

6 April 2023 – With a focus on empowering healthy environments in sustainable societies, the WHO healthy cities initiative creates frameworks to enable the promotion of health and equity within the foundations of urban development, receiving recognition for multisectoral empowerment and innovation on the part of communities to improve health and well-being for all.

In 2018, Um Alhassam was awarded as the first healthy city in Bahrain, with Manama following shortly after, by fulfilling the required criteria in 2020, and with the additional accolade of being announced as the first healthy cities capital in the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region in 2021. Following rigorous assessment, the cities of Busaiteen/Al-Sayah and A'ali were recognized as WHO healthy cities in 2022, with award ceremonies held on 26 February 2023, testament to the advancement of the healthy settings approach in Bahrain.

During the ceremony to recognize A'ali as a WHO healthy city, Her Excellency Dr Jaleela bint AlSayed Jawad Hasan, Minister of Health in Bahrain noted, "The recognition of Aali in the northern governorate as a healthy city is a source of pride for Bahrain. This is part of the healthy cities programme, one of the most important programmes of WHO that aims to promote and protect the health of a population through sustainable urban development and the provision of a healthy, safe and supportive environment in all settings".

During the Busaiteen/Al-Sayah WHO healthy cities awards ceremony, Her Excellency Dr Jaleela bint AlSayed Jawad Hasan, Minister of Health in Bahrain, commented, "WHO's accreditation of "Busaiteen/Al-Sayah" as a healthy city is a manifestation of the expansion of this ambitious programme and a testament to the continuous efforts of the Government of Bahrain. It also catalogues an impressive track record of groundbreaking national achievements".

Bahrain's whole-of-society approach, evident through community participation in assessment of needs, and with effective planning to ensure Health-In-All-Policies, saw the awarding ceremonies held in the presence of Her Excellency Dr Jaleela bint AlSayed Jawad Hasan, Minister of Health in Bahrain, and Mr Salman bin Isa bin Hindi AlMannai, Governor, Muharraq Governorate, and Mr Ali bin AlShaikh Abdulhussain AlAsfoor, Governor, northern governorate, with the healthy cities awards being presented by Dr Ahmed Al-Mandhari, WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean.

“As one of WHO's flagship initiatives in the Eastern Mediterranean Region to promote urban health and well-being, the healthy cities programme calls for partnerships in sustainable development, shaped as a reflection of our ever-changing environments, not only at the national level, but also at the regional and global levels as well,” noted Dr Ahmed Al-Mandhari, WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean.

Under the leadership of the Ministry of Health in Bahrain, and with imperative displays of commitment and dedication on the part of the governorates, the country has demonstrated notable multisectoral commitment in continuing the expansion of healthy cities accreditation, benefiting the health and well-being of populations across Bahrain, and contributing to the strengthening of public health in the Region towards achieving the Triple Billion Goal 3: 1 billion people enjoying better health and well-being.

The WHO healthy cities programme provides a best practice example of a successful healthy settings approach. Initiated by WHO in 1986, Healthy cities have spread rapidly across the world. “The development of the WHO healthy cities programme across Bahrain provides a tangible example of the effects of sustainable urban living on our quality of life. Under the leadership of the Ministry of Health in Bahrain, and with proactive displays of dedication and commitment by the Governorates, community-based approaches provide the building blocks to support health and well-being opportunities, “Together, for a Healthier and Sustainable Tomorrow,” said Dr Tasnim Atatrah, WHO Representative in Bahrain.

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