

**Universal Periodic Review
(13th session, 21 May - 1 June 2012)**

Contribution of UNESCO

BAHRAIN

I. Background and framework

1. Human rights treaties which fall within the competence of UNESCO and international instruments adopted by UNESCO

A. Table

<i>Title</i>	<i>Date of ratification, accession or succession</i>	<i>Declarations /reservations</i>	<i>Recognition of specific competences of treaty bodies</i>	<i>Reference to the rights within UNESCO's fields of competence</i>
Convention against Discrimination in Education 1960	Not ratified	<i>Reservations to this Convention shall not be permitted</i>		Right to education
Convention on Technical and Vocational Education. 1989	26/03/1992			Right to education
Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage 1972	28/05/1991			Right to take part in cultural life
Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage 2003	Not ratified			Right to take part in cultural life
Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions 2005	Not ratified			Right to take part in cultural life

II. Promotion and protection of human rights on the ground

1. Right to education¹

A. Normative Framework

i. Constitutional framework

1. The Constitution of the Kingdom of Bahrain of 2002 guarantees the right to education in Article 7. The Constitution also establishes the principles of equality of opportunity (Article 4) and non-discrimination (Article 18) as well as gender equality (Article 5 (b)).

ii. Legislative framework

2. In relation with the right to education, the following legal tools can be mentioned:

- a. The *Education Law of 2005*, which provides for 9 years of compulsory school (Article 6), free basic and secondary education (Article 7) and the eradication of illiteracy (Article 9).
- b. The *Law No. 3 of 2005 on higher education*
- c. The *Private Education and Training Institutions Law of 2005*
- d. The *Academic Qualifications Evaluations Law No. 19 of 1995*

B. Policy measures

i. Gender equality

3. The Kingdom of Bahrain does not provide co-education in government schools (girls and boys are separated) because of customs and traditions in the country, yet the educational system offers equal opportunities to education in all its stages and types for all, except the technical education, which is currently only provided for boys. The government of the Kingdom of Bahrain took initiatives to introduce new specializations in technical and vocational education for boys and girls alike to be implemented since 2008. However, as far as the private schools are concerned, there are schools which follow a co-education system (boys and girls), and there are others which resemble government schools where boys are separated from girls. Therefore, parents may choose between the different types of schools.

¹ Sources:

- 2002 Constitution:

<http://www.bahrain.bh/pubportal/wps/wcm/connect/66637e004b96f314ba75bf13d8048f0c/CA9SS7XP.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CACHEID=66637e004b96f314ba75bf13d8048f0c>

- National Report submitted in 2007 for the 7th consultation of the Member States on the implementation of the Convention and Recommendation against Discrimination in Education.

- International Bureau of Education (IBE),

http://www.ibe.unesco.org/fileadmin/user_upload/archive/Countries/WDE/2006/ARAB_STATES/Bahrain/Bahrain.pdf

ii. Inclusive education

4. The Kingdom of Bahrain is committed to the enrolment of all children who are at the school age, including the victims of Down's syndrome and simple mental retardation, where they joined regular classes in public schools in accordance with the ministerial decree issued on October 13, 2001. It also provides schooling opportunities for the older people who have not had the opportunity for education in the past.

5. Since 2000-2005, the Ministry exerted its efforts for the opening of remedial classes for the slow learners, and for preparing qualified teachers, through the Arabian Gulf University (Special Education Program) to teach this type of students.

iii. Literacy

6. Since 1984, the Ministry of Education made many reforms, which have helped greatly in reducing illiteracy and eradicating its sources. The Ministry has encouraged and supported the education of individuals who have not received any primary education or did not complete primary school, by giving them the opportunities to continue their education according to their capabilities, and by the provision of intensive literacy courses for both sexes.

iv. Formal and non-formal education

7. The Ministry of Education has made the non-formal education parallel to the formal education, and worked towards opening channels between them via flexible rules and regulations, which made it more responsive to the needs of learners in the different work force. It has also consolidated the accreditation of its curricula; hence the certificates given by non-formal education bodies are considered equivalent to the ones given in the formal education. This enhances adult self-learning opportunities and encourages them to continue their education.

v. Training and status of teachers

8. The educational policy aims at providing qualified teachers of the same level for both boys and girls. The Ministry of Education has taken several measures to improve the social status and the professional development of both male and female teachers. Male and female teachers are treated alike in terms of their working conditions, recruitment procedures and the qualifications needed to join the teaching profession, teacher-students ratio, as well as in their wages, and in their promotion opportunities to higher positions, which are regulated by specified conditions and criteria for occupying the vacant positions.

C. Cooperation

9. Bahrain reported to UNESCO in 2007 on the measures taken for the implementation of the 1960 UNESCO Recommendation against Discrimination in Education within the framework of the seventh consultation of Member States (covering the period 2000-2005).

10. Bahrain did not report within the framework of the fourth consultation of Member States on the measures taken for the implementation of the 1974 UNESCO Recommendation concerning Education for International Understanding, Co-operation

and Peace and Education relating to Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (covering the period 2005-2008).

D. Achievements, best practices, challenges and constraints

11. Bahrain continues to provide free education for all; making basic education compulsory as a minimum education standard; improving the quality of education; reviewing the situation of teachers through the new framework for teachers in order to guarantee the value of the teaching profession.

2. Right to take part in cultural life²

A. Normative Framework

12. In relation with the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage 1972, the following legal tools can be mentioned:

- a. Antiquities Law 1970
- b. Royal Decree (17) year 1985 – Amendment of provisions of the 1970 Antiquities Law
- c. Royal Decree (11) year 1995 concerning the protection of antiquities

B. Institutional framework

13. Until November 2008, the institution in charge of cultural heritage was the Sector of Culture and National Heritage, under the Ministry of Information. This sector was headed by an Assistant Undersecretary for Culture and National Heritage. In November 2008, the Ministry of Information became the Ministry of Culture and Information. In July 2010, this ministry was split into two entities: the Ministry of Culture and the Authority for Information.

14. The Ministry of Culture is the institution in charge of cultural life and the safeguarding and promotion of cultural heritage. It is also the institution in charge of the implementation and follow-up of the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage 1972. The Ministry is composed of 3 directorates: Culture & Arts, Museums and Archaeology & Heritage. The Ministry is also in charge of tourism since the orientation of the Government is to develop tourism industry in the country using cultural tourism as one of the main vectors.

C. Policy measures

15. A National Strategy for Culture and Heritage is being developed by the Ministry of Culture, in cooperation with other key governmental institutions, and particularly the Economic Development Board (EDB) chaired by the Crown Prince. This strategy,

² Sources :

- Ministry of Culture
- Legislation & Legal Opinion Commission web site
- Economic Development Board (EDB) web site

which includes measures to improve the protection and promotion of the cultural heritage of the country, should at some point be integrated in the Economic Vision 2030 for Bahrain.

16. Bahrain has not ratified yet the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage 2003 and the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions 2005. The reason is a combination of lack of information about these two conventions as well as of competences within the Ministry of Culture to follow the necessary steps towards a possible ratification.

17. The implementation of the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage 1972 is effective in Bahrain. Its application stresses the importance of the UNESCO cultural conventions for the authorities of Bahrain, but also reveals needs in legal protection at the national level due to an even more important lack of awareness, at all the levels of the Government and the civil society, regarding the exceptional value of Bahrain's heritage.

D. Cooperation

18. In 2007, Bahrain decided to present its candidature to become member of the World Heritage Committee. The purpose was to use the World Heritage Convention to develop a strategy for the protection and promotion of the cultural heritage of the country. Bahrain was elected, for the first time in its history, in October 2007 for a 4 year term.

19. A bilateral cooperation programme was established between the Ministry of Information (which became Ministry of Culture in July 2010) and the UNESCO World Heritage Centre, which gave rise to the development of several projects with UNESCO, including the establishment of the future Arab Regional Centre for World Heritage (Category II Centre) which was approved by the General Conference of UNESCO in 2009. The development of the abovementioned cooperation programme between Bahrain and UNESCO has introduced a new way of considering cultural heritage in the country and notably among youth.

20. Bahrain should have hosted the 35th session of the World Heritage Committee from 19 to 29 June 2011, which would have been a major cultural event in the country and would have been a unique opportunity to mobilize the civil society and give it an occasion to interact with the world cultural community. Unfortunately, the unrest which has prevailed in the country since February 2011 led to the transfer of the Committee session to UNESCO Headquarters in Paris. Nevertheless, Bahrain officially announced that it intends to organize an international conference in April 2012 on "Prehistory and World Heritage", as contribution to the celebration of the 40th anniversary of the adoption of the World Heritage Convention, thereby willing to express its commitment to the values enshrined in the World Heritage Convention; and a World Heritage Committee Mission is considered.

E. Work with civil society

21. Civil society is present in many aspects of cultural life in Bahrain (literature, poetry, music) but its role is not important as far as the implementation of the World Heritage Convention is concerned. It is important to acknowledge that the civil society

is expected to have much more involvement in the implementation of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage 2003 and the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions 2005.

F. Achievements, best practices, challenges and constraints

22. Bahrain is taking an active part in the implementation of the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage 1972, which is used by the authorities of Bahrain as a framework for regulating pressures on heritage protection. The future Arab Regional Centre for World Heritage will benefit from a comfortable budget to reinforce the implementation and promotion of the World Heritage Convention in the entire Arab region.

23. However, despite all the achievements and efforts of the Ministry of Culture, the protection of the cultural heritage of the country in all its forms is still not a priority at decision making levels. The archaeological sites and ancient built heritage are the most threatened elements of Bahrain's heritage due to a rather aggressive urban development policy.

24. Furthermore, despite all the efforts of the Ministry of Culture, culture is not a priority in the agenda of the country. This situation is due, notably, to the political dimension of culture, and its relation to the recognition of cultural diversity, rights of minorities, etc. In this respect, the serious political crisis which has developed in Bahrain since February 2011 has affected the image of the country at the international level. This further complicates the work and efforts of the cultural actors, especially with regard to maintaining cooperation with external institutions.

3. Freedom of opinion and expression

A. Achievements, best practices, challenges and constraints

i. Legislative Framework

25. While the constitution guarantees freedom of expression and press freedom, the actual level of freedom of expression and press freedom in Bahrain is not in line with international standards. Self-censorship is widespread and access to the Internet is filtered especially for political and religious content. 2011 has seen a restrictive turn in this regard, with the King announcing a state of emergency and curtailing freedom of expression in order to quell political upheaval.

ii. Media Self-regulatory System

26. Under instructions from the King, Bahrain's Information Affairs Authority (IAA) began discussions with local media in order to establish a new legal framework for the press, including an independent self-regulatory body, in February 2011. However, they remain at an early stage.

iii. Safety of Journalists

27. The safety of journalists in Bahrain is poor. During the reporting period, UNESCO's Director General condemned the death of two journalists, Karim

Fakhrawi, a co-founder of the country's only independent newspaper Al-Wasat, and online writer Zakariya Rashid Hassan, both of whom died in prison in Bahrain in April 2011, and asked relevant authorities to investigate these cases.

28. Widespread violence against journalists has also been reported during 2011, in the context of sustained political protests.

B. Capacity-building and technical assistance provided and/or recommended by UNESCO

29. The training of journalists and media workers to raise professional standards and safety awareness should be strengthened.

III. Recommendations

1. Right to education

30. Bahrain should be encouraged to ratify the Convention against Discrimination in Education and to report to UNESCO within the framework of the eighth consultation of Member States on the measures taken for the implementation of the Convention and the Recommendation against Discrimination in Education (covering the period 2006-2011).

2. Right to take part in cultural life

31. Bahrain should envisage ratifying other cultural conventions so as take further the right to take part in culture into account and have this strategy adopted at the highest level of the Government.

3. Freedom of opinion and expression

32. While Bahrain's constitution guarantees the freedom of expression and press freedom, the Press Law is needed to be further amended to bring it in line with international standards. UNESCO recommends:

- a. The freedom of information law should be elaborated and adopted
- b. Safety of journalists should be improved