



5 July 2022, Manama, Bahrain - The World Health Organisation launched a case study documenting the Kingdom of Bahrain's strategic response to the COVID-19 pandemic, showcasing how the country managed to overcome critical challenges through preparedness and early response.

The case study, which was launched during a joint press conference by H.E. Dr Jaleela bint Al-Sayed Jawad Hasan, Minister of Health of Bahrain, and Dr Ahmed Al-Mandhari, WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean, in the presence of a number of officials, presents a detailed view of Bahrain's COVID-19 response and lessons learned.

The unprecedented health crisis ushered in by the pandemic jeopardized the health and well-being of individuals and societies across the world. However, countries and health systems now have an opportunity to bounce back by sharing and learning from best practices to establish new paradigms of partnership in health emergency documentation and response.

Speaking at the press conference, H.E. Dr Jaleela bint Al-Sayed Jawad Hasan said: "We are proud to have our experience documented by the WHO in this case study. Commitment at the highest political level was instrumental to the success of Bahrain's COVID-19 response. Under the leadership of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa and His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister, Bahrain managed to take significant strides to ensure the highest possible levels of safety and maintain health and well-being for all citizens and residents even before the first COVID-19 case was detected in the country."

Three weeks before the first case was reported in Bahrain, a National Taskforce for Combatting COVID-19 was formed, along with a fully functional, around the clock, war room. On February 19, five days before the first case was detected, a multilingual national campaign to combat COVID-19 was launched with a pre-prepared media statement to build community engagement,

reinforcing awareness at all levels of society and providing sound technical guidance on how to prevent the spread. When the first case was detected on February 24, 2020 the Taskforce was ready to launch a comprehensive whole-of-government response. Strong leadership and a wholistic approach to care helped to secure a high level of support across the country, with over 50,000 volunteers registering on a national platform.

Prevention, preparedness and response activities were implemented swiftly across all sectors through a whole-of-government, whole-of-society approach, with support from international and local WHO officials.

At the same time, Bahrain successfully dealt with a number of challenges during its response, including repurposing the workforce, acquiring sufficient protective equipment and reaching out to vulnerable populations.

Dr Ahmed Al-Mandhari praised the high-level collaboration between the Bahrain health authorities and the WHO in responding to the pandemic.

“Under the wise leadership of HM the King and the follow up of HRH the Crown Prince and Prime Minister in Bahrain, and through close coordination among the Ministry of Health, all concerned ministries, the Supreme Council of Health and the WHO, Bahrain's response to the pandemic proved to be very timely, comprehensive and successful. We are glad to be part of this endeavour through our new WHO Country Office, which aims to expand WHO's longstanding partnership with the Government of Bahrain to achieve national and global health goals and make WHO's regional vision of Health for All by All a reality on the ground.” Dr Al-Mandhari stated.

In a video message to the press conference, Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General, thanked the Government of Bahrain for sharing their experiences and expressed his hope that the lessons from Bahrain's experience will be useful for other countries in the Eastern Mediterranean Region. Dr Tedros emphasized that Bahrain's success in containing the spread of the disease was the result of early testing, high vaccination coverage and the continued provision of essential health services thanks to a well-trained workforce.

The existence of a WHO Country Office facilitated a three-level mission of WHO staff members

from the Country Office, WHO's Regional Office and headquarters to produce a detailed account of Bahrain's operational strategy in containing the spread of the disease.

Dr Tasnim Atatrah, WHO Representative to Bahrain, reiterated the importance of documenting Bahrain's experiences with COVID-19. "Through this report, WHO seeks to increase the communication and exchange of lessons learned among those working in the field of health emergency in WHO's Eastern Mediterranean Region and beyond. The report is part of Bahrain's contribution to the exchange of global best practice to strengthen health emergency preparedness and response across borders."

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