



**World Health
Organization**

Bahrain



REPORT OF THE WHO REPRESENTATIVE

on the work of the WHO Bahrain Country Office
2021



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a call for
solidarity
and action

REPORT OF THE WHO REPRESENTATIVE

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ABBREVIATIONS

GPW 13	Thirteenth General Programme of Work
IHR	International Health Regulations
NCDs	noncommunicable diseases
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UHC	universal health coverage
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNIATF	United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on NCDs
WHO	World Health Organization

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

GLOBAL AND REGIONAL COMMITMENTS TO ADVANCE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, grounded in the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their 169 associated targets, is a universal, people-centred and planet-sensitive agenda that encompasses far-reaching economic, social and environmental dimensions. It aims to foster more peaceful and inclusive societies. Health plays a central role in this agenda: SDG 3 is “Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages”, and the remaining 16 goals indirectly influence or are influenced by this Goal.

To achieve this ambitious agenda, the World Health Organization’s (WHO) Thirteenth General Programme of Work (GPW 13) 2019–2023 sets three strategic priorities: achieving universal health coverage (UHC), addressing health emergencies and promoting healthier populations. Health equity is also central to GPW 13, which calls for the establishment of new paradigms of partnerships with government, the private sector, academia, legislative bodies and civil society as a means to realize it. Guided by these strategic priorities, WHO launched *Vision 2023* for the Eastern Mediterranean Region, which calls for solidarity and action to achieve “Health for All, by All” in the Region, by strengthening health system resilience; promoting better-integrated recovery, preparedness and response policies; building partnerships; and reinforcing engagement between both state and non-state and health and non-health actors.

TRANSLATING GLOBAL AND REGIONAL COMMITMENTS INTO BAHRAIN’S CONTEXT

Inaugurated on 26 July 2021, with the first WHO Representative to Bahrain being appointed on 1 June 2021, the newly established office quickly set forth, in line with the global and regional health related commitments, working to improve the health and well-being of everyone in Bahrain by directing and coordinating its work through collaboration, cooperation and partnerships.

The WHO Country Office works to support national health authorities through on-the-ground programmatic interventions to strengthen the provision of health care services; enhance the exchange of best practices and lessons learned locally, regionally and globally; and strengthen engagement with key health partners, including academia, civil society, the private sector and other United Nations agencies, to drive progress on the health-related SDGs and achieve WHO’s global and regional priorities. Since its inauguration, the WHO Country Office has aligned its activities around the three strategic priorities and cross-cutting themes in GPW 13 to advance the health and well-being agenda in Bahrain.

THE SCOPE OF THIS REPORT

As part of its end-of-year reporting process, the WHO Country Office has prepared this report to provide an overview of its major areas of activity in 2021 to accelerate progress towards UHC, address health emergencies, promote healthier populations, advance health equity, and strengthen collaboration and partnerships for health. The report also outlines the WHO Country Office's future priorities to ensure that all individuals enjoy the highest attainable standards of health and that no one is left behind.

OVERVIEW OF HEALTH AND WELL-BEING IN BAHRAIN

In the last few decades, Bahrain has had great success in improving reproductive, maternal, newborn and child health. As per the latest data, the maternal mortality ratio is estimated at 21.5 deaths per 100 000 live births, while under-5 mortality and neonatal mortality rates are 7.6 and 3.8 deaths per 1000 live births respectively.¹ Despite this progress towards achieving the highest possible level of health, noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) continue to pose significant challenges, accounting for 81.8% of total deaths. Moreover, the unprecedented health crisis brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic has jeopardized the health and well-being of many individuals in Bahrain. As of 18 December 2021, the number of confirmed cases in the country was 278 410, with deaths estimated at 1394.

Bahrain has made significant strides towards ensuring all its citizens and residents attain the highest possible level of health. The population enjoys comprehensive health care services, which are 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,² while the Bahrain Economic Vision 2030 aims to drive economic growth and ensure that all Bahraini nationals and residents continue to have access to quality health care.

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

2. National Health Plan 2016–2025. Kingdom of Bahrain and the Supreme Council of Health; n.d. (<https://www.sch.org.bh/images/documents/publications/National%20Health%20Plan%202016-2025.pdf>, accessed 22 December 2021).



KEY HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2021

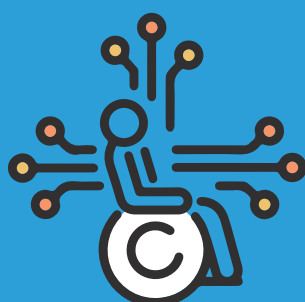
To address Bahrain's health priorities, the WHO Country Office in Bahrain delivered numerous activities that are designed around GPW 13's three strategic priorities and its cross-cutting themes. These activities are summarized below.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1: ACHIEVING UHC



Developed a factsheet on Bahrain's trends and progress on advancing SDG 3 targets, including UHC, focusing on success stories, lessons learned and the way forward.

Promoted the World Patient Safety Day campaign by organizing a virtual seminar facilitated by WHO experts and supporting national campaign coverage.



Promoted Bahrain's breakthrough in becoming the first country in the Region to develop a **national action plan to improve access to assistive technology**.

Presented on the Ministry of Health's achievements in advancing towards health-related SDG targets, including UHC, during the launch of WHO's first report on *Progress on the health-related SDGs and targets in the Eastern Mediterranean Region*.

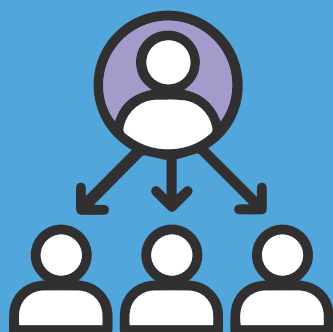


Took part in a United Nations General Assembly side event on "Meeting the Noncommunicable Diseases and Mental Health-related SDG Targets: the urgent need to scale up catalytic financing and technical support" on 22 September 2021.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2: ADDRESSING HEALTH EMERGENCIES

Led a three-level country mission

of WHO staff members from the Country Office, Regional Office and headquarters **to document Bahrain's COVID-19 success stories**, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, the Supreme Council for Health and the Office of the Prime Minister.



Coordinated with the Ministry of Health to identify International Health Regulations (IHR 2005) stakeholders

in preparation for tailored capacity-building interventions on points of entry and mass gathering preparedness.

Provided technical support for developing a joint statement for the Ministry of Health and Supreme Council for Environment

promoting Bahrain's initiative and commitment in addressing climate change in line with the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26).

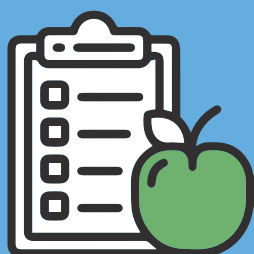


Participated in an intercountry capacity-building workshop

organized by the Regional Office between 23–25 November on using WHO and United Nations system tools **for integrating gender, equity and human rights into health system response and recovery** in the context of COVID-19 and beyond.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3: PROMOTING HEALTHIER POPULATIONS

Facilitated a joint country mission for representatives of the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on NCDs (UNIATF) and WHO staff members from headquarters and the Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean, between 9 and 11 November, **to promote the effective implementation of NCD prevention and management strategies and document best practices** in line with the National Action Plan 2019–2030.



Supported the development of the Bahraini Food-Based Dietary Guidelines to promote health and prevent disease.

Organized a workshop on the School Mental Health Package, between 3 and 10 October, to build the capacity of in-country trainers and provide them with essential knowledge and skills in advancing school mental health in Bahrain.



Organized a country-specific virtual mission, in close coordination with the Ministry of Health and WHO staff from the Regional Office, **to discuss the current situation of tobacco control in the Region and share strategies to achieve GPW 13, NCD and SDG targets** through strengthening tobacco control efforts.

Provided technical assistance to the Ministry of Health during preparations for the 68th session of the Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean in October 2021, including assistance for the participation of Her Excellency the Minister of Health in a focused panel discussion on the social determinants of health and addressing inequalities.



MAXIMIZING WHO'S IMPACT ON THE GROUND



Conducted meetings with key actors and stakeholders from the government, legislative and regulatory bodies and civil society to enhance coordination, explore areas for collaboration and promote partnerships for health.

Strengthened networking and partnerships with academic institutions, including WHO collaborating centres, and identified opportunities to advance health curriculums for future health workers.



Conducted SDG stakeholder mapping to strengthen collaboration and coordination between the different actors involved in the implementation of health-related SDGs, including different United Nations entities.

Facilitated regional and international collaboration and **promoted Bahrain's best practices as an incubator for success.**



Established community partnerships for health, including promoting Bahrain national team members' participation in the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games, acknowledging the WHO Regional Office Children's Art Competition winner and participating in the launch of the 7th Manama Entrepreneurship Week.

INTRODUCTION

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, grounded in the 17 SDGs and their 169 associated targets, is a universal, people-centred and planet-sensitive agenda that encompasses far-reaching economic, social and environmental dimensions. It aims to foster more peaceful and inclusive societies. Health plays a central role in this agenda because one of the 17 goals – SDG 3 – is to “Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages”, while the remaining 16 goals indirectly influence or are influenced by it. SDG 3 has 13 health targets and 27 indicators, including target 3.8 on UHC, which is defined as access to quality essential health care services without incurring financial hardship. This target is considered the hallmark of SDG 3 because it provides a platform for integrated action across all 13 health targets.

To achieve this ambitious agenda, WHO’s GPW 13 for 2019–2023³ sets three interconnected strategic priorities to ensure healthy lives and well-being for all at all ages: achieving UHC, addressing health emergencies and promoting healthier populations. Health equity is also central to GPW 13, which calls for the establishment of new paradigms of partnerships with the government, the private sector, academia and civil society as a means to realize it. These strategic priorities are not mutually exclusive and thus require implementation that is mutually reinforcing. For example, strengthening health systems also makes them more resilient and better able to detect and control outbreaks before they spread, and improved public health functions contribute to good-quality health care within UHC.

In the Eastern Mediterranean Region, countries struggle with the double burden of communicable and noncommunicable diseases, along with injuries and disabilities. Furthermore, the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has negatively impacted health systems in these countries, undermining the overall health status and access to quality care for all populations. To overcome these regional challenges and move towards achieving the three strategic priorities of GPW 13, the WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean launched *Vision 2023*.⁴ The Vision calls for solidarity and joint action to achieve “Health for All, by All”, by strengthening health system resilience; promoting better-integrated recovery, preparedness and response policies; building partnerships; and reinforcing engagement between both state and non-state and health and non-health actors.

In line with the above, the WHO Bahrain Country Office is working towards improving health and well-being for all by directing and coordinating its work through collaboration, cooperation and partnerships. Since its inauguration, the Country Office has been designing its activities around GPW 13’s three strategic priorities and its cross-cutting themes, with the aim of advancing the health and well-being agenda in Bahrain. Being a newly established office, the Country Office sets forth to support national health authorities through on-the-ground

3. The Thirteenth General Programme of Work sets out WHO’s strategic direction for the five-year period 2019–2023. For more information, see: Thirteenth General Programme of Work, 2019–2023. In: WHO/About WHO/What we do [website]. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2019 (<https://www.who.int/about/what-we-do/thirteenth-general-programme-of-work-2019---2023>, accessed 22 December 2021).

4. The WHO for the Eastern Mediterranean Region, “Health for All, by All”, supports countries’ ongoing efforts to move towards UHC and builds on the Regional Roadmap 2017–2021, which was presented to the 64th session of the Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean in 2017. For more information, see: Vision 2023. In: WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean/About us/Regional Director [website]. Cairo: WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean; 2018 (<http://www.emro.who.int/about-who/vision2023/vision-2023.html>, accessed 22 December 2021).

programmatic interventions to strengthen the provision of health care services; enhance the exchange of best practices and lessons learned locally, regionally and globally; and strengthen engagement with key health partners, including academia, civil society, the private sector and other multilateral United Nations agencies. Through these interventions, it aims to drive progress on the health-related SDGs and achieve WHO global and regional priorities.



26 July 2021, Manama, Bahrain: Inauguration of the WHO Country Office in Bahrain by Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General; with HE Faeqa bin Saeed Al Saleh, Minister of Health; HE Dr Abdullatif bin Rashid Alzayani, Minister of Foreign Affairs; Dr Tasnim Atatrah, WHO Representative, Bahrain; and representatives of the Government of Bahrain.

As part of its end-of-year reporting process, the WHO Bahrain Country Office has prepared this report to provide an overview of its major areas of activities in 2021. These activities were designed around the three strategic priorities of GPW 13: achieving UHC, addressing health emergencies and promoting healthier populations. The report also outlines the WHO Country Office's future priorities to ensure that all individuals enjoy the highest attainable standards of health and that no one is left behind.



HEALTH AND WELL-BEING IN BAHRAIN

According to the United Nations Population Division, Bahrain had an estimated population of 1.7 million in 2021, an increase of 21% from the 2016 figure of 1.4 million. Of the total population, 35% are females and 65% are males.⁵ The country is advancing rapidly in its economic and social development. None of the population lives below the international poverty line.⁶ The literacy rate among youth aged 15–24 years is estimated at 98%, with males having higher rates than females (99% versus 95%).⁷ In addition, the entire population has access to improved drinking water and sanitation facilities.⁸

MANAMA: HEALTHY CITY 2021

In June 2021, WHO designated Manama as a “Healthy City”. In the last few decades, the city has made multiple improvements in many areas, including education and literacy, health, water and sanitation, food safety and air pollution. Prior to Manama’s designation, Um Al Hassam was declared a Healthy City in 2018.

In the last few decades, Bahrain has had great success in improving reproductive, maternal, newborn and child health. As per the latest data, the maternal mortality ratio is estimated at 21.5 deaths per 100 000 live births, whereas under-5 mortality and neonatal mortality rates are calculated at 7.6 and 3.8 deaths per 1000 live births respectively.⁹ Despite this progress, NCDs – including cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes and chronic respiratory disease – continue to be among the leading causes of death in Bahrain, accounting for 81.8% of all deaths. Out of the four main NCDs, cardiovascular disease accounts for the most NCD deaths in Bahrain, followed by cancer and chronic respiratory disease.¹⁰ However, NCD-related morbidity and mortality are more than just a health issue; they also have a detrimental impact on socioeconomic development and the

government’s long-term fiscal sustainability. A recent investment case on the prevention and control of NCDs in Bahrain found that NCDs cost the national economy 534 million Bahraini dinars (US\$ 1.4 billion), which is equivalent to 3.8% of its 2019 GDP.¹¹

5. World Population Prospects 2019 [custom data acquired via website]. New York: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division; 2019 (<https://population.un.org/wpp/DataQuery/>, accessed 7 December 2021).
6. The Kingdom of Bahrain’s First Voluntary National Review on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals. Manama: Government of Bahrain; 2018 (https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/2132920181231_Bahrain_VNR_English_translation.pdf, accessed 18 December 2021).
7. Monitoring health and health system performance in the Eastern Mediterranean Region: Core indicators and indicators on the health-related Sustainable Development Goals 2020. Cairo: WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean; 2021 (WHO-EM/HST/246/E; <https://rho.emro.who.int/sites/default/files/booklets/EMR-HIS-and-core-indicators-2020-final.pdf>, accessed 7 December 2021).
8. Monitoring health and health system performance in the Eastern Mediterranean Region: Core indicators and indicators on the health-related Sustainable Development Goals 2020. Cairo: WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean; 2021 (WHO-EM/HST/246/E; <https://rho.emro.who.int/sites/default/files/booklets/EMR-HIS-and-core-indicators-2020-final.pdf>, accessed 7 December 2021).
9. Kingdom of Bahrain SDG portal [website]. Manama: Information & eGovernment Authority; 2021 (<https://www.sdgs.gov.bh/>, accessed 14 December 2021).
10. Kingdom of Bahrain SDG portal [website]. Manama: Information & eGovernment Authority; 2021 (<https://www.sdgs.gov.bh/>, accessed 14 December 2021).
11. Elmusharaf K, Grafton D, Roberts E, et al. Prevention and control of non-communicable diseases in Bahrain: the case for investment. Geneva: UNDP, WHO, UNIATF, GHC; 2021 (https://www.researchgate.net/publication/349348977_Prevention_and_Control_of_NonCommunicable_Diseases_in_Bahrain_The_Case_for_Investment, accessed 15 December 2021).

Moreover, the unprecedented health crisis brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the health and well-being of many individuals. As of 18 December 2021, the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases in Bahrain was 278 410, with an estimated 1394 deaths.¹² In response to the pandemic, Bahrain has set up a national taskforce and adopted a robust “test, trace and treat” strategy, which deployed innovative technology to keep all users up to date on recommendations issued by the health authorities.¹³ The Government of Bahrain is also providing COVID-19 vaccines, testing and treatment to all citizens and residents, free of charge.

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.¹⁴ 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.¹⁵

12. COVID-19: WHO EMRO biweekly situation report #25. In: WHO/Eastern Mediterranean COVID-19 health topic/Situation reports [website]. Cairo: WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean; 2022 (<http://www.emro.who.int/health-topics/corona-virus/situation-reports.html>, accessed 1 August 2022).
13. Hoffman D. Lessons from Bahrain’s response to COVID-19. In: The Cipher Brief [website]. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belford Center for Science and International Affairs, Harvard Kennedy School; 17 June 2020 (<https://www.belfercenter.org/publication/lessons-bahrains-response-covid-19>, accessed 18 December 2021).
14. National Health Plan 2016–2025. Kingdom of Bahrain and the Supreme Council of Health; n.d. (<https://www.sch.org.bh/images/documents/publications/National%20Health%20Plan%202016-2025.pdf>, accessed 22 December 2021).
15. Bahrain Economic Vision 2030. Manama: Kingdom of Bahrain; 2008 (<https://www.bahrain.bh/wps/wcm/connect/b8dd35bc-9c52-4af3-8310-9136fae8d82a/Bahrain+Economic+Vision+2030.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CVID=o8qe1-5>, accessed 22 December 2021).



STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1: ACHIEVING UHC

This priority is largely aligned with SDG target 3.8, which focuses on achieving UHC, including financial risk protection, access to quality essential health care services, and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all. Based on the above, the WHO Country Office has implemented several activities around promoting UHC, as follows:

- Developing a factsheet on Bahrain’s trends and progress in advancing SDG 3 targets, including UHC, focusing on success stories, lessons learned and the way forward.
- Promoting the World Patient Safety Campaign and organizing a virtual seminar to observe the World Patient Safety Day 2021, facilitated by WHO experts. The theme of the day was “Safe Maternal and Newborn Care”. Its aim was to raise awareness on issues of maternal and newborn safety, to engage multiple stakeholders and to advocate the adoption of best practices at the point of care to prevent avoidable risks and harm to all women and newborns during childbirth.
- Promoting Bahrain’s breakthrough in becoming the first country in the Region to develop a national action plan to improve access to assistive technology with the aim of realizing the goals of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, UHC and the SDGs. This action plan was prepared by the Ministry of Health in collaboration with WHO and is based on the findings of a system-level capacity assessment, which was completed in the country using the WHO Assistive Technology Capacity Assessment tool. Dr Tasnim Atarah, WHO Representative, Bahrain, presented an opening address on Bahrain’s efforts in supporting and empowering persons with disabilities – including the national action plan – during a UNDP seminar held on 4 December to mark the occasion of the Bahrain 2021 Asian Youth Paralympic Games.
- Presenting on the Ministry of Health’s achievements in advancing towards health-related SDG targets, including UHC, during the launch of the first WHO report on *Progress on the Health-related Sustainable Development Goals and targets in the Eastern Mediterranean Region*. This report presents a snapshot of the progress made in addressing the health-related SDG targets and indicators in the Region.



World Patient Safety Day 2021 WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region Office Poster.



19 September 2021: Dr Mondher Letaief, WHO EMRO Regional Adviser, presents during the World Patient Safety Day 2021 virtual seminar.

- Participating in the United Nations General Assembly side event “Meeting the Noncommunicable Diseases and Mental Health-related SDG Targets: the urgent need to scale up catalytic financing and technical support”. This event took place on 22 September and promoted adequate health financing for UHC. This side event aimed to review the work of UNIATF, including actions that need to be taken during the pandemic and beyond to meet the 2030 Agenda. During the side event, Her Excellency the Minister of Health made an intervention on the actions taken in Bahrain to strengthen NCD service delivery through the UHC benefit package to ensure that no one is left behind when it comes to health.



STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2: ADDRESSING HEALTH EMERGENCIES

This priority focuses on (1) building and sustaining the resilient national, regional and global capacities that are required to keep the world safe from epidemics and other health emergencies, and (2) ensuring that populations affected by acute and protracted emergencies have rapid access to essential life-saving health services, including health promotion and disease prevention. Guided by these objectives, the WHO Bahrain Country Office worked towards documenting Bahrain's success stories and enhancing emergency preparedness capacities in the following ways:

- Leading a three-level country mission of WHO staff members from the Country Office, Regional Office and headquarters, between 4 and 11 November, to document Bahrain's COVID-19 success stories, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, the Supreme Council for Health and the Office of the Prime Minister. During the mission, case studies were drafted based on several interviews conducted with key stakeholders and technical focal points. A draft report was developed at the conclusion of the mission which highlights the success of Bahrain in responding to the pandemic, the lessons learned and the way forward. Through this report, the WHO Country Office seeks to increase communication and the exchange of best practices among those working in the field of health emergencies within the Eastern Mediterranean Region and beyond.



4-11 November 2021, Manama, Bahrain: WHO visits a testing facility during the three-level country mission to document Bahrain's COVID-19 success stories.



4-11 November 2021, Manama, Bahrain: WHO visits a testing facility during the three-level country mission to document Bahrain's COVID-19 success stories.

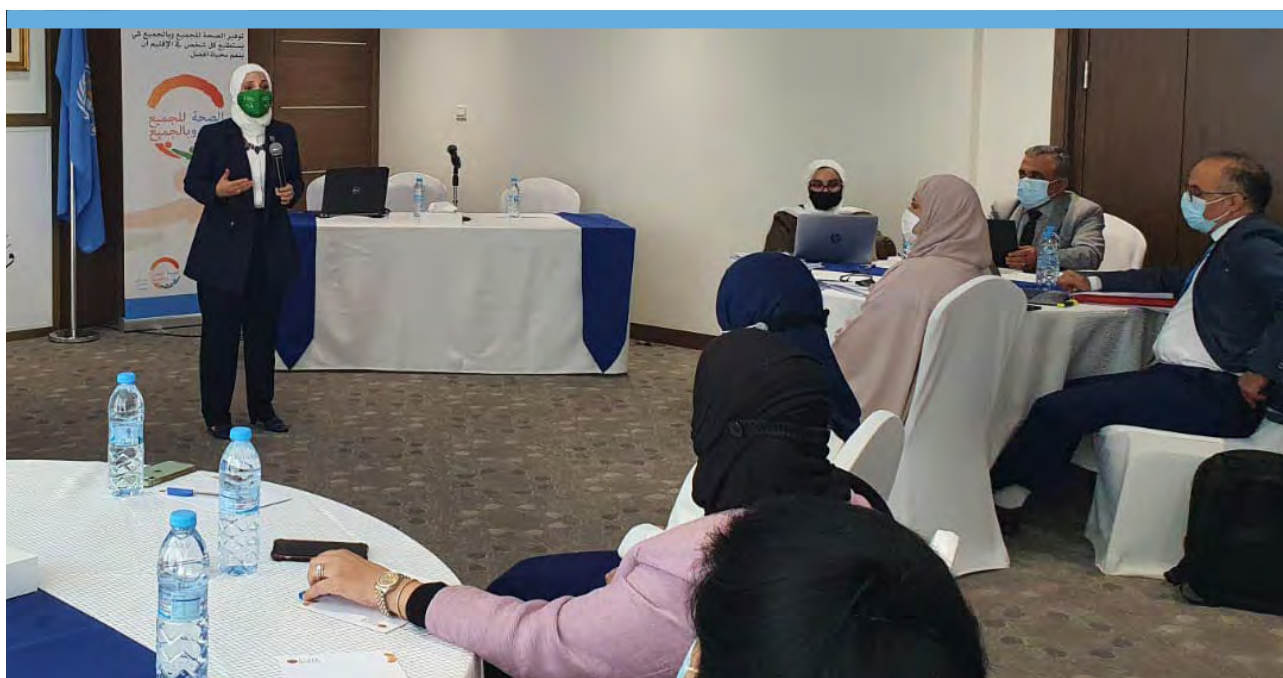
- Coordinating with the Ministry of Health to identify IHR stakeholders in preparation for tailored capacity-building interventions on point-of-entry and mass gathering preparedness.
- Providing technical support for developing a joint statement for the Ministry of Health and the Supreme Council for Environment, promoting Bahrain's initiative for and commitment to addressing climate change, in line with the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26).
- Participating in an intercountry capacity-building workshop organized by the Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean on using WHO and United Nations system tools for integrating gender, equity and human rights into health systems response and recovery in the context of COVID-19 and beyond. The workshop took place between 23 and 25 November and was aimed at sensitizing WHO Country Office staff members on general concepts around gender, equity and human rights, as well as building their capacity to understand and apply available WHO and United Nations tools for integrating these concepts at the country level.



STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3: PROMOTING HEALTHIER POPULATIONS

This priority aims to contribute to people enjoying better health and well-being through work on five interconnected platforms: (1) improving human capital across the life course; (2) accelerating action on preventing NCDs and promoting mental health; (3) accelerating the eradication of high-impact communicable diseases; (4) tackling antimicrobial resistance; and (5) addressing the health effects of climate change in small island developing States and other vulnerable States. In line with the above, in 2021 the WHO Bahrain Country Office undertook many activities around scaling up NCD prevention and management strategies and promoting mental health, including the following:

- Facilitating a joint country mission of UNIATF representatives and WHO staff members from WHO headquarters and the Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean, held between 9 and 11 November. The mission aimed to promote the effective implementation of NCD prevention and management strategies and to document best practices in line with the National Action Plan 2019–2030. Mission members met with Ministry of Health officials and nongovernmental organizations – such as the Cancer Society, the Bahrain Diabetes Society and the Anti-smoking Society – and conducted a monitoring visit to the Dilmun Bakery to examine its efforts to implement “Best Buy” policy by reducing the amount of salt, trans fat and sugar in its baked goods. The mission concluded by making several recommendations regarding (1) building on the country’s progress to scale up NCD prevention and management services, (2) strengthening collaboration and coordination across all relevant sectors, (3) establishing monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to measure the impact of the national NCD programme, (4) investing in the food system, and (5) developing a research platform in parallel with the NCD progress.



9-11 November 2021, Manama, Bahrain: Joint country mission of UNIATF representatives, WHO Country Office, WHO headquarters, WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean and Ministry of Health, Bahrain.

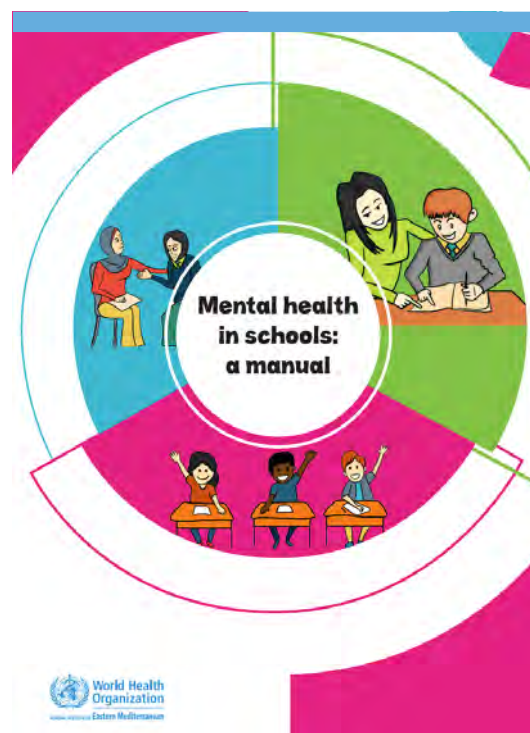


9-11 November 2021, Manama, Bahrain: Group image of WHO Representative, Bahrain, WHO facilitators, and participants during the meetings with key actors and national stakeholders.

- Supporting the development of the Bahraini Food-Based Dietary Guidelines to promote health and prevent disease. The Guidelines consist of 11 key messages, which are designed to serve policymakers, health professionals and the general public to promote the consumption of a healthy, nutritionally adequate diet. The development process for these guidelines included a situational analysis of diet-related diseases and food consumption in Bahrain, an extensive review and synthesis of cutting-edge and evidence-based research addressing the association between diet and health and diseases, and international and local expert consultations. The launch of the Guidelines marked the conclusion of the UNIATF and WHO joint mission in Bahrain.
- Organizing “The School Mental Health Package Workshop” between 3 and 10 October to build the capacity of 32 in-country trainers and provide them with essential knowledge and skills in school mental health in the Kingdom of Bahrain, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education. This workshop was guided by the School Mental Health Programme developed by the WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean, along with the Programme’s implementation plan. The implementation plan outlines a three-step model to support the scale-up of the Programme in the countries of the Eastern Mediterranean Region, including building the capacity of in-country trainers who can then train champion facilitators to cascade down the training to health workers, social workers and teachers at their schools, followed by regular supervision by the in-country trainers. The workshop was delivered virtually in both English and Arabic.
- Organizing a country-specific virtual mission, in close coordination with the Ministry of Health and WHO staff from the Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean, to

discuss the current situation of tobacco control in the Region, and share strategies to achieve GPW 13, NCD and SDG targets through strengthening tobacco control efforts. The mission's key outcomes included reviewing a SMART¹⁶ action plan developed in line with GPW 13 by representatives of the Government of Bahrain and national experts for the national tobacco control programme.

- Providing technical assistance to the Ministry of Health during preparations for the 68th session of the Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean (11–14 October), including the participation of her Excellency the Minister of Health in a focused panel discussion on the social determinants of health and addressing inequalities. The panel discussion suggested the Healthy Cities Network as a key recommendation for action on social determinants of health and commended Manama for its successful accreditation by WHO as a “Healthy City” in 2021.
- Supporting the presentation of Bahrain’s best practices at the preparatory session for the Small Island Developing States Summit for Health.
- Participating in the virtual regional launch of the Global Plan for the Decade of Action for Road Safety 2021–2030 by WHO on 25 November 2021.
- Conducting and participating in virtual and in-person campaigns on public health issues such as mental health, cancer screening, antimicrobial resistance and gender-based violence to raise awareness and understanding and mobilize support for action.



[Mental health in schools: a manual](#). The Mental health in schools manual, which was presented by WHO facilitators during the School Mental Health Package Workshop.



13 October 2021: HE Faeqa bin Saeed Al Saleh, Minister of Health, participates virtually in the panel discussion on the social determinants of health and addressing inequalities.

16. SMART: specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely.



MAXIMIZING WHO'S IMPACT ON THE GROUND

Another cross-cutting theme in GPW 13 is strengthening collaboration and coordination with the Ministry of Health and other health-related actors and establishing partnerships for health. To this end, the WHO Country Office has arranged several activities:

- Providing technical support, including developing any materials needed, sharing relevant information and providing capacity-building training. For example, the WHO Country Office, in collaboration with the Regional Office, developed a report analyzing the Q3 Routine Immunization Subnational Coverage data of 2021 to provide support in prioritizing and tailoring vaccination strategies that address immunization priorities. The WHO Country Office facilitated the participation of the Ministry of Health focal points in the following activities:
 - » the Regional Workshop on Global Analysis and Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking-water
 - » a measles and rubella molecular detection and sequence analysis training workshop
 - » a country consultation process to review COVID-19 excess mortality estimates
 - » the Regional Training Course on the Health of Refugees and Migrants, organized by the Health Systems in Emergencies Lab
 - » the Third Regional Meeting of Directors of Public Health Laboratories in the Eastern Mediterranean Region
 - » the regional training on health diplomacy for focal points from Eastern Mediterranean Region governing bodies.
- Conducting meetings with key actors and stakeholders from the government, legislative and regulatory bodies, academia and civil society to enhance coordination, explore areas for collaboration and promote partnerships for health. Among others, these included the Ministry of Health; the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; the Ministry of Information; the Ministry of Education; the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Tourism; His Majesty the King's Representative for Humanitarian Work and Youth Affairs; the Information & eGovernment Authority; Members of the National Assembly; the Supreme Council for Health; the Supreme Council for Women; the Supreme Council for Environment; the National Health Regulatory Authority; Bahrain Defense Force Royal Medical Services; the University of Bahrain; the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI); and the International Federation of Medical Students' Associations (see Annex 1 for the outcomes of the meetings and agreed upon priorities).
- Networking and partnership strengthening with academic institutions, including WHO collaborative centres, and identifying opportunities for advancing health curriculums for future health workers.
- Conducting SDG stakeholder mapping to strengthen collaboration and coordination between the different actors involved in implementing health-related SDGs, including the different United Nations entities. The mapping exercise included a desk review to identify key stakeholders and was complemented by an online questionnaire followed by online interviews for deep-dive analysis. The data collection tools were created and validated with the Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean.

- Facilitating regional and international collaboration and promoting Bahrain's best practices as an incubator for success.
- Establishing community partnerships for health – for instance, by promoting Bahrain team members' participation in the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games and acknowledging the WHO Regional Office's Children's Art Competition winner. Additionally, Dr Tasnim Atatrah, WHO Representative, Bahrain, participated in the launch of the 7th Manama Entrepreneurship Week, under the theme "Rebuilding Sustainable Post-Pandemic Economies", on behalf of the United Nations Country Team in Bahrain.



26 October 2021, Manama, Bahrain: Dr Tasnim Atatrah, WHO Representative, Bahrain, awards WHO Regional Office's Children's Art Competition winner.

- Conducting the pioneering national focal points workshop to streamline communication across units and departments. The workshop included a review of the main achievements in the 2020– 2022 period and informed the development of the joint workplan for 2022–2023.
- Presenting on WHO's work and key recommendations for climate change and health during the World Technology Universities Network 2021 congress. As a keynote speaker, Dr Atatrah embraced this opportunity to share key messages from *WHO's COP26 special report on climate change and health: the health argument for climate* with fellow experts, academics and university students in the field. The report was officially launched ahead of the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26) and was signed by over two thirds of the global health workforce. It called for national leaders and country delegations to step up climate action, further strengthening the WHO mission to address climate change as a topic of global concern.



WHO Regional Office's Children's Art Competition Bahrain winning image.



18-21 October 2021: Dr Tasnim Atatrah, WHO Representative, Bahrain, participates virtually in the World Technology Universities Network 2021 congress.

- Featuring as the spotlight personality during the University of Bahrain / UNDP Webinar Series “Beyond COVID-19? An opportunity to build back better”. With an audience of students, academics and professionals from across the nation, Dr Atatrah took the opportunity to share valuable WHO insight into the topic of “Achieving the Health-related SDGs: Together Towards an Inclusive, Equitable and Resilient COVID-19 Recovery”.
- Presenting during the 5th Equal Opportunities Conference on Women in Development, which had the theme “Partnership, Fairness and Competitiveness” and was hosted by Ahlia University. Dr Atatrah shared specialist WHO global and regional insight surrounding the impact of COVID-19 on women’s health.
- Participating in the WHO European Conference on Tackling Noncommunicable Diseases through Digital Solutions. Dr Atatrah was invited to participate as the facilitator of a session on global developments. As part of the larger conference, the session provided a lightning presentation from distinguished speakers and provided a platform for reflecting on global development in the area of digital solutions, ethics and outstanding systems to manage NCDs.



WAY FORWARD

Consistent with the international health agenda and the GPW 13 strategic priorities, the WHO Bahrain Country Office will continue to support the Ministry of Health and work towards achieving the agreed joint workplan for the next biennium (2022–2023), focusing on the following priorities:

ACHIEVING UHC

The WHO Country Office will continue to provide needed technical support to strengthen health systems and ensure that all people have access to high-quality promotive, preventive, curative, rehabilitative and palliative health services that are appropriate to their needs and expectations, while not exposing the user to financial hardship, in line with WHO norms and standards.

ADDRESSING HEALTH EMERGENCIES

The WHO Country Office will provide technical assistance on the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the IHR framework. Operationally, it will facilitate an assessment of health emergency coordination mechanisms, country risks and vulnerabilities, and the emergency supply chain, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health. Moreover, the WHO Country Office will support in-depth assessment of the current surveillance system and provide follow-up training on strengthening event-based surveillance according to epidemic intelligence.

PROMOTING HEALTHIER POPULATIONS

The WHO Country Office will scale up action on NCDs and their associated risk factors, including supporting the development and dissemination of guidelines and tools for NCD preventive, diagnostic, curative, palliative and rehabilitative care and technical packages to address NCD risk factors through multisectoral action. In addition, it will strengthen its role in providing technical and political leadership on equity in health and addressing the social determinants of health to ensure that the needs and rights of individuals at different stages of the life course are addressed.

MAXIMIZING WHO'S IMPACT ON THE GROUND

The WHO Country Office will strengthen collaboration with health actors and stakeholders and promote partnerships for health by organizing a number of joint meetings, workshops and seminars, including a workshop on One Health with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the World Organization for Animal Health.

ANNEX 1:

OUTCOMES OF WHO COUNTRY OFFICE MEETINGS WITH KEY HEALTH ACTORS AND STAKEHOLDERS

Actor/ stakeholder	Agreed priority areas for collaboration
Ministry of Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review and update joint programme of work for 2020–2021.• Develop a workplan for joint programme of work for 2022–2023.• Conduct a national assessment to inform the development of the Country Cooperation Strategy for WHO and Bahrain.• Support the documentation of best practices and lessons learned from the COVID-19 response in Bahrain.• Develop a concept note on Bahrain’s initiative to promote global health diplomacy.
Supreme Council of Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide technical support in line with the newly established structure and reformed system, with special emphasis on national health accounts and health insurance.• Provide technical support in reviewing maternal and child health indicators.• Improve access to regional and global best practices in health insurance and management of interactions between the payee and providers.• Support the strengthening of emergency preparedness and response in line with the IHR (2005).
National Health Regulatory Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support the documentation of Bahrain’s best practices in advancing the accreditation system and processes.• Provide technical support to address pharmacovigilance in line with WHO recommendations.
Ministry of Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strengthen the capacity of health and social workers to advance mental health in schools in the context of COVID-19 and beyond.
Supreme Council for Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support the implementation of policies and programmes to improve air quality in Bahrain.• Support the review of environmental standards, taking into consideration Bahrain’s specific context and determinants.

Actor/ stakeholder	Agreed priority areas for collaboration
Supreme Council for Women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen the monitoring and reporting of women's health and wellbeing indicators, in line with the international monitoring framework. Improve access to international and regional best practice and lessons learned around women's health and rights.
Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the establishment of policies and regulations on health tourism, in collaboration with key stakeholders. Provide technical support on key regulations and standards for commerce and travel in line with WHO recommendations. Provide technical support in line with the IHR framework, with a special focus on point-of-entry core capacity.
Bahrain Defense Force Royal Medical Services Military Hospital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the dissemination of best practices of the hospital in repurposing the training centre to support COVID-19 response and provide a proactive platform for capacity-building for all staff members. Capitalize on the hospital's expertise in trauma management and emergency response.
Ministry of Information Affairs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide technical support in communicating and advocating key public health messages.
University of Bahrain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advance the partnership with the collaborative centre for nursing. Support the establishment of a platform for SDG monitoring in line with the SDG hub initiative.

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 to achieve Health for All by All.



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