

WHO BAHRAIN NEWSLETTER



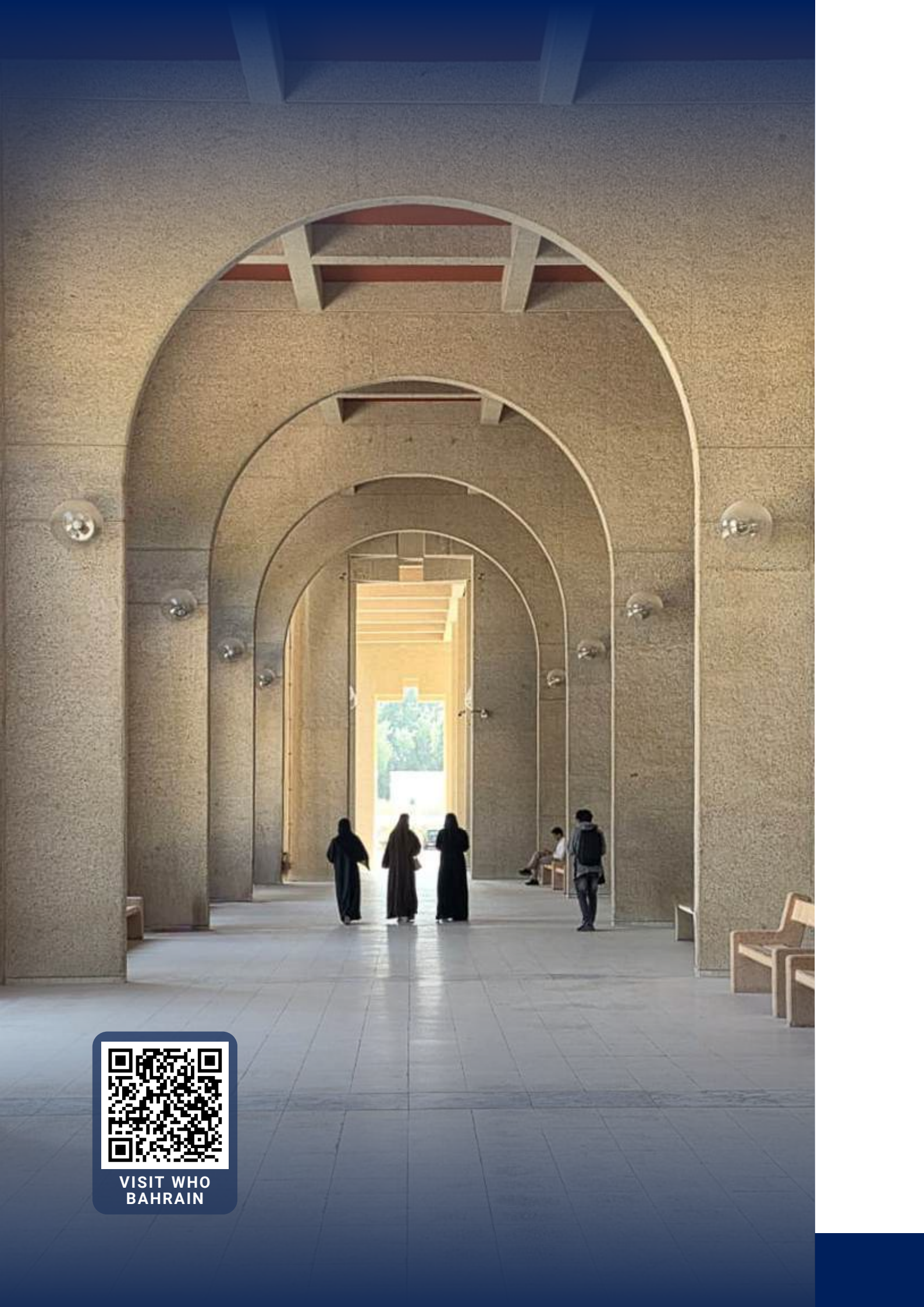
Image

HRH Shaikh Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Crown Prince and Prime Minister of Bahrain, with Dr Hanan Balkhy, WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean.



**World Health
Organization**

Bahrain



VISIT WHO
BAHRAIN

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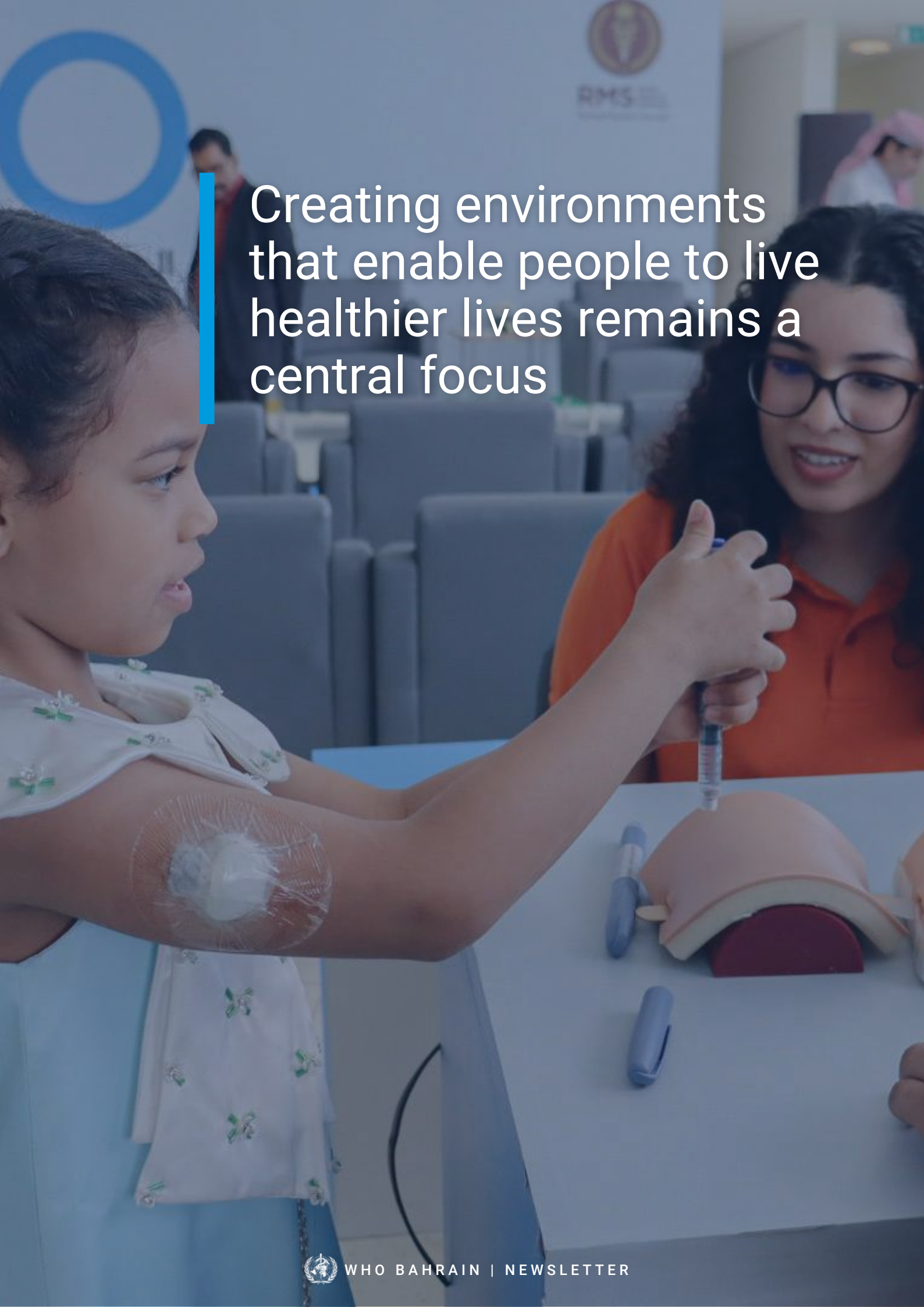
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A young girl with a bandage on her arm is looking at a woman with glasses who is using a marker on a medical model. The background shows a room with grey chairs and a white wall with a blue circle and the RMS logo.

Creating environments
that enable people to live
healthier lives remains a
central focus



Message from the WHO Representative in Bahrain

I am pleased to share this edition of the WHO Country Office in Bahrain newsletter, which captures key developments and collaborative achievements from the latter part of 2025 to advance health and well-being across the Kingdom.

These months were marked by significant global and regional developments that continue to shape public health action. At the global level, Member States adopted a historic declaration at the United Nations General Assembly, bringing noncommunicable diseases and mental health together under a single framework and reaffirming a collective commitment to equity and multisectoral action. Important advances were also made in global health security, including the entry into force of amendments to the International Health Regulations and ongoing efforts to advance the WHO Pandemic Agreement. Regionally, the Seventy-second session of the WHO Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean translated shared ambitions into concrete actions across priority health areas. Bahrain also assumed the Chairmanship of the Supreme Council of the Gulf Cooperation Council and secured its seat as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council for 2026-2027, affirming the Kingdom's standing at the forefront of international and regional affairs.

Against this evolving global and regional landscape, the WHO Country Office continued to work in close partnership with national authorities to promote health, protect populations and deliver impact for all, guided by WHO's Fourteenth General Programme of Work and the three regional flagship initiatives. The official visits of the WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean to the Kingdom provided an important opportunity to take stock of progress and set a clear course for expanded technical cooperation, while also reinforcing Bahrain's proactive leadership in shaping the regional health agenda.

Creating environments that enable people to live healthier lives remained a central focus throughout the period. A landmark achievement was the completion of Bahrain's nationwide Healthy Cities journey, with the designation of the Southern governorate as a healthy city. Progress also continued in expanding the Health-Promoting Universities network, alongside sustained engagement with communities and young people through health observances and awareness initiatives addressing mental health, noncommunicable diseases and antimicrobial resistance.

At the same time, the country office continued to support national efforts to build a more resilient, inclusive and future-ready health system. This included simulation exercises and targeted training to enhance health emergency preparedness and advance the integration of mental health services into primary care, complemented by collaboration with academic institutions to equip future health professionals with practical public health skills.

I extend my sincere thanks to the Government of Bahrain, our United Nations partners, academic institutions and all stakeholders for their ongoing engagement and partnership. Through our collective efforts, we continue to translate shared priorities into meaningful impact that protects lives, strengthens health systems and delivers results where they matter most.



Dr Assad Hafeez
WHO Representative



World leaders adopt historic declaration on NCDs and mental health



Explore the declaration shaping the future of NCDs and mental health



Leaders from around the world adopted a landmark political declaration at the Eightieth United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) to combat noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) and mental health challenges through an integrated approach, marking the first such declaration to bring NCDs and mental health together under a single framework.

The declaration is the outcome of intergovernmental negotiations conducted ahead of, and considered during, the fourth high-level meeting of the UNGA on the prevention and control of NCDs and the promotion of mental health and well-being, held on 25 September 2025 with the participation of Member States, including Bahrain. It sets out three targets for 2030: reducing the number of tobacco users by 150 million, increasing the number of people with controlled hypertension by 150 million, and expanding access to mental health care for an additional 150 million people.

The adoption of this declaration signals a renewed commitment to equity and sustained multisectoral action, reinforcing global efforts to deliver a healthier, more equitable and prosperous future.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS SHAPING GLOBAL HEALTH EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

1 The Intergovernmental Working Group (IGWG) convened four meetings between July–December 2025. Established by WHO Member States following the adoption of the WHO Pandemic Agreement at the Seventy-eighth World Health Assembly in 2025, the IGWG is tasked with developing key components of the Agreement, including an annex on the Pathogen Access and Benefit-Sharing system. The finalized annex is expected to be submitted to the Seventy-ninth World Health Assembly in 2026 for consideration.

Follow progress of the WHO Pandemic Agreement and IGWG discussions



2 Amendments to the International Health Regulations (2005) entered into force on 19 September 2025, marking a significant step forward in global health governance and cooperation. The updated IHR reflect lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic and introduce measures to enhance collaboration on public health risks, including a new “pandemic emergency” alert level to trigger coordinated action when a high-risk global threat emerges.

Learn how the amended IHR strengthen global health security



Through our collective efforts, we continue to translate shared priorities into meaningful impact that protects lives, strengthens health systems and delivers results where they matter most.

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



Image

Bahrain's participation in COP11 to the WHO FCTC



RC72 concludes with concrete actions on regional health priorities

15–17 OCTOBER 2025,
CAIRO, EGYPT

The Seventy-second session of the Regional Committee (RC72) for the Eastern Mediterranean was held under the theme “Together for a healthier future”. Bahrain was represented by a delegation led by H.E. Dr Jalila bint Al Sayyed Jawad Hassan, Minister of Health, and comprising of Dr Adel Alsayyad, Public Health Advisor; Dr Ghada Alzayani, Head of Monitoring and Control at the Public Health Directorate and Ms Ameera Isa Nooh, Chief of the International Relations Team.

RC72 adopts key resolutions to address priority health challenges

RC72 demonstrated a strong commitment to advancing WHO’s regional health agenda across a range of pressing priorities. Member States reviewed progress under the Regional Strategic Operational Plan (RSOP) 2025–2028, including the three flagship initiatives to expand equitable access to medicines, strengthen the health workforce and address substance use, while reaffirming priorities such as polio eradication, immunization, palliative care, biosafety and health systems resilience.

The session concluded with the adoption of key resolutions on reaching zero-dose children and advancing measles and rubella elimination; improving health systems recovery in fragile and conflict-affected settings; strengthening palliative care across hospitals, primary health care and communities; and minimizing biological risks and enhancing laboratory safety. In addition, Member States agreed to finalize and introduce a new operational action plan on climate change and health. The session also saw the endorsement of the Cairo Call to Action, marking a landmark regional commitment to strengthening prevention, early detection and treatment of breast cancer.



Discover
RC72
technical
papers and
resolutions





Bahrain demonstrates practical leadership in antimicrobial stewardship at RC72

During the pre-Regional Committee Virtual Week held from 29 September to 2 October, Bahrain contributed to technical discussions through a side event on strengthening antimicrobial stewardship and infection prevention in primary health care. Dr Samya Bahram, Assistant Undersecretary for Public Health at the Ministry of Health, presented Bahrain's experience in introducing key performance indicators for clinicians to monitor and reduce unnecessary antibiotic prescriptions, reinforcing primary health care approaches to tackling antimicrobial resistance.



Read Amjad's story to see how courage and innovation are shaping the future of health



WHO Faces for Health campaign featured at RC72 highlights Bahrain's health innovation

As part of RC72, the WHO Faces for Health campaign featured Mr Amjad Al Mahari from Bahrain following his treatment for sickle cell anaemia using CRISPR gene-editing technology. His experience exemplifies personal courage and health innovation that transcends borders, setting a pioneering example in the Eastern Mediterranean Region for genomic medicine and its potential to inform future treatment pathways for hereditary blood disorders.



WHO Regional Director's multiple visits to Bahrain deepen longstanding partnership



WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean, Dr Hanan Balkhy, undertook three visits to Bahrain in August, November and December 2025, providing an opportunity to take stock of progress across key health priorities and to set a clear direction for enhanced technical cooperation in the years ahead.

During the visits, Dr Balkhy met with HRH Shaikh Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister of Bahrain; H.E. Lieutenant General Dr Shaikh Mohamed bin Abdullah Al Khalifa, Chairman of the Supreme Council of Health; and H.E. General Shaikh Rashid bin Abdullah Al Khalifa, Minister of Interior; and H.E. Dr Jalila bint Al Sayyed Jawad Hassan, Minister of Health, to review health sector achievements and identify priority areas for future collaborative initiatives. She also held discussions with H.E. Brigadier General Dr Shaikh Fahad bin Khalifa Al Khalifa, Commander of the Royal Medical Services, on strengthening the health workforce, and with members of the national health working groups on multisectoral strategies to address communicable and noncommunicable diseases.

These discussions were complemented by site visits that offered a firsthand look at Bahrain's efforts to build a robust, future-ready health system underpinned by a strong primary health care, skilled health



workforce and cutting-edge innovation. At the Shaikh Abdulla bin Khalid Al Khalifa Health Centre, Dr Balkhy observed the country's integrated, people-centred primary health care model, while at the Bahrain Oncology Centre, she was briefed on the pioneering use of CRISPR-based gene-editing technology to treat a sickle cell disease patient.

Beyond the health sector, Dr Balkhy also met with H.E. Noor bint Ali Alkhulaif, Minister of Sustainable Development, and H.E. Rawan bint Najeeb Tawfiqi, Minister of Youth Affairs, underscoring the importance of whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches to health.



Community health achievements were recognized during the visits, with the presentation of Healthy City certificates to the Northern, Muharraq and Southern governorates, reflecting Bahrain's sustained efforts to create healthier, more inclusive living environments. This forward-looking approach reflects the same leadership Bahrain brings to regional health cooperation through the Bahrain Declaration, adopted at the 2024 Arab League Summit, which calls for strengthened care for conflict-affected populations, improved access to essential medicines and expanded regional pharmaceutical and vaccine production. Dr Balkhy reaffirmed WHO's support for advancing the Declaration in close partnership with Bahrain.

These visits underscored the strong partnership between WHO and the Government of Bahrain and reaffirmed WHO's commitment to supporting Bahrain as it advances its national health priorities, strengthens its health system and drives progress towards Health for All.



“On behalf of WHO, I extend our sincere congratulations to the Kingdom of Bahrain for its leadership, innovation, and determination to place health and well-being at the heart of development.”

Dr Hanan Balkhy
WHO Regional Director for Eastern Mediterranean



Bahrain International Public Health Conference reinforces regional leadership and collaboration



6-7 NOVEMBER 2025, MANAMA, BAHRAIN

The Ministry of Health hosted the Bahrain International Public Health Conference and Exhibition, bringing together international and regional experts and researchers to advance dialogue on public health and disease prevention.

Held in the presence of H.E. Lieutenant General Dr Shaikh Mohamed bin Abdullah Al Khalifa, Chairman of the Supreme Council of Health, and attended by H.E. Dr Jalila bint Al Sayyed Jawad Hassan, Minister of Health, the conference featured a comprehensive scientific programme of lectures and workshops addressing topics such as preventive health, health planning, global health security and modern technologies in public health.

WHO had a strong presence at the conference, with participation from Dr Hanan Balkhy, WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean, and Dr Assad Hafeez, WHO Representative, a.i. in Bahrain. Addressing participants in a keynote speech, Dr Balkhy highlighted Bahrain's leadership in advancing public health across the Eastern Mediterranean Region, citing the Bahrain Declaration as a key example of the Kingdom's commitment to equitable health care and strengthened pharmaceutical resilience.



Read the WHO Regional Director's keynote speech



WHO hosts roundtable discussion on antimicrobial resistance



5 AUGUST 2025, MANAMA, BAHRAIN

The WHO Country Office, in collaboration with the Arabian Gulf University (AGU), convened a roundtable discussion on strengthening health workforce education and antimicrobial stewardship.

The roundtable was inaugurated by Dr Hanan Balkhy, WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean, and Dr Abdulrahman Yousif Ismael, Vice President for Support Services and Institutional Affairs at AGU. In her remarks, Dr Balkhy highlighted antimicrobial resistance as a critical challenge for public health in the Eastern Mediterranean Region, emphasizing the urgent need to equip the health workforce with the knowledge and skills required for effective antimicrobial stewardship. Building on this, Dr Ismael reaffirmed AGU's commitment to advancing health workforce education as a foundation for strengthening health systems and supporting effective responses to antimicrobial resistance across the Gulf Cooperation Council and neighbouring countries.

The roundtable brought together senior national stakeholders, including Dr Lulwa Rashid Showaiter, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Health, and H.E. Dr Jameela Al Salman, Shura Council member and Chairperson of the Strategic and Technical Advisory Group on Antimicrobial Resistance, alongside academics and health practitioners, strengthening dialogue, aligning priorities and advancing coordinated national action on antimicrobial resistance.



Discover Dr Balkhy's key remarks at the AMR roundtable



Bahrain convenes international experts to address **AMR** and **infectious diseases**



18–20 SEPTEMBER 2025, MANAMA, BAHRAIN

The Bahrain Medical Society's Infectious Diseases and Microbiology Association hosted the Third International Conference on Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) and Infectious Diseases, held in the presence of H.E. Lieutenant General Dr Shaikh Mohamed bin Abdullah Al Khalifa, Chairman of the Supreme Council of Health.

The event featured a series of high-level scientific sessions and expert presentations. This included a presentation by Dr Muhammed Shaffi Koya, Medical Officer at the WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean, who highlighted the regional AMR burden, outlining challenges and opportunities for coordinated multisectoral action at the national and regional levels to strengthen surveillance, stewardship, prevention and innovation.

WHO's participation in this year's conference builds on its engagement in the previous edition, reinforcing the Organization's commitment to supporting Bahrain in advancing evidence-based action to combat AMR and protect the effectiveness of life-saving medicines.

Manama Health Congress advances **sustainable hospital practices**

11–13 DECEMBER 2025, MANAMA, BAHRAIN

The Government Hospitals, in collaboration with the Arab Hospitals Federation, hosted the Fourth Manama Health Congress and Expo in the presence of H.E. Lieutenant General Dr Shaikh Mohamed bin Abdullah Al Khalifa, Chairman of the Supreme Council of Health. The Congress provided a platform for dialogue and collaboration on scaling up sustainable hospital practices across the Region.

As part of the programme, Dr Hamid Ravaghi, Regional Adviser for Hospital Care and Management at the WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean, delivered a presentation on building sustainable and climate-resilient hospitals, highlighting practical approaches to improving resource efficiency and strengthening hospital preparedness in line with global climate commitments.



Sustaining gains of polio eradication

14-16 SEPTEMBER 2025, RIYADH, SAUDI ARABIA

Poliomyelitis (polio) is a highly infectious viral disease that primarily affects children under five years of age. Bahrain has remained free of wild poliovirus since 1993.

The Regional Commission for Certification of Poliomyelitis Eradication (RCC), an independent expert body that oversees polio certification in the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region, convened its 39th meeting to review annual updates from polio-free countries, including Bahrain, and formally reaffirmed the country's status.

The Commission also reviewed progress reports from endemic countries and issued recommendations to support continued efforts towards achieving regional polio eradication.



WHO certifies the proficiency of Bahrain's measles and rubella laboratory

25 SEPTEMBER 2025, MANAMA, BAHRAIN

In an on-site mission to Bahrain, WHO experts certified the proficiency of the measles/rubella laboratory in line with the WHO Measles and Rubella National Reference Laboratory Checklist. Led by Dr Amany Ghoneim, Laboratory Focal Point for Vaccine-Preventable Diseases at the WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean, the mission assessed core laboratory functions, including general laboratory operations, serology and molecular diagnostics.

Following the assessment, the laboratory met accreditation requirements, leading to its designation as a National Reference Laboratory for Measles and Rubella. This accreditation confirms compliance with the rigorous quality and performance standards of the WHO Measles and Rubella Laboratory Network and highlights Bahrain's contribution to regional and global measles and rubella elimination efforts amid the resurgence of measles in many countries.

WHO supports national preparedness through health security simulation



10–12 NOVEMBER 2025, MANAMA, BAHRAIN

To strengthen national health security preparedness, the WHO Country Office, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, organized a three-day simulation exercise (SimEx), providing a practical opportunity to test emergency plans and response systems and strengthen readiness across sectors.

The exercise brought together 25 participants from key sectors, including the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Municipalities Affairs and Agriculture, Primary Health Care Centres, Government Hospitals, the National Communication Centre and Bahrain Airport Company. Through interactive, scenario-based simulations, participants practiced emergency procedures and tested communication, coordination and response functions, helping

identify strengths and areas for improvement in detecting, assessing and responding to public health events.

The SimEx forms part of the International Health Regulations (2005) monitoring and evaluation framework, complementing mandatory State Party Self-Assessment Annual Reporting (SPAR) and voluntary instruments such as joint external evaluations and after-action reviews.



WHO strengthens maritime health preparedness through IHR training



15–17 OCTOBER 2025, ATHENS, GREECE

With support from the country office, Bahrain participated in an international training course on the issuance of Ship Sanitation Certificates (SSCs), organized by the WHO Collaborating Centre for the International Health Regulations (2005) at the University of Thessaly, in accordance with the WHO Handbook on Ship Sanitation.

The training brought together participants from 10 countries and focused on strengthening public health capacities to prevent and control health risks on board ships, particularly at points of entry.

Through theory and practical sessions, participants strengthened skills in ship sanitation inspection and SSC issuance in line with IHR requirements, contributing to safer maritime transport and stronger health security.



Bahrain achieves nationwide **Healthy City** status with the Southern governorate designation



10 DECEMBER 2025, MANAMA, BAHRAIN

In a landmark moment for Bahrain's Healthy Cities journey, WHO officially awarded the Southern governorate the Healthy City designation. With this recognition, all four governorates in Bahrain – Capital, Northern, Muharraq, and now Southern – have achieved Healthy City status, marking the completion of the nationwide rollout of the Healthy Cities programme.

The designation certificate was presented by Dr Hanan Balkhy, WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean, to H.E. General Shaikh Rashid bin Abdulla Al Khalifa, Minister of Interior, in the presence of H.E. Dr Jalila bint Al Sayyed Jawad Hassan, Minister of Health; His Highness Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali bin Khalifa Al Khalifa, Governor of the Southern governorate; and Dr Assad Hafeez, WHO Representative, a.i., in Bahrain.



UCB joins Bahrain's network of Health-Promoting Universities



20 OCTOBER 2025, SAAR, BAHRAIN

Marking an important milestone in Bahrain's drive to create healthier learning environments, University College of Bahrain (UCB) has been officially awarded the Health-Promoting University designation by WHO.

The award certificate was presented by Dr Assad Hafeez, WHO Representative, a.i., in Bahrain, to Dr Rana Sawaya, President of UCB. The award ceremony was attended by government officials, including Ms Dalal Al-Haj, Director of Accreditation and Licensing at the General Secretariat of the Higher Education Council, and Dr Wafa AlSharbati, Director of Health Promotion at the Ministry of Health.

As part of its journey toward designation, UCB received a joint evaluation team in February led by WHO experts from the Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean and the country office, together with representatives from the Ministry of Health and the Higher Education Council. The evaluation team engaged with UCB faculty and students, observed on-campus initiatives, and reviewed documents to assess how the university is fostering a health-conducive working and learning environment. This external evaluation followed an earlier technical visit in January, during which the WHO Country Office and the Ministry of Health supported UCB in completing its self-assessment.

UCB is the seventh academic institution in Bahrain to achieve this distinction, joining Ahlia University, American University of Bahrain, Arabian Gulf University, Kingdom University, the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland – Medical University of Bahrain and University of Technology Bahrain.



UoB undergoes evaluation for the WHO Health-Promoting University status



19 NOVEMBER 2025, SAKHIR, BAHRAIN

As part of Bahrain's broader efforts to strengthen health-enabling learning environments, a joint regional and country evaluation team visited the University of Bahrain (UoB) to assess its eligibility for the Health-Promoting University designation. The team included 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 visit, the evaluation team met with the university's leadership, faculty members and students, and observed a range of on-campus activities and institutional practices. The assessment focused on examining the university's efforts to integrate health into its services and campus environment, with particular attention to efforts that support a safe, inclusive and health-enabling setting for both students and staff. This external assessment built on a preliminary technical engagement conducted on 12 November, during which the Ministry of Health and the WHO Country Office provided guidance to support UoB in completing its self-assessment, a foundational requirement in the Health-Promoting University designation process.

The WHO Health-Promoting Universities initiative recognizes the central role of higher education institutions in advancing public health and sustainable development. By integrating health into their campus culture, universities create supportive environments that strengthen the well-being of students, staff and the wider community.

mhGAP training supports the integration of mental health services in primary care



18–20 NOVEMBER 2025, MANAMA, BAHRAIN

The country office, in collaboration with the Primary Health Care Centres, organized a three-day training on the WHO Mental Health Gap Action Programme (mhGAP) to strengthen the capacity of primary care professionals in delivering mental health services. The training focused on enhancing skills to assess, manage and follow up on mental, neurological and substance use (MNS) conditions in non-specialized health settings.

The training brought together over 20 medical professionals from Primary Health Care Centres and Government Hospitals, who were introduced to the mhGAP Intervention Guide through interactive exercises that explored evidence-based protocols and tools for managing priority MNS conditions. It covered six priority areas, including child and adolescent mental and behavioural disorders, stress-related conditions, anxiety, depression, substance use disorders and self-harm and suicide.

The mhGAP is a global WHO initiative designed to close the treatment gap for MNS conditions by expanding access to quality care through non-specialist health services. By strengthening mental care at primary health care, mhGAP supports countries in advancing universal health coverage and ensuring that more people receive timely and appropriate mental health support.



WHO strengthens **healthy ageing** competencies among future health professionals



14 SEPTEMBER 2025, BUSAITEEN, BAHRAIN

In the lead-up to the International Day of Older Persons (1 October), the country office held an interactive workshop on healthy ageing at the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland–Bahrain (RCSI Bahrain) to equip future physicians with practical knowledge and skills to better support older people in clinical and community settings.

The session brought together 126 medical students, strengthening their understanding of key principles and approaches that shape healthy ageing, as well as the priority areas of action of the United Nations Decade of Healthy Ageing (2021–2030), a global initiative that supports countries in creating more inclusive and equitable environments for older populations. Through dynamic discussions, students explored how these global priorities translate into everyday practice, challenging ageism, promoting age-friendly environments and supporting integrated, person-centred and long-term care that upholds dignity for older adults.

This training complements broader efforts by the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) in Bahrain to enhance policy frameworks and expand capacity building on healthy ageing. In 2023, WHO, together with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), provided technical support to the Ministry of Social Development in reviewing the national strategy for the elderly, adopted in 2012, helping to inform its update in line with the Government Plan (2023-2026) and Economic Vision 2030.



United Nations Day in Bahrain marks 80 years of multilateral dialogue and cooperation



24 OCTOBER 2025, MANAMA, BAHRAIN

United Nations Day (24 October) is observed each year to celebrate the founding of the United Nations (UN). This year's commemoration coincided with the Organization's 80th anniversary, and to mark the milestone, the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) in Bahrain organized a series of activities to engage communities and highlight the UN's relevance in today's world.



See how UN
touches lives
around the world





25-27 OCTOBER 2025, ISA TOWN, BAHRAIN

The UNCT, in collaboration with the Bahrain Science Center for the Sustainable Development Goals and the Ministry of Youth Affairs, organized a three-day event as part of the UN Day commemorations. The event was launched by an opening ceremony, followed by a programme of diverse activities designed to engage and empower youth in shaping a more sustainable and inclusive future. Among these activities, the WHO Country Office delivered a session on mental health, which attracted around 10 medical students, highlighting the growing burden and impact of mental health conditions and the important role young people can play in promoting awareness, prevention and well-being.



28 OCTOBER 2025, MANAMA, BAHRAIN

The UNCT marked the UN's 80th anniversary with a reception, bringing together government officials, members of the Diplomatic Corps, youth leaders, and representatives from the private sector and civil society. The event was inaugurated by Mr Khaled El Mekwad, UN Resident Coordinator, and H.E. Ambassador Khalid Al Jalahma, Undersecretary for Political Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. A key highlight of the reception was the launch of the UN@80 Photo Exhibition, "Shared Lives, Shared Future", which was later displayed at Seef Mall to reach a wider public. The WHO Country Office joined the commemoration with a dedicated booth showcasing its work on-the-ground and key achievements in advancing health and sustainable development across the Kingdom.

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 country office.



3 SEPTEMBER 2025, MANAMA, BAHRAIN

As part of its continued efforts to strengthen tobacco control and protect public health, the Primary Health Care Centres launched a national anti-smoking campaign under the patronage of H.E. Lieutenant General Dr Shaikh Mohamed bin Abdullah Al Khalifa, Chairman of the Supreme Council of Health. The campaign aimed to raise awareness of the health risks associated with tobacco and nicotine products, protect young people from addiction, and promote smoke-free environments.

The launch event was inaugurated by H.E. Dr Jalila bint Al Sayyed Jawad Hassan, Minister of Health, together with Dr Ejlal Faisal Al Alawi, Chief Executive of Primary Health Care Centres, who both reaffirmed Bahrain's commitment to reducing tobacco-related harm and strengthening prevention efforts at the community level.

During the event, the WHO Country Office delivered a presentation highlighting the tactics used by the tobacco industry to increase the appeal of tobacco and nicotine products, particularly among young people, and emphasized the importance of comprehensive, evidence-based measures to prevent addiction and tobacco-related diseases.

This national campaign represents an important step in advancing Bahrain's tobacco control agenda, reinforcing preventive efforts, and building sustained momentum to reduce the burden of tobacco-related illness in line with national and global public health goals.



World Patient Safety Day

World Patient Safety Day (17 September) aims to raise awareness and mobilize action to improve patient safety across health systems. The 2025 theme, “Safe care for every newborn”, underscores the importance of preventing avoidable harm and ensuring safe, high-quality care from the very start of life. To mark the day, the WHO Country Office engaged with national partners to promote patient safety, with particular focus on newborn and child health.



**17 SEPTEMBER 2025,
MANAMA, BAHRAIN**

The country office attended a World Patient Safety Day event organized by the Primary Health Care Centres. The event highlighted this year’s theme and reinforced the importance of embedding patient safety principles across primary care services. WHO’s participation emphasized the Organization’s continued support for national efforts to strengthen safety and quality of care across the health system.

**8 OCTOBER 2025,
MANAMA, BAHRAIN**

The country office conducted an event in collaboration with the University of Bahrain to mark World Patient Safety Day, bringing together around 100 students and faculty members. It featured presentations covering topics such as safe newborn care practices and breastfeeding for infants. Through interactive discussions, the event strengthened awareness of patient safety principles among future health professionals and emphasized the importance of building a culture of safety across the continuum of care.



WHO raises youth awareness on World Mental Health Day

World Mental Health Day (10 October) provides an opportunity to raise awareness and promote action on protecting mental health and well-being. This year's theme, "Mental health in humanitarian emergencies", highlights the urgent need to address mental health and psychological support for people affected by conflict. To mark the day, the WHO Country Office engaged with young people to strengthen understanding of this year's theme and empower them to play an active role in supporting mental well-being.



**7 OCTOBER 2025,
RIFFA, BAHRAIN**

The country office delivered a guest lecture at the Royal University of Women, engaging around 12 students. The lecture explored the importance of integrating mental health and psychosocial support into emergency preparedness and response and included interactive discussions that encouraged students to reflect on practical actions and real-world applications.

**14 OCTOBER 2025,
HAMALA, BAHRAIN**

The country office conducted a session at the British School of Bahrain, engaging 18 senior school students, who serve as mental health ambassadors within their school community. The session explored the theme of World Mental Health Day through interactive group work, during which the students developed creative games and activities to help their younger peers understand mental health concepts.



WHO mobilizes students for breast cancer prevention and early detection



14 OCTOBER 2025, RIFFA, BAHRAIN

In commemoration of Breast Cancer Awareness Month (October), the WHO Country Office conducted an awareness session at the Royal University for Women, focusing on breast cancer risk factors, early signs and symptoms, screening methods, and the role of youth leadership in strengthening breast cancer awareness.

The session engaged more than 14 students with this year's campaign theme, "Every story is unique, every journey matters", highlighting the importance of personalized care, and the diverse lived experiences of women affected by breast cancer. Through interactive

exercises, students explored practical approaches to promote breast health education within their communities and support women and families, contributing to broader efforts to reduce stigma and improve health outcomes.

WHO marks World Diabetes Day with community outreach on prevention and care

13-14 NOVEMBER 2025, MANAMA, BAHRAIN

On the occasion of World Diabetes Day (14 November), the country office participated in a public awareness event at Seef Mall, organized by the Bahrain Diabetes Society in collaboration with the Royal Medical Services and the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland – Medical University of Bahrain (RCSI Bahrain). The event was inaugurated by H.E. Lieutenant General Dr Shaikh Mohamed bin Abdullah Al Khalifa, President of the Bahrain Diabetes Society, and Chairman of the Supreme Council of Health, and drew wide participation from community members of all ages.

Aligned with the international day's theme, "Diabetes across life stages", the event focused on increasing public awareness of diabetes prevention, early detection and effective management, highlighting the importance of integrated care and supportive environments throughout the life course. In support of these messages, the WHO Country Office, together with RCSI Bahrain student volunteers, led an interactive booth featuring practical demonstrations of safe insulin administration, engaging games revealing the hidden sugar content in commonly consumed drinks, and the distribution of information material promoting healthy lifestyle choices.



WHO Representative champions healthy starts on **World Prematurity Day**



See how global health action supports premature babies worldwide



17 NOVEMBER 2025

Marking World Prematurity Day (17 November), Dr Assad Hafeez, WHO Representative, a.i. in Bahrain, emphasized that preventing preterm birth starts with a healthy pregnancy, and that simple, evidence-based interventions can strengthen newborn care, save lives and help every baby thrive.

World Prematurity Day was officially endorsed as a global health campaign at the Seventy-eighth World Health Assembly in May 2025, reflecting growing international commitment to improving maternal and newborn health outcomes.

WHO marks **World AMR Awareness Week** with student engagement at AGU

25 NOVEMBER 2025, MANAMA, BAHRAIN

The WHO Country Office participated in an event hosted by the Arabian Gulf University (AGU) to mark World AMR Awareness Week (18–24 November), held under the global theme “Act Now: Protect Our Present, Secure Our Future”. The event brought together more than 100 students to raise awareness of the growing threat of antimicrobial resistance and underscore the urgent need for collective action to preserve the effectiveness of life-saving medicines.

As part of the event, the country office led an interactive booth that engaged students through educational materials, videos, and games inspired by the WHO AWaRe (Access, Watch, Reserve) antibiotic book, strengthening their understanding of the appropriate use of antibiotics, the risks associated with misuse and overuse, and the critical role future health professionals play in preventing the spread of antimicrobial resistance.



OFFICIAL MEETINGS

FROM JULY - DECEMBER 2025



- 1 H.E. Dr Jameela Al Salman, Member of the Shura Council, Chair of the Strategic and Technical Advisory Group on Antimicrobial Resistance (STAG-AMR)
- 2 Mr Khaled El Mekwad, UN Resident Coordinator
- 3 H.E. Dr Saad bin Saud AlFuhaid, President of Arabian Gulf University
- 4 Professor Sameer Otoom, President of the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland – Medical University of Bahrain

- 5 Shaikha Deena bint Rashid Al Khalifa, Advisor Planning and Development at the Ministry of Youth Affairs
- 6 Dr Leena Khonji, Director of WHO Collaborating Centre for Nursing Development
- 7 H.E. Alastair Long, Ambassador of the United Kingdom to the Kingdom of Bahrain

Thank you! From the WHO Bahrain Country Office Team

Inaugurated in July 2021, the WHO Country Office in Bahrain is the 20th country office to be established in the Eastern Mediterranean Region and the 152nd globally. Guided by WHO's Fourteenth General Programme of Work, the office provides strategic and technical support to the Government to promote, protect and improve health and well-being. Working closely with national health authorities, United Nations partners and other health-related stakeholders, the WHO Country Office supports accelerated progress towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with a strong commitment to ensuring that no one's health is left behind.



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