for capacity-building programs targeting young scientists and professionals in Kuwait. Joint training, knowledge exchange, and policy-oriented studies will support the implementation of WHO-led initiatives and create a solid foundation for innovation in public health.

This agreement marks a significant step forward in WHO Kuwait's efforts to foster meaningful partnerships with national institutions—united by a shared vision of science, sustainability, and health for all.

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10TH GULF CANCER AWARENESS WEEK



The 10th Gulf Cancer Awareness underscored the critical importance of early cancer detection and prevention across the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. This year's theme, "Your Health Is In Your Awareness," emphasized the power of knowledge and proactive health measures in combating cancer.

Dr. Assad Hafeez, the World Health Organization (WHO) Representative to Kuwait, actively participated in these initiatives. Addressing the media during the awareness week, Dr. Hafeez highlighted the pivotal role of awareness in preventing chronic diseases, including cancer. He emphasized that early detection significantly improves treatment outcomes and survival rates, urging the public to engage in regular health check-ups and adopt healthier lifestyles.

Dr. Hafeez also praised the collaborative efforts of GCC countries in organizing the Gulf Cancer Awareness Week, noting that such unified actions amplify the impact of health campaigns and foster a culture of shared responsibility in public health matters. He reiterated WHO's commitment to supporting regional initiatives that aim to reduce the cancer burden through prevention, early detection, and effective treatment strategies.

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LEADERSHIP, EQUITY, AND COLLABORATION: DR. HANAN BALKHY'S STRATEGIC VISIT TO KUWAIT



During her two-day visit Dr. Balkhy met with high-level officials, civil society organizations, public health experts, and women leaders. Her presence amplified Kuwait's evolving role as a strategic player in the regional health landscape and highlighted the importance of multisectoral collaboration for public health transformation.

Addressing Urban Health: Keynote at the Second Healthy Cities Conference

A major milestone of her visit was her keynote address at the Second Healthy Cities Conference on February 10, where she commended Kuwait's achievements in urban health and sustainable development. She praised the country's vision to expand WHO-accredited Healthy Cities and emphasized that **"healthy cities are not only about infrastructure—but about empowering communities to lead healthier, more resilient lives."**

Her remarks helped catalyze national commitment to urban health and emphasized the need for cross-sector alignment in climate action, disease prevention, and health equity.

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DR. HANAN BALKHY MEETS WITH KUWAIT'S MINISTER OF HEALTH TO STRENGTHEN COLLABORATION



Dr. Hanan Balkhy, WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean, met with H.E. Dr. Ahmed Al-Awadhi, Kuwait's Minister of Health, to reaffirm the strong partnership between WHO and Kuwait.

During the meeting, Dr. Balkhy expressed her appreciation for Kuwait's steadfast support and commended the Ministry of Health for the significant progress made toward advancing shared health priorities. Discussions covered key areas including joint strategies to strengthen human capital development, address substance abuse challenges in the region, and enhance the capacity of regulatory authorities for health.

Both leaders emphasized their commitment to continued collaboration in delivering on shared health goals. H.E. Dr. Al-Awadhi also extended his gratitude to the WHO Country Office for their close cooperation and dedication to advancing health initiatives in Kuwait and the region.

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CIVIL SOCIETY ROUNDTABLE: AMPLIFYING COMMUNITY VOICES IN HEALTH RESPONSE



Dr. Balkhy convened a pivotal civil society roundtable at the United Nations House, gathering leaders from humanitarian and health-focused NGOs in Kuwait. The session explored the essential role of civil society in emergency preparedness, crisis response, and inclusive service delivery.

“In humanitarian contexts, civil society plays a critical role in bridging gaps and ensuring that health services reach the most vulnerable populations,” Dr. Balkhy stated. “Civil society in Kuwait plays a remarkable role in supporting the health, development, and humanitarian agenda.”

Discussions focused on strengthening access to health services for displaced communities, building CSO capacity, and establishing regular coordination mechanisms with WHO. The roundtable concluded with a shared commitment to a regional framework for health response in humanitarian settings.

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EMPOWERING WOMEN LEADERS IN HEALTH: A CONVERSATION ON GENDER AND INCLUSION



Dr. Balkhy participated in an engagement session with women leaders across Kuwait—scientists, educators, healthcare professionals, and innovators—celebrating their growing contributions to the country’s development and its health systems.

“Kuwait has always been on the right path when it comes to women’s leadership,” she said. “I had the privilege of meeting truly inspirational women who have made significant contributions in many fields. Their leadership is essential to the betterment of their communities.”

The discussion centered on expanding mentorship programs, enhancing opportunities for women in research, and fostering regional collaboration on gender equity in health.

WHO Representative Dr. Assad Hafeez added, **“We are proud to support efforts that elevate women’s health and leadership. These conversations reflect our shared commitment to inclusive development and stronger, healthier societies.”**

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STRENGTHENING TECHNICAL COLLABORATION TO ADVANCE HEALTH PRIORITIES IN KUWAIT



As part of the ongoing mission of Dr. Hanan Balkhy, WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean, WHO engaged in a series of technical discussions with key departments of Kuwait's Ministry of Health.

The meetings highlighted the strategic and collaborative approaches being employed to address pressing health challenges in Kuwait and the region, with a focus on areas such as elderly care, noncommunicable diseases (NCDs), and the development of comprehensive public health strategies.

WHO extends its sincere appreciation to the Ministry of Health team for the rich and insightful engagement — not only during this mission but throughout our daily collaboration. These discussions reaffirm WHO's commitment to working closely with the Ministry to drive evidence-based policies and implement impactful interventions that contribute to improving health outcomes for all communities.

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LEGACY OF THE VISIT: A FOUNDATION FOR INCLUSIVE REGIONAL COLLABORATION



Dr. Balkhy's visit marked a turning point in WHO's partnership with Kuwait, reinforcing shared priorities in women's health, public sector accountability, and community engagement. Her presence inspired deeper cross-sectoral dialogue and positioned Kuwait as a proactive partner in regional and global health agendas.

Her visit also served as a strong endorsement of the collaborative progress made between WHO and Kuwait in recent years. It demonstrated the value of sustained engagement and mutual trust in tackling complex public health challenges, from health equity and service delivery to inclusive policymaking.

As WHO Kuwait continues to work with government bodies, research institutions, and civil society, the momentum created by Dr. Balkhy's mission will drive forward meaningful initiatives in urban health, gender inclusion, and emergency response capacity.

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STRENGTHENING HEALTH SYSTEMS THROUGH DATA: MOH AND WHO LAUNCH HEALTH INFORMATION GOVERNANCE WORKSHOP



The Ministry of Health (MoH) in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO) Office in Kuwait launched a transformative workshop focused on developing a national Health Information Governance and Management Framework, marking a critical step in Kuwait's digital health journey.

Held at the Kuwait Institute for Medical Specialization, the three-day event convened a wide range of stakeholders across the health, public, private, and civil society sectors. With growing recognition that high-quality, ethically governed health data is essential to improving health services, the workshop focused on building a robust, inclusive, and secure health data ecosystem for Kuwait.

Discussions covered key areas such as data quality, interoperability, privacy protection, and trust-building, all of which are foundational to achieving universal health coverage and advancing toward the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The sessions were led by international and regional experts, including Dr. Henry Doctor, Coordinator for Information Systems for Health at WHO EMRO, Dr. Salmi Al Salmi from the Oman College of Health Sciences, and Dr. Vikas Dwivedi from UNICEF, alongside contributions from national stakeholders such as CITRA, the Ministry of Justice, and key representatives from the private sector.

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KUWAIT FUND AND WHO LAUNCH RENEWABLE ENERGY PROJECT FOR HEALTH FACILITIES IN YEMEN



The Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development, in partnership with the World Health Organization (WHO) Office in Kuwait, has officially launched a transformative project to improve energy access across Yemen's health sector through renewable energy solutions.

This two-year, USD 2.5 million initiative will install solar power systems and battery storage units in six health facilities across Yemen. The goal is to ensure uninterrupted, life-saving health services by reducing reliance on fuel-powered generators, particularly in remote and fuel-insecure areas. The project will directly benefit over 935,000 people annually, with 1.6 million indirect beneficiaries expected each year.

“Reliable electricity is not a luxury — it’s a lifeline,” said Dr. Assad Hafeez, WHO Representative in Kuwait. **“This project ensures that healthcare workers in Yemen can deliver essential care even when fuel is scarce. It is a step toward a more resilient and sustainable health system.”**

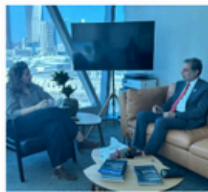
This collaboration between WHO and the Kuwait Fund is a powerful testament to the impact of coordinated regional efforts in driving long-term solutions for health, sustainability, and resilience in some of the world's most vulnerable communities.

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LOOKING AHEAD



OTHER ACTIVITIES WHO KUWAIT PARTICIPATED IN THIS QUARTER INCLUDED THE INTEGRATED CARE FOR OLDER PEOPLE (ICOPE) LECTURE, NCD STRATEGY MEETINGS, DISCUSSIONS ON SUBSTANCE ABUSE, AND A MEETING WITH THE CEO OF LEI WA LAKOM—A COMMUNITY INITIATIVE FOCUSED ON CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN—ALONGSIDE VARIOUS OTHER SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY EVENTS.

The first quarter of 2025 marked a significant period of progress, partnership, and momentum for the WHO Office in Kuwait. From strategic dialogues to Memorandums of Understanding, to initiatives on climate resilience, women's health leadership, and improved data governance — every step reflected our shared commitment to strengthening health systems and advancing the Sustainable Development Goals.

We proudly supported regional collaboration through Kuwait's leadership, fostered innovation through partnerships like the KISR MoU and Yemen solar project with Kuwait Fund for Arab and Economic Development, we have deepened our engagement with civil society, government, and academic institutions. We were especially honored to host Dr. Hanan Balkhy, WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean, whose visit emphasized the critical role of women, community engagement, and regional solidarity in driving health outcomes.

As we move into the next quarter, we remain committed to inclusive, science-driven, and people-centered solutions — always working in close collaboration with our partners to build a healthier, more resilient future for Kuwait and the region.

Together for Health. Together for Impact.

— WHO Office in Kuwait

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