

WHO KUWAIT NEWSLETTER

Q2 2025

Kuwait honored with WHO prize for healthy aging efforts

"This recognition is not only a reflection of our efforts, but a renewed responsibility to continue striving for excellence in elderly care," said Dr. Fatemah Bendhafari on behalf of the Directorate.



Kuwait's Ministry of Health – Geriatric Healthcare Directorate has been awarded the 2025 His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah Prize for the Promotion of Healthy Ageing at the 78th World Health Assembly in Geneva.



Key Achievements

- National Strategy for Older Adults (2024–2030) to enhance access to quality, integrated care.
- Kuwait Older Adults Health Survey, based on WHO's Global Ageing Population Survey.
- Mobile vaccination campaigns reaching over 1,000 older adults and caregivers.
- Capacity building for more than 1,000 healthcare professionals, boosting elderly care services by 40%.
- Community engagement and NGO collaboration to promote active, healthy ageing.

This award highlights Kuwait's leadership in promoting healthy ageing and its long-standing partnership with WHO since 1960.

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“What began as technical collaboration has evolved into a transformative partnership — one that is shaping the future of public health in Kuwait and offering a blueprint for the region.”

— Dr. Assad Hafeez

This Quarter we commemorate four years since the establishment of the WHO Country Office in Kuwait, I am compelled not only to look back at what has been achieved, but to also deeply reflect on how it has been achieved through partnership, purpose, and an unwavering commitment to the health and well-being of the people of Kuwait.

This newsletter is a testimony to how vision, when matched with national resolve and international collaboration, can shape systems, strengthen institutions, and inspire regional progress. From the earliest discussions with the Ministry of Health, the aspiration was clear: to move beyond episodic technical assistance and toward embedding WHO's expertise into the fabric of national health governance.

Throughout this journey, what has consistently stood out is Kuwait's openness to new thinking and its willingness to move from traditional paradigms to progressive, system-wide reforms.

We know, of course, that challenges remain. Health is not static, it is constantly being reshaped by demographic shifts, technological disruption, political will, and planetary health pressures. But with every workshop conducted, every national plan endorsed, and every young leader trained, I see the contours of a Kuwaiti health system that is more inclusive, more accountable, and more resilient than ever before.

Our collective journey continues, anchored in the belief that health is not just the absence of illness it is the foundation upon which all human progress stands.

It is my sincere hope that this document not only captures the progress of the past, but also stirs ambition for what is yet to come.

Dr. Assad Hafeez
WHO Representative in Kuwait



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WORLD HEALTH DAY

World Health Day this year embraced the theme **“Healthy Beginnings, Hopeful Futures,”** highlighting the vital role of early health interventions in shaping stronger, more resilient communities. The campaign set the tone for Q2 uniting the efforts of WHO offices in Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman, and Qatar in a coordinated regional push to promote lifelong well-being from the very start.

HEALTHY BEGINNINGS



World Health Day 2025

“

World Health Day 2025 offers us a unique opportunity to celebrate the progress we've made in improving maternal and newborn health.

Together, we've proven that healthier beginnings are within reach.

Join us in advocating for maternal and newborn health.

Let's be the change the world needs.

”



Dr Jean Jabbour
WHO Representative to the Sultanate of Oman



World Health Day 2025

“

World Health Day is a reminder that investing in maternal, newborn, and child health is investing in the future. Through collaboration and innovation, we can turn commitments into action, ensuring every mother and child receives the care they need to thrive.

”



Dr Assad Hafeez
WHO Representative in Kuwait
/ WHO Representative a.i. Bahrain

HOPEFUL FUTURES

Through awareness events, community outreach, and media engagement, the initiative underscored how investing in health from the earliest stages—whether in childhood, family support systems, or preventive care—paves the way for a brighter, healthier future for all. This collaborative approach not only amplified the message across borders but also reinforced the region's shared commitment to fostering healthier generations.



World Health Day 2025

“

Healthy beginnings create healthier futures for all - for families, communities and Nations.

We strive to protect the health of every mother, every newborn and child.

Let us continue to build a world where every life starts with dignity, care and love.

”



Dr Rayana Bou Haka
WHO Representative to The State of Qatar

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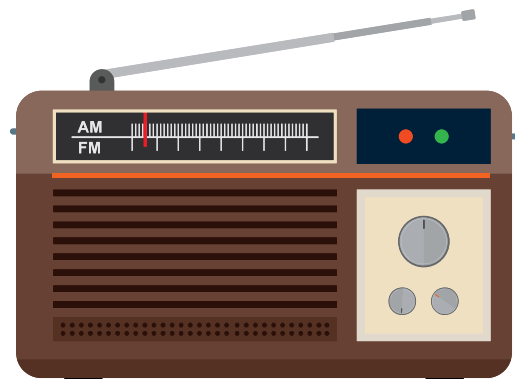
Health Focused Programing

As part of the World Health Day activities, our WHO Representative, Dr. Assad Hafeez, visited 99.7 RKFM to discuss this year's theme, "Healthy Beginnings, Hopeful Futures." In an engaging on-air conversation, Dr. Hafeez highlighted the importance of early health interventions, preventive care, and community-driven initiatives in building healthier societies. The discussion not only reached a wide and diverse audience but also sparked listener engagement, with callers and online followers sharing their own perspectives on how healthy habits start at home. The visit strengthened WHO's collaboration with local media, ensuring the campaign's message resonated far beyond the day itself and reinforcing our commitment to inspiring positive health action across Kuwait.

Following the interview, RKFM amplified the message from Dr. Hafeez's discussion. This extended the campaign's reach beyond the live broadcast, capturing the attention of younger audiences.

The station's listener feedback segments revealed a genuine curiosity about preventive health measures, particularly among parents and young adults. This online momentum created an avenue for WHO Kuwait to engage directly with the public, responding to questions and sharing practical tips that aligned with the campaign's focus on building healthier beginnings.

The collaboration also opened the door for future joint initiatives between WHO Kuwait and RKFM, with both sides exploring opportunities for regular health-focused programming. By pairing expert insight with the station's broad and loyal listenership, the partnership has the potential to keep vital health conversations alive year-round—not just during commemorative days. Dr. Hafeez's visit proved to be more than a one-time media appearance; it became a springboard for sustained public engagement, ensuring the vision of "Healthy Beginnings, Hopeful Futures" continues to inspire action and awareness across Kuwait's communities.



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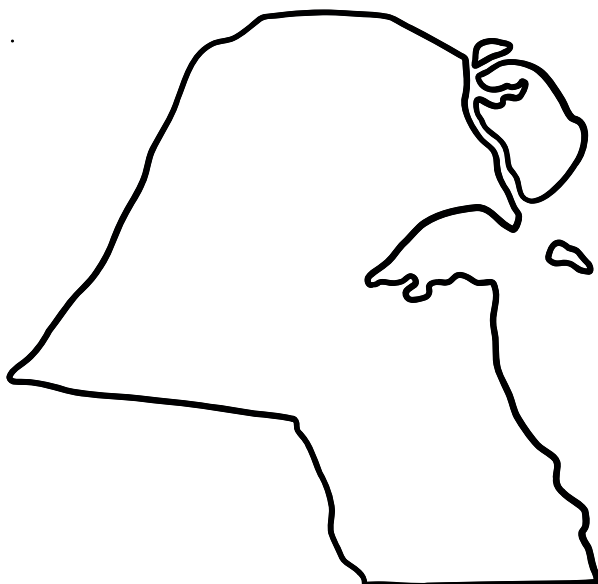
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A National Strategy, A Shared Vision

When the WHO Country Office opened its doors in 2021, Kuwait was already on a pathway toward modernization, guided by Vision 2035 and driven by a desire to align with the best practices of global public health. What was needed was a health strategy that could match that ambition, one that reflected Kuwait's unique context while drawing from the depth of international expertise. Over the last year, the vision took shape under the leadership of the Minister of Health and his team.

MOH Kuwait led the development and adopted its first-ever National Health Strategy, a milestone document that has helped unify the Ministry of Health's programs, anchor funding priorities, and establish a new level of accountability. WHO was instrumental in facilitating this process — from drafting workshops and technical reviews to capacity building for the team responsible. Crucially, the strategy was linked to practical implementation mechanisms and supported by a new Evidence to Policy Unit, also established with WHO's help. This unit, now embedded within the Planning Department of the Ministry of Health, ensures that health decisions are not made in isolation, but in constant dialogue with data, global trends, and local realities.

This new health governance model, built over the past four years, represents a major step forward turning fragmented decision-making into coordinated action, and aligning policy with population health outcomes. And the results are already being felt.



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WORLD IMMUNIZATION WEEK

This World Immunization Week (April 24–30) served as a global reminder of the power of vaccines to protect health, save lives, and build stronger communities. This year, Kuwait joined the world in celebrating progress while reaffirming its dedication to expanding access to essential immunizations. Vaccination remains one of the most effective tools in public health, safeguarding individuals across all age groups and preventing the spread of infectious diseases.

In 2023, Kuwait took a landmark step forward by introducing the HPV vaccine for both males and females. This initiative marks a critical milestone in the nation's efforts to reduce the burden of HPV-related cancers, including cervical, throat, and other preventable malignancies. By making the vaccine accessible to all eligible populations, Kuwait has strengthened its preventive health strategy and underscored the importance of early protection.

The introduction of the HPV vaccine is part of Kuwait's broader vision to ensure equitable access to preventive healthcare for all residents. Public awareness campaigns, community outreach, and collaboration with healthcare providers are helping to educate families about the benefits of vaccination and the role it plays in protecting future generations. By combining medical innovation with public engagement, Kuwait is creating an environment where prevention is prioritized, and every individual has the opportunity to live a healthier life.

We also launched a social media campaign with Dr. Hamad Bastaki, Head of the Communicable Disease Control Division at the Ministry of Health – Kuwait. This was launched to further strengthen the importance of immunization.



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SPOTLIGHT ON YOUTH ADVOCACY

As part of Kuwait's unique Young Ambassador Programme, supported by the United Nations Resident Coordinator Office and in collaboration with the British and Canadian Embassies, we are proud to highlight Lamar AbulJubain. Lamar exemplifies the energy, dedication, and leadership that the programme seeks to nurture, advocating for public health and community well-being while inspiring her peers to take action.

The Young Ambassador Programme, now in its third season, equips Kuwait's brightest young minds with the skills and knowledge to champion critical causes aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Participants like Lamar engage in mentoring sessions with diplomats, policy simulations, and community initiatives, gaining hands-on experience in leadership, advocacy, and communication. The programme is designed to ensure that youth voices are not only heard but actively shaping meaningful change in their communities.

Through her work, Lamar has become a role model for youth engagement, actively participating in campaigns, outreach activities, and social initiatives that promote awareness and positive action. Her efforts demonstrate how young leaders can bridge the gap between global strategies and local impact, proving that age is no barrier to creating meaningful change. By supporting ambassadors like Lamar, Kuwait is cultivating a generation of informed, empowered leaders who are ready to contribute to a healthier, safer, and more resilient society.



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From Training to Transformation: The Rise of Health Leadership



Behind every strong health system is a cadre of capable, visionary leaders, individuals who understand that health is about more than medical treatment; it is about systems, behavior, communication, and trust. In this spirit, WHO prioritized the development of leadership capacity in Kuwait as a cornerstone of its work.

With the support of the Ministry of Health, and in collaboration with Johns Hopkins University and the Gulf Health Council, WHO coordinated three flagship leadership programs that facilitated the training of over 100 senior- and mid-level health professionals from Kuwait and the broader GCC region. These programs were more than academic exercises. They became catalysts for institutional change.

Building on this momentum, WHO is working with KIMS (Kuwait Institute of Medical Specialization) to design and formalize four academic certificate programs in Health Policy, Emergency Preparedness and Response, Public Health, and Hospital Management. Once institutionalized these represent a long-term investment in public health professionalism.

What's more, Kuwait is preparing to launch its first-ever Public Health Residency Program in 2026 which is a four-year training track supported by WHO and tailored to regional needs. Together, these initiatives are cultivating a new generation of health leaders who are trained not only in clinical expertise, but in strategic thinking and systems innovation.

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Kuwait Showcases Leadership in Medical Accountability at WHA78



At the 78th World Health Assembly (WHA78), Kuwait reaffirmed its commitment to advancing global healthcare standards by hosting a high-level side event titled “Enhancing the Quality of Health Care through Medical Accountability.” Held in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO), the event highlighted Kuwait’s innovative model for improving care through transparency and oversight, with a focus on combating Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) through stronger accountability.



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Healthy Cities, Healthier Futures



Health is not just what happens in clinics or hospitals. It is shaped by the air we breathe, the streets we walk, the food we eat, and the way we live together in our communities. Recognizing this, WHO Kuwait prioritized a whole-of-society approach to well-being one that reaches beyond the health sector and into the neighborhoods and institutions where people live, study, and work.

This approach took visible form through Kuwait's participation in the Healthy Cities Initiative, a WHO-led global movement that reimagines urban living through the lens of health. Over the past four years at least 21 cities across Kuwait have been officially registered as Healthy Cities, each meeting rigorous criteria for sustainability, safety, walkability, and inclusive design. In parallel, Kuwait University became the first institution in the region to be certified as a Healthy University a milestone that symbolized the expansion of health promotion into academic life and youth culture.

The Ministry of Health, with WHO's support, documented this success in a powerful national report and a short film, which now serve as reference models across the Eastern Mediterranean Region. These achievements are more than symbolic. They reflect a genuine shift: health in Kuwait is no longer the sole responsibility of doctors it is a national value embedded into everyday life.

Looking ahead, WHO and the Ministry aim to further document Kuwait's Healthy Cities journey as a best practice for other nations, reinforcing the country's leadership in urban health promotion.

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Let's Move ? Let's Move.



This year, the WHO Kuwait Office proudly joined the global Let's Move campaign, highlighting the importance of physical activity for healthier lifestyles. Together with colleagues from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the team came together to take part in a social media campaign showcasing the power of collaboration in promoting health and well-being across the UN family.

The campaign encouraged staff to stay active and underscored the role of physical activity in preventing noncommunicable diseases and improving overall quality of life. By participating alongside UNDP colleagues, the WHO Kuwait Office reinforced the message that movement is a simple yet powerful tool for better health, setting an example for the wider community.

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Kuwait Strengthens Action Against Antimicrobial Resistance



Kuwait is taking decisive steps to combat antimicrobial resistance (AMR) through a new strategic partnership between the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR), the Ministry of Health, and the World Health Organization (WHO). A preparatory meeting held in February brought together key national stakeholders to set the stage for collaborative research and policy initiatives under the One Health approach, which links human, animal, and environmental health.

This effort builds on a Memorandum of Understanding signed in January 2025 between KISR and WHO, aimed at strengthening research capacity to address public health challenges, including AMR, environmental pollution, pandemic preparedness, and noncommunicable diseases for Kuwait's enhanced role as a regional leader.

Leaders from KISR, the Ministry of Health, and WHO highlighted the urgency of addressing AMR and emphasized the importance of turning scientific research into practical policies. The meeting also involved Kuwait University, the Environment Public Authority, the Public Authority for Food and Nutrition, and the Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources—reflecting a broad national commitment to tackling this pressing health threat.

WHO reaffirmed its full support to Kuwait in developing a comprehensive national system to curb AMR and safeguard the effectiveness of life-saving treatments.

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World Health
Organization
Kuwait

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Kuwait on the Global Health Stage

Over the past four years, Kuwait has evolved from a recipient of international health support to a contributor to global health leadership. With WHO's support, the country has taken bold steps to share its experiences, influence global policy, and invest in regional stability through health diplomacy.

As we close the first chapter in WHO Kuwait's journey, the accomplishments of the past four years and the second quarter of this year serve not as an endpoint, but as a beginning. The foundations have been laid — stronger systems, empowered people, resilient communities, and a renewed national identity rooted in health equity.

The path ahead is equally ambitious. In the coming years, WHO will continue to support the rollout of Kuwait's public health residency program, the implementation of a digital health ecosystem, the scaling of One Health, and the mainstreaming of climate and addiction strategies. Each of these priorities will move Kuwait closer to universal health coverage and toward becoming a reference point for the region.

The vision is bold, but the commitment is real. With the right partnerships, the right policies, and the right purpose — a healthier Kuwait is not just possible. It's inevitable.

