



World Health  
Organization

Bahrain



# MAXIMIZING IMPACT

the work of WHO in Bahrain  
Annual report 2023



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**World Health  
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# **MAXIMIZING IMPACT**

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Annual report 2023

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Looking back at the past year...We adopted new and innovative approaches to drive measurable improvements in building integrated and people-centred health systems, preparing for and responding to health emergencies, and addressing the root causes of disease to give everyone a fair chance to lead a healthy life.”

Dr Tasnim Atatrah, WHO Representative in Bahrain

# FOREWORD



I am proud to present our annual report for 2023. This report outlines key achievements of the World Health Organization (WHO) Country Office in Bahrain in 2023.

Looking back at the past year, we kept our work centred on accelerating progress towards the health-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and WHO's Thirteenth General Programme of Work, while also amplifying the WHO Regional Office's *Vision 2023* ambitious call for action to achieve Health for All by All. We adopted new and innovative approaches to drive measurable improvements in building integrated and people-centred health systems, preparing for and responding to health emergencies, and addressing the root causes of disease to give everyone a fair chance to lead a healthy life.

The goal of universal health coverage (UHC) is ambitious. It is also achievable with high-quality and people-centred primary health care (PHC) services. 2023 was a productive year in our work supporting Bahrain in its journey to make UHC a reality and to improve the lives of everyone. This included achievements on many fronts, such as enhancing the availability of appropriately skilled and qualified health workers, and strengthening the health system and the services it delivers for communicable and noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) and mental health.

There is also much to be proud of in our work in 2023 to prepare for, prevent and respond to health emergencies. We have worked earnestly to strengthen core national capacities for addressing health emergencies to save lives and protect the most vulnerable. Our key achievements in 2023 included organizing the first country-level simulation exercise training of trainers in the Region to boost health emergency preparedness capacities and ensure that everyone is protected, no matter what threats to health they may face now or in the future.

At the same time, we have continued to strengthen collaborations to promote better health and well-being across the life course. The past year saw significant efforts to combat tobacco use, address unhealthy diets, and improve health in urban settings. For example, we have supported the Capital, Northern and Southern governorates in expanding the implementation of the Healthy Cities programme to create a healthier urban environment for all. Similarly, we have initiated the development of Bahrain's Health National Adaptation Plan (HNAP) to address the health impacts of climate change at all levels.

The start of 2023 marked the beginning of a year-long celebration of the 75th anniversary of WHO. As is often the case, recalling our history reconnects and strengthens our vision going forward. While we embark on yet another year, it is my conviction that the keys to providing, protecting and promoting health lie within more robust PHC, greater health equity, evidence-informed health decision-making and a growing fiscal space for health.

Lastly, I acknowledge with deepest gratitude the immense efforts of the leadership in Bahrain, health care workers, partners, communities and other stakeholders who, together with the WHO Country Office, relentlessly work to respond to the health needs of the people. With your unwavering support, we are closer than ever to achieving Health for All.

Dr Tasnim Atatrah  
WHO Representative in Bahrain

# ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

<b>AMR</b>	antimicrobial resistance
<b>COP10</b>	Tenth session of the Conference of the Parties
<b>HNAP</b>	Health National Adaptation Plan
<b>IHR</b>	International Health Regulations
<b>JEE</b>	joint external evaluation
<b>MOP3</b>	Third session of the Meeting of the Parties
<b>NCDs</b>	noncommunicable diseases
<b>PHC</b>	primary health care
<b>SDGs</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>UHC</b>	universal health coverage
<b>UNCT</b>	United Nations Country Team
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children’s Fund
<b>UNSDCF</b>	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
<b>VNR</b>	voluntary national review
<b>WASH</b>	water, sanitation and hygiene
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization
<b>WHO FCTC</b>	WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This annual report offers a snapshot of key activities undertaken by the WHO Country Office in Bahrain from January to December 2023. The work of the country office over the past year has been guided by the three strategic priorities of WHO's Thirteenth General Programme of Work – achieving UHC, addressing health emergencies and promoting healthier populations – and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It is also closely aligned with the aspirations of WHO's regional *Vision 2023* to achieve Health for All by All.

In 2023, the WHO Country Office worked in novel and innovative ways, cooperating and fostering dialogues with the Government of Bahrain and other key partners and stakeholders to strengthen the health system with the aim of achieving UHC. Notable achievements included launching an initiative to adapt and adjust the workload indicators of staffing needs method to ensure that all health facilities at all levels of health care have the right number and skills mix of health workers. The initiative will first be piloted in two cadres, doctors and nurses, at six PHC facilities. It will then be extended to all health professionals at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels.

Much work was also undertaken in 2023 to address health emergencies. The year under review saw considerable progress in strengthening core national capacities and capabilities to prevent, prepare for and respond effectively to disease outbreaks and other health emergencies in support of building a resilient health system. One key achievement was organizing the simulation exercise training of trainers to develop and improve national capabilities to respond to risks to public health and ensure sustained capacity on the ground. Moreover, the WHO Country Office provided technical leadership and support in initiating the second round of the joint external evaluation (JEE) in Bahrain to facilitate the identification of the most urgent needs and opportunities for enhanced emergency preparedness and response.

Extensive efforts were exerted to promote health across the life course. Boosting the implementation of NCDs “best buys”, such as promoting healthy diets and physical activity, received much attention in 2023. The WHO Country Office also made substantial efforts over the previous year to improve health in urban settings by supporting the implementation scale-up of the Healthy Cities programme to the entirety of the Capital, Northern and Southern governorates. In addition, the past year saw significant policy advocacy to address deep-seated challenges such as climate change, including ushering in the development of Bahrain's HNAP towards building a climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable health system.

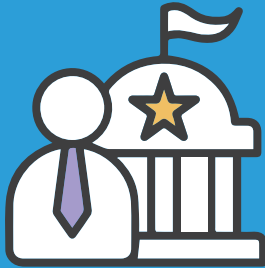
At the same time, the WHO Country Office worked towards strengthening its footprint on the ground through enhancing strategic coordination and collaboration with United Nations agencies at the country level. This included joint achievements on many fronts, from supporting the development of Bahrain's second voluntary national review, to guiding the review of the national strategy for the elderly, and chairing and directing the United Nations Disability Inclusion Task Force.



# KEY HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2023

In 2023, the WHO Country Office in Bahrain accelerated efforts towards UHC, health emergencies preparedness and response, and healthier populations. The facts and figures over the following pages illustrate how we did it by changing the way we work to manage and deliver.

## STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1: ACHIEVING UHC



**Strengthened meaningful engagement with parliamentarians** to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all by participating in the 146th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union as part of a WHO delegation representing the three levels of the Organization.

**Launched an initiative to adapt and adjust the workload indicators of staffing needs method in Bahrain**, in collaboration with the Supreme Council of Health, the Ministry of Health and Primary Health Care Centres, to ensure that all health facilities at all levels of health care have the right number and skills mix of health workers.



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

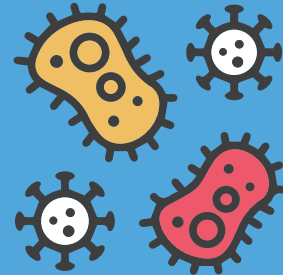
**Fostered policy dialogue on health system resilience** by guiding the engagement of senior management officials in the Ministry of Health in the second high-level interregional meeting on the health of refugees and migrants.



**Organized an advocacy event to mark World AMR Awareness Week**, in partnership with the University of Bahrain, to spread awareness about antibiotic abuse and encourage positive behavioural change in the community.

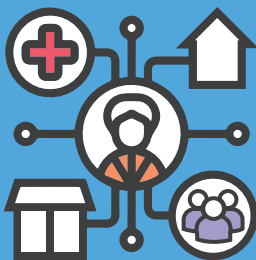
## STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2: ADDRESSING HEALTH EMERGENCIES

**Led the development of a comprehensive roadmap to strengthen Bahrain's capacity to handle high-threat pathogens** through a strategic and phased approach that considers immediate needs, mid-term renovations and potential long-term expansions in laboratory capabilities.



**Organized the first country-level simulation exercise training of trainers in the Region** to boost core capacities that rapidly detect and respond to known vulnerabilities and public health emergencies.

**Initiated the second round of the JEE in Bahrain**, in close collaboration with the Ministry of Health, to facilitate the identification of the most urgent needs and opportunities for enhanced emergency preparedness and response efforts.



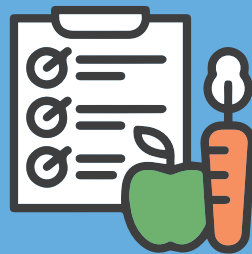
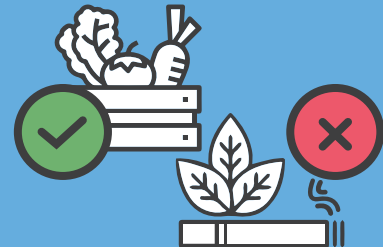
**Provided an innovative and extensive array of capacity-building opportunities for more than 150 experts** from the Ministry of Health and other health-related sectors to strengthen global health security and build a safer future for all.

**Conducted a workshop on multidisciplinary health communications and community engagement** to promote best practices for communicating risk in public health emergencies and ensuring that accurate information is delivered to communities for inclusive emergency preparedness and response.



## STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3: PROMOTING HEALTHIER POPULATIONS

**Launched a call-to-action poster campaign on the occasion of World No Tobacco Day** to raise public awareness about the high toll of tobacco use on human health and the environment.



**Organized a five-day exhibition on the food-based dietary guidelines for Bahrain** with the Ministry of Health, to encourage health-conscious behaviour and offer tips on best practices to address obesity and other risk factors associated with NCDs.

**Hosted a “Walk the Talk” event** with the Ministry of Health **on the occasion of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities** to promote an inclusive environment that fosters acceptance, accessibility and engagement for individuals with disabilities in all spheres of society.



**Initiated the development process of Bahrain’s HNAP** towards building a climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable health system.

**Signed formal letters of collaboration with the Capital, Northern and Southern governorates** to provide a framework for increased cooperation in achieving a Healthy Governorate designation.



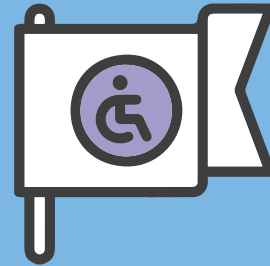
## MAXIMIZING WHO'S IMPACT ON THE GROUND



**Supported the Ministry of Sustainable Development**, in collaboration with other United Nations agencies, **in preparing Bahrain's second voluntary national review** to assess and track national progress towards achieving the SDGs.

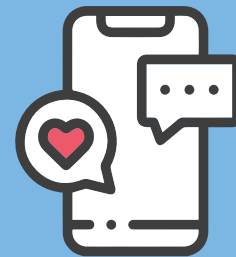
### **Steered the United Nations Disability Inclusion Task Force**,

ensuring the mainstreaming of disability inclusion in the work of the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) and driving more transformative national progress on disability inclusion.



**Organized a strategic and operational planning workshop**, in close collaboration with the Ministry of Health, **to foster a participatory dialogue on WHO's technical cooperation** in and with Bahrain in line with the country's Government plan (2023–2026).

**Boosted strategic health communications by sharing 3500+ posts over different social media channels**, launching six social media campaigns to mark international health days, and disseminating two biannual newsletters to showcase country results.



**Leveraged and nourished partnerships with three Bahraini health champions as part of WHO's 75th anniversary campaign** towards achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and ensuring that no one is left behind.



# STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1: ACHIEVING UHC

This section examines the WHO Country Office's technical leadership in 2023 to drive public health impact towards health coverage for all, looking at milestones across major programmes, including communicable diseases, NCDs and antimicrobial resistance (AMR).

## PROMOTING PARTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE, SOCIAL PARTICIPATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

More participatory and inclusive processes in health sector decision-making are crucial to build, secure and sustain trust within the population and ensure responsive and people-centred health systems. In 2023, WHO worked to promote more collaborative governance and to strengthen systematic and meaningful engagement with academia, the private sector, legislative bodies and civil society towards Health for All by All.

Enhancing engagement with parliamentarians to capitalize on their pivotal role in public health has been a key area of focus in 2023. For example, as part of a WHO delegation representing the three levels of the Organization, the country office actively participated in the 146th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, which was organized in Exhibition World Bahrain from 11 to 15 March. The Inter-Parliamentary Union is an international organization of parliaments that facilitates parliamentary diplomacy and empowers parliamentarians to promote peace, democracy and sustainable development. A key highlight from the 146th Assembly was the involvement of Dr Tasnim Atatrah, WHO Representative, in the general debate, which was held under the theme of “Promoting peaceful coexistence and inclusive societies: fighting intolerance”. The 146th Assembly and its associated meeting delivered a resonant message on how the long-standing partnership between WHO and the Inter-Parliamentary Union to enhance parliamentary engagement is now more important than ever to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all throughout the life course.



**11-15 March, Sakhir, Bahrain:** Dr Tasnim Atatrah, WHO Representative, participates in the 146th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union as part of a WHO delegation representing the three levels of the Organization. Photo credit: WHO Bahrain



## SUPPORTING HEALTH WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

An adequate, well-distributed, motivated and supported health workforce is essential to achieving progress towards UHC. Throughout 2023, WHO provided technical support and leadership to address all aspects of health workforce development and optimize health workers' contribution to achieving UHC through pioneering innovative approaches for managing human resources for health, facilitating high-level policy advocacy and accelerating the exchange of information and cross-country learning.

To ensure that all health facilities at all levels of health care have the right number and skills mix of health workers, WHO jointly launched an initiative in 2023 to adapt and adjust the workload indicators of staffing needs method, in close collaboration with the Supreme Council of Health, the Ministry of Health and Primary Health Care Centres. The workload indicators of staffing needs method is a WHO method that determines 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 of health workers in that facility. The initiative will first be piloted in two cadres, doctors and nurses, at six PHC facilities. It will then be extended to all health professionals at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels. Key efforts in this regard included conducting a capacity-building workshop from 26 to 30 March, where 25 experts from the Ministry of Health, Primary Health Care Centres, and the Arabian Gulf University were introduced to the workload indicators of staffing needs method and its implementation. This was followed by an experience-sharing mission to Muscat, organized for 30–31 July, to facilitate the exchange of best practices and lessons learned between Bahrain and Oman on using and implementing the method.



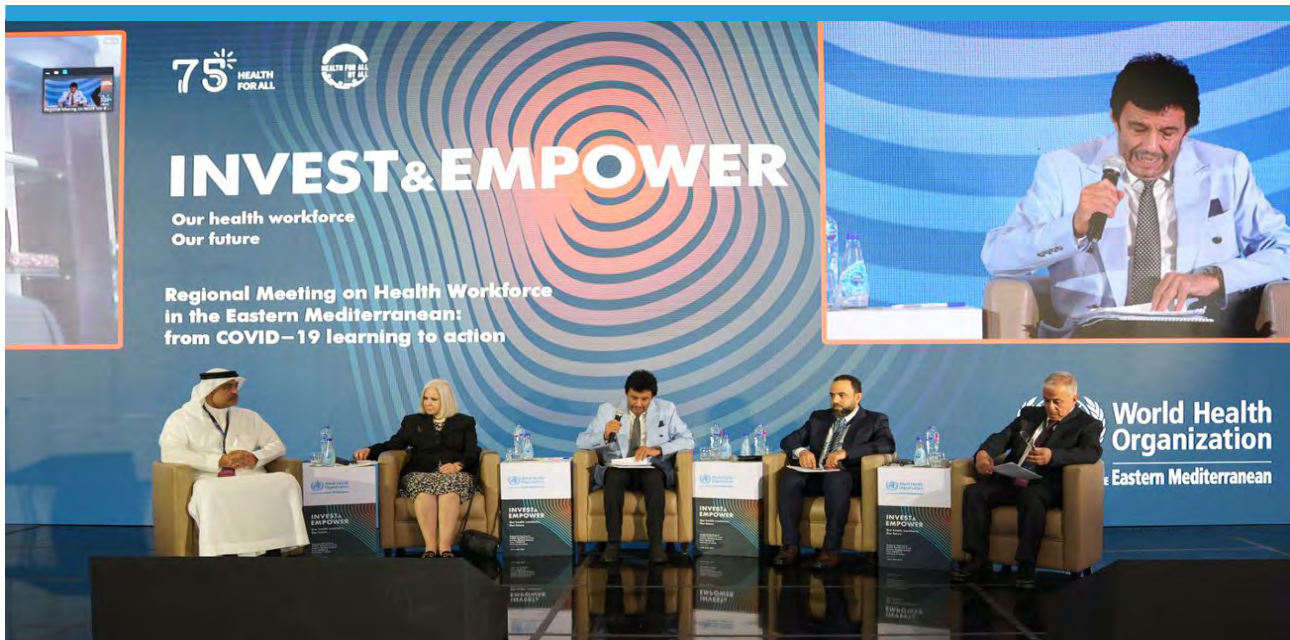
**30-31 July, Muscat, Oman:** The country office delegation and the workload indicators of staffing needs technical team during the experience-sharing mission. Photo credit: WHO Bahrain



**30-31 July, Muscat governorate, Oman:** The workload indicators of staffing needs technical team during a visit to a PHC facility. Photo credit: WHO Bahrain

Moreover, WHO contributed to building national capacities and promoting policy dialogue to sustain and scale up investments in the health workforce. More than 20 experts from the Ministry of Health, the National Health Regulatory Authority, the WHO Collaborating Centre for Nursing Development, and the WHO Collaborating Centre for Health Professionals' Educational Development were actively engaged in the following meetings.

- **Fifth global forum on human resources for health.** This meeting was held in April, during World Health Worker Week, to provide updates on the implementation of the *Global strategy on human resources for health: workforce 2030* and share evidence and experiences on workforce development.
- **Tenth global forum of government chief nursing and midwifery officers.** This virtual convening took place in June to assess progress on the WHO *Global strategic directions for nursing and midwifery 2021–2025* and to discuss priorities for the next *State of the world's nursing* report, planned for 2025.
- **Regional meeting on the health workforce in the Eastern Mediterranean Region: from COVID-19 lessons to action.** This meeting was held in June to share experiences and good human resources for health practices drawn from the COVID-19 pandemic, with the aim of addressing the Region's health workforce challenges.



**19-20 June, Cairo, Egypt:** H.E. Dr Waleed Khalifa Al Manea, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Health, participates in a panel discussion during the regional meeting on the health workforce in the Eastern Mediterranean Region: from COVID-19 lessons to action. Photo credit: WHO

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

UHC can only be achieved when there is affordable access to safe, effective and quality medicines and health products. During the year under review, WHO coordinated action to improve access to medicines, vaccines and health technologies through strengthening regulations, guiding the implementation of international norms and standards, and leveraging innovative technologies and solutions for health.

WHO's efforts to ensure universal access to quality medical products were given added impetus through guiding the active engagement of the national pharmacovigilance focal point in the review process of the VigiBase data access conditions guidance document. This document was developed by WHO and the WHO Collaborating Centre for International Drug Monitoring, known as Uppsala Monitoring Centre, to provide direction on managing access rights for nongovernment users to VigiBase – the WHO global database of reported potential side-effects of medicinal products. The guidance document benefited from comprehensive feedback by the focal point on innovative approaches to facilitate public access to information on the adverse impact of medicinal products towards enhanced patient care and patient safety.

In addition, five experts from the Ministry of Health and the National Health Regulatory Authority were actively involved in the following WHO-related workshops and training.

- **Workshop on regulation of medical devices with a focus on technical files approaches and post-market/market surveillance.** This workshop was held in January to give an overview of the technical aspects of the market and post-market surveillance for medical devices.
- **Tenth Eastern Mediterranean drug regulatory authorities conference.** This meeting was held in November to enhance cooperation between regulatory authorities in the Region and facilitate the exchange of up-to-date evidence on the safety and quality of medical products.
- **Regional awareness webinar on establishing and updating the lists of priority medical devices.** This virtual convening took place in December to introduce WHO methodology in selecting priority medical devices, essential in vitro diagnostics and priority assistive products, to increase access to medical devices.



20-22 November, Luxor, Egypt: Aesha AbdulHakam Ahmed, Regulatory Affairs Specialist, National Health Regulatory Authority, participates in the tenth Eastern Mediterranean drug regulatory authorities conference. Photo credit: WHO

## BUILDING RESILIENT HEALTH SYSTEMS

In recent years, emergencies have affected more people over a more extended period of time and have required more resources than ever before. Throughout 2023, WHO focused on fostering policy dialogue on health system resilience for health security and operationalizing the humanitarian–development–peace nexus approach to effectively address the health needs of refugees and migrants.

One landmark step was facilitating the engagement of senior management officials in the Ministry of Health in the second high-level interregional meeting on the health of refugees and migrants, organized in March by the WHO regional offices for the Eastern Mediterranean, Africa and Europe. The meeting aimed to speed up the implementation of the strategic priorities agreed at last year's high-level meeting on refugee and migrant health in Istanbul, Türkiye, through enhancing interregional collaboration as part of a whole-of-route approach. It also reaffirmed commitment to the WHO Global action plan on promoting the health of refugees and migrants, 2019–2023 and facilitated the exchange of experiences promoting the health of refugees and migrants in the three WHO regions.



16–17 March, Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt: Group photo of the participants in the second high-level interregional meeting on the health of refugees and migrants. Photo credit: WHO

## ADDRESSING MAJOR COMMUNICABLE DISEASES

Communicable diseases are a deadly threat with potentially devastating consequences for individuals and the wider social and economic spheres. During 2023, WHO provided normative guidance, strengthened country capacity, and coordinated and implemented awareness-raising activities directed towards preventing, controlling and treating communicable diseases.

Over the course of 2023, through social media platforms, WHO continued to improve awareness and understanding of infectious diseases and how to control and prevent them. To mark World AIDS Day, held every year on 1 December, WHO joined the global campaign towards attaining a world without AIDS by featuring a series of social media posts of the staff members undertaking HIV self-tests, to raise public awareness of the importance of testing for maintaining health and preventing HIV transmission. The WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean supplied WHO team with the HIV self-tests.



**2 December, Manama, Bahrain:** The WHO country team joins in the global campaign for World AIDS Day. Photo credit: WHO Bahrain

In addition, WHO provided technical leadership in building national capacities and skills on a broad range of topics in the context of preventing, controlling and treating communicable diseases, including expanding immunization and enhancing surveillance for infectious diseases. In 2023, the country office coordinated the engagement of more than 10 experts from the Ministry of Health in the following regional workshops and training.

- **Consultative meeting on the development of the regional life course immunization.** This meeting was held in May to exchange country experiences and lessons learned from the COVID-19 vaccination rollout, and to support countries in developing national policies for life course immunization to advance UHC.
- **Virtual consultative meeting to prepare the countries of the Eastern Mediterranean Region for the United Nations high-level meeting on the fight against tuberculosis.** This meeting was held in May to explore countries' progress on the 2018 Political Declaration on the Fight Against Tuberculosis and to discuss country plans for the General Assembly's second high-level meeting in September.
- **Intercountry meeting on latest updates on tuberculosis and drug-resistant tuberculosis case management.** This meeting took place in June to support countries in transitioning to new WHO-recommended treatments and ensuring the effective management of tuberculosis and drug-resistant tuberculosis, including considerations for implementing all-oral shorter regimens.
- **Regional hands-on laboratory training workshop on laboratory diagnosis of diphtheria and pertussis.** This training was conducted in June, in Nicosia, Cyprus, to build national skills and capacities on the correct procedures to diagnose diphtheria and other related infections.
- **Workshop to strengthen the capacity for morphological identification of primary malaria and dengue vectors for high-risk countries.** This workshop was held in Muscat, Oman, in July, to strengthen countries' capacity in identifying *Aedes* and *Anopheles* mosquitos towards enhanced vector surveillance for rapid and appropriate vector control response.

## SCALING UP ACTION ON AMR

AMR is one of the top global public threats that requires both sector-specific actions in the human health, food production, animal and environmental sectors, and a coordinated approach across these sectors. WHO provided strategic leadership and support in 2023 to tackle the growing problem of resistance to antimicrobials through promoting the adoption of the One Health approach, enhancing community awareness, and facilitating capacity-building and the exchange of best practices.

During the year under review, WHO undertook extensive work to improve awareness of appropriate antibiotic use. For example, a joint event was organized with the University of Bahrain to celebrate World AMR Awareness Week, observed from 18 to 24 November every year. Bringing together more than 50 university students, the event featured lectures by the academic staff to bring attention to the issues of AMR, including the use of antibiotics and the concept of the One Health approach, which covers human health, animal health and environmental health. During the event, the students and academic staff took photos in an AMR photobooth cardboard frame to display their commitment to slowing AMR's spread and inspire others to join the global campaign. They also received a WHO "Will you go blue for AMR?" branded tote bag to spread awareness about antibiotic abuse and encourage positive behavioural change in the community. At the conclusion of the event, three students who created educational posters capturing the theme of World AMR Awareness Week received acknowledgement from WHO in recognition of their creativity and hard work.



22 November, Sakhir, Bahrain: The celebration of World AMR Awareness Week. Photo credit: WHO Bahrain

WHO support also included enhancing the collection, analysis and sharing of AMR data to the Global Antimicrobial Resistance and Use Surveillance System (GLASS), the first global collaborative effort to standardize and foster AMR surveillance and inform strategies to contain AMR. Key achievements included technically guiding the completion and submission of the routine national surveillance data of AMR in bacteria causing common human infections, to inform AMR prevention and control strategies and foster national AMR surveillance systems.

Furthermore, WHO facilitated the engagement of two experts from the Ministry of Health and the Supreme Council for Environment in the Quadripartite regional meeting to accelerate the implementation of One Health in the Eastern Mediterranean Region, organized in May, in Muscat, Oman. The meeting provided countries in the Region with approaches, methodologies and tools to enable them to assess and develop their multidisciplinary One Health core capacities required to prevent, detect and respond to health threats and mitigate their impact on humans, animals and the whole ecosystem.

## ADDRESSING THE BURDEN OF NCDs AND SUPPORTING MENTAL HEALTH

NCDs and mental health conditions present a significant challenge to public health and economies globally. Throughout 2023, WHO pivoted to innovative ways of working to enhance the prevention, control and management of NCDs and promote mental health to meet SDG target 3.4: to reduce premature deaths by one third by 2030.

In 2023, activities to accelerate national responses to NCDs were complemented by strategic partnerships to enhance the prevention and control of specific diseases. WHO actively engaged in a health event held by the Northern governorate to mark World Diabetes Day, held every year on 14 November. Organized under the theme of “Towards a healthy governorate free of diabetes – know your risks, know your response”, the event aimed to raise awareness of the impact of diabetes on people’s health and to highlight opportunities to strengthen the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of diabetes. Bringing together government officials, United Nations representatives, health champions and the community, the event featured an awareness-raising exhibition, free medical examinations and a walkathon.



16 November, Northern governorate, Bahrain: Dr Tasnim Atatrah, WHO Representative, takes part in a health event to mark World Diabetes Day. Photo credit: Northern governorate

WHO also facilitated capacity-building and the exchange of best practices by disseminating information on WHO frameworks of policy, legislative and regulatory measures on surveillance, prevention, diagnosis, treatment and care of NCDs and mental health conditions. Around 15 experts from the Ministry of Health and Government Hospitals were involved in the following WHO-related workshops and training.

- **Regional consultative meeting to review the Framework for Action on Diabetes Prevention and Control in the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region.** This meeting was held in March to share updates on the status of diabetes in the Region and examine progress on the national implementation and adaptation of the regional framework for action on diabetes prevention and control.
- **NCD hard talk webinar.** This online convening was held in April to provide a platform to connect, share and learn from global and regional initiatives on strengthening health systems to address the burden of NCDs.
- **Training workshop on cancer data use to inform cancer control planning in the countries of the Eastern Mediterranean Region.** This meeting was conducted in November to explore the data needed to assess the causes of cancer and other NCDs and discuss the development of a database to estimate the contribution of a risk factor to chronic disease.
- **Intercountry meeting to scale up action on mental health in the Eastern Mediterranean Region.** This meeting was held in November to examine the progress and challenges in implementing the regional framework to scale up action on mental health and review the update of the regional mental health and psychosocial support action plan, 2024–2030.





## **STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2: ADDRESSING HEALTH EMERGENCIES**

This section outlines the strategic, technical and operational support the WHO Country Office provided in 2023 to advance health security and protect communities from potential threats by further strengthening its approach to emergency management across all phases – prevention, preparedness, detection, response and recovery – and fostering collaboration for a healthier, safer future for all.

## PREVENTING AND CONTROLLING EPIDEMIC- AND PANDEMIC-PRONE DISEASES

In an era of emerging and re-emerging infectious diseases with epidemic and pandemic potential, it is vital to strengthen countries' capacities in disease prevention, surveillance, laboratory diagnosis, and improving knowledge management and innovation. In 2023, WHO leveraged its technical expertise to expand testing capacities for new and high-impact pathogens and enhance knowledge sharing and peer-to-peer exchanges across laboratories in the Region.

One key highlight was the development of a comprehensive roadmap to strengthen Bahrain's capacity to handle high-threat pathogens through a strategic and phased approach that considers immediate needs, mid-term renovations and potential long-term expansions in laboratory capabilities. The production of the roadmap was informed by the findings of a three-level mission that took place from 31 October to 1 November, consisting of experts from WHO headquarters, the Regional Office and country office. The mission was organized in response to the Central Public Health Laboratory's request to evaluate the potential establishment of a biosafety level 4 laboratory in Bahrain – a maximum containment laboratory that analyses the most dangerous pathogens with a high risk of life-threatening disease for which no available vaccine or therapy exists. It also provided an opportunity to explore with the Ministry of Health areas for WHO support, including providing training on handling high-threat pathogens to enhance the competencies of biosafety officers, sharing relevant guidelines, procurement of diagnostic kits and developing operational plans for high-containment facilities.



1 November, Manama, Bahrain: The members of the WHO three-level mission meet with H.E. Dr Jaleela bint AlSayed Jawad Hasan, Minister of Health. Photo credit: WHO Bahrain

During the year under review, WHO also coordinated the engagement of more than five experts from the Ministry of Health in the following WHO-related global and regional workshops and training.

- [Technical working group consultation on strengthening health laboratory services in the Eastern Mediterranean Region](#). This consultation took place in March, and it

convened WHO technical officers, directors of public health laboratories in the Region and partners to review the implementation of the regional strategic framework for strengthening health laboratory services 2016–2023 and to discuss the strategic priorities for the next regional framework.

- **Meeting of directors of national laboratory services and partners in the Eastern Mediterranean Region.** This meeting was held in August to enable the directors of health laboratories in the Region and partners to review and provide feedback on the draft strategic framework for strengthening health laboratory services for 2024–2029.
- **Seventh Singapore international dengue workshop.** WHO and the Government of Singapore jointly organized this workshop in May to exchange experiences on dengue epidemiology, risk factors and prevention measures. Participants were from 24 countries across the WHO regions of Western Pacific, South-East Asia, Eastern Mediterranean and Africa.
- **Quadripartite global technical meeting on MERS-CoV and other emerging zoonotic coronaviruses.** This meeting was held in November to share updates on implementing the MERS-CoV public health research agenda with the global community and to explore ongoing work on other emerging zoonotic coronaviruses.



14–16 August, Cairo, Egypt: Mrs Amjad Ghanem, Chief of Public Health Laboratories, Ministry of Health, participates in the meeting of directors of national laboratory services and partners in the Eastern Mediterranean Region. Photo credit: WHO

## PREVENTING AND CONTROLLING SEASONAL AND PANDEMIC INFLUENZA

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on public health serves as a reminder of the need to scale up investment in pandemic preparedness for influenza and other respiratory viruses. In 2023, WHO provided strategic guidance and technical support to strengthen surveillance for influenza and other emerging respiratory viruses and improve the use of surveillance data to enhance disease control programmes. For example, it coordinated the participation of more than five experts from the Ministry of Health in the following WHO-related regional meetings and workshops.

- **Sixth meeting of the Eastern Mediterranean Acute Respiratory Infection Surveillance Network and the Third Scientific Conference on Acute Respiratory Infection.** This meeting was held in March to exchange best practices for influenza and other emerging respiratory diseases surveillance, track progress and draw essential lessons on public health preparedness for pandemic influenza. The National Influenza Centre in Bahrain was among 21 health organizations and scientists from the Region to be honoured during the meeting for its significant contributions to enhancing country and regional preparedness and response to respiratory diseases of epidemic and pandemic concern.
- **Subregional workshop for influenza disease burden estimation in the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region.** This workshop was held in September to build capacities on using available data from existing functional surveillance systems to estimate the influenza burden across the spectrum of severity.

## STRENGTHENING NATIONAL EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

In keeping with WHO's leadership role as the custodian of the the International Health Regulations (IHR 2005), WHO in 2023 provided strategic and operational support to strengthen core capacities that rapidly detect and respond to known vulnerabilities and public health emergencies. Efforts in this area were guided by the IHR Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, which provides an entry point to assess the implementation of a country's public health capacities under the IHR through the States Parties self-assessment annual report, after action review, simulation exercise and JEE.



20-22 February, Manama, Bahrain: The WHO Regional facilitators deliver the simulation exercise training of trainers. Photo credit: WHO Bahrain



20-22 February, Manama, Bahrain: The participants of simulation exercise training of trainers engage in group work activities. Photo credit: WHO Bahrain

One key milestone for WHO in rapidly boosting health emergency preparedness capacities was organizing the first country-level simulation exercise training of trainers in the Region from 20 to 22 February, in close collaboration with the Ministry of Health. A simulation exercise is a form of voluntary training involving the description or simulation of an emergency, to which a described or simulated response is made, to provide an evidence-based assessment of functional capacities to respond to emergencies and strengthen

preparedness and response. The training was delivered by WHO staff members from the Regional Office and experts from the Gulf Center for Disease Prevention and Control. It built the knowledge and skills of over 30 participants from different sectors on identifying the strengths and gaps in health system capacities and laying out the practical corrective actions needed to be better prepared for public health emergencies. They included experts from the Ministries of Health, Municipalities Affairs and Agriculture, Transportation and Telecommunication, and Interior, as well as Primary Health Care Centres, Government Hospitals, and the Supreme Council for Environment.

Further enhancing national efforts to reduce and manage health emergencies, WHO held the national workshop on the second round of the JEE of the IHR from 3 to 5 September, in close collaboration with the Ministry of Health. The first round of JEE in Bahrain was completed in 2016. The JEE is a voluntary two-stage process to assess a country's capacity to prevent, detect and rapidly respond to public health risks, allowing for the identification of the most urgent needs and opportunities for enhanced preparedness and response. Delivered by WHO staff members from the Regional Office, the workshop built the knowledge and skills of over 35 multisectoral experts on completing the JEE's self-assessment phase and preparing for the external evaluation phase. They included professionals from the Ministries of Health, Foreign Affairs, Industry and Commerce, Municipalities and Agriculture, Interior, and Transportation and Telecommunications, as well as Primary Health Care Centres, Government Hospitals, the National Health Regulatory Authority, the National Oil and Gas Authority, and Bahrain Airport Services. The evaluation outcomes will be paramount in identifying national priorities to update the national action plan for health security.



3-5 September, Manama, Bahrain: Participants of the JEE workshop. Photo credit: Ministry of Health

WHO successfully built the knowledge and skills of around 10 experts from the Ministry of Health and Government Hospitals by coordinating their participation in the following regional training and workshops.

- **Tenth regional stakeholders meeting to review the implementation of IHR (2005) in the Eastern Mediterranean Region.** This meeting took place in March to provide an update on IHR implementation at the country level and accelerate progress towards updating national action plans for health security.

- **Regional meeting to establish and strengthen emergency medical teams in the Eastern Mediterranean Region.** This meeting was held in June in Hammamet, Tunisia, to introduce the WHO Global emergency medical teams 2030 strategy and explore opportunities for developing a regional action plan for establishing and strengthening emergency medical teams in the Region.
- **Workshop for strengthening the notification and information sharing of acute public health events.** This workshop was held in October to identify gaps in the notification and sharing of information on acute public health events with WHO and to generate recommendations on enhancing the exchange of information between Member States and WHO.
- **Regional training of trainers on capacity-building of public health emergency operations centres in the Eastern Mediterranean Region.** This training was conducted in November in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, to establish a regional pool of trained experts to support emergency management and be mobilized to support work on public health emergency operations centres at the national and regional level.

## HARNESSING THE POWER OF RISK COMMUNICATION

Communication is a powerful tool to address growing and complex health threats – from disease outbreaks to the impacts of climate change. It can help to change people’s knowledge, attitudes and behaviours and empower them to make choices that help protect and improve health and well-being. Throughout 2023, WHO provided technical leadership in guiding national efforts on the best practices for communicating risk in public health emergencies and supporting capacity to ensure that accurate information is delivered to communities for effective, equitable and inclusive emergency preparedness and response.



**3-5 December, Manama, Bahrain:** The participants of the multidisciplinary health communications and community engagement workshop. Photo credit: WHO Bahrain

During the year under review, WHO organized a capacity-building workshop on multidisciplinary health communications and community engagement from 3 to 5 December, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health. Focusing on routine and emergency communications, the workshop drew on advancements in the health communications field and behavioural science and

explored lessons learned from community engagement during the COVID-19 pandemic. WHO staff members from the Regional Office and headquarters delivered the workshop to around 50 experts from the Ministry of Health, Primary Health Care Centres, Government Hospitals and the National Communication Centre. By employing a blended learning approach of presentations and group work, the workshop boosted participants' knowledge and capacities in planning and implementing effective communication and engagement strategies and interventions targeting audiences such as communities, media professionals and policy-makers.

In addition, WHO built the knowledge and capacities of three experts from the Ministry of Health on implementing different approaches to respond to and manage an infodemic and reduce its impact on health behaviours during health emergencies. The country office coordinated the experts' participation in virtual infodemic management training, organized over four sessions in October.



**3-5 December, Manama, Bahrain:** The participants of the multidisciplinary health communications and community engagement workshop take part in group work discussions. Photo credit: WHO Bahrain

## SAFEGUARDING THE ELIMINATION OF MEASLES AND RUBELLA

Measles and rubella are important contributors to childhood mortality and morbidity worldwide. Bahrain is one of four countries in the Region to be verified as having achieved measles and rubella elimination. By the end of 2022, these countries were confirmed to have maintained measles elimination. WHO worked with the Ministry of Health throughout 2023, providing technical leadership, fostering policy dialogue and delivering capacity-building to maintain the gains of this elimination status. For example, five experts from the Ministry of Health were engaged in the following regional training and meetings.

- **Regional Verification Commission for Measles and Rubella.** This meeting was held in December to review the progress reports on measles, rubella and congenital rubella syndrome elimination status in Bahrain, Egypt, Islamic Republic of Iran and Oman.
- **Virtual training session on the measles and rubella reporting tool.** This training was held in December to build national capacities on completing the Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean's measles and rubella reporting form and verifying data quality.

## SUSTAINING GAINS OF POLIO ERADICATION

Eradicating polio has been a worldwide effort over many years. Bahrain's success in sustaining its polio-free status since 1993 means that no more children in the country will have to experience the devastating effects of the disease. Throughout 2023, WHO worked jointly with the Ministry of Health and provided needed capacity-building to sustain the gains in polio eradication. For example, four experts from the Ministry of Health were actively involved in the following regional meetings.

- **AFP/environmental surveillance and lab directors intercountry meeting (Group A).** This meeting was held in September to support the effective implementation of the *Global polio surveillance action plan 2022–2024* for improved poliovirus detection and response through efficient and sensitive field and laboratory surveillance.
- **37th Regional Commission for the Certification of Poliomyelitis Eradication meeting.** This meeting was held in November to review annual updates submitted by polio-free countries and examine progress towards polio eradication in polio-endemic countries.



**24-26 September, Muscat, Oman:** Ms Fatema Jasim, Public Health Specialist, Ministry of Health, takes part in the AFP / environmental surveillance and laboratory directors intercountry meeting. Photo credit: WHO





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

This section describes the WHO Country Office's efforts in 2023 to tackle the underlying causes of ill health and create enabling environments through providing technical guidance and support, strengthening multisectoral coordination, increasing community engagement and fostering public health action in the settings of everyday life.

## PREVENTING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND CHILDREN

Violence against women and children is a serious public health concern, with costs at multiple levels of society. Throughout 2023, WHO provided wide-ranging support to the ongoing work and progress in ending violence against women and children in the Region and beyond. This included improving the practical skills of health practitioners to prevent and respond to violence. In June, WHO facilitated the engagement of an expert from the Ministry of Health in the training of trainers on health system responses to violence against children in the Eastern Mediterranean Region, where national capacities were built on the WHO guidelines and tools on violence against children.



[Click here](#) for advocacy video

WHO also continued to promote a culture that prevents and reduces violence against women and their children across different social media channels. To mark the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence, which runs annually from 25 November to 10 December, WHO staff joined the global campaign by posting a short video clip to raise awareness about the health consequences of violence against women and to promote collective action.

## GALVANIZING ACTION TO TACKLE NCD RISK FACTORS

One of the most important ways of reducing deaths from NCDs is to control the risk factors that lead to their development. Throughout the year under review, WHO provided leadership, coordination and guidance to accelerate progress on reducing major risk factors for NCDs – tobacco use, physical inactivity and unhealthy diets – enabling the people in Bahrain to increase control over and improve their health.

### Combating tobacco use

In 2023, WHO provided strategic support to reduce the prevalence of tobacco use and strengthen the implementation of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC)<sup>1</sup> by promoting data-driven tobacco control measures, advancing community engagement strategies and building national capacity for tobacco control.

As part of its work to engage and empower the public for tobacco control, WHO in Bahrain launched a call-to-action poster campaign to mark World No Tobacco Day, celebrated every year on 31 May. The campaign aimed to raise public awareness about the high toll of tobacco growing on human health and the environment. It invited medical, paramedical and nursing students to create posters on the benefits of moving



[Click here](#) for campaign posters

1. The WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC) is the first international treaty negotiated under the auspices of WHO. It came into force in 2005 and contains provisions aimed at reducing tobacco consumption and toxicity. To date, it has been ratified by 181 countries, known as "Parties". These Parties make up the Conference of the Parties (COP), which serves as the governing body of the FCTC. Sessions of the COP take place every two years to provide recommendations on how countries can implement treaty provisions.

away from tobacco growing and switching to more sustainable crops that improve food security and nutrition. The campaign attracted large-scale engagement from the community, with five nursing students from the University of Bahrain receiving recognition from WHO for their outstanding and innovative posters.

Similarly, WHO actively engaged in an awareness-raising event organized by the Health and Social Affairs Directorate of the Ministry of Interior, in close collaboration with the Royal Academy of Police, to commemorate World No Tobacco Day. The event showcased the Ministry's efforts in fighting tobacco use in the community, including encouraging local initiatives to strengthen tobacco control and promoting policy coherence. Other advocacy events that WHO took part in to mark World No Tobacco Day included an awareness exhibition organized by the Gulf University to raise awareness regarding the harmful consequences of smoking and to advocate for a smoke-free campus environment. Through interactive activities and engaging presentations, the exhibition proactively engaged many students and faculty members.

WHO support also included guiding the compilation of robust data and up-to-date evidence on the current tobacco health warning legislation in Bahrain to support the update of the Canadian Cancer Society's eighth edition of the *Cigarette package health warnings: international status report*. Released during the Tenth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP10) to the WHO FCTC, the report provides an international overview ranking 206 countries/jurisdictions based on warning size, and lists those that have finalized requirements for picture warnings.

Further advancing tobacco control, WHO managed to build the knowledge and capacities of more than 10 experts from the Ministries of Health, Foreign Affairs, and Industry and Commerce, as well as the National Bureau for Revenue, by coordinating their participation in WHO-led global and regional meetings, including the following.

- **Regional meeting on the implementation of Articles 9 and 10 of the WHO FCTC.** This meeting was held in March to drive a policy dialogue on regulating nicotine and tobacco products and share recommendations on the adaptation and implementation of Articles 9 and 10.
- **The high-level meeting of ministers of Health and Finance on tobacco and nicotine products taxes.** This meeting was held in June to discuss opportunities and challenges in tobacco and nicotine products taxation and promote effective tobacco control strategies within the Region.
- **Preparatory meeting for COP10 to the WHO FCTC and the Third session of the Meeting of the Parties (MOP3) to the Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products in the Eastern Mediterranean Region.** This meeting took place in September and was the first in a series of regional preparatory meetings for COP10 and MOP3.
- **The eighth meeting of the WHO Tobacco Laboratory Network and the training on testing nicotine and tobacco products.** This meeting was held in December to guide countries on nicotine and tobacco product testing and finalize the development of technical material on heated tobacco products in preparation for COP10 to the WHO FCTC.

## Addressing unhealthy diets and physical inactivity

Diet and physical activity influence health and well-being throughout life. Throughout 2023, WHO acted as a technical assistance partner that worked with the Ministry of Health and other key partners to create healthy and active environments by raising community awareness of healthy dietary and physical activity practices, strengthening the implementation of global strategies and action plans, and building national capacity for healthy eating and physical activity.

During the year under review, WHO played a significant role in promoting diversified, safe and healthy diets at all stages of life. One key milestone was jointly organizing a five-day exhibition on the food-based dietary guidelines for the Kingdom of Bahrain<sup>2</sup> with the Ministry of Health. The exhibition was held between 10 and 14 December at Seef Mall, Manama, and aimed to encourage health-conscious behaviour and offer tips on best practices to address obesity and other risk factors associated with NCDs. It featured 11 interactive stations that provided information on the guidelines' key messages, animated videos on nutrition-based healthy lifestyle choices, and a 3D tik-tac-toe game to engage children and young people. The exhibition attracted large-scale participation from the community from different age groups, including five school visits. Moving forward, the Ministry of Health will host the exhibition until June 2024 to contribute to the promotion of healthy diets and lifestyles.



10-14 December, Manama, Bahrain: School students visit the the food-based dietary guidelines exhibition. Photo credit: WHO Bahrain

WHO also provided strategic support in driving policy dialogue on implementing the WHO acceleration plan to STOP obesity. Bahrain is one of 25 frontrunner countries selected to implement the plan. On the sidelines of the Seventy-sixth World Health Assembly, WHO coordinated efforts to support the Government of Bahrain in organizing a side event on “WHO acceleration plan to STOP obesity: from endorsement at WHA75 to execution in frontrunner countries”. The side event marked the start of the execution phase of the WHO acceleration plan in the frontrunner countries. It also sought to raise political advocacy to support and finance the frontrunner countries’ response to the obesity epidemic.

2. The food-based dietary guidelines were developed by the Ministry of Health with WHO technical support. They were launched at the conclusion of the joint mission of the United Nations Interagency Task Force on the Prevention and Control of NCDs and WHO in Bahrain in November 2021.



**21-30 May, Geneva, Switzerland:** H.E. Dr. Jaleela bint AlSayed Jawad Hasan, Minister of Health, inaugurates the side event on the WHO acceleration plan to STOP obesity during the Seventy-sixth World Health Assembly. Photo credit: WHO

To increase public knowledge of the myriad benefits of physical activity, WHO took part in awareness-raising events to inform and change attitudes towards being active. Among these were the Walk the Talk: Health for All Challenge events staged to celebrate the launch of the Seventy-sixth World Health Assembly and the 70th session of the WHO Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean. Bahrain's delegation was led by H.E. Dr. Jaleela bint AlSayed Jawad Hasan, Minister of Health, and together with Dr. Tasnim Atatrah, WHO Representative, the delegation joined the Health for All challenge and walked with the community at large to promote active lifestyles. Similarly, WHO actively engaged in the Ministry of Health's celebration of Bahrain Sports Day, which included a walkathon led by senior government officials, health screenings and the soft opening of the Ministry's new health and sports recreation centre.



**9 October, Cairo, Egypt:** Bahrain's delegation led by H.E. Dr. Jaleela bint AlSayed Jawad Hasan, Minister of Health, together with Dr. Tasnim Atatrah, WHO Representative, join the Health for All challenge at the start of the 70th session of the WHO Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean. Photo credit: WHO Bahrain

Furthermore, WHO successfully built the knowledge and capacities of three experts from the Ministry of Health by coordinating their participation in the following regional meetings and training.

- **Regional expert meeting on policy action for healthy diets with more focus on the Gulf Cooperation Council countries.** This meeting took place in March to explore recent developments in the field of healthy diet, including the *Strategy on nutrition for the Eastern Mediterranean Region 2020–2030*, to accelerate policy action.
- **Regional training workshop on best practices for public awareness and education communications campaigns on physical activity.** This training was conducted in July to train experts from the Ministries of Health and Sports on implementing community-based communication campaigns on physical activity.
- **Intercountry meeting for nutrition focal points.** This meeting was held in September to provide a platform for the nutrition focal points from the Region to share relevant country experiences and success stories and identify country support needs and opportunities for intercountry collaboration.

## PROMOTING DISABILITY INCLUSION

Disability inclusion is critical to achieving the SDGs and global health priorities to achieve health for all. Over the course of 2023, WHO worked to fully integrate and promote disability inclusion in the health sector through disseminating relevant technical guidance and fostering disability-inclusive community engagement strategies.



**2 December, Manama, Bahrain:** WHO staff in Bahrain join the Ministry of Health in celebrating the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. Photo credit: WHO Bahrain

In efforts to promote the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities in all spheres of society, WHO in Bahrain jointly hosted a “Walk the Talk” event with the Ministry of Health on 2 December on Sa’ada Sea Front, Muharraq, to commemorate the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. With a message of “Leaving no one behind”, the walking event brought together persons with disabilities, government officials, representatives from United Nations agencies, health champions and youth volunteers to promote an inclusive environment that fosters acceptance, accessibility and engagement for persons with disabilities. The event also provided an opportunity to bring to the forefront the recently launched *National action plan for persons with disabilities*, another milestone demonstrating Bahrain’s commitment to promoting disability inclusion across all sectors.

## ENGAGING COMMUNITIES TO PROMOTE HEALTH

Effective community engagement empowers individuals and communities to take an active role in their own health and participate in the decisions and structures that impact health and well-being. During the year under review, WHO strengthened support and leadership to engage communities in planning and implementing public health interventions and to build community relationships that are based on trust, to drive progress on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.



**2 December, Manama, Bahrain:** Youth volunteers walk the talk to mark the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. Photo credit: WHO Bahrain

Recognizing the critical role of young people as catalysts for positive social change, WHO worked in 2023 on engaging and partnering with young people to build a healthier, safer and fairer future for all. For example, WHO joined the Ministry of Health in marking Bahrain Youth Day, which is observed on 25 March. During the celebration, information was disseminated to raise youth awareness about the harmful effects of smoking and sugary drink consumption, and to promote healthy lifestyles and physical activity. Similarly, WHO, together with the Ministry of Youth Affairs, capitalized on the “Walk the Talk” event organized on 2 December, to

celebrate International Volunteer Day. The 12 Bahraini youth volunteers who actively participated in the event received recognition from WHO for their efforts towards building a healthier, safer and fairer world for everyone.

Furthermore, WHO facilitated the participation of school students in an art competition organized by the WHO Regional Office to mark the occasion of WHO's 75th anniversary year. The art competition aimed to raise school students' awareness of WHO's health-related achievements over the years and stimulate their interest in contributing to future achievements to enhance the health and well-being of all. Three student winners were selected from Bahrain: Hagar Abd Aljaleel Mansour, ranked in fifth place among the age group category 8–9 years; Masooma Mirza, ranked in fourth place among the age group category 16–18 years; and Fatemah Abdelhamid, who received a certificate of merit among the age group category 16–18 years. WHO in Bahrain and the Ministry of Health jointly recognized the outstanding achievements of the three student winners during the Gulf School Health Day celebration on 2 November.



Art work submitted by  
Masooma Mirza



Art work submitted by  
Hagar Abd Aljaleel Mansour



Art work submitted by  
Fatemah Abdelhamid

## ACCELERATING ACTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH RISKS

Environmental risks, such as air pollution, sanitation and hygiene and climate change are among the major factors determining health across the life course. WHO capitalized on its role as the Ministry of Health's technical assistance partner in 2023 to promote action on creating healthier environments by fostering multisectoral dialogues around building climate-resilient health systems, strengthening the Ministry's engagement in international forums, and enhancing capacities for environmental health monitoring.

One key milestone for WHO in fostering a participatory dialogue around health and climate action was the organization of a workshop on conducting climate change and health vulnerability and adaptation assessment and the HNAP,<sup>3</sup> held between 29 and 30 October. It was organized in collaboration with the Supreme Council for Environment and the Ministry of Health to serve as a practical starting point to initiate the development of HNAP for the country, building on Bahrain's national adaptation investment plan. The workshop built the

3. The HNAP is the health component of a country's national adaptation plan. It aims to diagnose health systems' vulnerabilities to climate change, and to outline actions to build climate-resilient health systems. The development of HNAP is among the commitments made by countries at the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference towards building climate-resilient health and environmentally sustainable health systems.



knowledge and skills of over 50 experts from different sectors on WHO tools and guidelines that can support countries in achieving their commitments to build climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable health systems. They included professionals from the Ministries of Health, Sustainable Development, Transportation and Telecommunications, Works, Labour, and Municipalities Affairs and Agriculture, as well as the Supreme Council for Environment, the National Health Regulatory Authority and Primary Health Care Centres.



**29-30 October, Manama, Bahrain:** Experts from the WHO Regional Office in the Eastern Mediterranean deliver a workshop on conducting climate change and health vulnerability and adaptation assessment and the health national adaptation plan. Photo credit: WHO Bahrain

Work in this area also took a significant step forward with strengthening the health sector's engagement in the 2023 United Nations Climate Change Conference, organized between 30 November and 12 December in the United Arab Emirates. WHO supported the participation of the Ministry of Health's climate change focal point in the conference, particularly in events such as the first-ever Health Day, to facilitate the exchange of Bahrain's best practices in addressing environmental health risks and bring health considerations front and centre into the global climate change agenda.



**29-30 October, Manama, Bahrain:** The participants of the workshop on conducting climate change and health vulnerability and adaptation assessment and the health national adaptation plan reflect on their experiences. Photo credit: WHO Bahrain

Further advancing the health and environment agenda, WHO provided technical leadership in building national capacities and skills on a broad range of topics in the area of environmental risks to health, including climate change and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH). During the year under review, WHO coordinated the engagement of eight experts from the Ministry of Health, the Information and eGovernment Authority, and the Supreme Council for Environment in the following regional workshops and training.

- **Regional workshop on the launch of country consultations for SDG indicators 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3.1.** This workshop was held in January to enable WASH focal points in countries of the Eastern Mediterranean Region to review and verify their national estimates for drinking-water services (6.1), sanitation and hygiene services (6.2) and domestic wastewater generation and treatment (6.3.1) prior to their release in WHO and United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) data portals.
- **Training of trainers on climate change and health for experts in the African and Eastern Mediterranean regions.** This training was held in January to build the capacity of climate change and health experts on WHO tools and guidelines to support countries in achieving their commitments to build climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable health systems.
- **Alliance for Transformative Action on Climate Change and Health: track progress and identify challenges and opportunities.** This meeting was conducted in September to enable countries of the Eastern Mediterranean Region to share progress on achieving low-carbon, sustainable health systems and to exchange good country practices and lessons learned.
- **Regional workshop on monitoring SDG 6 indicators 6.1–6.3.1.** This workshop was held between 30 October and 1 November to present and reflect on the regional findings of the WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme report on the progress of WASH in health care facilities, published in August 2022.

## IMPROVING HEALTH IN URBAN SETTINGS

Urbanization trends present both opportunities for better health outcomes, as well as risks. During the year under review, WHO focused on driving improvements in creating supportive and enabling urban environments for health by catalysing political leadership, promoting multisectoral actions and facilitating experience exchange to improve the daily conditions of urban life.

Throughout 2022–2023, WHO continued working to strengthen the implementation of the WHO Healthy Cities programme as a platform to address the social determinants of health, address risk factors for NCDs, and ensure that no one is left behind. These efforts have yielded significant achievements, including the designation of two Bahraini cities – A’ali and Busaiteen/AI-Sayah – as Healthy Cities in 2022, bringing the total number of Healthy Cities in the country to four.<sup>4</sup> The Healthy Cities awards were presented by Dr Ahmed Al-Mandhari, WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean, in February 2023, in the attendance of high-level officials, including H.E. Dr Jaleela bint AISayed Jawad Hasan, Minister of Health; H.E. Salman bin Isa bin Hindi Al-Mannai, Governor of Muharraq

4. Umm-Al-Hassam was the first city in Bahrain to be designated as a Healthy City in 2018, followed by Manama in 2021 – the first capital in the Eastern Mediterranean Region to earn the Healthy City distinction.

governorate; H.E. Ali bin Sheikh Abdulhussein Al-Asfour, Governor of Northern governorate; and Dr Tasnim Atatrah, WHO Representative.



**26 February, Muharraq governorate, Bahrain:** Dr Ahmed Al-Mandhari, WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean, presents the Healthy City award to Busaiteen/Al-Sayah. Photo credit: WHO Bahrain



**26 February, Northern governorate, Bahrain:** Dr Ahmed Al-Mandhari, WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean, presents the Healthy City award to A'ali. Photo credit: WHO Bahrain

WHO similarly provided strategic leadership to foster a healthy settings approach and promote healthy living at the governorate level in Bahrain. One key milestone is supporting the Capital, Northern and Southern governorates in expanding the implementation of the Healthy Cities programme beyond individual cities to the entirety of their respective governorates. In 2023, the three governorates signed formal letters of collaboration with WHO to provide a framework for increased cooperation in achieving a Healthy Governorate designation. High-level government officials were convened for the signing ceremonies of the letters of collaboration for the Capital governorate in July, the Northern governorate in August, and the Southern governorate in September. The signing of these formal letters is a testament to the nationwide dedication to the Healthy Cities programme as a strategic vehicle for health development in urban settings under the leadership of the Ministry of Health in Bahrain.



**24 July, Capital governorate, Bahrain:** The signing ceremony of the letter of collaboration between the Capital governorate and WHO in Bahrain to expand the implementation of the Healthy Cities programme. Photo credit: Capital governorate



**4 September, Southern governorate, Bahrain:** The signing ceremony of the letter of collaboration between the Southern governorate and WHO in Bahrain to expand the implementation of the Healthy Cities programme. Photo credit: Southern governorate



**14 August, Northern governorate, Bahrain:** The signing ceremony of the letter of collaboration between the Northern governorate and WHO in Bahrain to expand the implementation of the Healthy Cities programme. Photo credit: Northern governorate

Moreover, WHO leveraged its technical expertise to strengthen peer-to-peer exchange on implementing the Healthy Cities programme. On 5 October, WHO organized the Healthy Cities exchange of experiences workshop, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health. The workshop involved the multisectoral participation and meaningful engagement of more than 25 experts from Bahrain's four governorates to exchange Healthy Cities' best practices and lessons learned, and to agree on the next steps for expanding the implementation of the Healthy Cities programme in the Capital, Northern and Southern governorates. The workshop similarly marked the launch of the Healthy Cities photography exhibition, which featured 12 powerful images to celebrate with the community the unique aspects of Bahrain's four Healthy Cities: Umm-Al-Hassam – Living in Heritage, Manama – Living in Entrepreneurship, Busaiteen/AISayah – Living in Knowledge, and A'ali – Living in Art.



**5 October, Manama, Bahrain:** The participants of the Healthy Cities exchange of experiences workshop. Photo credit: WHO Bahrain

Work in this area was also furthered by accelerating efforts to create health-conducive working, learning and living environments in Bahrain's universities. In 2023, the Ahlia University, Arabian Gulf University, Kingdom University, Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland – Medical University of Bahrain, and University of Technology Bahrain were designated as health-promoting universities. The designation process was ushered in by the technical leadership and expert advice of the WHO Regional Office and WHO Country Office in Bahrain, together with the Ministry of Health and the Higher Education Council. The five universities received their designation awards in February 2023 from Dr Ahmed Al-Mandhari, WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean, in the presence of H.E. Dr Jaleela bint AlSayed Jawad Hasan, Minister of Health; H.E. Dr Shaikha Rana bint Isa bin Duajj Al-Khalifa, Secretary-General of the Higher Education Council; and Dr Tasnim Atatrah, WHO Representative.



**19 January, Manama, Bahrain:** The WHO joint regional and country evaluation team visits Ahlia University to evaluate its eligibility for Health-Promoting University status. Photo credit: WHO Bahrain



**26 February, Manama, Bahrain:** Dr Ahmed Al-Mandhari, WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean, presents the Health-Promoting Universities awards to the Ahlia University, Arabian Gulf University, Kingdom University, Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland – Medical University of Bahrain, and University of Technology Bahrain. Photo credit: WHO Bahrain



# MAXIMIZING WHO'S IMPACT ON THE GROUND

This section provides insights into the strategic support provided by the WHO Country Office in 2023 to drive a positive impact on health and lead accelerated efforts to achieve the health-related SDGs through strengthening engagement with other United Nations agencies and partners, fostering alignment and creating synergies, and conducting advocacy at high-level international and regional health engagements.

## DELIVERING AS ONE UN

The United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2021–2024 between the Government of Bahrain and the United Nations promotes a coherent and coordinated strategy to implement the SDGs while contributing to the attainment of the Economic vision 2030 for Bahrain. It is structured around four strategic outcomes: 1) sustainable management of natural resources, sustainable energy, climate resilience and enhanced food security; 2) improved delivery of quality and inclusive services; 3) strengthened conditions for economic diversification, employment creation, rule of law and community resilience; and 4) an enhanced role in international and regional partnerships for sustainable development. The UNCT is supported in its work by four results groups – one per UNSDCF outcome. WHO is the co-chair of Results Group 2 on improved delivery of quality and inclusive services and is an active member of the remaining three groups.

In 2023, under the auspices of the UNSDCF, WHO worked closely with sister United Nations agencies to leverage the added value of the United Nations system and increase the coherence of its actions towards catalysing and accelerating sustainable development in Bahrain.

### Championing Bahrain's second voluntary national review

A voluntary national review (VNR) is an essential part of the formal follow-up and review architecture of the 2030 Agenda to assess and track countries' progress towards achieving the SDGs. Between 2022 and 2023, Bahrain prepared its second VNR, under the leadership of the newly established Ministry of Sustainable Development. Throughout 2023, WHO joined efforts with other United Nations agencies, under the guidance of the Resident Coordinator's Office, to provide technical guidance and advice in the different VNR processes – from the initial preparation to the consultation process and the drafting of the VNR report.

Capitalizing on its comparative advantage as the strategic planner and leader of global health, WHO played a technical advisory role in the multi-agency discussions with the Ministry of Sustainable Development around the Government's expectations for the United Nations' support in the VNR processes. Special focus was given to establishing a fruitful collaborative relationship with the Ministry to ensure better coordination and collaboration beyond the preparation of the VNR. Furthermore, WHO provided expert guidance on the planning and designing of participatory, inclusive and transparent consultation processes. One significant highlight was the bridging role that Dr Tasnim Atatrah, WHO Representative, played in steering and moderating the government officials' consultation workshop, sharing information and advice, and pointing to best practices to advance progress towards achieving the health-related SDGs. This was one of six consultation workshops conducted in February with parliamentarians, academia, civil society, the private sector, women and young people to take stock of progress in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and identify emerging issues. WHO also contributed technical inputs to the VNR report, particularly the health and well-being chapter, drawing on WHO's existing state-of-the-art mechanisms and tools to enhance the analysis and use of the health and well-being data in the report.



**13 February, Manama, Bahrain:** Dr Tasnim Atatrah, WHO Representative, moderates the consultation with government officials as part of the preparation of Bahrain's second voluntary national review. Photo credit: National Communication Centre

Bahrain presented its second VNR at the 2023 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in July. The VNR report builds on national progress from 2018 when the first VNR was presented, showcasing national achievements in a number of areas, including health, education and economic diversification.

### **Formulating a new cooperation framework for 2025–2029**

Under the overall direction of the Resident Coordinator's Office, the UNCT initiated the preparation process for a new UNSDCF 2025–2029 during the year under review, as the UNSDCF 2021–2024 was approaching its penultimate year. This included a number of key activities, including evaluating and assessing the performance and outcomes of the UNSDCF 2021–2024. Throughout 2023, WHO, together with other sister United Nations agencies, leveraged their comparative advantages to ensure synergized and coherent efforts on the development of the UNSDCF 2025–2029.

In 2023, WHO participated in a UNCT workshop held in October to review and assess the implementation of the UNSDCF 2021–2024 and identify lessons learned and areas for improvement. More than 30 representatives from the 21 United Nations agencies, funds and programmes supporting the Government of Bahrain participated in the workshop. The workshop followed a comprehensive desk review of strategic documents, complemented by online interviews with representatives from United Nations agencies and different line ministries. These efforts were part of the independent review of UNSDCF 2021–2024, which the UNCT has undertaken in line with the guidance provided by the United Nations Sustainable Development Group. The independent review aimed to assess the progress made towards achieving the UNSDCF outcomes, identify factors that have affected the UNSDCF contributions and provide recommendations to improve the contribution of the UNSDCF 2021–2024, especially for incorporation into the new programming cycle.



## Chairing the UN Disability Inclusion Task Force

Meeting the needs of people with disabilities is central to achieving the SDGs. In 2023, WHO directed and steered the UN Disability Inclusion Task Force, ensuring the mainstreaming of disability inclusion in the UNCT work and driving more transformative national progress on disability inclusion. This included coordinating the quarterly meetings of the Task Force to leverage the UNCT strengths and accelerate change on disability inclusion. Also, WHO led concerted efforts to complete the disability-inclusion scorecard for the year under review to assess the UNCT disability mainstreaming practices and performance at the country level.

## Supporting the establishment of a gender theme group

Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right but also a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world. In 2023, WHO actively engaged in the establishment process for the UN Gender Theme Group to provide programmatic and technical and policy advice to the UNCT and strengthen collective results for gender equality and women's empowerment in Bahrain. This included participating in interagency consultations on the Group's composition, leadership and terms of reference, and in the preparation of the Group's first annual workplan.

## Reviewing Bahrain's national strategy for the elderly

During the year under review, WHO led efforts to support the Ministry of Social Development in comprehensively reviewing the national strategy for the elderly, adopted in 2012, to inform its update in line with the Government plan (2023–2026) and the Economic vision 2030 for Bahrain. The updated national strategy is planned to guide Bahrain's policies and programmes for older people from 2024 to 2030. Coordinated by the Resident Coordinator's Office, the review process was carried out in liaison with the United Nations Population Fund, UNICEF and the United Nations Development Programme to promote more collaborative actions on improving the lives of older people, their families and the communities in which they live.

In keeping with WHO's leadership role as the Secretariat of the UN Decade of Healthy Ageing 2021–2030, the country office leveraged technical expertise at the global and regional levels to design person-centred and integrated models of care and implement age-friendly practices, used the latest data and analytical trends, and shared relevant guidelines and recommendations to strengthen the strategy and ensure its alignment with global and regional commitments.

## Engaging in roundtable discussion on improving SDG data

WHO actively participated in a roundtable discussion, organized in August by the Ministry of Sustainable Development, to explore the challenges and opportunities in collecting and reporting SDG data in Bahrain to guide the Government's efforts in streamlining the data-collection process and synchronizing with international reporting. The roundtable involved the UNCT and representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Information and eGovernment Authority.

During the roundtable discussion, WHO showcased its ongoing efforts in enhancing the generation, collection and analysis of health-related SDG data to improve the health system, services and policy-making. It also capitalized on the opportunity to explore possible areas for WHO support, including leading support for health information system improvements, building capacity to collect data to monitor national health outcomes, and sharing WHO standards and guidance to improve the quality of SDG reporting.

## STRENGTHENING WHO'S PRESENCE ON THE GROUND

The physical presence of WHO in countries provides an opportunity to collaborate effectively with governments to guide improvements to health care, build technical capacity and strengthen health systems. Throughout 2023, WHO worked to enhance its footprint on the ground and ensure the alignment of its programming with the national health needs and priorities through fostering strategic policy dialogues and strengthening technical cooperation.



**15-16 November, Manama, Bahrain:** The facilitators of the strategic and operational planning workshop. Photo credit: WHO Bahrain

One key milestone was organizing a strategic and operational planning workshop on 15–16 November, in close collaboration with the Ministry of Health. The workshop aimed to foster a participatory dialogue on WHO's technical cooperation in and with Bahrain in line with the country's Government plan (2023–2026). More than 60 technical staff from the Ministry of Health participated in the workshop, including focal points for universal health care, NCDs, mental health, maternal and child health, and health emergencies. Five strategic priorities for WHO support for the next three years were identified during the workshop: 1) promoting health through transformative action on climate change and the social determinants of health; 2) providing health through expanding coverage of essential health services to achieve UHC; 3) protecting health by taking action to strengthen health emergency prevention, preparedness and response; 4) reinforcing the use of evidence and translating

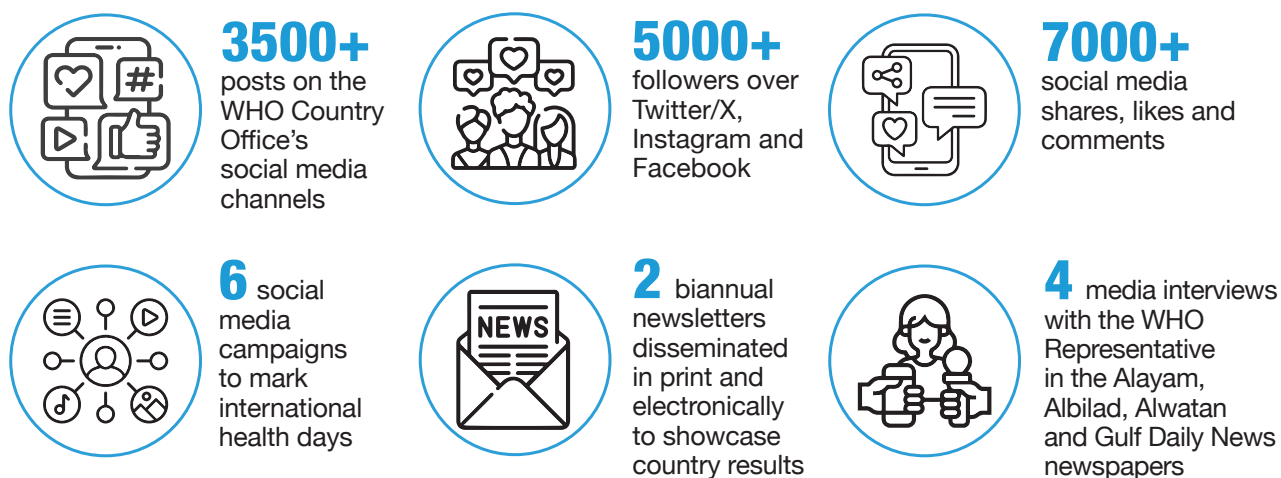
innovations into interventions and national decision-making; and 5) strengthening health diplomacy, collaboration and partnership. In addition, the workshop provided an opportunity to assess the progress of WHO’s biannual joint workplan with the Ministry of Health for 2022–2023 as a practical point of departure for preparing the upcoming joint workplan for 2024–2025.



15-16 November, Manama, Bahrain: The participants of the strategic and operational planning workshop engage in group discussions. Photo credit: WHO Bahrain

## COMMUNICATING FOR IMPACT

Strategic communications and advocacy are an integral part of WHO’s work to bring about positive behavioural and social changes for the well-being of all people. In 2023, WHO used both traditional and digital communications channels to disseminate public health information, increase awareness and build relationships with the community at large. WHO’s activities were boosted over different social media channels – Twitter/X, Instagram and Facebook – through clear messaging about public health priorities and the increased use of visual storytelling and infographics, resulting in consistent growth in subscriber numbers and engagement.



Snapshot of communications activities of the WHO Country Office in 2023

## BOOSTING ENGAGEMENT IN WHO GOVERNANCE

Strengthening Member States' engagement in WHO's governance is essential to reinforce their oversight and decision-making. During the year under review, WHO supported Bahrain's ministerial teams to effectively engage in WHO global and regional governing body sessions, through technical briefings, capacity-building on global health policy and diplomacy, and regular and ad hoc discussions for improved coordination.



**21-30 May 2023, Geneva, Switzerland:** H.E. Dr. Jaleela bint AlSayed Jawad Hasan, Minister of Health, chairs Committee A during the Seventy-sixth World Health Assembly. Photo credit: WHO/Pierre Albouy

WHO invested great effort in maintaining Bahrain's high-level engagement throughout the Seventy-sixth World Health Assembly. A significant development in this regard was the election of H.E. Dr. Jaleela bint AlSayed Jawad Hasan, Minister of Health, as Chair of Committee A, which discusses key technical areas such as UHC, PHC and emergency preparedness. This is the first time that the head of Bahrain's delegation has held such a position within the WHO governing body, demonstrating the Minister's unwavering commitment to achieving Health for All by All and her unique roles and contributions to public health at national and regional levels. In addition, Dr. Maryam Athbi Al Jalahma, Chief Executive Officer of Bahrain's National Health Regulatory Authority, was awarded the 2023 Nelson Mandela Award for Health Promotion, following the closure of the World Health Assembly session. Dr. Al Jalahma received the award in recognition of her pivotal role in developing national and regional strategies in PHC, child and adolescent health, NCDs and tobacco control efforts.

Furthermore, WHO provided extensive technical support in the preparation for and during the 70th session of the Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean to ensure Bahrain's effective engagement. One key milestone was guiding Bahrain's membership in the Programme Subcommittee of the Regional Committee and its active involvement in its meetings. Similarly, the WHO Country Office supported the national delegation throughout the Regional Committee session, prompting their active participation in discussions on technical papers tackling urgent regional challenges – from integrating care for NCDs in emergency

settings, to strengthening public health readiness for mass gatherings, enhancing the health workforce's capacities and galvanizing action to address the links between health and climate change. Moreover, during the Regional Committee session, Dr Randah Ribhi Hamadeh, Adviser to the Dean of the College of Medicine and Medical Sciences at the Arabian Gulf University, was presented with the State of Kuwait Prize for the Control of Cancer, Cardiovascular Diseases and Diabetes in the Eastern Mediterranean Region. Dr Hamadeh received the award in recognition of her significant contribution in the field of cancer and her instrumental work as the founder of the Bahrain Antismoking Society.



**21-30 May 2023, Geneva, Switzerland:** Dr Maryam Athbi Al Jahma, Chief Executive Officer, National Health Regulatory Authority, receives her award as a 2023 laureate of the Nelson Mandela Award for Health Promotion. Photo credit: WHO/Pierre Albouy



**9-12 October, Cairo, Egypt:** Dr Ejlal Al-Alawi, Undersecretary for Public Health [when picture was taken], Ministry of Health, during the 70th session of the Regional Committee. Photo credit: WHO/Blue Ocean

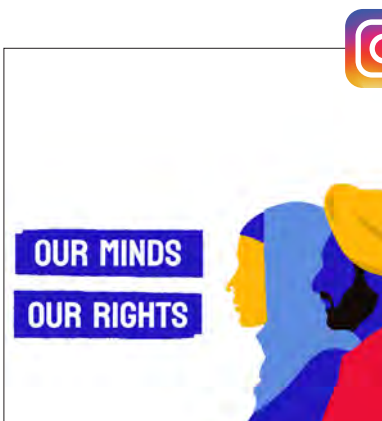


**10 October, Cairo, Egypt:** Dr Randah Ribhi Hamadeh, Advisor to the Dean of the College of Medicine and Medical Sciences, Arabian Gulf University, receives the State of Kuwait Prize for the Control of Cancer. Photo credit: WHO/Blue Ocean

## LEVERAGING PARTNERSHIPS FOR HEALTH

Partnerships are essential to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and ensuring that no one is left behind. Throughout 2023, WHO worked to deepen existing partnerships and establish new ones. An important case in point is the partnership that the country office established and nourished with three Bahraini health champions as part of WHO's 75th anniversary campaign: Dr Amal Al Jowder, former Director of Health Promotion at the Ministry of Health; Mr Abbas Almosawi, a world-renowned artist; and Ms Roba Al Omari, a pioneering para-athlete.

During the year under review, WHO engaged with the WHO75 champions to raise awareness about public health challenges in the Region, inspire positive change and mobilize action towards better health and well-being for all. For example, the country office worked with the WHO75 champions on producing six short videos that utilized positive messages to inform the community about mental health, breast cancer, climate change and physical activity. The videos were posted over the different social media channels, reaching a large number of viewers.



[Click here](#) for Dr Amal Aljowder's video on mental health



[Click here](#) for Mr Abbas Almosawi's video on health and climate change



[Click here](#) for Ms Ruba Al-Omari's video on physical activity

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

The WHO Country Office in Bahrain takes great pride in its workforce, placing their health and well-being at the heart of its management strategy. For example, an office visit by Dr Sahar Maklad, Regional Staff Physician at the WHO Regional Office, was arranged in February to provide staff with information on the different activities and programmes of the Staff Health and Well-being Unit. The visit also included a wellness activity where the country office team painted pottery lanterns as a pre-celebration for the holy month of Ramadan.

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

This report showcases the work of the WHO Country Office in Bahrain in 2023 and demonstrates its commitment to achieving the health-related Sustainable Development Goals and the triple billion targets of WHO's Thirteenth General Programme of Work, which aim to have a measurable impact on people's health at country level. The WHO Country Office, in partnership with a range of stakeholders, adopted new and innovative approaches to drive measurable improvements in building integrated and people-centred health systems, preparing for and responding to health emergencies and addressing the root causes of disease to give everyone a fair chance of leading a healthy life and to meet the aspirations of WHO's regional *Vision 2023* to achieve Health for All by All.

