JUL-DEC 2024 Volume 4

WHO BAHRAIN NEWSLETTER

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Painting of a school student during the Northern Governorate Healthy Governorate Evaluation



Bahrain





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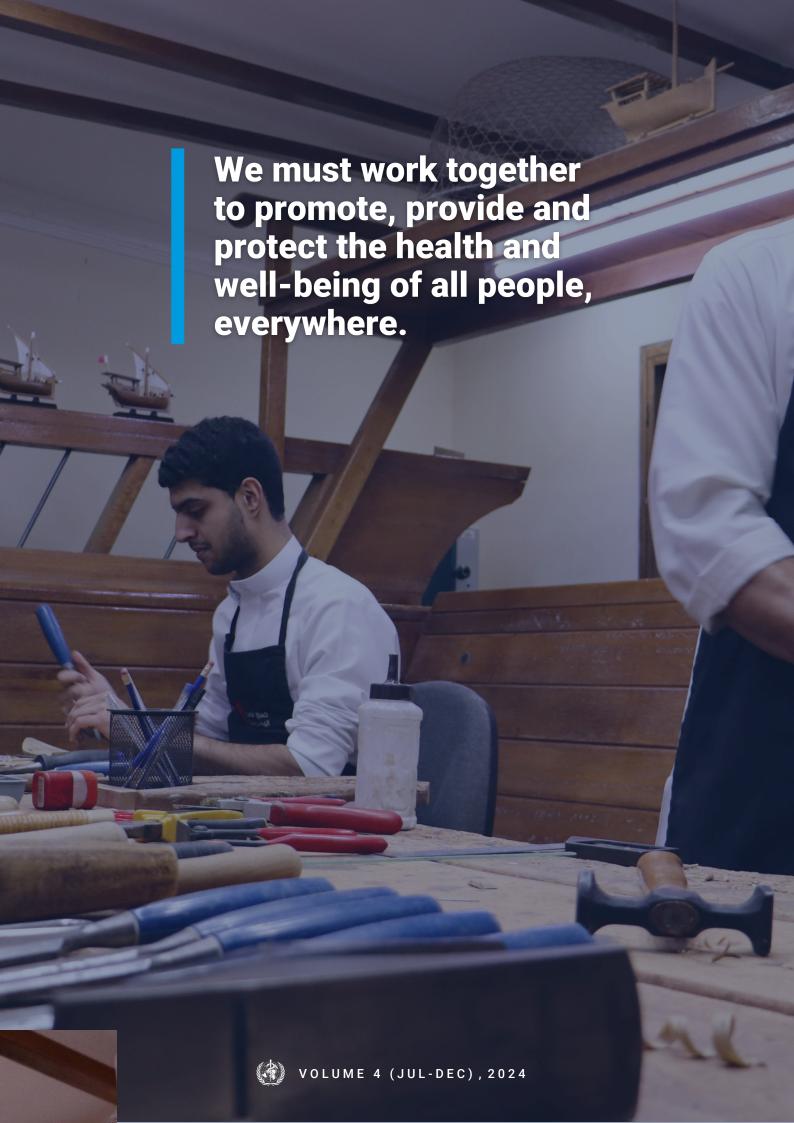
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Message from the WHO Representative in Bahrain

I am pleased to present the fourth edition of WHO Bahrain's newsletter. This newsletter highlights our progress between July and December 2024 in meeting the triple billion targets of the WHO Thirteenth General Programme of Work 2019–2023 and the health-related Sustainable Development Goals.

The quest for universal health coverage underpins all of our efforts. This means everyone should be able to access the health care services they need, when and where they need them, without risking financial hardship. However, antimicrobial resistance (AMR) makes common infections no longer treatable by drugs and poses a serious challenge to achieving this goal. On this account, we accelerated efforts to turn the tide against AMR by strengthening surveillance, providing training and building capacity, and raising public awareness.

At the same time, we continued to boost core health emergency preparedness and response capacities to ensure our health system is resilient and ready for future health challenges, from severe weather events to outbreaks and pandemics. Efforts in this regard included organizing a three-day refresher training workshop on Epidemic Intelligence from Open Sources (EIOS) to build a community of well-trained public health intelligence professionals in Bahrain and improve health threat detection and response at the national level.

We also gained momentum in addressing the challenge of noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) by increasing health promotion campaigns, encouraging increased physical activity and healthy diets, and enhancing NCD screening and treatment. Moreover, there is much to be proud of in our work on improving urban health. We have been supporting the Capital Governorate and the American University of Bahrain in achieving the Healthy Governorate and Health-Promoting University recognition, documenting lessons learned in our efforts to guide other countries in the Region and beyond.

Member States approved a new vision for health and well-being in the Eastern Mediterranean at the October session of the WHO Regional Committee. This vision incorporates lessons from the past, the realities of the present, and our aspirations for the future. If we are to achieve this vision, we must work together to promote, provide and protect health. I am grateful for our partnerships with the Government of Bahrain, United Nations agencies, academia, civil society and the private sector. Working together, we can fulfil the vision of health for all in Bahrain.

Dr Tasnim Atatrah WHO Representative in Bahrain



We are working toward achieving health beyond borders through action, access, and equity.

Dr Tasnim Atatrah WHO Representative in Bahrain





The 71st session of the WHO Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean (RC71), held from 14 to 17 October in Doha, Qatar, brought together the Region's 22 countries and territories. Dr Lulwa Showaiter, the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Health, led the Bahraini delegation, which also included Dr Samya Bahram, the Assistant Undersecretary for Public Health, and Mrs Ameera Nooh, the Head of the International Relations Section.

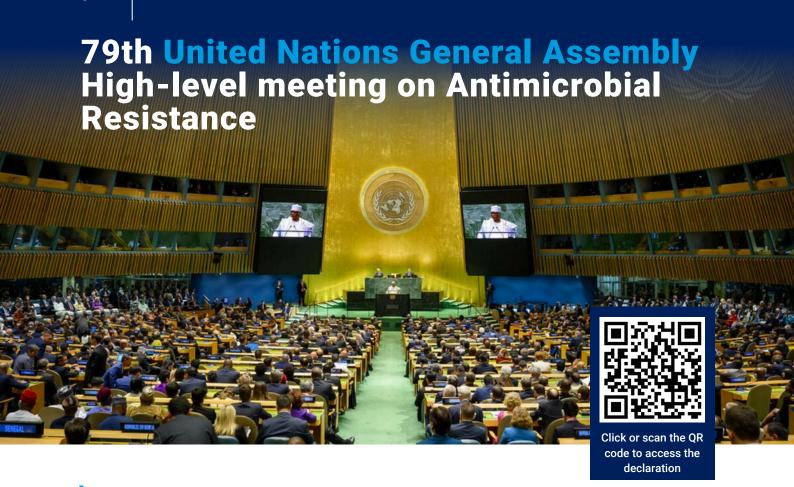
The Bahraini delegation actively participated in discussions about technical papers and draft resolutions from trauma and mental health needs in emergency settings, to antimicrobial resistance (AMR), immunization, and the digitalization of health information systems. These discussions paved the way for the adoption of landmark action plans at the session's conclusion, including the regional action plan for mental health and psychosocial support in emergencies and the regional strategy for enhancing and digitalizing health information systems. The Committee also endorsed a resolution promoting collaborative action to accelerate the response to AMR in the Eastern Mediterranean Region.

One defining feature of RC71 was the formal endorsement of the WHO Strategic Operational Plan, which covers the Regional Office's work for the next four years. Additionally, the Committee approved the Regional Director's three flagship initiatives. These initiatives will serve as accelerators for the WHO's Strategic Operational Plan in three key areas: expanding equitable access to essential medicines, vaccines, and medical products, investing in a more resilient health workforce, and scaling up public health action on substance use.

A series of side events were also held, including a special event on the WHO Investment Round at the Museum of Islamic Art.

This event was part of global efforts to mobilize predictable and flexible resources from a broader base of donors for WHO's core work from 2025 to 2028. WHO's first Investment Round was launched on the eve of the Seventy-Seventh World Health Assembly in May 2024.





26 SEPTEMBER 2024, NEW YORK, UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Global leaders have approved a political declaration at the 79th United Nations General Assembly High-level Meeting on Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR). The declaration recognizes AMR as an urgent global threat that impacts the health of humans, animals, plants, and the environment and threatens food safety and economic development. It dictates a clear set of global targets, including reducing the estimated 4.95 million human deaths associated with bacterial AMR annually

ANTIMICROBIAL RESISTANCE COUNTRY SELF-ASSESSMENT UNDERWAY IN BAHRAIN WITH WHO SUPPORT

The Ministry of Health submitted the eighth round of the Tracking AMR Country Self-Assessment Survey 2024 (TrACSS) in close coordination with WHO Bahrain. The TrACSS is an annual country self-assessment survey that monitors countries' progress in implementing their national action plans on antimicrobial resistance (AMR) per the Global Action Plan on AMR.

by 10% by 2030. The declaration also calls for all countries to develop and sustainably finance national AMR action plans by 2030, setting a target of \$100 million in international financing to help at least 60% of countries implement their national action plans.

Similarly, acknowledging the reality that preventable infections drive antibiotic use in many countries, the declaration sets a target of 90% of countries meeting the WHO's minimal requirements for national infection prevention and control programmes in health care facilities and 100% of countries having basic water, sanitation, and hygiene in all health care facilities, by 2030.

Another target included in the declaration is for at least 70% of antibiotics used globally to belong to the WHO Access group by 2030, which consists primarily of antibiotics with minimal side effects and the potential to cause AMR.

Survey questions apply a One Health perspective covering the human, animal, agri-food, and environment sectors.

Click or scan the QR code to access previous rounds of country self assessment surveys



WHO Representative headlines workshop on AWaRe antibiotic book at the University of Bahrain





As part of WHO Bahrain's ongoing efforts to tackle antimicrobial resistance (AMR), Dr Tasnim Atatrah, WHO Representative in Bahrain, participated in a workshop hosted by the College of Health and Sports Sciences at the University of Bahrain, to promote the recently published WHO AwaRe antibiotic book. The WHO AwaRe antibiotic book is a new gold-standard resource that provides health workers with evidence-based guidance on the appropriate prescribing and dispensing of antibiotics in primary health care and hospital settings.

The workshop was inaugurated by Dr Leena Khonji, Dean of the College of Health and Sports Sciences. It featured keynote speakers such as H.E. Dr Jameela Alsalman, the newly appointed Chair of the WHO Strategic and Technical Advisory Group on Antimicrobial Resistance (STAG-AMR) and a member of the Shura Council, and Dr Tasnim Atatrah, WHO Representative in Bahrain. The technical discussions informed around 100 newly employed doctors in Government Hospitals, Primary Healthcare Centres, and private hospitals on the critical role of the AWaRe antibiotic book in addressing AMR and, more broadly, contributing to achieving universal health coverage.

Organizing this workshop was part of the University of Bahrain pharmacists' winning campaign proposal in the WHO competition on "Tackling the misuse and overuse of antibiotics in the Eastern Mediterranean Region." The WHO Regional Office launched this competition in the leadup to World AMR Awareness Week 2023. The University of Bahrain pharmacists were among the eight winners chosen from different countries in the Region and have been receiving support from WHO to implement their proposal.

WHO Bahrain boosts fight against antimicrobial resistance with interactive booth at AMR conference



WHO participated in the 2nd Bahrain International Conference of Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) and Infectious Diseases, organized by the Bahrain Medical Society's Infectious Diseases and Microbiology Association. Held in the presence of the Chairman of the Supreme Council of Health, H.E. Lieutenant General Dr Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdullah Al Khalifa, the conference provided a platform for more than 650 healthcare professionals, researchers, policymakers, and industry leaders to discuss and explore the latest advancements in the field of infectious diseases and AMR.

The conference featured a series of lectures and cutting-edge scientific papers, most notably from Dr Hala Amer, Regional Advisor for AMR at the WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean, who outlined the AMR burden in the Eastern Mediterranean and the challenges and opportunities for accelerated action. WHO Bahrain organized a booth in collaboration with the winning students in the AMR Regional competition, where visitors of various ages learned about the WHO AWaRe antibiotic book and took part in interactive games and awareness-raising resources featuring testimonials from survivors of drug-resistant infections.

Furthermore, during the conference, WHO Bahrain recognized the remarkable contributions of Shura Council member H.E. Dr Jameela Alsalman in the fight against AMR. Dr Tasnim Atatrah, WHO Representative, presented H.E. Dr Alsalman with an achievement award in honour of her recent appointment as Chair of the WHO Strategic and Technical Advisory Group on Antimicrobial Resistance (STAG-AMR), the principal advisory group to WHO on AMR. The STAG-AMR, which consists of 25 global AMR experts, is mandated to advise the WHO Director-General, Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, and the AMR Division on overall global policies and strategies to address AMR within the context of human health while considering relevant World Health Assembly resolutions and decisions.

WHO Bahrain recognizes winning students in WHO Regional competition on antimicrobial resistance



26 NOVEMBER 2024, SAKHIR, BAHRAIN

WHO Bahrain jointly organized an awarding ceremony with the University of Bahrain to recognize the winning nursing students in the WHO competition on "Tackling the misuse and overuse of antibiotics in the Eastern Mediterranean Region."

During the ceremony, Dr Tasnim Atatrah, WHO Representative, Dr Fuad Al-Ansari, President of the University of Bahrain, and Dr Leena Khonji, Dean of the College of Health and Sport Sciences at the University of Bahrain, emphasized the critical role which young health professionals play in preserving the efficacy of current antibiotics

and praised the winning students for acting as change agents. The winning students were presented with certificates of achievement and received in-kind prizes such as customized lab coats, notebooks, mousepads and pins.

The WHO Regional Office launched the competition in September 2023 in the lead-up to World AMR Awareness Week. The University of Bahrain's nursing students were among the four winners chosen from the Region under the first track of the competition, which required contestants to film a short video on the WHO AWaRe Antibiotic Book.



WHO presents on Medical Tourism at the National Health Regulatory Authority conference



17-19 OCTOBER 2024, MANAMA, BAHRAIN

WHO participated in the 4th National Health Regulatory Authority (NHRA) Conference and Exhibition, held in the presence of the Chairman of the Supreme Council of Health, H.E. Lieutenant General Dr Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdullah Al Khalifa. The theme of the event was "Bahrain: A Medical Tourism Destination" showcasing Bahrain as a medical tourism destination.

David Clarke, Team Leader of Health Systems Governance and Stewardship at WHO Headquarters was among the keynote speakers, presenting on medical tourism.

Mr Clarke's session focused on the definitions and types of medical tourism, enabling environments and challenges for medical tourism and potential regulatory issues faced.

Bangladesh Embassy hosts International Migrants Day

18 DECEMBER 2024, MANAMA, BAHRAIN

WHO took part in an event on "International Migrants Day", which was organized by the Bangladesh Embassy in Bahrain, in the presence of the Bangladeshi community, Government entities and International Organizations.

Inaugurated by Mr A.K.M. Mohiuddin Kayes, the Chargé d'Affaires a.i. of the Embassy of Bangladesh, the event is marked each year to advocate for migrants' rights, including their right to health.

Ms Rayan Butaita, Public Health Associate Officer, highlighted the right of everyone, everywhere to health at every step of their migration journey.



WHO and University of Bahrain team up to raise awareness on breast cancer

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month



"NO ONE SHOULD FACE BREAST CANCER ALONE"

31 OCTOBER 2024, MANAMA, BAHRAIN

Breast cancer is the most common cancer globally, with around 2.3 million new cases every year. In commemoration of Breast Cancer Awareness Month, WHO Bahrain and the University of Bahrain hosted an awareness-raising event to promote early detection, timely diagnosis, and comprehensive treatment.

Dr Tasnim Atatrah, WHO Representative, and Dr Leena Khonji, Dean of the College of Health and Sports Sciences at the University of Bahrain, inaugurated the event. In her opening remarks, Dr Atatrah emphasized that reducing the global burden of breast cancer required strategic investments in early detection, timely diagnosis, and access to comprehensive management as part of universal health coverage. Dr Khonji echoed those sentiments, underlining the importance of amplifying the conversation on breast cancer, educating medical professionals, and providing unwavering support to those impacted by the disease.

Nine interactive booths served to educate the public about breast cancer,

including early identification and the signs and symptoms associated with the disease. The booths instructed visitors on breast self-examination techniques and offered educational materials to over 100 community members.



WHO presents at 'Scientific Forum on the role of Nursing and Midwifery in building the health sector'



"WOMEN ARE VALUABLE PARTNERS IN BUILDING THE COUNTRY"

18 DECEMBER 2024, RIFFA, BAHRAIN

WHO participated in a 'Scientific Forum on the role of Nursing and Midwifery in building the health sector in the Kingdom of Bahrain', which took place at the Royal University for Women in Bahrain.

The forum was organized by the Bahrain Nursing and Midwifery Society and Royal University for Women under the theme of "Women are valuable partners in building the country". The event was inaugurated by the President of the Bahrain Nursing and Midwifery Society, Dr Jameela Mukhaimer, and the President of the Royal University for Women, Professor Riyad Hamzah. The event was attended by H.E. Dr Ali Fakhro, former Minister of Health and Education in Bahrain and many other senior officials.

Dr Deena Alkhamis, Public Health Officer at the WHO Bahrain Country Office presented on WHO's regional perspective on nursing and midwifery, while Dr Amelia Latu Afuhaamango Tuipulotu, WHO Chief Nursing Officer presented on WHO's global perspective and the Nursing and Midwifery



Global Community of Practice, a virtual network established by the World Health Organization to enable collaboration and networking between nurses and midwives globally and to share professional knowledge and experiences.

Celebration of 50 years of EPI



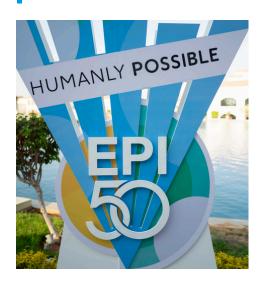
Bahrain received an award at the Celebration of 50 years of Essential Programme of Immunization (EPI). The award recognized Bahrain for its new vaccine introduction and for Measles and Rubella elimination.

The newly introduced vaccine combats the human papillomavirus (HPV), which is a primary cause of cervical cancer. Cervical cancer is the fourth most common cancer in women. In 2022, an estimated 660 000 women were diagnosed with cervical cancer worldwide and about 350 000 women died from the disease.

In Bahrain, the HPV vaccine was rolled out in 2023 to girls and boys, between the ages of 12-13 years old.



Bahrain submits progress report on measles and rubella elimination



In 2022, Bahrain was among the four countries in the Eastern Mediterranean Region that achieved the elimination of measles and rubella.

To maintain the elimination status, WHO Bahrain provided technical support to Bahrain's National Verification Committee in submitting the annual progress report to the Regional Verification Commission for Measles and Rubella (RVC-MR).

The Regional Verification Commission for Measles and Rubella (RVC-MR) was established in 2018 to provide technical support to countries close to eliminating measles and rubella, document elimination status, and build the capacity of national verification committees and secretariats.

Ministry of Health participates in the introduction and roll out of EMFLU 2.0



23-25 SEPTEMBER 2024, AMMAN, JORDAN

The WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean held a three-day training workshop on introducing EMFLU 2.0 and rolling out: sentinel data reporting and capacity building on data management.

Delivered by the Infectious Hazard Prevention and Preparedness Unit at the WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean, the training introduced 4 participants from the Ministry of Health to the regional platform for sharing of epidemiological and virological data on influenza and respiratory viruses in the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region.

EMFLU presents epidemiological and virological data on the trend, spread, intensity and impact of influenza and respiratory viruses in the Region.

Since its launch in 2016, the platform has been used at national and regional levels to monitor trends of circulating influenza viruses. Bahrain has been reporting influenza data regularly on EMFLU from influenza-like illness (ILI) and severe acute respiratory infection (SARI) sentinel sites.

Detecting and responding early to influenza outbreaks is essential to mitigate impact, and one way to achieve this is by ensuring the availability of good surveillance data.

The upgraded regional platform to EMFLU 2.0 aims to allow for the timely collection, management and analysis of data to assist policy-makers in implementing efficient and timely preparedness and response measures.

This upgrade aims to strengthen the Region's integrated surveillance efforts.

Ministry of Health experts hone skills in WHO refresher training on Epidemic **Intelligence from Open Sources**



21-23 JULY 2024, MANAMA, BAHRAIN

Under the guidance of the Ministry of Health, WHO Bahrain held a three-day refresher training workshop on Epidemic Intelligence from Open Sources (EIOS). The workshop followed on from the in-person pilot training conducted in Bahrain in September 2022 and the virtual orientation session organized in January 2024.

Delivered by Dr Mohamed Fawzy, Surveillance Officer at the WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean, the workshop introduced 10 participants from the Ministry of Health to the concepts of public health intelligence and the EIOS initiative.

The participants also actively engaged in practical sessions focusing on the effective use of the EIOS system.

A field visit to the Public Health Directorate was organized following the workshop's conclusion. This visit complemented the refresher training, allowing participants to explore the current integrated disease surveillance system and understand the importance of strengthening all surveillance system components, including event-based surveillance.

The EIOS initiative is a WHO-led partnership that aims to create a unified, all-hazards One Health approach to early detection, verification, assessment, and communication of public health threats using publicly available information. At the heart of this initiative is creating a community of practice for public health intelligence supported by a web-based system that collates hundreds of thousands of articles and categorizes them.

The EIOS initiative is hosted at the WHO Hub for Pandemic and Epidemic Intelligence in Berlin, Germany.





20-21 NOVEMBER 2024, MANAMA, BAHRAIN

WHO took part in the Bahrain Diabetes and Obesity Conference, held under the patronage of Her Royal Highness Princess Sabeeka bint Ibrahim Al Khalifa, Consort of His Majesty the King and President of the Supreme Council for Women.

Organized by the Bahrain Diabetes Society under the theme "Diabetes and Well-being," the two-day event featured lectures, workshops, and panel discussions on the social determinants of health, diabetes and women, obesity, and mental health. The conference also included launching WHO's arabic book on hyperglycaemia during pregnancy, which aims to educate women and health care providers across the Middle East and North Africa.



A notable highlight was the recorded video message from Dr Hanan Balkhy, WHO Regional Director of the Eastern Mediterranean, at the conference's opening, where she commended Bahrain's efforts to drive progress on diabetes prevention and control. WHO's engagement was also demonstrated through the presentation delivered by Ms Shanine Mohebat, Health Promotion Officer at WHO Bahrain, on WHO's role in coordinating and promoting the global fight against noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals target 3.4, which calls for a reduction in premature mortality from NCDs by a third by 2030.



9 JULY 2024, RIFFA, BAHRAIN

WHO Bahrain, led by Dr Tasnim Atatrah, WHO Representative in Bahrain, visited the smoking cessation clinic at the Shaikh Abdulla Bin Khalid Al Khalifa Health Centre.

The visit was part of WHO's ongoing efforts to strengthen national tobacco cessation systems and alleviate the global burden of tobacco-related diseases.

During the visit, the WHO Bahrain team was briefed on the specialized outpatient treatment services provided in the clinic to help individuals quit smoking.

WHO Bahrain also capitalized on the opportunity to inform the clinic staff of WHO's release of the first-ever clinical treatment guideline for tobacco cessation in adults. The guideline provides technical guidance on a thorough set of tobacco cessation interventions for adults, including behavioural support delivered by health care providers, digital cessation interventions and pharmacological treatments.



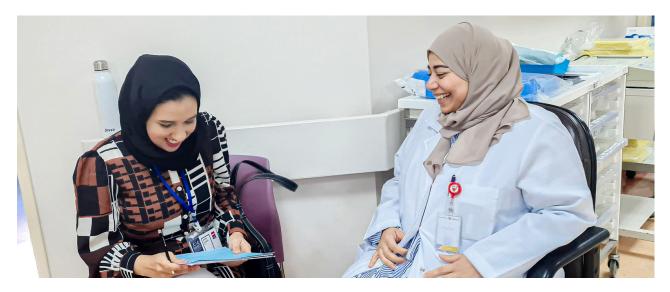


24-28 NOVEMBER 2024, MANAMA, BAHRAIN

In collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Government Hospitals, WHO Bahrain conducted a five-day introductory training workshop on the WHO/UNICEF Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative (BFHI). The training aimed to provide health workforce professionals with the knowledge, skills, and competence to protect, promote and support breastfeeding in facilities. It was also designed to develop a pool of trainers in Bahrain who can conduct up-to-date and practical training on breastfeeding.

The training was inaugurated by Dr Tasnim Atatrah, WHO Representative, Dr Samya Ali Bahram, Assistant Undersecretary for Public Health, and Dr Raja'a Al Yousif, Deputy CEO for Government Hospitals. It brought together around 40 medical professionals directly involved in breastfeeding, such as physicians, midwives, and nurses. Participants were from the Ministry of Health, Primary Healthcare Centres, and public and private hospitals.

Launched in 1991, the BFHI is a global effort to implement practices that protect, promote and support breastfeeding, which has many health benefits for both the mother and infant. The initiative is based on integrating the Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding (the Ten Steps) as the standard across all maternity care facilities.







The Capital and the Northern governorates received joint regional and country evaluation teams in August and November 2024, respectively, to assess their eligibility for the Healthy Governorate status. The evaluation teams included WHO experts from the regional and country offices and Ministry of Health representatives. The team assessing the Capital governorate also comprised experts from the WHO Collaborating Centre for Healthy Cities in Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

During the field visits, the joint evaluation teams visited several healthy city implementation sites, where they observed programmes, interacted with community members, and reviewed documents to understand the governorates' role in creating supportive and enabling urban environments for health. Cities achieving over 80% receive a Healthy City certificate from the WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean and are re-evaluated every three years.



On the road to becoming Healthy



These in-country evaluations came after a joint technical team from the Ministry of Health and WHO Bahrain visited the Capital governorate office in May 2024 and the Northern governorate office in July 2024 to guide the completion of the self-assessment, the initial step required to qualify for the Healthy Cities status. The self-assessment involves 80 indicators across nine domains, including community organization and mobilization, intersectoral collaboration, availability of information, and environmental health.

The Capital and Northern governorates' designation process was initiated in 2023 by signing formal letters of collaboration with WHO Bahrain. These letters provided a framework for expanding the Healthy Cities programme's implementation beyond individual cities to the entirety of the governorates.





20 AUGUST 2024, RIFFA, BAHRAIN

A joint regional and country evaluation team visited the American
University of Bahrain (AUBH) to assess its eligibility for HealthPromoting University status. The team included WHO experts from
the regional and country offices and representatives from the

Ministry of Health, Higher Education Council, and WHO Collaborating Centre for Healthy Cities in Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

During the field visit, the evaluation team interacted with AUBH staff and students, observed programmes, and reviewed documents to understand the university's role in creating and promoting a health-conducive working and learning environment. This visit came after the Ministry of Health and WHO Bahrain toured AUBH in May 2024 to guide the completion of the self-assessment, which is the initial step towards the Health-Promoting University designation.

AUBH will be the sixth academic institution in Bahrain to receive this recognition. 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 in 2023.



WHO, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Higher Education Council, conducted a one-day workshop at the American University of Bahrain to introduce the Health-Promoting Universities programme to academic institutions nationwide.

The workshop was inaugurated by Dr Tasnim Atatrah, WHO Representative, and Dr Wafa AlSharbati, Director of Health Promotion, and delivered by experts from the

WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean. It allowed more than 40 participants from different academic institutions to gain first-hand access to the Health-Promoting Universities programme, exchange ideas and experiences, and learn more about the designation process. This workshop followed an introductory session held in September 2022 as part of the field visit to Busaiteen/Al-Sayah to evaluate its eligibility for the Healthy City status.

The WHO Health-Promoting Universities programme targets the social determinants of health in academic settings, enhancing health and well-being among students, staff, and the wider community. To qualify, a university must commit to activities that promote health equity and complete an assessment. The assessment involves a set of indicators across six domains, including general indicators, the university environment, promotion of healthy lifestyles, safety and emergency preparedness and response, health development, and community participation and sustainability. Universities reflect on the indicators, and a joint WHO regional and country evaluation team conducts a field visit. Universities achieving over 80% receive the designation certificate and are re-evaluated every three years.

WHO recognizes American University of Bahrain as a Health-Promoting University



22 DECEMBER 2024, RIFFA, BAHRAIN

In the presence of the Higher Education Council and the Ministry of Health, WHO Bahrain presented a certificate to the American University of Bahrain (AUBH), recognizing them as a Health-Promoting University.

The certificate was presented by Dr Tasnim Atatrah, WHO Representative in Bahrain, in the presence of Dr Diana AlJahromi, Secretary General of the Higher Education Council, and Dr Wafa AlSharbati, Director of Health Promotion at the Ministry of Health, to Dr Bradley J. Cook, President of the American University of Bahrain.

AUBH is the sixth academic institution in Bahrain to receive this distinction. In 2023, five universities in Bahrain were

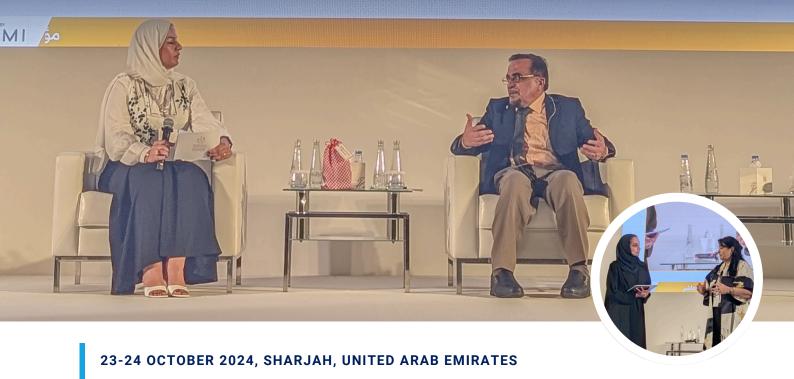
recognized as Health-Promoting Universities. These are the Ahlia University, Arabian Gulf University, Kingdom University, Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland - Medical University of Bahrain, and University of Technology Bahrain.

The WHO Health-Promoting Universities programme recognizes higher education institutions as important contributors to promote and protect the health of students and staff, create health-promoting working, learning and living environments, promote health promotion and be a great resource and partner for health in the local, national and global communities.

A Health promoting university should meet at least 80% of the indicators recognized by WHO. The recognition is valid for a period of three years and universities must demonstrate on-going efforts to improve upon and achieve the indicators.



WHO takes centre stage at 'My Health' conference in Sharjah

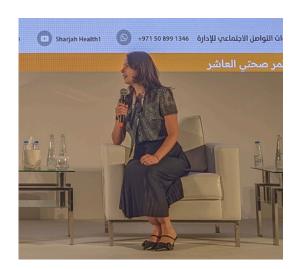


The 10th edition of the 'My Health' conference was held from 23-24 October at the University of Sharjah, United Arab Emirates, under the patronage of Her Highness Sheikha Jawaher bint Mohammed Al Qasimi, Chairperson of the Supreme Council for Family Affairs (SCFA).

Thirty-six experts in physical and mental health, lifestyle, sports, and nutrition participated in the event. WHO experts at regional and country levels were also among the conference attendees. Dr Samar Elfeky, Regional Adviser for Health Promotion and Social Determinants of Health, WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean (EMRO), discussed the WHO Health-Promoting Schools initiative, highlighting Sharjah's advancements in its implementation.

Dr Ayoub Al-Jawaldeh, Regional Adviser for Nutrition, WHO EMRO, discussed the escalating burden of overweight and obesity in the Eastern Mediterranean Region and its linkages to changing dietary patterns.

Dr Deena Alkhamis, Public Health Officer at WHO Bahrain, participated in a panel discussion on healthy settings, which Dr Kawthar Al-Eid, President of Bahrain Health Friends Society, moderated. Dr Alkhamis shared Bahrain's experience scaling up the implementation of the WHO Health-Promoting Universities initiative, reflecting on best practices and lessons learned to guide countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council and the Eastern Mediterranean region in their journey towards healthier learning environments.





7 NOVEMBER 2024, MANAMA, BAHRAIN

WHO Bahrain joins efforts to mark National Tree Week



WHO Bahrain participated in the planting-tree campaigns held by the Northern governorate and Capital Municipal Council to commemorate National Tree Week, which takes place annually during the third week of October. In a show of collaboration and unity, the WHO Bahrain team, headed by Dr Tasnim Atatrah, WHO Representative, joined government officials and the general public on 7 November in planting seedlings to help preserve the environment and promote sustainability.

The National Tree Week initiative was launched by His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister, to support the national plan for afforestation, which aims to double the tree count to 3.6 million by 2035, and in turn, contribute to the Kingdom's commitments under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. This initiative aligns with the WHO Healthy Cities programme, which aims to improve the health of populations by involving communities, addressing health outside the health sector and enhancing collaboration across sectors and society.



WHO Global Health Days

Global public health days and weeks offer great potential to raise awareness and understanding about health issues and mobilize support for action, from the local community to the international stage. There are many world days observed throughout the year related to specific health issues or conditions. Here is a snap shot of some of the days that were marked by WHO Bahrain.



WHO Bahrain celebrates with Ministry of Interior

17 SEPTEMBER 2024 MANAMA, BAHRAIN

Patient safety is a global health priority and an essential component of strengthening health systems to achieve universal health coverage. On the occasion of World Patient Safety Day (17 September), WHO Bahrain organized an awareness-raising event, in collaboration with the Ministry of Interior, to draw attention to the critical importance of correct and timely diagnosis in ensuring patient safety and improving health outcomes, in line with this year's theme "Improving diagnosis for patient safety."

Dr Tasnim Atatrah, WHO Representative, inaugurated the event. In her address, she underlined that improving diagnostic safety was a shared responsibility that extended beyond health care providers. Policymakers, health care leaders, and the general public all have roles to play in fostering an environment where safe care is the norm. Dr Atatrah also reiterated WHO's commitment to working with all partners and stakeholders so that every person receives the safe, dignified, and compassionate care they deserve.

The event brought together about 20 health professionals. It featured an interactive presentation delivered by WHO Bahrain's team to raise awareness of World Patient Safety Day and enhance understanding of the importance of promoting the active engagement of all relevant stakeholders in shaping the diagnostic process.

WHO Bahrain marks World Diabetes Day

On World Diabetes Day (14 November), WHO Bahrain joined partners to raise awareness about diabetes as a critical global public health issue and promote collective action to improve the prevention, diagnosis and management of the condition.



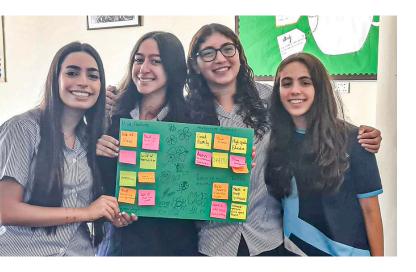
WHO attended an advocacy event held by the Southern governorate to mark World Diabetes Day. The event was held under the patronage of His Highness Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali Al Khalifa, the Southern Governor, and H.E. Lieutenant General Dr Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdullah Al Khalifa, Chairman of the Supreme Council of Health and President of the Bahrain Diabetes Society. Dr Tasnim Atatrah, WHO Representative, and Dr Samar Elfeky, Regional Adviser for Health Promotion and Social Determinants of Health at the WHO Regional Office, were among the key attendees. The event featured an informative lecture on the practical measures for preventing, diagnosing, and treating diabetes. It also included an awareness-raising exhibition featuring thematic zones to educate diabetic patients on self-care behaviours, including healthy eating and being active.



Dr Tasnim Atatrah, WHO Representative, participated in an awareness-raising event organized by the Northern governorate to mark World Diabetes Day. Organized under the patronage of H.E. Ali bin Sheikh Abdulhussein Al-Asfour, the Northern Governor, 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. Among the key attendees were Dr Amer Ibrahim Al Derazi, President of the Bahrain Medical Society, and Professor Faisal Al-Mulla, Sports Advisor in the Healthy Cities programme, together with community members and school students. The event featured an awareness-raising exhibition, free medical examinations, and a walkathon.

World Mental Health Day

In commemoration of World Mental Health Day, WHO Bahrain united with partners to raise awareness of mental health issues and mobilize efforts to improve mental health in the workplace, in alignment with this year's theme, "Mental health at work."



8 OCTOBER 2024, HAMALA, BAHRAIN

WHO Bahrain delivered a lecture on the principles and drivers of mental health at the British School of Bahrain in preparation for World Mental Health Day. Approximately 20 students between the ages of 15 and 18 years attended. The lecture used interactive techniques to raise the students' awareness of mental health issues and discuss practical strategies for maintaining good mental health in their personal lives and school environments. The discussion allowed the students to reflect on World Mental Health Day's 2024 theme and explore available WHO resources designed to support healthy working environments.

10 OCTOBER 2024, MANAMA, BAHRAIN

The creation and enjoyment of the arts can boost mental health and well-being. In keeping with this year's theme of World Mental Health Day, WHO Bahrain's team engaged in a wellness activity where each member painted a portrait of a co-worker to promote healthy, supportive, and safe work environments. This activity strengthened bonds between all team members and allowed them to showcase their artistic and creative skills.

What are you

grateful for?





23 OCTOBER 2024, MANAMA, BAHRAIN

WHO Bahrain held an awareness-raising event to mark World Mental Health Day in collaboration with the Arabian Gulf University. Dr Tasnim Atatrah, WHO Representative, and Professor Waheeb Al Nasser, Vice President for Academic Affairs at Arabian Gulf University, opened the event. The University's faculty and WHO Bahrain delivered lectures on healthy workplaces and mental health support strategies for health care workers, keeping with the theme of World Mental Health Day. In addition, WHO Bahrain set up a dynamic booth where students practised mindfulness techniques, such as cultivating gratitude, to lessen stress and anxiety.



International Day of Persons with **Disabilities**

WHO Bahrain celebrates International Day of Persons with Disabilities with the community as a whole.



3 DECEMBER 2024, HAMALA, BAHRAIN

WHO Bahrain attended an advocacy event organized by the Higher Committee for the Care of Persons with Disabilities to commemorate the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. The event was organized in the presence of H.E. Mr Osama bin Saleh Al Alawi, Minister of Social Development and Chairman of the Higher Committee for the Care of Persons with Disabilities. Government officials, persons with disabilities and organizations of persons with disabilities came together for the event to champion positive change in their community and promote a disability-inclusive, accessible and sustainable world for all.

8 DECEMBER 2024, MANAMA, BAHRAIN

WHO Bahrain collaborated with the Ministry of Social Development and the Higher Committee for the Care of Persons with Disabilities to commemorate the International Day of Persons with Disabilities 2024.

Taking place under the theme "United for a Better Tomorrow," over 100 participants came together and participated in activities, including a collaborative art project and painting traditional Bahraini pottery.



WHO Bahrain marks UN Day in Bahrain



30 OCTOBER 2024, MANAMA, BAHRAIN

Organizations and offices of the United Nations (UN) system in Bahrain celebrated UN Day on 30 October. The celebration was attended by officials of the Government of Bahrain, the Diplomatic Corps, and UN partners. It featured initiatives undertaken recently by the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) in Bahrain to advance the Sustainable Development Agenda.

Dr Tasnim Atatrah, WHO Representative, together with the WHO Bahrain team, joined the celebration. A key highlight was the organization of a WHO Bahrain booth, to raise awareness of WHO's on-the-ground work and key achievements.



19 SEPTEMBER 2024, MANAMA, BAHRAIN

WHO Bahrain, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, organized a consensusbuilding workshop on the WHO-Bahrain Country Cooperation Strategy 2024–2026. The workshop addressed ways to strengthen cooperation between WHO and Bahrain in mutually agreed-upon priority areas, guided by national health priorities, the Sustainable Development Agenda 2030, and WHO's General Programme of Work.

WHO and Bahrain have a long-standing and trusting partnership which has played a pivotal role in promoting a quality, resilient and equitable health system... The Country Cooperation Strategy 2024-2026 is an important step to take our partnership to the next level.

Dr Tasnim Atatrah, WHO Representative





Dr Tasnim Atatrah, WHO Representative, and Dr Samya Ali Bahram, Assistant Undersecretary for Public Health, inaugurated the event. Workshop participants included government officials from the health sector, such as the Ministry of Health, Primary Healthcare Centres, and Government Hospitals, and representatives from the Supreme Council of Environment, Ministry of Social Development, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Ministry of Sustainable Development.

Delivered by WHO experts, the workshop identified five priority areas for WHO support for the next three years. They are: (1) promoting health through transformative action on environmental challenges and the social determinants of health; (2) expanding coverage of essential health services to achieve universal health coverage; (3) protecting health by taking action to strengthen health emergency prevention, preparedness, response and resilience; (4) reinforcing the use of evidence and translating it into interventions and national decision-making; and (5) strengthening health diplomacy, collaboration and partnership, advocacy and strategic communications.

The workshop followed on from the Ministry of Health and WHO Bahrain strategic and operational planning workshop, held on 15–16 November 2023 to foster a participatory dialogue on WHO's technical cooperation with Bahrain and reflect on joint work plan activities for 2022–2023.



WHO Bahrain joined a roundtable hosted by the Royal University for Women on the future of Bahrain's health sector from research and educational perspectives. The roundtable was held under the patronage of the Supreme Council of Health Chairman, H.E. Lieutenant General Dr Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdullah Al Khalifa and brought together health professionals, medical education leaders, and representatives from United Nations organizations.

Professor Riyad Hamzah, President of the University, inaugurated the event by emphasizing the importance of health research and medical education in resolving public health challenges. Mr Khaled El Mekwad, the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Bahrain, commended the efforts the leaders and decision-makers in supporting the country's health system.

Dr Tasnim Atatrah, WHO Representative introduced WHO's ongoing efforts to strengthen research for health and build a resilient and sustainable health workforce, including enhancing women's participation in health research. Dr Atatrah also reflected on the existing regional barriers to conducting health research and shared WHO's recommendations to strengthen research for health.

The UNCT welcomes the Assistant Secretary-General for Youth Affairs



The United Nations (UN) Resident Coordinator Office organized a meeting between the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) and Dr Felipe Paullier, UN Assistant Secretary-General for Youth Affairs.

During the meeting, Dr Paullier updated the UNCT on the establishment of the UN Youth Office and its various initiatives to lead engagement and advocacy for advancing youth issues across the UN.

Dr Tasnim Atatrah, WHO Representative highlighted WHO Bahrain's ongoing efforts to build and cement partnerships with wide-ranging actors, including the government, academia, and sister UN agencies. She also highlighted WHO Bahrain's commitment to creating well-trained and qualified young public health leaders, capitalizing on the WHO internship and UN Volunteers programmes.

Unlocking potential: WHO Bahrain takes centre stage at Youth City 2030

























blueprint to achiev





21 JULY-30 AUGUST 2024, SAKHIR, BAHRAIN

WHO Bahrain recognizes the importance of active and meaningful engagement with youth to achieve a healthier and sustainable future for all. WHO Bahrain participated in the 13th edition of Youth City 2030, a nationwide initiative that empowers and upskills young people by equipping them with the skills they need to better integrate into the labour market. The 13th edition was organized by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Labour Fund (Tamkeen) at the Exhibition World Bahrain, under the patronage of His Highness Sheikh Nasser bin Hamad Al Khalifa, His Majesty's Representative for Humanitarian Affairs and Youth Affairs and the Chairman of the Supreme Council for Youth and Sports.

A standout feature of Youth City 2030 was the booth organized by WHO Bahrain from 11 to 12 August in keeping with International Youth Day (12 August) to engage young people as partners and stakeholders and inspire them to become active changemakers. Two young professionals from WHO Bahrain managed the booth, fostering peer-to-peer learning. It featured interactive tools and activities to enhance the youth's understanding of sustainable development and the work of the World Health Organization. The booth also served as a platform to amplify and embed youth voices in health advocacy by encouraging young people to engage in a media campaign, leveraging their ideas and perspectives on maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Over two hundred young people visited the booth and interacted with the advocacy materials on display.



In another testament to WHO Bahrain's commitment to partnering with young people, Dr Tasnim Atatrah, WHO Representative, toured the Youth City on 29 August accompanied by Shaikha Deena bint Rashid Al Khalifa, Advisor Planning and Development at the Ministry of Youth Affairs.

During the tour, Dr Atatrah was briefed on Youth City's different programmes and training opportunities, including the media training and entertainment centre, which focused on building the skills of future journalists and broadcasters; the culture and arts centre, which cultivated young people's artistic talents; and the technology and science centre, which equipped youth with cutting-edge tech skills.

Scan or click the QR code:

Learn from youth as they share their perspective on health and well-being





Interning at WHO:

Yusuf Jalili on his experience with WHO Bahrain

Recognising the transformative potential of young people, WHO Bahrain is strengthening efforts to cultivate public health leaders capable of representing Bahrain on the global and regional stage.

In the following interview, Yusuf Jalili, a 20-year-old intern from the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland – Medical University of Bahrain, shares his experiences and highlights during his internship at the country office.



Can you tell us a bit about yourself and your background?

My name is Yusuf Jalili, and I'm 20 years old. I was born and raised in Bahrain. From a young age, my parents taught me the importance of giving back to the community. This, along with my realisation that medical professionals can make a significant impact, inspired me to pursue a career in medicine. I am currently a fourth-year medical student at the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland—Medical University of Bahrain.

In my free time, I enjoy reading about the latest health research, horse riding, table tennis, and cooking. Everything I do supports my dream of becoming a doctor who helps people in need.

How did you become involved with WHO?

Working for WHO has always been my dream. The Organization's work to improve public health is admirable. When my university announced an internship opportunity at WHO Bahrain, I applied immediately. I had my first-ever interview in May 2024 and was thrilled to be accepted. This internship has been a turning point for my career, exposing me to the dynamics of international organisations and equipping me with valuable skills and experiences. I'm grateful for the professional guidance and friendships I've gained.

What were your primary responsibilities during the internship?

As an intern, I worked on various tasks across technical areas like universal health coverage, health security, noncommunicable diseases, and health throughout the life course.

I helped organise training and advocacy events, compiled information for the country office's biannual newsletters, and helped create advocacy materials such as website articles.

I'm particularly proud of my role in the field visits with the Ministry of Health to support the Healthy Governorate designation for the Capital and Northern governorates.

Can you explain more about the university projects or any projects you worked on?

I am very interested in pursuing clinical and patient-centred research because it advances medical knowledge and improves patient outcomes. Currently, I'm collaborating on research about the risk factors of surgical site infections after caesarean sections. We hope to publish the study soon.

What advice would you give to WHO staff considering bringing interns on board?

The WHO internship programme is an excellent opportunity for medical students to learn about the Organization's work and enhance their public health knowledge. My advice would be to provide a comprehensive orientation on WHO's values, norms, and expectations for new interns. This would help enhance their internship experience and close the gap between their academic knowledge and practical requirements.

Do you have any advice for future interns joining WHO Bahrain?

Always be willing to learn, be attentive, responsive, and proactive. Look for ways to contribute and take initiative rather than waiting for tasks. Don't hesitate to ask questions and seek clarification from colleagues - they offer valuable insights and support. Build and maintain relationships with your colleagues and nurture them even after your time at WHO ends. Networking can shape your professional journey and open doors for future opportunities.

As we wrap up, is there anything else you'd like to add?

WHO is a fantastic place to intern, especially at the WHO Country Office in Bahrain. I want to thank my colleagues for their mentorship and guidance throughout my internship. I encourage anyone considering an internship at WHO to go for it.





Dr Tasnim Atatrah receives WHO Director- General LEAD Innovation Award

12 DECEMBER 2024, GENEVA, SWITZERLAND

Dr Tasnim Atatrah, WHO Representative in Bahrain, received the WHO Director-General LEAD Innovation Award for 2024.

This year's award highlights the contributions of LEAD Catalyst Innovation Network, a network for WHO's workforce to harness a culture of innovation, inspire peers, and translate groundbreaking ideas into scalable solutions to address critical health challenges.

Dr Atatrah remarked "I am honoured to receive this award as the WHO Representative of Bahrain and thankful for Bahrain's inspiring environment for innovation."

The award is presented to WHO staff members who exemplify visionary thinking and creative and collaborative approaches, working across WHO's Country Offices, Regional Offices, and Headquarters to build partnerships, foster unity, and empower others to take their innovation journey.

Human health has only ever progressed because of innovation. It is my most tremendous honour to receive this award alongside my esteemed colleagues, Khayesi Meleckidzedeck, Md. Abdul Kader and Luis Gabriel Cuervo Amore.

Dr Tasnim Atatrah, WHO Representative





WHO Bahrain Advances Health for All

OFFICIAL MEETINGS
FROM JULY - DECEMBER 2024



















- 1 H.E. Shaikh Khalid bin Abdulla Al Khalifa, Deputy Prime Minister
- 2 H.E. Dr Abdullatif bin Rashid Al Zayani, Minister of Foreign Affairs
- 3 H.E. Eng. Wael bin Nasser Al-Mubarak, Minister of Municipalities Affairs and Agriculture
- 4 H.E. Hamad bin Faisal Al Malki, Minister of Cabinet Affairs
- 5 H.E. Noor Bint Ali Alkhulaif, Minister of Sustainable Development

- 6 H.E. Fatima bint Jaffer Al Sairafi, Minister of Tourism
- 7 H.E. Osama bin Saleh Al Alawi, Minister of Social Development
- 8 Dr Ahmed Al Ansari, Chief Executive Officer of the National Health Regulatory Authority
- 9 Mr Mohamed Ali Al Qaed, Chief Executive of the Information and eGovernment Authority
- 10 Mr Ahmed Khalid Al Araifi, Chief Executive Officer of the National Communication Centre

























World Health Organization

Bahrain

- 11 H.E. Esin Çakıl, Ambassador of Turkiye to Bahrain
- 12 H.E. Fahad Mohammed Bin Kardous Alameri, Ambassador of UAE to Bahrain
- 13 H.E. Dr Heonsang Koo, Ambassador of the Republic of Korea to Bahrain
- 14 Ambassador Dr Yusuf Abdulkarim Bucheeri, Director-General of Legal Affairs and Human Rights at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- 15 Dr Arwa Hassan Al Sayed, Chief of the Human Rights Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

- 16 Mr Hatem Abdulhameed Hatem, Chief of Organizations at Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- 17 Mr Adel Darwish, ITU Regional Director for Arab States
- 18 Mr Jocelyn Fernard, UNFPA Representative and Head of the GCC Area Office
- 19 Ms Aishath Ihma Shareef, IOM Chief of Mission to Bahrain
- 20 Ms Asmaa Shalabi, UNDP Resident Representative in Bahrain

Thank you! From the WHO Bahrain Country Office Team

Inaugurated in July 2021, the WHO Country Office in Bahrain is the 20th WHO country office to open in the Eastern Mediterranean Region, and the 152nd WHO country office globally. Guided by WHO's Thirteenth General Programme of Work, the office provides strategic and technical support to the Government to achieve universal health coverage, address health emergencies, and promote healthier populations.

It collaborates with national health authorities, United Nations partners, and other health-related stakeholders to foster public health collaboration to accelerate progress towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and ensure that no one's health is left behind.



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