



World Health  
Organization

Bahrain

# MAXIMIZING IMPACT

The work of WHO in Bahrain  
Annual report 2022



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# **MAXIMIZING IMPACT**

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# FOREWORD



Welcome to our annual report for 2022. This report highlights the key activities and initiatives of the World Health Organization (WHO) Country Office in Bahrain during 2022 and marks two years since the office was established.

This report demonstrates our commitment to achieving the health-related Sustainable Development Goals in Bahrain, while also keeping our sights on the Triple Billion targets of the WHO Thirteenth General Programme of Work 2019–2023 and the aspirations of WHO’s regional *Vision 2023* to achieve Health for All by All. The report gives a detailed overview of the support we provided to Bahrain during the year under review, including support towards achieving universal health coverage (UHC), health emergency preparedness and response, and healthier populations. It also shows our efforts to maximize WHO’s impact on the ground.

Achieving UHC is at the heart of everything we do, and Bahrain recognizes it as a top priority. UHC is a basic human rights aspiration: everyone should be able to access the services they need without running the risk of financial hardship in doing so. To realize this aspiration, we have scaled up efforts on many fronts, from strengthening primary health care as the foundation for UHC, to improving health leadership and governance, enhancing the quality of services and medical products, and tackling growing challenges such as noncommunicable diseases and antimicrobial resistance.

Addressing health emergencies is a critical priority in Bahrain. The COVID-19 pandemic has been a defining event of these past three years, causing unimaginable suffering and requiring an unprecedented public health response. Despite the challenges and disruptions posed by the pandemic, the world has learned important lessons that should be capitalized on to build back better. We have been inspired by this and have kept our work centred on the best ways to turn lessons learned into commitments and actions for a better future and better health for all citizens. Key achievements in 2022 included, among many other things, the launch of a case studies report that documents Bahrain’s strategic response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The report aims to guide emergency preparedness and response efforts in the Region and beyond and to catalyse the adoption of innovative approaches to strengthening health systems resilience for the dual goals of UHC and health security.

Promoting health and well-being is central to WHO's regional *Vision 2023*, of Health for All by All. Our efforts in this area included revamping our strategy and workplans to address the root causes of ill health and promote the incorporation of health considerations into all policies. We have supported Bahrain in taking the initial steps towards implementing the WHO Acceleration Plan to STOP Obesity, for which the country was selected together with another 24 countries worldwide. We have finalized the development of food-based dietary guidelines to boost the transition towards healthy dietary practices and launched an online campaign to promote healthy lifestyle choices.

As we journey together into the 75th anniversary year of WHO, it gives me great pride to recognize the vital role we have played in promoting health, keeping the world safe and serving the vulnerable. Looking back at our long-standing history, we have continued to solidify our gains, expand the reach of our work, produce high-quality evidence, and keep all partners and stakeholders engaged in policy dialogues, with the goal of achieving healthier futures for all people around the world.

I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to the leadership in Bahrain for its continued support for the work of WHO and commitment to building a sustainable, resilient and equitable health system; the people of the country for placing their confidence and trust in WHO; and our colleagues at the three levels of the organization for their unwavering dedication and guidance. With your support, we hope to continue to inspire change, demonstrate tangible results and shape our future, "Together, for a healthier and sustainable tomorrow".

**Dr Tasnim Atatrah,  
WHO Representative, Bahrain**

# ABBREVIATIONS

<b>AMR</b>	antimicrobial resistance
<b>EIOS</b>	Epidemic Intelligence from Open Sources
<b>GCC</b>	Gulf Cooperation Council
<b>GPW 13</b>	WHO's Thirteenth General Programme of Work
<b>IOM</b>	International Organization for Migration
<b>NCDs</b>	noncommunicable diseases
<b>PHC</b>	primary health care
<b>RC69</b>	69th session of the WHO Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean
<b>SDGs</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>UHC</b>	universal health coverage
<b>UN-Habitat</b>	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
<b>UNCT</b>	United Nations Country Team
<b>UNIATF</b>	United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund
<b>UNSDCF</b>	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This annual report for 2022 provides a comprehensive overview of important activities and initiatives that were implemented by the World Health Organization's (WHO) Country Office in Bahrain from January to December 2022. It gives many examples of how the WHO Country Office used new and innovative ways of working, collaborating and fostering dialogues with the Government of Bahrain and other key partners and stakeholders to accelerate progress towards the three strategic priorities of WHO's Thirteenth General Programme of Work: achieving universal health coverage (UHC), addressing health emergencies and promoting healthier populations.

In 2022, the WHO Country Office undertook a range of activities to strengthen the health system in Bahrain with the aim of achieving UHC. One key achievement was liaising with the Ministry of Health to identify a set of essential health services to support the development of a regional UHC priority benefits package – a set of promotive, preventive, curative, rehabilitative and palliative services that should be available and accessible to all without risk of financial hardship.

Extensive work was also undertaken to address health emergencies. Reducing the transmission and impact of COVID-19 remained one of the core elements of the WHO Country Office's mission and one that saw considerable progress in Bahrain in 2022. Notable achievements included the launch of a landmark case studies report that documents the country's strategic response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The past year also saw significant efforts to strengthen the preparedness and response efforts for the recent mpox outbreak.

Much work was done to promote health across the life course. Reproductive, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health were all high priorities for the WHO Country Office in Bahrain and received much attention in 2022. The WHO Country Office also made substantial efforts over the previous year to promote health through the Healthy Cities and Health Promoting Universities initiatives and to tackle deep-seated challenges such as health inequities and climate change.

Closely related to health promotion efforts is the fight against the major risk factors of noncommunicable diseases (NCDs), including cardiovascular diseases, cancer, diabetes and chronic respiratory diseases. As in many parts of the world, NCDs take a severe toll in Bahrain. In response, the WHO Country Office made substantial efforts in 2022 to boost the implementation of NCDs "best buys" such as promoting healthy diets and physical activity.

In partnership with other United Nations agencies in Bahrain, the WHO Country Office developed a range of initiatives – from advocating for disability-inclusive spaces to promoting healthy habits – to ensure the effective coordination and synergy in health and health-related work across the country and maximize WHO's impact on the ground.



# KEY HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2022

In 2022, the WHO Country Office in Bahrain accelerated efforts towards UHC, health emergency preparedness and response, and healthier populations. The facts and figures over the next pages illustrate how we did it by changing the way we work, manage and deliver.

## STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1: ACHIEVING UHC



Provided technical input for the **development of Bahrain's Primary Health Care Vital Signs Profile**, under the overall guidance and support of the Primary Health Care Performance Initiative.

Supported the Ministry of Health in **identifying a set of essential health services** to guide the development of a regional UHC priority benefits package.



Led the development of robust and sustainable national expertise on the ground by **facilitating the capacity-building of more than 80 participants** from the Ministry and other health-related sectors, **covering the full spectrum of UHC.**

### **Organized the first-ever National Bridging Workshop**

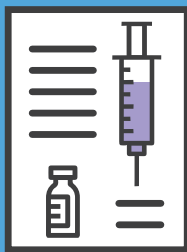
in close collaboration with the Supreme Council of Health and the Ministry of Health, to build national capacities on One Health principles and concepts and drive multi-stakeholder action on antimicrobial resistance.



**Finalized the Report of the Joint Mission of the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases** to leverage the new thinking of delivery science for country-level measurable impact.

## STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2: ADDRESSING HEALTH EMERGENCIES

**Launched a case studies report that documents Bahrain's strategic response to the COVID-19 pandemic**, to guide emergency preparedness and response efforts in the Region and beyond.



**Produced a comprehensive brief on the safety and possible side-effects of the different COVID-19 vaccines**, in line with the Strategic Advisory Group of Experts on Immunization recommendations, to inform the national vaccination strategies and plans.

**Distributed information** on 18 WHO guidelines and 29 WHO global and regional online meetings to **inform COVID-19 response, as well as produced six situation updates on the mpox outbreak** to inform national public health emergency preparedness and response efforts.



**Supported national risk communication to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and combat the stigma around mpox** by maintaining high online visibility and sharing more than 35 posts and two videos across Twitter, Instagram and Facebook.

**Built capacities and skills of more than 20 participants** from the Ministry in efforts **to maintain national gains in polio eradication and the elimination status of measles and rubella.**



## STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3: PROMOTING HEALTHIER POPULATIONS

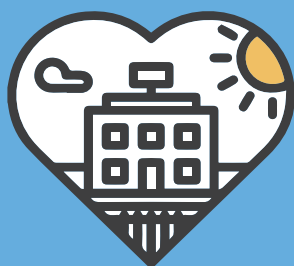
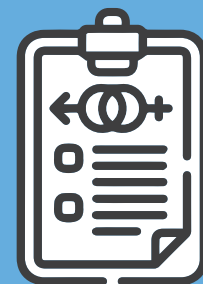
**Finalized food-based dietary guidelines** in close collaboration with the Ministry, to boost the transition towards healthy dietary practices and guide a wide range of food, nutrition and health policies and programmes for a healthier population in Bahrain.



Supported the planning process for the **implementation of the WHO Acceleration Plan to STOP Obesity in Bahrain**, which the country was selected for together with another 24 countries worldwide.

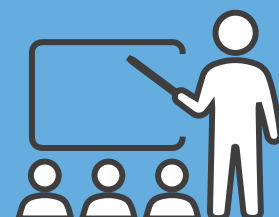
**Contributed to a regionally led, in-depth assessment of sexual and reproductive health laws, policies and regulations in the Eastern Mediterranean Region**

to identify gaps and challenges that hamper the effective implementation of sexual and reproductive health and rights programmes and service delivery.



Guided the successful awarding of **two additional cities and five universities** in Bahrain as Healthy Cities and Health Promoting Universities, respectively.

Trained and **facilitated the capacity development of over 55 participants** from the Ministry of Health and other health-related sectors **to promote health across the life course and tackle major risk factors of NCDs**, such as tobacco use and physical inactivity.

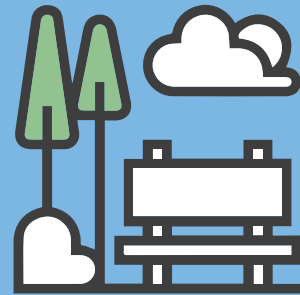


## MAXIMIZING WHO'S IMPACT ON THE GROUND



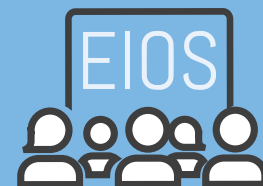
**Launched a social media campaign** together with the United Nations Population Fund Subregional Office for the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf, and in close partnership with the Ministry of Youth and Sports, featuring eight short videos of young Bahraini athletes **to promote healthy lifestyle choices.**

**Hosted a promotion event** under the theme of Public Spaces for All in collaboration with the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, **to raise awareness on the role inclusive and accessible public spaces** play in improving physical activity and social inclusion of persons with disabilities.



**Coordinated the redesignation** of the Nursing Division in the College of Health Sciences at the University of Bahrain and the College of Medicine and Medical Sciences of the Arabian Gulf University as **WHO collaborating centres.**

**Organized the first-ever national workshop on the Epidemic Intelligence from Open Sources initiative,** in close collaboration with the WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean, to build a community of well-trained public health intelligence professionals in Bahrain and improve health threat detection and response at the national level.



# INTRODUCTION

The current report offers an overview of some of the key initiatives undertaken by the World Health Organization's (WHO) Country Office in Bahrain from January to December 2022 to drive innovation, strengthen collaboration and move beyond the COVID-19 pandemic – reinventing health care while building back better. The report is not intended to give a comprehensive account of all the WHO Country Office's operations during the year under review. The examples of work highlighted within these pages offer only a snapshot of the countless initiatives undertaken by the Country Office to support the achievement of healthy lives and well-being for all at all ages in Bahrain.

The report positions the work of the WHO Country Office within the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which is based on values such as equity and respect for human rights and views health and well-being as vital to ensuring sustainable and equitable societies. Out of the Agenda's 17 ambitious Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Goal 3 is dedicated to ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all at all ages. The present report is also aligned with regional aspirations, including the WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean's *Vision 2023*. *Vision 2023* calls for solidarity and joint action to achieve Health for All by All, to strengthen health systems' resilience; promote better-integrated recovery, preparedness and response policies; build up partnerships; and reinforce the engagement between both state and non-state and health and non-health actors.

The structure of the report follows that of WHO's Thirteenth General Programme of Work (GPW 13), which is firmly based on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It summarizes the activities undertaken under each of the three interconnected strategic priorities of GPW 13: achieving universal health coverage (UHC), addressing health emergencies and promoting healthier populations. It also presents how the WHO Country Office in Bahrain has made further progress in maximizing its impact on the ground, in line with one of the three strategic shifts of GPW 13 (driving public health impact in every country).



# HEALTH AND WELL-BEING IN BAHRAIN



Bahrain is one of the 22 countries of the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region. It is also a member country of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). Bahrain ranks 35th on the Human Development Index<sup>1</sup> and is recognized by the World Bank as a high-income economy.

The population of Bahrain was estimated at 1.5 million in 2019. None of the population lives below the international poverty line. The literacy rate among youth aged 15–24 years is estimated at 98%, with males having a higher rate than females. The entire population lives in urban areas and has access to improved drinking water and sanitation facilities. Life expectancy at birth is 75.8 years.<sup>2</sup>

Noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) are the leading causes of death in Bahrain. The age-standardized NCDs mortality rate is estimated at 644.3 deaths per 100 000 population. Injuries are another significant cause of death and disability in the country. Based on WHO estimates, the mortality rate from road traffic injuries is calculated at 5.2 deaths per 100 000 population. The share of out-of-pocket expenditure as a percentage of current health expenditure was 30% in 2018, and the health workforce density is 22.6 physicians and 45.4 nurses and midwives per 10 000 population.<sup>3</sup>

From the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic until December 2022, a total of 696 614 cases of COVID-19 were reported in Bahrain, including 1536 deaths.<sup>4</sup> However, effective public health measures and vaccination coverage implemented by the Government of Bahrain successfully flattened the epidemiological curve. Moreover, in response to the mpox outbreak, the country set up a national taskforce to monitor developments, provide guidance, and coordinate preparedness and response efforts. Only one case of mpox has been reported so far.<sup>5</sup>

Bahrain has made significant strides towards attaining the highest possible level of health for all. The population enjoys comprehensive health care services, which are provided free of charge to citizens and delivered mainly through a universal health care system dating back to the 1960s. Furthermore, Bahrain has introduced the National Health Plan 2016–2025, which focuses on upgrading the country's health insurance coverage system and reducing inequalities in accessing health care and medicines. The Bahrain Economic Vision 2030 is also in force and aims to drive economic growth and ensure that all Bahraini nationals and residents have access to quality health care.

1. Human development report 2021/2022. Uncertain times, unsettled lives: shaping our future in a transforming world. New York: United Nations Development Programme; 2022 ([https://hdr.undp.org/system/files/documents/global-report-document/hdr2021-22pdf\\_1.pdf](https://hdr.undp.org/system/files/documents/global-report-document/hdr2021-22pdf_1.pdf), accessed 20 January 2023).
2. Monitoring health and health system performance in the Eastern Mediterranean Region: core indicators and indicators on the health-related Sustainable Development Goals 2021. Cairo: WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean; 2022 (<https://rho.emro.who.int/node/348>, accessed 7 February 2023).
3. Monitoring health and health system performance in the Eastern Mediterranean Region: core indicators and indicators on the health-related Sustainable Development Goals 2021. Cairo: WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean; 2022 (<https://rho.emro.who.int/node/348>, accessed 7 February 2023).
4. Bahrain. In: WHO coronavirus (COVID-19) dashboard [online database]. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2023 (<https://covid19.who.int/region/emro/country/bh>, accessed 25 February 2023).
5. Multi-country outbreak of mpox. External situation report 13. Geneva: World Health Organization; 5 January 2023 (<https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/multi-country-outbreak-of-mpox--external-situation-report--13--5-january-2023>, accessed 10 February 2023).



# STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1: ACHIEVING UHC

This section provides insights into the leadership and strategic support provided by the WHO Country Office in Bahrain in 2022 to drive public health impact towards health coverage for all, as part of the WHO Regional Office's *Vision 2023* and the national commitments under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

## STRENGTHENING PRIMARY HEALTH CARE

Throughout 2022, the WHO Country Office continued working to strengthen primary health care (PHC) as a key means towards achieving UHC. This included supporting the systematic use of PHC-oriented research and innovation to drive evidence-based decision-making. One key achievement was providing technical input for the development of Bahrain's PHC Vital Signs Profile, under the overall guidance and support of the Primary Health Care Performance Initiative. The PHC Vital Signs Profile provides a snapshot of the PHC system in the country and assesses different areas that are important to providing

quality health care to track progress and identify priority areas for improvement.

“One of the most important achievements on the health road map is the official inauguration of the WHO office in the Kingdom of Bahrain. The inauguration is an important event that contributes to the provision of required strategic and technical support in the health sector in a way that ensures the quality and sustainability of the services provided to strengthen public health at the local, regional and international levels.”



From an interview with H.E. Dr Jaleela bint AlSayed Jawad Hasan, Minister of Health in Bahrain, on the occasion of RC69

Further advancing the PHC agenda, the WHO Country Office provided country leadership and strategic support, tailored to the country's priorities, to ensure that the health system is fit for people, fit for context and fit for purpose. In close coordination with the WHO Regional Office, the Country Office liaised with the Ministry of Health to identify a set of essential health services to support the development of a regional UHC priority benefits package – a set of promotive, preventive, curative, rehabilitative and palliative services that should be available and accessible to all without risk of financial hardship.

In addition, the promotion of PHC as the cornerstone of a sustainable health system for UHC was scaled up in 2022 by fostering policy dialogue. To ensure the effective engagement of public health managers in

policy discussions around the impact of investment in PHC, the WHO Country Office facilitated the participation of two representatives from PHC centres in the Meeting on Primary Health Care for Universal Health Coverage and Health Security in the Eastern Mediterranean Region. The meeting was organized in December in celebration of Universal Health Coverage Day 2022. It included an expert intervention on Bahrain's good practices and lessons learned with regard to the use of evidence to inform the rebuilding of the health system.



**11-15 December 2022, Cairo, Egypt:** The Bahrain delegation celebrates Universal Health Coverage Day together with WHO regional and international experts, partners, donors and government officials from across the region, during the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office's Primary Health Care for Universal Health Coverage & Health Security Regional Meeting.

To spread awareness of the importance of PHC to public health and UHC, the WHO Country Office aligned PHC advocacy with existing health agendas and maintained high online visibility of relevant efforts and activities during 2022. One flagship example was publishing an interview with H.E. Dr. Jaleela bint Al-Sayed Jawad Hasan, Minister of Health in Bahrain, on the occasion of the 69th session of the WHO Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean (RC69). In the interview, the Minister shared insights into Bahrain's successes and good practices in addressing public health priorities, and how they could inform regional and global efforts to strengthen PHC-based health systems and advance the health-related SDGs. The interview was published on the WHO website and on social media platforms, reaching a wide range of viewers.

## **IMPROVING THE EFFICIENCY AND QUALITY OF MEDICAL PRODUCTS, VACCINES AND TECHNOLOGIES**

Over the course of 2022, the WHO Country Office acted as a technical assistance partner that worked with the Ministry of Health and other key partners to ensure access to quality essential medicines and health products and advance the application of international norms and standards for the quality, safety, efficacy and use of medicines. More than 10 representatives from the Ministry and the National Health Regulatory Authority were actively involved in WHO-related workshops and training, such as the following.

- **Virtual Advocacy and Sensitization Workshop on Collaborative Registration Procedure.** This workshop was jointly organized by the WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean and three other WHO regional offices in June, to promote the application of

risk-based approaches to the registration of medical products and advocate for the use of a collaborative registration procedure in national regulatory authorities.

- **Consultative Meeting on the Revised Global Model Regulatory Framework for Medical Devices.** This meeting was held by the WHO Regional Office in June, to review and discuss the revised draft of the framework and agree on the next steps towards its finalization.
- **WHO Tenth Annual Meeting on the Collaborative Registration Procedure for Accelerated Registration of Prequalified Medical Products and Stringent Regulatory Authorities Medicines and Vaccines.** This meeting was organized by WHO headquarters in December, to promote the use of collaborative registration procedures for all applicable medical product streams in all Member States.

The WHO Country Office also facilitated capacity-building and the exchange of best practices through the dissemination of information on WHO guidance, frameworks and e-learning modules. For example, details of an e-learning course on pharmacovigilance inspection were shared with the relevant focal points in the National Health Regulatory Authority to support them in planning and conducting pharmacovigilance inspections more effectively and consistently.

## SUPPORTING THE HEALTH WORKFORCE

The potential occupational risks to which the health workforce may be exposed – putting them at risk of disease, injury and even death – were brought to light more than ever during the COVID-19 pandemic. To mitigate these hazards and protect the health, safety and well-being of the health workforce, the WHO Country Office contributed to capacity-building on occupational health and safety and continued to disseminate information about relevant WHO guidelines, recommendations and e-learning training during 2022. Details about the launch of WHO and the International Labour Organization's guidance document *Caring for those who care: guide for the development and implementation of occupational health and safety programmes for health workers* were shared across focal points of occupational health and safety for health workers, as well as with facility managers and occupational health service providers.

Moreover, the WHO Country Office capitalized on the leadership of the health workforce to guide policy dialogue on their practical contributions to achieving UHC and other population health goals. Seven nursing champions from the Ministry of Health were actively engaged in the Ninth Triad Meeting of WHO, the International Confederation of Midwives and the International Council of Nurses, organized in May 2022. The meeting focused on the *WHO global strategic directions for nursing and midwifery 2021–2025* and how national nursing and midwifery leaders can advance this new global mandate in their country contexts.

The WHO Country Office's initiatives also included facilitating the active participation of WHO experts in the First International Nursing and Midwifery Conference, led by the Bahrain

Nursing Society, which saw over 500 members of the professional community convene in Bahrain in December, to enhance collaboration and strengthen nursing practice and research while promoting knowledge-sharing across regional networks.

## **ENSURING QUALITY AND PATIENT SAFETY AND TRANSFORMING HOSPITALS**

The safety of patients during the provision of health services is a prerequisite for strengthening health care systems and making progress towards UHC. During the course of 2022, the WHO Country Office focused on driving improvements in some key strategic areas on the patient safety agenda by providing technical support and building national capacities. The WHO Country Office regularly disseminated information about relevant global and regional workshops and training, including a webinar series on patient safety organized year-round by the Saudi Patient Safety Centre, a WHO collaborating centre for patient safety policies and strategies, in close collaboration with the WHO Regional Office.

Furthermore, the WHO Country Office facilitated the engagement of WHO experts in a seminar on patient safety issues organized by the Ministry to mark World Patient Safety Day, celebrated annually on 17 September. The seminar, guided by WHO guidance and tools, targeted health care professionals to raise their understanding of the high burden of medication-related harm and promote the active involvement of patients and families in the safe use of medication.

## **ENHANCING IMMUNIZATION PROGRAMMES**

Against a global backsliding in rates of immunization brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, the WHO Country Office's work focused on maintaining and strengthening routine immunization through evidence generation and information-sharing to ensure that all individuals and communities enjoy lives free from vaccine-preventable diseases. During the year under review, the WHO Country Office provided technical support for Bahrain's reporting of immunization coverage data as part of the annual update of the WHO/UNICEF [United Nations Children's Fund] estimates of national immunization coverage – the world's largest data set on immunization trends. This annual update aims to help identify trends and gaps at the country level and inform progress towards the Immunization Agenda 2030. The WHO Country Office similarly guided the reporting on subnational immunization coverage estimates for the year under review through the WHO/UNICEF Joint Reporting Process for higher and more equitable immunization coverage.

In addition, the WHO Country Office contributed to building national capacities and promoting policy dialogue to create awareness of the importance of vaccination in preventing illness and saving lives. Six representatives from the Ministry of Health were actively engaged in WHO-related workshops and training, such as the following.

- **Webinar on Human Papillomavirus Vaccination.** This webinar was organized by the WHO Regional Office in April to discuss opportunities and challenges for the vaccination's introduction in the national immunization programmes as a prevention measure against cervical cancer in women.
- **Fourteenth Intercountry Meeting of National Managers of the Expanded Programme on Immunization and the Regional Technical Advisory Group on Immunization Meeting.** These meetings were held in November in Cairo, Egypt.

## SCALING UP ACTION ON ANTIMICROBIAL RESISTANCE

In an effort to drive progress towards the delivery of the Global Action Plan on Antimicrobial Resistance, the WHO Country Office provided strategic leadership in strengthening the knowledge and evidence base and supporting country-level monitoring and evaluation. The WHO Country Office's help included guiding the completion of the 2022 Tracking Antimicrobial Resistance Country Self-Assessment Survey, to analyse national progress on the implementation of the antimicrobial resistance (AMR) national action plan and identify major achievements and persistent gaps across human, animal, plant, food and environment sectors. The self-assessment survey is jointly administered by the Quadripartite Joint Secretariat, comprising representatives from WHO, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the World Organisation for Animal Health and the United Nations Environment Programme.

The WHO Country Office also facilitated capacity-building and the exchange of best practices through the dissemination of information on e-learning modules, communities of practices platforms and global webinars. The details of a joint webinar by the Quadripartite Joint Secretariat on best practices for monitoring AMR national action plans at the country level were shared with the relevant focal points to prompt their participation. Similarly, information on the launch of an online training package delivered by the OpenWHO platform on the implementation of integrated antimicrobial stewardship activities at national, subnational and health care facility levels was widely disseminated across the health sector.

The multisectoral and multidisciplinary One Health approach is a new paradigm in dealing with cross-cutting public health issues, such as zoonotic diseases, food safety, AMR and biological safety. Leading a One Health response to AMR, the WHO Country Office worked towards strengthening collaboration, communication, capacity-building and coordination across all sectors responsible for addressing health concerns at the human–animal–plant–environment interface. The WHO Country Office coordinated the engagement of about nine focal points from the ministries of Health and Agriculture and the Supreme Council for the Environment in a consultative meeting held in April to discuss the draft of the One Health Joint Plan of Action (2022–2026). The draft plan provides a framework for integrating systems and capacities for better prevention, detection and response to health threats.

In addition, the WHO Country Office provided technical support to the Ministry of Health for completing the One Health survey, conducted by the WHO Regional Office. The aim of the survey is to better understand the implementation of the One Health approach at the country level, including the identified national One Health priorities for 2023–2024. The survey findings were presented at RC69 in October 2022.

One key milestone for the WHO Country Office in coordinating a One Health response to AMR was the organization of the National Bridging Workshop from 4 to 6 October, in close collaboration with the Supreme Council of Health and the Ministry of Health. The workshop was delivered by WHO staff members from the three levels of the organization. It built the knowledge and skills of over 35 participants from the animal, human and environmental health sectors on One Health principles and concepts and prompted effective communication and collaboration across stakeholders from different sectors to drive multi-stakeholder action on AMR.



04-06 October 2022, Manama, Bahrain: Group photo of participants in the One Health National Bridging Workshop in Bahrain that was led by the Supreme Council of Health and the Ministry of Health in Bahrain.

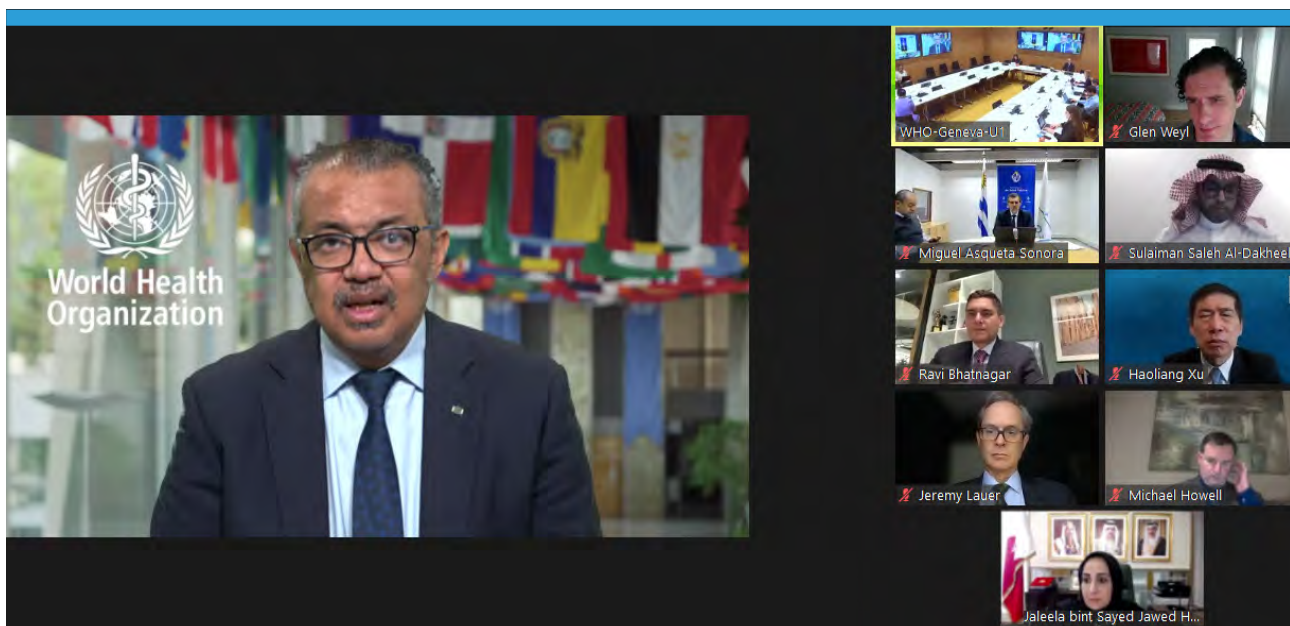
Over the course of 2022, the WHO Country Office continued to improve awareness and understanding of AMR through social media platforms and to encourage best practices among the general public, health workers and policy-makers to slow the development and spread of drug-resistant infections. In celebration of World Antimicrobial Awareness Week, held annually from 18 to 24 November, the WHO Country Office joined the “Go blue for AMR” campaign by featuring a series of social media posts of the staff members wearing blue.

## TACKLING THE BURDEN OF NCDs

Throughout 2022, the WHO Country Office contributed to the development, dissemination and implementation of WHO guidance on tackling the growing NCDs burden. One key achievement was finalizing the *Report of the Joint Mission of the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force*



on the *Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases* to leverage the new thinking of delivery science for country-level measurable impact. The production of the report was informed by the findings of a joint country mission of United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases (UNIATF) and staff members from WHO headquarters and the WHO Regional Office. The mission was coordinated by the WHO Country Office in 2021 with the objective of scaling up the implementation of NCDs prevention and management strategies. The report lays out a clear road map for Bahrain to accelerate strategic actions on NCDs prevention and control across the areas of governance, health care provision, surveillance, research, and monitoring and evaluation.



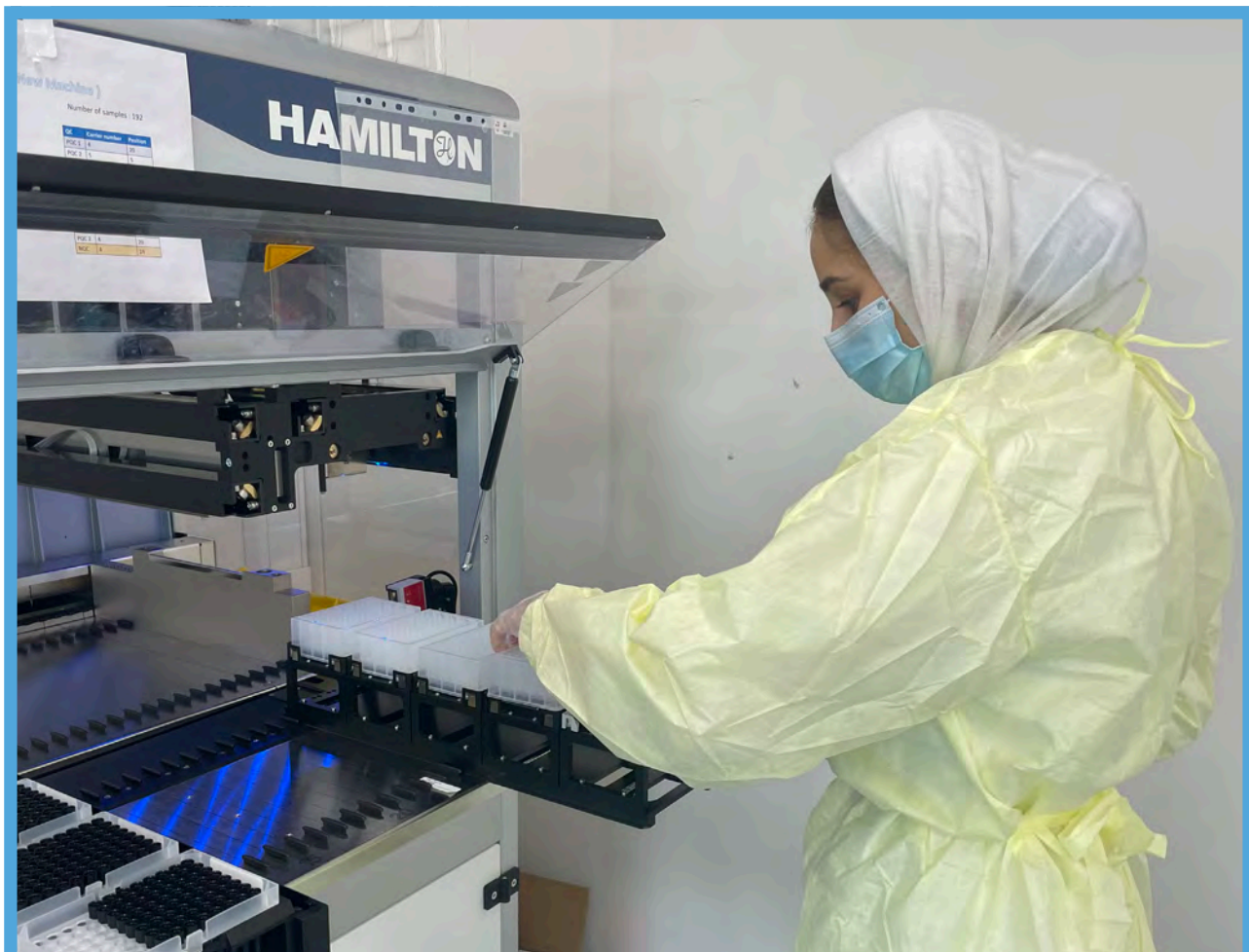
**21 September 2022:** H.E. Dr Jaleela bint AlSayed Jawad Hasan, Minister of Health in Bahrain, participates in Friends of the UN Inter-Agency Task Force on Non-Communicable Diseases, during a side event on Mobilizing Resources and Technical Support with and for Member States to Deliver the Non-Communicable Diseases and Mental Health-Related Sustainable Development Goal Targets.

The WHO Country Office also kept up its role as the Ministry of Health's technical assistance partner in global and regional policy dialogues on efficient pathways and strategic investments to accelerate progress towards preventing and controlling NCDs. In September 2022, the WHO Country Office facilitated the participation of H.E. Dr Jaleela bint AlSayed Jawad Hasan, Minister of Health in Bahrain, in the annual meeting of the Friends of the UNIATF, which was held on the margins of the high-level week of the United Nations General Assembly. The side event focused on the need for mobilizing resources and technical support to tackle the increasing burden of NCDs and mental health conditions. During the side event, Her Excellency showcased Bahrain's progress in the area of tobacco control and emphasized the value of the multisectoral coordination mechanisms in scaling up the prevention and control of NCDs.

Further advancing the health and well-being agenda, the WHO Country Office provided technical leadership in building national capacities and skills on a broad range of topics in the context of the prevention and control of NCDs, including surveillance and data, policy measures and evaluation of interventions. Over the course of the year, the WHO Country

Office coordinated the engagement of more than 10 Ministry representatives in regional workshops and consultations such as the following.

- **WHO Informal Consultation with People Living with NCDs and Mental Health Conditions in the Eastern Mediterranean Region.** This consultation was organized by the WHO Regional Office and the WHO Global Coordination Mechanism for Noncommunicable Disease in February. Its purpose was to support the participatory development processes of the WHO Framework for Meaningful Engagement of People Living with NCDs and Mental Health Conditions.
- **Regional Workshop on Implementing and Strengthening Noncommunicable Disease Monitoring Systems at the Primary Health Care Level.** This workshop was held in November by the WHO Regional Office, in collaboration with WHO headquarters, to support the strengthening and implementation of NCDs monitoring systems at the PHC level across the Region.
- **WHO Global and Regional Technical Meeting on Addressing NCDs in Emergencies.** The meeting was organized in December and aimed to build political momentum and discuss the development of a comprehensive approach to better include NCDs in emergency preparedness and response plans.



## STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2: ADDRESSING HEALTH EMERGENCIES

This section outlines the technical support provided by the WHO Country Office in line with the 10 WHO emergency preparedness and response pillars to enhance the capacity of national health systems to better manage the COVID-19 crisis<sup>6</sup> as well as prepare for and respond to the current mpox outbreak.

6. WHO COVID-19 strategic preparedness and response plan: operational planning guideline. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2021 (<https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/covid-19-strategic-preparedness-and-response-plan-operational-planning-guideline>, accessed 7 February 2023).

## THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

### Country-level coordination, planning and monitoring

With the COVID-19 pandemic entering its third year in 2022, the WHO Country Office continued to provide technical and operational support to the Ministry of Health by sharing 18 WHO guidelines and information updates, as well as details about 29 WHO global and regional online meetings. This support was intended to inform the national public health emergency response and facilitate COVID-19 vaccine uptake while ensuring that the principles of equity and inclusiveness were integrated.

“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 practices to strengthen health emergency preparedness and response across borders.”



From a television interview with **Dr Tasnim Atatrah**, WHO Representative in Bahrain

The WHO Country Office also worked towards boosting the pandemic response by contributing to building the evidence base on COVID-19 to inform the decision-making process in the Region and beyond. One remarkable milestone in 2022 was the launch of a case studies report that documents Bahrain’s strategic response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The report showcased success stories and best practices to guide emergency preparedness and response efforts and to catalyse the adoption of innovative approaches to strengthening health systems resilience for the dual goals of UHC and health security. This report is the first of its kind in the Region and was the result of a joint mission of staff members from WHO headquarters and the Regional Office. The mission was coordinated by the WHO Country Office in 2021, with the objective of producing a detailed account of the country’s operational strategy for suppressing the

transmission of COVID-19, reducing exposure and protecting the vulnerable.

The COVID-19 case studies report was launched during a joint press conference by H.E. Dr Jaleela bint AlSayed Jawad Hasan, Bahrain’s Minister of Health, and Dr Ahmed Al-Mandhari, WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean, in the presence of a number of high-level officials. Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General, provided a video statement, which aired during the launch, to commend

Bahrain's achievement and highlight the added value of the case studies report in guiding other countries in the Region. The launch event was widely covered by the media in Bahrain and across the Region, ensuring visibility for WHO and the Ministry of Health.

As part of generating greater awareness of the importance of operational documentation and the benefits of establishing platforms for country exchange, Dr Tasnim Atatrah, WHO Representative, Bahrain, was interviewed by Bahraini national television. The case studies report is available on the WHO website and the WHO COVID-19 Health Services Learning Hub.

## Risk communication, community engagement and infodemic management

In a context of increasing pandemic fatigue, the WHO Country Office capitalized on risk communication and community engagement to break the chains of transmission, mitigate the impact of the pandemic and build resilience to deliberate anti-vaccine misinformation. Throughout 2022, the WHO Country Office maintained a high level of visibility by sharing more than 20 posts across Twitter, Instagram and Facebook that included important WHO recommendations and messages for the public on COVID-19. These posts illustrated the dynamic strategy used by the Country Office to drive risk communications and messaging shaped by the local context to reach target audiences.

The WHO Country Office also continued to produce and support the production of advocacy videos to relay important and complex information on the COVID-19 pandemic to the general public, as well as promote Bahrain's COVID-19 successes to facilitate the transfer of good practices in the Region and beyond. One key achievement was the production of a local video on public health and social measures to control the spread of COVID-19, which was widely shared on social media platforms. In addition, the Country Office supported the production of a video showcasing the role of Bahrain's national public health laboratory in the COVID-19 response, which was featured in the Country Success Story Exhibition during RC69.



[Bahrain COVID-19 Case Studies](#)



**October 2022, Cairo, Egypt:** H.E. Dr. Jaleela bit Al-Sayed Jawad Hasan, Minister of Health in Bahrain, the Bahrain delegation, and Dr. Tasnim Atatrah, WHO Representative, Bahrain, attend the exhibition showcasing country results, with Bahrain's story highlighting: "Test, trace, and treat: An insight into Bahrain's National Public Health Laboratory".

## Vaccination

Due to the Government of Bahrain's strong leadership and commitment, the country successfully met the WHO target of vaccinating 70% of its population. As of 21 December 2022, the country had administered a total of 3 476 633 vaccine doses, of which 1 008 663 were booster doses. The vaccines were provided to all people in the country free of charge, regardless of their citizenship status, to ensure that no one was left behind.

Throughout 2022, the WHO Country Office provided needed technical guidance to support Bahrain in accelerating COVID-19 vaccine delivery. One key highlight was producing and sharing with the Ministry of Health a comprehensive brief on the safety and possible side-effects of the different COVID-19 vaccines, in line with the recommendations of the Strategic Advisory Group of Experts on Immunization. This brief was developed based on the request of the Ministry to inform the national vaccination strategies and plans.

## THE MPOX OUTBREAK

### Country-level coordination, planning and monitoring

Since May 2022, when the global mpox outbreak began, the WHO Country Office has closely coordinated with Bahrain's mpox national taskforce, facilitating information-sharing on WHO technical recommendations and tools to adequately inform preparedness and response plans. The WHO Country Office produced and shared with the taskforce six situation updates in the Arabic language. These included a comprehensive overview of global and regional epidemiological data and trends on the disease outbreak, in addition to detailed information about the available WHO guidance on surveillance, laboratory work, clinical care, infection prevention and control, and risk communication and community

engagement. These weekly updates were also shared with other country offices in the Region to facilitate knowledge-sharing and promote regional collaboration.

With the detection of the first mpox case in Bahrain on 16 September 2022, the WHO Country Office continued to provide technical guidance to inform and support the mpox national taskforce in scaling up surveillance, case investigation, contact tracing and treatment. One key achievement was coordinating Bahrain's participation in a survey conducted by the Regional Office on mpox response monitoring and evaluation. The aim of the survey was to support national health authorities in determining the effectiveness of the implemented public health measures and facilitate experience-sharing among countries in the Region.



May 2022, Manama, Bahrain: The WHO Bahrain Country Office meet with the Bahrain mpox national taskforce.

## Risk communication, community engagement and infodemic management

The WHO Country Office played a significant role in public messaging on mpox to raise the awareness of health care workers, communities and individuals in Bahrain on how to prevent infection and transmission, as well as to ensure that those at risk of mpox have access to accurate information to help them make informed decisions to protect themselves and others from infection.

As part of its mpox awareness-raising activities, the WHO Country Office stepped up visibility on social media by sharing over 15 posts on WHO technical guidance, recommendations on prevention and control public health measures, and advice for the public to combat stigma. The posts informed and engaged a high number of viewers. The Country Office also issued a media statement upon the detection of the first mpox case in Bahrain, to underline WHO's strategic support to the Ministry to respond to the disease front and centre and provide accurate information on its spread to prevent rumours and misinformation.

The WHO Country Office similarly ensured the timely dissemination of evidence-based communications on the evolving epidemiological situation of mpox and WHO

recommendations and messages to the Resident Coordinator's Office in Bahrain and the sister United Nations agencies. This information helped ensure a more coordinated One UN response. In addition, Dr Tasnim Atatrah, WHO Representative, Bahrain, actively participated in the monthly meetings of the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) and presented the latest situation updates and WHO recommendations.

### **Laboratories and diagnostics**

During 2022, the WHO Country Office provided tools and expertise to inform and support national health authorities in strengthening their laboratory capacity to prepare for and respond to the mpox outbreak. One example was coordinating the delivery of one mpox kit to the national public health laboratory, with support from the technical team in the WHO Regional Office, to break the chains of transmission and ensure that potential cases are quickly identified, tested and responded to.

### **Vaccination**

Recognizing that the combined impact of public health measures, including vaccination, is indispensable for an effective response to the mpox outbreaks, the WHO Country Office provided national health authorities with up-to-date information on the development and deployment of vaccination against mpox, together with guidance and tools to support the country in preparing for and implementing successful vaccination campaigns against the disease.

One highlight was guiding Bahrain's participation in a survey conducted by the Regional Office on the demand for mpox vaccines and therapeutics to assess the general need for vaccine doses in the Region and, in turn, guide WHO efforts in their procurement in collaboration with global partners.

## **POLIO ERADICATION**

With high-threat infectious diseases continuing to rise globally, the WHO Country Office worked jointly with the Ministry of Health in 2022 and provided needed capacity-building to sustain the gains in polio eradication and strengthen emergency preparedness, detection and response capacities.

During the year under review, the WHO Country Office coordinated and technically supported Bahrain's participation in the 36th meeting of the Regional Commission of Certification of Poliomyelitis Eradication, held from 31 May to 2 June. The Regional Commission of Certification of Poliomyelitis Eradication was established following the World Health Assembly on polio eradication, in 1988, to lead the formal process for certifying countries in the Eastern Mediterranean Region as polio-free after reviewing submitted data and annual certification reports. During its 36th meeting, the Commission provisionally accepted, pending some minor revisions, the annual certification report presented by Bahrain's national committee on polio eradication, thus maintaining the country's polio-free status.





**15-17 October 2022, Amman, Jordan:** A delegation from Bahrain and WHO Bahrain participate in the Information for Action Refresher Data Training to improve the capacity of the national polio focal points.



**18-21 December 2022, Muscat, Oman:** Bahrain participates in the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office National Polio Containment Coordinators and National Certification Committee intercountry meeting, to improve national capacities on containment and post eradication strategies.

Furthermore, the WHO Country Office successfully built the knowledge and skills of around six representatives from the Ministry by coordinating their participation in the following regional trainings and workshops.

- **Training of the national certification committees and ministries of health polio focal points on the newly developed electronic submission of the Annual Certification Reports System.**<sup>7</sup> This training was held twice throughout the year. The first training was organized in June in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates, and the second took place in September in Muscat, Oman.

7. The Annual Certification Reports System is a web-based system that allows for the submission, review and approval of the annual certification reports and supports the retrieval of data from previous years for comparison between reports.

- **The National Polio Containment Coordinators and National Certification Committee Intercountry Meeting.** This meeting was held in December in Muscat, Oman.
- **Information for Action Refresher Data Training.** This training was held in October in Amman, Jordan.

## MEASLES AND RUBELLA ELIMINATION

The achievement of measles and rubella elimination status in Bahrain in 2019 constituted a major success. The WHO Country Office therefore worked with the Ministry of Health throughout 2022, providing technical leadership and delivering capacity-building, to maintain the gains of this elimination status.

During the year under review, the WHO Country Office supported the strengthening of the health system's capacities to prevent, prepare for, respond to and recover from measles outbreaks by sharing more than five WHO-relevant technical resources and guidelines with the Ministry. This included the *Measles outbreak guide*,<sup>8</sup> which addresses measles outbreak management, along with complementary online training for health care workers that facilitates the guide's implementation.

In addition, the WHO Country Office managed to build the knowledge and capacities of more than 15 Ministry representatives by coordinating their participation in the following regional trainings and workshops:

- **Webinar on the Interpretation of Different Measles and Rubella Laboratory Results and Proper Final Case Classification**, held in February;
- Two Back-To-Back Hands-On **Regional Laboratory Training Workshops on Measles and Rubella Molecular Surveillance for National and Regional Laboratories**, Central Public Health Laboratory, held in October in Muscat, Oman; and
- **Virtual Meeting of the Regional Verification Commission for Measles and Rubella Elimination in the Eastern Mediterranean Region**, held between 1 and 3 November.

8. Measles outbreak guide. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2022 ([https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/978924\\_0052079](https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/978924_0052079), accessed 7 February 2023).



## **STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3: PROMOTING HEALTHIER POPULATIONS**

This section describes the WHO Country Office's efforts in 2022 to tackle the underlying determinants of health and promote well-being for all at all ages through fostering strong multisectoral coordination and collaboration, promoting healthy settings and strengthening health promotion capacities.

## GALVANIZING ACTION TO TACKLE NCDs RISK FACTORS

To achieve sustained improvements in the health and well-being of the population in Bahrain, the WHO Country Office capitalized on its comparative advantage as the lead agency for directing and coordinating health and acted as a technical assistance partner to the Ministry of Health and other health-related partners to drive a whole-of-government and whole-of-society response on the underlying risk factors for NCDs in 2022.

“Bahrain is one of few countries in the region that are showing reduction in tobacco use, which is a great success in tobacco control. Despite the many achievements, challenges still exist like in other parts of the region; however, with the national authorities’ commitment to tobacco control, positive progress is expected in the near future. It is recommended mainly to consider joining the FCTC Protocol on Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products, and also scaling up tobacco products packaging and labelling to include plain packaging.”



**Dr Fatimah El-Awa,**  
Regional Advisor for the  
Tobacco Free Initiative,  
WHO Regional Office for  
the Eastern Mediterranean

### Combating tobacco use

Bahrain has made progress on tobacco control in recent years. These efforts were recognized globally in 2022, with WHO presenting the World No Tobacco Day Award to the National Committee to Control Smoking and All Types and Products of Tobacco during the 75th World Health Assembly, as a tribute to its accomplishments in the area of tobacco control.

In 2022, the WHO Country Office provided strategic support in combating the serious health menace of tobacco use by strengthening national capacities for tobacco control and driving a policy dialogue on the implementation of data-driven tobacco control measures (i.e., MPOWER measures) to reduce the demand for tobacco. From January to December 2022, the WHO Country Office coordinated the engagement of 18 participants from the ministries of Health, Foreign Affairs, and Industry and Commerce, as well as the Customs Authority, the University of Bahrain and the Arabian Gulf University, in WHO-led training and workshops, including the following.

- **Regional Training and Capacity-Building of Academia in Tobacco Economics and Research.** This training was held in June and organized by the WHO Regional Office and the Institute for Health Research and Policy at the University of Illinois Chicago, to

support countries in the Region in implementing effective tax policies as part of their comprehensive tobacco control strategies.

- **Regional Training on Scaling up Ratification/Accession to the Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products.** This training was organized by the WHO Regional Office and held in July.
- **Legal workshop on plain (standardized) packaging in the Eastern Mediterranean Region.** This workshop was organized by the WHO Regional Office and held in December with the aim of driving policy progress on implementing plain packaging and strengthening tobacco control.

### Addressing unhealthy diets and physical inactivity

Over the last few decades, Bahrain has been accelerating efforts towards achieving globally endorsed NCD targets, such as reducing mean population sodium intake by 30%, decreasing the prevalence of insufficient physical activity by 10%, and halting the rise in diabetes and obesity by 2025.<sup>9</sup>

In 2022, the WHO Country Office worked to improve dietary patterns at the population level and support research and evidence generation to deliver tangible public health impact on the ground. One key achievement was finalizing food-based dietary guidelines, in close collaboration with the Ministry. These guidelines aim to boost the transition towards healthy dietary practices and guide a wide range of food, nutrition and health policies and programmes for a healthier population in Bahrain. Their formulation constituted part of the joint country mission of UNIATF and WHO, which was coordinated by the WHO Country Office in 2021. The guidelines will be launched in 2023 in a high-level media event to ensure the visibility of WHO and the Ministry of Health.

Work in this area also took a major step forward with initiation of the WHO Acceleration Plan to STOP Obesity in Bahrain. This plan was introduced during the 75th World Health Assembly to provide a mechanism that supports “front-runner” countries – those with a high prevalence of obesity and that are ready to achieve ambitious global goals – in developing national plans to tackle the obesity epidemic and catalyse national action. Bahrain is one of the 25 countries globally – and the first GCC country – to be selected to implement the WHO acceleration plan in the next biennium (2022–2023). To this effect, the WHO Country Office organized an orientation meeting on 11 August, bringing together technical teams from WHO headquarters and the Regional Office and six representatives from the Ministry and the Bahrain Diabetes Society to discuss the existing challenges and best practices of obesity prevention, and agree on next steps for the implementation of the acceleration plan.

Recognizing that many factors influencing physical activity lie outside the health sector, the WHO Country Office boosted efforts in 2022 to foster policy dialogue around the adoption of whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches, to create an enabling and safe environment for physical activity. More than 20 representatives from the ministries of Health, Youth and Sports Affairs, and Education, as well as the Information Affairs Authority, were

9. NCD global monitoring framework. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2011 (<https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/ncd-surveillance-global-monitoring-framework>, accessed 7 February 2023).

actively engaged in the Online Workshop on the Regional Adaptation of the Global Action Plan on Physical Activity 2018–2030, held on 29 March. The workshop aimed to initiate policy discussions around existing opportunities and challenges for multisectoral collaboration on the implementation of the Global Action Plan at the national level, taking into account national public health priorities, target populations and the burden of NCDs.

As part of its health advocacy work to advance the physical activity agenda, the WHO Country Office took part in events such as the Walk the Talk: Health for All Challenge,



**18-20 October 2022, Amman, Jordan:** Dr Tasnim Atatrah, WHO Representative, Bahrain, and representatives from the Ministry of Health participate in a regional workshop to discuss causes, impact, knowledge sharing and country experience; strengthening national capacities, advancing regional programmes, and aiming to reduce Non-Communicable Diseases guided by informed, evidence-based tailored Acceleration Plan to Stop Obesity.



**October 2022, Manama, Bahrain:** Under the patronage of H.E. Dr Jaleela bit Al-Sayed Jawad Hasan, Minister of Health in Bahrain, and launched by Dr Waleed Al Manea, Undersecretary, Ministry of Health in Bahrain, Bahrain hosts the WHO Walk the Talk challenge, joining the global movement for health and wellbeing under the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office Regional Committee theme of “together for a healthier and sustainable tomorrow”.

which is a global initiative to promote health, particularly physical activity. On 10 October, in celebration of the launch of RC69 in Cairo, Bahrain's delegation walked with high-level government representatives and United Nations officials during the Walk the Talk event, pledging their commitment to healthier lifestyles. Joining this global movement for health and well-being, the WHO Country Office and the Ministry jointly organized a Walk the Talk event in Manama, in parallel with that of RC69. People across the country were invited to join the event, in person and remotely, to celebrate the importance of healthy lifestyles.



**12 October 2022, Cairo, Egypt:** The Bahrain delegation participates in the Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office Regional Committee Walk the Talk event alongside Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General and Dr Ahmed Al-Mandhari, WHO Eastern Mediterranean Regional Director.



**October 2022, Manama, Bahrain:** Under the patronage of H.E. Dr Jaleela bit Al-Sayed Jawad Hasan, Minister of Health in Bahrain, and launched by Dr Waleed Al Manea, Undersecretary, Ministry of Health in Bahrain, Bahrain hosts the WHO Walk the Talk challenge, joining the global movement for health and wellbeing under the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office Regional Committee theme of "together for a healthier and sustainable tomorrow".

## SUPPORTING THE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF WOMEN, CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

In recent years, Bahrain has seen remarkable progress in sexual, reproductive, maternal, newborn, adolescent and child health. In 2019, the maternal mortality ratio was estimated at 21.5 deaths per 100 000 live births, which is lower than the global maternal mortality ratio and the 2030 target of 70 deaths per 100 000 live births. Country efforts have also driven improvement in neonatal and child survival and well-being, with neonatal and under-five mortality rates estimated at 3.8 and 7.6 deaths per 1000 live births, respectively, in 2019.<sup>10</sup> The WHO Country Office is committed to supporting the Ministry with technical expertise and the promotion of good practices to ensure access to quality services at all levels of health care.

Over the course of 2022, the WHO Country Office worked towards strengthening the evidence base and fostering research and innovation on women's sexual and reproductive health. One key achievement was contributing to a regionally led in-depth assessment of sexual and reproductive health laws, policies and regulations in the Eastern Mediterranean Region. Bahrain was one of five countries in the Region that participated in the assessment to identify gaps and challenges that hamper the effective implementation of sexual and reproductive health and rights programmes and service delivery. The results of the assessment will be published in a regional report in 2023.

Furthermore, the WHO Country Office supported Bahrain in improving national capacities in adolescent health by coordinating the participation of relevant focal points in WHO global and regional workshops and training. Around 10 participants from the Ministry, the University of Bahrain, Arabian Gulf University, the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, and the International Federation of Medical Students' Associations were involved in a WHO-led training course on "Meeting the needs and fulfilling the rights of adolescents' sexual and reproductive health for WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region". The course facilitated knowledge-sharing on the importance of providing a package of effective health and social interventions to promote adolescent sexual and reproductive health, with special considerations for the delivery of these interventions in humanitarian settings and during the COVID-19 pandemic.

To enhance the quality of care of every newborn and child in the context of UHC, efforts were scaled up to strengthen the collection, analysis and use of data for improved adoption, implementation and monitoring of interventions. During 2022, the WHO Country Office provided hands-on support in providing feedback to the online stakeholder consultation on proposed core indicator sets for quality of care for small or sick newborns in high mortality and morbidity rate settings. The consultation was coordinated by a working group organized by the WHO Department of Maternal Newborn Child and Adolescent Health and Ageing, in collaboration with the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. In addition, the WHO Country Office contributed to the update process of Bahrain's country profile on newborn and child health for 2022 to support newborn and child health planning and activities in the country.

10. Kingdom of Bahrain SDG portal [website]. Manama: Information & eGovernment Authority; 2021 (<https://www.sdgs.gov.bh/>, accessed 14 December 2022).



## PROMOTING HEALTH IN URBAN SETTINGS

As a result of rapid urbanization, cities across the GCC region, especially those in Bahrain, have undergone a notable transformation over the past two decades. This transformation is exposing the population to a wide range of environmental, social, cultural, economic and behavioural factors that impact health and well-being. In response to such challenges, the government is implementing key WHO initiatives such as Healthy Cities and Health Promoting Universities that synergize multisectoral actions on addressing health determinants and promoting inclusiveness and equity. The Healthy City and Health Promoting University statuses are awarded to cities and universities around the world that meet the criteria set by WHO.

In 2022, WHO awarded the Healthy City status to two Bahraini cities – A’ali and Busaiteen/Al-Sayah – bringing the total number of Healthy Cities in the country to four.<sup>11</sup> With the strategic support and coordination of the WHO Country Office, a delegation from the WHO Regional Office paid a field visit to A’ali and Busaiteen/Al-Sayah to evaluate their eligibility for Healthy City status in September. After the evaluation process, certificates were issued for the two cities in December, and an award ceremony will be held in early 2023.

The successful accreditation of two additional cities in Bahrain as Healthy Cities catalysed the expansion of health promotion initiatives in the country to include the Health Promoting Universities Programme. In December 2022, the WHO Country Office, together with the Ministry of Health and the Higher Education Council, provided technical leadership and expert advice to five universities in Bahrain on completing and submitting their self-assessments as they applied for Health Promoting University status. The universities passed the initial self-assessment and will be evaluated by a delegation from the WHO Regional Office in a field visit coordinated by the Country Office in 2023.

## PROMOTING DISABILITY INCLUSION

Meeting the health needs of people with disabilities is central to achieving the SDGs and the global health priorities of UHC, protection in health emergencies and healthier populations. The 74th World Health Assembly adopted a resolution on “The highest attainable standard of health for persons with disabilities”, to make the health sector more inclusive by tackling the significant barriers many people with disabilities face when they try to access health services.

In 2022, the WHO Country Office recruited the country’s first disability and inclusion officer to take the lead on mainstreaming disability inclusion in the Country Office’s programmes and activities. The officer will also explore new and innovative thinking approaches to support the ongoing work of the Ministry and the UNCT on building disability-inclusive societies. The officer has been selected to take on the role of the Coordinator of the UNCT Disability and Inclusion Working Group in 2023.

11. The Healthy City status was awarded to Manama in 2021 and to Umm-Al-Hassam in 2018.

## PROMOTING ACTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE THE ENVIRONMENT

The WHO Country Office facilitated the participation of three representatives from the Ministry in “Regional training on building climate resilient and environmentally sustainable health systems”, organized by the WHO Regional Office from 10 to 13 September in Amman, Jordan. The training aimed to build capacities on relevant WHO tools and guidance and establish a science-informed dialogue with government officials and other stakeholders on the required actions to achieve climate resilient and environmentally sustainable health systems.



**10-13 September 2022, Amman, Jordan:** A delegation from Bahrain and WHO Bahrain participate in WHO Regional Training on Building a Climate-Resilient and Environmentally Sustainable Health System to raise awareness on environmentally sustainable health initiatives, and how together, we can implement progressive steps to protect the generations of tomorrow.



## MAXIMIZING WHO'S IMPACT ON THE GROUND

This section outlines the efforts of the WHO Country Office in 2022 to strengthen its footprint on the ground through enhancing strategic coordination and collaboration with United Nations agencies at the country level and elevating its strategic role as convener, leader and facilitator to achieve synergies and support progress towards Health for All by All.

## DELIVERING AS ONE UN

In March 2021, the Government of Bahrain and the United Nations signed the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2021–2022, which is now extended to 2024. The UNSDCF is a key instrument for the planning and implementation of United Nations development activities at the country level in support of the realization of Bahrain’s Economic Vision 2030 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Signed by 21 resident United Nations agencies, the UNSDCF is structured around four priority areas: (1) environment, energy and food; (2) quality, comprehensive social services; (3) economic diversification, public administration and resilience; and (4) Bahrain among nations.

Throughout 2022, the WHO Country Office worked effectively with sister United Nations agencies in partnerships under the umbrella of the UNSDCF. These partnerships built on the comparative advantages of each organization to ensure faster and more effective development operations and enhance the “delivering as one” agenda.



Post from the UNFPA, WHO Bahrain, and Ministry of Youth and Sports Affairs joint campaign on promoting Healthy Habits.

## Launching the Healthy Habits Campaign

During the year under review, the WHO Country Office jointly launched a social media campaign to promote healthy lifestyle choices with the United Nations Population Fund's Subregional Office for GCC, in close partnership with the Ministry of Youth and Sports.

The campaign featured eight short videos of young Bahraini athletes from different demographic groups, ensuring gender balance and disability inclusion. The videos positioned the young athletes as health champions across Bahrain, the Region and United Nations communities, and utilized positive messages on adopting and maintaining healthy dietary practices and increasing physical activity that appealed to youths, who were the campaign's key target group. They also reinforced that a healthier lifestyle could cross social boundaries and be achieved by all: women, men and persons with disabilities. The campaign reached a large number of viewers on social media pages.

## Promoting disability-inclusive public spaces

Accessible public spaces enhance community cohesion and promote health, happiness and well-being for all citizens. They also foster investment, economic development and environmental sustainability. On the occasion of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, the WHO Country Office and UN-Habitat jointly hosted a promotion event under the theme of Public Spaces for All to raise awareness among policy-makers and the general public of the role that inclusive and accessible public spaces play in improving the physical activity and social inclusion of persons with disabilities.



**December 2022, Manama, Bahrain:** Participants attend the advocacy event celebrating the United Nations International Day for Persons with Disabilities.

The event took place in Diyar Al-Muharraq park, highlighting the park's efforts to become accessible and disability inclusive. The event was held under the patronage of the Supreme Health Council and key national counterparts, including the ministries of Health, Social Development, Municipalities Affairs and Agriculture, Works and Sustainable Development.

A wide range of partners and stakeholders were engaged, including community members, upholding the United Nations principles of gender equality and meaningful participation of persons with disabilities.

In alignment with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, other human rights instruments and core development and humanitarian frameworks, the event advocated for inclusive opportunities for all persons with disabilities, while promoting inclusive means for providing a positive impact on health and well-being.

## Celebrating United Nations Day

On 26 October 2022, organizations and offices of the United Nations system in Bahrain celebrated United Nations Day. The celebration was attended by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Sustainable Development and the diplomatic corps in Bahrain, in addition to many other stakeholders and partners. Dr Tasnim Atatrah, WHO Representative, Bahrain, along with the Country Office's staff members, joined the celebration with other UNCT members, reflecting the spirit of operating and communicating as one.

On the occasion, the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Bahrain, H.E. Mr Khaled El-Mekwad expressed his appreciation to the Kingdom of Bahrain for its unwavering support of the work of the United Nations and all its agencies. He also highlighted that the UNSDCF has contributed to deepening the partnership between Bahrain and the United Nations, expanding areas of cooperation and collaboration in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Bahrain's Economic Vision 2030.

Representing the Government of Bahrain, the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for Political Affairs, H.E. Dr Shaikh Abdulla bin Ahmed Al Khalifa, affirmed that Bahrain was keen to expand the strategic partnership with the United Nations to safeguard security and peace, protect human rights and support sustainable development.



**October 2022, Manama, Bahrain:** The WHO Bahrain Country Office attends the Bahrain UN Day celebrations with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Bahrain, UN agencies, partners, and national stakeholders.

## Mobilizing resources as One UN

To enhance the coherence and efficiency of the United Nations at the country level and promote coordinated resource mobilization, the UNCT initiated the process of establishing the United Nations Bahrain SDG Fund. The Fund will serve as a financial instrument to be used as a vehicle for the United Nations system in Bahrain, the government and the private sector to collectively work towards achieving national development priorities and the delivery of the shared results anchored in the UNSDCF. A UNCT task force was formed to lead the process of the Fund's establishment. The task force is composed of representatives from WHO, the United Nations Development Programme, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the International Labour Organization, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), UN-Habitat, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, in close coordination with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and in partnership with the Bahrain Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The Fund is expected to be launched in 2023.

During the year under review, the Resident Coordinator's Office introduced new standard operating procedures for joint programme approval and resource mobilization to strengthen the coordination, coherence and efficiency of the UNCT in Bahrain. Capitalizing on this window of opportunity, the WHO Country Office collaborated with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, UNICEF and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for West Asia on developing a joint funding proposal on transforming education in Bahrain. The proposal is currently in the pipeline, with the activities expected to be implemented in 2023.

Moreover, the WHO Country Office capitalized on the seed funding provided by the Resident Coordinator's Office in 2022 to support collaboration and partnerships among United Nations agencies in Bahrain. The Country Office was successful in securing seed funding for two joint



**October 2022, Manama, Bahrain:** The WHO Bahrain Country Office participates in the UN Resident Coordinator Office workshop on the development of the joint workplans and the implementation of gender equality, human rights, and sustaining peace markers to ensure No One Is Left Behind.

United Nations activities: the first with UN-Habitat on promoting disability-inclusive public parks and the second with IOM on strengthening migrant health towards achieving UHC. The Country Office also contributed to a seed-funding activity led by UN Women, in close partnership with the International Labour Organization and IOM, to promote the economic empowerment of women with disabilities.

## Monitoring and evaluating results as One UN

To ensure the efficient and effective delivery of UNSDCF outcomes, the WHO Country Office actively contributed to the annual review and reporting process of the UNSDCF/Joint Workplan for 2021 by reviewing the workplan's performance and tracking progress on its identified results. Data and other evidence required by the Joint Workplan to review progress were systemically gathered, analysed and shared through UN INFO, an online platform that provides general access to the work of the UNCT teams in all countries to increase accountability and transparency.

The WHO Country Office also supported the preparation of the United Nations Bahrain *Country results report 2021*, providing technical feedback and advice to ensure that the United Nations system's collective contributions to the achievement of national priorities and the SDGs were well reflected and demonstrated.

## SCALING UP COUNTRY-DRIVEN COLLABORATIONS

WHO collaborating centres are institutions, such as research institutions, universities or academies, designated by the WHO Director-General to form part of an international collaborative network to conduct a range of activities in support of WHO's work at all levels. In 2022, the WHO Country Office provided country leadership and strategic support to facilitate the redesignation of two WHO collaborating centres.

The Nursing Division in the College of Health Sciences at the University of Bahrain was first designated in 1990 as a WHO collaborating centre for Nursing Development. This collaborating centre was the first in the Eastern Mediterranean Region, and it contributes to WHO's strategic goals and objectives in supporting and enriching the nursing and midwifery education and health care service in the country and the Region. In 2022, the Nursing Department received its redesignation, which is valid until 2026.

In 2019, the College of Medicine and Medical Sciences of the Arabian Gulf University was designated as a WHO collaborating centre for Health Professionals' Educational Development. The collaborating centre serves as a sphere for human resources development, and it contributes to WHO's work on strengthening health professionals' education capacities and incorporating quality improvement approaches and mechanisms in health professional education institutions. The College of Medicine and Medical Sciences obtained its redesignation in January 2023, which is effective until 2027.

Capitalizing on this country-driven collaboration, the College of Medicine and Medical Sciences organized a workshop on "Capacity-building in tropical disease implementation research methods and ethics", from 6 to 8 November. The workshop was held in line with



the collaborating centre's mandate to provide training and courses in the area of best-evidence medical education and evidence-based medicine. Five representatives from the Ministry were engaged in the workshop, including researchers and public health specialists working on neglected tropical diseases.

## STRENGTHENING CAPACITY FOR DATA AND INNOVATION

With the aim of making progress towards strengthening the public health intelligence function in the country, the WHO Country Office led efforts to support the Ministry in joining the community of practice of the EIOS initiative. Bahrain is the third country from the Gulf region to join the community of practice, after Oman and Qatar.

The EIOS initiative is a WHO-led partnership that aims to create a unified all-hazards, One Health approach to early detection, verification, assessment and communication of public health threats using publicly available information. At the heart of this initiative is the creation of a community of practice for public health intelligence that includes Member States, international organizations, research institutes and other partners. This community of practice is supported by a web-based system that collates hundreds of thousands of articles from a broad range of sources and then processes them through a number of text-mining and analytical modules to categorize them by topic, country, language, source and contextual indices.



**27-28 September 2022, Manama, Bahrain:** WHO organise a training workshop on Epidemic Intelligence from Open Sources at the WHO Country Office in Bahrain, with participants from the Ministry of Health's Health Promotion Directorate; Primary Healthcare Centers; Salmaniya Medical Complex; the Ministry of Health's Public Health Directorate; and the Ministry of Health's Communication Directorate in Bahrain.

In an effort to build a community of well-trained public health intelligence professionals in Bahrain, the WHO Country Office organized a national workshop from 27 to 28 September in close collaboration with the WHO Regional Office. With eight participants from the

Ministry, the workshop provided an opportunity to develop public health intelligence competencies and skills to support and improve health threat detection and response at the national level. As a follow-up to this national training, the Country Office coordinated the participation of one representative from the Ministry in the Global Technical Meeting on the EIOS initiative, organized in November, in Luxor, Egypt, to agree on follow-up action for the implementation of the initiative at global, regional and national levels.



**27-29 November 2022, Luxor, Egypt:** The Bahrain delegation and WHO Bahrain participate in the Epidemic Intelligence from Open Sources Global Technical Meeting to discuss critical issues and opportunities for the public health intelligence community.

## PROMOTING STAFF WELL-BEING AND INVESTING IN THE WHO COUNTRY OFFICE'S CAPACITIES

The WHO Country Office's workforce is a source of pride and priority. To promote a safe, inclusive and respectful workplace, several communications were disseminated and meetings were conducted to provide orientation on the WHO Code of Ethics, the Policy on Preventing and Addressing Abusive Conduct, the Policy on Preventing and Addressing Sexual Misconduct, and the WHO Bystander Intervention Training in the Workplace, underlining WHO's zero-tolerance approach.

Efforts were exerted to strengthen the Country Office's staff and consultants' skill set in different areas by facilitating their participation and involvement in global, regional and country-level capacity-building activities.

This report demonstrates our commitment to achieving the health-related Sustainable Development Goals in Bahrain, while also keeping our sights on the Triple Billion targets of the WHO Thirteenth General Programme of Work 2019–2023 and the aspirations of WHO's regional *Vision 2023* to achieve Health for All by All.

