مَمْلَكَةُ البَحْرَيْن
KINGDOM OF BAHRAIN

أهداف التنمية المستدامة البحرين
BAHRAIN SDGs 2030

BAHRAIN

VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEW 2026

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His Highness
Shaikh Isa bin Salman Al Khalifa
The Late Amir

His Majesty
King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa
King of the Kingdom of Bahrain

His Royal Highness
Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa
The Crown Prince and Prime Minister

OPENING STATEMENT

The Kingdom of Bahrain's progress has always been powered by the ambition, talent and determination of its people. Across generations, Bahrainis today demonstrate an enduring commitment to building a nation defined by opportunity, sustainable growth, and shared prosperity for all. This conviction drives the work of the Government every single day.

Under the leadership of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, Bahrain advances decisively toward the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, and this global agenda is aligned with Bahrain Economic Vision 2030.

Today, national progress is increasingly defined by international cooperation. The challenges the world faces now, more than ever, require collaboration, dialogue, and collective responsibility.

Whether internationally, currently serving as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council, or regionally, in its recent role as chair of the Arab League Council and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), the Kingdom of Bahrain is committed to the organs of multilateralism.

The United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is the multilateral framework we must collectively pursue to build a better world. The Kingdom is proud of its contribution and the whole of Bahrain is committed to advancing our common aspirations and building a future that is more prosperous, inclusive, and sustainable for generations to come.

His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa

Crown Prince and Prime Minister

OPENING STATEMENT

With four years remaining to 2030, and with the accelerated momentum towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at this final and most consequential phase of implementation, it gives me great pleasure to present the Kingdom of Bahrain's third Voluntary National Review (VNR) on the progress made in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Under the leadership and vision of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, and the support of His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister, the Kingdom of Bahrain is maintaining its steadfast commitment to advancing sustainability efforts across the social, economic and environmental dimensions; even at one of the most challenging times for our nation.

In the face of unprovoked external aggression, Bahrain's response provided a definitive demonstration of solidarity and the principle of leaving no one behind. Under wise leadership, the government's decisive actions with the immediate activation of a comprehensive emergency response protocols, underscored a clear national mandate: protecting the lives and well-being of the entire community above all else. The response underscored the vital role of local and international partnerships across government, the private sector, and civil society, reflecting a shared commitment to the pillars of sustainable development.

Since the last VNR in 2023, the Kingdom followed a systematic approach to taking stock of the achievements, opportunities and challenges across all the SDGs, with data sitting at its core.

Through the continuous monitoring of national indicators, regular data collection and analysis, and close collaboration with stakeholders, the Kingdom has strengthened its evidence-based approach to sustainable development. We maintained a calendar of workshops, consultations, and technical engagements in partnership with relevant international organizations and United Nations bodies to review progress, validate findings, build institutional capacities, and enhance understanding of SDG indicators and reporting methodologies. These efforts have supported more informed decision-making, improved data quality and availability, ensured that the assessment of progress is grounded in robust and reliable evidence, and most importantly ensures that it is a meaningful ongoing process, not merely an exercise for the preparation of the VNR.

The Kingdom has also been present at the major convenings, including the SDG Summit in 2023, the Summit of the Future in 2024, the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development in July 2025, and the first Biennial Summit for a Sustainable, Inclusive and Resilient Global Economy in September 2025. Through its active engagement in these forums, Bahrain has demonstrated its continued commitment to the 2030 Agenda, contributing to international discussions, exchanging knowledge and best practices, and strengthening cooperation with partners to support sustainable and inclusive development.

The preparation of this VNR in 2026 coincides with the Kingdom's celebrations of the "Year of Isa Al Kabeer", to honor the legacy of the late founder of the modern country, His Greatness Shaikh Isa bin Ali Al Khalifa, and reflect on his enduring contributions to the foundations of governance, development, and nation-building in Bahrain. The commemoration underscores the importance of preserving national heritage and identity, and drawing inspiration from Bahrain's historical journey in advancing its development vision and informing its sustainable development trajectory.

The structure of the 2026 VNR aligns with the Kingdom's priorities and localizes the SDGs, from empowering the people through education, training, social support, healthcare systems, to balancing the past with the preservation of culture, heritage and identity while looking to future proof the country through climate protection and enabling innovation and digitization, and continuing down the path of economic diversification and growth. Within each section, we share examples of strategies, projects and initiatives that reflect our transformative, equitable, innovative and coordinated actions for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs, in line with this year's theme at the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

As we progress with developing the Bahrain Economic Vision 2050, the Kingdom is firmly committed to defining a long-term roadmap for sustainability; one that champions people, prosperity and the planet.

Noor bint Ali Alkhulaif
Minister of Sustainable Development
Chief Executive of the Bahrain Economic Development Board

SHERATON

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 10

CHAPTER 1
EMPOWERING PEOPLE 19

CHAPTER 2
CELEBRATING HERITAGE, CULTURE AND NATIONAL IDENTITY 64

CHAPTER 3
SECURING THE FUTURE 83

CHAPTER 4
ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY 112

CONCLUSION 135

APPENDIX
SDG INDICATORS 138

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

When the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was announced in 2015, the Kingdom of Bahrain was already ahead in advancing sustainable development; with significant progress fueled by the Constitution, National Action Charter, Economic Vision 2030 and our early achievements of the Millennium Development Goals. Since the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Bahrain continued to advance its implementation efforts across the social, economic and environmental pillars through a whole of government, whole of society approach that champions building efficient government institutions and creating partnerships. With just four years remaining until the end of the decade, Bahrain remains steadfast in its commitment to accelerating sustainable development efforts and building a society fit for the future.

Under the leadership of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa and the directives of His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister, sustainable development has been placed at the forefront of national priorities. With Bahrain's Economic Vision 2030, four-yearly government plans, a framework for government priority projects and sector-specific strategies, the Kingdom relies on a systematic approach to achieving sustainable development and addressing needs.

At the time of the Kingdom's last Voluntary National Review (VNR) on the progress made on the SDGs, in 2023, the world was emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic, and the government was in the midst of implementing its comprehensive Economic Recovery Plan, which laid out clear targets

for enabling Bahrainis in the labor market, advancing the development of the strategic economic sectors, delivering on major investment projects, increasing government efficiency, and achieving fiscal stability. It is efforts like these, across government bodies, private sector institutions and the wider society, that ensured Bahrain maintained stability and its progress towards achieving the sustainability goals during turbulent times.

As Bahrain was preparing its 2026 VNR, the world was facing a new set of challenges; some closer to home. Unprovoked and indiscriminate attacks launched against the Kingdom by Iran, in flagrant violation of international law and the United Nations (UN) Charter, caused loss of life, injuries, and significant damage to civilian and critical infrastructure. Wider supply chain disruptions and pressures on trade, energy, and global economies have had far-reaching consequences, with resources diverted to emergency and recovery responses that risk undermining hard-won SDG gains. Despite this, our commitment to the principles of sustainability and leaving no one behind carried through.

These circumstances demonstrated the importance of resilient institutions, preparedness, and adaptive governance in maintaining progress towards long-term development objectives during periods of uncertainty. The agility of Bahrain's national response, characterized by the immediate safeguarding of livelihoods, the swift containment of environmental threats at vital installations, and the rapid restoration of essential services and logistical networks, highlighted the resilience of its institutions. Rather than derailing long-term progress, successfully navigating these challenges underscored the value of economic diversification, risk preparedness, and effective crisis management in strengthening national resilience. The experience also reinforced the importance of protecting civilian infrastructure, preserving freedom of navigation and trade, and upholding international cooperation as essential foundations for sustainable development. It serves as a reminder that progress towards the SDGs depends not only on national efforts, but also on a stable regional and international environment that enables countries to pursue long-term development goals.

This VNR follows a holistic approach to reviewing SDG progress; one that reflects the Kingdom's priorities and the real impact the sustainable development initiatives are having on individuals, communities, and society as a whole. Furthermore, Bahrain, through the Review, is affirming that peace is the indispensable precondition for sustainable development, that it will continue to be a principled voice for multilateralism, dialogue, and regional stability.

Structure of the VNR

The 2026 VNR is structured across four chapters: Empowering People, Celebrating Heritage, Securing the Future, and Economic Sustainability:

- Empowering people is a life-long cycle involving education, skills development, healthcare, and ensuring equal opportunities. The Kingdom continues to modernize its education and training system by integrating emerging technologies, innovation, research and future skills into education institutions, and to invest in advanced healthcare systems by leveraging science, technology, and innovation to enhance medical services and improve public health outcomes. The Kingdom remains committed to promoting equal opportunities and strengthening its social welfare system, while continuing to invest in youth development, ensuring future generations are well equipped to contribute to an inclusive, resilient, and prosperous society.

- By implementing His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa's royal direction to safeguard Bahrain's cultural legacy and national identity, the Kingdom is ensuring future communities remain proudly rooted in their rich and diverse heritage, spanning over 5,000 years. The Kingdom believes its sustainability is directly linked to the sustainability of culture through active preservation, revitalization of historic cities, and the protection of authentic national traditions. At the same time, Bahrain places strong emphasis on cultural creativity and expression, recognizing culture not only as heritage to be preserved, but also as a living and evolving space that supports innovation, arts, and creative industries.

- Through building on the foundations of Economic Vision 2030 and shaping its Vision 2050 ambitions, the Kingdom is investing in resilient institutions, future-ready infrastructure, innovation, digital transformation, and environmental sustainability to support long-term prosperity and adaptability. Bahrain continues to strengthen its capacity to respond to emerging global challenges while advancing opportunities for future generations. This approach is reflected in the Kingdom's efforts to accelerate climate and environmental action, harness emerging technologies, advance digital innovation, strengthen scientific research, including in the space sector, and build resilient systems that support sustainable and inclusive development.

- Economic transformation remains a cornerstone of Bahrain's development model and a key driver of sustainable development, social progress, human development, and job creation. Guided by a long-standing commitment to economic diversification and resilience, the Kingdom continues to implement comprehensive reforms that enhance competitiveness, foster entrepreneurship, and stimulate inclusive and sustainable growth. Supported by a business-friendly ecosystem, agile regulatory frameworks, Bahrain is creating an enabling environment that fosters innovation and supports enterprise growth, private sector participation, and the adoption of new technologies.

Championing Sustainable Development on the Global Stage

Bahrain's commitment to securing a peaceful and prosperous future for all, and being a constructive and reliable partner within the international community, is grounded in the belief that global challenges require coordinated dialogue and collective action; and so the Kingdom has consistently embraced multilateralism as a cornerstone of its approach to advancing the SDGs. On the global stage, the Kingdom continues to strengthen its international engagement and leverage partnerships to contribute actively to collective solutions across a range of shared priorities, including security, trade, climate action, digital cooperation, food security, and technological advancement.

Bahrain plays an active role in regional and international institutions such as the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), the League of Arab States, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the United Nations, with its current membership in the UN Security Council, in addition to new initiatives and platforms such as the Board of Peace. Through this approach, Bahrain demonstrates how a small nation can play an active and constructive role in shaping regional and global dialogue, strengthening partnerships, and advancing sustainable development through cooperation, inclusivity, and mutual understanding.

Bahrain's continued commitment to the 2030 Agenda was further demonstrated through its active participation in the SDG Summit held in the UN headquarters in New York, in September 2023, marking the midpoint towards 2030. At the Summit, Bahrain announced three voluntary national commitments aimed at accelerating progress on the SDGs; focusing on strengthening national SDG data systems and statistical capacity, leveraging innovative finance through the banking sector to support sustainable development financing, and advancing climate action in support of sustainable development and inclusive economic growth. Additionally in 2024, the Kingdom participated in the Summit of the Future which offered a once-in-a-generation opportunity for change and a chance to commit to bold new solutions for sustainable development that better reflect the realities of the 21st century. Bahrain's participation in the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development in Seville, Spain in 2025, underscored its commitment to financial innovation and joint action to accelerate progress and to promoting sustainable development and inclusive growth for all.

Advancing GCC Cooperation

The Kingdom's presidency of the 46th Session of the GCC Supreme Council Summit in December 2025, and the announced Sakhir Declaration, underscored the GCC leaders' shared commitment to strengthening regional cooperation, preserving stability and security, and advancing sustainable development, while emphasizing continued adherence to a set of core principles, including:

- Strengthening GCC unity and integration to advance regional stability, security, progress, and prosperity.

- Respecting state sovereignty, non-interference in internal affairs, and safeguarding the collective security and stability of GCC states.
- Strengthening the GCC economy, advancing economic integration, and enhancing resilience to support sustainable development and prosperity.
- Investing in human capital, empowering youth and women, supporting innovation and scientific research, and enhancing education and healthcare systems to build a prosperous future.
- Strengthening cooperation in the fields of environmental sustainability, climate action, and the transition towards clean and renewable energy sources.

Building on these principles, the Summit also advanced a practical regional agenda focused on accelerating economic integration through the completion of the customs union and common market, enhancing digital connectivity and data exchange, progressing the GCC Railway Project, and strengthening cooperation in artificial intelligence (AI) and emerging technologies.

Advancing Arab League Cooperation

In May 2024, the Kingdom hosted the 33rd Arab Summit in Sakhir, the "Bahrain Summit", marking the first time Bahrain had convened this gathering of Arab leaders. Chaired by His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, the Summit reaffirmed the Kingdom's commitment to advancing regional cooperation, collective action, and dialogue to address shared challenges and support sustainable development across the Arab region. The Summit concluded with the adoption of the "Bahrain Declaration", which not only addressed pressing regional challenges, but set out a forward-looking agenda that recognizes human development, innovation, and economic transformation as essential drivers of resilience and long-term growth across the Arab world. The Declaration endorsed a series of initiatives proposed by Bahrain, including:

- A call for an international conference under the auspices of the United Nations to advance a peaceful resolution to the Palestinian issue based on the two-state solution.
- Coordinated Arab efforts to expand international recognition of the State of Palestine and support its full membership in the United Nations.
- The provision of educational services for conflict-affected children and youth in cooperation with the League of Arab States and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).
- Improving healthcare services for populations affected by conflicts, while strengthening Arab cooperation in pharmaceutical and vaccine industries in coordination with the World Health Organization (WHO).

- Advancing Arab cooperation in financial technology, innovation, and digital transformation to foster economic modernization and future-ready economies.

Abraham Accords

Consistent with its constitutional commitment to global peace, peaceful coexistence, and international cooperation, the Kingdom of Bahrain signed the Abraham Accords in September 2020. This diplomatic milestone reflects Bahrain's strategic vision of leveraging regional partnerships to foster a more stable, secure, and prosperous Middle East. By promoting dialogue, mutual understanding, and active collaboration across key developmental sectors, including trade, innovation, technology, and healthcare, the Kingdom actively advances sustainable development targets on peace, stability and partnerships . In line with its steadfast foreign policy doctrine, Bahrain continues to utilize these multilateral frameworks to advocate for a just, comprehensive, and lasting peace in the region, emphasizing that sustainable development and long-term economic resilience are inextricably linked to regional stability and the upholding of international law.

United Nations Security Council

In June 2025, Bahrain was elected to the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) as a non-permanent member for the 2026–2027 term, securing 186 out of 188 possible votes - one of the highest margins recorded in the history of UNSC elections. This result was not merely a procedural outcome; it was an unambiguous expression of confidence by the international community in Bahrain's standing as a principled, credible, and constructive diplomatic actor.

From its seat on the Council, Bahrain has advanced a focused and substantive priorities agenda spanning peace and stability, dialogue and coexistence, humanitarian action, respect for international law, maritime security, cybersecurity, counterterrorism, and the participation of women and youth in peacebuilding efforts. These are not aspirational positions - they reflect Bahrain's lived experience as an archipelago navigating a complex regional environment, and its long-standing commitment to a rules-based international order as the foundation for sustainable development.

During its tenure thus far, the Kingdom of Bahrain presented UNSC Resolution 2817, which received unprecedented international support and was co-sponsored by 136 countries, reaffirming the international community's commitment to freedom of navigation and the rules-based international order. In April 2026, Bahrain assumed the Presidency of the UNSC - a moment that carried particular weight given the regional context. Leading the Council's work during a period of active geopolitical tension, Bahrain demonstrated that small states can exercise the Presidency with authority, impartiality, and purpose. Under the Kingdom's leadership, the Council advanced cooperation between the UN and regional organizations, strengthened frameworks for maritime security coordination, and promoted diplomatic and humanitarian approaches to conflict resolution.

Bahrain used the Presidency to give voice to principles it has consistently championed: that lasting security is inseparable from development, that regional bodies are essential partners to the UN system, and that dialogue must be preserved even - especially - when it is most difficult. These priorities reflect Bahrain's broader conviction that the 2030 Agenda and the international peace and security architecture are mutually reinforcing.

Board of Peace

In January 2026, the Kingdom of Bahrain formally accepted an invitation to join the Board of Peace, a new multilateral platform established to coordinate post-conflict reconstruction, humanitarian assistance, and transitional governance in Gaza. Bahrain's participation reflects its conviction that durable peace requires not only political will, but concrete commitment to rebuilding the institutions that allow communities to recover and thrive.

At the Board's inaugural meeting in February 2026, attended by His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, Bahrain announced its readiness to provide the infrastructure and expertise necessary to establish an effective Government Digital Services platform for Gaza - a commitment grounded in demonstrated national capability, with Bahrain ranking 18th globally for government digitalisation and having advanced 36 places in the UN's e-government rankings between 2022 and 2024.

It reinforces the Kingdom's broader foreign policy doctrine, which prioritises multilateral engagement, peaceful conflict resolution, and cohesive international action to alleviate regional crises and build resilient communities.

CHAPTER 1
EMPOWERING PEOPLE

1 CHAPTER 1 EMPOWERING PEOPLE

Introduction

The Kingdom of Bahrain is driving transformative change towards achieving the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development and the SDGs, through people-centered, future-focused plans. Backed by a proven track record, a long-term vision, and ongoing institutional reform, the Kingdom is building a highly skilled, agile workforce ready to drive economic growth and compete in a fast-evolving global economy, while also fostering communities where health, well-being, and inclusion are central pillars, in line with Bahrain's Economic Vision 2030.

Bahrain has always viewed empowering people and advancing gender balance as enablers for innovation-led, inclusive growth, and a tool for social stability. This, coupled with coordinated government action, strong partnerships, and increasingly data-driven decision-making, is enabling Bahrain to address social challenges today while preparing for the opportunities and disruptions of a rapidly changing world. Education reform and labor market policies are evolving in line with these shifts, ensuring alignment with the needs of the future economy. This approach is delivering results. Bahrain continues to perform strongly across key indicators - from women's economic participation and leadership to education outcomes and public health.

Investing in Health and Well-being

The strength of any nation's human capital ultimately rests on the health of its people. With a comprehensive and free universal healthcare system in place since the 1960s, the Kingdom has continued to build on these foundations, investing in the technological capabilities needed to advance early detection and prevention of hereditary and chronic diseases, strengthen preparedness for public health emergencies, and support the integration of precision medicine.

Reforming the Healthcare System

The Supreme Council of Health continues to drive developments in the sector, guided by its transformative National Health Plan 2016 – 2025, which focused on a raft of holistic measures, including improving service delivery, ensuring quality and safety, simplifying access, securing sustainable funding, building workforce capacity, advancing digital health, and enhancing leadership and governance for better overall performance. One of the Plan's main goals was to shift the Ministry of Health's role from a primary service provider to a regulator of the health sector, and to give operational autonomy to public hospitals and health centers.

The Sehati (National Health Insurance) program, expected to be fully implemented by the end of 2026, will guarantee the patient's right to choose the service provider, and create greater opportunities for competition between the public and private sectors. The Kingdom ensured the ecosystem is digitized through the launch of the Sehati mobile app, which allows for booking appointments, finding a doctor, tracking medication authorization, and receiving medical results. Building on this, the Supreme Council for Health has established the Health Insurance Fund (SHIFA), the financial and administrative pillar that guarantees access to comprehensive, high-quality medical care for all individuals in the Kingdom.

Supporting these reforms, the National Health Regulatory Authority continues to strengthen the governance, quality, and safety of Bahrain's healthcare sector through regulatory modernization and digital transformation. The Authority has reengineered and automated a range of services to improve efficiency and user experience, including the launch of the Pharmaceutical Products Registration System (Adweya) in 2025 and the Medical Devices and Supplies Registration and Tracking System (Madar) in 2026. The Authority has also updated key regulatory frameworks, including the Professional Qualification Requirements, the Infected Healthcare Professionals Policy, the Medical Malpractice Insurance framework, and the Continuing Medical Education requirements, helping ensure that Bahrain's healthcare system remains aligned with international standards and best practices.

This reform agenda is being matched by stronger prevention, monitoring, and specialist care as Bahrain has continued to build its capacity to respond to infectious diseases, launching its first Infectious Diseases Centre in 2023 to provide integrated diagnostic, treatment, and preventive services under one roof. It has also introduced new tools to tackle non-communicable diseases such as the Communicable Disease Case Notification Service, launched in December 2023, which replaced paper-based reporting with a real-time digital system, allowing healthcare providers to flag cases quickly and securely and giving authorities a clearer, faster view of emerging health trends.

Bahrain's prevention approach, particularly for diabetes and cardiovascular disease, also includes promoting healthier diets. Since 2017, authorities have worked with industry to reduce salt, sugar, and fat in food products, supported by public awareness campaigns, stronger school nutrition standards, clearer food labelling, and targeted taxes on unhealthy products. In 2024, the Ministry of Health strengthened these efforts with the launch of Food-Based Dietary Guidelines, promoting reduced intake of foods high in sugar, salt, and unhealthy fats while encouraging healthier food choices and raising preventive health awareness across the population.

Bahrain is also investing in life-saving specialist services through community-based initiatives, including the "Waman Ahyaha" organ donation program, launched in 2023. In 2025, the program was improved through an enhanced electronic registration system on Bahrain's national portal, bahrain.bh, allowing citizens and residents to more easily register as organ donors. As of October 2025, the King Hamad University Hospital successfully performed 54 kidney transplants and 19 liver transplants since the launch of the transplant program.

Data-driven Healthcare

Bahrain is increasingly harnessing the power of data to build a more responsive healthcare system. Ongoing health surveys and monitoring programs support data-driven healthcare planning and help shape policy and keep it aligned with international standards, particularly when it comes to reducing early deaths from preventable diseases. The Third National Health Survey, carried out in 2024, engaged more than 4,000 households across all governorates and generated critical insights that help enhance service delivery, strengthen the responsiveness of primary healthcare services, and support more targeted planning for prevention, early intervention, and fair access to quality care for all.

Additionally, multiple efforts were undertaken under the umbrella of the National Taskforce for Information and Population, in collaboration with relevant national stakeholders and UN-affiliated organizations to enhance data systems in healthcare and close data-related

gaps. Several workshops were carried out between 2023 and 2025 to tackle data on specific topics, including the impact of climate and the environment on health.

Innovation, Research and Global Partnerships

Bahrain is developing the infrastructure needed to deliver more advanced healthcare through forging greater partnerships and leaning on advanced technology. Since 2024, the Hugo robotic-assisted surgery system has supported procedures across urology, general surgery, and gynecology, widening access to minimally invasive, technology-enabled care. In December 2024, King Hamad American Mission Hospital joined the Mayo Clinic Care Network, becoming the first institution in Bahrain and the 15th internationally to join the network, giving clinicians access to world-class Mayo Clinic expertise. In April 2025, the Royal University for Women signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the WHO to support research into female health and wellbeing, knowledge sharing, and capacity-building in line with the WHO's Health for All agenda. Bahrain is also working with Saudi Arabia on the King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Medical City, a 1 million square meter healthcare complex set for completion by the end of 2027, with 274 private patient rooms, 74 clinics, 17 operating theaters, a physiotherapy and imaging center, a research center, and on-site accommodation.

At the same time, the Kingdom of Bahrain has made significant and internationally recognized strides in research, precision medicine, and knowledge partnerships. The Bahrain National Genome Program, launched in 2019 in collaboration with the International Center for Genetic Diseases at Harvard Medical School and the Broad Institute of Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and Harvard, is a pioneering national initiative to establish a comprehensive genetic map of the Bahraini population. The program harnesses whole genome sequencing to enable earlier disease detection, advance personalized treatment, and inform health policies tailored to the genetic profile of the population. As of June 2026, the program has collected 75,855 samples, placing it on a strong trajectory toward its target of 100,000 by 2028. Bahrain further demonstrated its commitment to global medical advancement by becoming the first country in the Middle East to acquire and operationalize the NovaSeq X Plus, the most advanced genome sequencing technology currently available, capable of generating over 20,000 whole genomes annually. National specialists have undergone advanced training at Harvard University in genome sequencing, data analysis, and clinical interpretation, and a dedicated clinical training program has been delivered to physicians across multiple specialties throughout the Kingdom. Private sector participation has further expanded the Program's reach, with Bahrain Specialist Hospital becoming the first private hospital to join in 2024, reflecting the growing momentum of public-private collaboration in this field.

This forms part of a broader national effort to expand specialized treatment options and improve patient outcomes, including the Mohammed bin Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa Cardiac Specialist Centre, established in 2021 as a leading tertiary hub for advanced, AI-enabled cardiovascular care. The private sector is playing a noticeable role in widening access to specialized neurological services and long-term patient support, an example of which is the National Bank of Bahrain Multiple Sclerosis Centre, opened in April 2024.

The government also encourages a collaborative approach to drive innovation across healthcare and emergency response. Through Fikra, an innovation competition open to all civil servants, six ideas aimed at strengthening healthcare and emergency response systems have been shortlisted, five of which have already been implemented, including the First Responder Ambulance Motorcycle service and the Hayat Plus application, a smart emergency response tool that connects citizens directly to police, ambulance, and fire services.

Bahrain Breaks New Ground in CRISPR Gene Therapy Innovation

The Kingdom of Bahrain has achieved a pioneering global medical milestone by becoming the first country outside the United States to publicly announce the successful treatment of a sickle cell disease patient using Clustered Regularly Interspaced Short Palindromic Repeats (CRISPR)-based gene-editing therapy. This achievement underscores Bahrain's commitment to world-class healthcare, scientific innovation, and the adoption of advanced technologies that enhance quality of life and long-term wellbeing.

Building on this achievement, Bahrain successfully treated a second sickle cell disease patient using CRISPR-based gene-editing therapy in June 2026, marking a further step in the integration of advanced genomic medicine within the national healthcare system.

These achievements carry significance far beyond the treatment of individual patients; they demonstrate how national health systems can move beyond conventional care models to embrace next-generation therapies that address diseases at their root cause. Beyond their clinical impact, these milestones position Bahrain among a select group of countries translating frontier science into real-world outcomes and signal the Kingdom's growing role as a regional hub for specialized treatment, research excellence, and advanced medical capability.

Embedding Well-being Across Communities and Institutions

Bahrain has advanced an integrated public health model that places wellbeing at the center of communities and everyday life. The Kingdom believes that health is shaped not only by hospitals, treatment, and technology, but by the environments people live in and the choices available to them. This approach was validated in 2021, when the WHO designated Manama as the first "Healthy Capital" in the Eastern Mediterranean Region.

Building on this momentum, all four governorates in the Kingdom later joined the Healthy Cities framework under the WHO Healthy Cities Initiatives, recognizing their efforts to create and revitalize open spaces, expand pedestrian areas and cycling lanes, improve environmental quality, and integrate health services, schools, and employment opportunities into urban planning.

Bahrain has further expanded the Healthy Cities model into places where people study, work, and gather, launching the Healthy Universities, Healthy Mall, and Health Promoting Workplace programs. Since then, 8 universities have been recognized as health-promoting institutions, while 28 malls and 29 major workplaces are implementing measures to support physical activity, healthier lifestyles, and mental well-being.

Promoting Sports and Active Living

Bahrain continues to promote sport as an essential component of public wellbeing, healthy living, and quality of life. The Strategic Plan for the Sports Sector 2024–2026 reinforces this direction by positioning sports as a way of life through encouraging healthy lifestyle patterns and raising awareness of the importance of sports participation across society. Through this framework, the Kingdom continues to strengthen community engagement in sports and physical activity while advancing the role of sport in supporting broader social and developmental goals.

This focus on active living was reinforced in January 2025 with the opening of the Nasser bin Hamad Cycling Track in the Southern Governorate. Spanning 50 kilometers, it is Bahrain's longest cycling track and the first built to international standards, providing a safe space for professional and recreational users while supporting preventive health, sport participation, and quality of life.

The Let's Walk initiative, launched in February 2024 by the Ministry of Health in partnership with the Ministry of Youth Affairs, the Ministry of Municipalities Affairs and Agriculture and the Ministry of Social Development, encourages regular physical activity through community walks, engaging university students, government staff, persons with disabilities, and families nationwide. A renewed campaign was held in February 2026, reaffirming the commitment to building a healthier Bahraini society through accessible and inclusive physical activity.

Also in February 2026, coinciding with the annual Bahrain Sports Day – which encourages individuals and families across the Kingdom to engage in sports and adopt more active and healthy lifestyles, Bahrain hosted the Bahrain Sports Summit, organized by the General Sports Authority, under the patronage of His Highness Shaikh

Khalid bin Hamad Al Khalifa, First Deputy Chairman of the Supreme Council for Youth and Sports, Chairman of the General Sports Authority, and President of the Bahrain Olympic Committee. The summit formed part of a comprehensive national vision to develop the sports sector and strengthen its contribution to sustainable development by bringing together officials, experts, and stakeholders to discuss the future of sports, community participation, investment, and innovation within the sector.

The General Sports Authority plays a central role in advancing Bahrain's sports ecosystem through initiatives that promote community participation, develop athletic talent, and strengthen the long-term sustainability of the sector. Through the Khalid bin Hamad League, the Authority encourages regular sports participation across multiple sports, age groups, and clubs, helping to promote physical and mental well-being and embed sport as a healthy way of life. Complementing these efforts, the Golden Neighborhoods (Farejan Al-Thahab) initiative identifies and develops promising young football talent within local communities by organizing neighborhood-based leagues and activities that create accessible pathways for youth participation. The Authority is also implementing a comprehensive regulatory initiative to professionalize sports-related occupations through standardized classifications, qualifications, and licensing requirements, strengthening workforce development and supporting quality employment opportunities across the sports sector.

In November 2023, Bahrain hosted the first Gulf Healthcare and Sport Congress, which brought together healthcare professionals, sports experts, and policymakers from across the GCC to explore the role of sport and physical activity in improving public health and advancing preventive healthcare approaches.

Bahrain's commitment to sport extends beyond national participation, with the Kingdom actively supporting Bahraini athletes in major international competitions, including the Asian Games, World Athletics Championships, and Summer Paralympic Games. At the 2024 Summer Olympics, Bahrain achieved its most successful Olympic performance to date, winning four medals, including two golds, one silver, and one bronze. At the same time, Bahrain has established itself as a leading host of international sporting events, including the Formula 1 Gulf Air Bahrain Grand Prix, IRONMAN 70.3 Middle East Championship Bahrain, World Aquatics High Diving World Cup Bahrain 2024, and the IWF World Weightlifting Championships 2024, reinforcing its position as a regional hub for world-class sport and international sporting exchange.

Additionally, the Bahrain Paralympic Committee continues to reinforce the Kingdom's commitment to inclusive sports and empowering athletes with disabilities. The Kingdom hosted the Asian Youth Para Games in December 2021, the BWF Para Badminton World Championships in February 2026 and is set to host the World Para Powerlifting Championships for the first time in December 2026.

Educating for Tomorrow

The Kingdom of Bahrain is fully committed to providing high-quality education, building on a strong and well-established foundation characterized by high enrollment and completion rates. Even before the adoption of the SDGs in 2015, Bahrain had already achieved many key education milestones, reflecting its long-standing focus on excellence and alignment with international standards.

Strong Foundations in Learning and Teaching

The Kingdom understands that strong education systems begin with well-prepared educators, which is why the Mohammed Jaber Al Ansari College for Teachers (formerly Bahrain Teachers College) is critical. Established in 2008, the College prioritizes practical application of theory, including field experience in each year of learning. It developed an attractive admissions package, helping to encourage strong candidates to apply, which includes offering all students full scholarships and paying a monthly monetary stipend if they remained in good academic standing.

In 2023, the College received a seven-year accreditation (the maximum available) by the US-based Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation and was recognized by the World Bank in its May 2026 global education publication "From Prospective to Prepared Teacher" as an international model for teacher preparation.

Building on these efforts, the Kingdom of Bahrain continues to strengthen early childhood as a foundation for good education through comprehensive policy frameworks and quality assurance mechanisms. In 2024, the Ministry of Education introduced the "Early Childhood Education Regulatory Framework" and the "National Curriculum Framework for Early Childhood Education", which set clear policies for early education and defined core competencies and developmental outcomes for children from birth to pre-primary stages. Complementing this, the Education and Training Quality Authority introduced, in 2025, the "General Framework for Kindergarten Performance Review" which sets out guidelines to audit the quality assurance of early childhood education, positioning Bahrain among the few countries in the region to implement a national quality assurance and evaluation framework dedicated to the field.

Opening Doors to International Learning

Bahrain is further strengthening public education by broadening access to international learning pathways and language skills. In February 2026, the Kingdom reached a major milestone with the official introduction of the International Baccalaureate (IB) into the public school system, widening access to advanced learning previously available mainly through private schools. The IB

curriculum aims to enhance students' critical thinking, independent learning, and global competitiveness, broadening their pathways to leading universities locally and internationally.

The Kingdom continues to benchmark student performance through international assessments such as Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study, in which it has participated since 2003. In the 2023 TIMSS cycle, Bahraini Grade 4 students ranked 2nd in science and 3rd in mathematics among Arab countries, while Grade 8 students ranked 4th in science and 3rd in mathematics regionally. Bahrain's schools achieved notable progress in the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS 2021), with the average student achievement score rising to 458 points, an increase of 12 points compared to the 2016 cycle. This resulted in the Kingdom ranking third among Arab countries and forty-fifth internationally.

Education for a Digital Economy

Bahrain recognizes that preparing its youth for the future requires going beyond traditional learning. With a strong emphasis on digital transformation, AI, innovation, and critical thinking, the Kingdom is committed to equipping students with the future skills that emerging global economies demand, a commitment reflected in the continuous development of curricula across the entire education system.

The Student Information System, or EduSIS, launched by the Ministry of Education in January 2025, provides government school students with a comprehensive digital environment to access academic information and services and manage their educational needs. Building on this foundation, the Ministry plans to introduce the Classera system during the 2026–2027 academic year, integrating AI into teaching, learning, assessment, and personalized student support. Together, these reforms strengthen adaptability, employability, and digital readiness, helping future generations succeed in a more dynamic, knowledge-based economy.

Bahrain achieved 1st globally in the 2025 Microsoft Showcase Schools Program, having achieved 3rd place in 2024. A total of 125 public schools and 5 private schools from Bahrain, out of 954 schools from 60 countries, were recognized for excellence in digital transformation, earning the title of Microsoft Showcase Schools, the highest number worldwide.

“Gaming 100”

In February 2026, the Ministry of Education launched Gaming 100, a nationally developed, innovative course that reflects a forward-looking approach to education in the digital age. The course is offered to all secondary school students across public schools in the Kingdom and aims to equip students with future-ready competencies by transforming gaming from a recreational activity into a structured academic subject grounded in critical thinking, problem-solving, innovative storytelling, and technical creativity.

The course is designed around five comprehensive modules, offering students a holistic understanding of the gaming ecosystem, covering the foundations and history of video games, game design and mechanics, building games, gaming in culture and society, and careers in gaming. Rather than focusing on gameplay, the course emphasizes how games are conceptualized, developed, and brought to market, encouraging students to become creators rather than simply consumers of digital content.

Bahrain focuses on building future skills through the Nasser Centre for Science and Technology, which delivers specialized programs across future-oriented fields, including AI, engineering, cloud computing, and cybersecurity, through theoretical instruction combined with apprenticeship training. The Centre recently launched its locally developed "Smart Crisis Management Platform" powered by AI, designed for organizations seeking to enhance resilience, efficiency, and business continuity, and to keep pace with business challenges.

Complementing these efforts, the Technical Development Program, implemented by the Information & eGovernment Authority in partnership with the Ministry of Labour, supports the development of Bahraini talent in information technology and digital fields. The program provides practical training, professional certification opportunities, and hands-on experience within government technology projects, helping participants strengthen their technical capabilities, enhance employability, and contribute to Bahrain's ongoing digital transformation.

Championing Digital Learning on the Global Stage

Bahrain remains committed to championing the development of future skills globally, through its longstanding support of the UNESCO King Hamad Bin Isa Al Khalifa Prize for the Use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in Education. The Prize serves as a leading platform recognizing innovative uses of ICT and AI in education, reinforcing the Kingdom's commitment to providing learners and educators with future-ready skills. In 2025, the Kingdom hosted the award ceremony for the first time outside the UNESCO Headquarters in Paris, marking the 20th anniversary of the Prize and further elevating Bahrain's role as a global partner in advancing digital education. This event served as a platform not only to highlight the work of the laureates but also to foster dialogue around the award's theme of "preparing learners and teachers for the ethical and responsible use of AI", bringing together voices from Bahrain and beyond. The 2025 edition recognized four winning initiatives from Belgium, Brazil, Egypt, and the United Kingdom, showcasing innovative approaches to inclusive digital learning, AI applications in education, technical skills development, and experiential learning models that advance future-ready education systems worldwide.

His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Crown Prince and Prime Minister, with the winners of the 2025 edition of the UNESCO King Hamad Bin Isa Al Khalifa Prize for the Use of ICT

Accelerating Inclusive Education through the '1 Billion Lives Challenge'

Bahrain is leveraging international partnerships to expand digital inclusion and create opportunities for all. Through its membership in the World Economic Forum's EDISON Alliance initiative, the Kingdom joined the network of Lighthouse Countries participating in the '1 billion Lives Challenge', launched in 2022, to accelerate digital inclusion across sectors such as education, health, and finance.

Bahrain's participation in the challenge focused on showcasing how targeted, country-level digital initiatives can bridge the digital divide and empower vulnerable communities. This included prioritizing digital inclusion in education to provide digital skills and literacy training to students and to empower women and girls to pursue careers in STEM. Bahrain pledged to impact 600,000 lives by 2025 under the challenge and has successfully achieved this target.

A Higher Education System Built for the Future

Bahrain continues to advance a forward-looking higher education system driven by quality and alignment with the labor market needs and global standards. The Higher Education Council launched the National Strategy for Higher Education and Scientific Research 2026–2036, which establishes a comprehensive framework to strengthen institutional performance, enhance program accreditation in coordination with relevant authorities, and deepen collaboration with private and semi-government entities. The ten-year strategy focuses on growing STEM enrollments and graduation,

improving teaching quality, strengthening entrepreneurship and innovation, widening access for underrepresented groups, and accelerating the use of advanced technologies in teaching and learning.

Bahrain is also strengthening the role of higher education institutions in advancing research and innovation. In 2024, under the guidance of the National Taskforce for Information and Population, the Ministry of Education, in collaboration with the Higher Education Council and UNESCO, conducted workshops to improve the calculation and publication of national research and development (R&D) data. This work supported the release of updated figures in 2024 and was followed by Bahrain's election, in 2025, to the Governing Board of the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, reflecting growing international confidence in the Kingdom's expertise in educational planning and statistical development.

Inclusive education in Bahrain has also broadened access to higher education, through targeted annual scholarships, alleviating financial burdens while directing students towards the jobs of the future. Since 2013, scholarships funded by the Isa bin Salman Education Charitable Trust have enabled Bahraini students, who require financial assistance, to pursue undergraduate and postgraduate studies at both local and top-ranked international universities. In parallel, many private sector institutions and foundations provide other opportunities to students, including the "Rayaat" scholarship program, implemented by AlMabarrah AlKhalifia Foundation, which has provided comprehensive support, including financial assistance, training, and skills development opportunities since its launch in 2011.

Integrating Sports into Education

Bahrain recognizes sport as an important component of holistic education and youth development, contributing to physical wellbeing, teamwork, leadership, and social inclusion. Through initiatives led by the Supreme Council for Youth and Sports, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, the Kingdom continues to expand school sports programs, competitions, and talent development pathways that encourage broader student participation in athletics and active lifestyles. Among these initiatives is the Model Sports Schools Project for the 2025–2026 academic year, which aims to assign a specialized sport to each school while providing integrated training and educational programs to support excellence in both sports and academics.

The General Sports Authority, through the Khalid bin Hamad Academic Chair Program, supports outstanding Bahraini student-athletes through scholarships and educational fellowships that enable them to pursue higher education while continuing to excel in sport. By promoting a balance between academic achievement and athletic excellence, the program contributes to the development of well-rounded athletes equipped to succeed both on and off the field.

Furthermore, "Best School in Sports Award" initiative reflects Bahrain's continued commitment to positioning education as a cornerstone of national development, supported by the leadership of His Highness Shaikh Nasser bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Representative of His Majesty the King for Humanitarian Works and Youth Affairs and Chairman of the Supreme Council for Youth and Sports. The initiative underscores the Kingdom's focus on fostering well-rounded student development by integrating academic and athletic excellence within the education system.

Embedding the SDGs in Learning

Schools and universities play a significant role in advancing awareness of the SDGs and promoting a culture of sustainability. In 2025, the Ministry of Education launched the "Green Education" framework, aligned with Bahrain's Economic Vision 2030 and the Ministry's Education Strategy 2023–2026. The initiative supports the Strategy's four pillars—Education Quality, Human Capital, Administrative Services, and Infrastructure—by integrating sustainability into curricula, promoting green school gardens, encouraging environmentally responsible practices, and fostering a culture of sustainability across educational institutions. Key initiatives rolled out under the framework include the Green Education Manual, released in December 2025, which aims to foster environmental stewardship in students.

At the higher education level, the University of Bahrain and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) launched a pioneering academic program, in December 2024, integrating the SDGs into university curricula. The program introduces SDG-focused content into English courses for first-year students, alongside specialized courses in sciences and law. Students completing these courses receive dual certifications from the University and UNDP, equipping them with the knowledge and skills needed to tackle global sustainability challenges and contribute to Bahrain's sustainable development agenda. Additionally, several universities have actively fostered knowledge exchange amongst students in the field of sustainability by hosting regular sustainability events, including the "Health and Sustainability Week" by the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland - Bahrain, the annual "Sustainability Week" event by both Gulf University and the Applied Science University, and activities hosted by the Ahlia University Sustainability Club.

International Sustainability Rankings

As part of ongoing efforts to guide higher education institutions toward stronger contributions to the SDGs, Bahrain has been providing ample support to institutional participation in international rankings relevant to sustainable development, namely the Times Higher Education (THE) Impact Rankings which assesses universities' contributions to the SDGs. The results

highlight the strong performance of Bahraini institutions, with the University of Bahrain, Ahlia University, Applied Science University and Gulf University receiving commendable international rankings. These achievements reflect the growing commitment of Bahraini higher education institutions to sustainability policies, environmental and social initiatives, and impact reporting practices.

In addition, four Bahraini institutions, namely the University of Bahrain, Gulf University, Applied Science University, and Ahlia University, have been listed in the Universitas Indonesia Green Metric World University Rankings 2025. This recognition demonstrates continued progress in sustainability policies, environmental and social initiatives, and institutional transparency across Bahrain's higher education sector.

Unlocking Human Capital through Lifelong Learning

With 24.2 percent of the population under the age of 25, the transition from education into employment plays a decisive role in long-term economic and social outcomes. Beyond bridging the gap between educational outcomes and market demands, Bahrain's approach recognizes that unlocking human capital capabilities and building a knowledge-based economy is a lifelong endeavor. Guided by the priorities set out in Bahrain's Economic Vision 2030, the Kingdom has been actively investing in programs and initiatives, in partnership with the private sector, that provide training, upskilling and reskilling to Bahrainis with a focus on innovation, entrepreneurship, and developing the digital and technical knowledge needed to keep pace with an era defined by digitization and technological disruption.

The Labour Fund (Tamkeen): Driving Skills, Jobs, and Private-Sector Growth

At the forefront of efforts to advance training and employment outcomes is the Labour Fund (Tamkeen), a key national institution established to drive private sector growth and enhance the competitiveness of Bahraini talent. Between 2023 and 2025, Tamkeen supported 32,400 Bahrainis into employment– of which 52 percent were females and 92 percent aged between 18 and 35 – and facilitated 14,400 training opportunities to job seekers through the Jobs+ Program, demonstrating its pivotal role in enabling job creation and strengthening labor market integration. Since its inception, Tamkeen has contributed more than 2.6 billion Bahraini Dinars to the economy through direct and indirect financing, creating more than 300,000 opportunities for Bahrainis.

In February 2026, marking its 20th anniversary, Tamkeen launched its 2026–2030 strategy which focuses on directing support toward priority sectors and future skills. The strategy is intended to maximize the impact of support and generate positive returns with direct benefits for the national economy and Bahrainis in line with national priorities and the evolving requirements of the next phase of development. The strategy is built around four main priorities: prioritizing areas with the highest returns for the economy and Bahrainis; supporting the design of career pathways through initiatives that link skills with available labor market opportunities, adopting innovative approaches to stimulate private sector growth and access to financing; and delivering programs that enhance the Fund's operational effectiveness and efficiency, while further strengthening governance.

Tamkeen's support portfolio spans a wide range of sectors and career stages. For private sector employees, the National Employment Program supports enterprises in advancing the careers and salaries of Bahraini staff, improving retention and recognition of national talent, while the Jobseeker Training Program provides training and upskilling opportunities for jobseekers to increase their competitiveness and facilitate their entry to the labor market. The Apprenticeship Program provides enterprises with the opportunity to employ Bahrainis as apprentices, giving

them the chance to obtain in-demand vocational skills in the fields of information technology, cybersecurity, and other future jobs. Tamkeen has also introduced dedicated tracks to support Bahraini doctors and dentists, enabling specialization in high-demand fields, while the nursing specializations program is scaling the pipeline of qualified nursing professionals across the private and public sectors.

In the technology and entrepreneurship space, Tamkeen has partnered with globally recognized institutions to deliver targeted training at scale in software engineering, data analytics, cloud engineering, user experience design, digital marketing, and full-stack development, equipping Bahrainis with the technical skills most in demand across the modern economy.

Building on this foundation, Tamkeen has set an ambitious target for the years ahead. One recent key initiative announced by Tamkeen is the launch of a national program to train 50,000 Bahrainis in AI by 2030, targeting entrepreneurs, executives, professionals, and job seekers. The initiative aims to strengthen future-ready skills, enhance workforce competitiveness, and support the adoption of AI across key sectors of the economy.

Using Skills Bahrain, an initiative which harnesses the power of data analytics to enable strategic decisions on anticipated future skills gaps, Tamkeen directs its training programs toward emerging shortages and mobilizes resources to address them ahead of the curve. In December 2024, Skills Bahrain launched the Employability Skills Portal, the region's first integrated platform designed to translate complex labor market data into actionable career insights. The portal serves as a practical guide, mapping specific job roles and requirements, and providing individuals with a clear, data-driven pathway to employment and career advancement. Skills Bahrain has so far surveyed over 6000 responses and conducted over 85 workshops with participants from industry, academia and training providers, and developed nine sector skills reports covering key industries including financial services, telecommunications, education, human resources, accountancy, hospitality and tourism, energy, construction and real estate, and transport and logistics.

Connecting Talent to Opportunity

In September 2025, His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister, directed the Ministry of Labour to build on the success of the National Employment Program launched in 2020, and present every registered job seeker with three job opportunities, further accelerating employment outcomes and reinforcing the role of the private sector as a key partner in developing Bahraini talent. By December 2025, 18,657 job seekers were provided three job opportunities, which enabled the employment of 4,746 Bahrainis.

Youth in Bahrain

Bahrain believes that investing in young people is essential to sustaining national progress and preparing for the future, and has actively worked on equipping young people with the skills, opportunities, and platforms they need to lead, innovate, and shape the opportunities and confront the challenges of tomorrow.

Building the Youth Empowerment Ecosystem

Bahrain's youth empowerment agenda is guided by the National Youth Empowerment Strategy, led by the Supreme Council for Youth and Sports, which provides the overarching national direction for youth development in the Kingdom. Within this framework, the Ministry of Youth Affairs plays a key role in translating these national priorities into programs, initiatives, partnerships, and institutional mechanisms that empower young people and enhance their participation in national development.

In practice, this national direction is reflected in efforts to discover, develop, and showcase young talent. Operationally, it directs this ambition into programs that increase youth representation in national and international platforms and strengthen youth centers and associations across the Kingdom. These efforts are supported by investment in resources, performance management, digital systems, and partnerships with the private sector to enhance skills development, employability, and access to future opportunities.

A key delivery platform for this agenda is Youth City 2030, launched in 2010 to help young Bahrainis aged between 9 and 35 become more innovative, skilled, and future-ready through practical exposure to skills development, creativity, entrepreneurship, and community engagement. In its 2025 edition, Youth City engaged 4433 participants, delivered 230 programs, and created approximately 6400 training opportunities across several key areas, from mentoring budding entrepreneurs to classes teaching podcast production fundamentals. The 2025 edition also featured the National Photography and Videography Competition, which challenged young Bahrainis to document sustainable tourism through creative visual storytelling, and the Media Talent Award, a six-week intensive program uncovering the next generation of television, radio, and content creators. The Youth Market, provided emerging entrepreneurs with a platform to showcase their ideas, test their ventures, and connect directly with the community, with 84 youth-led projects participating in the 2025 edition.

Youth City 2030 functions as a national talent pipeline, linking skills development with labor market readiness, entrepreneurship, creativity, and civic engagement. In 2025, the initiative also identified 402 talented young people and engaged 248 trained youth volunteers in its implementation, reinforcing the role of young people not only as beneficiaries, but also as contributors to national youth development.

Complementing these efforts, the Hope Fund, established in 2020 in line with the directives of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa and under the leadership of His Highness Shaikh Nasser bin Hamad Al Khalifa,

Representative of His Majesty the King for Humanitarian Works and Youth Affairs, supports Bahraini youth in transforming innovative ideas into sustainable businesses. The Fund provides financial support, mentorship, capacity-building opportunities, and access to networks that help entrepreneurs launch, grow, and scale their ventures. By investing in youth talent, innovation, and entrepreneurship, the Hope Fund contributes to job creation, economic diversification, and the development of a dynamic private sector led by the next generation of Bahraini innovators and business leaders.

His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa during his visit to Youth City 2030 in July 2025

Creating Pathways into Leadership and Public Life

Bahrain is also creating structured pathways for young people to enter leadership, public service, and national decision-making. The Prime Minister's Fellowship Program, which celebrates its 10-year anniversary in 2025, prepares exceptional young Bahrainis from government entities for public service leadership. Each year, 15 individuals are selected to spend one year as full-time research fellows in the Prime Minister's Office, receiving advanced training in writing, research methods, and policy analysis, both in-house and through the Institute of Public Administration. Fellows also engage directly with senior decision-makers, giving them practical exposure to the workings of government and national policy.

The Institute of Public Administration plays a central role in developing leadership capacity across the public sector through the National Leadership Development Program, Bahrain's national framework for leadership development approved by the Civil Service Bureau. The program supports employees across all career stages, from entry-level positions to senior leadership, strengthening leadership competencies, enhancing performance, and preparing future public-sector leaders.

Established in 2019, the Mohamed bin Mubarak Al Khalifa Academy for Diplomatic Studies plays a key role in strengthening Bahrain's diplomatic capacity through training, research, and international partnerships. Its flagship Postgraduate Diploma in Diplomacy provides foundational

training for newly appointed diplomats, while initiatives such as the International Diplomats Programme (IDP Dhiyafa) promotes dialogue, knowledge exchange, and cooperation among diplomats, foreign ministries, and diplomatic academies worldwide, helping advance Bahrain's international engagement and diplomatic excellence.

Looking beyond just the government, the National Project Lamea, launched in 2021, under the patronage of His Highness Shaikh Nasser bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Representative of His Majesty the King for Humanitarian Works and Youth Affairs, further supports this leadership pipeline by identifying and nurturing high-potential young Bahrainis across key sectors. By 2025, Lamea had delivered five editions, attracting more than 1,500 applicants annually and engaging more than 130 participants across its cohorts. More than 70 percent of its graduates have achieved measurable professional progress.

Youth Organizations and Associations

The Kingdom of Bahrain supports youth empowerment through a broad institutional infrastructure that extends across all governorates of the Kingdom. The youth ecosystem includes 38 youth empowerment centers located across different governorates, in addition to 3 model youth centers and 25 youth organizations and associations. This network provides accessible spaces for young people to develop their skills, discover their talents, and engage in community participation, while supporting equal access to youth programs and services.

In 2025, this ecosystem reached more than 130,000 young men and women across the Kingdom of Bahrain through the implementation of more than 1,000 youth events and programs in various fields. This reflects the broad reach of youth network in Bahrain and the ability of this institutional infrastructure to translate youth empowerment into sustainable action with direct developmental impact, supporting community participation and national development.

Reflective of the Kingdom's efforts to empower its youth are the numerous Youth organizations and Associations, licensed organizations that are driven by the passion and efforts of young people. Operating under the supervision of the Ministry of Youth Affairs, these bodies have grown steadily in number, with several new associations established in 2024 and 2025 alone.

The Academic Excellence Association connects high-achieving Bahraini youth and fosters a culture of innovation through motivational and interactive programs. Nasser Al Khair Association, launched in 2024, focuses on promoting volunteerism and humanitarian work among young people, encouraging them to contribute to community service and social responsibility initiatives, while the Al Haraka Baraka Association, launched in the same year, focuses on enhancing physical fitness and public health among youth, strengthening social interaction and positive relationships, and raising awareness of the importance of physical activity and mental well-being.

In addition, Mulhemoon Association, established in 2025, is a volunteer-based organization anchored in social entrepreneurship, innovation, sustainability,

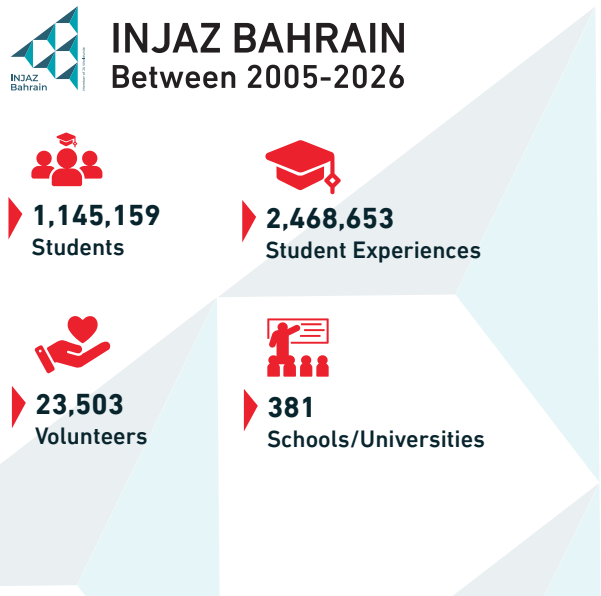
and governance. The Wahaj Association, registered in April 2025, similarly focuses on developing young people's skills.

Among the newly established youth associations is Al Bait Al Oud Association, which focuses on preserving and promoting Bahraini cultural heritage, strengthening young people's connection to national identity, and creating opportunities for youth engagement in cultural and creative fields. Bahrain Global Shapers Association is also among the youth associations led by ambitious young Bahrainis and is linked to the World Economic Forum's Global Shapers Community. The association aims to create positive and sustainable impact in society, reflecting the belief in young people's ability to lead change and contribute to shaping a better future for the Kingdom through youth-led initiatives that promote community engagement, leadership, innovation, and sustainable development. One example is Find Us at the Park, led by Budaiya Hub, which engaged youth in mapping more than 150 public spaces across Bahrain and collecting environmental data to support climate adaptation and public-space planning.

The impact of these organizations also extends beyond Bahrain, as demonstrated by the Bahrain Youth Hostels Association through its Outbound Travel Program, which has been implemented in 2023 with the support of the Ministry of Youth Affairs. The program enables Bahraini youth to participate in international experiences that combine volunteering, learning, cultural exchange, and community engagement across various fields, including humanitarian, educational, health-related, and social areas. By organizing specialized trips and youth delegations, the program strengthens young people's life skills, broadens their global perspectives, and enhances their ability to represent the Kingdom internationally. It positions youth mobility as a platform for personal development, social responsibility, global citizenship, and active contribution to sustainable development.

INJAZ Bahrain

INJAZ Bahrain is a not-for-profit established in 2005 as part of Junior Achievement Worldwide, chaired by Her Highness Shaikha Hessa bint Khalifa Al Khalifa, and a member of INJAZ Al-Arab, which spans 13 Arab countries. Through immersive, hands-on programs in entrepreneurship, financial literacy, work readiness, sustainability, STEM, and digital literacy, it empowers Bahraini youth to own their economic success and thrive in a global economy. Its Company Program translates that learning into real-world impact, most recently through "Tanka," a smart oil-disposal device developed by students from Al Jabriya Industrial Boys' School that won Best Social Impact at the 2024 INJAZ Young Entrepreneurs Competition.



In November 2025, INJAZ Bahrain inaugurated a new headquarters in Manama, a milestone that reflects the organization's growing role as an active partner in national development. This was followed by Boeing and INJAZ Bahrain launching a dedicated STEM Hub at the headquarters in December 2025, offering hands-on programs in robotics, aviation, sustainability, and emerging technologies to over 400 students annually.

The Hope Network: A Global Platform for Youth Empowerment

Bahrain is extending its youth empowerment agenda internationally through the Hope Network, a global youth empowerment initiative spearheaded by the Kingdom of Bahrain in 2024 and backed by the UN. The Network brings together governments, institutions, and youth organizations to exchange best practices aligned with global sustainability goals, enhance international cooperation on youth affairs, foster youth-focused policies worldwide, and advance young people's participation in development. Since its launch, the Network has expanded to include 51 members from 38 countries and, in 2025, issued the first international guide of youth empowerment best practices, featuring 28 initiatives from 13 participating countries.

Empowering Women

Bahrain's commitment to women is a central pillar of national development. The Kingdom recognizes women's vital role as partners in shaping the economic, social, and innovation landscapes. Bahrain continues to expand women's participation and leadership across all sectors, building on a strong legacy of empowerment and achievement, which is reinforced by a robust and enabling environment, underpinned by a comprehensive legislative and institutional framework and driven by coordinated efforts across government, semi-government entities, the private sector, and civil society.

Bahrain's efforts to empower women are led by the Supreme Council for Women, chaired by Her Royal Highness Princess Sabeeka bint Ibrahim Al Khalifa, Wife of His Majesty the King and President of the Supreme Council for Women, whose world-class initiatives have advanced female representation, expanded access to resources, and reinforced the Kingdom's leading position on the global stage. This standing is recognized internationally through Bahrain's second membership on the United Nations Women Executive Board 2026–2028.

When it comes to education, women accounted for over 40 percent of STEM enrolments in higher education in 2022 and up to 50 percent of graduates in those fields. Women represented 55.9 percent of students enrolled in higher education institutions during the 2024-2025 academic year.

Today, Bahraini women occupy 22 percent of cabinet seats, 25 percent of Shura Council seats, and 20 percent of Council of Representatives seats. As of April 2026, Bahraini women represented 13 percent of board members at companies, 51 percent of senior executive positions in government, alongside growing representation in the judiciary and entrepreneurship ecosystem, reflecting continued progress in women's participation in economic leadership and decision-making roles.

This momentum has been accompanied by strong participation in the labor market, with women's labor force participation reaching around 43 percent in 2025, significantly exceeding the Arab regional average and approaching global levels. Women constituted 40 percent of Bahrain's ICT workforce in 2023, demonstrating their growing contribution to innovation, technology, and the Kingdom's knowledge-based economy.

Women's entrepreneurial presence continues to grow, with female owners accounting for 49 percent of all active individual commercial registrations and 58 percent of active virtual commercial registrations, in 2023. By January 2026, women owned 34.4 percent of Bahrain's 85,700 registered Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs), underscoring their increasingly important role in entrepreneurship, innovation, and private sector growth. In addition, women's participation in the real estate sector continued to expand, with the number of real estate transactions involving women increasing by approximately 36 percent, between 2021 and 2025, reflecting their growing role in property ownership and investment activities.

Her Royal Highness Princess Sabeeka Bint Ibrahim Al Khalifa, Wife of His Majesty the King and President of the Supreme Council for Women, chairing a meeting of the Supreme Council for Women

A National Roadmap for Women

The National Plan for the Advancement of Bahraini Women 2025–2026, led by the Supreme Council for Women, is a strategic roadmap aimed at further advancing women's leadership and reinforcing the sustainability of their contributions through prioritizing economic participation, decision-making, and leadership, family stability, and quality of life. The Plan also introduces a forward-looking approach focused on emerging sectors, such as science, technology, and innovation, and positions Bahraini women to take on greater roles at the regional and international levels.

To achieve these priorities, the National Plan has identified five core pillars: policies, gender-responsive budgeting, awareness and training, auditing and oversight, and follow-up and evaluation, with clear actionable initiatives and measurable indicators.

The National Gender Balance Model

The National Gender Balance Model is considered the basic framework for applying the principle of equal opportunities and gender balance. The Supreme Council for Women adopted the axes of the "National Gender Balance Model" to serve as a mechanism for monitoring the inclusion of women's needs in national development programs, specifically the government action plan and the general budget. The National Model includes five main axes, which define the roles and responsibilities of different sectors to integrate women's needs and implement gender balance in all national development programs, these include policies, budgets responsive to women's needs, awareness and training, and auditing, monitoring, and evaluation. The Supreme Council for Women works on implementing the axes of the National Gender Balance Model through coordination and consultation with the relevant entities.

Closing the Gender Gap

Bahrain has made significant progress in expanding women's access to formal financial services, strengthening financial inclusion and economic empowerment. According to the 2026 report Unlocking Women's Economic Potential in the Arab Region: Advancing Financial Inclusion and Autonomy, published by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), Bahrain leads the Arab region in women's access to formal financial services, with 83 percent of women holding bank or payment accounts compared to 82 percent of men, resulting in a gender gap of just 1 percent, compared to the Arab regional average gap of 15 percent. The report highlights Bahrain as a leading regional example of financial inclusion, reflecting the impact of strong financial infrastructure, widespread access to digital banking and payment services, and efforts to expand access to formal financial systems. This high level of financial inclusion supports women's economic empowerment by enabling greater access to savings, payments, credit, and entrepreneurship opportunities, while strengthening financial independence and economic resilience.

In 2025, Tamkeen forged a strategic partnership with the World Economic Forum to launch the 'Skills and Gender Parity Accelerator', a leading initiative aimed at enhancing women's participation and leadership in high-growth sectors through targeted interventions in collaboration with the private sector. This initiative builds on Bahrain's strong foundation in education, particularly in STEM fields, where Bahrain ranked 1st globally in female digital skills training and STEM education in the Inclusive Internet Index, published by Meta and Economist Impact for the year 2022. Also, according to the World Bank Human Capital Index for the year 2025, Bahrain is among the few countries globally who outperformed the global average in the education pillar outcomes and the female tertiary education completion indicator where female learning outcomes consistently surpassed those of males.

Skills and Gender Parity Accelerator

The Bahrain Skills and Gender Parity Accelerator was launched at the World Economic Forum's Annual Meeting at Davos, in January 2025, through a partnership between Tamkeen, the Bahrain Economic Development Board and the Forum. As the first accelerator of its kind globally, it focuses on closing gender-based skills gaps in high-growth sectors such as technology and manufacturing, while enhancing the participation of Bahraini women in both the current and future workforce.

Coordinated by Tamkeen's Skills Bahrain, in collaboration with leading private-sector employers, the Accelerator combines local industry insights with the World Economic Forum's global research. This integrated approach enables a cross-sector analysis to identify current and future gender-related skills gaps, forming the basis for a targeted upskilling and reskilling strategy, including around mobilizing local talent, increasing opportunities for women, and ensuring our workforce is equipped for the demands of a dynamic global economy.

His Highness Shaikh Isa bin Salman Al Khalifa, Minister of the Prime Minister's Court and Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Labour Fund (Tamkeen), witnesses the signing of the "Bahrain Skills and Gender Parity Accelerator" Agreement with the World Economic Forum at the Annual Meeting in Davos in 2025.

Institutional Frameworks and Leadership Programs

The Kingdom continues to strengthen the institutional mechanisms that advance women's leadership and economic participation. These efforts are reinforced through programs and committees led by the Supreme Council for Women, including:

- Women in Media Committee: responsible for studying the reality of women working in the media field, analyzing the media content of the status of women in television programs and dramas and various audiovisual, print and visual media and social media, proposing coordination and cooperation tools with media institutions to develop means and measures to develop the status of women in the media, proposing training, education and awareness programs to build the capabilities of women working and leading in the media field to support ways to develop the skills of women.
- Women in Sports Committee: responsible for monitoring women's participation in sports, identifying challenges and obstacles, and presenting recommendations. It would also propose policies, plans, initiatives, and training programs to develop women's sports, and recommend measures to increase women's representation in local, regional, and international sports federations and committees.
- Women's Committee in ICT and Modern Sciences: responsible for raising awareness of support programs for professional certifications, promoting skill development in line with emerging labor market demands, increasing awareness of career opportunities in technology and artificial intelligence, and encouraging women entrepreneurs to leverage digital tools for business growth.
- Women's Committee for Nurseries and Kindergarten: responsible for studying the conditions of women working in the sector, proposing policies for development, and recommending appropriate training and qualification programs that contribute to enhancing the quality of early education.
- Bahraini Women's Leadership Platform: designed to document the professional journeys of Bahraini female leaders, showcase their accomplishments, and increase their visibility in both the national and international stage.

The Equal Opportunities Committees were first established in accordance with the Civil Service Bureau instructions issued in 2014. In 2025, and based on feedback of meetings between the Supreme Council for Women and the heads of the Equal Opportunities Committees, the instructions were revised to establish an Equal Opportunities Committee within every government entity, tasked with upholding the principle of equal opportunities and achieving gender balance in the entity's policies, plans, and budgets. The establishment of equal opportunity committees also continued on a voluntary basis in the private sector and civil society organizations.

Fostering Leadership and Entrepreneurship

Cumulatively, Tamkeen's women's empowerment efforts since its inception supported more than 15,800 women-led enterprises, trained more than 92,600 women, provided more than 32,500 jobs to women, and supported more than 7,100 female entrepreneurs to launch their businesses.

The Princess Sabeeka Bint Ibrahim Al Khalifa Global Award for Women's Empowerment, adopted by UN Women, stands as a flagship initiative that extends Bahrain's vision of women's empowerment beyond its borders. Through this platform, the Kingdom not only supports and recognizes transformative projects that advance women's empowerment worldwide. In 2025, the Supreme Council for Women launched the 8th edition of Her Royal Highness Princess Sabeeka bint Ibrahim Al Khalifa Award for the Advancement of Bahraini Women alongside the fifth edition of the Bahraini Female Entrepreneur Seal "Imtiaz".

Several national programs have been established to accelerate the momentum, including the Women Business Finance Scheme "Riyadat", in collaboration with the Supreme Council for Women, which benefited more than 355 Bahraini women entrepreneurs through tailored financial and advisory support to establish and scale their businesses. In the technology space, the SC Women in Tech Incubation Program, delivered in partnership with Standard Chartered, Bahrain FinTech Bay and the Supreme Council for Women, is now in its seventh cohort. The program has supported 61 startups through mentorship, with 22 receiving funding to help scale their ventures, backed by strategic partners including the Central Bank of Bahrain, Tamkeen, the Supreme Council for Women, and UN Industrial Development Organization's (UNIDO) Investment and Technology Promotion Offices (ITPO) Bahrain.

In 2024, Tamkeen launched the Accelerating Women's Leadership Program; a first of its kind executive leadership training initiative, designed to provide world-class opportunities for Bahraini talent, equipping them with leadership skills to drive change and create impact within their organizations, through strategic partnerships with globally renowned training institutions including Paris School of Advanced Business Studies (HEC), and Bahrain-based EMIC Institute. The women leadership program's first cohort of thirty female leaders graduated in February 2025, having completed an intensive training program which focused on advanced research and best practices in leadership skills development, and included a series of sessions on managing complex leadership environments, influencing and persuasion skills, enhancing problem-solving abilities and adopting an objective-driven leadership approach.

The Institute of Public Administration, through its National Leadership Development Program, offers the Tawazun Program in partnership with the Supreme Council for Women. This Program provides participants with foundational knowledge of the principles of justice, equal opportunity, and gender balance. Through this integrated

approach, the Program strengthens the capacity of public sector officials to embed gender balance considerations within policies and institutional practices, thereby supporting the Kingdom's broader efforts to enhance women's participation in national development.

International benchmarks continue to recognize Bahrain's efforts to strengthen the legal, regulatory, and institutional environment supporting women's economic participation. The World Bank's Women, Business and the Law 2026 report indicated that the Kingdom of Bahrain is among the half of the economies in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region that have laws prohibiting gender-based discrimination in access to credit. Furthermore, Bahrain outperforms the regional average in the areas of pay, childcare, entrepreneurship, and pensions across all major pillars of the report. This reflects the continuous national efforts to develop the legislative and institutional environment that supports and economically empowers Bahraini women.

Building A Society That Leaves No One Behind

Bahrain's commitment to its people extends to the social foundations that ensure every citizen can live with dignity, security, and opportunity. Grounded in the principles of the SDGs, this means ensuring that those most in need receive timely support and effective intervention. Bahrain's long-standing commitment to social equity is reinforced by 100 percent universal access to essential services, including safe drinking water, reliable electricity, high-quality education, and comprehensive healthcare. The Kingdom further recognizes that today's social risks, including economic shocks, extend beyond traditional income support, requiring more inclusive, adaptive, and forward-looking social protection. This support also focuses on ensuring people with disabilities, widows, orphans, pensioners, unemployed persons, low-income households, and those affected by job loss continue to maintain living standards during periods of vulnerability.

The Kingdom strongly believes that social development is about improving the well-being of every individual in society so they can reach their full potential. Guided by this principle, Bahrain has developed a people-centered system that protects those in need while creating pathways for participation, resilience, and long-term security. Through job creation, training, skills development, and pathways into productive employment, national policies seek to build self-reliance, strengthen economic security, and enable full and productive participation in society.

Strengthened by a 21st-Century Social Safety Net

Bahrain has maintained a comprehensive social protection system designed to support vulnerable groups and promote social wellbeing throughout different stages of life. The system encompasses a range of programs and benefits, including social security assistance, financial support for low-income households, disability allowances, support for older persons, housing assistance, subsidies and compensation schemes, and targeted services for widows, divorced women, orphans, and other groups requiring support. Through a combination of social security benefits, financial support programs, subsidies, and specialized services, the system continues to promote social stability while adapting to evolving economic and social needs.

The government has significantly expanded the accessibility of social support through digital transformation. In 2025, the Ministry of Social Development launched the Electronic Services for Social Support Programs through the eGovernment portal, enabling citizens to submit financial support applications, track application status, issue support or social security statements, update bank account details, check payment dates, and raise inquiries through the government feedback portal, Tawasul, all without visiting a ministry center. All services are completed electronically through the digital identity verification system, eKey, ensuring faster and more transparent processing. A virtual customer service center was also introduced, allowing citizens and residents to access social assistance services and submit inquiries remotely.

Through this national platform, a range of targeted financial support services are now available digitally, including support for low-income individuals, cash compensation for meat subsidy removal, disability allowances for those with permanent disabilities, and official service receipt certificates. Support for the elderly, including social security, financial support, and assistive devices, continues to be provided in accordance with approved conditions and standards.

Bahrain continues to modernize its systems and update them in response to change. In January 2026, following the introduction of a comprehensive package of fiscal reforms designed to reinforce long-term sustainability, the government ensured social support was also deepened for low-income families through the cost-of-living allowance.

Safeguarding Children

The Kingdom of Bahrain continues to progress a comprehensive and integrated framework for the protection and empowerment of children, anchored in prevention, protection, and rehabilitation. In its effort to create a well-established ecosystem for protecting children, Bahrain issued Law No. 4 of 2021 Promulgating the Restorative Justice Law for Children and Their Protection from Maltreatment. The Law defined clear roles and responsibilities

for government entities in charge, where the best interests of the child shall take precedence in all rulings, decisions and procedures related to the child, regardless of the authority that issues or implements them.

Preventive initiatives remain central to this approach, most notably the continuation of the Maan "Together" Program, launched in 2011 by the Ministry of Interior in partnership with the Ministry of Education, which delivers structured awareness curricula across schools. Building on its steady expansion, the program had reached 196 schools by 2025, engaging more than 136,000 students and contributing to a reported 56 percent reduction in negative behaviors. This is further reinforced by targeted national initiatives, such as the 2024 campaign to protect children from electronic exploitation and blackmail, which reached over 30,000 beneficiaries through awareness lectures, media outreach, and educational materials, strengthening digital safety among children, parents, and caregivers.

These preventive efforts are complemented by expanded protection and response mechanisms. In 2024, the Public Prosecution established the Family and Child Reconciliation Office, which adopts child-sensitive approaches to handling family-related cases involving children. At the institutional level, Bahrain further reinforced its child rights ecosystem through the establishment of the Child Rights Commissioner in 2023, enhancing oversight, advocacy, and alignment with international standards, alongside the ongoing coordination role of the National Committee for Childhood. In April 2026, the Child Protection Affairs Directorate was established under the Ministry of Social Development to strengthen child protection services, enhancing case management and intervention mechanisms, and ensuring coordinated, timely responses to cases of abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

In parallel, Bahrain continues to invest in holistic child wellbeing through innovative service delivery models such as hospital mini-schools, safeguarding children's right to education during treatment. The first hospital school was launched in 2019 at Salmaniya Medical Complex, and the model has since expanded to four hospital schools by 2025, including the most recent at the Psychiatric Hospital.

Civil Society Support

Civil society organizations play a vital role in community development by supporting social, educational, and humanitarian initiatives that contribute to improving people's quality of life. These associations help meet community needs, provide support to vulnerable groups, and promote a culture of volunteerism and social responsibility. They also empower individuals through training programs, awareness campaigns, and economic development projects.

Amid these extensive community-driven efforts, the Royal Humanitarian Foundation, established in 2001 under the patronage of

His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, emerges as a prominent national model of humanitarian and charitable leadership. The Foundation acts as the Kingdom's primary body for local and international aid. Throughout the years, it has evolved into a leading institution in humanitarian and charitable work within the kingdom and beyond. Its mission encompasses a wide range of social, health, and educational assistance programs aimed at alleviating the burdens of families in need, including orphans and widows. Beyond direct assistance, it places strong emphasis on long-term empowerment through initiatives such as the "Nitaj" program, which enables beneficiaries to develop productive and handicraft skills, supporting sustainable income generation and strengthening economic inclusion and self-reliance.

In April 2026, coinciding with its 25th anniversary under the theme "25 Years... A Humanitarian Legacy" and the unprovoked and indiscriminate attacks launched against the Kingdom, the Royal Humanitarian Foundation launched a media and community initiative titled "Rest Assured... Bahrain is Well as Long as You Are Its People," aimed at strengthening social cohesion and spreading reassurance across all segments of Bahraini society. The initiative introduced dedicated online platforms to assess family needs and ensure faster response and service delivery, through which more than 2,000 sponsored families have already been reached.

His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa receiving the sponsored orphans from the Royal Humanitarian Foundation in March 2025

In parallel, the government established the National Center for NGO Support under the Ministry of Social Development to strengthen and professionalize the non-profit sector. Serving as a central platform for civil society organizations, the Center provides technical assistance, capacity-building programs, training workshops, institutional development support, and advisory services, while facilitating collaboration and knowledge exchange across the sector.

Family and Community

Supporting families and strengthening social cohesion are central pillars of Bahrain's people-centered development approach. In this context, the Ministry of Social Development continues to implement

integrated programs and initiatives targeting families, children, youth, and local communities through a network of social and community centers across the Kingdom. Serving as hubs for community development and civic engagement, these centers work in partnership with government entities, civil society organizations, and the private sector to provide opportunities for learning, awareness-raising, and community participation, contributing to improved quality of life, stronger social connections, and greater social cohesion and solidarity across communities.

Through its network of social development, rehabilitation, childhood, and family protection centers, the Ministry of Social Development provides coordinated services encompassing social care, rehabilitation, counselling, family support, and community-based interventions. This network includes specialized facilities such as Dar Al Aman, which offers shelter and rehabilitation services for victims of domestic violence, alongside Family Care and Protection Centers that promote family stability and social cohesion. The Ministry's services also extend to the elderly through care homes, day-care centers, and community clubs, ensuring accessible and continuous support for different segments of society.

In the area of family development, the Ministry of Social Development continued its efforts to strengthen the economic empowerment of Bahraini families by supporting Productive Families and expanding opportunities for marketing their products. In 2025, the Ministry launched the "Bahraini Hands" initiative, which included the operation of a dedicated retail outlet for products made by productive families, providing a sustainable platform for showcasing and marketing locally made products, expanding their reach to consumers, enhancing economic opportunities for Bahraini families, preserving national identity, and promoting Bahraini crafts and products.

The Ministry of Social Development continues to support income-generating household enterprises through the Productive Home (Al Bait Al Muntij) program, which provides productive families and home-based entrepreneurs with training, marketing opportunities, exhibitions, and business development support. Bahrain has also expanded opportunities for entrepreneurship through its home-based commercial registration Sijili (Virtual Commercial Registration) system, enabling individuals to establish and operate eligible businesses from home through a simplified regulatory framework, helping transform small-scale household activities into formal economic enterprises.

Her Royal Highness Princess Sabeeka bint Ibrahim Al Khalifa's Award for Productive Families, running since 2007, recognizes outstanding home-based businesses, entrepreneurs, and institutions that support them. The Award held its 17th local and 8th Arab edition in February 2024, recognizing outstanding productive families across categories, including Best Productive Family, Best Product, and Best Sponsor of Productive Families.

In the field of childhood and youth development, the Ministry offers developmental and educational programs and activities, in addition to specialized events. These initiatives focused on developing life skills, leadership, creativity, citizenship values, and social responsibility. They also provided safe and supportive environments that foster talent development, personal growth, and active participation, contributing to the preparation of a capable and engaged future generation.

Additionally in August 2025, as part of efforts to strengthen the social protection system and reinforce the principle of integration among national entities, a unified Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Justice, Islamic Affairs and Endowments, the Ministry of Social Development, the Supreme Council for Women, and the Royal Humanitarian Foundation. The entities aim to coordinate and unify national efforts to address the needs of Bahraini women facing humanitarian circumstances. It seeks to optimize and coordinate the national initiatives and services provided by the concerned ministries and institutions, within their respective mandates, in order to offer financial and in-kind support to meet the needs of Bahraini women experiencing urgent social, economic, and living challenges.

Persons with Disabilities

The Kingdom of Bahrain continues to develop a focused, inclusive, and rights-based approach to helping persons with disabilities, guided by its National Strategy for Persons with Disabilities (2023–2027). The strategy is built around seven interconnected axes: legislation and regulations; health and rehabilitation; education, integration, and vocational training; economic empowerment; social empowerment and the empowerment of women with disabilities; accessibility of buildings and services; and awareness and media.

For more than 15 years, the Ministry of Social Development launched the Mobile Units Project for Home Care and Rehabilitation, delivering free, home-based personal care and rehabilitation services, including physiotherapy, directly to beneficiaries, complementing ongoing physiotherapy services across government centers and specialized facilities.

Investments in accessible public services are also continuing across multiple sectors. The Ministry of Interior's video-call emergency reporting service for people who are deaf, introduced in 2019, remains an important tool for inclusive emergency access. The Special Education Needs Review General Framework, developed by the Education and Training Quality Authority, represents a further step in strengthening inclusive education and ensuring that learning systems are responsive to the diverse needs of all students.

In 2025, the Ministry of Tourism, in partnership with the Ministries of Social Development and Labour, launched a government-backed initiative to train and employ people with disabilities in long-term positions across tourism facilities, granting access to meaningful employment and reinforcing a broader national commitment to economic inclusion.

The Supreme Council for Women continues to work with relevant entities to support the inclusion and empowerment of women with disabilities, as well as women caring for persons with disabilities. These efforts focus on enhancing access to services, promoting equal opportunities, and strengthening economic and social participation, while ensuring that the needs of women with disabilities and caregivers are reflected in national policies and programs.

Protecting Workers in a Modern Labor Market

The Kingdom's reform agenda extends to the way Bahrain protects workers and strengthens fairness in the labor market. On this front, the Labour Market Regulatory Authority launched the Wage Protection System in 2021 to ensure that all employees have proper documented work contracts and that they are paid their wages in full and on time. In 2025, the system was enhanced so that employers are now required to upload detailed monthly payroll data via the Labour Market Regulatory Authority's portal, appoint designated compliance officers, and adhere to stricter monitoring requirements, with penalties for non-compliance. By 2026, these measures have resulted in an exceptional registration rate of 85 percent in the portal across targeted sectors, encompassing over 570,000 workers, drastically reducing wage-related disputes.

In 2024, the IBAN Initiative, a collaboration between the Labour Market Regulatory Authority, the Central Bank of Bahrain and the private sector, advanced financial inclusion by issuing an International Bank Account Number (IBAN) to every expatriate worker upon arrival in Bahrain. This proactive measure integrates the workforce into the formal banking system from day one, ensuring secure, transparent wage deposits and reinforcing the Kingdom's commitment to a fair, digitally enabled labor market. This initiative compliments the Authority's efforts in increasing awareness to workers via innovative methods, including providing mobile pre-paid SIM cards to facilitate contact with the workers and spread awareness via messages. By 2026, over 470,000 IBANs were generated for workers during the issuance and renewal of work permits for Commercial and Domestic Workers.

Complementing these digital safeguards, the Labour Market Regulatory Authority has intensified its enforcement through comprehensive joint field inspection campaigns in coordination with relevant government and security authorities to eliminate illegal practices and guarantee safe working conditions. Furthermore, the Authority has streamlined multi-lingual

grievance mechanisms and strengthened institutional support through the Expat Protection Centre and the National Referral Mechanism to ensure vulnerable workers have direct access to justice and protection.

By moving from basic electronic monitoring to full digital oversight and centralized processing, Bahrain has reinforced protections for migrant and overseas workers, centralized accountability in the labor market, and aligned its wage governance framework with international standards on decent work and worker rights. Taken together, these reforms — documented contracts, guaranteed and traceable wage payments, and banking access from a worker's first day — strengthen protections against forced labor and wage abuse and align Bahrain's framework with international standards on decent work. The Kingdom's sustained standing in the top tier of the U.S. State Department's Trafficking in Persons Report reflects this trajectory.

Housing Security and Affordable Living

Bahrain continues to advance housing security as a key pillar of social development. A major milestone in this journey was the successful achievement of the Royal Directive of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa to construct and provide 40,000 housing units for citizens, with the target officially completed by early 2022. Building on this achievement, a further Royal Directive was issued to accelerate housing projects and provide 50,000 housing units, marking the next phase in strengthening housing security and expanding access to adequate housing across the Kingdom. Supporting this commitment, the General Budget for 2025–2026 allocated the largest financing package dedicated to social housing projects in Bahrain's history, totaling 800 million Bahraini Dinars. This investment supports the provision of thousands of housing services across housing projects, financing programs, and housing support mechanisms, reinforcing the Kingdom's commitment to adequate housing and family wellbeing.

To support this target, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning has advanced several large-scale urban development projects, creating five new cities and residential communities: Madinat Salman, Madinat Khalifa, Hidd Housing City, Sitra Housing City, and Al Ramli Housing District. Across the five developments, infrastructure implementation has reached advanced stages, with completion rates at 100 percent in Hidd Housing City, Al Ramli District, and Madinat Salman, while Sitra City and Madinat Khalifa have reached approximately 50 percent and 13 percent, respectively.

The Ministry has also strengthened collaboration with the private sector through a public-private partnership model to expand and accelerate delivery of affordable social housing options. Since the introduction of the partnership framework in 2013, housing projects implemented through this model have injected approximately 1.9 billion Bahraini Dinars into the national economy.

In August 2022, several housing financing initiatives were introduced, including the Tas'heel and Enhanced Mazaya programs, in partnership with the private sector and commercial banks. These measures expanded access to immediate housing services through flexible financing solutions and widened accessibility for a broader range of beneficiaries. The Tas'heel program introduced financing support of up to 70,000 Bahraini Dinars, while the Enhanced Mazaya program provided financing support of up to 63,000 Bahraini Dinars, expanding opportunities for eligible beneficiaries to access affordable housing solutions.

Building on these initiatives, additional financing options were introduced in 2025 to further strengthen housing support systems and reduce affordability barriers. The Tas'heel+ program increased the maximum financing amount to up to 91,000 Bahraini Dinars for the purchase of land and housing units, with repayments structured through flexible monthly installments capped at 35 percent of approved income, while the government covers the remaining amount. The Tumooh program provides additional support to beneficiaries with long-standing housing financing needs through supplementary grants of up to 20,000 Bahraini Dinars and fixed installment structures designed to enhance long-term affordability and financial stability.

The Masaken Project, developed in collaboration with the Supreme Council for Women, provides specialized residential apartments for women eligible for housing services under a usufruct (right-of-use) system. The initiative was further expanded through the completion of Masaken 2 in December 2025, adding 49 units.

Housing policy also contributes to broader sustainability objectives through innovative public-private partnership models such as the Government Land Development Program (GLDP). Launched in 2019, the program leverages private sector participation to accelerate delivery and maximize the value of government land. Since 2023, it has supported the development of more than 500 housing units across seven private-sector-led projects, generating land value that exceeds housing finance subsidies and creating a self-sustaining funding cycle.

Madinat Salman Development Plan, Advancing Sustainable Urban Communities

The Madinat Salman Development Plan reflects Bahrain's commitment to developing sustainable and integrated urban communities that enhance the quality of life while supporting national housing priorities. Led by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning, the project combines modern housing delivery with climate-responsive urban planning and community-focused infrastructure. The development adopts climate-responsive design principles, with more than 80 percent of streets, buildings, and open spaces oriented towards prevailing breezes to improve natural ventilation and reduce heat exposure. These efforts are complemented by passive cooling strategies, pedestrian-friendly streets, dedicated cycling routes, green spaces, and integrated public amenities that support healthier and more connected communities.

The project also incorporates a comprehensive landscaping and water-management strategy aimed at strengthening ecological value, reducing water consumption, and improving climate resilience. This includes the use of 90 percent native, adaptive, drought- and saline-tolerant plant species, alongside soil treatments and mulches applied across most landscaped areas to minimise irrigation demand. The development further ensures that 100 percent of irrigation demand is supplied through treated sewage effluent, supported by efficient irrigation systems, water meters, and leak-detection infrastructure. Stormwater resilience measures, natural infiltration systems, and landscape waste composting practices further support Bahrain's broader environmental sustainability and circular economy objectives.

Digital Tools for Accessible Housing

Beyond the design and delivery of housing itself, Bahrain has focused on making the path to home ownership more accessible through digital innovation. In 2024, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning, supported by Eskan Bank, launched the 'Baity App', a digital property platform that brings together housing options and services in one portal, simplifying the home-buying journey for Bahraini citizens. The platform includes a finance calculator, 360-degree virtual tours, master plans, and interactive property maps, enabling citizens to compare options and make informed decisions. It has since been upgraded to offer online property reservations, digital valuation services, and full application tracking, serving as an enabler of more accessible and transparent home ownership.

Bahrain's real estate sector is also being strengthened through private sector collaborations such as the Aqari Data Bank, the Kingdom's national centralized real estate platform and primary source of official property information. Developed as an intelligent real estate assistant, Aqari provides accurate and up-to-date market data from trusted sources, helping citizens, investors, and professionals make informed, data-driven decisions. By using AI and advanced real estate technologies, improving transparency, encouraging investor confidence, and creating one unified national data hub, Aqari is driving a qualitative leap in Bahrain's real estate market and positioning the Kingdom as a regional benchmark for data-driven, digitally enabled property services. Since its launch, the platform has expanded to include online property reservations, digital valuation services, and full application tracking, strengthening accessibility, transparency, and user experience across the housing journey. The platform has recorded more than 52,197 users and currently hosts over 14,999 properties, supported by a network of 64 real estate agencies and valuation providers and seven financing banks, demonstrating strong uptake and broad integration across Bahrain's housing and financing ecosystem.

The Property Check Service also provides updated information on restrictions and conditions affecting properties, helping citizens, investors, and real estate professionals make informed decisions prior to property transactions and investments. The service recorded over 33,000 uses during 2025, highlighting its role in enhancing transparency, improving access to information, and supporting confidence in Bahrain's real estate market.

Judicial Reform

For individuals to truly reach their full potential, they need to live in just communities, governed by institutions they can trust. Ensuring a society has strong foundations, through robust security and justice, is critical to building prosperous and future-ready communities. Bahrain's drive towards safety and security has

been focused on targeted modernization of judicial and correctional reforms in line with international standards on human rights and restorative justice.

Two pioneering initiatives on this front are the Alternative Sentencing Program and the Open Prisons Program, which are integral components of Bahrain's National Human Rights Action Plan 2022-2026. They reflect the Kingdom's holistic approach to integrating human rights principles into its sustainable development framework, ensuring justice is inherently restorative and community-focused.

The Alternative Sentencing Program, launched in 2017 and amended in 2025, introduced non-custodial penalties as alternatives to traditional imprisonment for certain offences. Under this law, courts can impose measures such as community service, rehabilitation programs, electronic monitoring, home detention, and participation in training or educational initiatives instead of prison time. The framework was further expanded in 2024 through the inclusion of the "Weyak" Program for rehabilitation and addiction treatment within the alternative sentencing system, strengthening support for integration and rehabilitation. Thousands of individuals have benefited from the program since its introduction, allowing many to maintain employment, pursue education, and contribute to their families and communities while serving their sentences. The Alternative Sentencing Program has benefitted 8,278 people, supporting their rehabilitation and reintegration.

Furthermore, in 2025, Sentencing Guidelines were introduced to provide judges with an objective and systematic framework for sentencing that assists in determining appropriate penalties in similar factual circumstances and promotes consistency and predictability in judgements.

Bahrain's ongoing Open Prisons Program, launched by the Ministry of Interior in 2022, is an innovative correctional initiative focused on rehabilitation and reintegration. The program allows eligible inmates to work in external jobs or vocational placements, receive vocational training, and participate in educational opportunities while living in supervised accommodation rather than traditional prison facilities, and maintain closer contact with family and transition gradually back into society. The strength of this model has attracted regional interest, reflecting its growing reputation as a reference point for progressive correctional reform. In 2024, the program was accredited by the American Correctional Association, becoming the first mechanism outside the United States to be accredited in the category of community rehabilitation programs. In addition, Bahrain received an Arab Government Excellence Award for the best Arab Government Project for Community Development.

Further strengthening Bahrain's legal and judicial ecosystem, His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa issued Order No. (19) of 2026 establishing the King Hamad Global Institute for Justice. The institute aims to advance legal thought, support

legal and judicial research and training, develop national and international legal competencies, and strengthen cooperation with international judicial and academic institutions.

These initiatives reflect Bahrain's shift toward a more rehabilitative and community-oriented justice model, balancing public safety with opportunities for reform and reintegration while reinforcing the principles of fairness, accountability, and human dignity within the justice system. The Kingdom is already seeing the results of the programs, with reoffending rates at around 2.5 percent, some of the lowest in the world.

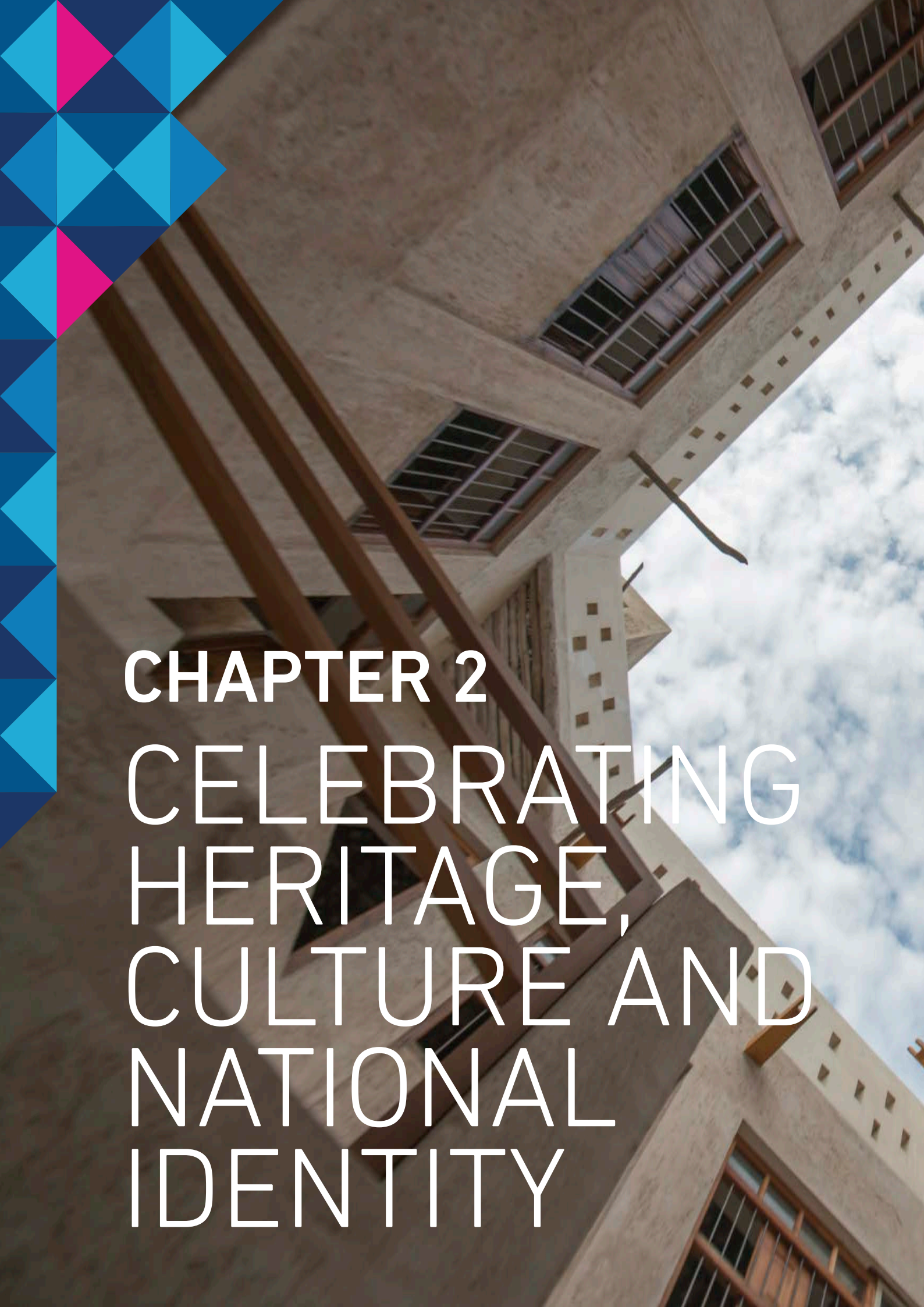
Challenges and Way Forward

The Kingdom of Bahrain's continuous advancements across healthcare, education and training, employment, gender equality, and social protection reflects a deliberate and sustained commitment to human-centric development. By prioritizing the empowerment of its people—with a dedicated focus on women and youth—the nation continues to invest in a highly inclusive, equitable, and opportunity-driven society.

As global and national contexts evolve, and amid a shifting economic landscape, the Kingdom recognizes that ongoing reform is essential. Rapid technological change is expected to lead to shifting labor market demands, which require doubling down on the efforts to address the skills mismatch, including through upgrading curricula, expanding vocational studies and providing ongoing reskilling and upskilling programs. To stay ahead, the Kingdom will continue to use data and evidence to anticipate skills demand and inform responsive policy development.

At the same time, demographic and social shifts, from aging populations, to growing prevalence of chronic diseases, and health emergencies, if not monitored and addressed, can put increasing pressure on health systems, and social protection services. The Kingdom believes in the importance of ensuring accessible, equitable, and high-quality services for all, building measures that strengthen system resilience.

Most importantly, the Kingdom believes in the power of partnerships to address challenges. On the healthcare front, the upcoming health insurance framework opens the door for private sector hospitals to work side by side with government hospitals and health centres, fostering competition that benefits the people. Similarly, the private sector has demonstrated efficiency and effectiveness with the delivery of social housing units.



CHAPTER 2

CELEBRATING HERITAGE, CULTURE AND NATIONAL IDENTITY

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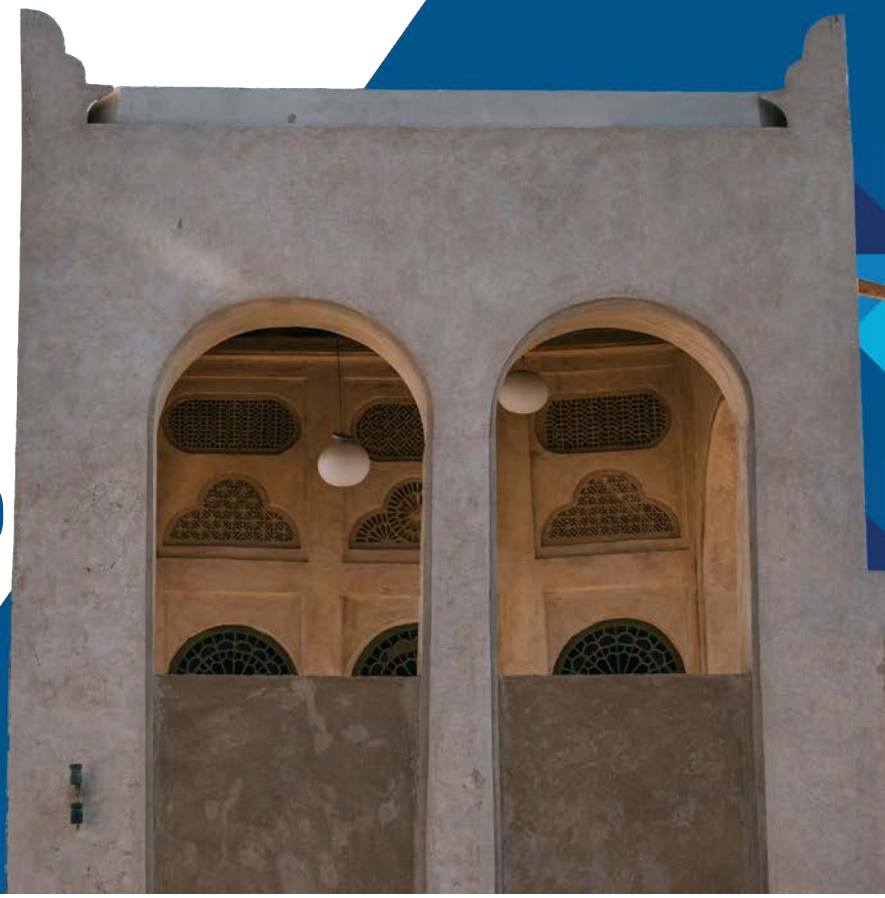


Introduction

With a history spanning over 5,000 years, Bahrain is home to one of the oldest civilizations in the Arabian Gulf. The ancient Dilmun civilization, a crucial Bronze Age trading hub linking Mesopotamia and the Indus Valley, was so revered that Sumerian tales described it as the "land of immortality." That legacy is written into the landscape today through three UNESCO World Heritage Sites: the ancient Dilmun capital at Qal'at al-Bahrain, the historic Pearling Path in Muharraq, and over 11,700 Dilmun Burial Mounds.

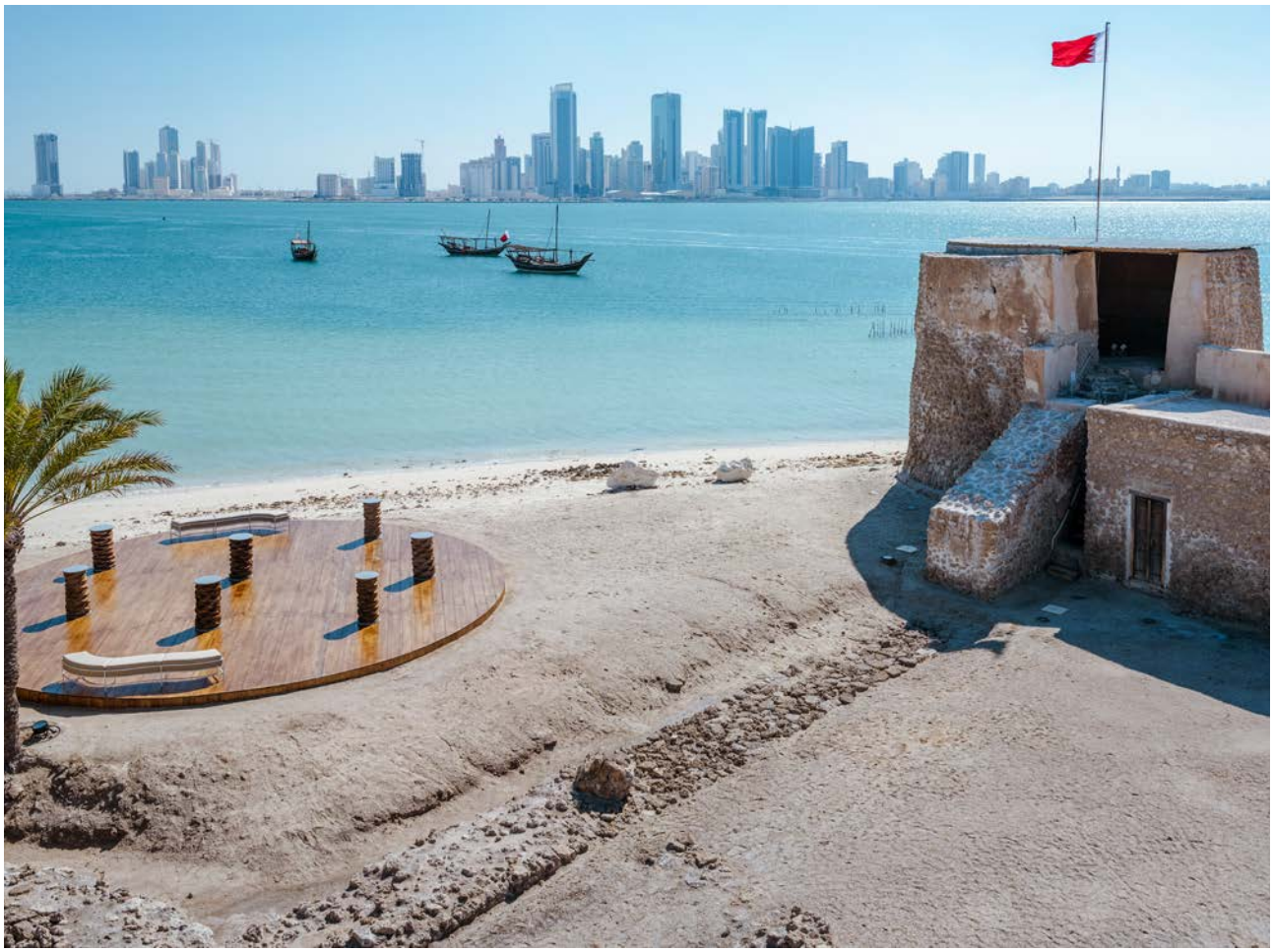
The Kingdom of Bahrain is advancing a model of sustainable development that places identity, heritage, belonging, and creative expression at the core of national life, and embeds these values across policies, partnerships, and investment opportunities.

From preserving ancient crafts and maritime traditions to nurturing a vibrant contemporary arts scene, strengthening interfaith coexistence, and empowering communities to carry their heritage forward, Bahrain's approach recognizes that culture is not a backdrop to development, but rather an important driver of job creation, economic diversification and social cohesion, while also serving as a connector to the world.

Legacy and Heritage as Foundations for the Future

Promoting the Spirit of Belonging

The Kingdom's celebration of its identity is guided by the vision of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, who repeatedly emphasizes the importance of preserving the national pillars that reinforce citizenship values and support a shared identity as represented by values, customs, traditions, and heritage. Under this vision, the Kingdom launched the National Plan to Promote the Spirit of Belonging to the Nation and Reinforce the Values of Citizenship (Bahrainouna) in March 2019. The Plan brings together public and private organizations under a unified strategy to strengthen Bahraini identity. Bahrainouna encompasses a range of initiatives across key areas, including programs on belonging, public relations campaigns, media, curricula, legislation, and regulations. It also establishes national performance indicators to measure shifts in citizens' attitudes towards national belonging and citizenship values, as well as the effectiveness of implementing these initiatives and their social impact.



The Year of Isa Al Kabeer

His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa issued on January 2026 a royal order naming 2026 as the "Year of Isa Al Kabeer", in celebration of His Greatness Shaikh Isa bin Ali Al Khalifa, known as Isa Al Kabeer, Ruler of Bahrain and its dependencies from 1869 to 1932, the builder of the modern state and leader of institutional advancement in the history of the Kingdom of Bahrain.

This honor commemorates the legacy of His Greatness in laying the foundations of stability that helped shape the modern Bahraini state. The royal initiative also reflects HM the King's keenness to honor national figures whose contributions have left a lasting impact on the Kingdom's history, national identity and development journey.

It also highlights the ongoing national efforts to preserve and revive sites of historical significance, particularly in the historic city of Muharraq, which served as the center of ruling during the era of Isa Al Kabeer. Among the key projects associated with this initiative are the preservation of the historical and cultural identity of Bahraini buildings and cities, as well as the revival of Isa Al Kabeer Palace and its surrounding areas in Muharraq. These efforts enhance awareness of the Kingdom of Bahrain's rich historical and architectural heritage.

The "Year of Isa Al Kabeer" represents an important national milestone that strengthens community belonging, reinforces awareness of the Kingdom of Bahrain's historical journey, and affirms the values of loyalty, tolerance, coexistence, and national unity. The initiative also embodies the Kingdom's vision of linking heritage protection with development pathways, reinforcing the continuity between the historical foundations on which the state was built and its comprehensive national journey.

Urban Heritage and City Redevelopment

Tangible heritage, including historic buildings, urban landscapes, and archaeological sites, forms an irreplaceable part of Bahrain's national identity and cultural continuity. The Kingdom has advanced a series of integrated development plans that combine heritage conservation with modern urban planning, ensuring that its most historically significant cities and communities remain vibrant, livable, and connected to both their past and future.

In 2023, His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa issued a Royal Order to revive the Isa Grand Palace and the historic neighborhoods of Muharraq, Bahrain's former capital and one of the most culturally significant cities in the Arabian Gulf. His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister, directed government agencies to launch the Muharraq City Development Plan to preserve its historical and cultural identity.

The Muharraq City Development Plan includes preserving buildings of heritage value, completing the UNESCO World Heritage-listed Pearling Path, providing housing units that meet the aspirations of Bahraini families, upgrading infrastructure services and public utilities, increasing green spaces with 72 green squares and planting 100,000 trees, and launching the Urban Heritage Areas Reconstruction Guideline to preserve the identity of Muharraq City.

A year later, in 2024, His Majesty the King directed the launch of a comprehensive plan for the redevelopment of the historic Manama Souq area, that will preserve its character, address infrastructure needs of the historic areas, and create new tourist spots.

Under the guidance of His Royal Highness the Crown Prince and Prime Minister, the plan includes the redevelopment of the Bab Al Bahrain, the historic entrance which has welcomed traders, travelers, and citizens for generations, the historic Manama Post Office, one of the oldest buildings in the area dating back to 1937, the Manama Municipality building, museums, shops and more, ensuring the souq will be better equipped to host large numbers of visitors, offering them an enhanced experience that celebrates Bahrain's rich heritage.

As works were ongoing on the two projects, the Urban Planning and Development Authority launched the Building Facades Guidelines, aimed at enhancing architectural standards, reducing visual distortion, and reinforcing the distinct urban identity and character of Bahrain's cities and communities, specifically for buildings on main roads and highways. Complementing these efforts, the Authority also approved and published the Urban Heritage Areas Rebuilding Guideline – Old Muharraq Model in November 2023, and is currently finalizing the updated Guideline for Heritage and Historic Areas (Muharraq and Manama). Together, these guidelines support the regulation of urban development while preserving the architectural and cultural identity of Bahrain's historic and heritage areas.

The Heritage Village in Askar supports heritage awareness by recreating traditional Bahraini settings and providing an immersive experience of the Kingdom's customs, traditions, crafts, and historical way of life. The village also hosts the annual Heritage Village Evenings festival, organized by the Ministry of Information, featuring cultural performances, traditional arts, and community activities that connect visitors with Bahrain's rich cultural legacy.

The Kingdom further recognizes the role of the private sector as a key partner in developing its cultural landscape. The Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities' "Invest in Culture" initiative builds strategic partnerships with the private sector to finance the construction of cultural infrastructure, including theatres, cultural centers, and community spaces, as well as recurring programs such as festivals, exhibitions, and entertainment activities.

Bahrain's preservation agenda reaches beyond its ancient and commercial heritage into a more recent, but equally defining, chapter of its national story. Awali, one of the Gulf region's earliest planned oil communities, represents the era that transformed Bahrain's economy and shaped its modern identity. Established following the discovery of oil in Bahrain, in 1932, Awali became the operational center of the Kingdom's oil industry and played a defining role in its economic and urban transformation. The redevelopment project, unveiled in 2026, modernizes residential, commercial, and public facilities while safeguarding the town's distinctive architectural and urban character. The master plan also includes interconnected neighborhoods, green spaces, pedestrian and sports pathways, and the redevelopment of vacant lands in a way that complements existing buildings and supports a contemporary lifestyle.

Bahrain's commitment to sustainability and heritage preservation also extends to the Hawar Islands, one of the Kingdom's most important natural and ecological assets. In 2024, a Royal Decree established the Higher Authority for Hawar Islands Development to guide the archipelago's transformation into a leading eco-tourism destination through a balanced approach that integrates sustainable tourism, environmental protection, infrastructure development, and responsible investment. Nationally, the Hawar Islands Marine and Wildlife Reserve remains one of the region's most significant biodiversity areas, hosting globally important wildlife populations including one of the world's largest dugong aggregations, major seabird breeding grounds, and sensitive coastal ecosystems such as seagrass beds, mudflats, and tidal flats.

The Pearling Path: A Living Maritime History

Of all the traditions that define Bahrain's cultural identity, none runs deeper than the pearl trade. The Kingdom's heritage and national identity are deeply intertwined with its historic pearling industry, which for centuries formed the backbone of its economy, social fabric, and maritime culture. Long before the discovery of oil in 1932, natural pearls harvested from the Arabian Gulf positioned Bahrain as a major regional trading hub, linking it to markets across India, the Middle East, and Europe. Today, the Pearling Path stands as a tangible testament to this legacy, translating history into an interactive experience that preserves the stories, livelihoods, craftsmanship, and maritime traditions that shaped Bahrain's identity for generations. Spanning approximately 3.5 kilometers across the historic city of Muharraq, the Path guides visitors through restored pearling houses, traditional markets, public spaces, and coastal landmarks connected to the historic pearling trade.

Inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List, in 2012, the Pearling Path represents one of Bahrain's most significant heritage initiatives and a leading model of heritage-led urban regeneration. The integrated development approach was internationally recognized in 2019 when the Muharraq revitalization project received the Aga Khan Award for Architecture, one of the world's leading awards for architecture and urban conservation, underscoring Bahrain's commitment to positioning heritage as a driver of sustainable development, tourism, and economic opportunity.

Bahrain Institute for Pearls and Gemstones (DANAT)

Building on the legacy of the Pearling Path, Bahrain continues to spotlight the pearling industry as a defining element of its cultural identity and economic development in the past, present and future. Renowned globally for being home to some of the world's finest natural pearls, the Kingdom has adopted a forward-looking approach to revitalizing this traditional sector. This commitment was institutionalized with the establishment of the Bahrain Institute for Pearls and Gemstones (DANAT) in 2017, positioning it as a national center of excellence dedicated to preserving, developing, and promoting Bahrain's pearling heritage.

In recent years, DANAT has advanced a series of targeted initiatives to modernize the sector and strengthen its global competitiveness. Efforts in 2023 and 2024 focused on enhancing transparency and international positioning through curated exhibitions and auctions of graded natural pearls, enabling local divers and suppliers to access global markets and achieve fair value. Building on this, in 2025, DANAT partnered with the Watch & Jewelry Initiative 2030 to implement a comprehensive sustainability program that introduces the Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) standards, emissions reporting, and responsible sourcing practices across the value chain. This included the launch of the 'SMEs Solution Lab' initiative, providing technical support and professional training to strengthen the capacity of small and medium-sized enterprises

Alongside economic development, DANAT has placed a strong emphasis on research, environmental protection, and long-term resource sustainability. The first national assessment cycle of pearl oyster beds conducted between 2020 and 2023 showed stable conditions and improved pearl incidence, informing national conservation strategies. This work was expanded in 2025 through the second assessment cycle in the northern Hayrat Marine Protected Area, alongside the development of an integrated time-series database to support sustainable marine resource management. In parallel, DANAT collaborated with Arabian Gulf University in 2025 to launch a joint research project examining the impact of climate change on pearl oysters and seagrass ecosystems, including the measurement of blue carbon storage for the first time in the Kingdom, helping to support Bahrain's carbon neutrality target by 2060. These efforts were further complemented by the development of a national framework and blacklist of Invasive Alien Species to support the identification and classification of species that may threaten Bahrain's biodiversity, including marine ecosystems and pearling environments.

SMEs Solution Lab powered by DANAT

In response to the need for practical sustainability integration within the watch and jewelry sector, DANAT partnered with Watch & Jewelry Initiative 2030 to deliver the SMEs Solutions Lab in Bahrain. The program was designed as a targeted capacity-building initiative to support SMEs in translating sustainability principles into actionable business practices.

Delivered between September 2025 and February 2026, the Lab brought together 14 participants from Bahrain and across the international jewelry sector. Through a structured series of expert-led workshops, participants engaged directly with the Initiative specialists to address real operational challenges and identify practical, sector-relevant solutions.

Co-founded by Kering and Cartier (on behalf of Richemont) and implemented in collaboration with DANAT and the World Jewelry Confederation, the program focused on three core pillars: climate resilience, resource preservation, and inclusiveness. The approach emphasized peer learning, open dialogue, and tailored guidance, allowing participants to align sustainability efforts with their business realities.

As proof of concept, the Solutions Lab demonstrated a scalable model for SME engagement in sustainability, reinforcing DANAT's role in enabling industry transition towards more responsible and transparent practices.

دانات
DANAT
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BAHRAIN INSTITUTE FOR PEARLS & GEMSTONES

WATCH & JEWELLERY
INITIATIVE 2030

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Traditional Crafts and Living Heritage

The Kingdom recognizes traditional crafts as a vital pillar of its cultural identity and one of the most important elements of the Kingdom's intangible heritage, reflecting generations of unique knowledge, creativity, and craftsmanship. These practices preserve the authenticity of Bahraini culture, create income opportunities and jobs across tourism, hospitality and trade and contribute to the growth of the cultural and creative economy.

Led by the Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities, the Kingdom has built a network of dedicated spaces and programs to ensure its most vital traditions survive and thrive. These programs span the full breadth of Bahraini heritage, from traditional crafts such as pottery and jewelry to preserving living skills like dhow-making and pearl diving for future generations. Since 2021, Bahrain has introduced the National Register of Craftsmen to guide policy and support artisans, alongside expanding dedicated craft spaces such as Al Jasra Handicrafts Centre, the Bani Jamra weaving factory, the House of Basket Weaving and the Al Naqda House for embroidery. In parallel, Bahrain has sustained annual public workshops for all age groups, including pottery, traditional boat making, and Al Naqda embroidery, ensuring the continuous transfer of skills and engagement of younger generations.

MADE IN BAHRAIN صنع في البحرين

Through the "Made in Bahrain" initiative, the Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities revisits the visual and functional identity of Bahraini handmade products as a cultural expression that has stood the test of time and is reflective of national identity. The initiative aims to launch a visual identity for the local crafts and creative industries, highlight the importance of crafts and handmade products as a part of the Bahraini identity, educate the audience on the different local crafts and their role in the development of communities, introduce elements of modernity and sustainability to local handmade products and promote it locally and internationally, and provide support to the local craftsmen and creative industry practitioners.

Traditional culinary practices carry equal significance. Bahraini halwa, with a history spanning more than 200 years, remains one of the Kingdom's most recognized symbols of hospitality and cultural identity, with traditional copper pots linked to the craft preserved at the Bahrain National Museum. Widely recognized across the GCC, the tradition continues to support local enterprise and strengthen the continuity of Bahrain's cultural heritage across generations.

Heritage and the Arts

This openness to influence and exchange has shaped a vibrant contemporary cultural scene with deep institutional foundations. Across the Kingdom, institutions such as the Bahrain National Museum, Bahrain National Theatre, and gallery networks, supported by the Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities, provide platforms for both local and international artists, helping to bridge traditional heritage with contemporary expression. Independent galleries and cultural houses, particularly in Muharraq and Manama, have expanded alongside restoration projects, creating clusters where visitors can move between historic sites and exhibitions, and live cultural programming in a single experience. These spaces also host the packed calendar of events that is helping to propel Bahrain into a regional hub for culture and creativity. In 2024, Manama was designated as the Capital of Arab Media 2024, highlighting Bahrain's ability to honor its past while embracing its role as a regional center for communication, creativity, and cultural exchange. Also the capital was awarded Gulf Tourism Capital status, kick-starting a year-long itinerary of events that celebrated the diverse and exciting art, music, and culture scene across the country.

Building on this institutional foundation, Bahrain has cultivated a year-round calendar of festivals that bring its cultural identity to life. The Spring of Culture Festival is held annually, and brings together international artists, musicians, performers, and exhibitions, attracting audiences interested in global arts while showcasing Bahrain as a platform for cultural exchange.

The Bahrain International Music Festival further enhances this offering, featuring orchestras, regional musicians, and international performers.

A leading contributor to this calendar is the Bahrain Philharmonic Orchestra, founded in 2022 by Maestro Dr. Mubarak Najem, and comprising over 100 musicians and choir members. The Orchestra has embraced an educational mission, welcoming public school students to dedicated concert series that introduce young audiences to orchestral music through interactive sessions blending international classics with Bahraini compositions. Its mission is to emphasize the educational value of music and its power to inspire creativity and cultural appreciation.

The Muharraq Nights Festival, hosted annually since 2022, is a flagship event linked directly to the UNESCO-listed Pearling Path, where the festival transforms the historic city of Muharraq into a vibrant cultural hub during the winter season, bringing traditional crafts, food, music, and performances into the streets, courtyards, and restored houses that line the route. It is here, where heritage preservation, creative expression, and community participation meet, that Bahrain's broader cultural model finds its clearest expression.

Muharraq Nights, Celebrating Bahraini Arts in a Historic Setting

ليالي المحرق • Muharraq Nights •

Muharraq Nights has emerged as one of Bahrain's leading annual cultural festivals which exemplifies sustainable tourism. The festival transforms the historic city of Muharraq into a vibrant cultural destination that celebrates heritage, creativity, and community engagement. Organized by the Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities, in collaboration with the Shaikh Ebrahim bin Mohammed Al-Khalifa Center for Culture and Research, the festival activates the UNESCO-listed Pearling Path through a program of art, music, food, design, crafts, and public performances.

The initiative transforms historic houses, courtyards, alleyways, and public spaces across Muharraq into interactive cultural venues, reconnecting communities and visitors with Bahrain's pearling heritage and urban identity. The festival stretches across key heritage sites along the Pearling Path, including public squares, restored traditional houses, and cultural pavilions. Visitors experience live performances, exhibitions, workshops, heritage tours, artisan markets, culinary experiences, and family-focused programming designed to strengthen public engagement with Bahrain's cultural heritage and support the local creative economy.

In its fourth edition in 2025, Muharraq Nights welcomed more than 3.5 million visitors across 7 heritage and cultural sites, featuring participation from over 500 vendors, artists, performers, and creative entrepreneurs. The festival program included more than 560 cultural activities, exhibitions, workshops, and performances, further strengthening Muharraq's position as a leading regional destination for heritage-led cultural experiences.

The Kingdom regularly hosts international exhibitions, art fairs, and cultural weeks that bring the world to Bahrain. The Bahrain Annual Fine Arts Exhibition, now in its 52nd edition having debuted in 1972, showcases works by Bahraini artists across multimedia, photography, sculpture, and video installation, serving as an annual platform where traditional forms meet digital media and emerging talent is celebrated alongside established names.

Alongside these national initiatives, the RAK Art Foundation, established by Shaikh Rashid bin Khalifa Al Khalifa, Chairman of the National Arts Council and Honorary President of the Bahrain Arts Society, has emerged as a prominent cultural platform supporting artistic expression, cultural preservation, and community engagement. Through exhibitions, artist residencies, educational programs, and international partnerships, the Foundation promotes contemporary art while providing a space for critical discourse, creative exchange, and social dialogue. Located within a restored historic complex in Muharraq, the Foundation contributes to the preservation and adaptive reuse of Bahrain's cultural heritage, demonstrating how culture can support sustainable urban regeneration while preserving the identity and character of historic communities.

The MAMA Mother Nature International Art Exhibition, which originally debuted in Azerbaijan as an initiative established during the 29th session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, was hosted in Bahrain in February 2025, becoming the first country to take the exhibition international. It used contemporary art to explore environmental conservation, drawing high-level diplomatic attendance and broadening the reach of sustainability conversations through the medium of art.

Bahrain's Folk and Intangible Arts Documentation Project (2021-2024) reflects the Kingdom's commitment to preserving its rich cultural heritage and ensuring that intangible heritage such as music, traditional knowledge, oral histories, performing arts, and community practices are documented for future generations.

A World Model for Coexistence and Tolerance

His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa with the late Pope Francis, and the Grand Imam of Egypt's Al-Azhar Mosque Ahmed Mohamed El-Tayeb in Manama, Bahrain in November 2022

Bahrain's identity has been shaped by centuries of movement, trade, and exchange. As an archipelago at the heart of the Arabian Gulf, the Kingdom has long welcomed people, ideas, languages, and traditions from across the region and beyond. This deep history of connection has given rise to Bahrain's most defining national characteristics, as one of the most religiously and culturally diverse societies in the region, with a profound, lived understanding of tolerance and coexistence, and to a national commitment to ensuring that this diversity remains a source of strength. This enduring environment of inclusion and mutual respect is fundamentally rooted in the Kingdom's authentic Islamic and Arab values, which intrinsically advocate for peace, human dignity, and the acceptance of others.

This spirit of coexistence is visible across the Kingdom through the presence of mosques, churches, temples, and synagogues representing different religions and faiths within a relatively small geographic area. The Kingdom continues to invest in measures that protect and celebrate faith communities, including the renovation of mosques following the directives of His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Crown Prince and Prime Minister, which saw the completion and reopening of 92 mosques in 2025 and 2026. As a part of wider national initiatives to maintain places of worship, the Kingdom facilitated the renovation of the Gulf's oldest synagogue in Manama, reopened in 2021, and the continued care of the Shrinathji Temple, which dates back 200 years and is one of the oldest Hindu temples in the region.

Reflecting the Kingdom's longstanding commitment to religious freedom and coexistence, the King Hamad Global Center for Coexistence and Tolerance secured a Guinness World Record on behalf of Bahrain for the highest density of houses of worship worldwide, with 2.577 houses of worship per square kilometer, highlighting the Kingdom's unique model of religious diversity, tolerance and coexistence.

In May 2026, the Kingdom marked the 120th anniversary of the National Evangelical Church, established in 1906 on land generously granted by the late ruler His Highness Shaikh Isa bin Ali Al Khalifa, Ruler of Bahrain and its Dependencies. His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa donated land for the Cathedral of Our Lady of Arabia, the largest Catholic cathedral in the Arabian Peninsula. Designed to accommodate 2,300 congregants and spanning a 9,000 square meter complex in Awali, the Cathedral stands as one of the most tangible expressions of Bahrain's culture of tolerance.

The Cathedral gained international coverage during the historic state visit of His Holiness the late Pope Francis to the Kingdom of Bahrain, in November 2022, when he toured the site and participated in the Bahrain Dialogue Forum: East and West for Human Coexistence. The Forum brought together hundreds of religious leaders, scholars, intellectuals, policymakers, and senior representatives of Muslim, Christian, Orthodox, Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist, and other faiths from around the world. During the Forum, His Holiness described Bahrain as a beacon of human connection and unity among distant peoples, he also expressed appreciation for the Kingdom's environment of religious freedom, protection of beliefs, and its longstanding role in advancing dialogue, tolerance, and coexistence globally.

The King Hamad Global Center for Coexistence and Tolerance, established in 2018, has continued to expand its educational and international initiatives, including a Joint Postgraduate Diploma on Coexistence launched in partnership with the University for Peace and GIOYA Higher Education Institution, whose second cohort in 2025 graduated 100 participants from 63 countries. The Center also advances the King Hamad Leadership in Coexistence Program in partnership with Faith in Leadership and the 1928 Institute, affiliated with Oxford University, empowering young Bahrainis to become ambassadors of tolerance and coexistence through training, mentorship, and practical tools to counter hate speech and discrimination online and within their communities.

In August 2024, in line with the vision of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa that mutual respect for shared humanity is essential to sustaining global harmony, Bahrain launched the King Hamad Award for Coexistence and Tolerance to honor individuals and organizations advancing intercultural dialogue, coexistence and tolerance, religious freedom, and human diversity. Established as an international biennial award under the oversight of the King Hamad Global Center for Coexistence and Tolerance, the initiative seeks to recognize pioneering global efforts that promote understanding among cultures and religions, reject extremism and hate speech, and strengthen the values of tolerance and coexistence internationally.

Sport as a Living Expression of Bahrain's Heritage

Bahrain recognizes sport as an important component of national identity, social cohesion, and cultural continuity. The Kingdom's development approach links sports initiatives with the preservation of cultural heritage, youth empowerment, and community wellbeing. National institutions, including the Supreme Council for Youth and Sports and the Bahrain Olympic Committee, continue to support initiatives that expand participation in sports while reinforcing values of inclusion, belonging, and national pride. This national commitment was highlighted when Bahrain was crowned the Capital of Arab Sports Culture 2026 during the meeting of the Council of Arab Youth and Sports Ministers, held under the umbrella of the League of Arab States. The achievement marked a milestone shaped by leadership, vision and long-term national strategy and underscored the Kingdom's growing regional role in safeguarding traditional sports as part of its broader cultural and sustainable development vision.

Horse racing and equestrian sports remain central to Bahrain's sporting identity, linking internationally recognized competitions with traditions deeply rooted in the Kingdom's cultural heritage. Through continued investment in racing infrastructure, training facilities, and equestrian services, Bahrain is preserving and advancing its equestrian heritage and horse racing culture while supporting the long-term sustainability of the sector across generations. The Kingdom hosts major events including the Bahrain International Trophy, launched in 2019 at the Rashid Equestrian and Horseracing Club, alongside His Majesty the King's Cup, His Royal Highness the Crown Prince's Cup, the Bahrain Turf Series, and the Future Stars Series, strengthening Bahrain's position on the international horse racing calendar, attracting global participation and visitors, and reinforcing its growing presence within the international equestrian community.

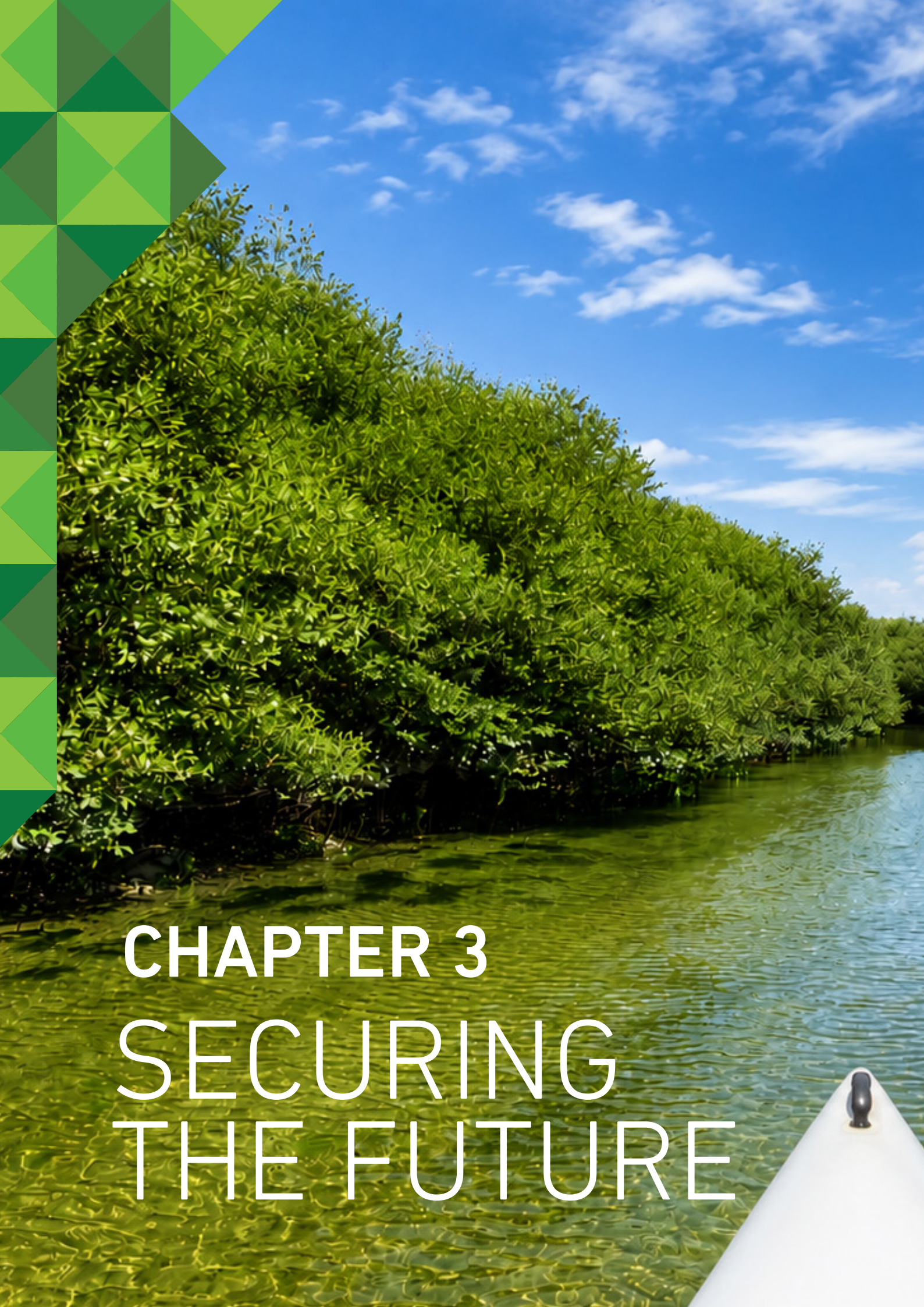
Reflecting broader efforts to sustain this cultural legacy across generations, the "Bahrain Jockeys" training program, launched in 2025, in partnership with Tamkeen and supervised by the British Racing School, aims to train and qualify Bahraini jockeys through specialized international training pathways that support the long-term sustainability of Bahrain's equestrian sector.

Challenges and Way Forward

Bahrain's approach to culture, heritage, and national identity reflects a clear conviction that sustainable development is deeply rooted in the preservation and promotion of cultural values, historical continuity, and social cohesion. This commitment is evident in the ongoing preservation and rehabilitation of heritage sites, the safeguarding of traditional crafts and practices, and the revitalization of historic urban areas. It is further reinforced by the role of cultural institutions and community partnerships in promoting Bahrain's long-standing traditions of coexistence and openness.

Rapid urban development and economic transformation require a careful balance between modernization and the protection of tangible and intangible heritage, including historic sites, cultural landscapes, and traditional practices. Ensuring the sustainability of cultural and creative industries also requires continued support to enable fair competition, expand market access, and strengthen the capacity of small and emerging cultural enterprises in an increasingly globalized and digital environment. In addition, maintaining active engagement of youth and communities in cultural life, including in heritage sports, requires sustained investment in awareness, participation, and institutional support to ensure these traditions remain vibrant and relevant.

Looking ahead, Bahrain will continue to strengthen the institutions, partnerships, and policies that support culture and heritage as integral pillars of sustainable development. The Kingdom will further invest in safeguarding and promoting cultural assets, expanding opportunities for creatives and cultural entrepreneurs, and enhancing the contribution of heritage sports as a living expression of national identity and community cohesion. It will also continue to deepen regional and international cooperation in culture and heritage preservation, while fostering inclusive participation across society.



CHAPTER 3
SECURING THE FUTURE

3 CHAPTER 3

SECURING THE FUTURE

Introduction

Bahrain is committed to addressing both immediate and long-term priorities and challenges, with the aim of setting the foundations today for building a sustainable, resilient future that leaves no one behind. This direction aligns closely with the priorities advanced through the Summit of the Future and the adoption of the Pact for the Future, particularly in areas related to sustainable development, digital cooperation, climate action, resilient institutions, and strengthened international cooperation.

Building on the foundations of Bahrain Economic Vision 2030, the Kingdom is also looking ahead toward shaping its Vision 2050 ambitions. As the Kingdom does so, it is strengthening institutions, infrastructure, sustainability, innovation, and future-ready systems that support long-term prosperity and resilience. In line with this longer term view, the Kingdom continues to advance a comprehensive transition toward carbon neutrality by 2060, in line with its international commitments, while undertaking other future planning initiatives, including in areas of digitisation, space and sustainable urban expansion.

Looking Beyond 2030: Shaping Bahrain Vision 2050

As we approach 2030, the Kingdom is increasingly focused on shaping its next phase of national development, building on the progress achieved under Bahrain Economic Vision 2030. This forward-looking approach reflects the Kingdom's commitment to ensuring long-term prosperity, resilience, sustainability, and competitiveness in a rapidly evolving global landscape.

Under His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa's directives to secure a prosperous future for Bahrain and its people, His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister, directed the commencement of consultations, with the Legislative Authority, the private sector, professional institutions, and civil society organizations, to draft the Bahrain Vision 2050. The consultation will adopt a whole of society approach to help shape a vision that reflects the aspirations of current and future generations. As the successor framework to Bahrain Economic Vision 2030, Bahrain Vision 2050 aims to support continued prosperity, economic advancement, sustainability, innovation, and a high quality of life for all while positioning the Kingdom to navigate future global transformations and opportunities.

Environmental Practices for a Sustainable Future

Building for the future requires balancing environmental responsibility with sustainable economic growth, a principle long embedded within Bahrain's national development approach and reflected in its constitutional commitment to protecting the environment and preserving natural resources. Recognizing the growing urgency of climate action, Bahrain has placed sustainability at the heart of its national transformation agenda through Bahrain Economic Vision 2030, which outlines a pathway toward reducing dependence on hydrocarbons while promoting private sector growth and innovation. Through this approach, the Kingdom is advancing a just and orderly transition that aligns environmental sustainability with long-term economic resilience, social equity, and future development priorities.

As a low-lying island, Bahrain is cognizant of its vulnerabilities to climate risks, including sea-level rise and groundwater salinization, temperature increases and water scarcity. In response to this, the Kingdom has made several pledges to support international targets and set ambitious domestic goals.

As a signatory to the 2015 Paris Agreement on Climate Change, Bahrain is committed to taking more action to prevent overconsumption, cut greenhouse gas emissions, and mitigate the impacts of climate change. This transition also

presents an opportunity to move towards more inclusive growth that supports long-term environmental sustainability.

During the 26th session of COP in Glasgow, in 2021, His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister, announced Bahrain's commitment to achieve carbon neutrality by 2060. The commitment was accompanied by a set of ambitious interim targets for 2035, including reducing emissions by 30 percent, doubling renewable energy deployment, expanding mangrove coverage fourfold, doubling tree coverage across the Kingdom, and investing in carbon capture technologies. This has catalyzed a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach, with strong participation by the private sector, to meet this pledge.

In line with its obligations under the Paris Agreement, in 2024, the Kingdom submitted its First Biennial Transparency Report to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change under the Enhanced Transparency Framework, reinforcing its commitment to climate monitoring, reporting and accountability.

Blueprint Bahrain and the Roadmap to Carbon Neutrality

At the 28th session of COP in the United Arab Emirates, in 2023, His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa announced "Blueprint Bahrain," reaffirming the Kingdom's commitment to the Paris Agreement and its climate targets, including achieving carbon neutrality by 2060.

Built around three core pillars; mitigation, adaptation, and investment, the initiative reflects Bahrain's vision for a more sustainable and climate-resilient future. The blueprint emphasizes that achieving meaningful climate action requires collective cooperation and coordinated efforts toward targeted change.

Under Blueprint Bahrain's mitigation pillar, the National Energy Strategy serves as the Kingdom's roadmap to improving energy efficiency, delivering a diversified, affordable, and low-carbon energy system through the expansion of renewable energy, and decarbonizing heavy-emitting sectors through carbon abatement technologies such as carbon capture and storage. Bahrain is also advancing sectoral pathways in collaboration with industry stakeholders, particularly across emissions-intensive sectors such as manufacturing and transport.

Supporting this transition, financial commitments were announced which included the creation of a 750 million US Dollars climate technology investment fund focused on emerging climate solutions, alongside the Safa voluntary carbon offsetting platform which supports businesses and individuals in understanding and managing their carbon footprint through a user-friendly platform, with revenues directed toward financing regional and international climate projects. To position Bahrain as a destination for climate innovation, His Majesty the King invited experts, researchers, and

entrepreneurs to bring their ideas and solutions to the Kingdom, underscoring Bahrain's commitment to innovation and knowledge exchange in support of global energy transition efforts.

While mitigating future impacts remains crucial, the Kingdom recognizes the accelerating realities of climate change and is acting on both fronts: limiting future impacts and adapting to those already underway. The National Adaptation Investment Plan guides investments in water security, ecosystem protection, and coastal resilience. By 2035, the Kingdom aims to achieve full water resilience, quadrupling mangrove coverage, and doubling tree cover. By 2040, all 161 kilometers of Bahrain's coastline will be protected. These are not mere ambitions; they are concrete steps towards building a more resilient nation.

To further strengthen the resilience of its coastal ecosystems and shorelines, Bahrain announced its Sea-Level Rise Adaptation Plan in 2023. The plan sets out proactive measures to protect vulnerable coastal areas, critical infrastructure, and key economic assets from the impacts of rising sea levels, while supporting long-term adaptation planning and climate resilience. These efforts are supported by national sea-level rise assessments that use satellite-derived data and advanced geospatial modelling to identify potential inundation zones and inform long-term adaptation planning.

Through a combination of national strategies, investments, and international commitments, the Kingdom is advancing a comprehensive approach to climate action and sustainable development. Bahrain's updated Nationally Determined Contribution, submitted to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change in 2021, serves as the Kingdom's official climate action plan under the Paris Agreement outlining how to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, strengthen climate resilience, and contribute to global climate goals. The submission reinforces the Kingdom's sustainability agenda by emphasizing adaptation measures and economic diversification with mitigation co-benefits. It outlines a pathway that combines renewable energy expansion, improved energy efficiency, and afforestation initiatives to strengthen climate resilience, support emissions mitigation, and advance the transition towards a more sustainable and lower-carbon economy.

Expanding Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency

Bahrain continues to advance its transition towards a more sustainable and lower-carbon energy system through the implementation of the National Renewable Energy Action Plan and the National Energy Efficiency Action Plan.

The National Renewable Energy Action Plan seeks to expand renewable energy deployment and increase the contribution of clean energy within Bahrain's national energy mix, targeting renewable energy generation of 20 percent by 2035, while the National Energy Efficiency Action Plan aims to improve energy efficiency across key sectors, including buildings, industry, transport, and electricity consumption.

Bahrain has introduced a range of measures to accelerate renewable energy deployment and improve energy efficiency. Through the Net Metering Resolution and the Distributed Solar Initiative, residential, commercial, and industrial consumers are able to install rooftop photovoltaic (PV) systems, generate electricity for self-consumption, and export surplus electricity to the national grid.

The government has also advanced energy efficiency through initiatives such as the KAFAA Energy Efficiency Program, launched in 2023 to promote energy-saving retrofits across public and private sector buildings through accredited energy service companies, and the implementation of an energy-saving LED project replacing conventional lighting with energy-efficient LED systems across roads, main streets, and traffic signals to reduce electricity consumption, while solar-powered street lighting projects continue expanding the use of renewable energy in public spaces.

At the infrastructure level, Bahrain has advanced several large-scale solar projects across strategic national facilities under the National Renewable Energy Action Plan, including a multi-site solar project covering major public infrastructure sites and government buildings. In 2022, the Bahrain International Circuit completed a major solar project that generates sufficient renewable electricity to power the entire Formula 1 Gulf Air Bahrain Grand Prix weekend. In 2023, Khalifa Bin Salman Port became the region's first fully solar-powered seaport following the completion of a large-scale solar installation supporting port operations and emissions reduction.

Another example is the solar energy project at Bahrain National Stadium, implemented by the General Sports Authority in collaboration with the Ministry of Electricity and Water Affairs.

Bahrain's higher education institutions are also contributing to the transition towards renewable energy. In 2023, the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland inaugurated a solar project comprising nearly 5,000 panels, generating approximately 65 percent of the university's annual electricity needs while reducing carbon emissions annually. The University of Bahrain has similarly incorporated solar energy systems into its campus infrastructure, supporting sustainability, energy efficiency, and environmental awareness through education and research.

Industry is also playing an increasingly important role in Bahrain's energy transition. Alba, one of the world's largest aluminum smelters, has installed a 6 megawatts solar system comprising more than 11,000 panels across its facilities and established an internal carbon bank to manage verified emissions reductions. Meanwhile through its green initiative, Beyon has expanded renewable energy generation across its facilities, including a 2-megawatts solar project at the Beyon Data Oasis and a 1.5 megawatts system at the Hamala site. The company also introduced the region's first solar and wind-powered mobile site, while AI-driven robotic cleaning systems help conserve approximately 300,000 litres of water annually.

Among the largest renewable energy initiatives currently underway in Bahrain is Foulath Holding's 123-megawatt-peak solar project, announced in November 2025. Spanning 14 sites, the project combines rooftop and ground-mounted solar installations and includes the world's largest single-site rooftop solar power plant: a 50-megawatt installation covering a 262,000-square-metre stockyard shed and incorporating approximately 77,000 solar panels. Across all sites, the project will deploy more than 189,900 high-efficiency solar panels, generating an estimated 200 million kilowatt-hours of clean electricity in its first year and reducing carbon emissions by approximately 90,000 metric tons annually.

Enhancing Air Quality Through Innovation and Sustainable Mobility

Improving air quality is an integral part of efforts to protect public health, enhance environmental resilience, and advance sustainable development. To support these objectives, the Ambient Air Quality Monitoring Network was upgraded and expanded across all governorates between 2020 and 2024, strengthening real-time monitoring capabilities, enhancing the national air quality database, and supporting evidence-based environmental policymaking. The Kingdom is also strengthening public access to environmental information through the development of the Bahraini

Air Quality Index smartphone application by the Supreme Council for Environment, expected to launch in 2026. The application will provide real-time air quality data, health guidance, and daily recommendations.

In the spirit of international cooperation, the Kingdom hosted the CEM Middle East Conference and Exhibition on Emissions and Air Quality Monitoring, in April 2025, bringing together international experts, technical specialists, and leading companies to advance collaboration, innovation, and knowledge exchange in emissions monitoring and air quality technologies.

Water Resources Security and Resilience

Water security remains a national priority, and light of growing urban demand, the Kingdom continues to strengthen water infrastructure, improve resource efficiency, and advance sustainable water management through technology and long-term resilience measures.

Several strategic water distribution stations were completed in 2024, including projects in Hidd, Madinat Khalifa, Ramli Housing Development, and Madinat Salman. Bahrain is also advancing the Hidd Independent Water Production Plant using advanced reverse osmosis technologies, alongside additional desalination infrastructure planned in Hawar. These efforts are guided by the National Water Strategy 2030, under which twenty-two of the strategy's forty initiatives had been completed by 2025, reflecting advanced management of water resources, wastewater treatment, sewage systems, and sanitation services.

Technology and innovation are also playing an increasing role in Bahrain's water management approach. In 2025, the Kingdom launched a satellite scanning initiative to detect unseen leaks across Bahrain's water distribution network, helping reduce water losses and improve infrastructure reliability. Bahrain is also strengthening national capabilities in groundwater monitoring through isotope techniques, while promoting smart water-saving technologies, greywater reuse, rainwater harvesting, and advanced wastewater recovery solutions across residential, agricultural, and industrial sectors.

Environmental protection and public awareness also remain central to Bahrain's water management framework. In cooperation with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the Supreme Council for Environment launched the national "Sustainable Water" campaign in 2024 under the theme "Every Drop Has a Story," promoting water conservation and sustainable consumption practices. Bahrain also continues monitoring industrial wastewater discharged into the marine environment to ensure compliance with national discharge standards and strengthen long-term water resilience.

The Coastal Resilience Strategy developed a digital model of Bahrain's terrain and assessed multiple sea-level rise scenarios through to 2100. Based on these assessments, an action plan comprising more than 190 proposed measures was developed to protect Bahrain's coastline, with implementation planned in five-year phases through to 2040.

Reflecting Bahrain's growing role in advancing dialogue on sustainability and climate resilience, the Kingdom also hosted the Global Water, Energy and Climate Change Congress under the theme "Sustainable Water & Energy Transition – Innovating for a Secure Future" in September 2025. The congress brought together regional and international policymakers, experts, and industry leaders to strengthen cooperation, exchange knowledge, and showcase advanced technologies and innovative solutions supporting water security, energy sustainability, climate resilience, and more integrated management of natural resources.

Strengthening Terrestrial Ecosystems and Biodiversity

Bahrain's efforts extend to strengthening environmental protections across terrestrial ecosystems through targeted policies, ecosystem restoration initiatives, afforestation programs, and the expansion of protected areas. Together, these efforts promote biodiversity conservation, sustainable land use, and more science-based environmental management across the Kingdom.

Central to these efforts is the National Afforestation Plan, which aims to plant 3.6 million trees by 2035 as part of Bahrain's broader climate resilience and environmental sustainability agenda. By the end of 2025, the Kingdom had already achieved approximately 62 percent of this target, reflecting the accelerated pace of implementation across urban greening, coastal rehabilitation, and environmental restoration projects. Supporting these efforts, initiatives such as the Forever Green Campaign continues to promote public participation, environmental awareness, and community engagement in expanding green spaces and enhancing biodiversity across the Kingdom. Community engagement is further strengthened through initiatives such as Buthoor Al Bahrain (Seeds of Bahrain), implemented in partnership with UN Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), which distributed more than 13,000 seedlings across 57 locations in 2024.

Bahrain is also encouraging innovation in sustainable environmental management and community participation through initiatives such as the Innovation in Irrigation Solutions Competition, which looks at innovative modern irrigation technologies and water-efficient solutions that strengthen environmental sustainability, improve resource efficiency, and support long-term ecosystem resilience. The competition focuses on developing innovative irrigation solutions in specific

locations such as King Hamad Highway, Gulf of Bahrain Avenue, and Sheikh Jaber Al Ahmad Al Sabah Highway, while a second category allows participants to select an area without treated water services to assess its needs and propose integrated solutions.

Alongside these national initiatives, Bahrain continues expanding and strengthening its protected terrestrial areas. The Mohamed bin Zayed Nature Reserve, the Kingdom's first protected area, originally established in 1976 and spanning more than five square kilometers, plays a central role in safeguarding native and endangered species, including the Arabian Oryx, while supporting long-standing regional breeding programs. In 2024, the Reserve introduced dedicated greenhouses to propagate native desert species such as Ghaf and Sidr trees, supporting national afforestation efforts and expanding the Kingdom's green cover.

Protected terrestrial areas now cover 7.3 percent of Bahrain's land area, an approach further reinforced through the expansion of protected terrestrial areas, including the designation of Wadi Al Buhair Reserve in 2022. Characterized by its unique geological formations and rich biodiversity, the reserve supports a wide range of plant species and serves as an important habitat for migratory and resident birds.

Strengthening Coastal Ecosystems, Marine Life and Biodiversity

Bahrain has made the protection of its coastal and marine ecosystems a central pillar of its environmental and development agenda, recognizing that the sustainability of its waters is critical to biodiversity, climate resilience, and long-term national prosperity. This commitment has progressively expanded over the past decades through the designation of a growing network of protected marine and coastal areas, beginning with Tubli Bay in 1995, followed by the Hawar Islands Reserve in 1996, Mashtan Island in 2002, Arad Bay in 2003 and Najwat Bul Thamah in 2007, alongside the protection of ecologically significant marine habitats such as Northern Hayrat pearl oyster beds of Hayr Bu Amamah, Hayr Bul Thamah and Hayr Shtayyah which were declared marine protected areas in 2017. Today, marine protected areas cover 22.3 percent of Bahrain's marine territory.

Tubli Bay remains one of the Kingdom's most important natural marine environments and includes the country's only significant natural mangrove stand, providing vital nursery, feeding and breeding habitats for marine life and migratory birds. The Arad Bay Reserve further strengthens this model by combining ecological restoration with public access, where restored mangrove habitats support marine biodiversity while the surrounding public walkway allows communities to engage directly with Bahrain's natural environment.

Building on these efforts, Bahrain launched the Bahrain Mangroves Initiative in 2024 to further expand mangrove cultivation and reinforce the Kingdom's broader environmental sustainability and climate action agenda.

Following the fifteenth UN Biodiversity Conference in 2022, Bahrain updated its National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan for the period 2026–2031 to align with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. The updated strategy reflects enhanced national commitments to biodiversity conservation, ecosystem protection, and the sustainable management of natural resources, while supporting the implementation of international biodiversity targets.

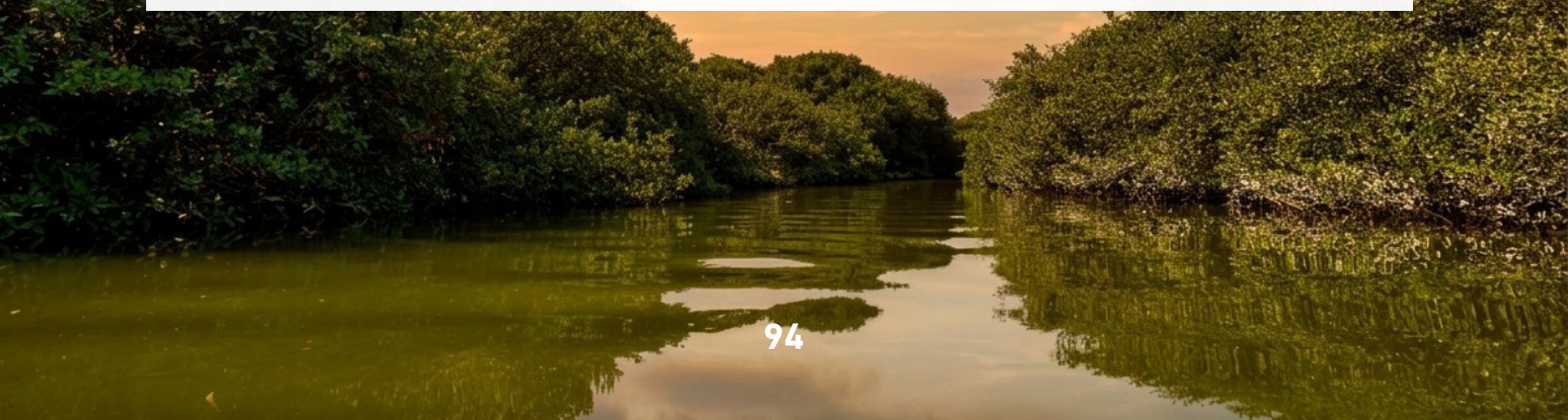
The Bahrain Mangroves Initiative

Bahrain has increasingly positioned nature-based solutions at the center of its environmental and climate agenda, with mangrove restoration emerging as a flagship national initiative. Mangroves are among the world's most effective natural ecosystems for absorbing carbon dioxide, protecting coastlines, preserving marine biodiversity, and maintaining ecological balance.

Building on its mangrove strategy set in 2022, the Kingdom officially launched the 'Bahrain Mangroves Initiative' in December 2024 under the patronage of His Highness Shaikh Mohammed bin Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa. Led by the Ministry of Municipalities Affairs and Agriculture and supported by the Supreme Council for Environment, the initiative aims to plant 1.6 million mangrove seedlings by 2035 and reflects Bahrain's broader commitment to biodiversity conservation, climate resilience, and achieving carbon neutrality by 2060. It also aligns with the implementation of the National Action Plan, "Blueprint Bahrain," developed to support the Kingdom's pathway towards net-zero emissions while strengthening environmental protection and climate resilience.

Implementation accelerated significantly through volunteer planting campaigns and partnerships with private-sector entities supporting mangrove cultivation and ecosystem restoration. A notable example is the collaboration with Alba, which provided financial support for the Ras Sanad Mangrove Nursery Project to expand seedling production and strengthen national restoration efforts. Alba also established its own mangrove nursery to contribute seedlings for planting initiatives across the Kingdom.

By May 2026, Bahrain had surpassed its mangrove planting milestone ahead of 2035 deadline, reaching 2.23 million planted seedlings and achieving 139 percent of the target, marking a significant milestone in the Kingdom's efforts to strengthen biodiversity and climate resilience.



The National Aquaculture Center supports aquaculture research, hatchery production, marine restocking, and private-sector investment in fish farming technologies. In 2026, Bahrain launched fish restocking initiatives involving the release of nearly 100,000 juvenile fish into territorial waters. These efforts are complemented by regulatory measures introduced in 2024 and 2025 to strengthen sustainable fisheries management, including seasonal bans on the fishing and trade of key local species during breeding periods and the protection of 18 species of juvenile fish and crustaceans through restrictions on their capture and trade. The Supreme Council for Environment also continues to monitor marine ecosystems and fish populations through scientific surveys and conservation initiatives to support evidence-based marine protection efforts. These efforts are reinforced through the Artificial Reefs Project 2026–2030, which aims to deploy artificial reef structures along Bahrain's coastline to create new marine habitats, enhance fish breeding and nursery grounds, replenish fish stocks, and support the long-term sustainability of the fisheries sector. By strengthening marine ecosystems and increasing biodiversity, the project contributes to both environmental conservation and sustainable marine resource management.

This conservation network is supported by Bahrain's growing investment in science, technology and marine data. The launch, in 2025, of the advanced research vessel Al-Masaha 2050 marks a strategic milestone in strengthening national surveying capabilities, using hydrographic technologies, AI and Geographic Information System to generate high-precision data for coastal planning, ecosystem monitoring and sustainable resource management.

Ensuring Food Security and Resilient Production

Food security remains central to Bahrain's approach to strengthening national resilience, enhancing supply chain sustainability, and building a more sustainable future. As an archipelago with limited natural resources, the Kingdom is strengthening food resilience through a practical mix of innovation, strategic investment, and sustainable production practices. The aim is to ensure stable food availability while reducing pressure on resources and making production systems more resilient to climate, supply-chain, and market shocks.

The National Initiative for Agricultural Development, launched in 2010 under the patronage of Her Royal Highness Princess Sabeeka bint Ibrahim Al Khalifa, Wife of His Majesty the King of Bahrain, President of the Supreme Council for Women, promotes sustainable agricultural development through modern technologies, strategic planning, and resource-efficient practices. Building on this approach, the Initiative launched AgroBH in 2022 as Bahrain's first integrated agricultural database providing a centralized digital platform for agricultural

information, research, statistics, and geospatial data to support decision-making across the sector. The platform also hosts the "AgroCareers" initiative, introduced in 2025, which helps students explore emerging agricultural fields including AI, robotics, drones, and sustainable technologies.

Another major step in this direction was the establishment of the Bahrain Food Holding Company, Ghitha, in 2024, to accelerate growth and innovation across the agri-food sector. This was followed by the launch of the Ghitha Strategy, in 2025, which introduced a unified ecosystem to enhance local production, attract investment, support workforce development, and strengthen public-private partnerships across food production, manufacturing, and distribution. The Ghitha Food Park builds on this vision as an integrated food infrastructure project, with its first phase spanning one million square meters to support food manufacturing, logistics, processing, and storage.

Efforts are further supported through platforms such as the annual Bahrain Animal and Agriculture Production Show (Mara'ee), one of the region's largest agricultural and livestock exhibitions supporting national food security and domestic agricultural production. The exhibition also showcases innovation and sustainable farming solutions, which in 2025 included an AI-powered smart irrigation system developed by Bahraini university students using sensors and IoT technologies to optimize water consumption and improve agricultural efficiency. The Kingdom also hosts an annual Farmers Market which supports local farmers and entrepreneurs while promoting community awareness around sustainable food systems, youth participation, and digital integration through smart technologies, e-payment systems, and modern agricultural solutions.

In 2026, Bahrain expanded support for farmers by allocating them plots in Buri and Hoorat A'ali, with more than 122,000 square meters of agricultural land made available through the Government Land Investment Platform, under long-term land-use agreements, supported by infrastructure development, irrigation network expansion, and technical assistance.

The Ministry of Municipalities Affairs and Agriculture signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the National Initiative for Agricultural Development to deliver specialized training programs that strengthen the technical and entrepreneurial capacities of agricultural entrepreneurs and support sustainable agricultural investment.

Reflecting the impact of all these efforts, four Bahraini agricultural villages received international recognition under the FAO Villages Recognition Initiative in 2026. Hoorat A'ali was recognized for science, innovation, and digital villages; Buri village for natural villages; Karranah village for traditional food cultures; and Budaiya for agritourism experiences, reflecting

the diversity and excellence of Bahrain's agricultural initiatives and sustainable practices.

An innovative outlook is helping Bahrain produce more with fewer resources through initiatives such as the Hydroponics and Soilless Agriculture Program, which promotes water-efficient farming methods capable of reducing water consumption by 70 to 90 percent compared with conventional farming, while improving productivity and enabling year-round production. This links food security directly to sustainable resource use, helping protect water supplies while supporting domestic production.

The King Hamad Prize for Agricultural Development promotes innovation, sustainability, and excellence across Bahrain's agricultural sector by fostering a competitive environment among agricultural entrepreneurs, Bahraini farmers, and researchers. Since its first edition in 2015, the prize has been awarded across three categories: Best Agricultural Project, Best Bahraini Farmer, and Best Agricultural Research and Studies. It recognizes initiatives that strengthen food security, advance agricultural innovation, and support the long-term sustainability of the sector. In 2025, the fifth edition of the prize, recognized outstanding initiatives that strengthened food security through sustainable farming practices, innovative irrigation solutions, and the application of modern agricultural technologies to improve productivity and resource efficiency.

Bahrain continues strengthening agricultural research and international cooperation in the date palm sector. In 2026, the Kingdom approved the establishment of the Global Date Research Center, positioning the country as an international hub for specialized research, monitoring, and scientific cooperation related to date production and palm cultivation.

Looking ahead, Bahrain continues to strengthen its long-term food security and sustainable aquaculture systems through new digital infrastructure and international partnerships. The Electronic "Bluetrack" System, set to launch in 2027, is an integrated digital communication and monitoring platform connecting the Fish Licensing and Laboratory Directorate at the Supreme Council for Environment with fish farms across the Kingdom. It is expected to improve transparency, accelerate information exchange and decision making, strengthen sectoral data and oversight, support sustainable investment, and enhance production and market access through more efficient operational management.

Reducing Waste and Promoting a Circular Economy

Bahrain is advancing a more circular approach to resource management through investments in waste management infrastructure, recycling, composting, waste-to-energy solutions, and more efficient water use.

A critical driver of this is the National Waste Management Strategy, announced in 2018, the strategy sets out an integrated system for the collection, segregation, treatment, disposal, and recycling of waste across the Kingdom. Its focus is to reduce the volume of waste sent to landfill by cutting waste at source, working with manufacturers to encourage reuse and recycling, and expanding public awareness on segregation and responsible disposal. To facilitate community participation, the Ministry announced, in 2024, the establishment of 300 community collection centers across Bahrain's governorates, ensuring one center for every 5,000 people.

The Strategy examines multiple integrated solutions, including material recovery facilities, composting of food and green waste, refuse-derived fuel production, waste-to-energy systems, and landfill gas recovery for energy generation. Organic and green waste, which account for more than 40 percent of landfill waste, are a particular focus due to their significant methane emissions when decomposing anaerobically. Pilot windrow composting operations at the Hoorat A'ali facility have successfully produced quality compost while helping divert green and organic material from landfill.

Next Generation Cities and Smart Infrastructure

As Bahrain continues to advance its long-term sustainability and resilience agenda, the Kingdom is also adopting a future-focused approach to urban development that places sustainability, connectivity, resilience, and quality of life at the center of national planning. Urban development is increasingly shaped around creating smart, inclusive, and adaptable communities capable of responding to evolving economic, social, environmental, and technological needs while supporting future generations.

This requires future-ready urban environments that connect people to housing, transport, services, public spaces, and economic opportunity through efficient and sustainable infrastructure systems.

The National Planning Development Strategy 2050 serves as Bahrain's long-term framework for integrated and sustainable urban development. In 2023, Phase 1 of the plan was launched to assess existing national and sectoral strategies, evaluate planning gaps, and review Bahrain's land use framework in light of evolving economic, social, environmental, and demographic trends. Building on this, Phase 2 was launched in 2026, focusing on developing the national spatial vision and establishing a unified framework for balanced urban expansion, efficient land use, environmental sustainability, infrastructure development, and improved quality of life, while guiding future national priorities and strategic investments.

Bahrain continues to modernize its transport infrastructure through a series of strategic road development projects implemented under the current Government Plan 2023–2026 to improve connectivity, reduce congestion, enhance mobility, and support more sustainable urban systems. Major projects, including the Al Fateh Highway Development Project, Muharraq Ring Road, and the access road network serving Bahrain International Airport, incorporate smart and environmentally conscious design features such as LED street lighting, solar-powered systems in selected locations, intelligent traffic management systems, environmental noise barriers, enhanced drainage and water-flow infrastructure, and coordinated landscaping and tree-planting initiatives. Beyond improving transport efficiency, the road development program contributes to broader sustainability objectives by reducing traffic congestion and vehicle idling, helping lower transport-related emissions while supporting more efficient movement of people and goods. Several of these projects have already been completed, while additional phases and future expansions continue to be implemented to accommodate population growth, stimulate economic activity, and support the Kingdom's long-term urban development goals.

Building Future Ready Digital Governance

Digital transformation is increasingly being embedded across government systems, public services, and the wider economy. The Kingdom continues to leverage advanced technologies, digital connectivity, and innovation-driven governance to strengthen institutional resilience, improve service delivery, and support long-term competitiveness in an increasingly digital world. From nationwide digital connectivity to commercial 5G networks, cloud capability, data centers, data jurisdiction laws, submarine fibre optic systems, and terrestrial dark fibre networks, the Kingdom is creating the foundations for a more connected, agile, and digitally enabled economy.

The National Digital Economy Strategy 2030, launched in 2025, seeks to accelerate innovation and economic diversification by advancing digital transformation across the economy. The strategy prioritizes digital infrastructure, data sovereignty, digital identity systems, international connectivity, secure data exchange, innovation ecosystems, technology testbeds, and international digital partnerships, while promoting the adoption of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, blockchain, smart manufacturing, and digital twin applications. It further supports digital exports, SME digital adoption, and broader participation in the digital economy. Bahrain's strategy includes initiatives such as digital twins for Manama and Diyar Muharraq, blockchain implementation across government services, AI capability development, smart contracts, digital SME solutions, and strengthened cybersecurity systems.

Bahrain's Telecommunications, ICT, and Digital Economy Sector Strategy 2022–2026, launched under the post COVID-19 Economic Recovery Plan, sets out a framework for leveraging digital technologies to enhance productivity, innovation, service delivery, and economic competitiveness while strengthening Bahrain's position as a regional hub for digital innovation and emerging technologies. The strategy also establishes clear national targets by 2026, including increasing ICT sector start-ups by 20 percent, expanding national employment in the sector by 35 percent, and training at least 20,000 citizens in cybersecurity.

Bahrain continues to advance its digital transformation agenda through the enhancement and integration of government services across the public sector through numerous initiatives and projects between 2021 and 2026. During this period, more than 1,300 government services were documented, translated, and published on the national digital government portal. This effort included the establishment of Service Level Agreements (SLAs) for all services and re-engineered. In addition, several customer service guidance manuals were introduced, including the Commercial Activities Requirements Guide and the Unified Customer Service Guide.

At the direction of Cabinet, 500 government services across 23 entities were successfully defined and developed. The enhancements focused on reducing processing times, minimizing documentation requirements, and increasing the digitalization of services.

Further implementing Cabinet's directives, 300 government services across 24 entities were improved by eliminating duplicate requests for documents already issued by government entities, enhancing electronic integration, and providing services proactively and automatically where possible.

Key Initiatives of the National Digital Economy Strategy 2030

- Digital twins for Manama and Diyar Muharraq
- Blockchain implementation in government services
- Artificial Intelligence capabilities development
- Digital solutions for SMEs to increase competitiveness
- Digital export infrastructure development
- Smart contracts for economic exchanges
- Establishment of a national innovation cluster
- Digital ID for single authentication, e-Signature and identification
- Global digital alliance, trade agreements and partnerships
- Enhancement of cybersecurity

Strengthening Bahrain's Digital Foundations

Bahrain has made significant investments in digital infrastructure, positioning itself as a regional leader in connectivity and technological advancement. A major part of Bahrain's digital transformation story is the country's early adoption of cloud infrastructure. In 2017, the Kingdom introduced the region's first nationwide Cloud-First Policy, helping to establish itself as a cloud-computing pioneer in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, laying the ground for the establishment of the first MENA hyperscale data center on its soil in 2019, by Amazon Web Services. Today, more than 85 percent of the government applications are on cloud.

The Kingdom was among the first countries in the region to commercially launch 5G services in 2019 and became the first country in the Middle East and North Africa to achieve 100 percent nationwide 5G network coverage in 2021, later establishing an extensive fiber-optic network reaching approximately 99 percent of households, providing reliable and ultra-fast broadband connectivity across the Kingdom. Supported by a 99 percent internet penetration rate and among the fastest mobile internet speeds globally, these advancements have strengthened digital inclusion, expanded access to public and private services, and supported economic diversification.

Building on its domestic connectivity infrastructure, Bahrain has continued to invest in strategic digital infrastructure that supports data-intensive and AI-driven industries while strengthening its position in the global digital economy. Key investments include participation in the SEA-ME-WE 6 submarine cable system, which will connect Singapore, the Middle East, and Europe through a high-capacity fiber-optic network extending to Marseille, France, as well as the landing of the 2Africa Pearls submarine cable in 2025, which significantly enhanced the Kingdom's international connectivity, network resilience, and capacity to support growing demand for data-intensive technologies and digital services.

E-government Advancement: Making Public Services More Seamless

Bahrain's digital transformation extends to government modernization and the work to make public services more accessible, efficient, and responsive to citizens, residents, businesses, and investors.

One of the pillars of the Telecommunications, ICT and Digital Economy Sector Strategy 2022–2026 focuses on strengthening digital governance, supporting digital capabilities, and improving the efficiency of government services through e-transformation. Similarly, the National Digital Economy Strategy 2030 has a dedicated pillar on building an advanced and agile digital government with initiatives such as digital ID expansion, intra-governmental data exchange, seamless citizen and business journeys, international engagement on digital topics, and blockchain national guidelines. This marks a shift from digitizing services to creating end-to-end digital journeys, where individuals and companies can complete more economic transactions entirely online.

The Digitization of Government Services Contributed to:

- Reducing application steps to a maximum of 4 steps
- Unifying published service information across all channels
- Reducing required approvals to obtain a service by 25%
- 100% digital transformation of all services
- Reducing required documents by 50%
- Converting application forms into digital forms
- Reducing Service Level Agreement (SLA) times by a minimum of 25%
- Reducing the number of pages required to access a service by 50%
- Improving the user interface,user experience, and simplifying procedures

The Information and eGovernment Authority is central to the strategy's agenda, implementing projects to enhance the sector. In 2025, Bahrain launched the MyGov application as a unified national platform, bringing together government services into a single, holistic digital experience, enabling users to access government service directories, personal profiles, unified payment options, and digital cards through one integrated platform. The eKey system, first launched in 2012 to provide citizens and residents with secure digital access to government eServices, was upgraded with the launch of eKey 2.0 in 2025. The enhanced platform provides a secure single sign-on solution for accessing public and private sector electronic services through biometric authentication, AI, and advanced electronic Know Your Customer (eKYC) verification capabilities, further strengthening Bahrain's integrated digital governance ecosystem. This government-developed system is benefiting not only the public sector but has also been deployed across the private sector. For example, the Bulk eKYC Verification Service for Entities allows financial firms to securely verify large volumes of customer identities through direct integration with the national population registry and the eKey system, with more than 600,000 requests processed during the fourth quarter of 2025 alone. Demonstrating the success of Bahrain's extensive digitization steps, in 2024, the Kingdom jumped 36 spots in the UN E-Government development Index from 54th to 18th place.

Bahrain's Ranking in the UN eGovernment Development Index 2024

18th GLOBALLY

36 places advanced in 2024 compared to 2022

77% 2022 → 92% 2024

Advancements Across All Key and Supporting Indicators

- **32rd** Globally in Human Capital Index, advancing 33 places
- **10th** Globally in the Telecommunications Infrastrucutre Index, advancing 55 places
- **18th** Globally in the E-Participation Index, Advancing 47 places
- **23rd** Globally in Online Services Index, advancing 31 places
- **1st** Globally in the Government Technology Adoption in Public Services
- **1st** Globally in the Institutional Framework for Whole-of-Government

Introduced in 2024, the Digital Twinning Program supports cross-border collaboration through the exchange of expertise, co-development of digital solutions, and the strengthening of resilient and future-ready public service systems. A key milestone in 2024 was the launch of the "Global Digital Twinning for eGovernment Excellence" pilot program, which introduced Bahrain's first digital twinning partnerships with the Republic of Tunisia and the Union of the Comoros.

The program includes several strategic components, including the Bahrain Digital Twinning Exchange Hub, advisory toolkits aligned with UN Online Service Index benchmarks, collaborative pilot projects, fellowship opportunities, and technical exchange programs designed to strengthen digital capabilities across participating countries.

This matters because digital government does more than improve convenience: it reduces administrative friction, supports business formation and trade, strengthens data exchange across government, and helps citizens and residents access services and information more quickly and securely. By sharing its expertise and lessons learned, Bahrain is helping partner countries strengthen digital governance, improve public service delivery, and accelerate their digital transformation efforts while advancing international cooperation on innovation and sustainable development.

Utilizing AI Across Society, Ethically and Responsibly

As AI continues to shape the future of economies, public services, and digital societies, effectively utilizing and regulating its use has become increasingly important. In the Kingdom, the launch of the National Policy for the Use of Artificial Intelligence, alongside the adoption of the GCC Guiding Manual on the Ethical Use of AI, underscores the Kingdom's commitment to embracing technological progress while ensuring AI development remains responsible, future-ready, and aligned with international standards.

The Kingdom's primary focus, in addition to preparing the infrastructure, is on preparing talent. The Artificial Intelligence Academy at Bahrain Polytechnic, developed in partnership with Microsoft, is the first AI academy of its kind in the Middle East. It offers professional and academic AI certificates to students and teachers, aiming to cultivate innovation and prepare the next generation of AI professionals for Bahrain's digital economy in line with Tamkeen's commitment to train 50,000 Bahrainis in AI.

Higher education institutions in the Kingdom of Bahrain adopt artificial intelligence-powered platforms and educational technologies to support interactive learning environments and strengthen academic engagement. Examples include the University of Bahrain's initiatives to train faculty members on integrating artificial intelligence into teaching, assessment, and academic content design, Gulf University's AI Student Support Agent, and the Bahrain Institute of Banking and Finance's initiatives to integrate digital technologies and artificial intelligence into education and training. These efforts align with national priorities aimed at leveraging emerging technologies to create flexible, future-oriented, and sustainable educational outcomes.

Bahrain's strong performance in UNESCO's AI Readiness Assessment highlights the Kingdom's growing capacity to adopt and govern artificial intelligence responsibly. The assessment evaluates national readiness across key dimensions including governance, legislation and regulation, society and culture, research and education, economic factors, and technological infrastructure. The report recognizes Bahrain's progress as significant and promising, noting that the Kingdom possesses the foundations needed to emerge as a regional leader in ethical, inclusive, and innovative AI. Bahrain's commitment to adopting innovative and ethical AI solutions to enhance public services has further cemented the Kingdom's upward trajectory, climbing 20 ranks in the Oxford Insight's Government AI Readiness Index 2025.

Cybersecurity

As digital systems become increasingly central to the future of economies, public services, and daily life, Bahrain is also strengthening cybersecurity and digital resilience to address current and emerging threats. This is especially important given the Kingdom's extensive adoption of digital government services and interconnected digital infrastructure, reinforcing the need for secure, trusted, and future-ready digital systems.

The National Cyber Security Center takes the lead in drafting government policy and oversight of digital systems and governance. In 2022, it laid out a national cybersecurity incident response plan to define the roles of relevant bodies in the face of incidents and organize responses based on appropriate security levels, ensuring business continuity. It provides technical analysis that can be leveraged to build a proactive defense system with 24/7 monitoring of data logs to detect potentially suspicious activity. The Center has also launched a range of programs and initiatives to enhance Bahrain's cyber capabilities, including the Cybersecurity Professionals' Portal, which creates a community of experts to encourage expertise sharing.

Bahrain's cybersecurity capabilities have also received international recognition. The Kingdom advanced to the highest "Tier 1 – Role Modelling" category in the International Telecommunication Union's (ITU) Global Cybersecurity Index (GCI) 2022, which assesses countries across five pillars: legal measures, technical measures, organizational measures, capacity development, and cooperation. This achievement reflects the maturity of Bahrain's cybersecurity framework and places the Kingdom among the leading countries globally in cybersecurity readiness.

Bahrain has also strengthened its role as a regional hub for cybersecurity dialogue and cooperation through the annual Arab International Cybersecurity Conference and Exhibition, first launched in 2023 and hosted by the National Cyber Security Center. The conference brings together government officials, cybersecurity experts, technology companies, academics, and industry leaders from across the region and beyond to discuss emerging cyber threats, share best practices, showcase innovative solutions, and strengthen international cooperation in cybersecurity. In 2025, Bahrain hosted the third edition of the event in partnership with DEF CON, one of the world's leading cybersecurity conferences, further reinforcing the Kingdom's position as a regional center for cybersecurity collaboration and knowledge exchange.

In collaboration with the Ma'an ("Together") program, by the National Cyber Security Center has developed the first initiative of its kind by launching an educational curriculum for cybersecurity awareness, starting from elementary to secondary school. It spans enhancing awareness of cybersecurity and threats, encourages students to make informed decisions when faced with risks,

as well as empowering parents to be able to supervise their children's internet usage. Supporting this, Bahrain has also rolled out training in cybersecurity fundamentals through the Bahrain Institute of Public Administration.

Planning ahead, Bahrain launched the National Cyber Security Strategy 2025–2028 to further strengthen cyber resilience, governance, innovation, workforce development, and international cooperation in support of a safer and more trusted digital environment. The strategy focuses on strengthening the protection of national digital infrastructure, enhancing cyber readiness and incident response capabilities, developing national cyber talent, supporting cybersecurity research and innovation, and advancing regional and international collaboration to address evolving digital threats and emerging technologies.

Space Technologies for a Digital and Sustainable Future

Space technologies are increasingly being integrated into the Kingdom's broader innovation, sustainability, and digital transformation agenda. Established by Royal Decree in 2014, the Bahrain Space Agency was created under the vision of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa to position Bahrain internationally in the field of space science while supporting comprehensive and sustainable development through advanced technologies, research, and innovation.

Bahrain's National Space Policy, approved in 2018, serves as the strategic framework for the development and governance of the Kingdom's space sector. Guided by the principles of competitiveness, fairness, sustainability, partnership, and engagement, which are derived from Bahrain Economic Vision 2030, the policy aims to enhance national capabilities, promote innovation and scientific research, support socioeconomic development through space applications, strengthen international cooperation, and ensure the effective governance of space-related activities.

Bahrain is leveraging space technologies, geospatial data, AI, remote sensing, and IoT systems to support national planning, environmental monitoring, resource management and addressing real-world challenges across sectors. These include projects focused on identifying shallow groundwater recharge locations in geographically small countries, detecting Red Palm Weevil infestations, monitoring green area coverage and vegetation trends over time, analyzing chlorophyll and vegetation water content, mapping soil moisture and salinity to support agricultural planning and infrastructure development, and enhancing disaster management by providing rapid detection and assessment of environmental hazards such as floods and oil spills. The Agency collaborates with the National Cyber Security Center to develop cybersecurity standards for space assets, helping safeguard critical

Earth observation data and strengthen the security of Bahrain's digital and space infrastructure.

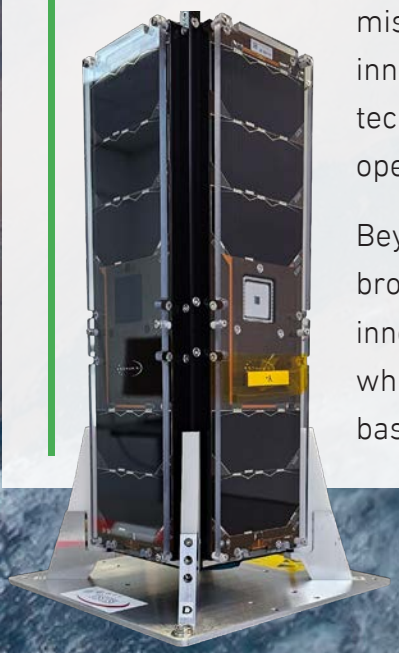
Beyond national applications, Bahrain continues to strengthen its space capabilities through regional and international partnerships that support knowledge exchange, technology transfer, and the development of advanced space systems. Bahrain's participation in the space sector extends through regional and international cooperation, including its role as an active technical partner in the Arab Satellite "813" project led by the Arab Space Cooperation Group, which supports precision agriculture, environmental monitoring, and climate modelling through hyperspectral imaging technologies. The Kingdom actively collaborates with international partners including the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs, the International Astronautical Federation, and various international space agencies to advance the peaceful use of outer space and promote the application of space technologies that ultimately contributed to the launch of Al Munther, Bahrain's first domestically designed and developed satellite.

Al Munther, Bahrain's First Domestically Developed Satellite

Bahrain marked a historic milestone, in March 2025, with the successful launch of Al Munther, the Kingdom's first domestically designed and developed satellite. It was carried into space aboard a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket as part of the Transporter-13 mission from Vandenberg Space Force Base in California.

Developed by the Bahrain Space Agency, Al Munther represents a significant national achievement led by Bahraini talent, with local engineers and specialists contributing to the design, development, and operation of the satellite and its onboard technologies. The satellite is a 3U CubeSat equipped with an Earth observation camera, cybersecurity systems, and AI capabilities that enable onboard image analysis, making it the first satellite of its size in the region to integrate AI-powered image processing technologies.

Operating in a sun-synchronous orbit approximately 550 kilometers above Earth, Al Munther is designed to capture images of Bahrain and its territorial waters while supporting scientific research, environmental monitoring, and technological testing. The mission also provides a platform for testing Bahraini-developed innovations in space, contributing to the localization of advanced technologies and strengthening national expertise in satellite operations and space systems engineering.



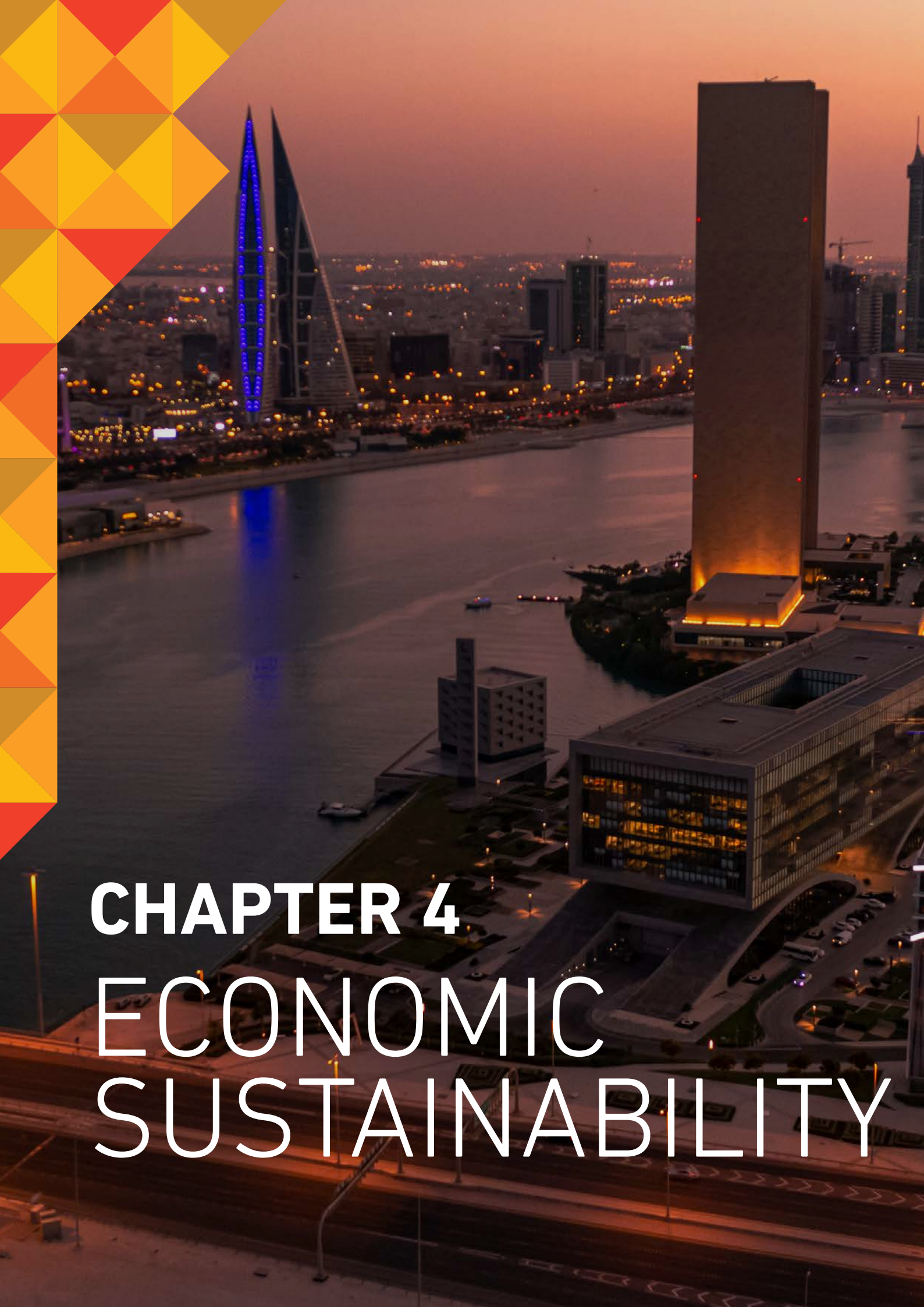
Beyond its technical objectives, Al Munther reflects Bahrain's broader efforts to advance digital transformation, future-focused innovation, and STEM capabilities in line with Economic Vision 2030, while reinforcing the Kingdom's transition toward a knowledge-based and technology-driven economy.

Challenges and Way Forward

Bahrain has consistently pursued a long-term vision that balances the needs of today with those of future generations, placing people at the center of its development approach. This commitment to looking forward is aimed at securing the future through strengthened climate resilience, the advancement of the energy transition, the modernization urban planning, and the expansion of national capabilities in data and space technologies. Together, these efforts reinforce Bahrain's integrated approach to sustainable development and its commitment to building a more resilient, innovative, and future-ready society.

Rising temperatures, water security pressures, sea-level rise, and increasing environmental demands, will remain a priority for the Kingdom going forward. Urban development pressures, including the need to ensure sustainable land use, manage urban expansion, and enhance infrastructure resilience in densely populated areas, further underscore the importance of integrated planning and climate-responsive urban management. Ensuring long-term food security remains an important priority amid external shocks, global economic uncertainties, and disruptions to international supply chains, highlighting the need for resilient food systems, adaptive policies, and continued local and international cooperation.

Building on the progress achieved to date, Bahrain will continue to advance forward-looking policies, invest in innovation and human capital, accelerate climate and environmental action, and strengthen national capabilities and resilience. The Kingdom will also continue to foster emerging technologies, enhance data-driven decision-making, and promote sustainable urban development approaches that improve livability, efficiency, and environmental sustainability.



CHAPTER 4
ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY

4 CHAPTER 4

ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY

Introduction

Bahrain strongly believes economic sustainability is a fundamental engine driving social progress, human development, job creation, and stability, and that achieving economic sustainability accelerates our progress towards overall sustainable development.

The Kingdom's approach to sustainable development and economic resilience is rooted in long-term vision and planning, demonstrated through the focus, originating in the late 1960s, to diversify away from oil. In 2025, non-oil sectors accounted for 85.8 percent of the Kingdom's real gross domestic product (GDP), with financial services, manufacturing, logistics, ICT and tourism playing significant roles in non-oil economic composition and growth trajectory; and with no individual sector contributing more than 20 percent of GDP.

At the heart of the Kingdom's economic resiliency is the depth of its human capital readiness, physical and digital infrastructure, supportive regulations, institutions that provide a stable, enabling environment and a commitment to partnerships.

Bahrain Economic Vision 2030

Bahrain maintains its steadfast commitment to achieving its Economic Vision 2030; serving as the Kingdom's comprehensive blueprint for sustainable growth, economic diversification, socioeconomic advancement, and long-term national prosperity. Launched in 2008 to reduce reliance on oil revenues and accelerate progress toward a more competitive and resilient economy, the Vision is centered on three core principles: sustainability, competitiveness, and fairness. It guides national policy by promoting private sector-led growth, investing in human capital, advancing innovation and digital transformation, and strengthening the contribution of high-potential non-oil sectors.

For the Kingdom, economic sustainability relies on establishing a clear pro-business, pro-innovation framework aimed at reinforcing Bahrain's position as an attractive destination for investment and trade. Through an investor-friendly regulatory environment, the Kingdom continues to enhance the ease of doing business, attract foreign direct investment, and support entrepreneurship and private sector expansion.

Bahrain's financial services, ICT, logistics, manufacturing, tourism, and oil and gas sectors are being strategically developed to drive economic growth, accelerate diversification, and attract investment. This focus was further reinforced through the launch of Bahrain's Economic Recovery Plan in October 2021, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The plan introduced targeted sector strategies and development programs across these key priority areas, many of which were implemented over the 2022–2026 period.

The Financial Services Sector

The Financial Services sector is one of the most powerful engines of Bahrain's economy and a central pillar of its growth, employment, and investment strategy. In 2025, Financial Services contributed around 17.6 percent of real GDP, making it the largest sector and a key driver of economic diversification. The sector also supports tens of thousands of high-skilled jobs across banking, insurance, capital markets, financial technology (fintech), and digital assets, while playing a vital role in attracting regional and international investment. Bahrain's financial ecosystem is widely recognized for its strength and maturity, reinforced by robust regulatory frameworks and continuous reform.

The Government Program 2023-2026 and the Financial Services Sector Development Strategy 2022–2026, launched by the Central Bank of Bahrain, are key drivers in supporting financial sustainability. Through a combination of regulatory innovation, sustainable finance, capital market expansion, and fintech leadership, Bahrain has built a dynamic and future-ready financial ecosystem that continues to drive economic growth and support long-term national sustainable development plans.

1980
44.2%

1995
65.3%

2010
79.2%

2025

Non-oil sector contribution to real GDP

85.8%

THE HIGHEST EVER

Fintech and Digital Financial Innovation

Remaining competitive requires ever-evolving skills and capabilities as industries and sectors develop at pace, including in fintech and digital assets. Bahrain has positioned itself as one of the region's leading fintech hubs.

The Central Bank of Bahrain established the Fintech and Innovation Unit and introduced the Regulatory Sandbox in 2017, allowing start-ups and financial technology firms to test innovative products in a controlled environment, significantly accelerating market entry and innovation. Later in 2018, the Kingdom established Bahrain FinTech Bay, the country's fintech hub responsible for facilitating an innovative ecosystem that seeks to attract international companies and investment into Bahrain, as well as create an environment and infrastructure for firms to establish, grow, and expand. In 2019, the Kingdom was among the first in the Arab world to introduce comprehensive crypto-asset regulations, followed by the adoption of open banking regulations in 2020. Building on these efforts, the Central Bank of Bahrain further advanced the sector in July 2025 through the launch of the Stablecoin Issuance and Offering framework, permitting licensed issuers to issue fiat-backed stablecoins in Bahraini Dinars, US Dollars, and other approved currencies.

Bahrain has developed a dynamic fintech ecosystem, reflecting the success of its innovation-driven regulatory model and its ability to combine traditional banking strength with emerging digital technologies. Given its small physical geography, Bahrain has also developed one of the most concentrated and interconnected fintech ecosystems in the MENA region, functioning as a highly agile "test-bed" environment for financial innovation. This ecosystem is helping expand access to digital financial services, support entrepreneurship, and provide individuals and businesses with greater tools, flexibility, and opportunities to shape their own financial futures.

ESG Frameworks Strengthening Sustainable Finance

In 2023, the Central Bank of Bahrain set out its ESG disclosure framework, establishing mandatory ESG reporting requirements for listed companies, banks, insurance firms, and financing companies, requiring them to disclose their environmental impact, social practices, and governance structures in line with international best practices.

In 2025, the Central Bank issued a consultation paper on the Proposed Sustainable and Sustainability Linked Debt Securities Regulatory Framework and joined the Sustainable Banking and Finance Network and the Green and Sustainable Finance Network in Arab Countries, in addition to its membership in the Network for Greening the Financial System, reinforcing its commitment to ESG integration.

As a result, Bahrain's financial services industry has significantly expanded sustainable finance instruments, including

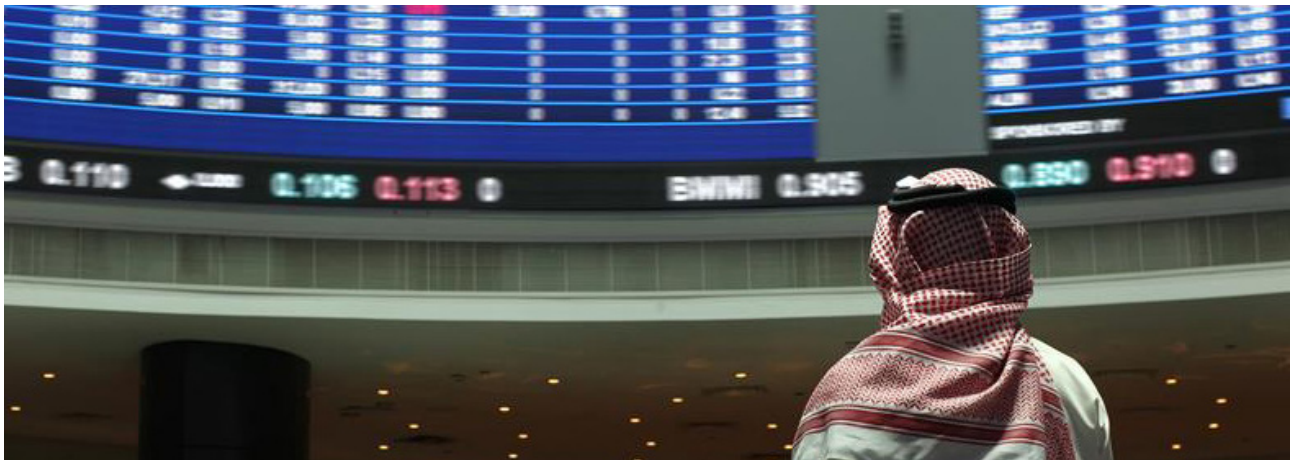
increased issuances of green and sustainable bonds, largely corporate and Islamic Sukuk. Several financial institutions have rolled out sustainable finance frameworks to fund renewable energy, green buildings, and climate-resilient projects.

The Bahrain Bourse, the Kingdom's exchange became one of the first exchanges in the region to introduce mandatory ESG disclosure reporting requirements, providing listed companies with structured guidance on environmental, social, and governance reporting in 2020, and mandatory reporting as of 31 December 2024. In 2025, the Bahrain Bourse, joined the Sustainable Stock Exchanges Initiative, enhancing its commitment to ESG integration and aligning Bahrain's capital markets with global sustainability and transparency standards. The exchange has also received international recognition for its leadership in sustainable market development, including being named the Most Sustainable Stock Exchange in the GCC in 2023 and 2025 by World Finance. It officially joined the Net Zero Financial Service Providers Alliance in 2024, committing to aligning its operations with net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, reflecting its commitment to environmental measures. Furthermore, in 2025, Bahrain Bourse signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Safa, Bahrain's carbon offsetting platform, to collaborate on environmental initiatives that support Bahrain Bourse's sustainability and carbon neutrality objectives in line with the Kingdom of Bahrain's Strategy to achieve net zero emissions by 2060.

Financial Inclusion

Financial inclusion is a foundation for equitable growth in a robust financial services sector. At its core, it means ensuring that everyone has access to banking, payments, and wider financial services that allow them to participate fully in the economy.

Bahrain is recognized as a regional leader in financial inclusion, with one of the highest levels of access to financial services in the Arab world. According to the UN ESCWA 2025 Financial Inclusiveness Report, the Kingdom ranks 1st in the region and 31st globally,



reflecting the widespread availability of banking services, digital financial platforms, and inclusive regulatory policies between genders.

Bahrain's digital payments ecosystem has also been fundamentally reshaped by BENEFIT, the Kingdom's national electronic financial network and a core enabler of its cashless economy. The platform offers one of the region's most seamless, real-time and interoperable payment environments, enabling instant transfers, bill payments and digital transactions across banks, businesses and government services with speed, security and efficiency, and using only a mobile phone number.

The advanced banking infrastructure, availability of integrated digital systems, breadth of financial solutions and their accessibility have also supported broader labor market reform and enhancements, including through the Wage Protection System and digital salary payment mechanisms that help ensure timely, secure, and transparent wage transfers for workers.

The Manufacturing Sector

Through the Industrial Sector Strategy 2022–2026, launched by the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, Bahrain is working to strengthen the manufacturing sector's contribution to GDP, increase national-origin exports, create skilled employment opportunities, and build an advanced industrial base rooted in innovation and sustainability.

Announced in December 2021, the Industrial Sector Strategy is structured around four main pillars: adopting fourth industrial revolution technologies, embedding a circular carbon economy approach, encouraging investment in digital infrastructure, and improving regional supply chains. Together, these priorities show that Bahrain's industrial agenda is building a more advanced, efficient, and sustainable manufacturing ecosystem. Its targeted industries include downstream aluminum, renewable energy, food and pharmaceuticals, petrochemicals, and microelectronics. These areas reflect Bahrain's shift towards higher-value industry, building on strengths in energy, aluminum, logistics, and exports while targeting future-growth sectors.

Smart Manufacturing and Industry 4.0

A major part of Bahrain's manufacturing transformation is the shift towards "Industry 4.0" with the integration of advanced digital technologies into manufacturing processes to produce higher-quality goods more efficiently and at lower cost. For Bahrain, this transition is both an industrial and an economic opportunity, with the Kingdom actively encouraging the adoption of technologies such as IoT, AI, machine learning, edge computing, and digital twins to enable real-time decision-making, predictive maintenance, self-optimization of production processes, and more efficient resource use.

The iFactories initiative, launched by the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, aims to transform 300 existing manufacturing facilities into smart factories by 2026, by helping manufacturers improve productivity, reduce costs, strengthen quality control, and optimize resources, while advancing the shift to data-driven, automated manufacturing.

Regional Integration, Local Value and Export Growth

Bahrain's manufacturing strategy is built on partnerships, an important factor in a global environment where supply chain security, industrial localization, and regional production capacity have become central to economic resilience.

A key example is Bahrain's participation in the Integrative Industrial Partnership for Sustainable Economic Development, alongside countries including the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Qatar and Türkiye. The partnership supports cooperation across industrial sectors and is designed to create new investment opportunities, strengthen strategic collaboration, and expand the role of participating countries in regional industrial development.

Sustainable Manufacturing and the Green Industrial Transition

Sustainability is increasingly central to Bahrain's manufacturing agenda, with the circular carbon economy being a critical pillar, alongside innovation, digital infrastructure, and supply chain development.

In 2023, the Ministry of Industry and Commerce launched the TAKAMUL (In-Country Value) Program to strengthen the contribution of the industrial sector to the national economy by promoting local value creation, enhancing industrial competitiveness, encouraging local sourcing, and strengthening domestic supply chains through preferential treatment in government procurement for eligible companies.

Complementing these efforts, the Green Factory Seal, launched at the 28th Session of COP in 2023, promotes sustainable manufacturing, ESG standards, and encourages factories to adopt effective technologies that contribute to reducing their carbon footprint, in line with Bahrain's commitment to carbon neutrality by 2060.

Leading Bahraini Industrial Companies Driving Sustainable Industrial Transformation

Home to the world's largest aluminum smelter on a single site, Bahrain produces approximately 2 percent of global aluminum output. With a production capacity exceeding 1.623 million metric tonnes per annum in 2025, Aluminum Bahrain (Alba) is advancing the transition towards lower-carbon industrial production through its ESG and decarbonization roadmaps. In 2024, the company launched EternAl™, a low-carbon aluminum product line incorporating recycled aluminum, supporting circular economy principles, reducing carbon intensity, and responding to growing global demand for more sustainable materials.

The Arab Shipbuilding and Repair Yard Company (ASRY) was established in 1977, as a leading maritime repair and fabrication facility, specializing in ship and rig repair, conversion, fabrication, recycling, and marine services. Supporting Bahrain's green industrial transition, ASRY launched a 44.5 megawatts solar project in 2025, the largest in the global shipbuilding and ship-repair sector, strengthening renewable energy integration within industrial operations while supporting emissions reduction and greater operational sustainability.

The Gulf Petrochemical Industries Company (GPIC), one of the first petrochemical companies in the Middle East, continues to integrate sustainability across its operations through a comprehensive Environmental Strategy and sustainability framework. The strategy focuses on improving environmental performance through emissions reduction, energy and resource efficiency, waste minimization, pollution prevention, biodiversity conservation, and the adoption of cleaner technologies and international best practices. As part of its implementation efforts, GPIC installed rooftop solar panels within its complex in 2024, expected to generate approximately 1,072 megawatt-hours of renewable energy annually, while also expanding its Mangrove Tree Plantation Project, which has resulted in the planting of more than 100,000 mangrove trees in support of ecosystem restoration, carbon sequestration, and Bahrain's carbon neutrality ambitions.

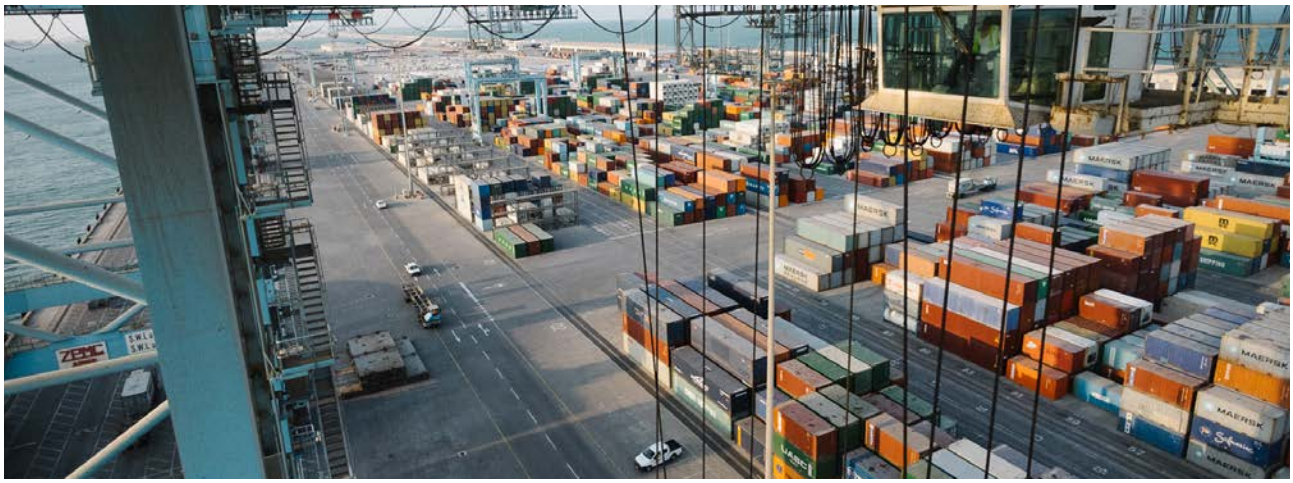
The Logistics Sector

Bahrain's strategic location at the heart of the Gulf has enabled it to develop as a regional trade, logistics, and connectivity hub. Through integrated maritime, road, and logistics infrastructure, including the King Fahd Causeway and Khalifa Bin Salman Port, the Kingdom provides efficient access to regional and global markets while supporting the seamless movement of goods, services, and people. Its compact geography and interconnected transport network further strengthen Bahrain's role as a gateway linking international trade routes with the wider GCC region.

Building on these advantages, Bahrain's Logistics Services Strategy 2022–2026, launched by the Ministry of Transportation and Telecommunications, sets out a clear roadmap to enhancing Bahrain's position as a regional and international logistics hub while advancing a series of longer-term objectives and performance targets extending to 2030.

The strategy is built around reviewing regulations, developing infrastructure facilities, upskilling the local workforce in supply chain management, automation, and AI, improving policies and procedures, strengthening regional and international engagement, and promoting investment opportunities. Additionally, there is a focus on expanding capacity, improving efficiency, strengthening connectivity, and making Bahrain a more competitive base for trade, freight, distribution, and re-export activity. Its objectives include reaching 1 million metric tons in air freight capacity and 1 million containers in cargo port capacity by 2030, positioning Bahrain among the top 20 countries worldwide in logistics rankings, while also expanding airline connectivity towards 100 destinations.

Bahrain is already demonstrating its commitment to translating policy into action through continued investment in airport cargo capacity, port efficiency, customs digitization, logistics zones, and cross-border connectivity. Bahrain's logistics sector is also undergoing a major transformation, shifting from a traditional regional transshipment hub to a smart, green, and highly integrated logistics ecosystem.



National Strategies and Governance Driving Logistics Transformation

To support long-term growth and competitiveness across the sector, Bahrain is advancing integrated national strategies focused on strengthening transport, maritime, and aviation connectivity. The National Maritime Strategy, launched in October 2025, aims to build a more integrated maritime ecosystem by strengthening port competitiveness, maritime services, logistics efficiency, investment opportunities, sustainability, and digital transformation across the sector.

Air transport plays a critical role in supporting Bahrain's economic diversification, trade facilitation, and tourism development efforts. The National Aviation Strategy 2026 - 2027, launched in February 2026, focuses on expanding Bahrain's aviation sector through strengthening airline connectivity, increasing cargo and passenger capacity – enhancing competitiveness, and supporting the Kingdom's position as a regional aviation and logistics hub.

Supporting the sector's broader transformation, Bahrain is also strengthening governance, sustainability, and digital integration across the logistics ecosystem. Bahrain Customs Affairs published a comprehensive SDG Action Guide mapping its strategic and operational contributions across the SDGs. The guide reflects the dual economic and security role of customs functions in facilitating trade, safeguarding borders, supporting economic growth, and strengthening institutional effectiveness.

The Ministry of Transportation and Telecommunications also published Bahrain's first ESG Sustainability Report issued by a government entity, aligned with Global Reporting Initiative standards. Complementing these efforts, the Ministry launched a dedicated platform linking government projects to the SDGs to strengthen impact measurement, transparency, and data-driven decision-making across the transport and logistics sector.

Export Bahrain

As Bahraini businesses seek to become export-ready and compete internationally, Export Bahrain plays a vital role in supporting their growth and global expansion through advisory services, market access support, trade promotion, e-commerce enablement, and one-to-one consultations that helps them understand regulations, identify target markets, reach buyers, and improve product readiness, including quality, packaging, and compliance with international standards. Initiatives such as "Made in Bahrain" and Export Week further strengthen the visibility of Bahraini products while supporting companies in expanding internationally through workshops, networking opportunities, market insights, and engagement with regional and international partners.

In parallel, financial support mechanisms help reduce the risks and costs associated with international expansion. The Export Credit Insurance system protects firms against non-payment by overseas buyers, while export financing through partner

banks helps companies manage liquidity pressures linked to shipping, production, and market entry. This is particularly important for firms for which upfront export costs or missed payments could constrain expansion.

Looking ahead, Export Bahrain plans to introduce the Sustainability Adoption in Exports program in 2027 under the Export Bahrain Strategy Roadmap 2025–2029. The initiative aims to support exporters in adopting environmentally sustainable practices, integrating greener technologies and processes, and obtaining certifications required for international trade. For instance, among these initiatives, Export Bahrain will be launching targeted support programs around the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism, helping exporters understand and meet evolving environmental compliance requirements in key international markets. This support will enable Bahrain-based businesses, particularly those in carbon-intensive sectors, to adapt to new reporting and carbon-related obligations, strengthen their sustainability practices, and maintain their competitiveness in global trade.

The Tourism Sector

The Kingdom's tourism sector plays an important role in driving sustainable economic growth and diversification. Rather than treating tourism as a standalone visitor economy, Bahrain is developing the sector as part of a broader national approach that promotes sustainable tourism by balancing economic opportunity, cultural preservation, community participation, and long-term investment in tourism infrastructure.

Under the Tourism Strategy 2022–2026, launched by the Ministry of Tourism, the Kingdom is working to strengthen its position as a regional destination for leisure, business, culture, sport, and events. It supports the Kingdom's objectives of increasing tourism's contribution to GDP, attracting investment, raising visitor numbers, and expanding opportunities for Bahraini businesses. The strategy is built around several identified pillars spanning maritime and waterfront, sports and recreation, leisure and entertainment, culture and heritage, exhibitions and business, medical and wellbeing, and media and film – highlighting the depth and diversity of the approach.

Tourism's economic value lies in its multiplier effect across the national economy, supporting hospitality, aviation, retail, leisure, entertainment, cultural institutions, and transport. Visitor spending extends well beyond hotels and attractions, generating demand across restaurants, retail, transport, cultural venues, event management, micro businesses and SMEs.

Bahrain is building on this broad base by strengthening its appeal to both regional and international visitors. The sector continues to show strong momentum, with visitor numbers rising from 12.4 million in 2023 to 15.2 million in 2025, while inbound tourism revenue reached 2.03 million Bahraini Dinars.

The Kingdom is also investing directly in the foundations of future tourism growth. More than 10 billion US Dollars are being directed into tourism infrastructure projects, including new hotels and museums, creating the facilities and services needed to support stronger visitor demand, and unlocking public and private investment.

A core strength of Bahrain's tourism strategy is its ability to adapt to evolving consumer demand and travel trends. To support this, food service, retail, leisure, and entertainment continue to be developed as priority sectors. Signature events such as Spring of Culture, launched in 2006, activate heritage sites, museums, and public spaces while creating opportunities for local artists, performers, and creatives, strengthening community participation, cultural exchange, and public access to the arts. Meanwhile, the Celebrate Bahrain Season transforms the holiday period into a nationwide visitor experience, including attractions such as Muharraq Nights along the Pearling Path.

The Kingdom is also expanding its role in exhibitions, conferences, and business tourism. Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE) tourism is supported by enhanced convention infrastructure and a growing pipeline of regional and international events. Exhibition World Bahrain, inaugurated in November 2022,

strengthens Bahrain's ability to host large-scale events and exhibitions.

Sport is another important part of Bahrain's tourism proposition and international visibility. The Bahrain International Circuit and its hosting of the Formula 1 Gulf Air Bahrain Grand Prix have helped position Bahrain as the home of motorsport in the Middle East since first hosting the race in 2004. The event continues to attract international visitors, global media attention, and commercial activity, while supporting tourism growth and reinforcing Bahrain's position on the global sporting and events calendar.

Tourism is also an important driver of inclusive economic prosperity and opportunity. The sector creates career pathways across management, marketing, hospitality, and related fields, while workforce initiatives further broaden participation in the industry.

The Oil and Gas Sector

The oil and gas sector remains a strategic part of Bahrain's economy, supporting energy security, industrial development, public revenues, and downstream activity. But the sector is being modernized, not preserved. Through investment in refining, infrastructure, trading, gas development, carbon management, and renewables partnerships, Bahrain is using its long-standing energy strengths as a bridge towards a more competitive, diversified, and sustainable future.

At the center of this shift is Bapco Energies, which has evolved from a traditional oil and gas company into a broader energy group that supports Bahrain's transition to a more globally connected, future-facing energy player. This reflects the wider national focus on diversification, with energy positioned not only as a legacy sector but as a platform for innovation, international partnership, and long-term value creation.

The 7 billion US Dollar Bapco Modernization Program, inaugurated in 2024, represents a major investment in Bahrain's energy transition and industrial competitiveness. The project has expanded Bahrain's refining capacity, improved the value of its energy exports, and supported the objectives of the National Energy Strategy and Blueprint Bahrain. Its design incorporates measures to improve energy efficiency, reduce emissions, and support the Kingdom's commitment to achieving carbon neutrality by 2060. Beyond the energy sector, the project has generated wider economic benefits through knowledge transfer, private-sector participation, skills development, and employment opportunities.

Sustainability reporting and ESG integration have also become increasingly embedded across the Group through annual disclosures aligned with internationally recognized standards, including the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI). Through its ESG reporting framework, Bapco Energies has strengthened transparency by disclosing key environmental performance indicators, including greenhouse gas emissions, and by advancing decarbonization planning aligned with Bahrain's carbon neutrality commitment. The Group has also progressed sustainability-linked financing approaches, reinforcing the integration of ESG considerations into corporate strategy and investment decisions, while implementing environmental initiatives such as mangrove planting and ecosystem restoration programs that contribute to biodiversity protection and enhanced coastal resilience. In addition, structured waste management, recycling initiatives, and a strong Environment, Health and Safety (EHS) policy has been reinforced across operations, alongside community engagement programs that promote environmental awareness, wellbeing, and sustainability education.

Bapco Energies is also a signatory to the Oil and Gas Methane Partnership 2.0, the United Nations Environment Programme's flagship methane reporting and reduction framework, through which methane emissions are reported annually across its assets. Beyond reporting requirements, the company has strengthened methane measurement, monitoring, and reduction practices across its operations to support improved emissions management and environmental performance. The company also supports the World Bank's "Zero Routine Flaring by 2030" initiative, with satellite monitoring data indicating a continued decline in flaring levels since 2020.

His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa inaugurates the Bapco Modernization Program in December 2024.

Innovation: Building a Knowledge-Based Economy

Guided by the Economic Vision 2030, the Kingdom is putting innovation at the center of its future growth model, strengthening competitiveness, accelerating diversification, and advancing sustainable development.

A National Framework for Innovation-led Growth

Through the National Innovation Strategy 2025–2035, launched by the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, the Kingdom is setting out a long-term framework to transitioning towards a knowledge-based and technology-driven economy and becoming a leading regional innovation hub rooted in creativity, collaboration, sustainability, and global competitiveness. The strategy adopts a whole-of-society approach, bringing together public-sector institutions, the private sector, and academia to ensure that innovation is not treated as a standalone policy area, but as a structural driver of productivity, investment, entrepreneurship, and future growth.

The strategy is built around four core pillars: strengthening research and development, developing national talent and future skills, enhancing intellectual property protection, and fostering an enabling environment for data-driven and inclusive innovation. From these pillars, 14 strategic initiatives branch out to build an integrated national ecosystem that supports innovation and scientific research, increases investment in R&D, enhances the knowledge economy, boosts Bahrain's global competitiveness, and strengthens its position as a regional innovation hub. The initiatives are linked to clear targets, including doubling the number of registered patents nationally by 2027, increasing the registration of industrial designs and trademarks by 2030, training Bahrainis in innovative fields, raising spending on R&D to 2 percent of GDP by 2035, and elevating the Kingdom into the top 50 countries in the Global Innovation Index.

Protecting Ideas and Strengthening Intellectual Property

Bahrain continues to strengthen its intellectual property framework as part of wider efforts to attract investment, support creators and innovators, and strengthen the Kingdom's innovation ecosystem. By improving legal protections and accelerating patent pathways, Bahrain is making it easier for researchers, entrepreneurs, and companies to commercialize ideas, attract investment, and scale new technologies into regional and global markets.

The Kingdom is a member of numerous international intellectual property treaties, including the World Intellectual Property Organization's (WIPO) Copyright Treaty and the WIPO Performances and Phonograms Treaty. It has also enacted laws covering trade secrets, patents, geographical indications, copyright, trademarks, industrial designs, compact discs, integrated circuits, and trade names. Bahrain has further strengthened its intellectual property framework through accession to international agreements, including the Locarno Agreement Establishing an International Classification for Industrial Designs in 2026, supporting greater alignment with international intellectual property standards and practices.

Bahrain is also improving the speed and efficiency of patent registration through international cooperation. The Kingdom has joined the global framework for accelerated patent examinations through Patent Prosecution Highway pilot programs, which allow patent offices to make use of examination work already completed by partner offices so applicants can obtain corresponding patents more quickly. This includes the China-Bahrain Patent Prosecution Highway Pilot Program, launched in May 2024, between the China National Intellectual Property Administration and the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, and is expected to run for five years. Bahrain has also strengthened cooperation with the European Patent Office, through the upcoming launch of a similar Patent Prosecution Highway Pilot Program, enabling applicants to obtain corresponding patents faster and allowing each office to benefit from work already completed by the other.

Creating an enabling environment for innovation and growth

Complemented by a modern Bankruptcy Law aligned with international best practices and robust alternative dispute resolution mechanisms through the Bahrain Chamber for Dispute Resolution, Bahrain's ongoing judicial reforms are playing an important role in supporting economic development. The digital transformation of the judiciary system through digital courts, integrated case management systems, and e-services has increased the efficiency, transparency, and accessibility of judicial processes, reducing delays and administrative burdens for businesses and individuals alike. At the same time, initiatives such as the Bahrain International Commercial Court alongside the Global Justice Bay, and the introduction of English-Language Courts have reinforced Bahrain's attractiveness as a regional hub for international commerce, investment, and dispute resolution.

Unlocking the Power of Data

The Kingdom recognizes that data is not only a technical resource, but a foundation for better policymaking, transparency, investment confidence, and evidence-based decision-making. By investing in open data, statistical standards, SDG data capacity, and digital public services, and by improving the quality, availability, and use of national data, Bahrain is strengthening the information and public-sector systems needed to support innovation, monitor progress, turn national priorities into measurable outcomes, and deliver more responsive services.

Across government entities, data is increasingly being linked to institutional planning and national development priorities. A key platform is the Bahrain Open Data Portal, data.gov.bh, which gives public access to government datasets and supports transparency, accountability, and civic engagement. The portal's regional leadership was recognized when it was awarded Best Open Data Initiative at the fifth GCC Digital Government Award in 2023.

In September 2024, Bahrain launched the National Summary Data Page as part of its compliance with the International Monetary Fund's Data Standards Initiative, a framework designed to improve the quality, accessibility, and transparency of official statistics. The platform serves as a unified gateway for financial, economic, and demographic data, enhancing transparency, facilitating data exchange, and strengthening alignment with international statistical standards. Furthermore, the Kingdom is playing an active role in international data cooperation, hosting the ninth Statistical Data and Metadata eXchange (SDMX) Global Conference in 2023, held in the Middle East for the first time, under the theme "Empowering Data Communities", with participation from more than 500 experts across 107 countries. The conference reinforced Bahrain's role as a convenor for statistical innovation, data exchange, and digital transformation.

Enabling Start-Ups, SMEs, and Enterprise Support

SMEs are a major driver of Bahrain's economic growth and diversification, accounting for 93.4 percent of all enterprises in the Kingdom, with more than 85,700 operating SMEs. Reflecting their importance to the national economy, the Kingdom has taken significant strides to build an ecosystem that supports entrepreneurship, innovation, private sector growth, and employment generation.

SME Development Board Plan

The SME Development Board Plan 2.0 (2022-2026), launched in July 2022, aims to empower SMEs by building on earlier efforts focusing on five strategic themes: access to finance, access to market, streamlining the business environment, skills development, and fostering innovation. It also focuses on three key performance indicators: increasing the contribution of SMEs to GDP, boosting the contribution of SMEs to exports, and elevating the number of Bahrainis employed in SMEs. Building on this foundation, Bahrain is developing a more ambitious strategy for the next phase (2026–2028), aimed at further strengthening the SME ecosystem, enhancing productivity and competitiveness, accelerating business growth, and increasing the sector's contribution to economic diversification and sustainable development.

These efforts have contributed to continued growth across the SME sector. In 2025, SMEs contributed 5.96 billion Bahraini Dinars, reflecting a contribution of 32.4 percent of the GDP.

Inception to Scaling - Innovative Programs Supporting SMEs

Specific and tailored programs are helping entrepreneurs move through each stage of the growth journey. For idea-stage or early-stage concepts, Tamkeen's Mashroo3i (my project) program gives access to an intensive advisory program focused on developing entrepreneurial skills. The program helps participants turn business concepts into viable models, with finalists eligible for phased support covering products and services needed to launch.

His Highness Shaikh Isa bin Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Minister of the Prime Minister's Court and Chairman of the Labour Fund (Tamkeen), during the Demo Day of the ninth edition of the Young Entrepreneur (Mashroo3i), in June 2024

StartUp Bahrain is the Kingdom's national ecosystem platform for innovative, scalable start-ups, bringing together founders, corporates, investors, enablers, and talent in one connected community. Powered by Tamkeen and supported through strategic partnerships, it gives entrepreneurs a clearer route into Bahrain's start-up landscape by connecting them to programs, workshops, funding information, policy

guidance, resources, and networking opportunities. To date, the platform has supported more than 223 startups, facilitated over 50 million US Dollars in investments, and engaged entrepreneurs and ecosystem stakeholders through more than 342 events, helping strengthen Bahrain's position as a regional hub for innovation and entrepreneurship.

Tamkeen's Overseas Expansion Program is specifically designed to support businesses seeking growth beyond Bahrain's borders, providing SMEs with access to experts who guide them through their expansion efforts, familiarize them with relevant regulations, and connect them with wider business networks, helping create an environment in which SMEs can thrive internationally.

More broadly, Tamkeen drives efforts toward supporting SMEs during turbulent times. In 2026, Tamkeen set out an economic support bundle providing targeted support for SMEs across the Kingdom. The measures offer grants and financial support, helping 7,250 Bahraini companies impacted by recent unprovoked and indiscriminate attacks toward the Kingdom.

Opening Avenues for Accessing Financial Support

Access to finance is also expanding across multiple channels to ensure more structured support for SMEs and entrepreneurs. In 2023, the Central Bank of Bahrain issued a circular to retail banks mandating enhanced financing access for SMEs, with the intention of reaching 20 percent of domestic financing by the end of 2025. The measure has placed SME funding higher on the agenda of private-sector financial institutions and encouraged further innovation in the financing market.

In November 2024, the Bahrain Development Bank, supported by Tamkeen and in partnership with local banks, launched the 265 million US Dollars private credit SME growth fund. The fund aims to support SMEs in innovating, expanding, creating jobs, and contributing to national economic growth, while also pioneering sharia-compliant subsidized financing solutions that strengthen enterprise growth and private sector development.

In February 2026, the Ministry of Industry and Commerce launched the Credit Rating Platform for Commercial Establishments, in partnership with BENEFIT, to facilitate access to finance for SMEs. The platform seeks to provide clearer and more accurate credit ratings that reflect the financial and operational standing of firms in Bahrain. The move is designed to open new avenues for financing for SMEs to scale up.

The Bahrain Development Bank has also launched the Sanad financing program in May 2026 to strengthen SME financial resilience. The program provides working capital solutions on accessible and flexible terms, including a grace period of up to 12 months, competitive profit rates, and a repayment tenor of up to five years. Designed to ease liquidity pressures, improve cash-flow management, and support business continuity, Sanad reinforces Bahrain's wider approach to SME finance: giving enterprises the flexibility to adapt, grow, and contribute to a more diversified and resilient economy.

Driving SME Expertise and Knowledge Exchange

Alongside financial and market-access support, Bahrain has also invested in developing the broader ecosystem needed to nurture entrepreneurship and innovation. The Kingdom has built a growing network of incubators and accelerators that provide entrepreneurs with workspace, mentorship, advisory services, seed funding, investor access, and sector-specific expertise. These include the Collective Hub incubator, Bahrain Fintech Bay incubator and HP Spring Studios (Bahrain) incubator. Collectively, they support aspiring entrepreneurs and start-ups across sectors, including fintech, financial services, hardware, and artificial intelligence.

The Riyada Business Acceleration Program, launched by Tamkeen and Hambro Perks in 2024, supports high-potential enterprises with specialized expertise in business development, strategy, financial planning, product development, fundraising, and investor readiness. In addition, the Digital Enablement Program, launched by Tamkeen is driving digital transformation to empower virtual and micro enterprises and SMEs in Bahrain. The program facilitates the adoption of digital tools that enhance productivity, operational efficiency, market reach, and competitiveness.

Bahrain continues to strengthen support for entrepreneurs and SMEs through international partnerships that advance innovation, investment, and private sector development. In January 2025, the "Global Entrepreneurs' Alliance" was launched in Manama by UNIDO Investment and Technology Promotion Office and the International Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation. The Alliance is envisioned as a global platform that fosters collaboration among entrepreneurs, innovators, investors, and professionals, while supporting entrepreneurship and innovation through networking events, capacity-building programs, mentorship opportunities, investor matchmaking, and market access support.

Further reinforcing these efforts, Bahrain hosted the World Entrepreneurs and Investment Forum in 2026, which concluded with the issuance of the Manama Declaration. The Declaration highlighted the importance of entrepreneurship, investment, innovation, and inclusive economic growth, while also emphasizing the role of women entrepreneurs in advancing sustainable development and calling for greater access to finance, innovation, and global markets.

Enabling SME Participation

Bahrain continues to take steps to reduce friction and ease the regulatory environment for SMEs. As part of these efforts, the Kingdom mandates that at least 20 percent of the total value of government procurement be allocated to SMEs. Additionally, SMEs benefit from a 10 percent preference in the financial evaluation stage when participating in tenders, and in auctions related to service facilities within government entities premises. This preferential treatment helps lower barriers to entry, enabling newer market participants to compete more effectively, broaden the supplier base, and encourages competition.

In 2024, the number of government tenders awarded to SMEs increased by 79 percent compared to 2022. Furthermore, the total value of tenders awarded to SMEs rose by 40 percent over the same period.

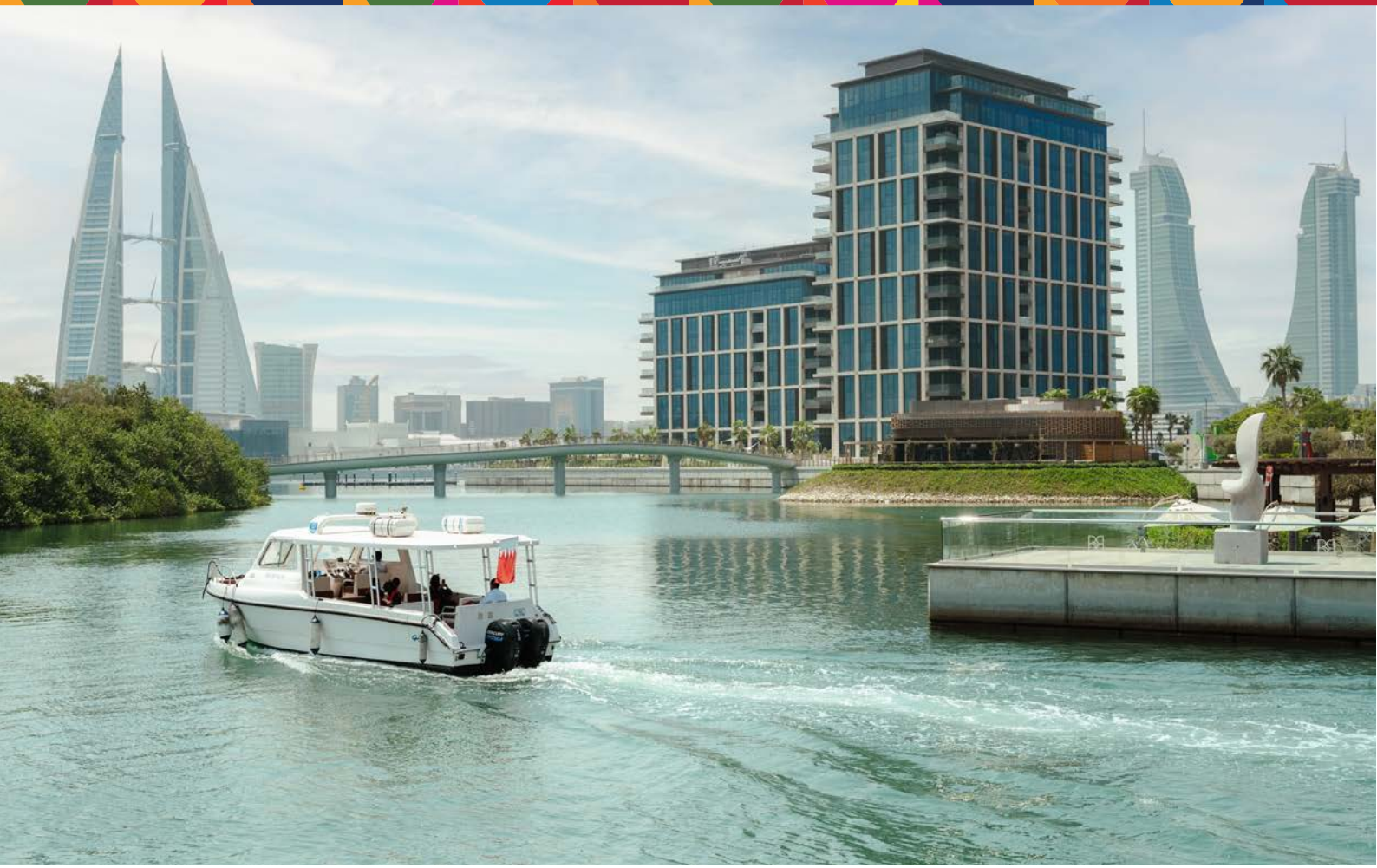
Challenges and Way Forward

Bahrain has made substantial progress in advancing its economic diversification agenda, supported by a competitive business environment, agile regulatory frameworks, world-class human capital, strategic infrastructure, and a strong focus on developing priority sectors, namely financial services, manufacturing, oil and gas, ICT, logistics, and tourism. These efforts have strengthened the contribution of non-oil sectors to economic growth, enhanced the Kingdom's attractiveness as a regional investment destination, and created new opportunities for innovation, entrepreneurship, and private sector-led development. Continued investments in digital transformation, skills development, and emerging technologies have further reinforced Bahrain's position as a dynamic and adaptable economy.

External shocks and economic uncertainties, changing trade and investment flows, and increasing competition for capital, businesses, and skilled talent are reshaping the environment in which economies operate. At the same time, rapid technological advancements, including artificial intelligence and digital innovation, are transforming business models and labor market requirements, creating both opportunities and pressures for economies seeking to remain competitive and future-ready. While SMEs continue to play an important role in economic diversification and private sector development, ensuring access to appropriate financing and growth capital remains important for enabling startups and expanding enterprises to innovate, scale, and compete in increasingly dynamic regional and global markets.

Bahrain will continue to strengthen its economic resilience by fostering innovation, accelerating digital transformation, and supporting the growth of high-value industries. Particular emphasis will be placed on developing national talent, enhancing workforce skills for emerging sectors, and strengthening linkages between education, training, and labor market needs. The Kingdom will also continue to empower SMEs with expanded access to finance and investment opportunities, promoting entrepreneurship, attracting quality investments, and advancing policies that support sustainable and inclusive economic growth.

CONCLUSION



CONCLUSION

The preparation of the Kingdom of Bahrain's third VNR has provided a vital opportunity to take stock of progress on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 17 SDGs, and to consolidate into one report efforts across the government, in partnership with the private sector and civil society. It also reveals the deep institutional ownership of the SDGs and the degree of integration of its targets into the Kingdom's vision, strategies and plans.

Bahrain's sustainable development journey demonstrates that long-term prosperity is built through investing in people, strengthening institutions, building resilient economies, protecting heritage and identity, consideration the environment impact, and fostering partnerships at every level of society and with the international community.

The Kingdom's progress has also been underpinned by a commitment to effective governance, evidence-based policymaking, and accountability. Continued efforts to strengthen national statistical systems, improve data availability and quality, and enhance monitoring and evaluation mechanisms have supported informed decision-making and more effective implementation of the SDGs. These efforts will remain essential to measuring progress, identifying gaps, and accelerating delivery in the years ahead.

CONCLUSION

As global challenges become increasingly interconnected, national progress must be complemented by international cooperation. Bahrain remains committed to multilateralism and to strengthening partnerships that advance peace, stability, and sustainable development. Through active engagement in regional and international institutions, the Kingdom continues to champion dialogue, cooperation, and collective action in addressing shared economic, environmental, humanitarian, and security challenges.

Looking ahead, to the final four years, Bahrain remains focused on closing implementation gaps, accelerating delivery, and ensuring that no one is left behind. The Kingdom recognizes that the path ahead will continue to present challenges, from economic uncertainty, climate pressures and regional and global security concerns to rapid technological transformation. The Kingdom recognizes that accelerating progress towards the SDGs will require even deeper collaboration and shared responsibility across all sectors of society. Yet Bahrain approaches the future with confidence and clarity, drawing strength from its people and partnerships, all grounded in its ambitious national vision.

Bahrain remains steadfast in its commitment to the SDGs and is proud of the progress achieved. Guided by the leadership of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa and supported by His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister, the Kingdom of Bahrain will continue working to build a future defined by opportunity, sustainability, innovation, and prosperity for all.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX: SDG INDICATORS

Indicator		Units	Data	Year
1.3.1	Proportion of population covered by at least one social protection benefit, by sex	Percent	86.4	2022
1.4.1	Proportion of the population living in households with access to basic sanitation services	Percent	100	2024
1.4.1	Proportion of population using basic drinking water services	Percent	99.9	2024
1.5.1	Number of deaths due to disaster	Number	0	2024
1.5.1	Number of people affected by disaster	Number	0	2024
1.a.2	Proportion of total government spending on essential services, education [UIS methodology]	Percent	8.3	2025
1.a.2	Proportion of total government spending on essential services	Percent	33.1	2020

Indicator		Units	Data	Year
2.2.1	Prevalence of stunting among children under 5 years of age	Percent	4.6	2023
2.2.3	Prevalence of anaemia in women aged 15 to 49 years	Percent	38.4	2023
2.a.1	Agriculture orientation index for government expenditures Index greater than 1 reflects higher government orientation towards agriculture	Index	0.45	2023
2.c.1	Indicator of food price anomalies (Consumer Food Price Index)	Index	-0.19	2024

APPENDIX: SDG INDICATORS

Indicator		Units	Data	Year
3.1.1	Maternal mortality ratio (per 100,000 live births)	Number	4.9	2022
3.1.2	Proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel	Percent	99.4	2022
3.2.1	Under-five mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)	Number	8.7	2024
3.6.1	Death rate due to road traffic injuries, by sex (per 100,000 population)	Number	8.1	2021
3.8.1	Universal health coverage (UHC) 0 to 100 index; higher value indicates greater UHC service coverage	Index	78	2023
3.b.1	Proportion of the target population covered by all vaccines	Percent	99	2023
3.d.1	International Health Regulations (IHR) capacity and health emergency preparedness 0 to 100 index; higher value indicates greater IHR capacity	Index	92	2024

Indicator		Units	Data	Year
4.4.1	Proportion of youth and adults with ICT skills	Percent	86.4	2024
4.6.1	Youth/adult literacy rate	Percent	97.8	2024
4.7.1	Extent to which global citizenship education and education for sustainable development are mainstreamed in teacher education	Percent	100	2020
4.7.1	Extent to which global citizenship education and education for sustainable development are mainstreamed in student assessment	Percent	100	2020
4.7.1	Extent to which global citizenship education and education for sustainable development are mainstreamed in national education policies	Percent	100	2020
4.a.1	Proportion of schools offering basic services	Percent	100	2024
4.a.1	Proportion of schools with access to computers for pedagogical purposes	Percent	100	2024
4.a.1	Proportion of schools with access to adapted infrastructure and materials for students with disabilities	Percent	100	2024
4.a.1	Proportion of schools with access to the internet for pedagogical purposes	Percent	100	2024
4.c.1	Proportion of teachers with the minimum required qualifications	Percent	100	2024

APPENDIX: SDG INDICATORS

Indicator		Units	Data	Year
5.6.2	Extent to which countries have laws and regulations that guarantee full and equal access to women and men aged 15 years and older to sexual and reproductive health care, information and education	Percent	73	2022
5.6.2	Extent to which countries have laws and regulations that guarantee full and equal access to women and men aged 15 years and older to sexual and reproductive health care, information and education: Section 4: HIV and HPV (%)	Percent	75	2022
5.6.2	Extent to which countries have laws and regulations that guarantee full and equal access to women and men aged 15 years and older to sexual and reproductive health care, information and education: Component 1: Maternity Care	Percent	100	2022
5.b.1	Proportion of individuals who own a mobile telephone	Percent	100	2024

Indicator		Units	Data	Year
6.1.1	Proportion of population using safely managed drinking water services	Percent	98.9	2024
6.2.1	Proportion of population using safely managed sanitation services	Percent	93.4	2024
6.2.1	Proportion of population with basic handwashing facilities on premises	Percent	100	2024
6.3.1	Proportion of wastewater treated	Percent	100	2022
6.4.1	Change in water-use efficiency over time	USD/m^3	82.5	2023
6.4.2	Level of water stress: freshwater withdrawal as a proportion of available freshwater resources	Percent	152.5	2023

Indicator		Units	Data	Year
7.1.1	Proportion of population with access to electricity	Percent	100	2024
7.2.1	Renewable energy share in the total final energy consumption	Percent	0.16	2023
7.b.1	Installed renewable electricity-generating capacity	Watts per capita	42.8	2024

Indicator		Units	Data	Year
8.1.1	Annual growth rate of real GDP per capita	Percent	0.2	2024
8.8.2	Level of national compliance of labour rights 0 to 10 score; 0 indicates the highest level of compliance and 10 the lowest	Score	4	2024
8.9.1	Tourism direct GDP as a proportion of total GDP	Percent	7.1	2023
8.9.2	Employed persons in the tourism industries	Number	109,305	2022
8.10.1	Number of automated teller machines (ATMs) per 100,000 adults	Number	31.3	2024
8.10.1	Number of commercial bank branches per 100,000 adults	Number	13.4	2024
8.10.2	Proportion of adults (15+) with an account at a financial institution	Percent	82.3	2024

Indicator		Units	Data	Year
9.1.2	Air Passenger volume	Million revenue passenger-kilometres	15,389	2024
9.2.1	Manufacturing value added as a proportion of GDP	Percent	19.12	2025
9.3.2	Proportion of small-scale industries with a loan or line of credit	Percent	49.6	2024
9.5.1	Research and development expenditure as a proportion of GDP	Percent	0.2	2024
9.5.2	Researchers (in full-time equivalent) per million inhabitants	Number	849	2024
9.c.1	Proportion of population covered by at least a 4G mobile network	Percent	100	2024
9.c.1	Proportion of population covered by at least a 5G mobile network	Percent	100	2024

Indicator		Units	Data	Year
10.a.1	Proportion of tariff lines applied to imports with zero-tariff	Percent	71.1	2024
10.c.1	Remittance costs as a proportion of the amount remitted	Percent	3.4	2025

Indicator		Units	Data	Year
11.1.1	Proportion of urban population living in slums	Percent	0	2018
11.5.1	Number of people affected by disaster	Number	0	2024
11.5.1	Number of deaths and missing persons attributed to disasters	Number	0	2024
11.5.2	Direct economic loss attributed to disasters in relation to global GDP	Percent	0	2024
11.6.1	Municipal Solid Waste collection coverage	Percent	100	2024
11.a.1	Countries that have national urban policies or regional development plans 1 = Yes; 0 = No	Score	1	2023

Indicator		Units	Data	Year
12.4.2	Proportion of hazardous waste treated or disposed	Percent	86.1	2019
12.4.1	Parties meeting their commitments in transmitting information as required by the Montreal Protocol	Percent	100	2025
12.5.1	Proportion of municipal waste recycled	Percent	33.9	2021
12.c.1	Amount of fossil-fuel subsidies per unit of GDP	Percent	2.7	2024

Indicator		Units	Data	Year
13.1.1	Number of deaths and missing persons attributed to disasters per 100,000	Number	0	2024
13.1.1	Number of people affected by disaster	Number	0	2024
13.1.1	Number of injured or ill people attributed to disasters	Number	0	2024
13.3.1	Extent to which global citizenship education and education for sustainable development are mainstreamed in national education policies 0 to 1 index; 1 indicates full mainstreaming	Index	1	2020

Indicator		Units	Data	Year
14.7.1	Sustainable fisheries as a proportion of GDP	Percent	0.05	2021

Indicator		Units	Data	Year
15.1.1	Forest area as a proportion of total land area	Percent	5.5	2025
15.2.1	Proportion of forest area within legally established protected areas	Percent	39.4	2025
15.2.1	Annual forest area change rate	Percent	12.3	2025
15.6.1	Countries that are parties to the Nagoya Protocol 1 = Yes; 0 = No	Score	1	2025
15.8.1	Legislation, Regulation, Act related to invasive alien species 1 = Yes; 0 = No	Score	1	2025
15.9.1	Countries that established national targets in accordance with Aichi Biodiversity Target 2 1 = Yes; 0 = No	Score	1	2022

16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS

Indicator		Units	Data	Year
16.1.1	Number of victims of intentional homicide per 100,000 population	Number	0.2	2022
16.3.2	Unsentenced detainees as a proportion of overall prison population	Percent	13.75	2022
16.6.2	Proportion of population who say that overall they are satisfied with the quality of healthcare services	Percent	88	2024
16.7.1	Proportion of youth in parliament (age 45 or below), Lower Chamber or Unicameral	Percent	42.5	2025
16.9.1	Proportion of children under 5 years of age whose births have been registered with a civil authority (% of children under 5 years of age)	Percent	100	2019
16.10.1	Countries with at least one verified case of killings of human rights defenders, journalists, and trade unionists 1 = Yes; 0 = No	Score	0	2024
16.10.1	Countries with at least one verified case of enforced disappearance of human rights defenders, journalists, and trade unionists 1 = Yes; 0 = No	Score	0	2024

17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

Indicator		Units	Data	Year
17.3.1	Foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows	Millions of USD	2477.9	2024
17.6.1	Fixed broadband subscriptions per 100 inhabitants	Number	17	2024
17.8.1	Proportion of individuals using the Internet	Percent	100	2024
17.10.1	Worldwide weighted tariff-average	Percent	4.6	2024
17.13.1	Foreign direct investment, net inflows, as a proportion of GDP	Percent	5.74	2024
17.14.1	Mechanisms in place to enhance policy coherence for sustainable development	Percent	100	2025
17.18.1	Open Data Inventory (ODIN) Coverage Index 0 to 100 score; higher score indicates greater data coverage	Score	62.7	2024
17.19.2	Countries with birth registration data that are at least 90 percent complete 1 = Yes; 0 = No	Score	1	2024

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