



UNITED NATIONS
BAHRAIN



Photo credit
©UN-Habitat/Hady Elcott



**COUNTRY RESULTS
REPORT**

2023

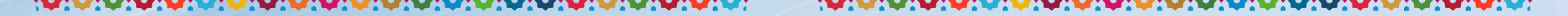


TABLE OF CONTENTS

■ Foreword	3
■ United Nations Country Team in Bahrain	4
■ Key development partners of the United Nations development system	5
■ Chapter 1: Key developments in the country	6
■ Chapter 2: United Nations development system support to national development priorities through the Cooperation Framework	8
2.1. Overview of Cooperation Framework Results	9
2.2. Cooperation Framework priorities, outcomes and outputs	11
2.3. Support to Partnerships and Financing the 2030 Agenda	27
2.4. Results of the United Nations working more and better together: enhanced Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Summit, effectiveness and efficiency	28
2.5. Evaluations and Lessons Learned	29
2.6. Financial Overview and Resource Mobilization	30
■ Chapter 3: Key focus for next year	32
■ Annex. Acronyms	34

Photo credit
Shutterstock

FOREWORD



Photo credit
UN RCO

For the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) in Bahrain, the year 2023 was one of consolidation, reflection and adaptation. Together, we consolidated our programming and initiatives for greater coherence, we reflected on how we approach the last mile development challenges in a high-income country context and adapt in real time to the demands of security and humanitarian imperatives in the region, an escalating climate catastrophe, and national priorities of the country. During the year, we also strengthened our partnership with the Government of Bahrain through processes of continuous engagement.

In the penultimate year of the ongoing Strategic and Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (SCF) 2021-2024, the UNCT in Bahrain initiated the process of formulating the new Cooperation Framework (CF) for 2025-2029, and conducted a rigorous programme review of the SCF to inform the design and implementation of the new CF. The programme review provided an opportunity to formalize some of the thinking already underway on the best ways for the United Nations to add value as a development partner in a high-income country context. Looking forward, our partnership with the Government of Bahrain must be cognizant of the unique characteristics of the country – a small, post-oil open economy, significant proportion of foreign workers in the labour force, a special role within the region, and strong capacity in basic service delivery – as well as its ambition to rapidly achieve the development aspiration of its people and contribute to sustainable development globally. This re-oriented how we define, pursue and measure success.

A key element of the United Nations support to the

Government was on aligning national policies, processes and capacities to deliver on national commitments to global and regional agreements and frameworks including the Global Biodiversity Framework, Stockholm Convention for Persistent Organic Pollutants, human rights treaties and conventions. Bahrain contributed to global dialogues through its active participation in events like the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), the SDG Summit, and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Conference of Parties (COP28). The country also co-sponsored two resolutions on Affordable Housing for All and Clean Up Day at the UN-Habitat Assembly.

The United Nations also contributed to raising public awareness of a broad range of issues including healthy lifestyles, urban resilience through afforestation, and early warning for disaster risk. In all of these initiatives, informed public action has the potential to meaningfully complement policy to leave no one behind. Alongside the UNCT initiated work with the Government on developing forward-looking joint projects, and filling data gaps for monitoring the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In 2024, the final year of our SCF 2021-2024, through our strengthened partnership with the Government, the UNCT will continue our process of experimenting and contributing to sustainable development both in the country and globally.

Khaled El Mekwad

United Nations Resident Coordinator
in Bahrain

UNITED NATIONS COUNTRY TEAM IN BAHRAIN



International
Labour
Organization



KEY DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS OF THE UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM

GOVERNMENT PARTNERS

- Arabian Gulf University
- Attorney General's Office
- Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities
- Bahrain Economic Development Board
- Bahrain Meteorological Directorate
- Bahrain's Water Resources Council
- British Embassy Manama
- Capital Governorate
- Embassy of Philippines
- Embassy of Thailand
- Labour Market Regulatory Authority (LMRA)
- Ministry of Education
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Department of Human Rights)
- Ministry of Health
- Ministry of Industry and Commerce
- Ministry of Interior
- Ministry of Justice, Islamic Affairs & Endowments
- Ministry of Labour
- Ministry of Municipalities and Agriculture
- Ministry of Social Development
- Ministry of Sustainable Development
- Ministry of Transportation
- Ministry of Youth Affairs
- Naif Arab University of Security Sciences
- National Institute for Human Rights (NIHR)
- National Taskforce for Population and Information
- Sand and Dust Storm Warning Regional Center
- Special Investigation Unit Bahrain
- Supreme Council for Environment
- Supreme Council for Women
- Supreme Council of Health
- Tamkeen
- Telecommunications Regulatory Authority
- The League of Arab States
- The National Communication Centre
- University of Bahrain

NON-GOVERNMENTAL PARTNERS

- Al Riwaq Art Space
- Bahrain Bourse
- Bahrain Society of Engineers
- Budaiya Hub (Global Shapers)
- Domestic Worker Union
- Fishermen Society
- Friends of Gardens
- General Federation of Bahrain Trade Unions
- Global Environment Facility (GEF)
- HSBC Bahrain
- International Domestic workers Federation
- Naseej
- National Mariculture Centre (NMC)
- The Annual Investment Meeting (AIM Congress)
- Union of Arab Chambers
- World Economic Forum
- Zain Bahrain



CHAPTER 01

Photo credit
Shutterstock

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN THE COUNTRY

Bahrain set out an ambitious reform agenda for socio-economic transformation in its Economic Vision 2030. Implementation of the vision has accelerated after the abatement of the COVID-19 pandemic with the adoption of the Economic Recovery Plan and revision of the Fiscal Balance Programme (FBP). Main areas of progress include social and business-friendly reforms, efforts to enhance sustainability and resilience, investments in strategic industries and digital infrastructure. In terms of key structural reforms, the Government introduced new financing schemes for government housing and implemented labour reforms to enhance protections for expatriate workers.

Following a strong performance in 2022, Bahrain's economy is projected to experience moderate growth of 2.6 percent in 2023.¹ Growth momentum in the country's non-hydrocarbon sectors remains strong, aided by recovery in the tourism, service sectors, and the continuation of infrastructure projects. Oil production has been subdued due to maintenance works in the major oil field. Fiscal space remained constrained in 2023, but the non-hydrocarbon deficit was steadily declining. Inflation was contained at the rate of 0.1 percent², supported by exchange rate peg, tight monetary policy, and generous subsidies.

Bahrain achieved remarkable progress in attracting Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) in 2023. FDI inflows in just the first three quarters of the year (for which data are available) at

BHD2.3 billion were more than double the BHD1 billion in total inflows for 2022.³ The financial and insurance sector attracted more than 60 percent of the total investments with the majority of the investments coming from State of Kuwait, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

In 2023 the Government introduced a new four-year plan: From Recovery to Sustainable Development (2023-2026). The plan, which is well-aligned with the 2030 Agenda, is focused on enhancing living standards, infrastructure, government services, and digital transformation. Bahrain also took stock of its progress towards achieving the SDGs and presented in July its second Voluntary National Review (VNR) at the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF). The key challenges identified by the review were financing for SDG implementation and data for monitoring the progress, which were presented as the country's commitments at the global SDG Summit in September 2023.

At the 2023 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP28), Bahrain unveiled a new National Energy Strategy that encompasses three broad principles: improving energy efficiency, in-creasing renewables' share and deploying technologies to reduce emissions. The country also launched the voluntary carbon offsetting platform, Safa, to help businesses and individuals better understand and manage their carbon footprint.

Key facts and figures⁴

 Population	Total (million)	1.6
	Bahraini (million)	0.7
	• Male (%)	62.1
	• Female (%)	37.9
 Labour force	Employment-to-population ratio 15+ (%)	70.9
	• Male (%)	86.7
	• Female (%)	42.3
	 Health	Mortality rate attributable to Noncommunicable diseases (per 100,000)
• Male (%)		147.5
• Female (%)		153.3

 Economy	Real GDP growth (%)	2.6
	General Government Gross Public debt (% of GDP)	120.9
	Consumer price index (%)	0.1
	 Education	Pre-primary school enrolment (%)
• Male		49.9
• Female		55.7
Primary school enrolment (%)		98.0
 Human development	Human Development Index/rank	0.888/34
	• Male	0.904
	• Female	0.847
	Gender Inequality Index	0.181

¹ Ministry of Finance and National Economy, Economic Quarterly Report, Q3 2023 <https://www.mofne.gov.bh/en/BEQR>
² Bahrain Open Data Portal <https://www.data.gov.bh>
³ Ministry of Finance and National Economy, Economic Quarterly Report, Q3 2023 <https://www.mofne.gov.bh/en/BEQR>
⁴ Economic statistics are 2023 estimates, population statistics is for June 2023, human development statistics is for 2022, labour force statistics are modelled estimates for 2023, pre-primary school and primary school enrolment statistics are for 2020 and 2019, respectively, and health statistics are for 2020. Data sources: Information and eGovernment Authority, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Finance and National Economy, World Bank and United Nations agencies including the International Labour Organization, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, and the United Nations Development Programme.



CHAPTER 02

UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM SUPPORT TO NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES THROUGH THE COOPERATION FRAMEWORK

2.1. Overview of Cooperation Framework Results

During the year, the United Nations focused on providing policy support, raising awareness, strengthening institutions, and building capacity of the government and key stakeholder groups across the outcome areas. Scholarship on the SDGs at the global level identified six critical transitions, which can catalyze progress across multiple SDGs. These include food systems, energy access and affordability, digital connectivity, education, jobs and social protection, and pollution, biodiversity loss and climate change. While each one is important for Bahrain, the transitions related to digital connectivity, education, jobs and

social protection and pollution, biodiversity loss and climate change are the most relevant for the country.

An analysis of the SCF 2021-2024 Joint Work Plan shows that some 83 percent of the sub-outputs contribute directly to one or more of the six transitions, or indirectly to their enablers. During the year, the UNCT together delivered USD4.6 million in development programming. This was 9 percent higher than the delivery in 2022, and 80.3 percent of the funds available to the UNCT during the year.

Table 1 Development Programme Delivery 2023 by SCF Outcome (USD)

OUTCOME	EXPENDITURE	AVAILABLE
Outcome 1: Environment, energy, and food	888,972	1,334,396
Outcome 2: Quality, Comprehensive Social Services	1,535,620	1,963,016
Outcome 3: Economic Diversification, Public Administration and Resilience	1,338,172	1,433,172
Outcome 4: Bahrain Among Nations	787,179	936,679
Grand Total	4,549,943	5,667,263



Outcome 1 Environment, energy, and food

Key SDG Transitions: Pollution, Biodiversity Loss and Climate Change.

Amount of funds delivered (USD): 888,972

Key results:

- First National Implementation Plan for the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants submitted.
- National authorities supported in updating the national legislation on Ozone Depleting Substances (ODS).
- Geospatial mapping of afforestation projects resulting in geo-referenced maps of tree distribution used to prioritize the allocation of trees.
- National afforestation dashboard finalized for monitoring national afforestation plan.
- Study completed on innovative solutions for greening and urban agriculture in households and communities.
- Water and Climate Knowledge Management Platform strengthened through the integration of outcomes of Hydrological and climate modeling, Groundwater hydrological modeling and Coastal Vulnerability Index studies.
- Bahrain joined the Sand and Dust Storm Warning Regional Center for the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC).
- Forecasting capabilities were further enhanced with Bahrain becoming connected to the GCC Weather Radar Network.
- International conference on Human Rights and the Environment organized – adopted declaration emphasizing clean environment as a human right for all.



Outcome 2 Quality, Comprehensive Social Services

Key SDG Transitions: Education, Pollution, Biodiversity Loss and Climate Change

Amount of funds delivered (USD): 1,535,620

Key results:

- Teachers and service providers trained on early childhood development services and referral services for children exhibiting distress and/or requiring support.
- Course for policymakers on Gender and Economic Policy developed.
- Over 850 people received improved access to skilling and lifelong learning programmes.
- Institutional capacity for preparedness and response to public health emergencies and pandemics strengthened.
- National Strategy for the Elderly reviewed and benchmarked against global standards.



Outcome 3 Economic Diversification, Public Administration and Resilience

Key SDG Transition: Jobs and Social Protection, Digital Connectivity

Amount of funds delivered (USD): 1,338,172

Key results:

- Innovations and entrepreneurship for SDGs promoted through 50 schools and several Micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs).
- Shenzhen Global Innovation and Entrepreneurship Conference 2023 supported, resulting in partnership between the **Ministry of Industry and Commerce** and the **Federation of Shenzhen Youth Entrepreneurship and Innovation** for setting up a smart regional manufacturing regional centre in Bahrain.
- Digital Innovation Country Profile for Bahrain completed.
- Post-arrival orientation programme developed to address the information needs of newly-arrived domestic workers.
- Social protection instruments available for foreign workers mapped. Occupational Safety and Health profile for Bahrain developed.
- In Regional Center of Excellence for Capacity Building of Combatting Trafficking in Persons – 102 frontliners (51 percent female) in criminal justice, labour inspection, healthcare/medical, media, aviation and airport, and academia trained.
- Nation-wide assessment of public parks conducted, mapping priority areas for improvement, providing recommendations for the public parks design guidelines and investment.
- 35 government nutritionists, public health specialists and statisticians from Bahrain and other Gulf countries trained on nutrition data quality.



Outcome 4 Bahrain Among Nations

Key SDG Transitions: All six

Amount of funds delivered (USD): 787,179

Key results:

- Parliament adopted landmark legislative reform to increase the protection of the fundamental rights of women and girls in Bahrain.
- Bahrain Partnerships Report 2015-2022 focused on SDG17 launched.
- The Government of Bahrain funded report on the State of Arab Cities.
- Bahrain co-sponsored two resolutions at the UN Habitat Assembly, namely 'Affordable Housing For All' and 'Clean Up Day'.
- General Federation of Bahraini Trade Unions supported in developing strategies to organize foreign workers in construction and domestic work sectors.
- Inclusion of domestic workers in social protection system, and development of inclusive national Occupational Safety and Health policy supported.
- Bahraini civil society and the National Institute for Human Rights trained in UN Treaty Bodies reporting and implementation.

2.2. Cooperation Framework priorities, outcomes and outputs

In 2023, the penultimate year of the current SCF, the UNCT continued to make progress across all four strategic priorities, seeing fund delivery rise by 9 percent and significant results achieved as the country hit full stride in its post-pandemic recovery. The year saw the United Nations support the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Bahrain, and the development and presentation of the country's second VNR.

National partners and stakeholders were able to access unique approaches tailored to national development priorities in a high-income country context, fostering regional cooperation and supporting Bahrain's role in the world of development. As in the past, the United Nations contributed across the SDGs, providing expertise, advice and cooperation to the Government of Bahrain, concentrating funds, knowledge and collaborative potential to enhance development at home and create positive trends and lessons learned for the wider region and the world.

The United Nations has created and harnessed synergies required to achieve the goals of the SCF and support the Government of Bahrain through its continued work with policymakers, civil society and youth across the fields of economic diversification, environmental protection, food security, health protection and promotion, responsive social protection, good governance, women's empowerment, and fostering a spirit of innovation and entrepreneurship. In all these areas, the United Nations played a pivotal role in raising capacities, creating networks, providing expert advice, and being a source of technical assistance. The United Nations continued to be a responsive partner, meeting the

expectations of the Government of Bahrain, playing a key role in advocacy and communications campaigns and ensuring the mainstreaming of gender equality and human rights in its interventions and programmes.

The United Nations continued its ongoing support for the development of reliable data on SDGs, a key factor in ensuring a clear path is illuminated in the quest for meeting the goals of Vision 2030 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In partnership with the **Ministry of Sustainable Development** and under the guidance of the **National Taskforce for Population and Information**, a roundtable was organized on improving SDG Data Collection and Reporting in Bahrain. With available technical support, the United Nations continues to strive to improve the data landscape in the country and leverage big data for achieving SDGs.

The UNCT made significant progress in strengthening its coherence, coordination and efficiency, including through strengthening accountability for United Nations Sustainable Development Group standards on mainstreaming gender equality, disability inclusion and youth empowerment. This allowed the United Nations to remain responsive to government requests for technical support, to be nimble in developing projects in a changing environment, and to support diverse stakeholder groups in Bahrain in support of the country's commitment to leave no one behind (see section 2.5).

Highlights of the results achieved followed by a detailed account for SCF priority area under each SCF priority area and a financial overview follow below.



Photo credit | Sustainable Development Minister Noor Al Khulaif addresses UN High-level Political Forum in New York, July 2023. Bahrain News Agency

OUTCOME 1

Environment, energy, and food



Figure 1 2023 Available Resources for Outcome 1 by SDG (USD)



Figure 2 2023 Expenditure Amount for Outcome 1 by SDG (USD)

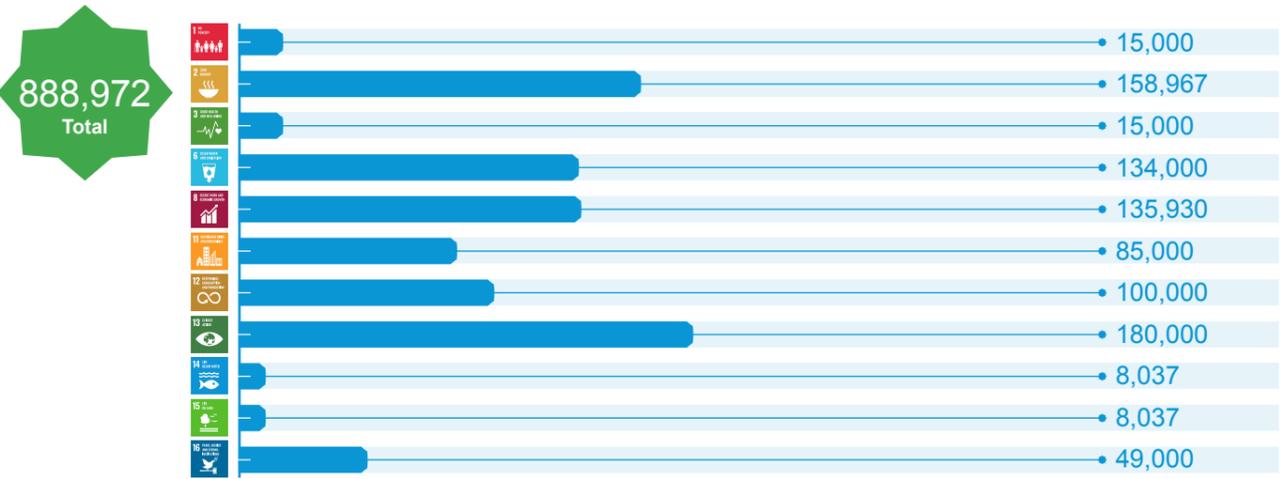
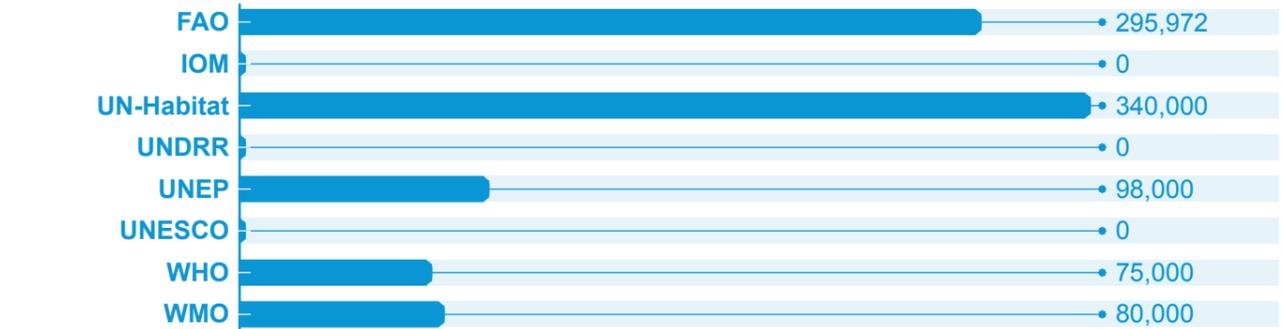


Figure 3 2023 Expenditure Amount for Outcome 1 by UN Entity (USD)



In 2023, the Government continued its work on ensuring sustainable and efficient preservation and use of energy resources, improving and deepening capacities to confront and mitigate the effects of climate change at local, regional and global levels, and ensuring food security while improving the nutritional and health aspects of diet across the country. These important areas, each a significant strategic enabler that unlocks Bahrain's potential and drives development across different, cross-cutting sectors, are a cornerstone of United Nations support for the Government. With the added stimulus of the Government Programme 2023-2026 and building on the foundation of the work already done under the SCF 2021-2024, the United Nations continued to provide support and expertise in the above, primarily through policy advice, technical assistance, and its ability to provide added value as an integrator across diverse development areas.

It also presents a unique opportunity for Bahrain, as a high-income country, to foster two-way knowledge sharing in this field thanks to the expertise of local beneficiaries at various levels of governance, administration and implementation who participated in the discussion sessions and saw their capacities and understanding of the GBF enhanced.

The United Nations also continued spatial geo-mapping of afforestation projects in 2023, providing an initial set of geo-referenced maps of tree distribution to the Government which is now being used to prioritize the allocation of trees. This is tied closely to the technical support the United Nations provides on the design of the national afforestation dashboard. The dashboard was finalised at the end of 2023 and will allow the Government to monitor the national afforestation plan via spatial maps, substantively reducing the needed human power to report progress, allowing real time information for decision making, and accurate data on the impact of the national afforestation plan.

In 2023, the UNCT in collaboration with the **Ministry of Municipalities' Affairs and Agriculture and the Supreme Council for Environment** initiated stakeholder mapping and established the institutional framework for the implementation of three outcome areas focusing on restoration, recreation, and financing for conservation in the Tubli Bay area. The project aims to add firsthand data to carbon sink potential of the mangrove in the region. The UNCT engagement in the support for the rehabilitation and restoration of mangrove habitats continued in 2023 by organizing an awareness session with key stakeholders. The session fostered discussion on the importance of mangrove ecosystems and how they can benefit cities.

• **Sustainable use of energy resources and preservation of biodiversity**

The United Nations has been supporting the **Supreme Council for Environment** in the implementation of **Global Environmental Fund (GEF)**-funded projects aiming at aligning Bahrain's efforts in protecting biodiversity with the recently adopted Kunming Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. This area has been highlighted by the Government of Bahrain in its VNR and is seen a priority. The United Nations conducted five sessions of national consultations to prepare for the alignment of the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) and targets of the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) with participation from the Government (**Ministry of Municipalities and Agricultural Affairs** among others), the **University of Bahrain**, private sector (**HSBC** among others), youth and civil society organizations (for instance **Fishermen Society**).



Photo credit UN Habitat | In the lead-up to COP 28, UN-Habitat organized an awareness-raising campaign to connect urban communities to the marine environment and deepen their understanding and enjoyment of the city seascape in Bahrain.

• **Confronting climate change with enhanced capacities and mitigation capabilities.**

Building on the momentum of two COPs in the region and a strengthened climate agenda in Bahrain, the United Nations worked in multiple initiatives in 2023 to support climate adaptation and resilience of urban areas.

The United Nations conducted a study on innovative solutions for greening and urban agriculture in households and communities. The study looked at secondary data and primary data from a survey of over 80 local small-scale farmers and enthusiasts, with a focus on women. The findings have informed a business plan and proposal for rooftop garden packages. The proposal is currently being negotiated with multiple donors for implementation in 2024. This initiative focuses on enhancing resilience and adaptation of dense urban areas where traditional afforestation techniques cannot be applied. Initial assessment of green area potential, reduction in energy consumption and food production were recommended to inform policy implemented by the **Ministry of Municipalities' Affairs and Agriculture**.

Climate change poses a significant threat to aquifer recharge in Bahrain due to declining rainfalls and increasing intrusion of saltwater. These processes can cause water shortages and the United Nations has moved to address this challenge through the "Enhancing Climate Resilience of the Water Sector in Bahrain" project. This initiative aims to assist **Bahrain's Water Resources Council** in establishing and operating a knowledge platform focused on a climate-resilient integrated water resources management framework across various sectors. So far, the Water and Climate Knowledge Management Platform has been established and is serving as a crucial link between climate information and water resource management. In 2023, further strengthening of management platform took place through the integration of outcomes of Hydrological and climate modeling, Groundwater hydrological modeling and Coastal Vulnerability Index studies. These engagements have further enhanced local capacities in making informed decisions on integrated water management in a changing climate.

Work was also done in relation to raising awareness and capacity building on the issue of urban heating and resilience. In partnership with the **Ministry of Municipalities' Affairs and Agriculture**, the United Nations facilitated a workshop addressing climate sensitive design, urban heat resiliency, mitigation policies and guidelines, in addition to exploring nature-based solutions for creating sustainable public spaces. The United Nations focused on maximizing nature-based solutions and urban design to cope with heat islands and the growing land surface temperature in dense urban areas. The event witnessed participation from **the Ministry of Housing, Urban Planning and Development Authority**, all four municipalities, and semi-government representatives spanning various departments across different ministries and academia.

Additionally, the United Nations held various training workshops to build local capacity on heat mapping's correlation with

afforestation and green areas, by introducing climate sensitive design techniques. The United Nations conducted a rapid assessment of capacity gaps resulting in recommendations to revise pruning techniques to maximize shading from trees, inclusion of diverse species to enhance ecosystem building, and greater utilization of soft landscape and more sustainable flooring. Broader policy recommendations are expected to be finalized in 2024.

In close cooperation with the **Ministry of Transportation** and together with the **Bahrain Meteorological Directorate**, the United Nations conducted training on a Common Alert Protocol for Bahrain, an important component of the Early Warning System for Disaster Risk Reduction. Together with the Government, the United Nations organized a technical conference and hosted a panel on tropical cyclones, further building local and regional capacities in this area of forecasting and reducing risk of negative impact.

During 2023, Bahrain became part of **the Sand and Dust Storm Warning Regional Center for the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC)** and its representatives participated in capacity building webinars conducted by the United Nations. Forecasting capabilities were further enhanced with Bahrain becoming connected to the **GCC Weather Radar Network**, creating further avenues for regional cooperation, and knowledge sharing.

The United Nations also supported Bahrain by organizing training in areas of Impact-Based Forecasting and early warning, ensuring continued support in strengthening institutional and foundational cornerstones on the path of confronting climate change challenges and mitigating its impact on the country and the wider region.



Photo credit WHO Bahrain | On 2 December 2023, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, WHO Bahrain hosted a 'Walk the Talk' event to mark the International Day of Persons with Disabilities.



Photo credit | In February 2023, UN-Habitat Executive Director Maimunah Sharif launched on behalf of UN-Habitat and FAO with H.E. Eng. Wael bin Nasser Al-Mubarak, Minister of Municipalities' Affairs a joint project to help build greener and healthier cities in Bahrain.

Improving Food Security and Access to Nutritional Health

The UNCT's support for the **National Mariculture Centre (NMC)** since 2021 has been instrumental in providing research and services in the emerging aquaculture sector. In 2023, the UNCT supported the **NMC** to be placed on more solid commercial footing, exploiting the islands comparative advantage for supplying a growing regional aquaculture market. The UNCT also focused its support to allow for the commercializing of ancillary support services including diagnostic facilities and satellite leasehold sites located at the centre. As part of this support, the UNCT commissioned three consultancy reports which covered the design of a new modern fish hatchery, a review of options and recommendations for live microalgae production for juvenile marine fishing weaning and initial assessment for Progressive Management Pathways for Aquatic Biosecurity Improvement.

Looking ahead and responding to government requests, the UNCT is working to further develop the **NMC**. Plans include conducting biosecurity assessments/ plans at both farm (**NMC**) and national level.

Throughout 2023, the UNCT worked closely with the Government of Bahrain on identifying ways in which climate change impacts health. A workshop bringing together over 50 participants from diverse sectors was organized to enhance capacities and capabilities on tools and guidelines that can support countries in achieving their commitments to build climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable health system. Bringing together the UNCT, the **Supreme Council for Environment** and the **Ministry of Health**, the workshop served as a practical starting point to initiate the development of Health National Adaptation Plan for Bahrain, an important step in the process to building a climate-resilient health system and one of the commitments Bahrain made at COP26 in 2021. The UNCT was able to support the Government in taking this important first step, enhancing capacities of staffs from diverse sectors.

The UNCT provided support for the participation of a representative of the **Ministry of Health** at the COP 28 in United Arab Emirates in late 2023, underlying the commitment to supporting the understanding of the deepening intersectionality of climate change and health by the Government of Bahrain.



OUTCOME 2

Quality, Comprehensive Social Services



Figure 4 2023 Available Amount for Outcome 2 by SDG (USD)



Figure 5 2023 Expenditure Amount for Outcome 2 by SDG (USD)

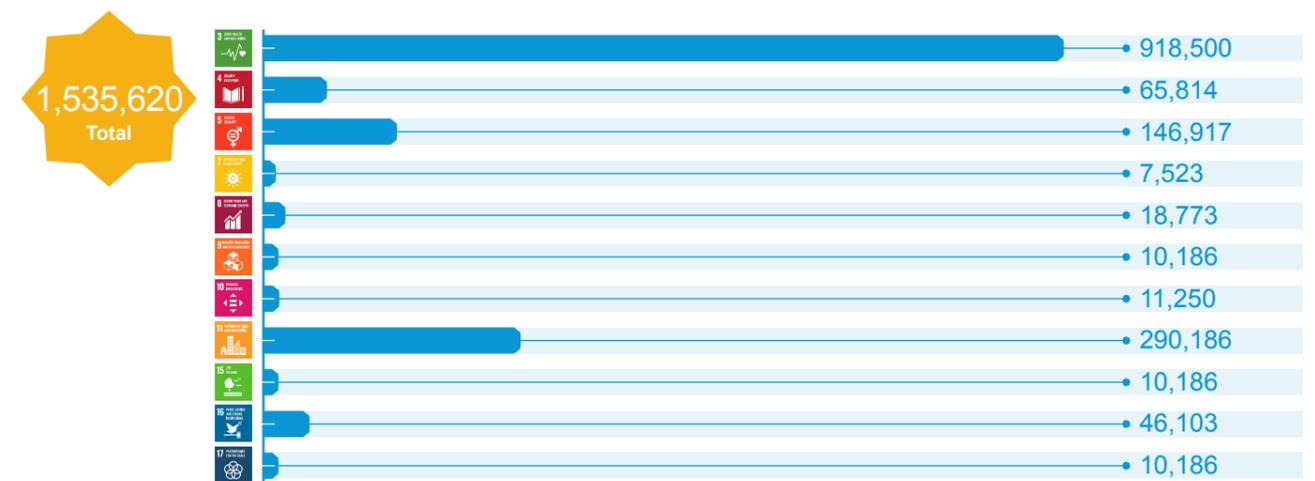
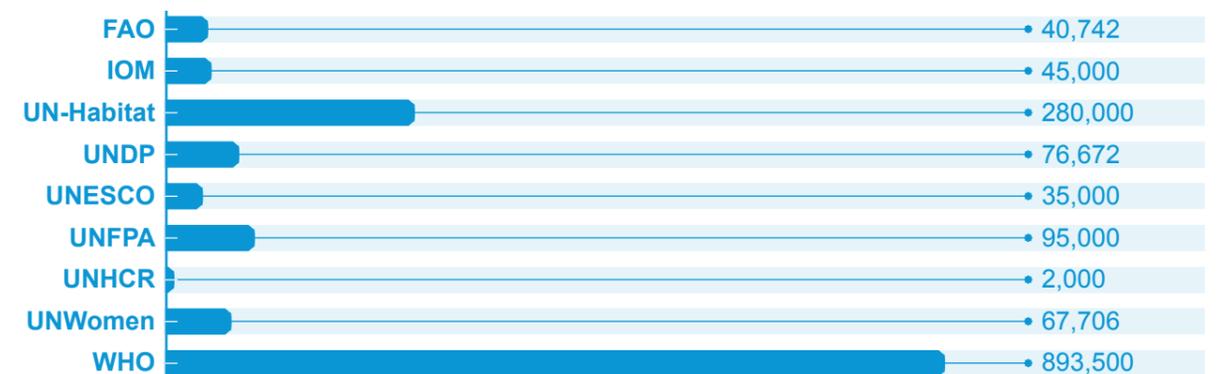


Figure 6 2023 Expenditure Amount for Outcome 2 by UN Entity (USD)



Support for social services, above all in areas of education, health, urban development, and the protection of vulnerable groups, has been a cornerstone of the SCF 2021-2024 and an area in which the United Nations continues to provide tailored, value-added assistance. The Government of Bahrain's priorities for fair and equitable access to world-class social services, as outlined in the country's Economic Vision 2030, which aligns closely with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and makes the United Nations and its agencies a natural partner in achieving these goals.

involvement of a key demographic to overcoming some of the health-related challenges in Bahrain.

Together with the **Supreme Council of Health**, the **Ministry of Health and Primary Healthcare Centers**, the United Nations launched an initiative in 2023 to identify workforce requirements at the primary healthcare level by utilizing the Workload Indicators of Staff Needs (WISN) method. The WISN method helps determine how many health workers of a particular type are required to cope with the workload of a given health facility and assesses the workload pressure on health workers. The initiative will be piloted in two cadres, doctors and nurses, at 6 primary healthcare facilities, with plans for it to be extended to all health professionals at primary, secondary, and tertiary levels. The launch of the initiative saw 25 representatives of the **Ministry of Health**, Primary Healthcare Centres and academia participate in trainings and capacity building seminars on the WISN method and its implementation.

Furthermore, the United Nations worked to strengthen core capacities that rapidly detect and respond to known vulnerabilities and public health emergencies, guided by the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework of International Health Regulations (IHR) 2005. Key milestones include organizing a simulation exercise training of trainers together with the **Ministry of Health**. Bahrain became the first country in the region to hold such a training, allowing it to serve as model to neighbouring countries. The training provided 30 participants from a variety of public and health sectors with the skills and capacities to identify the strengths and gaps in health system capacities and lay out the practical corrective actions needed to be better pre-prepared for public health emergencies. Follow up workshop also saw 35 diverse professionals from different sectors trained on conducting Bahrain's second round of Joint External Evaluation (JEE) of IHR an important assessment whose outcomes will be paramount in identifying national priorities to update the National Action Plan for Health Security.

Continuing in the area of preparedness, the United Nations in 2023 conducted a three-level mission to evaluate the potential establishment of a maximum containment laboratory in Bahrain. Such facilities are crucial in detecting, preventing and responding to global health threats. Bahrain has been provided with a long-term road map to establish such facilities as a result of the assessment.

Community engagement continues to be a United Nations priority, with workshops centred on health communications and health engagement taking place in collaboration with the **Ministry of Health**. Over 50 media experts were trained in effectively targeting communities in the field of health communications. In the same vein, a five-day public exhibition was organized in late 2023 promoting Food Based Dietary Guidelines aimed at addressing obesity and other risks associated with noncommunicable diseases. Similar events were organized to mark days such as World No Tobacco Day, International Day of Persons with Disabilities, International Volunteer Day and the World AMR Awareness Week, with each attracting strong crowds, particularly youth.

Strengthening institutional mechanisms to leave no one behind, the United Nations undertook a review of the National Strategy for the Elderly under the leadership of the **Ministry of Social Development**. The purpose of the review was to update the strategy, align it with global best practices and make it the guide for the country's elderly policies and programs for the period 2024-2030. By supporting the review with its internal and external expertise, the United Nations ensured that the strategy would provide the strategic oversight and be a policy catalyst for national programming up to 2030 at the least.

United Nations will support efforts to scale these up to the designation of Healthy Governorates in the future. With this in mind, the United Nations organized a workshop attended by 25 experts, which facilitated the sharing of best-practices and lessons-learned from different Healthy Cities. Looking forward, the establishment of partnerships with the Bahraini Governorates not only ensures the United Nations' role in scaling up the Healthy Cities initiative but also sets a foundation for cooperation in other development areas.

The United Nations developed a regional report on the financing of cities in recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, an important publication that attracted interest from a diverse set of stakeholders and which fit in with national plans, programs and strategies to build back better now that the pandemic is over.

The United Nations also actively engaged in building national capacities in the area of waste management. The United Nations supported the development of a Professional Diploma course on Waste Management at the **Arabian Gulf University**. This six-month programme includes a project component in which participants prepare and present practical waste management projects. In 2023, the second graduating class presented projects addressing several waste categories, such as industrial, medical, and hazardous waste, via projects that were aligned to the specific needs of relevant national institutions. The third cohort commenced its studies in December 2023 and is anticipated to graduate in April 2024.

Strengthened coordination on air quality: Considering the transboundary nature of air pollution, the United Nations facilitated Bahrain's participation in the West Asia Regional consultation on air pollution. The consultation provided a forum for Bahrain to interact with the West Asian countries on air pollution. Bahrain has established air quality standards for 12 air pollutants, including PM2.5 and PM10. Continuous monitoring of ambient air quality is carried out through a network of 5 monitoring stations. Furthermore, there are plans to launch a mobile application for an air quality index, enabling the dissemination of data to the public. Future initiatives on the horizon encompass source apportionment study for PM2.5 and monitoring of fugitive emissions from both the industrial sector and oil fields via fence line monitoring.

• Enhancing Quality Education for All

The strong engagement and participation by the Government of Bahrain in the Transforming Education Summit has created the momentum which led the United Nations to develop a Joint Programme with the **Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health** to improve strategies and policies to deliver on Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE). The Joint Programme under development makes a particular focus on mainstreaming children with disabilities in pre-primary education and enhancing Public-Private Partnership in providing high-quality inclusive ECCE services.

On a related issue, the United Nations continued to provide training to teachers and service providers in areas of early childhood development services and referral services for children exhibiting distress and/or requiring support. Twenty-five participants were trained in 2023, raising the number to almost 400 since the SCF 2021-2024 was signed.

In higher education, the United Nations and the **University of Bahrain** developed a course for policy makers and middle management on Gender and Economic Policy (GEPMI). In 2023, 25 faculty members were trained in this programme that covers a wide range of topics on gender and economics. In addition to enhancing their analytical and professional capacities, the engagement showcased the importance of national leadership in implementing gender related activities.

In terms of continued lifelong learning, the United Nations ensured that in 2023, 891 people directly benefited from improved access to skills and lifelong learning programmes, which were developed and implemented by the United Nations and its agencies.

The United Nations partnered with the **Ministry of Sustainable Development, Information and e-Government Authority** and relevant sectoral ministries to improve monitoring and reporting of the 37 child-related SDGs.

• Healthy Lives and Communities

Healthcare as a sector, and in particular, its access, inclusivity, and focus to vulnerable groups, continued to be a major area of United Nations involvement in Bahrain. The United Nations focused on greater youth involvement in the promotion of healthy living and well-being, a cause that was supported by national actors and which has seen greater participation and

• Promoting Safe, Inclusive, and Resilient Cities

The United Nations continued to identify innovative ways in which to bring ideas supporting inclusive, resilient cities closer to the population of Bahrain.

In collaboration with the **Ministry of Municipalities' Affairs and Agriculture and the Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities**, the United Nations initiated a project on public spaces during the Muharrag nights festival. Through its participation, the United Nations held an interactive exhibition that invited the public to rethink the importance of green areas, parks, and trees in Bahrain. The initiative included design interventions, awareness raising on green areas, training workshops and the distribution of trees. The project attracted approximately 10,000 visitors, included 5 workshops attended by 130 participants and distributed 400 trees.

Together with the **Capital Governorate, and with support from the embassies of the Philippines and Thailand**, the United Nations organized the second Clean Up Drive in Bahrain with the aim of promoting environmental cleanliness and sustainability in urban coastal areas in the country. The initiative saw 1,200 participants take part and collect over 300 bags of garbage and 150 bags of plastic waste.

Under the framework of the 8th Cycle of the **Prime Minister's Fellowship Program in Sustainable Development**, in collaboration with **The King's Foundation**, urbanization and SDG 11 were identified as pivotal themes for 2023. The United Nations facilitated a training program for 20 young leaders on the impacts of rapid urbanization and sustainable development in cities. This initiative served as a broader effort to address critical issues such as climate change, human activity, and the built environment.

One of the key priorities of the Government of Bahrain is the implementation of the Healthy Cities Programme. Throughout the year, the United Nations worked closely with local and national stakeholders to ensure this important initiative was developed and implemented. In 2023, the United Nations supported the expansion of the Healthy Cities Programme, securing commitment from three out of the four Bahraini Governorates to expand the program beyond individual cities. To date, four cities in Bahrain – Umm-Al-Hassam, Manama, Busaiteen/Al-Sayah, and A'ali – are recognized as Healthy Cities. Under the leadership of the **Ministry of Health**, the

• Strengthened, inclusive social cohesion

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is built around the concept of Leave No One Behind and ensuring cohesive, inclusive societies. High income countries such as Bahrain are no exception to receiving United Nations support and expertise in these areas, with their advanced levels of development a solid foundation on which to reach these lofty goals which are fully aligned with the country's Vision 2030, the 2023 VNR and the 2023-2026 Government Program.

Working with the **Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Department**



In line with the Government's Economic Vision 2030 and the SCF 2021-2024, as well as with the main priorities identified in the 2023 VNR, the United Nations continued its support to the Government of Bahrain in areas of economic diversification, strengthening public administration and ensuring resilience of institutions to external shocks. The year saw 471 individuals benefitting from income generating activities with support from United Nations. In the same vein, 189 women-led businesses benefited from United Nations support in similar areas as did 251 MSMEs. Apart from more efficient business practices and income generation, the United Nations continued to see innovation as a key not only to economic diversification but to wider development goals. As a result, 120 private sector entities used innovation in their business practices and mainstreamed ESG principles in their work.

opportunities and recommendations for a digital innovation ecosystem. The report is currently with the **Telecommunication Regulatory Authority of Bahrain** and is another example of the work of the United Nations becoming the foundation for governing legislation, planning and implementation in key development areas.

• Supporting Economic Diversification

The United Nations organized several activities targeting various audiences and providing them with information and education on economic activity, innovation and diversification. This included 32 local, regional and international events targeting economic empowerment of entrepreneurs and MSME's and a school Olympiad for 'Achieving the SDGs through Entrepreneurship and Innovation', which together with the **Ministry of Education** and the participation of **50 schools**, saw the participation of 420 students.

The focus on innovation and entrepreneurship continued with the United Nations supporting the organization of the Shenzhen Global Innovation and Entrepreneurship Conference 2023. The United Nations supported the participation of representatives from Bahrain, whose delegation was headed by the **Minister of Youth**. The event was held under the theme 'Openness, Cooperation and Win-win' and it represents another example of a holistic approach supported by the United Nations in finding avenues of diversification, bringing innovation and best global practices closer to Bahraini stakeholders and supporting efforts to identify new areas of economic growth. A concrete result of the event is the joint partnership between the **Ministry of Industry and Commerce** and the **Federation of Shenzhen Youth Entrepreneurship and Innovation** towards the establishment of a smart regional manufacturing regional centre in Bahrain.

This approach bore further fruit in 2023, with the United Nations cooperating with the **Union of Arab Chambers, League of Arab States and the AIM Congress** to organize the Entrepreneurs Investment Summit. The event was held in Abu Dhabi, and provided Bahraini stakeholders with an opportunity to discuss global economic realities at a regional level and develop comprehensive plans to better integrate partnerships between entrepreneurs and small and medium enterprises.

In the area of digital transformation, the United Nations completed the Digital Innovation Country Profile for Bahrain. The exercise engaged Government, private sectors, SME's, academia and funding institutions, culminating in a workshop in July 2023 that developed a draft report on the key challenges,

• Promoting Development Oriented and Gender Responsive Policies

Mainstreaming SDGs in economic and labor practices continues to be an area in which the United Nations in Bahrain plays an important role. In 2023, the **Labor Market Regulatory Authority (LMRA)** with the United Nations' technical support developed a post-arrival orientation program to address the information needs of newly-arrived domestic workers. Having informed, well prepared foreign workers and employers leads to increased work satisfaction, well-being and productivity. In total, the United Nations trained 14 LMRA officials on delivering orientation sessions, developing the institution's capacities in this key area.

The United Nations also undertook mapping of existing social protection instruments available for migrant workers across the **GCC**, including Bahrain. Findings and key policy recommendations were presented to the authorities. Work was also done with the **Ministry of Labour** to finalize the Occupational Safety and Health profile and proceed with legislative support in areas regulating heat stress on workers.

Key stakeholders in the private sector, including **Bahrain Economic Development Board, Tamkeen, Zain Bahrain, and Bahrain Bourse** have greater awareness of opportunities to increase women's participation and leadership in the private sector, through outreach and advocacy by UN Women. Additionally, UN Women on a comprehensive research on the opportunities and challenges for women's labour force participation in Bahrain, to contribute to the regional Women's Economic Empowerment programme. Bahrain's participation in this programme will foster knowledge-sharing in the region on the successful models implemented by Bahrain to reduce the women's labour force participation gap, and identify policy options to accelerate this trend.

• Strengthening rule of law and access to justice

Bahrain continues to work closely with the United Nations in the field of counter-terrorism, playing an active role in the regional counter-terrorism strategy development process. The United Nations assists the Government of Bahrain in implementing the strategy at the national level and provided technical support to operationalize recommendations aimed at preventing violent extremism. Technical assistance workshops and trainings were held throughout 2023, improving local capabilities in the relevant fields and ensuring Bahrain plays an important regional role in the area of counter-terrorism.

In close partnership with the **LMRA**, the United Nations continued its support to **the Regional Center of Excellence for Capacity Building of Combatting Trafficking in Persons**. The Regional Centre is an essential platform to train frontline workers on human rights-based practices to combatting human trafficking. Over 100 frontline practitioners have been trained as trainers from 2021 through the Centre along with the development of key Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), under IOM's project that the Government of Bahrain funds. With IOM's collaboration, the Government is prioritizing the Centre's regional scope, aiming to expand regional support and share experiences and knowledge based on Bahrain's achievement of Tier 1 status in the annual TIP report for six years. One Hundred Two frontliners were trained from seven sectors (criminal justice, labour inspection, healthcare/medical, media, aviation and airport, and academia) – 51 percent females and 49 percent males.

Regional engagement was also pursued in the area of Legal Identity, Border Security and Safe Mobility, with the United Nations organizing a regional Arab workshop on the topic under the auspices of the **Ministry of Interior** and in cooperation with the **Naif Arab University of Security Sciences**, based in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The workshop covered the strengthening access to legal identity, consular support and protection of foreign workers, and technical capacities of governments in risk analysis, including document verification and use of biometrics technologies. Participants at the workshop represented border and immigration authorities from the Kingdom of Bahrain, Arab Republic of Egypt, Republic of Iraq, Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, State of Kuwait, State of Libya, Islamic Republic of Mauritania, Kingdom of Morocco, Sultanate of Oman, United Arab Emirates, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Republic of Tunisia,

and Republic of Yemen. Local and international experts from IOM, UNICEF, UNOCT, ICAO, and various Arab countries delivered presentations during the event.

• Improving Data for Development Capacities

Improving the collection of data, using big data for development, digital transformations and improving the quality of SDG indicators is a cross cutting issue in the work of the United Nations as can be seen throughout the four outcome areas.

The United Nations also helped support data collection as the basis of informed decision making. In 2023, the United Nations supported a nationwide assessment of public parks, in which 31 volunteers were trained in data collection. The assessment resulted in the collection of primary data for all 156 parks in Bahrain and mapping key priority areas for improvement, providing recommendations for the public parks design guidelines and investment led by the **Ministry of Municipalities' Affairs and Agriculture**. The project was done in cooperation with local civil society organizations such as **World Economic Forum's (WEF), Budaiya Hub (Global Shapers), Al Riwaq Art Gallery and the Friends of Gardens**.

The United Nations provided training for 35 government nutritionists, public health specialists and statisticians from Bahrain and other Gulf countries on nutrition data quality with focus on anthropometry. The training is expected to improve data quality and collection, data management, data analysis and reporting on the SDGs going forward.



Photo credit UNIC Manama | UNIC Manama and UNDP, on 20 November, co-facilitated a regional workshop in Manama on SDGs at the "Skills of Tomorrow Forum" organized by Bahrain's Ministry of Youth.

OUTCOME 4

Bahrain Among Nations



Figure 10 2023 Available Amount for Outcome 4 by SDG (USD)



Figure 11 2023 Available Amount for Outcome 4 by SDG (USD)

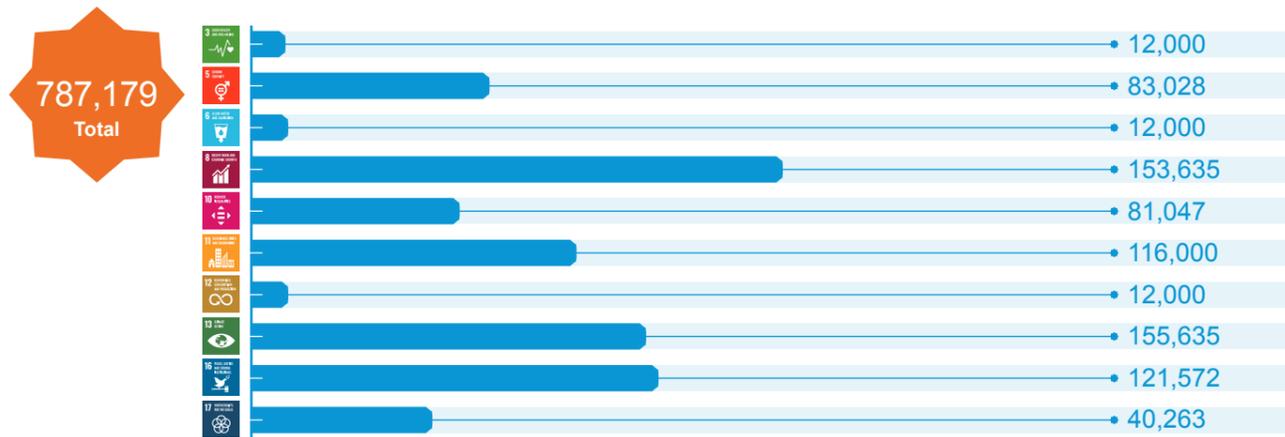


Figure 12 2023 Expenditure Amount for Outcome 4 by UN Agency (USD)



In many ways, 2023 was the year the Decade of Action really stepped up a gear – with 2030 on the horizon, in the case of Bahrain for both its Vision 2030 and the 2030 Agenda, the world as a whole stepped out of the COVID-19 pandemic and into post-pandemic recovery. This process is closely aligned with acceleration to meet the 2030 Agenda after the negative impact of the pandemic. Bahrain, as a high-income country, seeks not only to achieve the goals of the 2030 Agenda but also to play a key role as a catalyst of best practice and support for the rest of the world through South-South Cooperation, global knowledge sharing and support. In 2023, the United Nations and Bahrain worked together to help the country meet its international commitments, strengthen civil society at home and promote human rights.

Supporting Bahrain's international commitments

Bahrain continued to play a key role in advancing gender-responsive approaches to the 2030 Agenda. Facilitated by the establishment of the UN Women office in Bahrain (the first programmatic UN Women office in the GCC sub-region), the Government strengthened coordination for gender equality across its work with the United Nations. Public awareness on the value-added of the Princess Sabeeka Bint Ibrahim Al-Khalifa Global Award for Women's Empowerment to foster global multi-stakeholder engagement in gender-responsive implementations of the 2030 Agenda was enhanced through a suite of communications outreach and advocacy actions, including the United Nations' participation in the Derasat Annual Forum on the theme of women in think tanks.

Bahrain's leadership in implementing and advancing a gender-responsive approach to the 2030 Agenda was further enhanced in 2023 with strengthened coordination for gender equality and women's empowerment across the UNCT programme. In

March, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women issued its concluding observations on the fourth periodic report of Bahrain. Informed by these observations, in May, the Parliament adopted landmark legislative reform to increase the protection of the fundamental rights of women and girls in Bahrain by repealing Article 353 of the 1976 Penal Code.

The United Nations also assisted with the development of the Bahrain Partnerships Report 2015-2022 which was launched by **Ministry of Foreign Affairs**, reflecting the country's commitment to establishing bilateral and multilateral partnerships to support development and humanitarian work regionally and globally. The report highlights Bahrain's different initiatives towards achieving SDG 17 on partnerships.

The Government of Bahrain also funded the report on the State of Arab Cities. In collaboration with the United Nations, the report focused on urban trends in the Arab world and the need for sustainable urban infrastructure as a condition for creating resilient and sustainable cities. Following the report's launch in 2023, the United Nations organized several events at local and regional levels to disseminate the report, familiarize key stakeholders with recommendations and explore operationalization at national levels.

Bahrain's role in international development and as champions of sustainable urbanization was on display as the country co-sponsored two resolutions at the UN Habitat Assembly, namely 'Affordable Housing For All' and 'Clean Up Day'. The Government of Bahrain continues to advocate for the implementation of the two resolutions globally.

The year also saw engagement from Bahrain in meeting its obligations under international environmental treaties and protocols. In 2023, the United Nations supported the national authorities in updating the national ODS legislation as well



Photo credit © Bahrain News | UNCT Bahrain participates in a Roundtable Discussion on Improving SDG Data Collection and Reporting at the Ministry of Sustainable Development.



as developing a related training curriculum for Refrigeration and Air Conditioning (RAC) technicians which is inclusive on new, long-term ODS alternatives. These activities were part of the first tranches of the Hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFC) Phase Out Management Plan (HPMP) stage II which is being completed in partnership with the **Supreme Council for the Environment** and **Bahrain Society of Engineers**.

Further activities in this area of alignment with international commitments included improving the E-Licensing and Monitoring System for controlled substances under the Montreal Protocol (MP) and its amendments, training of 40 customs officers and 40 enforcement officers to enhance monitoring, control and combating of illegal trade of controlled substances. Training was also provided to customs brokers and importers from 42 companies to ensure effective implementation of the updated regulations. These achievements will support Bahrain to remain in full compliance with upcoming phase-out targets and will facilitate the ratification of the Kigali Amendment (KA) for additional climate benefits.

In 2023, Bahrain submitted its first National Implementation Plan for the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants. The United Nations, with financial backing from the **GEF**, play a pivotal role in the development of this comprehensive plan,

which was made possible through a synergistic effort involving key local stakeholders, above all the **Supreme Council for the Environment**, as well as the invaluable contributions of national and international experts.

Bahrain continued to demonstrate its commitment to regional solutions for pollution problems by hosting the West Asia Regional Workshop on Plastic Pollution in December 2023. With the support of the United Nations, the workshop brought together representatives from countries across West Asia, along with international experts to discuss the challenges of plastic pollution in the region and potential solutions. The workshop served as a platform for West Asian countries to exchange perspectives and experiences with regards to plastic pollution and discuss sustainable solutions to plastic waste management.

The United Nations supported the participation of five Bahraini delegates at the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Youth Consultations and the COP23 Regional Conference of Youth, striving to ensure Bahraini youth representatives have an opportunity to learn, network and develop skills for the betterment of sustainable development globally.

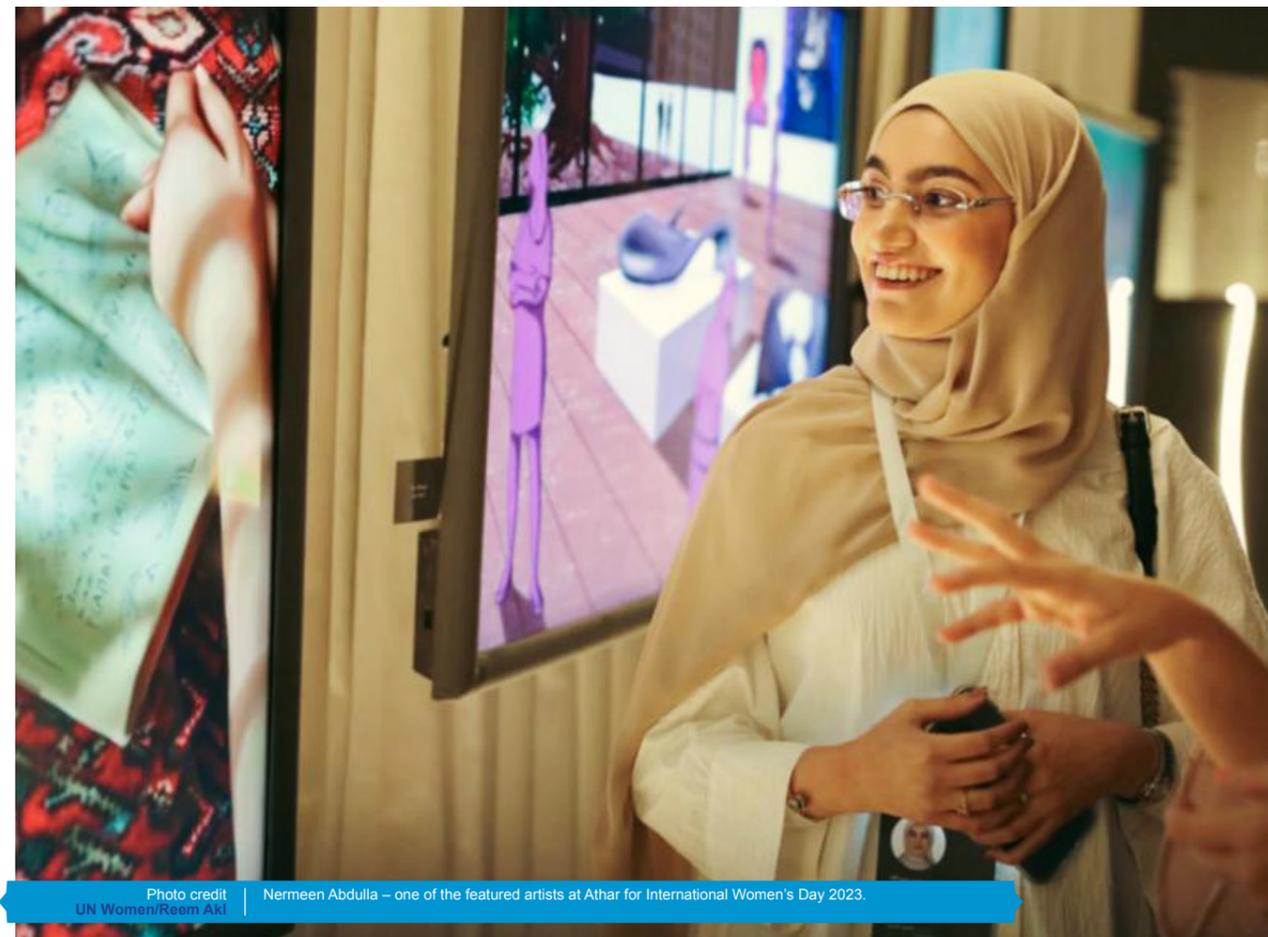


Photo credit | UN Women/Roem Aki | Nerveen Abdulla – one of the featured artists at Athar for International Women's Day 2023.



• Engaging Civil Society in Sustainable Development

The United Nations supported the **General Federation of Bahraini Trade Unions** to develop strategies to organize migrant workers in construction and domestic work sectors through cooperation with **Building and Woodworkers International and the International Domestic workers Federation**. The Domestic Worker Union founding congress was organized in 2023, with United Nations supporting the process to validate and submit its constitution and corresponding bylaws to the **Ministry of Labour**. The United Nations also worked on promoting the inclusion of domestic workers in social protection system as well as developing an inclusive national Occupational Safety and Health policy that was submitted to the Government and employers and recognized in late 2023.

In 2023, the 9th edition of UNDP Youth Leadership Programme (YLP) in partnership with **Ministry of Youth Affairs** was conducted with the participation of 25 Bahraini youth. A six week programme was developed and implemented with contributions from eight Youth-serving organizations covering a wide range of topics aiming at enhancing the capacity of youth for social innovation towards the achievement of the SDGs. The **Ministry of Youth Affairs** was also supported in the administration and implementation of the King Hamad Award.

The United Nations also signed a Memorandum of Understanding MoU with **Naseej**, the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region's first fully-integrated real estate and infrastructure development company, to promote smart cities and sustainable urban design in the housing sector, bringing civil society expertise and voices to a national priority area.



Photo credit | UN Bahrain | Artistic celebration of International Peace Day at Abbas Gallery.

• Promoting Human Rights and Developing National Human Rights Capacities

The United Nations continued to support human rights organizations, both inside and outside of Bahrain. It organized training workshops on the reporting to treaty bodies which were attended by 17 participants from Bahraini civil society and the **National Institute for Human Rights (NIHR)**. The participants learned about reporting procedures as well as how to address recommendations issued by UN Treaty Bodies committees and engage with experts to address pertinent issues and enhance their engagement with the High Coordinating Committee.

In 2023, the United Nations also organized an international conference on Human Rights and the Environment. It was organized together with **NIHR** and attracted over 200 participants from across the world. The conference adopted a declaration emphasizing that a clean environment is a human right for all.

The United Nations worked with the **Special Investigation Unit and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs** to provide training on Human Rights Instruments and Conventions. Seventy participants attended the workshops from government entities and civil society, ensuring a collaborative spirit of knowledge sharing and fostering greater understanding for cooperation on this issue moving forward.



2.3. Support to Partnerships and Financing the 2030 Agenda

In 2023, the United Nations in Bahrain not only continued to strengthen and deepen existing strategic partnerships aimed at achieving the 2030 Agenda but also developed new ones. Focusing on innovative partnerships that bring tailored value-added to address specific development objectives, the United Nations has added fresh perspectives and new dimensions to the development of Bahrain and the country's efforts to pioneer development regionally and globally. As we enter the final year of the SCF in 2024, the United Nations will ensure that these conversations, dialogues and partnerships translate into actions in the next CF that will take the country and the United Nations to the cusp of 2030.

The United Nations further strengthened its enduring partnership with the Government of Bahrain. Strategic dialogue on a broad range of issues in the SCF Joint Steering Committee meetings, co-chaired by the Undersecretary of Political Affairs at **Ministry of Foreign Affairs** and the United Nations Resident Coordinator in the second quarter, set the priorities for the rest of the year. The Government remained the biggest financial partner and supported SDG financing architecture across the work of United Nations agencies in the country.

The Government also made its presence felt as a member state in different key fora within the United Nations. The Government presented its second VNR at the High-Level Political Forum in June, engaged at the ministerial level at the SDG Summit, participated with a large high level delegation at COP28. In all of these activities, the United Nations supported relevant line ministries and drew on the commitments made at the events to inform its next steps.

Throughout 2023, the United Nations sought new partners across the region and the globe. Collaboration was established with the **Union of Arab Chambers** and **Shenzhen Federation of Youth Entrepreneurship Promotion**, resulting in

representatives from Bahrain attending the Shenzhen Global Innovation and Entrepreneurship Conference 2023. Such partnerships provided qualitative opportunities for knowledge sharing and discussing best practices at regional and global levels. The year saw the first large private sector (**HSBC Bank**) funded project being developed to restore the unique urban mangrove in Bahrain.

The United Nations continued to foster and deepen partnerships with civil society, private sector entities and academia to advance the SDGs, with approximately one-third of interventions being undertaken in collaboration with partners beyond government and public institutions. Local civil society organizations actively supported the work of the United Nations in areas such as mapping parks, sustainable urban development, and protecting the environment. Partnerships were developed with trade unions in order to provide better protections and occupational health and safety for migrant construction and domestic workers. Throughout the year, the United Nations also enhanced its cooperation with human rights organizations as well as the **NIHR**, providing capacity building training on reporting and engaging with OHCHR Treaty Bodies. Such knowledge will enable human rights organisations better interact with the United Nations on human rights issues, beyond Bahrain's borders. The United Nations also engaged with the private sector, the **Bahrain Economic Development Board**, and **Bahrain Bourse**, to generate momentum towards greater women's participation and leadership.

The United Nations' work on promoting healthy lifestyles and diets took an all of society approach by partnering with civil society organizations, private sector entities, businesses, and academia. Such outreach events and partnerships brought the work of the United Nations, and the importance of SDGs, closer to the general public.

2.4. Results of the United Nations working more and better together: enhanced Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Summit, effectiveness and efficiency

The year marked the beginning of the process of formulating the next CF between the United Nations and Bahrain. As a first step in the process the UNCT came together for a rigorous programme review of the SCF 2021-2024, using the opportunity to rethink the changes needed to achieve the SDGs by 2030 and ways it can add support those changes in a coherent and well-coordinated manner.

The United Nations family in Bahrain welcomed the opening of the UN Women office in 2023, strengthening the overall United Nations presence in the country. Entering the fifth year of the development system reform, the United Nations Resident Coordinator Office and the UNCT continued to enhance their coherence and efficiency while ensuring that coordination mechanisms remain light and work for both country-based and region-based agencies.

In 2023, the Bahrain UNCT also established the Gender Theme Group (GTG), co-chaired by UN Women and UNFPA, with the aim of strengthening the UNCT's accountability and capacity to achieve results for gender equality and women's empowerment in Bahrain. The Bahrain GTG, the first in the GCC sub-region, piloted several innovations to increase UNCT effectiveness on gender coordination, including analysis of gender investments in the UNCT joint workplan and the compilation of key national gender data to inform programme design and implementation. These interventions have been recognised as global best practices. In 2023, and for the second year in a row, the UNCT documented progress in implementation of the UNSDG Gender Equality Scorecard standards. The launch for the GTG in 2023 was particularly opportune in facilitating the UNCT's application of a gender lens to the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) elaboration process.

The UNCT's Disability Inclusion Task Force, provided coordinated support to the Government in formulating its Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Special Determination.

It also worked to increase awareness about rights of persons with disabilities.

Working in line with the United Nations Communication Strategy, the United Nations Communication Group ensured the coherence of advocacy and communication efforts throughout the year. The work of the United Nations was presented and amplified across Bahraini media and social media.

In line with the Secretary-Generals Efficiency Agenda, Bahrain designed a Business Operations Strategy (BOS) (2020-2023) in support of a more effective programme delivery for the 2030 Agenda. Five of the nine country-based United Nations entities (United Nations Resident Coordinator Office, UNDP, IOM, UNFPA, UN-Habitat) are collaborating mainly in Common Administration services, for a projected cost avoidance of USD 511,726 for the period 2020-2026. Against this projection, realized costs avoidance amounted to USD206,488 for 2020-2022. No additional cost avoidance was realized during 2023. In the last cycle all services provided by UNDP on HQ bilateral Service-level agreement (SLA) were included which is now removed and due to reduction in common services requests since most agencies have settled in the country and are established.

Bahrain committed to strengthen six common services under one common service line especially the potential high-yielding services being, establishment of common long-term agreements (LTAs) in Consumable Procurement, Printing/Graphic Design, Catering Services, Protocol Services and Official documents Services. The LTAs for printing/graphic design and catering are still to be established. They are delayed due to reprioritization of services required. The establishment of the other identified LTA will be undertaken in 2024. Further, the Government generously provides office space and maintenance for the United Nations House as well as funding for the United Nations House running costs as an in-kind contribution amounting to USD450,000 in 2023. Some agencies, such as WHO, IOM and UNIDO, are being accommodated by their own national counterparts'.



Photo credit Shutterstock

2.5. Evaluations and Lessons Learned

The year was one of reflection and learning for the country team as it started the formulation of a new CF for the year 2025-2029. To inform the formulation of the CF, the UNCT undertook a rigorous programme review of the SCF 2021-2024, which also presented an opportunity and an imperative for the UNCT to rethink how it should operate and add value in the context of a high income, net contributing country with seven years left to 2030. The key themes that emerged from the discussions are as follows:

► Rethinking United Nations support in a net contributing country

Countries like Bahrain which rank high on the human development index present unique challenges typical of the last mile in SDG achievement. These challenges include highly carbon-intensive production and consumption patterns, and pockets of vulnerability co-existing with high levels of national achievements.

Progress towards SDGs in a high income, open economy like Bahrain has significant direct and indirect impact outside its borders. The country hosts some 600,000 foreign workers who send back some USD 2.65 billion annually in remittances to their home countries, impacting the incomes and living standards there. Bahrain's USD 17.7 billion trade basket also impacts the economies of its key trading partners. Further, the country has the capacity to serve as an incubator for innovation in sustainable development and generate best practices that can inform policies, programmes and practices for sustainable development globally.

In light of the unique nature of the country and its potential, the UNCT noted an increased need to innovate with a shift from projects towards an integrated policy advisory role and increased experimenting in programming. Awareness raising across different stakeholder groups is another important role that the United Nations must play. This needs to take place in close coordination with the Government to ensure full alignment with government priorities. This thinking needs to be reflected in both the planning and implementation processes of the UNCT, as well as how we define and measure success.

► Shared understanding of change pathways

The United Nations' activities in Bahrain are closely aligned with the Government's priorities. The alignment is strengthened by the fact that the majority of United Nations programme funding is provided by the Government. However, in light of the inter-related nature of the SDGs and a rapidly evolving global environment, it is critical that the Government and the UNCT have a shared understanding of the progress pathways for the country, the preconditions for progress, and the United Nations' role in them. To ensure this dynamic alignment of priorities and perspectives, much coordination at the strategic level is needed between the UNCT and the Government. During the year, the

Ministry of Foreign Affairs took the lead in convening other ministries to facilitate some of these strategic discussions with the UNCT.

► Leverage data to leave no one behind

As the Decade of Action continues, it is imperative to have an overview of gaps and opportunities for the United Nations to strengthen its collaboration with Bahrain on the sustainable development goals. The 2023 VNR identified lack of accurate, timely and readily available data that is disaggregated by sex, age, and disability and migration status as a challenge, especially in identifying and tracking the progress of groups that might be structurally disadvantaged. In 2023, the Government prioritized improving SDG data as one of the national commitments at the SDG Summit and initiated a process to systematically identify and fill data gaps for the SDG indicators, with coordinated support from the United Nations. In addition, a more systematic approach is needed to ensure the United Nations and the Government use a common data set in monitoring and reporting on progress in implementing the SDGs. Mainstreaming SDG indicators into national surveys is an important first step to fill in the country's SDG data gap and improve the work of United Nations agencies in monitoring and reporting on their projects and activities. Data availability for SDG indicators would allow the Government and the United Nations to identify key priority areas more accurately while having project and activity related data would assist in determining the impact of activities, both to beneficiaries and the fulfilment of key SDG goals.

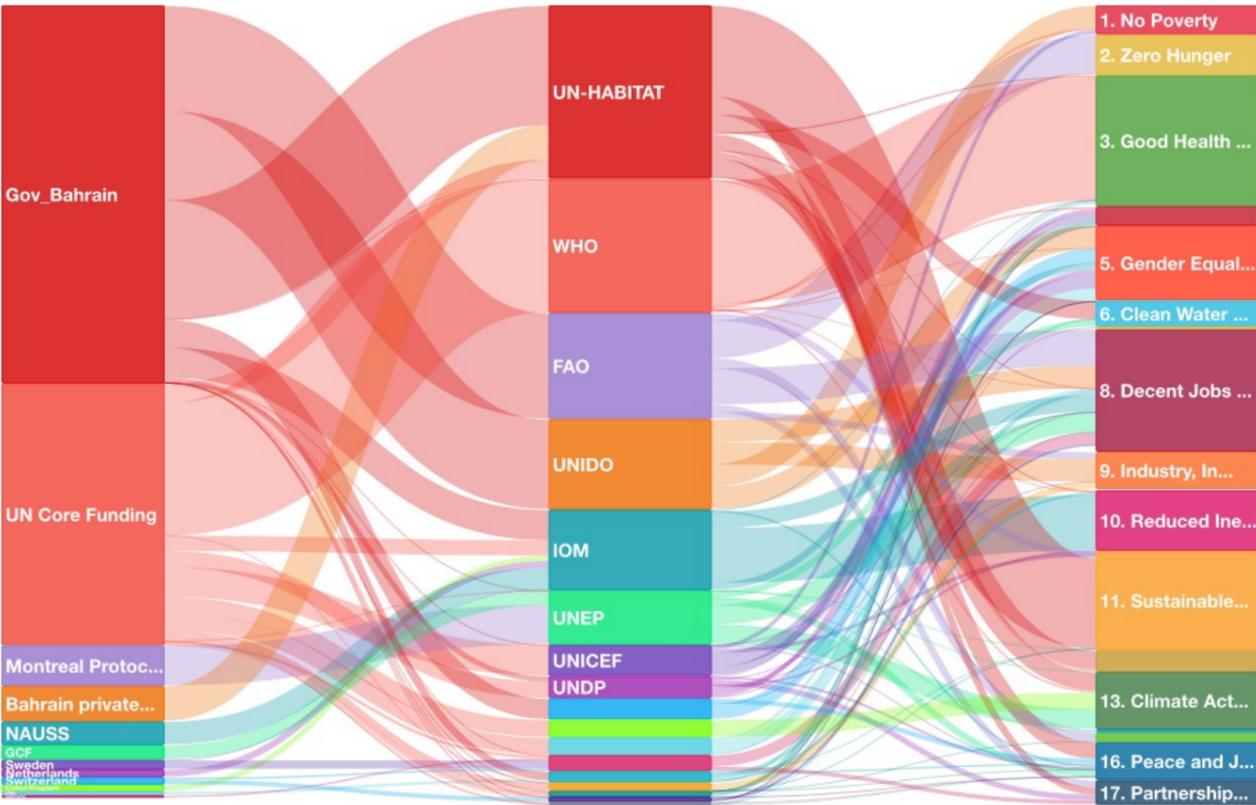
► Rethinking United Nations' coordination mechanisms in Bahrain

The 2022 Country Results Report noted the challenges posed by the limited country presence of United Nations agencies in Bahrain. Only a third of agencies in the UNCT have a physical presence in the country. With some of them supporting other countries in the GCC. Two agencies have just one person each in the country. The small programmatic capacity in the country has constrained the ability of the United Nations to respond in an agile manner to the development and innovation needs of the country. In particular, participation in the coordination mechanisms which are central to coherent programming require the same personnel to attend different coordination meetings, placing an unsustainable burden on their time. Consequently, in the course of the SCF 2021-2024 programme review, the UNCT decided to formalise a Programme Management Team (PMT), to dissolve the four separate SCF Results Groups and mandate them all to merge into the PMT platform. The Gender Theme Group and Disability Inclusion Task Force will remain as separate entities.

Starting with the new CF the UNCT also agreed to include government counterparts in the coordination structure where possible.

2.6. Financial Overview and Resource Mobilization

► **Figure 13** UN Funding Contributions to Agencies and Partners for Advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)



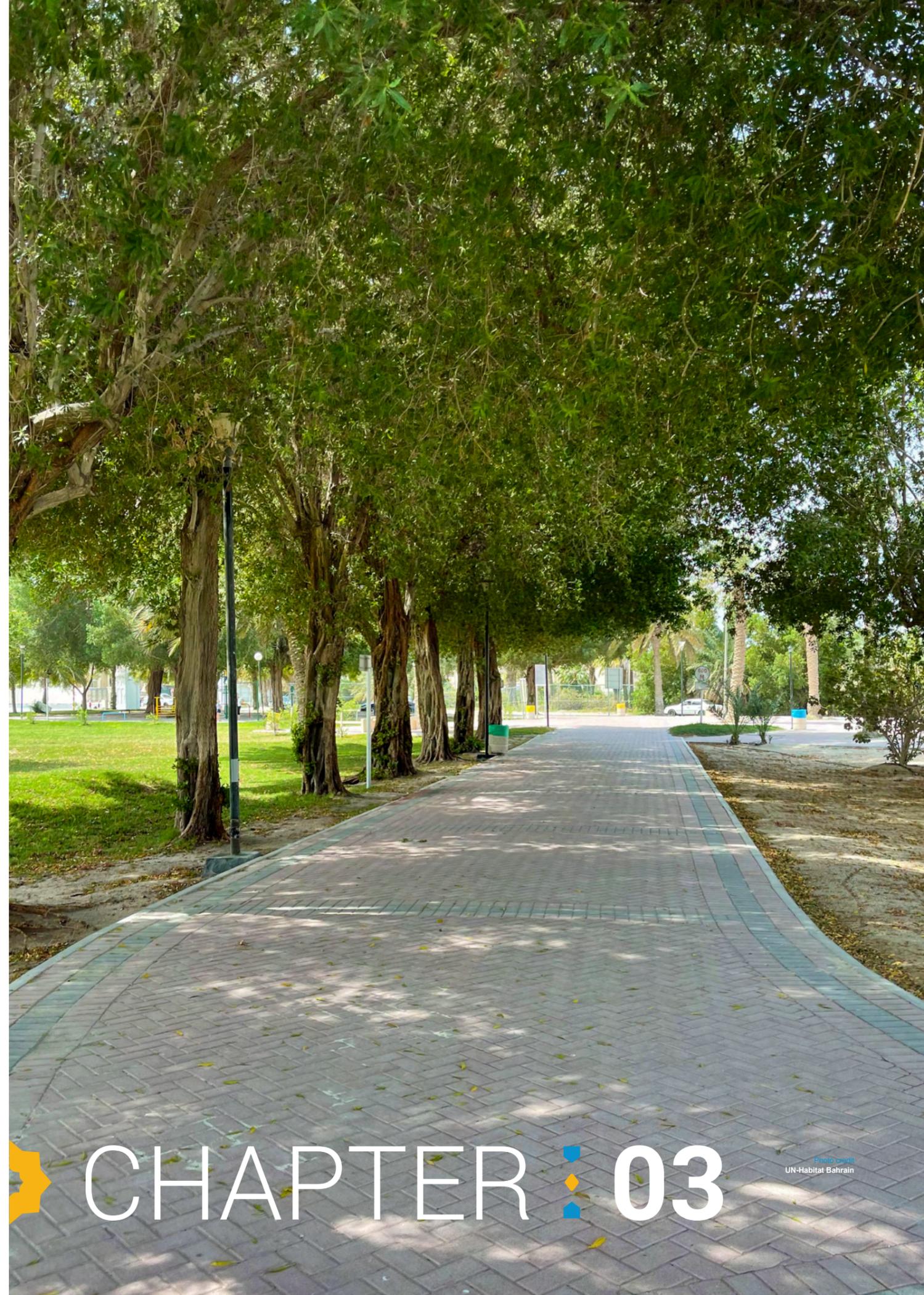
Development programme delivery by agency in 2023

Table 15 2023 Available Amount by Agency and Outcome (USD)

AGENCY	OUTCOME 1	OUTCOME 2	OUTCOME 3	OUTCOME 4	GRAND TOTAL
ESCWA					
FAO	559,396	205,638			765,034
ILO			32,000		32,000
IOM		45,000	480,394	54,000	579,394
ITU			50,000		50,000
OHCHR				1,500	1,500
UN-Habitat	480,000	360,000	100,000	313,000	1,253,000
UNDP		76,672	5,000	73,381	155,053
UNDRR					
UNEP	100,000			287,270	387,270
UNESCO		35,000			35,000
UNFPA		95,000		24,050	119,050
UNHCR		2,000			2,000
UNICEF		182,500	25,000	10,000	217,500
UNIDO			650,000		650,000
UNOCT					
UNODC			20,000	54,500	74,500
UNV			50,000	60,000	110,000
UNWomen		67,706	20,778	58,978	147,462
WHO	75,000	893,500			968,500
WMO	120,000				120,000
Grand Total	1,334,396	1,963,016	1,433,172	936,679	5,667,263

Table 16 2023 Expenditure by Agency and Outcome (USD)

AGENCY	OUTCOME 1	OUTCOME 2	OUTCOME 3	OUTCOME 4	GRAND TOTAL
ESCWA					
FAO	295,972	40,742			336,714
ILO			32,000		32,000
IOM		45,000	480,394	54,000	579,394
ITU			50,000		50,000
OHCHR				1,500	1,500
UN-Habitat	340,000	280,000	100,000	288,000	1,008,000
UNDP		76,672	5,000	73,381	155,053
UNDRR					
UNEP	98,000			287,270	385,270
UNESCO		35,000			35,000
UNFPA		95,000		24,050	119,050
UNHCR		2,000			2,000
UNICEF					
UNIDO			650,000		650,000
UNOCT					
UNODC					
UNV					
UNWomen		67,706	20,778	58,978	147,462
WHO	75,000	893,500			968,500
WMO	80,000				80,000
Grand Total	888,972	1,535,620	1,338,172	787,179	4,549,943



CHAPTER 03

Photo credit
UN-Habitat Bahrain

KEY FOCUS FOR NEXT YEAR

The year 2024 will be the final year for the SCF 2021-2024. The year will be one of consolidating, results and planning for the final push to achieve the SDGs in the next six years. The year will also be one of experimentation for the UNCT towards better and more agile ways of work, of strengthened partnerships with the Government and civil society, and of innovations to add to global best practices. To that end, the following priorities will serve as vehicles for experimentation, partnerships and innovation.

Formulating the UNSDCF 2025-2029

The UNCT in close collaboration with the Government is in the process of formulating its CF that will be the last full CF up until 2030. Consequently, the CF embodies a significant collective ambition to achieve the SDGs by the 2030 endpoint. The ambition was articulated in course of a Strategic Prioritization Workshop in January 2024 attended by 100+ participants. During the year, the United Nations and the Government will work to finalise the CF, co-sign the document, and launch it so that its implementation can start on 1 January 2025.

Innovating through joint work

Since programme infrastructure for individual agencies in Bahrain is small, joint work generates large economies of scale and scope, often outweighing the transactions cost of joint work. The year 2024 will be a year of experimenting for the UNCT for the purpose of innovating and engaging different stakeholder groups through joint initiatives. The United Nations will continue implementation of the joint project on greening urban spaces. It will start implementing its project on restoration of a mangrove in an urban area in partnership with the government and the private sector. Two projects on early childhood education and care, and strengthening

mechanisms for trafficking in persons are being developed and nearing finalisation of design and costing. With the availability of funding, implementation of both projects will start. These projects will innovate with targeting specific vulnerable groups as well as implementation modalities.

Strengthening SDG data

Filling gaps in the availability of SDG indicators is a priority of the Government, which has taken on an ambitious programme of work to generate the necessary data with technical assistance from the United Nations. During 2024, the United Nations will continue to support the Government in mapping the data gaps, needs and mechanisms for generating the necessary data and ensuring regular updates. For this purpose, custodian United Nations agencies will continue to leverage their regional and global capacities to bring to the country the necessary expertise.

Supporting Bahrain's engagement in global fora

With Bahrain taking on an active and more visible role in global fora as a United Nations member state, the United Nations will continue to facilitate and support the participation of the Government in a number of global and regional United Nations events. These include the High-Level Meeting on Young People's Learning, Skilling and Transition to Decent Work, Financing for Development Forum and SDG Investment Fair, World Entrepreneurs Investment Forum, Summit of the Future and COP29. These events will present an opportunity for Bahrain to benchmark its achievements against global goals and targets, engage in peer learning and contribute to global good practices and South-South Cooperation, thus contributing to the achievement of SDGs in Bahrain and other countries.



ANNEX. ACRONYMS

CF	Cooperation Framework
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GCC	Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GTG	Gender Theme Group
LMRA	Labour Market Regulatory Authority
LTA's	Long-Term Agreements
NMC	National Mariculture Centre
ODS	Ozone Depleting Substances
SCF	Strategic and Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
VNR	Voluntary National Review
WISN	Workload Indicators of Staffing Needs



UNITED NATIONS
BAHRAIN

