

BAHRAIN

Contents

Introduction

- Part One: Overview of achievements and challenges in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment
- I. Overview of achievements in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment
 - II. Overview of remaining gaps and challenges to promoting gender equality and women's empowerment
- Part Two: Progress achieved in implementation of the critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action (achievements and challenges)
1. Women and poverty
 2. Education and training of women
 3. Women and health
 4. Violence against women
 5. Women in power and decision-making
 6. Women and the economy
 7. Women and the media
 8. Women and the environment
 9. The girl child
- Part Three: Institutional mechanisms and arrangements put in place to support the follow-up and implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action
- Part Four: Main challenges and actions to address them
- Annexes

Introduction:

The Kingdom of Bahrain is situated in the middle of the southern coastline of the Arabian Gulf. It is an archipelago consisting of 36 islands, with a total area of 717.50 square kilometres. The largest of these islands is that of Bahrain, which contains the capital (Manama) and represents approximately 83 per cent of the total area of the Kingdom's islands. It is linked with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia by the King Fahd bridge.

Population indicators:

- According to the 2001 census figures, the population of Bahrain stood at 650,604 persons, of whom 37,649, or 57.4 per cent, were male and 276,955, or 42.6 per cent, were female;
- In the same year, the number of non-Bahraini inhabitants was estimated at 244,937, of whom 169,026, or 69 per cent, were male and 75,911, or 31 per cent, were female;
- In 2001, the population density was estimated at 903 persons per square kilometre;
- The urban-to-rural ratio is high throughout the whole of Bahrain owing to the expansion of new towns; in 2001, the urban ratio stood at 87.07 per cent.

Part One: Overview of achievements and challenges in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment

I. Overview of achievements in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment

The Kingdom of Bahrain entered a new phase with the coming to power of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa on 6 March 1999. This phase gained clear direction with the introduction of the reform project of His Majesty the King inasmuch as the Kingdom legitimized the role of women in development and the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women:

- The National Charter seeks to affirm the equality of men and women, providing as it does in chapter I that citizens are equal before the law in rights and obligations, without distinction on the basis of sex. It also lays emphasis on the State's support for women's rights and the enactment of legislation to protect the family and individual family members. It guarantees access to job opportunities for all citizens and enjoyment of the right to participate in public affairs, as well as the exercise of political rights by the country's men and women, beginning with the right to vote and stand as a candidate;
- Article 5, paragraph (b), of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Bahrain of 2002 provides that the State shall guarantee reconciliation of a woman's obligations towards her family with her work in society, as well as her equality with men in the political, social, cultural and economic spheres of life, without prejudice to the provisions of the Islamic Shariah;
- The Amiri Order establishing the Supreme Council for Women was issued;
- The Kingdom of Bahrain acceded to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women pursuant to Decree-Law No. 5 of 2002, with the effect that the laws in force in the Kingdom were amended to conform with the provisions of the Convention and reservations made by the Kingdom;
- Taking into account the provisions of the Bahraini Constitution and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, laws were promulgated and other laws already in force were developed and amended (the General Federation of Bahrain Workers' Unions Act, Decree-Law No. 28 of 2002 concerning electronic transactions, the Social Security Act, the Retirement Act, the Exercise of Political Rights Act, the Consultative Council and Chamber of Deputies Act (the Council now comprises six women) and the Judiciary Act). An agreement on electronic government was also signed with IBM in March 2004 and new judicial appointments geared to the benefit of women and the family were made;
- In addition, various bills and amendments to laws (such as the Education Act, the Civil Service Act, the Labour Act, the Non-Governmental Sector Employment Act, the Public Health Act, the Social Security Act, the Retirement Act, the Compulsory Premarital

Examination Act and the Environment Act) are now being discussed at the parliamentary and Government levels;

- The Supreme Council for Women was established in August 2001 as the authorized official body responsible for all women's affairs under the direction of His Majesty the King. It has made a number of recommendations aimed at narrowing the gender gap in line with the Constitution and the international conventions ratified by the Kingdom, in particular the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. It is worth noting that a national strategy for the advancement of women is currently being drafted;
- Stemming from the undertakings made by the Kingdom in its report to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly of the United Nations (Beijing +5) in June 2000, and on the basis of the Arab Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women to the Year 2005, the Millennium Development Goals and implementation of the 12 critical areas of concern contained in the Beijing Platform for Action, successes have been achieved in numerous areas, including:
 - Women and poverty: The Kingdom has endeavoured to eradicate the causes of female poverty by providing training aimed at turning needy families into productive families and by creating new markets for the sale of items produced by such families. It has also sought to activate decrees and civil legislation to raise the standard of living; decrees have been promulgated by the executive to increase salaries and adjust allowances for both sexes, whether in the public or private sector, as well as extend the loan scheme for microprojects (Microstart) to both sexes;
 - Education and training of women: The Kingdom has complemented its efforts for advancement with the educational process on the basis of article 7 of the Constitution, the Ministry of Education, having planned a strategy to promote education by ensuring that it is free of charge and available to both sexes. Also launched was the project of His Majesty the King Hamad for the schools of the future, whereby he adopted the Ministry's strategy aimed at expanding use of the Internet and employing information and communication technology throughout all stages of education to university level;
 - Women and health: The Ministry of Health adopted a new gender-mainstreaming strategy, backed up by a plan of action for the next four years to promote its implementation, and a national health strategy for schools was introduced, together with a strategy to develop the technology employed within the Ministry. National committees consisting of members from both governmental and non-governmental sectors have also been formed to ensure the implementation of national health plans and programmes based on equality of the sexes;
 - Women in power and decision-making: Bahraini women are present in the three legislative, executive and judicial branches of authority. They participated in the committee which drafted the National Charter and in the process of the referendum on the Charter. The Kingdom has further sought to ensure that there are women in the Consultative Council (a branch of the National Assembly). Women have also participated

in political life; they exercised their right to vote and stand as candidates in the municipal and parliamentary elections held in 2002 and chaired electoral commissions. In the public and private sectors, Bahraini women hold such leading positions as minister, ambassador, university chancellor, assistant under-secretary of State and director. In the judiciary, a woman holds the position of deputy public prosecutor;

- Women and the economy: The participation of women in the labour market has visibly increased over the last three decades; they have entered new sectors and assumed positions previously monopolized by men. The State has also taken care to promote gender equality in all laws promulgated on the economy and the labour market, such as the Commercial Companies Act, the Commercial Registration Act, the Trade Act and the Non-Governmental Sector Employment Act;
- It is worth noting that, in December 2001, the Central Information Agency signed the agreement on gender statistics, in addition to which an electronic library was built and published on the Bahrain Government webpage. Also in 2001, the eighth population census was conducted in accordance with such gender statistics and a survey of the millennium indicators was conducted in January 2002, in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

II. Overview of remaining gaps and challenges to promoting gender equality and women's empowerment

- In the area of women and poverty, a database employing the gender approach has been created in order to monitor the economic status of Bahraini women.
- In the area of education and training of women, the emerging challenge of the moment is that of how to maintain the prevalence of education, in terms of both quantity and quality, in line with the steady population growth and confront the rapid developments in technology.
- In the area of women and health, it is essential to tackle the rising cost of health services and reduce the prevalence of such chronic disorders as cardiovascular disease, cancer, genetic blood disease and iron-deficiency anaemia (particularly among women). The newest challenge is that of how to increase society's awareness of the need to follow healthy lifestyles.
- In the area of women in power and decision-making, gender-based statistics are urgently needed in the organizational structures of State ministries and institutions, in budget allocation and in planning. It is also essential to create a culture in society that accepts and promotes the presence of women by pursuing a specific media policy to that end.
- The past and ongoing reforms, laws and measures put in place in the Kingdom of Bahrain are proof of its regard for the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals as a national framework for development.

Part Two: Progress in implementation of the critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action

Introduction

This part will cover successful policies, legislative change and programmes, as well as remaining obstacles and challenges, in the following areas:

1. Women and poverty
2. Education and training of women
3. Women and health
4. Violence against women
5. Women in power and decision-making
6. Women and the economy
7. Women and the media
8. Women and the environment
9. The girl child

The methodology of presentation in those areas will be in the following order:

- I. Successful policies, legislative change and programmes in each of the above areas, set forth under the following points:
 - A. Successful measures, programmes and projects
- II. Remaining obstacles, gaps and challenges

1. Women and poverty

I. Successful policies, legislative change and programmes

The Kingdom of Bahrain seeks to guarantee social security and protect citizens of both sexes against poverty. Article 5, paragraph (c), of the Constitution provides that: “The State shall guarantee the achievement of social security and seek to protect its citizens from ignorance, fear and poverty.” (Constitution of 2002, Official Gazette No. 2517). In the human development index for 2003, the Kingdom of Bahrain ranked first among the Arab countries and thirty-seventh worldwide.

The above is the outcome of the policies, legislative change and programmes introduced by the State to raise the standard of living and improve the circumstances of the Bahraini family, including:

1. The payment of monthly assistance to orphans and widows (royal deed);
2. The distribution of financial sums to 10,000 Bahraini families (royal deed);
3. The promulgation of decrees and legislative acts aimed at raising the standard of living, such as:

- (a) The Cabinet Decree No. 39 of 2002 on raising the basic minimum wage of civil servants;
- (b) Decree No. 33 of 2002 on the adjustment of certain allowances, such as the relocation allowance for civil servants;
- (c) Decree No. 27 of 2003 on the award of social allowance to female Bahrainis working in the Government, including those with a spouse employed in the same sector;
- (d) Decree No. 1 of 2000 on the reduction of charges for domestic electricity consumption;
- (e) The strategy for social development in the twenty-first century being drafted by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs with the aim of developing and upgrading existing services to keep pace with immediate requirements, to which end the active participation of all sectors is essential;
- (f) The Cabinet Decree No. 1156-01 of October 2001 on the restriction of simple occupations to Bahraini workers of both sexes.

In addition, public health services and education during the compulsory stages are provided to citizens free of charge.

A. Successful measures, programmes and projects

On the basis of the Arab Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women by the Year 2005, the Kingdom adopted the following measures, programmes and projects in order to eradicate poverty, as well as reduce its causes and alleviate its impact:

- A study on the minimum wage was prepared in conjunction with UNDP and the International Labour Organization (ILO);
- The national accounts published by the Ministry of Finance and National Economy clearly show that the per capita share of gross domestic product (GDP) rose to 4,071 Bahraini dinars (BD), or US\$ 10,747, in 2002, with the result that the Kingdom of Bahrain is not counted among countries classified below the poverty line;
- In 2001, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs developed the national employment and training programme for Bahrainis, which targets unemployed citizens of both sexes and comprises the following projects:
 - o The provision of monthly financial support to the tune of BD 100 (US\$ 264) for married persons of either sex and BD 70 (US\$ 185) for unmarried persons of either sex;
 - o Employment and training for 2,000 jobseekers annually.

Stemming from its commitment to fulfil the pledges which it assumed at the Fourth World Conference on Women, the Government of Bahrain has sought to promote the contribution of citizens to the development process and the adoption of projects aimed at encouraging citizens to take up self-employment, by means of the following:

- (a) Expansion of the loan scheme for microprojects (Microstart);
- (b) Expansion of the productive families project to 400 beneficiary families, with women constituting 65 per cent of the number;
- (c) Subsidy of small- and medium-size projects by the Bahrain Development Bank, which also provides loans for persons of either sex wishing to set up economic projects;
- (d) Pursuant to the Cabinet Decree No. 1156-01 promulgated in October 2001, the conclusion of contracts by Government ministries and companies with companies and

institutions under which the latter are required to employ only Bahraini labour to carry out the simple jobs which they perform for such ministries, the aim being to create employment opportunities for young people from families which receive no financial assistance;

- (e) A share in the profits and stocks of State-owned companies, such as Saif Real Estate, for more of the families receiving assistance from the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs;
- (f) Cancellation of half of the instalments payable by citizens who benefit from the housing units and loans provided by the State, the number of whom amounted to 10,000 in the case of housing units and 25,000 in the case of loans (Ministerial Decree No. 194 of 2002);
- (g) The release of families from any outstanding instalments and debts payable to the State in cases where the breadwinner dies, a decision from which 590 families benefited to the tune of BD 7 million;
- (h) The elaboration of a plan for 2003 and 2004 by the Ministry of Labour, through the Higher Council for Vocational Training and other dedicated councils. with the aim of developing the national labour force and providing training and guidance for the unemployed in order to further the elimination of unemployment among both sexes.

II. Remaining obstacles, gaps and challenges

- To achieve further economic and social advancement in order to ensure essential needs and a continuing rise in the standard of living for citizens of both sexes.
- To provide more detailed statistical data on the economic status of women.

2. Education and training of women

I. Successful policies, legislative change and programmes and projects

Article 7 (a) of the Constitution provides that: “The State shall sponsor the sciences, humanities and arts and encourage scientific research. It shall also guarantee educational and cultural services for citizens. Education shall be compulsory and free of charge in the first stages, as specified and prescribed by law. The requisite plan for the eradication of illiteracy shall be laid down by law.” Procedures concerning the Education Act, as amended, and the Higher Education and Teaching Personnel Act are currently being completed by the legislative authority.

A. Successful measures, programmes and projects

- Expenditure on education as a proportion of the overall public expenditure rose by 14 per cent in 2002-2003, the education budget having increased from BD 97 million in 2001-2002 to BD 97,515,000 in 2002-2003.
- The net intake in the primary stage attained a record of 100 per cent.

- His Majesty the King's project for the schools of the future was announced. The aim of the project is to develop modern technological skills in students (of both sexes) and make the transition from traditional education to electronic education.
- Approval was given for the establishment of a centre for measurement and evaluation, a centre for the gifted and student clubs.
- Bahraini women account for the highest percentages of attendance in all stages of education, including university education; female students account for 67.2 per cent of all students at the University of Bahrain.
- Information and communication technology is used to raise the standard of educational attainment among students at the primary stage and a high level of technology skills has been achieved in eight primary schools.
- A computer laboratory project for preparatory schools has been implemented in 12 schools for boys and girls.
- Special needs students of both sexes are integrated into Government schools.

Results achieved

- Illiteracy rates among the 10-44 age group fell from 5 per cent in 2001 to 2.7 per cent in 2003 (table on illiteracy among women and men).
- The literacy rate among persons between the ages of 15 and 24 reached 99.29 per cent.
- The proportion of male to female students in Government and private schools amounted to 49.5 per cent in 2003.

II. Remaining obstacles, gaps and challenges

- To continue maintaining the prevalence of education in line with the steady population growth and improve the quality of education so that it is more closely tailored to learners' needs and the requirements of socio-economic development.
- To continue to link education with the labour market and development needs, devote attention to teachers and review their professional status, job situation and training on a continual basis in line with rapid technological developments.

3. Women and health

I. Successful policies, legislative change and programmes and projects

The legislative provisions guarantee equal access to health care services for men and women. Women in the Kingdom enjoy the benefit of all such services, free of charge.

- Article 8 of the Constitution of 2002 provides that: “Every citizen is entitled to health care. The State shall concern itself with public health and guarantee means of prevention and treatment by establishing various types of hospitals and health institutions.”
- An Amiri Decree governing the marketing of breast-milk substitutes was issued in 1995. Bahrain has also adopted the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes in order to safeguard the health of children under two years of age and ensure that they are well nourished.
- The legislature is currently discussing a bill on compulsory premarital examination and a bill on health insurance for non-Bahrainis.

A. Successful measures, programmes and projects

Concerned about the adverse impact of disease on the health of Bahraini citizens, the Kingdom adopted the following measures in order to promote the health of both sexes:

- The National AIDS Committee was established pursuant to Decree No. 20 of 1995 (Official Gazette No. 2185);
- The National Committee for the Elderly was established pursuant to Decree No. 1 of 1984 (Official Gazette No. 1594);
- The National Committee for Child Protection was established pursuant to Decree No. 15 of 1999 (Official Gazette No. 2381);
- A project to fortify flour with iron was implemented throughout the Kingdom, in conjunction with the Ministry of Commerce and the private sector. Preliminary studies conducted one year later showed a noticeable decrease in the incidence of iron-deficiency anaemia;
- A five-year national plan has been drawn up to reduce chronic disease and its risk factors, such as obesity, high blood pressure and diabetes, in conjunction with the Office of the Gulf Ministers of Health, the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNDP.
- A project was implemented in 2002 to ensure that healthy drinks, such as milk and juice, are introduced in children’s meals at fast-food restaurants instead of carbonated drinks;
- The healthy governorates project was implemented, in conjunction with WHO;
- The number of health centres providing lifelong family planning and reproductive health services to women was increased to 22;
- The Expanded Programme on Immunization was implemented, in conjunction with WHO;

- The school health strategy was adopted, delivering awareness-raising, nutritional, inoculation and dental services to young girls;
- Twenty female health nurses were appointed to Government schools;
- Twenty-two health instructors were appointed and sent to each health centre;
- Reproductive health concepts were included as part of the school curricula, with help from the Bahraini Family Planning Association;
- The gender approach was employed in the health statistics issued by the Ministry of Health;
- All male and female secondary school students were tested for genetic blood disease and intensive programmes were carried out to raise awareness of the importance of premarital examination, which helped to increase the uptake of such examinations from 6 per cent in 1996 to 38 per cent in 2002;
- The number of women holding top executive posts increased to 21.7 per cent of women employed in health, who constitute 55 per cent of the labour force in that field;
- Life expectancy at birth rose to 73.8 years, with an average of 76.3 years for women and 72.1 years for men;
- The overall mortality rate remained static for three consecutive years at 3 deaths per 1,000 population;
- The overall fertility rate per woman (aged between 15 and 44) fell to 2.5 children;
- The birth rate fell to 20.1 per 1,000 population in 2002, compared with 20.3 in 1998;
- The infant mortality rate fell to 7 deaths per 1,000 population;
- The under-five mortality rate fell to 8.9 deaths per 1,000 population;
- The maternal mortality rate fell to 14 deaths per 100,000 live births, or an average of two to three deaths per year, largely due to complications from sickle cell anaemia;
- The proportion of citizens with access to clean drinking water reached 100 per cent;
- The proportion of children inoculated rose to over 98 per cent.

II. Remaining obstacles and gaps

- To reduce the incidence of genetic blood diseases.

- To reduce the incidence of and deaths from chronic diseases, such as cardiovascular disease, which accounts for 28.65 per cent of deaths, diabetes and cancer, which accounts for 13.7 per cent of deaths.
- To reduce the incidence of iron-deficiency anaemia in children, adolescents and adults, particularly women.
- To raise awareness of the importance of promoting healthy lifestyles.
- To raise awareness of the importance of regular examinations for women.
- To carry out compulsory premarital examinations.
- To counter the rising cost of health services, which increased from US\$ 227 in 1999 to US\$ 280 in 2002.

4. Violence against women

I. Successful policies, legislative change and programmes

- The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was signed in 2002.

A. Successful measures, programmes and projects

- In coordination with the Supreme Council for Women, offices which receive women's complaints have been opened in the governorates of the Kingdom;

A family guidance office has been established under the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.

- Various lectures and workshops have been organized to raise women's awareness of their rights and increase society's awareness of women's rights.
- In view of the educational levels of Bahrain's inhabitants, there are few cases of violence against women and the number of such cases is constantly declining.
- Crimes of rape fell from 31 in 2001 to 16 in 2003.
- Crimes of indecency and assault fell from 21 in 2001 to 11 in 2003.
- There are few statistics and studies showing the extent to which women are subjected to domestic violence.
- Those who follow up cases of violence receive training in how to deal with the issues involved.

- Psychological and social rehabilitation for women subjected to domestic violence.

5. Women in power and decision-making

I. Successful policies, legislative change and programmes

In the past five years, Bahraini women have achieved a number of successes that constituted an important turning point in their history.

- The Bahraini Constitution of 2002 guarantees the right of women to political participation; article 1, paragraph 5, states that: “Citizens (men and women) have the right to participate in public affairs and enjoy political rights, including the right to vote and stand as a candidate.”
- The Exercise of Political Rights Act No. 14 of 2002 was promulgated, stating that: “Citizens, both men and women, shall have the right to state an opinion in every referendum conducted in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution and to elect members of the Chamber of Deputies.” (Official Gazette No. 2538).
- The Consultative Council and Chamber of Deputies Act No. 15 of 2002 was promulgated, affirming the right of women to stand as candidates for and elect the membership of the Chamber of Deputies and making no distinction between the sexes concerning the right to be appointed as a member of the Consultative Council (Official Gazette No. 2538).
- The Municipalities Act No. 35 of 2001 was promulgated, guaranteeing the right of women to vote and stand as candidates for municipal councils (Official Gazette No. 2508).

A. Successful measures, programmes and projects

- Bahraini women participated in the committee which drafted the National Charter (six women as against 40 men) and in the process of the referendum held in 2002 on the Charter, which was approved by 98.4 per cent of those of both sexes entitled to vote.
- Women participated in the Committee to Activate the National Charter and played a prominent role in the legal and legislative committees in that connection.
- Six women members were appointed to the Consultative Council, which is a branch of the National Assembly.
- Bahraini women participated in the municipal and parliamentary elections (2002) as candidates and voters to the tune of 51 per cent in the municipal elections and 47.7 per cent in the parliamentary elections.
- Bahraini women hold a number of leading executive positions in the public and private sectors.

- A female ambassador of the Kingdom was appointed to France in 2002 and the first female minister of health in the Arab world was appointed in 2004.
- Four female deans of the University of Bahrain were also appointed in 2004 and there are now five female under-secretaries of State. Several female representatives of the Office of the Public Prosecutor were also appointed, bringing their number to four, in addition to which there are now 31 female directors of Government departments in the Kingdom.
- The number of women in leading executive positions more than tripled between 1991 and 2001 from 780 to 2,100.
- Women participate in a number of important committees, such as the committee responsible for following up a study on the privatization of electricity and water, the committee responsible for reviewing complaints about commercial transactions (Official Gazette Nos. 2574, 2580 and 2512) and the national committee responsible for evaluating, equating and studying academic qualifications and academic accreditation.

II. Remaining challenges and obstacles

- To create a culture in society that has faith in the leading role of women.
- To continue activating the rights set forth in the Constitution and international instruments guaranteeing equality for women.
- To strengthen the capacities of women and thus empower them to occupy leading positions.

6. Women and the economy

I. Successful policies, legislative change and programmes

- Article 5, paragraph (b), of the Constitution promulgated in 2002 provides that the State shall guarantee reconciliation of a woman's obligations towards her family with her work in society, as well as her equality with men in the political, social, cultural and economic spheres of life.
- The Labour Act promulgated by Decree No. 23 of 1976 and the laws amending it guarantee equality between women and men in regard to the definition of an employee and equality of pay, providing as it does that: "The word "worker" means any male or female engaged in paid work of any type for and under the management and supervision of an employer."
- The Labour Act singles out certain rights for women, such as maternity leave, time for breastfeeding, unpaid leave for childcare purposes and bereavement leave, in order to help them reconcile their family obligations with work responsibilities (articles 61 to 63 of the Labour Act).

- Women are not employed in occupations which are hazardous and harmful to health or at night between the hours of 8 p.m. and 7 a.m., in accordance with the international labour conventions ratified by the Kingdom of Bahrain (Official Gazette Nos. 1238 and 1188).
- The Commercial Registration Act promulgated by Decree No. 1 of 1961 does not discriminate between the sexes in terms of the conditions for acquiring commercial registrations.
- The Companies Act promulgated by Decree No. 21 of 2001 makes no gender distinction in terms of the incorporation or participation in the incorporation of commercial companies and the assumption of administrative positions in such companies (Official Gazette No. 2842).

A. Successful measures, programmes and projects

- In 2001, the proportion of women in the total local labour force stood at 34.73 per cent, whereas in 1971 it stood at 5.14 per cent.
- The proportion of women's participation in the labour market increased by 83.4 per cent over three decades.
- In 2002, the proportion of women's employment in the civil service (Government) sector stood at 40.2 per cent.
- In 2001, women's participation in the private sector stood at 48.61 per cent of total women workers, compared with 48.16 per cent for males.
- In 2001, the proportion of women's employment in the public sector stood at 48.87 per cent of total female workers, compared with 47.07 per cent for males.
- The proportion of women's participation in the industrial sector rose from 4.8 per cent in 1991 to 15.7 per cent in 2001.
- The proportion of women's participation in commercial activity reached 41.7 per cent in 2002, up from 24.3 per cent in 2001.
- In 2002, 1,646 women were employed in the various ministries of the Kingdom. In other words, the recruitment of women increased to triple that in 1999, when 520 women were employed.
- The teaching and health sectors comprise the greatest proportion of women workers in the civil service; taking both sectors together, that proportion amounts to 82 per cent of the total women's labour force in the Government sector.
- The number of women holding membership of the Bahrain Chamber of Commerce and Industry stands at 1,145.

- A businesswoman became the first female member of the Council of the Bahrain Chamber of Commerce and Industry at the twenty-fifth electoral session, held in October 2002.
- The annual number of promotions and incentives going to women employed in the civil service amounts to an average of 8 per cent.
- The share of incentives for women employed in the civil service amounts to an average of 10 per cent.
- The State provided loans for microprojects that were largely taken up by the categories at whom they were targeted, in particular women, who constitute approximately 81 per cent of those involved.
- The proportion of female workers insured with the Public Authority for Social Security (the body which insures workers in the private sector) stood at 24 per cent of the total number of those insured with the Authority in 2002.
- The number of Bahraini families supported by a woman stood at 10.84 per cent of total Bahraini families in 2001.
- The proportion of commercial registrations owned by females stands at (updated percentage to be checked) of total commercial registrations.
- The Bahrain Development Bank, which is dedicated to supporting and funding new private projects, granted commercial loans to businesswomen amounting to a total of BD 315,000, equivalent to US\$ 831,000.

The essence of the Government's pledges at the Fourth World Conference on Women was to create greater training opportunities for women, in which regard the following has been carried out:

- BD 25 million was earmarked in the State budget for the national recruitment and training programme, from which 334 citizens have benefited (103 males and 231 females);
- A total of 30 hours was allocated to each Government employee for training purposes and will be increased to 50 hours at the beginning of 2006, meaning that women will benefit from more training opportunities in the future;
- The Higher Council for Training was established and comprises the three production parties, namely the Government, the Bahrain Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the General Federation for Bahrain Workers;
- Over the past five years, Bahraini women have won a substantial number of training opportunities in the civil service sector; statistics from the Civil Service Bureau indicate that 43 per cent of the women's labour force in the civil service ministries receive training;

- The State allocated BD 5 million to training in its 2001-2002 budget; in October 2001, the number of women trainees amounted to 668, compared with 1,870 males.

II. Remaining challenges and obstacles

- To provide more training opportunities for women in the future.
- To create new work opportunities in other than the usual sectors and to retrain women for entry to such sectors.

7. Women and the media

I. Successful policies, legislative change and programmes

- Article 23 of the Constitution of 2002 provides that freedom of opinion and scientific research is guaranteed and that every human being has the right to express his or her opinion orally, in writing or otherwise, in accordance with the conditions and circumstances prescribed by law, without prejudice to the principles of the Islamic faith and the unity of the people, and so as not to arouse discord or sectarianism.
- Decree No. 9 of 1995 reorganizing the Ministry of Information.
- Decree No. 28 of 1996 reorganizing the Ministry of Cabinet Affairs and Information.
- Decree No. 17 of 1999 amending certain provisions of Decree No. 28 of 1996 reorganizing the Ministry of Cabinet Affairs and Information.

A. Successful measures, programmes and projects

- The Ministry of Information elaborated a strategy and implementing programmes and plans for the Ministry (information affairs) and its sectors for the years 2003 and 2004 with the aim of promoting democratic action in the context of the principle that all information and data should be open and transparent, with emphasis on the sovereignty of the law, fair application and the protection of freedoms and human rights through the establishment of media, cultural and tourist relations and agreements with all sister and friendly States.
- The various media forms addressed women's issues and the responsibility of educating women and raising their awareness by devoting weekly pages to women in various local newspapers and increasing the number of television and radio programmes on the subject.
- Programmes have been planned and developed to encourage Bahraini executive personnel of both sexes to innovate in the field of culture and the arts.
- The position of women in the field of media work has been strengthened and their participation and contribution within the Ministry of Information and its audio-visual and print institutions evolved substantially after the Beijing Conference, as follows:

- The proportion of female employees in the Ministry of Information stands at 30.20 per cent, whereas the proportion of males stands at 69.80 per cent;
- Women constitute 50 per cent of local newspaper editors;
- Women constitute 50 per cent of total employees in the Government radio corporation;
- Women constitute some 30 per cent of employees in the Government television corporation, which comprises presentation, preparation and production sectors;
- The proportion of women's participation in exhibitions and the plastic arts stands at 28 per cent, with women accounting for 12 of the 42 artists involved;
- The proportion of women's participation in foreign conferences and art exhibitions stands at 22 per cent, with women accounting for 6 of the 27 artists involved;
- The number of female students studying in the media department at the University of Bahrain is double that of male students.

II. Remaining challenges and obstacles

- To continue work on changing the stereotype of women in the media;
- To increase women's participation and improve opportunities for women to express their opinions and take decisions in the different media environments.

9. Women and the environment

I. Successful policies, legislative change and programmes

- Article 9 of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Bahrain provides that the State shall take the necessary measures to conserve the environment and wildlife.
- The State has undertaken to draft rules and regulations on licences for the manufacturer and for workshops which are environmentally harmful in general.
- The Protection of Industrial Workers Act (covering both men and women) is currently being studied in order to guarantee a safe and harm-free environment.
- Civil-society institutions are encouraged to set up environmental associations.

Successful measures, programmes and projects

- A plan has been developed to introduce environmental concepts into the educational curricula for male and female school students, without distinction. Some internationally accredited environmental programmes (GLOBE) have also been introduced for girl secondary school students.
- At the official and non-governmental levels through specialist associations, the Kingdom holds conferences and seminars on the environment and sustainable development, without distinction between the sexes.

- The Society of Friends of the Environment was established.
- The General Commission for the Protection of Marine Resources, Environment and Wildlife formed a non-governmental committee of civil-society institutions on environmental matters in order to coordinate voluntary work in the environmental field. These institutions seek to increase environmental awareness among citizens in general and women in particular.
- In conjunction with the United National Environment Programme (UNEP), women's associations make an effective contribution to this field; a waste recycling project was started in 2001 in conjunction with the Ministry of Municipalities and Agriculture and the private sector.
- The environmental citizenship programme won the Food Environment Award for the States of Western Asia and North Africa (2002).
- Women's environmental and sustainable development associations also take part in international forums, such as the Earth Summit Conference in Johannesburg in October 2002.
- A woman holds the presidency of the Society of Friends of the Environment, which developed various awareness-raising programmes to increase society's awareness of the importance of conserving the environment.

I. Successful policies, programmes and projects

- The Constitution of the Kingdom of Bahrain emphasizes the principle of equality and non-discrimination, as well as the need for the social welfare of children.
- The Cabinet Decree No. 15 of 1999 forming a national committee for childhood was promulgated.
- The Ministry of Health formed the Committee for the Protection of Children, comprising professionals from all fields of specialization, in order to deal with and prevent cases of abuse.
- Pursuant to Decree-Law No. 8 of 2000, the Kingdom of Bahrain ratified the amendment of article 43, paragraph 2, of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted by the General Assembly in November 1989.
- The Ministry of the Interior recently formed a child protection unit to deal with and investigate cases of abuse.
- The International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour was ratified pursuant to Decree-Law No. 12 of 2001.

A. Successful measures, programmes and projects

- The Ministry of Information and the Ministry of Defence have each established their own crèches, which are exclusively restricted to the children of their employees.
- In order to encourage women to enrol in literacy programmes, crèches have been established in literacy centres to care for the children of female students,
- Work committees have been formed in the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs to study the provisions relevant to each of them in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Through the Social Assistance Division, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs provides monthly financial assistance for children who are orphaned, imprisoned or disabled.
- In 2000, the National Committee for Childhood conducted a poll study in order to collect and collate data on the status of women and children in Bahrain.
- Her Highness (instructed by His Majesty the King) participated in the special session of the General Assembly of the United Nations on children in April 2002, during which she emphasized the Kingdom's commitment to international human rights instruments, including those relating to the rights of the child.
- Participation in the activities of the Youth Peace Camp held in Cairo in December 2003.

II. Remaining obstacles, gaps and challenges

- To activate the Juveniles Act in order to ensure that preventive measures for juveniles are applied.
- To devise a national strategy for children.
- To incorporate the child nursery stage into the compulsory education system.

Part Three: Institutional mechanisms and arrangements put in place to support the follow-up and implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action

In order to promote the gender equality guaranteed by the Bahraini Constitution, empower Bahraini women and improve their situation to enable them to make a greater and fuller contribution to the process of development as citizens who are fully competent to engage in constructive partnership:

- The Supreme Council for Women was established pursuant to Amiri Decree No. 44 of 2001 as the official advisory authority on women's affairs, under the direction of His Majesty the King and chaired by Her Highness, the wife of His Majesty. The aim of establishing the Supreme Council for Women is focused on three main areas of concern:
 1. The provisions of the Shariah and law in connection with women's rights;
 2. The Constitution and international conventions to which the Kingdom has acceded;
 3. The modern-day changes which have taken place in the status of Bahraini women and families.

- The Supreme Council for Women is concerned with the following matters:
 1. Proposing the general policy aimed at developing women's affairs in the constitutional and civil institutions of society;
 2. Empowering women to fulfil their role in public life and integrating their efforts into comprehensive development programmes, taking care to ensure that there is no discrimination against them;
 3. Drafting a national plan for the advancement of women and remedying the problems which they face in all spheres;
 4. Activating the principles of the National Charter relating to women and establishing appropriate mechanisms to that end;
 5. Following up and evaluating implementation of the general policy on women and submitting the Council's proposals and remarks to the competent authorities;
 6. Submitting proposals for amendment of the current legislation on women, giving an opinion on draft laws and decrees on women before their submission to the competent authority and raising awareness by proposing the draft laws and decrees required to advance the status of women.

- The Council has its own budget comprising its income and expenditure. The Council also formed a technical secretariat headed by a secretary-general with the rank of minister.

- At the level of legislative institutions, the Consultative Council devoted particular attention to women, having formed its own committee on women and children for the purpose of discussing the legislation and laws affecting women and children, the status of women working in the non-governmental sector and maternal and child health.

- At the non-governmental level, women's non-governmental organizations in the form of 16 women's organizations and 13 women's committees from religious and vocational associations are involved in raising women's awareness of their rights and of how to obtain

such rights. These organizations have also helped to empower Bahraini women's access to economic resources.

- At the executive level, all ministries and official organizations and agencies in the Kingdom cooperate with the Council, in particular the Central Statistics Organization, which takes care to incorporate the gender approach in all of its statistics and has the job of:
 - (a) Promoting the objectives of Government agencies by making optimal use of information technology;
 - (b) Serving as the main centre for general statistical information;
 - (c) Managing and organizing elections as required by the regulating laws.

Main projects and successes at the official and non-governmental levels

- Amiri Order No. 5 of 2004 was issued, establishing a prize awarded by Her Majesty Shaikha Sabika bint Ibrahim Al Khalifa, chairperson of the Supreme Council for Women, for the empowerment of Bahraini women.
- The Ministry of Housing Decree No. 12 of 2004 was promulgated on the right of Bahraini women to benefit from housing services, the Supreme Council for Women having raised women's awareness of the matter as a result of the study, commissioned by His Majesty, which it conducted.
- The Supreme Council for Women carried out a study, commissioned by His Majesty, on the status of divorced women before the Shariah judiciary in terms of the assessment of maintenance, the basis for such assessment, the components of maintenance, the consistency of procedures with the provisions of the Rules of Shariah Trial Procedure Act, problems of enforcement, appeal against rulings, time taken to examine a case and to deliver and enforce a ruling and the status of the family during the examination of a case.
- Offices attached to the Supreme Council for Women have been opened in all governorates throughout the Kingdom in order to receive women's complaints.
- The Supreme Council for Women participated in the Ministry of Commerce's one-stop project of 2004 to overcome the difficulties facing Bahraini women and empower them to engage in commercial activity.
- The Kingdom of Bahrain acceded to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in March 2002.
- Social centres in all governorates throughout the Kingdom were assigned instead of police stations as the place for parents who are separated to meet with their children.
- The Supreme Council for Women has established its own committee for young people of both sexes in order to prepare them as leaders in the fight for women's issues and the rights of women as human beings by instilling in them the democratic spirit.

- Membership of the Arab Women's Council was acquired in 2002.
- A national team comprising an official and non-governmental membership has been formed to draft Bahrain's report on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

At the level of civil-society organizations:

- There are women in the labour unions which were first established after the promulgation of Decree-Law No. 33 of 2002 concerning the Labour Union Act on 24 December 2002.
- Four of the 34 labour unions are headed by women.
- Women accounted for 22.5 per cent of the members of union management councils in 2002.

Remaining challenges and obstacles

- To incorporate women's issues in the Government's work programme.
- To publicize the Women's Federation.
- To improve the type of data in general and on gender in particular in those areas where improvement is still needed, such as environment, economic standard and violence.
- To further raise awareness in official and non-governmental institutions of the importance of planning which takes into account the participation of women in all stages of development.
- To strengthen the gender-mainstreaming capacities of all individuals and groups in Bahraini society.
- To address the absence of specialist studies examining gender issues.

Future measures in connection with institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women

- The establishment of a strategy for the advancement of Bahraini women, which the Supreme Council for Women is busy preparing.
- The preparation of a national programme of action for the advancement of Bahraini women.
- The creation of mechanisms to monitor discrimination in official and non-governmental institutions.
- The conclusion of protocols between the Supreme Council for Women, ministries in the Kingdom and relevant agencies in order to facilitate avenues of cooperation between such

authorities and the Council, the aim being to coordinate realization of the proposals and recommendations of the latter in accordance with its mandate in that connection.

- Integration of the component of women into the work programmes of ministries connected with women's issues.
- The establishment of a database which uses the gender approach.
- The establishment of a maintenance fund under the Ministry of Justice.
- The treatment of women's issues as a matter of urgency.
- Amendment of the Evidence Act to make it easier for women to provide evidence of their material contribution.

Part Four: Main challenges and actions to address them

The Kingdom is making tangible efforts to deliver a better standard of services and facilities to citizens. In that regard, the Government attaches great importance to women, perpetually aiming to improve the quantitative and qualitative standard of the different services offered to them. Nevertheless, a number of challenges still remain and the State has put in place a number of measures to tackle these challenges in the future:

A. General approaches of the Kingdom to future measures for both sexes:

- To pursue the adoption of measures to guarantee higher standards of living in the future.
- To continue training teachers of both sexes and improving their capabilities in line with modern technology.
- To promote the trend towards the inclusion of persons of both sexes with special needs and their integration into regular education as far as possible.
- To expand programmes to combat genetic disease targeted at both sexes and at women in particular.
- To establish a gender council on information technology to activate training and increase Bahrainization in that vital sector, bearing in mind the constant increase in information and communication technology in the country, the aim being to ensure the gender approach.
- To continue training women and integrating them into the labour market and to draw up plans for that purpose.
- To open more recruitment centres in all governorates of the Kingdom so that the available jobs can be studied and allocated to the region's inhabitants (of both sexes) according to priority, taking into account ability and gender equality;
- To monitor the country's environmental legislation and develop it in conformity with international conventions.
- To support the environmental programmes of non-governmental institutions.
- To support and encourage official and non-governmental authorities concerned with human rights.
- To continue activating the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- To devote attention to the needs of special categories of children, in particular disabled and gifted children.

B. Future approaches and measures concerning women in the critical areas of concern

1. Women and poverty:

- To endeavour to provide more detailed statistics on the economic situation, using the gender approach;
- To propose women's awareness-raising programmes with the aim of giving them the incentive to integrate into the labour market;
- To continue training and retraining women in modern technology with a view to their integration into the labour market and improvement of their social standard.

2. Education and training of women:

- To amend the Education Act throughout so that it keeps pace with technological and scientific developments;
- To expand technical and vocational education and training for girls in order to match the needs of the labour market;
- To update school plans and curricula in line with the gender approach and remove all forms of women stereotypes;
- To raise women's awareness of sophisticated professional specializations matched with the requirements of the labour market.

4. Women and health:

- To continue improving the quantitative and qualitative standard of health services provided to women;
- To strengthen the health awareness programmes accompanying health development plans and seek to follow behaviour patterns conducive to women's health;
- To raise awareness of the importance of regular examinations for women;
- To raise awareness of the importance of compulsory premarital examinations in order to minimize genetic disease.

4. Violence against women:

- To conduct studies to monitor the phenomenon of violence against women;
- To accede to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;

- To consider promulgation of the draft law on family provisions;
- To train law enforcers in how to deal with such cases;
- To adopt measures and arrangements guaranteed to facilitate the reporting of cases of violence to which women are subjected;
- To study a project to open family guidance offices in the governorates of the Kingdom in order to minimize cases of divorce and family breakdown;
- To provide legal and judicial protection for women who are subjected to violence.

5. Women in power and decision-making:

- To activate the articles of the Constitution and the National Charter that guarantee gender equality;
- To continue reviewing, amending and activating domestic laws in conformity with international conventions and without contradicting the provisions of Shariah law;
- To create a societal culture that is accepting of women in high positions, with emphasis on raising women's awareness of their right of political participation on all fronts.

6. Women and the economy:

- To encourage women to manage small and medium projects and provide them with appropriate support;
- To seek to benefit from international and regional funding programmes for projects managed by women;
- To help women to gain access to productive resources, opportunities and public services.

7. Women and the media:

- To endeavour to change the stereotype of women in the media by encouraging programmes which highlight the effective role of women in society as partners in development and production;
- To increase the integration of women in the organizational structures of media institutions in order to ensure their involvement in decision-making;
- To support creative women and ensure that they play a part in representing the Kingdom at conferences and in cultural and intellectual forums;

- To prepare research and studies on the effect of the media on changing patterns of behaviour towards women and their partnership with men in life.

9. The girl child:

- To guarantee all forms of equal treatment of the sexes in all spheres;
- To seek to provide legislative protection for the girl child in all spheres;
- To raise the awareness of families and society concerning the importance of the principles of equality and non-discrimination between male and female children.