



**Convention on the Rights  
of Persons with Disabilities**

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**Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**

**Combined first and second periodic reports  
submitted by Bahrain under article 35 of the  
Convention, due in 2013\***

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## Introduction

1. In December 2006, the United Nations General Assembly, at its 61st session, adopted the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, commonly known as the “Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities”, together with an optional protocol recognizing the right of individuals and groups to submit complaints. Bahrain was one of the first countries to sign the Convention, joining the more than one hundred States which ratified the Convention and optional protocol in New York in March 2007.

2. Act No. 22 (2011), concerning the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, was subsequently promulgated and ratified by His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, King of Bahrain. Since the Convention entered into force in Bahrain, all government agencies have been obliged to implement it through legislative and administrative measures. Monitoring implementation of the State’s obligations under the Convention has been the responsibility of the Ministry of Labour and Social Development.

3. Under article 35 (1) of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Bahrain is required to submit a comprehensive report to the United Nations on measures taken to give effect to its obligations under the Convention and on progress made in that regard. In compiling this report, the Government of Bahrain has followed United Nations guidelines on reporting by State parties under international human rights treaties (HRI/GEN/2/Rev) and the guidelines of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on reporting under the Convention (CRPD/C/2/3). The present report provides an overview of the general status concerning the implementation of the Convention in Bahrain, with a particular focus on relevant laws and policies.

4. This document contains the combined first and second periodic report of Bahrain (2017) and it consists of two parts. Part I focuses on core information, including information about demographic, economic, social and political indicators, the situation of persons with disabilities in Bahrain and relevant legislation. Part II contains substantive information relating to the general guidelines and includes reference to legislative provisions, laws and ministerial decisions, as well as up-to-date statistics and information.

5. The report is the product of the labours of the governmental and non-governmental bodies which comprise the membership of the High Commission for Disabled Affairs, formed pursuant to a decision of the Ministry of Labour and Social Development with the goal of establishing partnerships among stakeholders and collecting information from reliable sources. The membership was subsequently expanded to include relevant governmental, non-governmental and private bodies and institutions. The report-writing team began by holding a number of meetings to distribute tasks to members. Official bodies were contacted with a view to obtaining the information required for the report, in accordance with the guidelines. The research and information gathering process took more than a year.

6. The report is basically a reflection of the contributions received by the High Commission from various bodies. It presents figures and data without any modifications having been made to them.

7. As regards the contents and methodological foundations of the report, it should be noted that, briefly put, the Government of Bahrain believes that, while the domestic legal situation in the country is consistent with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, there is room for improvement with regard to the position of persons with disabilities.

8. At the outset of the work, the Chair of the High Commission for Disabled Affairs assigned the members of the Commission with the tasks of reviewing the draft report, making comments and identifying related challenges. An advisory committee was chosen, consisting of experts on disability in the Kingdom, which made its observations on the report and handed it back to the high commission for approval. The report was then sent to the ministry.

## (A) Common core document: General information

### I. Geographical location

9. Bahrain lies in the Arabian Gulf, more or less equidistant from the Straits of Hormuz and the mouth of the Shatt al-Arab. Its strategic location has given the country enormous cultural importance throughout history, and it has been and still is an important international trading centre and key link in East-West trade and global communications.

10. Bahrain is an archipelago consisting of 40 islands with a total land mass in 2014 of 774.44 km<sup>2</sup>. The largest island in the archipelago is Bahrain Island, where the capital Manama is situated and which represents some 79.54 per cent of the country's total land mass. Bahrain Island is linked by causeways to neighbouring islands, including Muharraq, Sitra, Umm Nassan and Nabih Saleh. It is also linked to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia by the King Fahd causeway, which opened in November 1986.

11. Other important islands in the archipelago are the Hawar group, lying 25 kilometres south of Bahrain Island, with a land mass of some 52.10 km<sup>2</sup>.

### II. Demographic situation

12. The country's geographical situation is reflected in the people, who display distinctively authentic characteristics that afford reassurance and a sense of security to expatriates and visitors alike, while at the same time serving the spirit of enterprise which prevails across the wider region.

13. The Bahraini people are characterized by mutual tolerance, family cohesion, brotherliness and trustworthiness in business dealings; they have a distaste for all manifestations of intolerance, bigotry and discrimination. This has resulted in migrants from neighbouring countries making their home in Bahrain, where they find an atmosphere of peace and calm. The country's adherence to Islam and adoption of its revealed truth have helped to reinforce these qualities.

14. The overwhelming majority of Bahrainis are of Arab origin, the product of successive waves of tribal immigration from the Arabian Peninsula in pre-Islamic times. Their historical roots can be traced back to the pre-Christian Dilmun civilization and later civilizations, such as those of Tylos, Arados and Awal. The modern history of Bahrain began in 1783.

15. According to 2016 figures, the population of Bahrain stands at 1,423,726, of whom 664,707 are Bahrainis and 759,019 non-Bahrainis. The following table shows population by nationality and gender from 2012 to 2014:

**Population by nationality and gender (2012–2014)**

Year	Bahraini			Non-Bahraini			Total		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
2012	305 354	294 275	599 629	445 095	154 240	599 335	750 449	448 515	1 198 964
2013	312 945	301 885	614 830	475 436	162 925	638 361	788 381	464 810	1 253 191
2014	320 839	309 905	630 744	485 648	198 170	683 818	806 487	508 075	1 314 562

### III. Economic and social development

16. In the *Human Development Report (2015)*, Bahrain was ranked 45th globally – and fourth among Gulf countries – out of 49 countries that achieved a “very high human development” ranking, of between 0.8 and 1, in the Human Development Index; the report

covered 188 countries.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, Bahrain was ranked 18th globally and first among the Arab countries on the Index of Economic Freedom,<sup>2</sup> which covers financial, monetary and trade policy, government spending, capital flows, foreign investment and intellectual property rights.

17. With a view to developing national policies that take the existing situation in the country as a starting point and that take account both of opportunities and constraints, the Government of Bahrain continues to carry out strategic planning initiatives designed to optimize the utilization of the country's resources in pursuit of sustainable national development.

18. In October 2008, as part of the ongoing efforts to promote development, Bahrain launched its economic vision 2030, under the slogan "Sustainability, competitiveness and fairness". This formed the basis for the National Economic Strategy (2015–2018), which was subsequently adopted as a roadmap for the national economy and governmental action. The strategy focuses on strengthening links between Government policies and identifying key strategic initiatives to be implemented within the set timeframe. It further identifies the bodies responsible for implementing these initiatives and the measures required. The strategy has helped to achieve remarkable progress in the sphere of sustainable development.

#### IV. Basic constitutional structure

19. Bahrain obtained its independence in 1971. The following year, a Constituent Assembly was established to formulate a draft constitution and, in 1973, the first Constitution was promulgated. The Constitution identified the State authorities, including the National Assembly, and the relationship between them.

20. On 26 August 1974, Royal Order No. 4 (1974) was issued stipulating, inter alia, the dissolution of the National Assembly and postponement of elections until the promulgation of a new election law. The National Assembly was dissolved in 1975. Pursuant to the royal order, the Emir and Council of Ministers assumed responsibility for the legislature.

21. Upon assuming power on 6 March 1999, His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa launched a reform project. Royal Orders Nos. 36 (2000) and 43 (2000) were issued, creating a higher national committee charged with drafting the National Action Charter, designed to outline the future direction of the State and the role of State institutions and constitutional authorities.

#### V. Situation of persons with disabilities in Bahrain

22. The General Census of Population and Housing conducted by Bahrain in 1991 indicated 4,114 persons with disabilities. Ten years later – in 2001 to be precise – the figure stood at 4,229, a slight increase of 115. In 2007 however, the Ministry of Labour and Social Development published a report stating that the number of beneficiaries from disability allowance stood at 6,263; by the end of 2012, this had risen to 8,114. According to the ministry's most recent figures, there were 10,712 persons with various disabilities in the Kingdom of Bahrain as of August 2016. The following table shows the percentage of the total population reporting a disability in the period 1991–2016:

<i>Year</i>	<i>No. of persons with disabilities</i>	<i>Percentage of disabled to total population</i>
1991	4 114	0.70
2001	4 229	0.90
2007	6 263	0.80
2010	6 678	0.60

<sup>1</sup> *Human Development Report 2015: Work for Human Development*, UNDP.

<sup>2</sup> *Index of Economic Freedom*, The Heritage Foundation, 2015.

<i>Year</i>	<i>No. of persons with disabilities</i>	<i>Percentage of disabled to total population</i>
2012	8 114	0.75
2016	10 712	1.00

#### **Statistics on disability in Bahrain (1991–2016):**

<i>Type</i>	<i>1991</i>	<i>2001</i>	<i>2010</i>	<i>2012</i>	<i>2016</i>
Mental	765	992	3 099	3 514	3 984
Visual	882	460	536	765	1 188
Physical	962	775	1 587	2 132	3 155
Auditory	473	484	1 003	1 212	1 732
Multiple	1 032	1 518	453	521	653
<b>Total</b>	<b>4 114</b>	<b>4 229</b>	<b>6 678</b>	<b>8 144</b>	<b>10 712</b>

## **VI. Laws and decisions regulating the affairs of persons with disabilities**

23. The Kingdom of Bahrain paid considerable attention to persons with disabilities before it adopted the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, issuing legislation, laws and decisions designed to protect their rights. Thus Act No. 74 (2006), regulating the welfare, habilitation and employment of persons with disabilities, was adopted. At that time, however, the Kingdom had not ratified the Convention and so the Act was based on other sources, which did not take account of the core elements of the Convention.

24. Following ratification of the Convention by Bahrain in 2011, it became apparent that several pieces of legislation had to be amended to bring them into line with the obligations which ratification entailed. Accordingly, a legislative review was conducted and a development committee set up to draft a bill. This text appears to be more in line with the Convention and is expected to be put before the legislative bodies for adoption.

25. The bill consists of 25 articles, which address all aspects of the rights of persons with disabilities. These include a revised definition of disability to read, “Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others”. Furthermore, the bill contains provisions designed to guarantee the civil and human rights of persons with disabilities, in areas such as equality, non-discrimination, access to housing, public highways and public utilities, transport and communications, the exercise of legal competence and right of resort to litigation. In addition, the bill is designed to guarantee persons with disabilities the same access as all other members of society to education and health services. It also provides for the delivery of financial support and promotion of participation by persons with disabilities in public, political and cultural life and in sporting and recreational activities.

26. Act No. 74 (2006) is the basic legal framework regulating the rights of persons with disabilities and provides important guarantees regarding their welfare, training and employment. It contains numerous provisions relating to the affairs of persons with disabilities, setting out a definition of disability, the terms and conditions for the establishment of habilitation centres, care homes, shelters and workshops, access to financial allowances and pensions for persons with disabilities, tax exemptions on habilitation, medical and educational devices and equipment, the conditions of admission to habilitation centres and institutions, the proportion of workers with disabilities that enterprises should employ and the function of the High Commission for Disabled Affairs. The Act contains further provisions relating to the employment of persons with disabilities. The provisions of the Act apply to Bahrainis, not to resident aliens.

27. His Majesty recently promulgated Act No. 22 (2017), amending article 2 of Act No. 74 (2006), regulating the welfare, habilitation and employment of persons with disabilities, to read: “The provisions of this Act shall apply to Bahrainis with disabilities and to the disabled children of a Bahraini woman married to a foreign man residing permanently in the Kingdom of Bahrain”.

28. Although formally adopted in 2007, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was ratified by Bahrain pursuant to Act No. 22 (2011).<sup>3</sup> Under the Convention, Bahrain formally undertakes to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities and to promote respect for their inherent dignity.

29. Article 5 of Act No. 74 (2006), regulating the welfare, habilitation and employment of persons with disabilities, was amended by Act No. 59 (2014) to stipulate that an employee or worker with a disability or a person caring for a close relative with a disability must be allowed two hours paid rest each day, upon production of a certificate from a medical committee stating that the person needs to provide special care.

30. Under Act No. 7 (2009), the Ministry of Housing provides certain appliances in housing units occupied by citizens with disabilities. The Act gives the occupant the right to apply to the Ministry of Housing for the unit to be equipped to a standard that takes account of his or her disability or that of a family member.

31. A number of ministerial decrees and decisions have been issued, setting out the guidelines for implementing laws on the rights of persons with disabilities; the most significant of these are:

- Ministerial Decision No. 20 (2005), on the eligibility criteria for disability allowance; this is a monthly allowance payable to all disabled Bahraini nationals resident in the country upon production of a medical report confirming disability;
- Ministerial Decision No. 24 (2008), on the eligibility criteria for the monthly disability allowance; the minimum allowance was subsequently doubled by Act No. 40 (2010);
- Ministerial Decision No. 25 (2008), on the conditions for admission to habilitation centres and institutions, care homes, shelters and workshops for the disabled;
- Ministerial Decision No. 26 (2008), on the licensing conditions and procedures for setting up and operating habilitation centres and institutions, care homes, shelters and workshops for the disabled; the ministry and high commission intend to amend this decision shortly;
- Ministry of Health Decision No. 27 (2009), on the formation of a subcommittee to diagnose and assess persons with disabilities; recommendations are forwarded to the general medical committees at the ministry, which have authority under the law to determine disability and the persons covered by the provisions and guarantees of the law;
- Cabinet Decision No. 50 (2010), on the formation of a disability assessment committee and the licensing of habilitation centres, institutions and care homes; other decisions taken by representatives of the Ministry of Labour and Social Development, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, High Commission for Disabled Affairs, Arabian Gulf University and University of Bahrain designed to promote mechanisms for studying medical, educational, psychological and habilitation reports on cases of disability in a regular and systematic manner, preparing technical reports, standardizing psychological assessment tests, coordinating with the Ministry of Health to diagnose type and degree of medical disability and the early detection thereof and coordinating with the Ministry of Education to conduct pedagogical, behavioural and psychological assessments with a view to promoting integration of students with disabilities in Government schools;

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<sup>3</sup> The Convention was published in issue no. 3007 of the Official Gazette (7 July 2011).

- Decision No. 64 (2010) clarifies the licensing terms and procedures for setting up and operating habilitation centres and institutions, care homes, shelters and workshops for the disabled.

## **(B) General provisions of the Convention**

### **Article 1**

#### **Purpose**

32. Given that the Disability Act involves so-called “cross-domain issues”, a large number of the laws and decisions adopted by the Government of Bahrain contain provisions affecting persons with disabilities.

33. In terms of achieving equality for persons with disabilities in Bahrain, the key issue is to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by persons with disabilities and to promote respect for their inherent dignity.

34. To achieve fairness, equality and equal opportunity among all Bahrainis in general and to integrate persons with disabilities in Bahraini society, the High Commission for Disabled Affairs, working in close coordination with the Ministry of Labour and Social Development and United Nations Development Programme, took the initiative of formulating an inclusive and integrated national strategy based upon field studies and research into the situation of persons with disabilities in Bahrain.

35. The National Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities seeks to create a Bahraini society based on the principle of inclusion in which citizens with disabilities are able to exercise their rights in full in a fair and equal manner, by concentrating on the disabled themselves, their families and care-givers. By making the disabled the focus of concern, the strategy affirms that all sectors of Bahraini society, both governmental and non-governmental, are responsible for promoting the inclusion of persons with disabilities.

36. The strategy is based on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which has been ratified by the Kingdom of Bahrain. As such, the country is taking a great step forward along the path of legislative reform, seeking to integrate persons with disabilities in the community, setting out a roadmap to achieve the goals of the Convention in the coming years, raising awareness of its substance, bringing domestic legislation into line with the Convention and coordinating national efforts to implement its obligations.

37. The strategy consists of seven key themes: legislation, health and habilitation, inclusive education, economic empowerment, social empowerment (including empowerment of disabled women), ease of access to facilities and services and awareness-raising and the media.

38. In the light of the above, key services for persons with disabilities in Bahrain can be developed on the basis of the strategy, which presents a detailed and integrated national vision designed to improve the quality of life of persons with disabilities and achieve their full integration in society.

- **Legislation:** This theme focuses on fostering the legislative framework to ensure that persons with disabilities enjoy their full rights in accordance with international standards; key outputs include development of a mechanism to implement the Convention, adoption of domestic legislation compatible with the Convention and creation of a mechanism to monitor and follow-up national strategy outputs and goals.
- **Health and habilitation:** This theme covers programmes and activities designed to ensure that persons with disabilities enjoy equal health care rights and are fully covered by all health programmes. Its numerous outputs include the establishment of either a section or directorate for persons with disabilities in both the Ministry of Labour and Social Development and Ministry of Health, creation of mobile unit programmes for the disabled, funded by the Ministry of Labour and Social

Development and enhanced psychological and social support services, occupational therapy and the use of prosthetics.

- **Inclusive education:** This theme seeks to ensure the right of persons with disabilities to inclusive education and continuing educational opportunities on a basis of equality with others. It involves, inter alia, the establishment of model schools in the public sector to promote the inclusion of students with disabilities, including those with hearing impairment, and to provide support to enable persons with disabilities to access higher education.
- **Economic empowerment:** This theme involves putting in place measures to enable persons with disabilities to access vocational training and employment opportunities and includes the opening of a training and employment centre for persons with disabilities, the launch of campaigns to raise awareness of the employment of disabled persons and the introduction a loan programme for the disabled, in collaboration with the Family Bank.
- **Social empowerment and empowerment of disabled women:** This theme involves the development of policies and programmes to help integrate persons with disabilities in society. It seeks to promote individual care and specialized habilitation programmes and to encourage the participation of women with disabilities in sporting, cultural and recreational activities. It includes the launch of campaigns to raise awareness of social inclusion and development of national programmes to promote inclusivity in sport, culture and recreation.
- **Ease of access to buildings and services:** This theme involves the development of policies and legislation to facilitate access by persons with disabilities to public facilities, including transport, parks, recreational facilities, buildings and housing, as well as to assistive technology. Key outputs include the formulation of a universal design act, setting out common, universal standards for buildings, services and transport and guaranteed access to modern technology for persons with disabilities.
- **Awareness-raising and the media:** This theme includes measures designed to develop the State's media policy in order to highlight disability issues and enable media workers to deal with them effectively. It further seeks to enable persons with disabilities develop their media and communication skills and to train service providers to deal with the disabled. It includes outreach campaigns and training courses for media workers, as well as training courses for persons with disabilities in fields such as singing, drama and music.

## **Article 2**

### **Definitions**

#### **I. Persons with disabilities**

39. In Bahrain, disability is defined on the basis of Act No. 74 (2006), regulating the welfare, habilitation and employment of persons with disabilities. The Act defines a disabled person as “a person who suffers from impairment of his physical, bodily or mental capacities as a result of illness, accident, congenital cause or genetic factor resulting in a total or partial inability to work or to continue or advance in life and who needs care and habilitation in order to integrate or reintegrate in society”. The Convention offers the following definition:

“Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others”.

40. To harmonize the definition with that of the Convention, the new bill provides an updated definition of disability as: “A person suffering from long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their effective participation in society”.

## II. Communication

41. One of the goals of Bahraini policy on disability is to ensure the availability of means of communication to achieve a level playing field. Failure to provide such access may be seen as discrimination. One example of the obstacles faced by the disabled is the failure to employ sign language interpreters at public events.

## III. Sign language

42. Guarantees exist to ensure that persons with auditory impairments or visual impairments and the blind can take part in administrative and legal proceedings on a basis of equality with others. Communication with the authorities and courts is facilitated by sign language interpreters or by having documents read out or printed in Braille.

43. A recent initiative launched by the Information and e-Government Authority (the Government's digital portal) is a live sign language interpretation service designed to help persons with auditory disabilities communicate with Government bodies in order to access services.

## IV. Discrimination

44. The protection from discrimination afforded by the Constitution of the Kingdom of Bahrain with a view to achieving equality for persons with disabilities includes protection from direct discrimination, which is when the fact of having a disability results in a person being treated less favourably than another person is or might be treated, and from indirect discrimination, which is when a person is denied certain benefits because of regulations, criteria or procedures that might seem to be impartial or because of the existence of certain barriers. In relation to disability, harassment means unwanted, unwarranted or improper behaviour toward a disabled person or behaviour that targets or entails the violation of a disabled person's dignity and creates an intimidating, hostile or degrading atmosphere for him or her.

### Article 3

#### General principles

45. Domestic legislation in Bahrain is the primary instrument for entrenching, promoting and safeguarding human rights. It is also an instrument for social and institutional change, as well as for behavioural change in individuals and society. The Kingdom of Bahrain is keen to uphold human rights and give effect to the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and associated protocols.

46. The Constitution of the Kingdom of Bahrain (2002) represents the basic guarantee of the rights of all sections of society, including persons with disabilities. It guarantees the principles of citizenship, equality and equal opportunity and outlaws discrimination. Furthermore, it promotes the social role of the State in the areas of economic and social rights, while ensuring public civil and political rights and freedoms.

### Article 4

#### General obligations

47. The Kingdom of Bahrain paid considerable attention to persons with disabilities before it adopted the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, issuing legislation, laws and decisions designed to protect their rights. Thus Act No. 74 (2006), regulating the welfare, habilitation and employment of persons with disabilities, was adopted. At that time, however, the Kingdom had not ratified the Convention and so the Act was based on other sources.

48. Following ratification of the Convention in 2011, it became apparent that several pieces of legislation had to be amended to bring them into line with the obligations which ratification entailed. Accordingly, a legislative review was conducted and a development committee set up to produce a draft bill. This will certainly be more in line with the Convention and is expected to be put before the legislative bodies for adoption.

49. Bahrain was one of the States which implemented the Arab Decade for Persons with Disabilities, adopted by the League of Arab States. Decision No. 3 (2005) was subsequently issued, forming a national monitoring committee.

50. Furthermore, Bahrain acceded to Arab Labour Convention No.17 (1993), on Rehabilitation and Employment (Persons with Disabilities), pursuant to Legislative Decree No. 17 (1999).

51. Act No. 74 (2006), regulating the welfare, habilitation and employment of persons with disabilities, was written to strengthen the rights of the disabled by putting in place a more inclusive framework for care-giving in general and habilitation and employment in particular. The Act adopts a more advanced definition of disability and identifies the Government bodies responsible for the planning and implementation of welfare, habilitation and employment programmes for the disabled. These bodies are represented on the High Commission for Disabled Affairs, chaired by the Minister of Labour and Social Development.

## **Article 5**

### **Equality and non-discrimination**

52. Numerous articles in the Constitution of the Kingdom of Bahrain affirm the principle of equality and non-discrimination clearly and forthrightly. In particular,

- Article 4 stipulates: “Justice is the basis of government. Cooperation and mutual respect provide a firm bond between citizens. Freedom, equality, security, trust, knowledge, social solidarity and equality of opportunity for citizens are pillars of society guaranteed by the State.”
- Article 18 stipulates: “People are equal in respect of human dignity and citizens are equal before the law in respect of public rights and duties. There shall be no discrimination among them on the basis of sex, origin, language, religion or creed.”

53. These constitutional constants are reflected in various ministerial directives and decisions adopted to promote the right to equality and non-discrimination and in measures taken to facilitate access by persons with disabilities to their full and comprehensive rights on an equal basis with others. Examples include:

- Preventing and opposing discrimination against persons with disabilities in respect of any of their rights and imposing administrative or criminal penalties in cases of discrimination on grounds of disability;
- Prohibiting the denial of legal capacity, the right of free disposal and the right to enter into litigation or contracts save as required by law;
- Affirming the right of resort to the courts on an equal basis with others in cases of discrimination on grounds of disability in respect of any common right.

54. The prohibition of discrimination covers direct and indirect discrimination, harassment and instructions from others to discriminate.

55. In addition to the above, the Ministry of Transportation and Telecommunications is required to formulate plans for public transport, to be implemented in stages. The ministry has completed the equipping of all public transport buses with the most up-to-date technologies in line with international standards to meet the needs of disabled passengers.

56. For reasons related to the legal system, discrimination in employment is prohibited under Act No. 74 (2006), on the welfare, habilitation and employment of persons with disabilities.

57. Given modern approaches to media outreach, all programmes broadcast by the Bahrain Radio and Television Authority must respect the dignity and basic rights of persons with disabilities and contain no incitement to hatred on grounds of race, ethnicity, age, disability, religion or nationality.

58. The law gives the Minister of Justice the right to grant certain employees the capacity of law enforcement officers charged with monitoring and inspecting facilities to ensure application of the law. The law further allows the Minister of Labour and Social Development to issue a reasoned decision stopping violations in non-governmental habilitation centres, homes and institutions, which are not subject to ministerial authority. If the ministerial decision is not complied with, the law permits the offending establishment to be placed under ministerial direction for a period of three months or to have its license revoked. The offending establishment has the right of appeal to the civil courts.

## **Article 8**

### **Awareness-raising**

59. Raising awareness of and educating people about disability issues is a joint responsibility of ministries and authorities, as well as non-governmental and civil society organizations. There is no doubt that significant media efforts have been and continue to be made in Bahrain and that these have resulted in increased awareness of disability issues.

60. The audiovisual and print media agencies of the Ministry of Information Affairs play a prominent role thanks to their grasp of technology and ability to reach out to all sections of society and all cultural, intellectual and social levels. Given their influence over the public and ability to convey information, spread awareness and educate, they are able to shape public opinion and bring about change.

61. The Ministry of Information Affairs plays an important role in spreading awareness and educating the community about disability issues through its various media outlets, including radio, television and social media, as well as the Bahrain News Agency. Bahrain TV introduced on-screen sign language interpretation in 2000 and the possibility of extending the number of programmes with sign language coverage is currently being considered. Furthermore, the ministry arranges sign language training courses for programme presenters and producers with a view to achieving the maximum level of professionalism when communicating with target groups and programme guests.

62. The visual media produce numerous health education and awareness programmes to help reduce the number of road accidents, fires and accidents at work and in the home that result in disability and there is no doubt that these have had a significant impact.

63. Television and radio programmes are broadcast and articles published in the press dealing with the rights and duties of persons with disabilities. Activists and stakeholders, including physicians and specialists, are invited to appear on weekly programmes to discuss different aspects of disability. The best-known of these is a documentary programme highlighting the achievements, particularly sporting achievements, of talented and gifted persons with disabilities. Furthermore, news bulletins cover activities and events of concern to persons with disabilities.

64. Radio and television provide coverage of events marking International Day of Persons with Disabilities. Coverage includes several radio and TV talk shows, as well as news bulletins. Every possible event is highlighted with a view to providing maximum coverage of the Activities organized by governmental and non-governmental organizations and societies. Furthermore, media space is provided to enterprising film producers.

65. Between 2012 and 2014, Bahrain radio broadcast a special weekly programme for the disabled, entitled "Hand in Hand", that sought to raise awareness of all aspects of disability. The programme hosted specialists from the governmental and non-governmental sectors, who addressed the problems faced by households with a disabled member and sought to find solutions. It also highlighted the achievements of persons with disabilities. The programme's presenters were themselves visually impaired. The programme won the

gold medal in the family programmes category at the 14th Gulf Radio and Television Festival (Bahrain, March 2016).

66. In 2015, Bahrain radio launched a programme, entitled “We exist” (*Mawjoudoun*), dealing with the concept and reality of disability and the role the family can play in creating a better environment for the disabled. The 2016 Ramadhan schedule included a special evening programme on disability, highlighting the achievements of persons with disabilities and the successful experience of households with disability. The main issues addressed by the programme include:

- Learning difficulties of persons with disabilities;
- How to detect disability;
- Services offered by the Prosthetics and Orthotics Centre as part of the “World of the family” scheme;
- Rehabilitation of polio sufferers;
- Cochlear implants;
- The physician’s role in the prevention and early detection of disability;
- Habilitation of children with auditory impairment;
- The Arab Decade for Persons with Disabilities.

67. The press, too, has an important role to play, providing regular coverage and raising awareness of disability-related issues, discussing specialized topics, calling for persons with disabilities to receive their rights and tackling the problems of the disabled.

68. The important role the Ministry of Health plays in the life of a disabled child from the moment of birth must be recognized. The ministry’s health education section publishes booklets dealing with the prevention, diagnosis and habilitation/ rehabilitation of persons with disabilities. The ministry’s role is apparent in the involvement of ministry-employed physicians and specialists in interviews on television and radio and in the press, as well as lectures and forums held in educational institutions and social centres.

69. With strategic direction from the High Commission for Disabled Affairs, a coordinating subcommittee – the Public Relations and Community Awareness Committee – was formed, tasked with monitoring disability-related programmes in the media. The committee develops and implements activities and programmes to raise disability awareness, prepares booklets and ensures media coverage of activities and events organized by the high commission. It also organizes workshops to keep the media informed of disability issues.

70. In cooperation with the Ministry of Labour and Social Development and stakeholders, the High Commission for Disabled Affairs has provided the strategic direction to expand the training of media staff capable of promoting a social rights-based approach toward disability and to create a sustainable, multi-speciality staff development programme to spread awareness of this approach. The high commission also works in close collaboration with associations representing sections of the disabled community to design centralized campaigns to raise awareness of the rights of persons with disabilities and step up efforts to standardize disability-related terminology consistent with a social rights-based approach.

71. In cooperation with the Ministry of Information Affairs, Ministry of Education and the private sector, the high commission seeks to attract and train media staff from the disabled community, develop their leadership capacities and afford them the opportunity to address the economic, social, cultural and recreational issues affecting society.

72. Both the Ministry of Labour and Social Development and Ministry of Health play prominent roles in raising awareness and educating the community in disability-related issues by organizing regular conferences, workshops, forums, events and activities and preparing instructional pamphlets and booklets with a view to creating a proactive role for the disabled, allowing them to transition from the sphere of welfare to one of creativity and

innovation, change the perceived image of persons with disabilities and make the move from social exclusion to inclusion.

73. Non-governmental and private societies and organizations working in the field of disability have made great headway in enabling their staff to speak in the language of the common man and cast their ideas in a way that can be properly understood by the masses, while ensuring that the correct news is fed to the media, in line with a social rights-based view of disability and consistent with the considerable legislative efforts behind the signing of the CRPD. There are more than 18 societies and organizations working in this field in Bahrain, organizing conferences, workshops, lectures, events and activities to draw attention to disability issues and disability rights.

74. Bahrain has an excellent record regarding the inclusion of persons with disabilities in arts programmes, such as music and the theatre, and the Ministry of Labour and Social Development and civil society organizations spare no effort to organize such events. The most significant of these are the Nasser bin Hamad Award for Disabled Persons' Creativity and Khalid bin Hamad Award for Youth Theatre. Additionally, Bahrain hosted the 3rd Gulf Theatrical Festival for Persons with Disabilities. Bahrain also takes part in poetry, musical, theatrical and literary events organized by non-governmental centres and associations.

## **Article 9**

### **Accessibility**

75. The legislation on equality for persons with disabilities does not in itself make accessibility obligatory. However, by affording protection against discrimination, it contributes significantly to freeing the disabled from the barriers to equality, given that discrimination against persons with disabilities consists in the denial of access. A committee has been established to review and develop legislation in compliance with inclusive design standards with a view to formulating a bill to facilitate access to transport by persons with disabilities. This will involve putting up signs and notices, providing certain types of assistance, installing appropriate technology and information systems and designing spaces for the disabled in line with certain specifications to facilitate their use of public transport.

76. In Bahrain, the principle of unimpeded access needs to be adopted when designing and constructing public buildings, educational buildings, service organizations, event facilities, sporting venues, shopping malls, banks, places of worship, health and social facilities, clinics and pharmacies, public toilets etc.

77. On the basis of the principle of community partnership, the National Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has identified the parties responsible for implementing the theme of ease of access to buildings and services. Principally, these are the Ministry of Works, Municipality Affairs and Urban Planning, municipal councils, Ministry of Communications, Ministry of Transportation and Telecommunications, Ministry of Housing, Ministry of Labour and Social Development, Ministry of Education, High Commission for Disabled Affairs, Bahrain Society of Engineers and relevant civil society organizations.

78. In the course of implementing the national strategy, especially the part relating to facilitating access by persons with disabilities to buildings and services, the Ministry of Works, Municipality Affairs and Urban Planning chalked up a considerable number of achievements. These include the formation of a working group to assess the extent to which public facilities meet the requirements of the strategy and formulation of a plan for the phased upgrade of these facilities. The plan focuses on the following, in particular:

- Upgrade of school buildings to enable ease of access;
- Upgrade of health centres to facilitate access and delivery of services;
- Upgrade of buildings belonging to the Ministry of Justice, Islamic Affairs and Waqf (pending).

79. The Government of Bahrain has adopted the inclusive design approach, which provides for the creation of a barrier-free environment allowing equal access for all, including persons with disabilities. This means designing products and environments to be useable as far as possible from the outset by everyone instead of having to make alterations subsequently. This approach is designed to deliver more sustainable and less costly solutions that are visually compatible with existing designs. Examples of inclusive design standards are as follows:

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- Signs and diagrams giving directions
  - Entrances with automatic doors or doors conforming to inclusive design standards
  - Health facilities whose interior spaces allow wheelchairs to turn
  - Sufficient space to allow access to counters and tables
  - Stairways
  - Metal handrails
  - Workplaces
  - Ramps with correct measurements and gradients
  - Navigation maps, showing parking spaces and health facilities
  - Parking spaces allowing ease of access
  - Ramps and crossings
  - Access paths
  - Buildings without doorsteps
  - Emergency exits
  - Elevators
- 

80. The Ministry of Works, Municipality Affairs and Urban Planning has registered numerous achievements to date, especially in terms of preparing for project implementation. These include:

- Conducting a field survey of several school buildings and health centres in coordination with the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Public Health;
- Preparation of engineering drawings and technical specifications to address shortcomings in existing buildings;
- Calculation by the Cost Engineering Department of the estimated cost of work;
- Coordination with the relevant ministries to provide financial support;
- Monitoring by Buildings Maintenance Department of alterations made to school buildings and health centres.

81. As regards project implementation, numerous school buildings and health centres have undergone upgrade, including Halat Bu Mahir Health Centre in Muharriq, Bahrain Training Institute in Isa Town, a secondary school for boys in Haniniya, a preparatory school for girls in Busaiteen, the Comprehensive Disability Complex in Ali (78 per cent complete), Wadi al-Sail Primary and Preparatory School for Girls and Malikiya Primary and Preparatory School for Girls (87 per cent complete).

82. To meet the needs, rights and demands of persons with disabilities when planning and designing roads, facilitate mobility and give them the same peace of mind and security as other members of society, the roads department of the Ministry of Works, Municipality Affairs and Urban Planning took the initiative of publishing a guide to the design of residential roads that takes into account the needs of persons with disabilities. There follows a review of some of the engineering features installed at roads and pedestrian crossings to help the disabled and improve road safety:

- Designation of special parking spaces for persons with disabilities in public places, such as shopping malls;
- Installation of a dropped kerb near busy pedestrian crossings and crossroads and erection of bollards to prevent these spaces being used for parking;

- Special traffic signs for persons with disabilities;
- Adaptation of certain traffic lights for sound to enable persons with visual impairment to determine right of way at pedestrian crossings without a traffic island, such as on Government Avenue, near Manama Post Office;
- Installation of tactile indicators at pedestrian crossings to enable persons with special needs to determine right of way; these have been installed at the pedestrian crossing on Salmaniya Avenue near the Salmaniya Medical Complex;
- Installation of a new type of paving near pedestrian crossings especially for persons with special needs; these contain tactile direction indicators consisting of small, flat-top nodules, placed parallel to the road, to direct the pedestrian to the edge of the pavement where the kerb meets the road.

Work is currently underway on developing a guide to the construction of urban roads, part of which will be devoted to the requirements of persons with special needs.

83. To ensure proper implementation of right of access, Ministerial Decision No. 59 (1990) allows persons with disabilities whose vehicles display a special sticker to use disabled parking places. Able-bodied persons using these spaces are subject to a fine determined by law.

84. In the transport sector, particularly local public transport, there is a trend toward requiring those awarded public transport contracts to address the needs of persons with limited mobility and ensuring that vehicles are designed in such a way as to facilitate use by the disabled. It should be noted that all public transport buses have been equipped to meet the essential needs of persons with disabilities.

85. Working on the basis of the National Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2012–2016), the various agencies of the Government of Bahrain have developed sustainable programmes designed to raise national awareness of standards and mechanisms to facilitate access to buildings and services and commissioned engineering firms to design and construct roads and public facilities and upgrade existing buildings.

86. Bahrain TV has employed on-screen sign language interpretation since 2000 and the feasibility of extending the number of programmes covered – cost permitting – is currently being considered to make it easier for the deaf and hard of hearing to follow.

## **Article 10**

### **Right to life**

87. Everyone has the right to life. This right, however, must be translated into practice by legislation and policies to ensure its protection. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights has constitutional status in the Kingdom of Bahrain and is applied directly by the administrative authorities and courts, guaranteeing the right to life and non-discrimination between persons with disabilities and others. According to the Ministry of Justice, disabled persons enjoy the same protection as the able-bodied under the Criminal Code.

88. Article 10 of the Convention provides for the right to life of persons with disabilities and requires that all necessary measures be taken to ensure that they enjoy this right on an equal basis with others. Bahraini legislation is largely compatible with the Convention. Thus, article 5 of the Constitution stipulates: “The State guarantees the requisite social security for its citizens in old age, sickness, disability, orphanhood, widowhood or unemployment; it also provides them with social insurance and health care services and strives to safeguard them against ignorance, poverty and fear.” These assurances are designed to guarantee the right to life for vulnerable groups, particularly the disabled.

89. Chapter VIII of Legislative Decree No. 15 (1976) – the Penal Code – stipulates that the penalty for murder shall be a term of imprisonment or life imprisonment. Penalties for abortion continue to be reduced. Thus, chapter VII, part II, article 321 of the Penal Code stipulates that a woman who aborts herself without the advice and expertise of a physician shall be sentenced to a term of imprisonment of not more than six months or a fine of not more than 50 dinars.

90. Article 343 of the Code of Criminal Procedure stipulates that, if the convict is a pregnant woman in her sixth month of pregnancy sentenced to deprivation of liberty, execution of sentence may be postponed until 40 days after delivery. If it is decided to proceed with execution of sentence but it emerges during this time that she is pregnant, she shall be treated in prison as detained in custody until expiry of the period prescribed in the preceding paragraph.

91. Anxious to protect children from genetic diseases, the Government promulgated Act No. 1 (2004), on premarital medical examination for both intending spouses. The examination covers genetic and infectious diseases and other diseases to be determined by decision of the Minister of Health. Violation of the provisions of the Act by either party or officials responsible for concluding marriage contracts shall be punishable by a maximum fine of 500 dinars.

92. It should be noted that, having adopted Act No. 56 (2006), approving the accession of Bahrain to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the death sentence may not be handed down against children, given that part III, article 6 (5) of the Covenant stipulates that sentence of death shall not be handed down for crimes committed by persons under 18 years of age or carried out on pregnant women.

93. According to certain non-governmental organizations, the right to life – particularly that of the unborn child – is not sufficiently protected. They believe that it is inadmissible for article 322 of the Act to state that there shall be no penalty for procuring an abortion. These organizations believe that leniency toward abortion may lead to abortion being treated lightly, particularly if the unborn child is known to be disabled.

## **Article 11**

### **Situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies**

94. When disasters occur, relief is directed toward those in perilous circumstances who are most in need of help and the appropriate bodies take the necessary measures to protect the population. Bahrain has a civil defence system whose job is to respond to the needs of the population in such circumstances on the basis of contingency plans, which also cover the delivery of aid to persons with disabilities.

95. There is no discrimination in Bahrain between the disabled and able-bodied in situations of risk or emergency. In all cases, aid is delivered exclusively on the basis of human need.

96. In 2003, the National Disaster and Crisis Management Centre was opened, representing a qualitative leap forward in the management of major disasters, using advanced technology. With Cabinet approval a national disaster committee was formed, chaired by the head of Public Security and with the participation of representatives from those ministries responsible for disaster management under the national plan.

97. The General Directorate of Civil Defence (Ministry of Interior) requires that all sectors take full precautions, provide emergency exits and conduct evacuation drills, particularly in places where vulnerable groups, such as children, the old, the sick and the disabled are to be found.

98. The General Directorate of Civil Defence attaches great importance to awareness-raising and education in this respect, organizing training courses, workshops and lectures and publishing instructional booklets and leaflets on what to do in hazardous situations and humanitarian disasters. By way of example, the directorate's publications deal with earthquake risk, overcrowding and accidents involving children.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.gdcd.gov.bh/awareness-guidance/books>.

## **Article 12**

### **Equal recognition before the law**

99. The Constitution of the Kingdom of Bahrain (2002) is the fundamental guarantee of the rights of all sections of society, including persons with disabilities. It safeguards the principles of citizenship, equality and equal opportunity and outlaws discrimination. Furthermore, it promotes the social role of the State in the sphere of economic and social rights and ensures public civil and political rights and freedoms.

100. The National Action Charter guarantees the principle of personal freedoms and ensures equality, justice and equal opportunity among citizens. The charter requires the State to safeguard these for all citizens without discrimination as part of a general and more comprehensive principle, namely that of equality among all people in respect of human dignity.

101. According to the Ministry of Justice, Bahraini law seeks to enable persons with disabilities to participate in life without restrictions. The law stipulates that a legal guardian shall be appointed for a disabled person in cases that might result in harm to the person. In certain areas the court, too, may determine the legal capacity of the person concerned.

102. Residents of care homes, nursing homes, psychiatric institutions and facilities for the disabled exercise their rights as provided for in the internal rules of care of these facilities.

## **Article 13**

### **Access to justice**

103. As regards the right to litigate, Bahraini law applies a system of legal aid for persons with disabilities, which includes a guarantee communicate in writing or sign language. Article 52 of Act No. 7 (1986) – the law of guardianship over property – allows a disabled person to appoint a judicial assistant at his request or the request of concerned parties.

104. Bahraini law treats persons with mental disabilities as persons who lack legal capacity. Other disabled persons, however, enjoy full exercise of legal capacity. There is no law in Bahrain that denies disabled persons their full rights, save for persons advised by government bodies or the courts on the basis of official reports to lack legal capacity, in which case the judiciary may assign guardianship in accordance with the best interests of the person concerned. A disabled person may resort to the courts at any time. Furthermore, judicial bodies cooperate to provide facilities for persons with disabilities in courtrooms and police stations. Sign language courses are regularly offered to staff of the Ministry of Interior and other bodies.

105. Bahrain is in the process of strengthening legislation to protect persons with intellectual or mental disabilities from those who would seek to exploit their situation of need. Harsh penalties will be stipulated for exploiting the disabled in the exercise of their legal capacity in respect of free disposal, entering into contract or other legal procedures.

106. The recently drafted bill on the rights of persons with disabilities promotes the exercise of legal capacity by the disabled on an equal basis with other citizens with regard to freedom of disposal, acquisition of ownership, conclusion of contracts, litigation etc. The bill stipulates that technology to facilitate exercise of legal capacity must be made available in courts and Government offices, particularly means of oral and written communication and sign language interpreters. The bill explicitly recognizes the right of persons with disabilities to use sign language in courts and Government offices.

## **Article 14**

### **Liberty and security of the person**

107. The Constitution of the Kingdom of Bahrain (2002) is the fundamental guarantee of the rights of all sections of society, including persons with disabilities. It safeguards the principles of citizenship, equality and equal opportunity and outlaws discrimination.

Furthermore, it promotes the social role of the State in the sphere of economic and social rights and ensures public civil and political rights and freedoms.

108. Chapter III, article 31 of the Constitution states that the public rights and freedoms provided for in the Constitution may only be regulated or limited by or in accordance with the law and such regulation or limitation may not prejudice the essence of the right or freedom. As such, any law that restricts persons with disabilities shall be deemed unconstitutional.

109. Article 19 of the Constitution stipulates that personal freedom is guaranteed under the law and no one may be arrested, detained, imprisoned or searched, be told where to live or have his freedom of residence or movement restricted, save in accordance with the provisions of the law and under judicial supervision. No one may be detained or imprisoned in places other than those designated by law, which must provide health and social care and be subject to the supervision of the judicial authorities. Furthermore, no one may be subjected to physical or mental torture, inducement or undignified treatment.

110. The National Action Charter (2001) also safeguards the principle of personal freedoms and ensures equality, justice and equal opportunity among citizens. The charter requires the State to guarantee these for all citizens without discrimination as part of a general and more comprehensive principle, namely that of equality among people in respect of human dignity.

111. It is not permissible to deprive persons with disabilities of their right to liberty save in cases of emergency and in accordance with the internal rules of hospitals and shelters. It is a precondition that the persons concerned may represent a danger to themselves and others due to mental illness or impairment.

112. Persons with disabilities who are deprived of one or other right under the law or as a result of a particular measure must enjoy the same safeguards with respect to rights as others in their place of detention or during execution of sentence and their special needs must be met.

113. Certain non-governmental organizations believe that, despite constitutional and legal guarantees of non-discrimination, it is essential to underline the right to liberty and security of persons with disabilities by incorporating specific articles in the new act. These articles would stipulate that the disabled have the right to exercise personal freedom without limitation and may not be treated arbitrarily by those with authority over them by restriction of freedom, confinement or isolation; disability is not a reason to deprive the disabled of liberty. In addition, penalties would be imposed for depriving a person with disabilities of his freedom without justification or acting in an arbitrary manner toward him.

114. The High Commission for Disabled Affairs seeks to ensure that the freedom and security of persons with disabilities remain legislative priorities.

## **Article 15**

### **Freedom from torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment**

115. Anxious to protect the rights of citizens, including those with disabilities, the laws of Bahrain and decisions issued by the competent bodies guarantee protection from torture and inhuman treatment. Thus articles 208 and 232 of the Penal Code, promulgated pursuant to Act No. 15 (1976), state that a public servant or person entrusted with a public service who deliberately causes severe pain or grievous suffering, whether physical or mental, to a person in detention or under his control in order to obtain information or a confession from him or another person or to punish him for an act that he or another person committed or is suspected of committing or to frighten or coerce him or another person, or for any reason to do with discrimination of any kind, shall be punished. The statute of limitations does not apply in respect of crimes of torture.

116. The Ombudsman Office was created in the Ministry of Interior, pursuant to Decree No. 27 (2012), amended by Decree No. 35 (2013), to ensure that all claims of abuse are

dealt with quickly, efficiently and impartially regardless of whether or not the aggrieved party is disabled. The Ombudsman Office is a financially and administratively independent agency that exercises its powers and duties with complete autonomy. It examines complaints brought against Ministry of Interior staff said to have committed offences in the exercise of their duties and informs the competent body of its conclusions to enable the appropriate criminal and disciplinary measures to be taken in the event that the claim is upheld. It provides the complainant and defendant of a report on the steps taken and notifies them of the conclusions reached.

117. A new department – the Department of Audit and Internal Investigation – was established under the legislative decree creating the Ombudsman Office (see above). This department receives, reviews and examines complaints submitted by any party against members of the Public Security Forces for severe pain caused in the execution of their duties.

118. Pursuant to Decision No. 14 (2012), the Ministry of Interior published a code of conduct for police officers, drawn from best global practice and the General Assembly-approved Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials, published by the United Nations. The aim is to promote discipline and civilized treatment of all sections of society in the course of law enforcement and to put in place a system based on the principles of transparency, fairness, equality and accountability. One of the key aims of the code of conduct is to ensure the absolute prohibition of torture and other forms of abuse.

## **Article 16**

### **Freedom from exploitation, violence and abuse**

119. Under the Code of Criminal Procedure, persons with disabilities enjoy the same protection from exploitation, violence and abuse as the able-bodied. Given that persons with disabilities, children and the elderly are the most vulnerable to mistreatment and torture, Bahrain has accorded maximum importance to the promulgation of Act No. 17 (2015), on protection from domestic violence. Article 8 of the Act states that any person subjected to domestic violence from a member of his/her family has the right to report the incident. Furthermore, anyone who learns of a case of domestic violence in the course of his work or in a professional medical or educational capacity must notify the Public Prosecution Service or the police.

120. The Bahraini Code of Criminal Procedure lays down severe penalties in cases where the victim is a person with special needs. Thus, article 21 of Act No. 74 (2006) stipulates imprisonment or a fine for anyone responsible for caring for a person with special needs who neglects his duties. According to non-governmental organizations, however, these laws do not cover all aspects of the torture or exploitation to which the disabled may be subjected, particularly in cases of domestic or institutional neglect.

121. A complaints monitoring committee, attached to the High Commission for Disabled Affairs, has been formed to receive complaints via the ministry hotline as well as from civil society organizations and police stations. The committee coordinates with the Public Prosecution Service and Ministry of Justice to follow up these complaints.

122. The Ministry of Labour and Social Development has elaborated a set of rules and procedures to ensure that centres and institutions for the disabled treat their charges well and do not exploit them. A supervisory team acting in the capacity of judicial enforcement officers conducts regular field visits to question parents/legal guardians and staff. Furthermore, 24-hour camera surveillance has been installed and tapes must be kept for a sufficient length of time in case they need to be consulted.

123. It should be noted that the High Commission for Disabled Affairs, in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour and Social Development, is seeking to create a disability support centre with a view to offering additional assistance, increasing protection for persons with disabilities and making it easier for them to submit complaints of abuse. The centre will also provide legal and psychological support and rehabilitation therapy and will help persons with disabilities to (re)integrate in society. If needed, it will act quickly in

coordination with the Ministry of Interior to transfer persons subjected to abuse to a secure location as a temporary measure. The centre will monitor violations or curtailment of the rights of persons with disabilities and conduct educational and outreach campaigns to advise persons with disabilities of their rights and thus enable them to protect themselves from violations of their rights or violence, exploitation and abuse.

### **Article 17**

#### **Protecting the integrity of the person**

124. The position of persons with disabilities in Bahrain is the same as that of the able-bodied: such persons have the right to protection of physical health and security and to protection from torture and inhuman treatment. Article 20 of the Constitution states that there shall be no crime and no punishment save on the basis of law and only acts committed subsequent to the date on which the law that provides for them comes into effect shall be punishable. An accused person is innocent until proven guilty in a court of law, where he is assured of the right of defence at all stages of investigation and a trial in accordance with the law. It is forbidden to harm an accused person physically or mentally. The right to litigate is guaranteed under the law.

125. It is not permissible under any circumstances to conduct a medical intervention or sterilization operation without the approval of the person with disabilities (or his guardian, if the person is a minor or lacks legal capacity).

### **Article 18**

#### **Freedom of movement and nationality**

126. Article 17 of the Constitution states that Bahraini nationality shall be determined by law. A person cannot be stripped of Bahraini nationality except in the case of high treason and other cases as prescribed by law. It is forbidden to exile a citizen from Bahrain or prevent his return. This constitutional protection covers all Bahraini citizens, including those with disabilities, who enjoy the right to Bahraini nationality and the right not to be stripped of it save for the reasons set out in the Constitution.

127. As the concept of “disability” has no significance in Bahraini immigration law there is, according to the Ministry of Interior, no discrimination on grounds of disability. The same applies generally to the law granting Bahraini nationality.

128. Registration of a newborn disabled child in the register of births ensures the child’s name and nationality. The same conditions apply to a disabled child as to an able-bodied one.

### **Article 19**

#### **Living independently and being included in the community**

129. The Government of Bahrain has taken a range of measures to support persons with disabilities and enable them to live an independent life. Act No. 74 (2006), on the welfare, habilitation and employment of persons with disabilities, has promoted these rights by putting in place a more inclusive framework in terms of welfare in general and habilitation and employment in particular and identifying the government bodies responsible for planning and implementing programmes for the habilitation and employment of persons with disabilities.

130. In 2007, following promulgation of Act No. 74, the Disabled Services Centre (“You are not alone”) was opened. The centre, which is attached to the Ministry of Labour and Social Development, provides a range of welfare, habilitation and vocational services to meet the daily needs and living requirements of persons with various types of disability. These include creating jobs to match their aptitudes and abilities and coordinating with institutions, companies and organizations to offer appropriate training. Furthermore, the centre offers family advice to the disabled and their families and receives complaints,

which it seeks to resolve in an appropriate manner. The centre also provides compensatory devices for the disabled and issues identity cards.

131. Act No. 74 (2006), on the welfare, habilitation and employment of persons with disabilities, provides for a monthly disability allowance in accordance with terms and conditions issued by decision of the minister. The criteria for eligibility were set out by Decision No. 24 (2006) and amended by Act No. 40 (2010), which increased the allowance by a minimum of 100 dinars; payment of the allowance does not affect any existing disability rights or assistance.

132. As regards facilitating independent accommodation, Act No. 7 (2009) allows the disabled occupant of a housing unit to apply to the Ministry of Housing for his unit to be equipped to a standard commensurate with his disability or the disability of a family member.

133. The Ministry of Housing accords special importance to persons with disabilities and seeks to ensure that they and their families enjoy a decent standard of living. To this end, it has formulated a set of legal provisions consisting of ministerial decisions to safeguard the rights of the disabled and equality of opportunity, as well as help them obtain decent housing appropriate to the nature of their disabilities. The ministry has adopted exceptional criteria with regard to disability, whether the disabled person himself or a family member is the primary beneficiary. It takes into account the health situation of the family and takes swift action to allocate the housing needed. Article 81 of Decision No. 909 (2015), on the housing system, makes this explicit. Furthermore, the ministry provides for the disabled by designing housing units for them appropriate to the type and degree of disability of the applicant or family member. Article 6 of Decision No. 909 (2015) stipulates that, if the applicant for housing or a member of his family is disabled, the disability must be specified on the application to enable the ministry to equip the unit in a manner the housing committee deems appropriate to the type of disability. The applicant completes a form stating type of disability to enable the technical committee to design the unit in a manner appropriate to the needs of the disabled person.

134. The Central Bank of Bahrain is engaged in developing services for persons with disabilities to ensure their right to access banking and financial services on a basis of equality with others, using appropriate means of communication to ensure a suitable environment that meets their needs. Disabled customers will be able to access the full range of services offered by banks and finance companies and obtain ATM cards the same as others. Disabled bank customers will be exempt from counter withdrawal charges and monthly current and savings account charges, as well as charges imposed if the account balance falls below the minimum during the month. Services will also include special ATMs for wheelchair users, the visually impaired and the blind, employing Braille and audio software, taking into account the height of the ATM and providing space for wheelchair access.

## **Article 20**

### **Personal mobility**

135. The Government of Bahrain has made remarkable advances in the field of personal mobility and ease of access to buildings and services for persons with disabilities, beginning with the adoption of the inclusive design approach, which provides a barrier-free environment allowing equal access for all. Sustainable programmes have been designed to raise national awareness of standards and mechanisms to facilitate access to buildings and services and engineering firms have been commissioned to design and construct roads and public facilities and upgrade existing buildings.

136. The Ministry of Works, Municipality Affairs and Urban Planning, in coordination with other ministries, Government authorities and civil society organizations, was charged with conducting a comprehensive national evaluation of existing facilities in terms of ease of access by persons with disabilities and formulating an operational plan to carry out alterations in phases. The first phase, consisting of adapting and upgrading several educational buildings, facilities and institutions and health centres, has been completed and

work is underway on upgrading buildings belonging to the Ministry of Labour and Social Development and Ministry of Justice, Islamic Affairs and Waqf. From the outset, the Ministry adopted the inclusive design approach to the construction of new buildings, thereby removing the need to make alterations after completion and allowing for more sustainable and less costly solutions.

137. The Ministry of Labour and Social Development, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Health all provide support services, compensatory devices, prosthetic devices and other technologies to facilitate the mobility of persons with disabilities and help them integrate in society.

138. To safeguard the rights of passengers with disabilities, Bahrain International Airport has issued directives providing for travel assistants to accompany passengers to the aircraft cabin.

139. Under the auspices of the Ministry of Labour and Social Development and in coordination with the General Directorate of Traffic (Ministry of Interior), Bahrain Mobility International offers the following services:

- Leadership training for persons with disabilities;
- Testing applicants for a licence to drive vehicles adapted for disabled use;
- Kindergartens for children with disabilities, with support from the Ministry of Labour and Social Development (the Ministry provides 84 per cent of operating costs);
- Free physiotherapy for all persons with disabilities in the Kingdom of Bahrain, whether citizens or residents;
- The “Little Ones” Club for disabled children offers free morning and afternoon sessions, as well as summer programmes;
- Transportation for the disabled, the elderly and the sick in fully equipped buses, in coordination with the ministry and the Yousif and Aysha Almoayyad Charity;
- A free wheelchair and medical appliance repair workshop, with support from the Ministry of Labour and Social Development;
- A technical upgrade advice office, with support from the Ministry of Health and High Commission for Disabled Affairs;
- Introduction of disabled parking spaces across the country, in cooperation with the Ministry of Works, Municipality Affairs and Urban Planning; equipping parks and public places to meet the needs of persons with disabilities;
- Working in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour and Social Development to create employment opportunities for disabled jobseekers;
- A health club for persons with disabilities, with support from the Ministry of Labour and Social Development;
- Occupational therapy for persons with disabilities, with support from the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Labour and Social Development and Bahrain Commercial Facilities Company.

## **Article 21**

### **Freedom of expression and opinion, and access to information**

140. Freedom of expression and opinion is vouchsafed for all, including persons with disabilities. Thus, article 23 of the Constitution stipulates that freedom of opinion and scientific research is guaranteed. Everyone has the right to express his or her opinion and publish it by word of mouth, in writing or otherwise under terms and conditions laid down by law, provided that nothing is done to infringe the fundamental beliefs of Islamic doctrine, undermine national unity or stir up discord and sectarianism.

141. Furthermore, article 27 of the Constitution stipulates that the freedom to form national associations and unions for lawful objectives and by peaceful means is guaranteed under terms and conditions laid down by law, provided that the fundamentals of the faith and public order are not infringed. No one can be forced to join an association or union or to continue as a member.

142. This right is affirmed in legislation stipulating that Government funding will be available for the means of communication chosen by persons with disabilities and the technology to ensure their right to communicate with others, express themselves and access information in the public domain.

143. The High Commission for Disabled Affairs has gone to great lengths to ensure that legislation exists to allow persons with disabilities to conduct official business using sign language, Braille and alternative or new technologies, such as the internet. The legislation requires internet service providers to deliver services in accessible and usable formats for persons with disabilities.

## **Article 22**

### **Respect for privacy**

144. Although privacy is assured to all without discrimination under the Constitution and national law, the bill on the rights of persons with disabilities should emphasize the right of persons with disabilities to privacy and should outlaw any arbitrary interference with their privacy, personal data, medical or habilitation reports.

145. The regulations and instructions for disability support workers stress that data must be protected and handled with great sensitivity. The social development sector operates a well-developed network designed to hold the data of persons with disabilities, ensure availability of information on any particular case and provide effective and confidential assistance, while guaranteeing respect for privacy.

146. The rules and regulations of the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Labour and Social Development and other Government bodies concerning persons with disabilities emphasize that harsh penalties will be imposed for failing to respect privacy and disclosing confidential data without good reason.

## **Article 23**

### **Respect for home and the family**

147. The difficulties facing disabled women cannot be ignored and include stereotype images of the married disabled woman, who is assumed to be unable to care for her children and home. In seeking to correct these ideas and raise awareness of methods of examination and early detection, the Government has taken a number of strategic measures to improve services for disabled women, principally by enabling young disabled women to exercise their right to marry and create a family. Measures include various awareness-raising courses offered by the Ministry of Health, Supreme Council for Women, Ministry of Information Affairs and Ministry of Labour and Social Development family guidance offices.

148. The most significant of these have been a series of programmes organized by the Supreme Council for Women on domestic compatibility skills for intending spouses and outreach programmes targeting more than 4,000 secondary school and university students of both sexes. Family guidance offices do their best to change the mistaken ideas and stereotype images that cling to the issue of disabled marriage.

149. Through the range of activities and programmes it offers, the Ministry of Labour and Social Development underlines that the main function of its own centres and non-governmental centres working in the field of disability is to support parents who are raising and looking after disabled children.

150. The Ministry of Labour and Social Development's family guidance offices and disability centres provide advice and assistance on resolving domestic problems and decision-making, while promoting up-to-date methods of child-raising to help parents deal with their disabled children in line with modern pedagogical approaches.

## **Article 24** **Education**

151. Education in Bahrain is governed by a legislative framework and the 2002 Constitution represents the basic frame of reference for the right to compulsory education. Article 7 of the Constitution highlights the principle of guaranteed education for all citizens, while article 4 affirms the principle of equal opportunity among citizens and articles 4 and 18 assert the principle of equality among citizens.

152. To make the Constitutional stipulation a reality, Act No. 27 (2005) – the Education Act – was promulgated on 15 August 2005. Building upon actual achievements, such as the right to free, compulsory education, the Act addresses future developments in teaching, learning, training and continuing education, including the nurturing of talent and programmes for students with disabilities. Article 5 provides for diversity of education commensurate with the different needs of students, focusing on monitoring the progress of slow learners and persons with disabilities and the inclusion in mainstream education of those who are able.

153. Further to the Ministry of Education's concern with students with disabilities and its desire to improve administrative efficiency in line with its vision, goals and future development, Decree No. 53 (2005), promulgated on 15 August 2005, on the organizational structure of the ministry, and Decree No. 29 (2006), promulgated on 8 April 2006, affirmed the reorganization of the ministry and creation of a new directorate – the Directorate of Special Education – from a former section in the Directorate of Primary Education. This has ensured a progressive set of job descriptions with clearly defined roles, functions and responsibilities across the ministry. Furthermore, the ministry has taken measures to integrate disabled students in the Government school system, recruiting qualified specialists to supervise and monitor on a daily basis those schools which apply the programme and facilitating their work by ensuring coordination between the Directorate of Special Education and the schools.

154. Special needs education in Bahrain is a shared responsibility, undertaken by the Ministry of Education in the form of an inclusive education programme. The ministry guarantees all citizens an education and does its utmost to care for the disabled and integrate those who are able within the Government school system, in line with modern trends in education which call for persons with disabilities to be integrated rather than shut away in special institutions and centres. Ministry of Labour and Social Development habilitation centres and the habilitation centres attached to non-governmental and civil society organizations, such as Bahrain Mobility International, the Saudi-Bahraini Institute for the Blind and Sadaqa Society for the Blind, also apply the system of inclusion.

155. The following statistics show the number of students with disabilities (male and female) benefiting from educational programmes in Bahrain in 2016:

<i>No.</i>	<i>Educational body</i>	<i>2016</i>
1	Children enrolled in Government schools (Ministry of Education)	-
2	Students enrolled in habilitation centres for the disabled	420
3	Beneficiaries from non-governmental habilitation centres for the disabled	1 047
4	Beneficiaries from private habilitation centres for the disabled	435

156. The number of pupils included in Government schools varies according to type of disability. The following Ministry of Education statistics for school year 2016/2017 show that a large number of disabled pupils are integrated in the regular curriculum:



educational institutions and the extent to which these provide a disabled-friendly environment. Accordingly, a number of institutions have been upgraded to ensure ease of access and greater safety of movement and an operational plan has been developed to modify the remaining buildings.

159. The number of specialists in mental disability and autism and special education teachers working in integration programmes in Government schools currently stands at 540, all of whom have bachelor's degrees in psychology and higher diplomas or master's degrees in special education. Teachers working with other groups of the disabled have been trained and qualified in-service through workshops, intensive training courses and seminars designed to help them adopt strategies for dealing with students with sensory and physical disabilities.

160. Article 3 of Act No. 74 (2006), on the welfare, habilitation and employment of persons with disabilities, affirms that the Ministry of Education and other stakeholders, acting in coordination with the Ministry of Labour and Social Development, shall provide organized and integrated medical, social, educational, cultural, sporting, habilitation, employment, communication, housing and other services for those with disabilities on a regular basis.

161. Article 10 of the same act stipulates that habilitation centres and institutions will award each disabled person who has undergone habilitation a certificate showing the job or type of work he can now perform, as well as other information to be determined by decision of the Minister.

162. As regards access to life-long education, the Ministry of Education has introduced a strategic initiative, allocating scholarships in various specializations to persons with disabilities at the University of Bahrain and private universities.

## **Article 25**

### **Health**

163. The Ministry of Health seeks to apply article 8 of the Constitution, which stipulates that every citizen is entitled to health care. The State is responsible for public health and provides preventive care and treatment through a number of hospitals and health-care institutions. Individuals and bodies may establish private hospitals, clinics or treatment centres under the supervision of the State and in accordance with the law.

164. To achieve this goal, the Ministry of Health has adopted a clear vision that involves working in partnership with stakeholders to improve the health of the population of Bahrain and ensure that everyone has access to a high quality health service responsive to their needs throughout their lifetime. Primary health care in Bahrain consists of a number of elements, including a country-wide network of health centres where physicians, community health nurses, specialists and social workers provide family medicine services, as well as preventive care and treatment.

165. A number of Ministry of Health agencies are responsible for providing health care for persons with disabilities. Services include primary, secondary and tertiary care, as well as public health programmes and customer service. The disabled person or his family is referred to a primary health care or treatment programme at one of 28 centres across the country. Other services include pre- and post-delivery mother and child care, regular check-ups for children, vaccination programmes, family planning, premarital medical examination, ultrasound, dental treatment, diabetes treatment and geriatric care.

166. Disability can be detected at the primary health care stage, whereupon the individual may be referred to a secondary care programme at one of several public hospitals, the largest of which is the Salmaniya Medical Complex, a multi-service facility that also provides emergency and tertiary medical services. Disabled citizens may need tertiary care in a specialist hospital abroad if a chronic condition cannot be treated in a hospital in Bahrain.

167. Through ongoing coordination between primary and secondary health care providers, the Ministry of Health seeks to deliver integrated health services for persons with disabilities. Services include home-based counselling and support, public health programmes, human resource development and disability training for health workers.

168. The Ministry of Health has adopted a number of early detection programmes, including:

- Ultrasound testing of pregnant mother and medical counselling in the event of congenital deformities and syndromes, such as Down syndrome;
- Medical examination of newborn children;
- Regular examination from birth of all children to ensure early detection of sensory, auditory, visual, physical and mental impairment;
- Full range of therapeutic services in cases of serious or chronic illness;
- Postnatal examination of the mother to ensure early detection of depression or mental disorders;
- Expanded immunization programme, covering children, pregnant women, the elderly and sickle cell anaemia sufferers;
- Immunization of children with auditory impairment and cochlear implants against pneumococcus and haemophilus.

169. A disability assessment committee, consisting of representatives of the Ministry of Labour and Social Development, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, High Commission for Disabled Affairs, Arabian Gulf University and University of Bahrain was formed pursuant to Cabinet Decision No. 50 (2010) with a view to improving the mechanisms for studying medical, educational, psychological and rehabilitation reports on cases of disability in a regular and systematic manner, preparing technical reports, standardizing psychological assessment tests, coordinating with the Ministry of Health to make early diagnosis of type and degree of medical disability and coordinating with the Ministry of Education to conduct pedagogical, behavioural and psychological assessments with a view to promoting integration of students with disabilities in Government schools.

170. The strategic vision for health requires the Ministry of Health to work in partnership with stakeholders to improve the health of the Bahraini population and ensure that everyone has access to a high quality health service responsive to their needs throughout their lifetime. Under the theme of “Health Services without Walls – a Community Partnership for Health”, the ministry focuses on delivering basic health services to the entire Bahraini population, citizens and residents, at affordable cost and making efficient use of emergency services, outpatient clinics, primary health care services, home care, geriatric care and mental health programmes, while affirming the importance of community partnership.

171. Mobile units from non-governmental relief agencies, such as Bahrain Mobility International, Bahraini Society for Mental Retardation and Bahrain Association for Parents and Friends of the Disabled, deliver home health care and rehabilitation services, physiotherapy, occupational therapy and support services, including domestic skills training, under the supervision and with the support of the Ministry of Labour and Social Development.

172. The following table shows Ministry of Health services for persons with disabilities by type of disability:

<i>Type of disability</i>	<i>Services provided</i>
Physical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health programme for cerebral palsy sufferers, including essential tests (EEG, MRI and CT scan), physiotherapy, speech therapy, vocational therapy, hearing and vision tests; surgical intervention, including crown lengthening;</li> <li>• The Prosthetics and Orthotics Centre</li> </ul>

<i>Type of disability</i>	<i>Services provided</i>
	<p>provides and fits rehabilitation devices in cases of fracture and paralysis;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health programme for hydrocephalus sufferers, including early detection involving prenatal testing of the mother (ultrasound, MRI), early brain and nerve surgery, physiotherapy and vocational therapy;</li> <li>• Health programme for persons with nervous and muscular disorders, including EMG test and physiotherapy; surgical intervention to straighten the spine;</li> <li>• Cranial, spinal and muscle surgery;</li> <li>• Botox injections to reduce muscle spasms;</li> <li>• Oral hygiene programme and dental treatment; cases requiring full anaesthetic are transferred to Salmaniya Medical Complex;</li> <li>• Community health nursing services, including home visits;</li> <li>• Prosthetics;</li> <li>• Physiotherapy;</li> <li>• Vocational therapy.</li> </ul>
Mental and psychological	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Psychiatric unit programme, applying international psychological and behavioural therapy protocols to ensure early detection and intervention in cases of autism and mental impairment;</li> <li>• Psychological tests to evaluate mental impairment and autism;</li> <li>• Day case admission to psychiatric unit for evaluation and behavioural therapy;</li> <li>• Social service and family guidance programmes provided by Social Services Directorate;</li> <li>• Admission to psychiatric unit on temporary basis.</li> </ul>
Visual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ophthalmoscopy;</li> <li>• Intraocular pressure measurement;</li> <li>• Range of vision measurement;</li> <li>• Habilitation of persons with sight problems and visual impairment; eye testing.</li> </ul>

173. There are 35 Ministry of Health-approved diagnostic centres, of which 28 are primary health care centres.

174. In addition to the country-wide network of diagnostic centres, there are four mobile units: mental impairment unit, social services unit, adult mental health unit and geriatric unit. These make home visits and provide services for the disabled, including case evaluation, medication, health education and psychological education. They also compile medical reports, conduct case studies and provide other relevant services.

175. Some 1,883 residents of all nationalities across the country benefited from Ministry of Health services in 2015. This figure covers all types of disability, as shown in the following table:

<i>Nationality</i>	<i>Bahraini</i>		<i>Non-Bahraini</i>		<i>Total</i>
	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	
<i>Age</i>					<i>Total</i>
<b>Psychological and mental disabilities</b>					
0–3	31	57	11	12	111
4–6	9	48	5	5	67
7–18	25	45	5	6	81
18+	101	190	25	28	344
Subtotal	166	340	46	51	603
<b>Auditory disabilities</b>					
0–3	3	7	3	2	15
4–6	9	11	1	2	23
7–18	39	28	3	1	71
18+	161	159	20	26	366
Subtotal	212	205	27	31	475
<b>Visual disabilities</b>					
0–3	1	1	0	1	3
4–6	5	2	0	1	8
7–18	17	14	2	3	36
18+	55	61	8	13	137
Subtotal	78	78	10	18	184
<b>Motor disabilities</b>					
0–3	48	33	15	17	113
4–6	5	12	2	2	21
7–18	30	44	4	6	84
18+	193	150	30	30	403
Subtotal	276	239	51	55	621
<b>Total</b>	<b>732</b>	<b>862</b>	<b>134</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>1 883</b>

## **Article 26**

### **Habilitation and rehabilitation**

176. Pursuant to the admirable goal of providing proper care and training for citizens with disabilities to enable them to participate in building modern Bahraini society, the Government of the Kingdom of Bahrain is keen for various types of rehabilitation to be available. At the medical level, this involves ensuring the success of hospital treatment and mitigating the effects of accidents; at the vocational level, it involves enabling the person to do his job; and at the social level, it involves facilitating his private life and integrating him in society.

177. Accident insurance is designed to help an injured person avoid the harmful effects of an accident at work or, at least, improve his chance of recovery and prevent the effects of the accident from worsening. Persons with disabilities must be in a position where they can perform their former work or carry out the duties of a new job.

178. The Ministry of Labour and Social Development, has charged the Directorate of Social Habilitation with delivering basic services designed to develop the capacities of persons with mental and auditory disabilities on a scientific basis with a view to integrating

them in the community. The directorate, through the social habilitation centres and homes it operates, plays an important role in caring for the disabled, ensuring that they have access to services and guaranteeing their legitimate rights.

179. These centres provide a range of welfare, habilitation, educational and residential services to meet the daily needs and living requirements of persons with all types of disabilities. Services include creating jobs to match their aptitudes and abilities, providing appropriate training and offering advice to the disabled and their families. Centres also receive complaints, which they seek to resolve in an appropriate manner. They also provide compensatory devices for the disabled and issue identity cards.

<i>Habilitation centres and homes attached to the Ministry of Labour and Social Development</i>	<i>No. of beneficiaries (2016)</i>		
	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Total</i>
Academic and Vocational Rehabilitation Centre	70	67	137
Bank of Bahrain and Kuwait Rehabilitation Centre	40	22	66
Shaikhhan al-Farsi Centre for Total Communication	26	24	50
National Bank of Bahrain Rehabilitation Home for Disabled Children	75	58	133
Disabled Child Day Care Centre	9	15	24
Matrouk Rehabilitation Centre	31	17	48
Disabled Services Centre	991	467	1 458
<b>Total</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>249</b>

<i>No.</i>	<i>Service</i>	<i>Beneficiaries</i>	
		<i>2015</i>	<i>2016</i>
1	Compensatory devices for the disabled	98 devices	121 devices
2	Identity cards for the disabled	606 cards	631 cards
3	Disability allowance	10 325 beneficiaries	10 713 beneficiaries

180. In addition to the above, the Directorate of Social Habilitation cooperates with non-governmental organizations working in the field of disability with regard to the grants and technical supervision programme, which the ministry makes available to these organizations to advance the principle of community partnership. The programme seeks to widen the range of habilitation services offered to the disabled, ensure they enjoy their educational, training and employment rights in full and modify the environment to make it more closely suited to their capacities and needs.

Non-governmental habilitation centres working in the field of disability include:

1. Hope Institute for Special Education;
2. Hope Centre for Early Care;
3. Mobility International Kindergarten;
4. Friendship for the Blind Kindergarten;
5. Al-Wafa Centre for Intellectual Disability;
6. Al-Wafa Centre for Autism;
7. Al-Rashad Centre;
8. Al-Rahma Youth Care Centre;
9. Prince Sultan Centre for Hearing and Speech Development;
10. Down Syndrome Care Centre;
11. Alia Early Intervention Centre;

12. Hidd Special Needs Rehabilitation Centre;
13. The Particular Educational Service Centre for Children – “Tafaol”;
14. Bahrain Mobility International;
15. Agricultural Centre for Vocational Training;
16. Childcare Centre for Cerebral Palsy.

## **Article 27**

### **Work and employment**

181. The Ministry of Labour and Social Development is responsible for providing jobs for Bahrainis of both sexes. To this end, it has created departments and sections dealing with work and labour issues and formulated plans and programmes to raise the capacities and efficiency of Bahraini workers to enable them to participate effectively in social development planning. The Ministry seeks to roll out welfare and social rehabilitation for the section of the population which needs these services and has developed a range of programmes to improve the living standards of needy families by providing opportunities for self-employment to guarantee them a decent living.

182. Bahrain’s labour law standards, which are generally held to be high, ensure that persons with disabilities enjoy appropriate employment conditions. Indeed, everything provided under labour market policy (including opportunities for self-employment) is open to persons with disabilities. These provisions are supplemented by specific measures targeting certain sections of the disabled, such as the Danaat project. This is a project designed to support and nurture small-scale projects run by persons with disabilities and involves setting up stalls in parks and popular recreation areas across the country.

183. The concern with the employment of persons with disabilities is not a recent phenomenon. Bahrain acceded to Arab Labour Convention No.17 (1993), on Rehabilitation and Employment (Persons with Disabilities), pursuant to Legislative Decree No. 17 (1999).

184. Act No. 74 (2006), regulating the welfare, habilitation and employment of persons with disabilities, has strengthened the rights of the disabled by putting in place a more inclusive framework for care-giving in general and habilitation and employment in particular. The Act adopts a more advanced definition of disability and identifies the Government bodies responsible for the planning and implementation of welfare, habilitation and employment programmes for the disabled. These bodies are represented on the High Commission for Disabled Affairs, chaired by the Minister of Labour and Social Development.

185. The Act grants the Minister of Labour and Social Development the right to issue a decision prioritizing the employment of persons with disabilities in public sector jobs. It allocates 2 per cent of jobs in non-governmental sector establishments employing 50 persons or more to the disabled and allows a disabled worker to be counted as two Bahraini workers under the local labour quota in non-governmental establishments.

186. The Act allows the quota of disabled workers to be met from outside Ministry of Labour and Social Development nominations, provided that the system of registering disabled workers in non-governmental sector establishments is adhered to and that the type of work matches the jobs for which they have been trained, as stated on the certificate of habilitation. The law exempts holders of a habilitation certificate from the physical fitness conditions of employment, commensurate with the level of disability stated on the certificate; it also exempts them from sitting the job examination. Furthermore, it requires an employee incapacitated in the course of his work to be re-employed at the same wage in the same facility and in a job commensurate with his disability, without prejudice to the compensation for the injury to which he is entitled.

187. As regards the pension and social insurance fund, the law devotes special attention to the pension rights of persons with disabilities and, exceptionally, grants a pension to those who are not covered by the laws on civil and military pensions and gratuities and

social insurance. It entitles persons with disabilities to an exceptional pension after an average term of service of 15 years for men and 10 for women. The pension is calculated on the basis of length of service or 15 years, whichever is the greater.

188. The Act discriminates positively in favour of working women with disabilities, entitling them to an exceptional pension and acknowledging their right to special paid leave commensurate with type of disability.

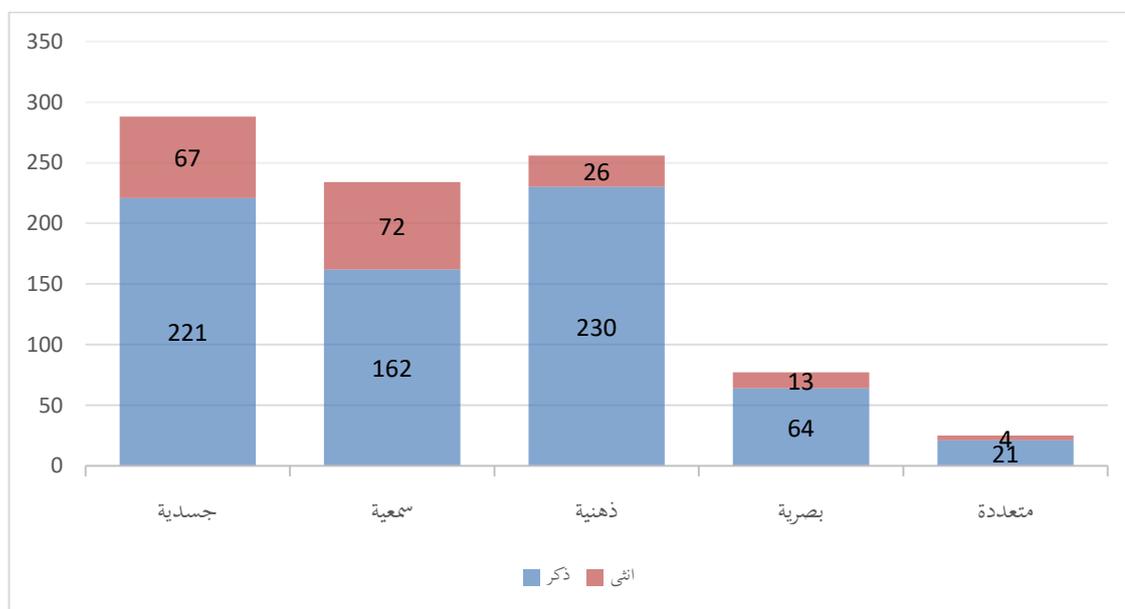
189. The Act imposes a custodial sentence and fine for violation of legally-guaranteed employment rights. It also imposes a custodial sentence and fine on the individual responsible for the welfare of a person with disabilities, if he neglects his duties or fails to perform them properly. A more severe penalty is imposed if such neglect results in the death of the person with disabilities.

190. In 2007, Bahrain achieved a breakthrough by establishing a training and employment centre for persons with disabilities – the Disabled Services Centre (“You are not alone”). The centre, which is attached to the Ministry of Labour and Social Development, provides a range of welfare, habilitation and vocational services to meet the daily needs and living requirements of persons with various types of disability, including creating jobs to match their aptitudes and abilities and providing them with appropriate training. The centre also supplies compensatory devices to help the disabled at work.

191. Disabled Services Centre statistics show that 867 persons with various types of disability were registered with the Centre as in various types of employment at the end of 2016.

#### No. of persons in employment as at the end of 2016

Disability	Physical	Auditory	Mental	Visual	Multiple	Total
Male	221	162	230	64	21	698
Female	67	72	26	13	4	182
<b>Total</b>	<b>288</b>	<b>234</b>	<b>256</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>880</b>



#### Article 28

##### Adequate standard of living and social protection

192. Bahrain Economic Vision 2030 and the National Economic Strategy are the two driving forces behind the country's course of direction. Bahrain seeks to enable all sections

of society, including those with disabilities, to play an active role in the development process and raise the standard of living through advanced training and habilitation programmes. This affirms a key goal of the 2030 vision, which is to more than double the income of Bahraini households in real terms by 2030. The vision is based on three fundamental and interlocking principles, namely sustainability, competitiveness and fairness. The Government also seeks to boost the economy and fight poverty. As such, it has taken a number of measures to help persons with disabilities by delivering long-term support and social welfare services. The Social Security Act, No. 18 (2006) stipulates the type of social security and financial or in-kind support to be provided to low-income individuals and households. Among the groups entitled to such support and mentioned in the Act are persons with disabilities, given the likely impact of disability on their social and material situation.

193. Article 7 of Act No. 74 (2006) stipulates that the disabled are to receive a monthly allowance in accordance with terms and conditions to be determined by ministerial decree. The criteria for eligibility are set out by Decision No. 24 (2006), as amended by Act No. 40 (2010), which increased the allowance by a minimum of 100 dinars; payment of the allowance does not affect existing disability rights or assistance.

194. With a view to facilitating access, article 8 of Act No. 74 (2006) exempts rehabilitation, medical, educational, technical and compensatory devices and appliances essential to persons with disabilities from all charges and taxes. Article 8 was subsequently amended to include among the exemptions private vehicles adapted for use by persons with disabilities or those acting on their behalf.

195. The law devotes special attention to the pension rights of persons with disabilities and, exceptionally, grants a pension to those who are not covered by the laws on civil and military pensions and gratuities and social insurance. It entitles persons with disabilities to an exceptional pension after an average term of service of 15 years for men and 10 for women. The pension is calculated on the basis of length of service or 15 years, whichever is the greater, without prejudice to the stipulated monthly allowance.

196. The Disabled Services Centre attached to the Ministry of Labour and Social Development issues the “disability identity card”, enabling holders to access facilities and obtain discounts on a number of goods and services at ministries and organizations across the country.

## **Article 29**

### **Participation in political and public life**

197. The Constitution of the Kingdom of Bahrain guarantees that persons with disabilities can exercise their political rights, which are guaranteed equally to all, on a basis of equality with others, including the right to vote and stand as candidates in parliamentary elections. To ensure that this right can be readily exercised by persons with disabilities, the legislation regulating the exercise of political rights has been strengthened by introduction of the following measures:

- Simplification of nomination and voting procedures, making them easy to understand and readily accessible to persons with disabilities; making use of assistive technology as much as possible and ensuring the suitability of facilities by removing physical barriers to access;
- Ensuring the right of persons with disabilities to use sign language and Braille;
- Ensuring the right of persons with disabilities to vote by secret ballot on a basis of equality with others;
- Providing assistants and readers during the nomination and voting processes;
- Ensuring the right of persons with disabilities to be appointed to public office on a basis of equality with others;
- Ensuring their performance of all public duties;

- Ensuring the right of persons with disabilities to form unions, non-governmental rights-based and political organizations and federations to represent them at local and international level.

198. The concern of the Government of Bahrain to involve persons with disabilities in decision-making is evident from the composition of the Consultative Council, where Ms. Munira bin Hindi continues to campaign to keep disability issues on the list of State priorities to demonstrate that persons with disabilities are part of Bahraini society and that any member of society – including those with disabilities – can be nominated to stand in parliamentary and municipal elections.

199. Act No. 21 (1989), addresses the issue of associations, social and cultural clubs and private organizations working in the field of youth and sports. Bahrain currently has 16 non-governmental organizations working with disability, most of which have been established recently (10 established since 2000). They are concerned with all types of auditory, visual, motor and intellectual impairment.

200. This right is affirmed in legislation providing Government funding for the means of communication chosen by persons with disabilities and for technology to ensure their right to communicate with others, express themselves and access information in the public domain.

201. The Government seeks to help persons with disabilities conduct official business using sign language, Braille and alternative or new technologies, such as the internet. Internet service providers are required to deliver services in accessible and usable formats for persons with disabilities. This also applies to banks, hotels, Government agencies and key institutions.

202. The Government seeks to facilitate the participation of persons with special needs in political and public life by ensuring their representation at all levels in parliamentary and local councils. Article 23 of Legislative Decree No. 14 (2002), on the exercise of political rights, stipulates that an illiterate, blind or special needs voter who cannot make his choice on the referendum or ballot paper by himself may express his choice orally. The chairperson of the electoral committee, in the presence of a committee member, shall confirm the voter's choice on a special card and place it in the ballot box.

## **Article 30**

### **Participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport**

203. The Constitution of the Kingdom of Bahrain strives to promote equality between everyone in respect of rights, without discrimination. As such, State agencies are anxious to promote the right of persons with disabilities to participate in cultural life and interact with the community by:

- Facilitating the enjoyment by persons with disabilities of cultural materials in accessible formats; making communications technology available;
- Facilitating the enjoyment by persons with disabilities of television programmes and news broadcasts in accessible formats; greater use of sign language in the media;
- Facilitating access by persons with disabilities to exhibitions and cultural spaces, such as theatres, cinemas and libraries;
- Using technology to enable persons with disabilities to benefit from cultural materials and the media, participate in cultural events and interact with the community;
- Providing opportunities for persons with disabilities to use their creative capacities to enrich society;
- Recognizing the cultural and linguistic identity of persons with disabilities and their right to use their own form of communication, particularly in Government offices and public places;

- Encouraging and promoting the participation of persons with disabilities in sporting and recreational events at all levels and providing assistive devices to help them take part in sports;
- Providing opportunities to organize and develop sporting and recreational activities for the disabled and widen the base of their sporting activities;
- Facilitating access to and use of sporting and recreational facilities by persons with disabilities, as far as possible;
- Providing opportunities for children with disabilities to participate with other children in sporting and recreational activities, including games played at school;
- Establishing a disabled sports federation;
- Allocating a special budget to enable persons with disabilities to take part in international competitions.

204. Through the Activities of its various institutions, Bahrain seeks to highlight the creative capacities of persons with disabilities in music, art, literature and sport in the belief that supporting the creativity of this section of society will facilitate their integration in society. Government bodies, especially the Ministry of Labour and Social Development, encourage the efforts of habilitation centres across the country to attract as large a number as possible of persons with special needs and organize workshops on literature, painting and drawing, in cooperation with experts and specialists. Numerous events have been launched in Bahrain to encourage the participation of persons with special needs in cultural, sporting and artistic life.

205. The Nasser bin Hamad Award for Disabled Persons' Creativity, launched in 2012, is one of the main events organized by Ministry of Labour and Social Development to encourage the participation of persons with disabilities in artistic and cultural life. The award highlights Bahrain's interest in the creative abilities of persons with special needs and seeks to foster the spirit of competition and promote an intellectually, artistic and scientifically stimulating environment. Furthermore, the award aims to encourage specialists and stakeholders to cultivate the capacities of persons with disabilities by contributing to their welfare, habilitation and academic attainment. It honours the creativity and innovation of persons with disabilities and highlights their achievements in the media. The award covers a number of fields, including science, especially creative and innovative technologies designed to help persons with disabilities; culture, covering literature, music, theatre and fine arts; sports, whether as player, referee, trainer or administrator; and pioneering organizations in the care and habilitation of persons with disabilities.

206. Bahrain is a participant in the Gulf Theatre Festival for Persons with Disabilities, established pursuant to a decision of the Council of Ministers of Social Affairs of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC) in an attempt to help empower and integrate the disabled by developing their artistic and theatrical talents. The festival seeks to promote the self-confidence of persons with disabilities and nurture their gifts and abilities. It provides opportunities for self-expression through the arts, particularly the theatre, and allows persons with disabilities to talk about their feelings and attitudes, as well as community issues. It also helps to foster self-empowerment and social inclusion, promote a positive view of the disabled among members of society and change prevailing negative perceptions. In 2013, Bahrain hosted the week-long 3rd Gulf Theatre Festival for Persons with Disabilities, in partnership with the GCC countries and the Republic of Yemen, during which a number of theatrical performances involving persons with disabilities were staged. The first festival was held in Qatar in 2009 and the second in the United Arab Emirates in 2011. The Kingdom of Bahrain achieved outstanding success at the festival with "When the rain smiles", which won best play, best scenography and best acting company.

207. To further encourage persons with disabilities to become involved in sports, the Bahrain Disabled Sports Federation was established in 1987, subsequently changing its name to the Bahrain Sports Federation for Disabilities to bring it more into line with approved international terminology. The federation seeks to nurture and develop persons with disabilities in sports, enable them to engage in sports that match their physical

capacities and take part in championships and competitions at local, Gulf, Arab and international level. The federation's noble goal is to give the disabled the chance to integrate in society. Some 1,000 disabled sportsmen and sportswomen, as well as members of their families, have benefited from federation programmes. The federation's primary focus is on football, athletics, table tennis, wheelchair basketball, wheelchair racing and bowling. It attracted some 188 new members in 2016 with a programme designed to attract new talent. It also cooperates closely with the Ministry of Education to discover gifted boys and girls. The federation has introduced new sports approved by the International Olympic Committee, including sitting volleyball, badminton, cycling and swimming. Furthermore, the federation takes part in many national, regional and international championships and tournaments and a large number of prizes have been won during the last three years, including 96 medals in 2014-2016, of which 33 were gold.

## (D) Children, girls and women with disabilities

### Article 6

#### Women with disabilities

208. Bahrain has chalked up a number of legislative and legal achievements to help bring stability to Bahraini households. The Supreme Council for Women and Ministry of Labour and Social Development have played a prominent role in this regard by proposing amendments to existing legislation relating to women, commenting on bills, draft regulations and decisions and recommending the bills and regulations needed to advance the position of women, including women with disabilities.

209. The Constitution of the Kingdom of Bahrain is the main inspiration for persons with disabilities, guaranteeing equal rights for all members of society without discrimination on grounds of disability or gender. Article 5 affirms that the State guarantees to reconcile the duties of women to their families with their work in society and equality with men in the political, social, cultural and economic spheres without offending Islamic sharia law.

210. The Supreme Council for Women was established pursuant to Royal Order No. 44 (2001) with the aim of empowering women to play their part in public life and contribute to sustainable development without being subject to discrimination.

211. Act No. 74 (2006), on the welfare, habilitation and employment of persons with disabilities, has contributed to improved social opportunities for the disabled. The Act devotes special attention to the pension rights of persons with disabilities and, exceptionally, grants a pension to those who are not covered by the laws on civil and military pensions and gratuities and social insurance. It entitles persons with disabilities to an exceptional pension after an average term of service of 15 years for men and 10 for women. The pension is calculated on the basis of length of service or 15 years, whichever is the greater, without prejudice to the stipulated monthly allowance. The Act discriminates positively in favour of disabled working women, entitling them to an exceptional pension and acknowledging their right to special paid leave commensurate with type of disability.

212. The concern of the Government to promote the participation of women with disabilities in society is evident from the appointments to the Consultative Council, where Ms. Munira bin Hindi continues to campaign to keep disability issues on the list of State priorities to demonstrate that women with disabilities are part of Bahraini society.

213. Women with disabilities enter the labour market and occupy various jobs in all areas. Statistics from the Disabled Services Centre show that 158 girls with disabilities were employed in private sector companies and establishments in 2016, as follows:

#### No. of females employed in the private sector in 2016

<i>Disability</i>	<i>Physical</i>	<i>Auditory</i>	<i>Mental</i>	<i>Visual</i>	<i>Multiple</i>	<i>Total</i>
Number	67	72	26	13	4	182

214. Women with disabilities can face many challenges. These have been prioritized in the National Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities under the theme of social empowerment, which includes the empowerment of disabled women. The main difficulties concern availability of transport to and from work and the need for housing, which is usually linked to being married; thus a woman with disabilities will tend to stay in her brother's house after the death of the parents. Another difficulty is the stereotype image of the married disabled woman, assumed to be incapable of caring for her children and home.

215. The Government has taken a number of strategic measures designed to improve services for disabled women, principally by encouraging young disabled women to marry and create a family. This has taken the form of a range of awareness-raising courses offered by the Ministry of Health, Supreme Council for Women, Ministry of Information Affairs and Ministry of Labour and Social Development family guidance offices designed to correct these negative perceptions and raise awareness of appropriate methods of examination and early detection.

216. The most successful of these have been a series of programmes organized by the Supreme Council for Women on domestic compatibility skills for intending spouses and outreach programmes targeting more than 4,000 secondary school and university students of both sexes.

217. The Ministry of Youth and Sport Affairs plays a prominent role in promoting sports among persons with disabilities of both sexes through sponsorship and development of their sporting abilities. It seeks to make gymnasiums available to nurture the sporting talents of persons with disabilities and encourages sports clubs to include disabled sports among their activities. A concrete example of this is the establishment of a gymnasium for persons with disabilities of both sexes in Isa Town. The way is open for persons with disabilities to participate and become involved in sporting and other types of ministry-sponsored activity.

218. The Bahrain Sports Federation for Disabilities supervises sporting activities under the aegis of the international federation and is responsible for technical affairs. It is affiliated to the Bahrain Olympic Committee. The federation seeks to popularize sport among persons with disabilities in youth centres and clubs and trains staff for this purpose, with due regard to the particular situation of women with disabilities. It also seeks to open up membership of public and private clubs to persons with disabilities and their families by granting fee exemptions and discounts.

219. The Bahrain Sports Federation for Disabilities encourages families to motivate their disabled sons and daughters to take up a sport and train hard. It organizes media campaigns to raise awareness and change the negative perception of persons with disabilities. It also devotes space in the media to disabled women's sport and shines a spotlight on disabled champions, including women.

220. The outstanding successes achieved in the competitions and tournaments in which they have participated at local, Arab and international level bear witness to the standard of disabled Bahraini sportswomen.

## **Article 7**

### **Children with disabilities**

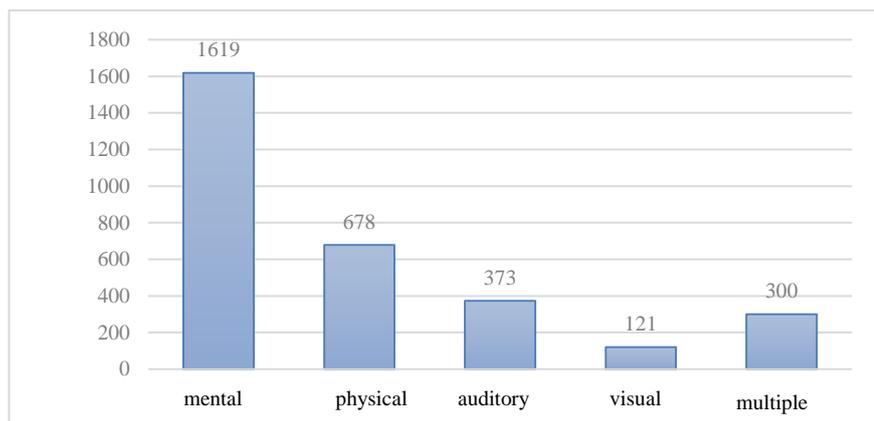
221. Bahrain accords considerable attention to children, including children with disabilities, believing them to be the mainstay and bright hope of the future. Policies, legislation and programmes have been formulated that are designed to protect children and promote their health, development and participation. These efforts have focused on ensuring the rights of the child, improving the situation of children and creating a safe environment for them to exercise their rights.

222. To complement the above, the National Strategy for Childhood (2013-3017) was launched under the auspices of the Ministry of Labour and Social Development. The strategy consists of a comprehensive, integrated vision and framework for action that seeks to ensure children's development in accordance with a particular set of values and guiding principles. It represents a national declaration and commitment to the support priorities

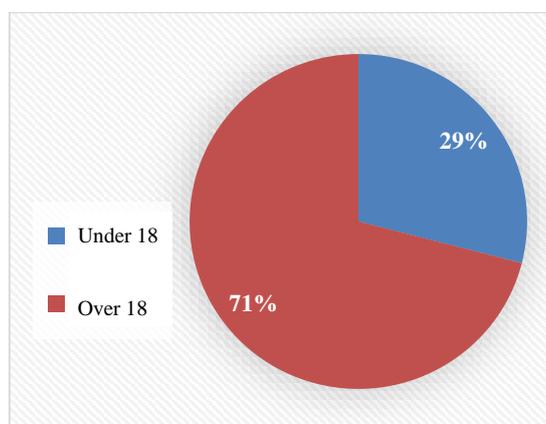
which the Government is determined to advance with the help of civil society and private sector organizations to enable children, including those with disabilities, to exercise their rights in full, become active and responsible members of society and cultivate the spirit of good citizenship.

223. Ministry of Labour and Social Development statistics for August 2016 show that there were 3,091 disabled children (i.e. under 18 years of age) registered as entitled to receive disability allowance. This represents 29 per cent of the total number of persons with disabilities in the country (10,713). The following charts show types of childhood disability in Bahrain:

**Proportion of children with disabilities to total number of persons with disabilities (2016)**



**Children with disabilities and types of disability (2016)**



224. Act No. 37 (2012) – the Children Act – promulgated by His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, guarantees to protect childhood and motherhood, provide care for children and put in place the appropriate conditions to ensure that children receive a proper upbringing. Article 2 of the Act affirms that the State guarantees that children shall enjoy their stipulated rights without discrimination on grounds of gender, origin, colour, disability, language, religion or creed, with due regard to the provisions and benefits of other laws pertaining to children.

225. Article 4 of the Act clearly states that, by child, the Act means a person who has not reached the age of 18 full Gregorian years, with due regard to the laws regulating the affairs of those under that age.

226. Chapter V of the Act deals with the welfare, education and habilitation of children with disabilities. Article 31 stipulates that a disabled child shall enjoy the same rights as other children. In addition, he shall enjoy the rights required by his situation. The State undertakes to provide the disabled child with social, health and psychological care and education. The State shall also ensure means of self-reliance and facilitate the child’s

integration and participation in society. It guarantees a disabled child the right to habilitation and access to social, psychological, medical, educational and vocational services to enable him to overcome the effects of disability.

227. Article 32 of the Act stipulates that the State undertakes to provide support and assistance to the families of children with disabilities to enable them to provide their children with proper care, as stipulated in the above paragraph. This applies, too, to the children of a Bahrain mother married to a non-Bahraini man. The State guarantees children with disabilities equal rights in respect of family life and seeks to prevent their concealment, abandonment, neglect or isolation.

228. Article 32 stipulates that under no circumstances may a child be separated from his parents because of his disability or the disability of one or both parents unless necessary to ensure the best interests of the child, in which case the child is to be given alternative care within his extended family or, if that proves to be impossible, a family that will guarantee his welfare.

229. The following are only some of the services provided to children with disabilities in 2016:

<i>No.</i>	<i>Service</i>	<i>2016</i>
1	Disability allowance	3 091 persons
2	Habilitation centres for persons with disabilities	420 male and female students
3	Compensatory devices for persons with disabilities (Ministry of Education)	30
4	Identity cards for persons with disabilities	300
5	Mobile units for persons with disabilities	143 cases
6	Non-governmental habilitation centres for persons with disabilities	1 047 male and female students
7	Private habilitation centres for persons with disabilities	435 male and female students
8	Integration in Ministry of Education schools	
9	Physiotherapy and vocational habilitation programmes	
10	Sports programmes	

## **(E) Specific obligations**

### **Article 31**

#### **Statistics and data collection**

230. The Community Research Section of the Social Assistance Directorate (Ministry of Labour and Social Development) conducts regular surveys of persons with disabilities. The data are sorted by a dedicated system (the social assistance system) for purposes of study and research, with a view to improving the services offered.

231. All bodies responsible for delivering habilitation, welfare, health or vocational services for the disabled submit biannual and annual reports to the Social Assistance Directorate of the Ministry of Labour and Social Development. The data are presented in an easy reference format in the report published by the ministry at the end of each year to help gauge the country's achievements in the field of disability care and habilitation.

232. The Ministry of Labour and Social Development has recently adopted an open data policy under which it is possible to access information and statistics on disability.

## **Article 32**

### **International cooperation**

233. Development cooperation and proactive, independent participation are two essential factors on which Bahrain relies to support the disabled, monitor the transparency of project and programme implementation and ensure the involvement of the disabled in building capacities and improving services.

234. The Gulf Disability Society is an independent society that seeks to unify the labours of the GCC countries in the field of disability, in cooperation with stakeholders. The society promotes participation of persons with disabilities on a basis of equality with others, with a view to helping them determine their own affairs. It cooperates with and coordinates the Activities of local and international organizations, taking into account the views of persons with disabilities as rights holders.

235. The Gulf Disability Society maintains a special needs database, publishes periodicals and pamphlets and seeks to find ways of improving the services provided by GCC countries, in coordination with stakeholders. It is active in the GCC countries in developing laws, legislation and regulations to ensure the rights of persons with disabilities, providing consultation and helping organizations, associations and societies working in the field of disability.

236. The society seeks to achieve its goals by establishing a comprehensive information centre on disability in the GCC countries, organizing conferences and seminars and convening scientific forums on areas of interest. Since its foundation, the society has held a conference regularly each year in one of the GCC countries, which has been of great service to the disabled. Furthermore, the society publishes periodicals, books and studies on disability.

237. One of the society's most important contributions has been to forge close relations with scientific councils and Arab and international organizations working in the field of disability by concluding a number of memorandums of understanding.

238. Civil society organizations, including the Sadaqa Society for the Blind, Bahrain Mobility International, Bahrain Association for Parents and Friends of the Disabled and other proactive societies, organize and take part in international conferences and workshops designed to exchange technical knowledge and expertise and train staff working in the field of disability.

239. In addition, State agencies responsible for providing services for the disabled are in regular contact with international and regional organizations with a view to improving services and ensuring the legitimate rights of persons with disabilities.

## **Article 33**

### **National implementation and monitoring**

240. Bahrain was one of the first countries to sign the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2007. Furthermore, it was one of the States which implemented the Arab Decade for Persons with Disabilities, adopted by the League of Arab States. Decision No. 3 (2005) was subsequently issued, forming a national monitoring committee. Bahrain also acceded to Arab Labour Convention No.17 (1993), on Rehabilitation and Employment (Persons with Disabilities), pursuant to Legislative Decree No. 17 (1999).

241. Act No. 74 (2006), on the welfare, habilitation and employment of persons with disabilities, has strengthened the rights of the disabled by putting in place a more inclusive framework for care-giving in general and habilitation and employment in particular. The Act adopts a more advanced definition of disability and identifies the Government bodies responsible for the planning and implementation of welfare, habilitation and employment programmes. These and various other governmental bodies and civil society organizations are represented on the High Commission for Disabled Affairs, chaired by the Minister of Labour and Social Development.

242. To monitor implementation of the National Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and international Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, a committee attached to the High Commission for Disabled Affairs was established pursuant to Decision No. 62 (2007). The committee is responsible for monitoring implementation of the Activities, programmes and projects outlined in the strategy's executive plan and directing stakeholders with a view to ensuring full and effective implementation of the Convention. Many disability-related activities, programmes and initiatives have been partially implemented and are currently being documented. Work is underway on preparing progress reports.

243. As regards evaluation and assessment, the National Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities contains a set of indicators to monitor progress achieved and measure the quantitative and/ or qualitative changes brought about in the lives of the disabled. Results are based on the analysis of nationwide data and published reports, using a participatory approach.

### **Article 34 Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**

244. The High Commission for Disabled Affairs was established pursuant to article 16 of Act No. 74 (2006). Chaired by the Ministry of Labour and Social Development, the commission has a membership drawn from the governmental and non-governmental sectors to underline the principle of community partnership. Its responsibilities include delivering health, educational, employment, training, outreach, instructional, habilitation and housing services. It is also responsible for scrutinizing and drafting public policy on the care and habilitation of persons with disabilities.

245. The care and habilitation of persons with disabilities is a joint responsibility of all ministries, particularly those in charge of delivering health, educational, employment, training, outreach, habilitation and housing services. Civil society and private sector organizations are equally involved in the care and habilitation of persons with disabilities.

246. The High Commission for Disabled Affairs has a number of subcommittees, including:

- National strategy drafting and monitoring committee, responsible for preparing and monitoring implementation of the national strategy, as well as identifying priorities for the care and habilitation of the disabled;
- Public relations and community outreach committee, responsible for activities designed to raise awareness and educate Bahraini society about disability; responsible for preparing manuals and guidelines, ensuring media coverage of activities and projects and organizing workshops for the media on disability;
- Financial and legal committee, responsible for monitoring the implementation of laws and regulations regulating disability affairs, proposing bills, providing legal advice and ensuring legal protection for the disabled.



## Summary: Challenges and future directions

247. The combined report shows that Bahrain has made significant progress toward integrating persons with disabilities in society, especially in the fields of education, health and access to jobs. As a result, the disabled have become productive actors who contribute to the development of society. Close cooperation between the governmental and non-governmental sectors has been a factor in achieving progress.

### I. Challenges

248. Despite the progress achieved, Bahrain, in common with the rest of the world, still faces a number of challenges to safeguarding the rights of the disabled, especially in the legislative, institutional, judicial, service and community spheres. Perhaps the most significant of these challenges are:

249. Legislative: Despite the passage of the bill on the care of the disabled, there are still a number of steps that have to be completed before it can be adopted and the decisions, procedures and regulatory instruments required for its implementation issued. While existing laws cover some of the rights stipulated in the Convention, many need a new legislative and regulatory framework. Work is currently underway on developing this.

250. Social: The image that some members of Bahraini society have of persons with disabilities represents a major challenge to the acceptance and inclusion of the disabled in society. This is not confined to Bahrain but is a problem faced by many societies. Changing society's perception of persons with disabilities requires sustained efforts in terms of education and media outreach to make society accept persons with disabilities at school, in the workplace and in places of entertainment, promote interaction and view disability as a difference, not a mark of backwardness.

251. Communication: There are major challenges to introducing a general roll-out of alternative means of communication, such as sign language and Braille, everywhere these might be needed by persons with disabilities and their families to facilitate communication.

Priority is given to providing these services in educational institutions, as well as in the workplace and places of entertainment.

252. Infrastructure access: Creating a disabled-friendly environment involves setting aside spaces outside the scope of private ownership for public use. However, ensuring full access will undoubtedly represent a major challenge for all countries, regardless of their level of economic development and urban infrastructure. The renovation and modernization required to provide services open to or specifically for persons with disabilities in a manner consistent with the Convention and access criteria, will entail enormous costs. Furthermore, removal of existing barriers to access will require a national access plan framed within a regulatory law.

253. Availability of staff: Dealing with persons with disabilities requires that care workers have specific skills in the areas of education, care and habilitation and undergo regular training in current best practice. Finding, retaining and developing qualified staff poses a particular challenge for educational and health institutions.

254. Employment: Creating suitable job opportunities for persons with disabilities represents a major challenge for both the public and private sectors, especially given the increase in the number of the disabled who are qualified to work. Although Bahrain has made reasonable progress in this area, further challenges face the disabled, including securing appropriate habilitation, undergoing continuous vocational training and finding suitable jobs in workplaces equipped to deal with disability.

255. Financial: Putting in place infrastructure, providing means of communication, facilitating access, establishing habilitation centres and subsidizing non-governmental organizations all need substantial sums of money, which will be made available in the State budget.

## **II. Future directions**

256. The Government of the Kingdom of Bahrain will strive to overcome the above challenges by fostering cooperation and coordination with the non-governmental and private sectors and with Bahraini society. It will seek to complete implementation of the National Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities with a view to achieving greater inclusion of persons with disabilities in Bahraini society.

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