



## **Kuwait Common Country Analysis (CCA)**

*One UN Kuwait Approach to CCA for SDGs Joint Programming*

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For RCO Kuwait

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## Executive Summary: One UN Kuwait Approach to CCA

### A Unified Framework of Sustainable Development Ecosystem

The main objective of the Common Country Analysis (CCA) is to provide an independent, collective, integrated, forward-looking and evidence-based analysis (deep dive) of Kuwait’s development system. The 2021 CCA will serve as a concise, inter-agency overview of Kuwait’s standing in each dimension of sustainable development (i.e., economic, social and environmental), which reflects on national development priorities and needs, existing gaps and challenges in achieving them, and also takes into account the groups left behind - or at risk of being left behind - and the root causes for this.

To achieve this objective, an overarching framework for understanding and linking the analytical chapters of this CCA document is required, along with an explanation of the connections between the chapters to follow (i.e., **“One UN Kuwait Approach: A Unified Framework of Sustainable Development Ecosystem”**.) Having presented this framework, each of its three components (Boxes 1, 2 and 3) is developed thematically and is linked to UNCT contributions towards sustainable development. This demonstrates how the framework builds on and is a synthesis of evidence-based analysis in a multidimensional manner.

Normative frameworks, adopted by the Government of Kuwait to inform country-specific development strategies, are presented in Box 1, including:

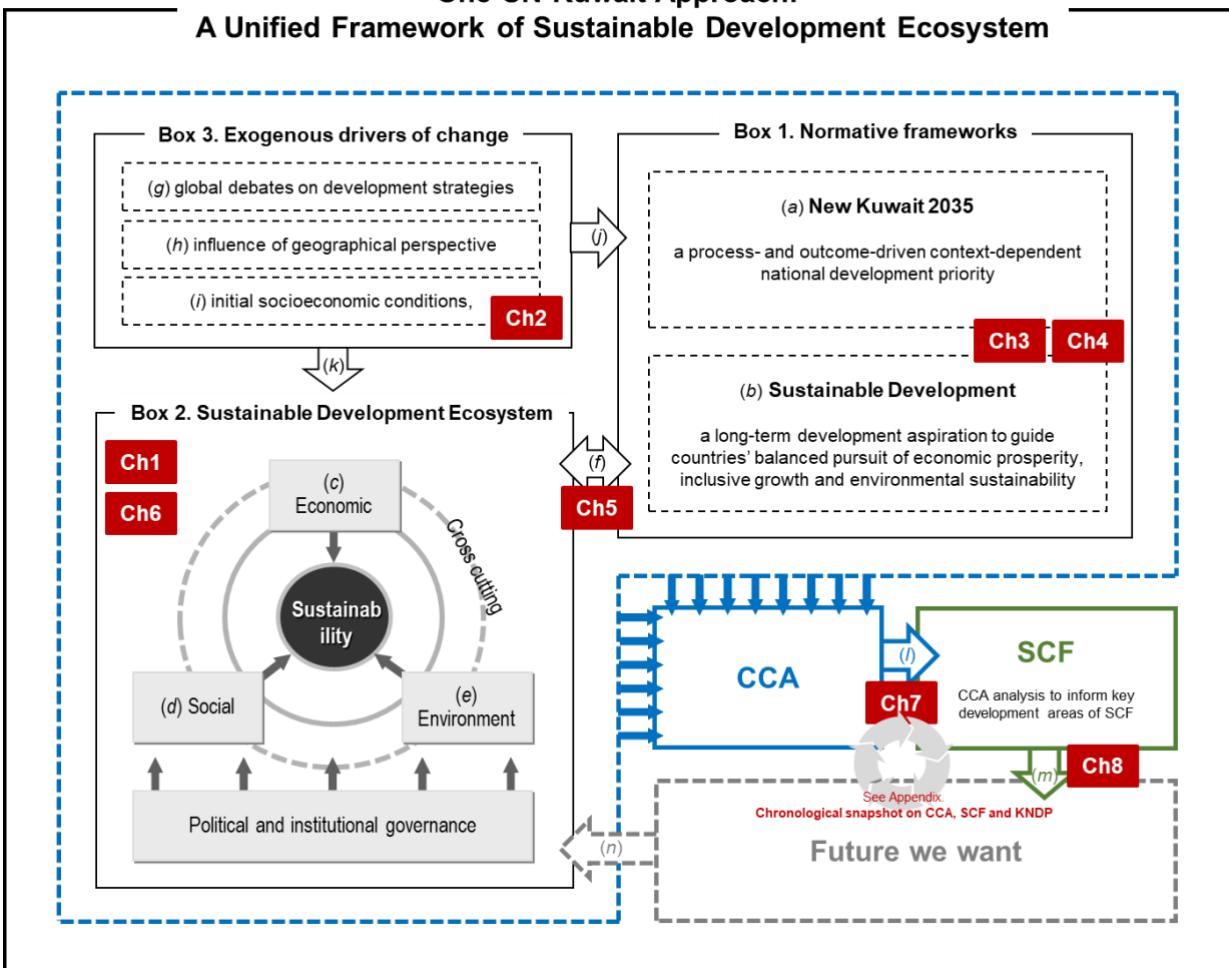
- (a) a process- and outcome-driven context-dependent development framework that is used for incorporating geographical and sectoral changes in resource allocation, while moving away from traditional patterns of economic growth largely based on a fossil fuel-driven production method, mainstreamed in the country's vision, “New Kuwait 2035”; and
- (b) a long-term development aspiration to guide countries’ balanced pursuit of economic prosperity, inclusive growth and environmental sustainability, without compromising the ability of future generations to be able to pursue the same goals.

These two normative frameworks provide the range of strategic development options for the Government of Kuwait. These two development objectives could be further reconciled/embedded into the one unified process of transformation that is both inclusive and sustainable.

Systematic interactions take place between the normative frameworks and the sustainable development ecosystem (Box 2), which are defined as the specific processes of (c) economic, (d) social and (e) environmental sustainability, all of which can be influenced by the dynamics of political and institutional governance, i.e., (f) Box 1  $\leftrightarrow$  Box 2. This interaction is likely materialised through institutions and influential individuals. Meanwhile, the normative frameworks are naturally influenced by exogenous drivers of change (Box 3), including (g) global debates on development strategies, (h) the influence of geographical perspectives and (i) initial socio-economic conditions, i.e., (j) Box 3  $\rightarrow$  Box 1. Exogenous drivers of change also influence country change processes, i.e., (k) Box 3  $\rightarrow$  Box 2.

A series of systematic discussions and analysis, underpinned by this overarching framework guides the multidimensional assessment by UNCTs' integrated and collective approach that provides areas of development priority further guiding specific projects and programmes that are institutionalised in the three outcomes of the UN-Kuwait Strategic Cooperation Framework (SCF), i.e., (l) CCA  $\rightarrow$  SCF (see Appendix 1. Chronological snapshot on CCA, SCF and KNDP). An integrated, collective effort by UNCTs via the SCF mechanism would support the Government of Kuwait towards the achievement of the "Future we want" – advancing the three dimensions of sustainable development to affect the process of achieving the New Kuwait 2035 aspiration, i.e., (m) SCF  $\rightarrow$  Future we want. Accordingly, the sustainable development ecosystem embedded in the country would be influenced in a more inclusive and sustainable fashion, i.e., (n) Future we want  $\rightarrow$  Box 2.

## One UN Kuwait Approach: A Unified Framework of Sustainable Development Ecosystem



Under the unified framework of the sustainable development ecosystem in Kuwait, the CCA approach specifically adheres to the UNDSG guidance: Cooperation Framework Companion Package to ensure the CCA is a data-driven and evidence-based analysis of the national development situation and SDGs interlinkages, with strong alignment to the UN principles of Leaving No One Behind (LNOB), human rights, and gender equality mainstreaming.

A mixed analysis method was applied throughout the various CCA chapters to ensure a wide range of data sources, allowing for triangulation and the inclusion of perspectives of different stakeholder groups, including national and international experts in the selected thematic and priority areas. These methods include a desk review of existing reports, research, analysis of quantitative and qualitative data from within and outside the UN system. Key sources consulted include the New Kuwait Vision 2035, the Kuwait National Development Plan (KNDP) 2020-2025; Kuwait VNR 2019; research on relevant development by UN agencies and other development partners; existing and available SDGs data; as well as findings from the ongoing socioeconomic impact assessment of COVID-19 and consultations results from the Kuwait UN-75 events.

A systemic data gathering from UNCT used an initial baseline questionnaire to capture the latest data and analytical inputs on development progress, key challenges, gaps, and opportunities covering aspects and transformational issues in each UN agencies' respective mandates. The CCA also used various methodologies and available UN tools to help shape the CCA analysis, such as the UN multidimensional risks framework, the Leave No one Behind analysis and the 5-factors framework to identify the root causes of vulnerabilities, inequalities, and discrimination. The human rights analysis using the most recent input from the UN treaty bodies and special procedures mandate holders' analysis of Kuwait's human rights situation and reports from the non-governmental community. The CCA 2021 development approach was anchored around three stages while ensuring UNCT ongoing participation throughout the entire process, which is described in Appendix 2.

### Inter-dynamics of Sustainable Development Challenges

- 1. Political and institutional challenges:** Kuwait is unique among its Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) peers for having a vibrant parliamentary life and a strong electoral tradition. It has a vocal National Assembly (parliament), which can reject government legislation, cross-examine cabinet ministers and challenge the will of appointed government ministers. While this allows for greater civic participation, it has also hindered decision making around needed fiscal adjustments, reforms and meaningful diversification plans. The political gridlock also lessened the appetite to pursue intended government reforms, including the restructuring of the civil service and public administration, as well as the implementation of urgently needed economic structural reforms and diversification plans; It impedes the implementation of complex policies such as economic diversification; climate change mitigation, environmental governance and greening the economy; food security and nutrition; the transition to a knowledge-based economy; and digital governance.

At the institutional level, the size of the public sector workforce is considered the main challenge and represents about 20 per cent of the total workforce, compared to an average of around 10 per cent internationally. The permanent civil service workforce, as of 2018, numbered some 450,000 employees – represents an increase of 11.5 per cent from 2014. The main driving factor for this growth in bureaucracy remains the government's guarantee of jobs for all citizens; this means the government is the largest employer in the country. The inefficient government bureaucracy caused by the duplication of roles and the overstaffing of growing government entities. The public sector also suffers from a lack of transparency, as well as red tape and corruption. Administrative decisions can be arbitrary, which can present a high risk of corruption and promote unfair competition.

- 2. The Demographic challenge that is reflected in three main trends: (1) The demographic dilemma:** Kuwait has witnessed rapid population growth due to its reliance on foreign labour. Between 1950 and 2020, the population grew 27-fold, increasing from 150,000 to more than 4.2 million; more than two-thirds of the population are foreign workers who reside in the country on a temporary basis. Kuwait's population is made up of approximately 30 per cent Kuwaiti nationals and 70 per cent non-

citizens, who work predominantly in low-paid private sector service jobs; **(2) The youth bulge:** with nearly 40 per cent of the population under the age of 30. This large youth population is both a resource and a challenge for the government. It constitutes a significant, productive future labour force that can contribute and shape the national economy and the transition to a knowledge economy. This means the government will need to address the poor outcomes of the education system and support youth integration in a labour market capable of absorbing them. It will indicate how well the government will be able to develop human capital; and **(3) the decline in the rate of fertility, ageing population:** together with improved health care and healthcare facilities over recent decades, mean the number of people in Kuwait aged 65 and above is expected to increase dramatically over the coming decades. This signals the need to enhance healthcare services for the elderly and will require the (GoK) to improve the quality of life and health care within the country. Most importantly, these efforts need to be aligned with a more sustainable social protection model for citizens and residents.

- 3. Fiscal and institutional challenges:** **(1) High reliance on oil** where Kuwait's economy remains heavily resource-based, and hydrocarbons and related products represent around 84 per cent of total exports; **(2) High level of public expenditure for subsidies and the legislative restriction on debt issuance:** The GoK has been left with limited financing instruments to fund budget shortfall. The General Reserve Fund (GRF) has always been a key adjustment mechanism for fiscal stability in Kuwait, shielding the effect of the boom-and-bust cycles of oil prices from the domestic economy. Since October 2017, Kuwait has been waiting for its parliament to approve the new debt law, which would increase both the debt ceiling and the borrowing period. As a result, it was unable to raise any debt financing and had to dip into the GRF – and, indeed, had exhausted it by 2020 – in order to cover its recurring deficits in the wake of the dual shock.<sup>1</sup> Kuwait's parliament remains adamant about rejecting proposals to borrow from international markets to cover the fiscal shortfall, and about cutting spending in the public sector.

#### 4. Socioeconomic challenges

Education: **(1) Quality is challenging.** In early childhood education, there is no comprehensive or coherent framework or curriculum. The outdated K-12 curriculum and teaching and learning materials have started to be updated, but there is much work to do.<sup>2</sup> Comprehensive Sexual Education (CSE) or a curriculum that can facilitate knowledge related to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRH&Rs) is relatively absent; **(2) High reliance on expatriate teachers.** Given the small pool of local teachers, the majority of educators in both private and public schools are recruited from foreign countries; **(3) Human capital formation and the learning gap.** According to the September 2020 World Bank Human Capital Project (HCP), Kuwaiti children are expected to complete 12.0 years of schooling; however, when this is adjusted for actual learning outcomes, children only complete on average

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<sup>1</sup> UNDP, Kuwait Socio-Economic Assessment, draft April 2021 (to be cited with exact title once finalised).

<sup>2</sup> UNDP, Socio-Economic Assessment, draft April 2021.

7.4 years, which indicates some 4.6 years of learning are lost (see Figure 7).<sup>3</sup> More than half of children (51 per cent) cannot read or understand a short age-appropriate text by the age of 10 (the learning poverty indicator), which is more than double the average of high-income countries (24 per cent).<sup>4</sup> These poor foundational skills hold students back from further learning during their school years and beyond. Inequalities in education outcomes are substantial.

*Health and wellbeing:* **(1) The imbalance in the health workforce** was signalled as one of the most urgent issues in Kuwait's health system, which relies heavily on an expatriate workforce.<sup>10</sup> Overseas workers account for 62 per cent of doctors and 94 per cent of nurses.<sup>11</sup> There remains an absence of health workforce plans and management systems in Kuwait. For this reason, there are many human resources gaps in the health sector, particularly at the intersection of requirements and available workforce, including doctors, dentists, pharmacists, nurses, technicians, emergency medical technicians, paramedics and in public health management;<sup>12</sup> **(2) Kuwait's burden of disease statistics** provides an additional dimension with which to frame key health outcomes. The country has an extremely high percentage of individuals with diabetes (15.8 per cent) and ranks 11th worldwide for obesity (37.9 per cent); this does not take into account the proportion of people classified as being overweight. Diabetes and obesity bring with them a number of complications that include an increased risk of cardiovascular disease, stroke, diabetic nephropathy and neuropathy, all of which contribute to an increased burden on the healthcare system; and **(3) The implications of the Covid-19 pandemic on the healthcare sector highlighting the hospital capacity burden, vulnerability to infection of Covid-19 for low-income expatriates and the mental health issues and domestic violence for women and people with disabilities.**

*Food security, nutrition and sustainable agriculture:* **(1)** In the 2017-19 period, the prevalence of severe food insecurity was 4.9 per cent and the prevalence of moderate or severe food insecurity was 12.3 per cent. During the same period, the prevalence of undernourishment in the total population was < 2.5 per cent. **Kuwait still experiences a malnutrition burden among its under-five population.** During 2017-2019, the prevalence stunting among under-fives was 6.4 per cent, the prevalence of wasting among under-fives was 3.1 per cent, and the **prevalence of being overweight among under-fives was 5.5 per cent.** Kuwait's adult population also faced a malnutrition burden during the 2017-19 period. **The prevalence of anaemia among women of reproductive age was 23.8 per cent, while the prevalence of obesity in adults was 37.9 per cent;** **(2) The agriculture sectors face significant challenges such as the severe scarcity of fresh water, limited arable land, land degradation (i.e., soil erosion, vegetation degradation), salinisation and harsh weather conditions, and the overfishing of some wild stocks (e.g., kingfish), which create significant obstacles to achieving food security and improving nutrition.** Kuwait has the lowest amount of renewable fresh resources in the world; **(3) the annual supply of fish per capita is low and Kuwait is highly reliant on imports.** Domestic production from the fisheries has been on the decline since the 1990s. Aquaculture production remains limited; **(4) agricultural land and water for livestock are scarce in Kuwait.** There is a lack of low-cost alternatives for

<sup>3</sup> [https://databank.worldbank.org/data/download/hci/HCI\\_1pager\\_KWT.pdf?cid=GGH\\_e\\_hcpexternal\\_en\\_ext](https://databank.worldbank.org/data/download/hci/HCI_1pager_KWT.pdf?cid=GGH_e_hcpexternal_en_ext)

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/education/brief/learning-poverty>



forage production; **(5) domestic food production is unable to meet local food demand, and Kuwait is import-dependent; and (6) issues of food loss and waste, overweight and obesity, and noncommunicable diseases (NCDs)** have received increasing attention and will need to be addressed within a thorough, cross-sectoral framework.

*Social protection and the welfare system challenges:* **(1) rentier welfare benefits** are constitutionally enshrined as rights for Kuwaiti citizens, and the constitution mentions the role of the state as caretaker; **(2) the current wealth distribution system is inefficient and unequitable; (3) higher demand on social protection programmes even prior to the pandemic** has affected many categories of the population, especially those who were initially vulnerable (e.g., people with disabilities, low-skilled workers or stateless groups such as the Bidoon). This has increased the demand on social protection programmes (i.e., cash transfers, unemployment benefits, free health care, etc.) and consequently increased financial pressure on the government; **(4) the sustainability of the system is increasingly in question** considering the GoK is increasingly faced with fiscal issues as oil incomes fluctuate and (since 2014) decrease, and as current spending increases due in particular to a high wage and pension bill and the generous welfare system. Some long-term demographic dynamics further burden the welfare system such as the declining birth rate and the ageing Kuwaiti population; and **(5) current spending on salaries and transfers dominates total government expenditure, crowding out development spending on infrastructure and projects.**

*Labour market challenges:* **(1) A heavy reliance on foreign labour** has been a significant pillar of Kuwait's economic structure. Over the past decades, expatriate workers have played a crucial role by helping to address shortages of workers and skills, thus cushioning the economy from overheating due to wage pressures. The economy has been locked in a low productivity growth pattern by existing laws that do not protect all workers; **(2) Low productivity pattern.** The current labour market structure is not conducive to supporting economic diversification and moving to a higher value-added economic structure. The majority of the labour force is low-skilled; one-third of the workforce is illiterate or has elementary-level education, and two-thirds have less than secondary-level education; **(3) Highly segmented along sectoral, nationality and gender lines.** Over time, a dual labour market has emerged in which expatriate workers predominately occupy private sector jobs, while the vast majority of nationals work in the public sector; **(4) higher unemployment among youth.** Kuwaiti women are less likely to participate in the labour force than Kuwaiti men (30.8 per cent and 47.7 per cent in 2017, respectively) and face higher unemployment rates. Women's unemployment in the 15-24 years' age group almost doubles men's in the same age bracket (37.1 per cent for female nationals versus 20.5 per cent for male nationals; and **(5) Existing labour market structures lack appropriate incentives to create a dynamic, skilled workforce capable of sustaining an expansion of Kuwaiti nationals joining the private sector.** Current policies to address labour market distortions and keep unemployment among nationals low through public employment, quotas, and permanent wage subsidy programmes in the private sector are neither effective nor sustainable in the long run.

Housing issues: Many young Kuwaitis are worried about their chances of securing housing in the immediate future for several reasons: **(1) land prices in Kuwait are very high**, usually averaging around 250,000 KWD for a 400 square metre plot, which is the average sized plot in the country; **(2) mortgages from commercial banks are difficult to obtain**; **(3) lack of different types of housing**, as houses and apartments are the only available choices available; and **(4) the supply levels are still below their targets**, where delays in setting up housing companies as a means for involving the private sector in housing welfare, in addition to weak operational capacity and delays in completing existing projects, have all caused the housing demand crisis to escalate; **(5) unsustainable provision of land and housing** where the system of housing provision, legislation and the distributive property mechanisms of the state have contributed further to this inequality and have created large imbalances in the market.

**5. Environment and climate challenges:** **(1) Rapid economic expansion, development and urbanisation have affected Kuwait's natural resources and environmental quality** in a number of areas over the past two decades. Issues of concern include desertification; pollution and health hazards; inadequate handling and treatment of urban and industrial waste and sewage; air pollution in Kuwait City and its industrial states; marine pollution, especially in the vicinity of harbours; large scale coastal erosion based on reclamation activities along the coast, which have destroyed valuable local marine ecosystems; and open sea marine pollution, which affects coastal and marine habitats and biodiversity; **(2) the negative impacts of climate change**, especially in the various vital and environmental sectors such as human health, coastal areas, water resources, food and nutrition security, marine environments and fisheries; climate change also contributes to causing or increasing events such as heatwaves, rainstorms and other rapid floods, as well as the number and intensity of dust storms; rising sea levels and the consequent impacts on infrastructure projects and future long-term investment.<sup>5</sup> Sand and dust storms also contribute to serious health impacts and road traffic accidents; **(3) Kuwait is one of the world's most water-stressed countries**, with the lowest per capita renewable internal freshwater availability of any country, requiring extensive seawater desalination to meet the water demand. Kuwait's arid climate is exacerbated by low annual rainfall, which leads to an increase in drought occurrences; **(4) the energy sector relies almost exclusively on oil products and natural gas to meet its energy needs**, with each source of fuel accounting for about half of the total primary energy consumption and by 2035, energy demand in Kuwait is projected to increase by a third in the Business-as-Usual Case; and **(5) Kuwait's renewable energy capacity at the plants accounts for less than 1 per cent of the total generating capacity in Kuwait.**

Strategic programming opportunities have been identified by this CCA analysis and will revolve around **five themes**: 1) socio-economic resilience; 2) quality education, continuous learning and human capital; 3) health and wellbeing; 4) environment and climate; and, finally, 5) governance, partnerships, institutional strengthening and global positioning – under the three outcomes of the UN-Kuwait Strategic Cooperation Framework 2022-2025 (corresponding to each of the three Result Groups) (see Figure 1).

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<sup>5</sup> Kuwait National Adaptation Plan 2019-2030

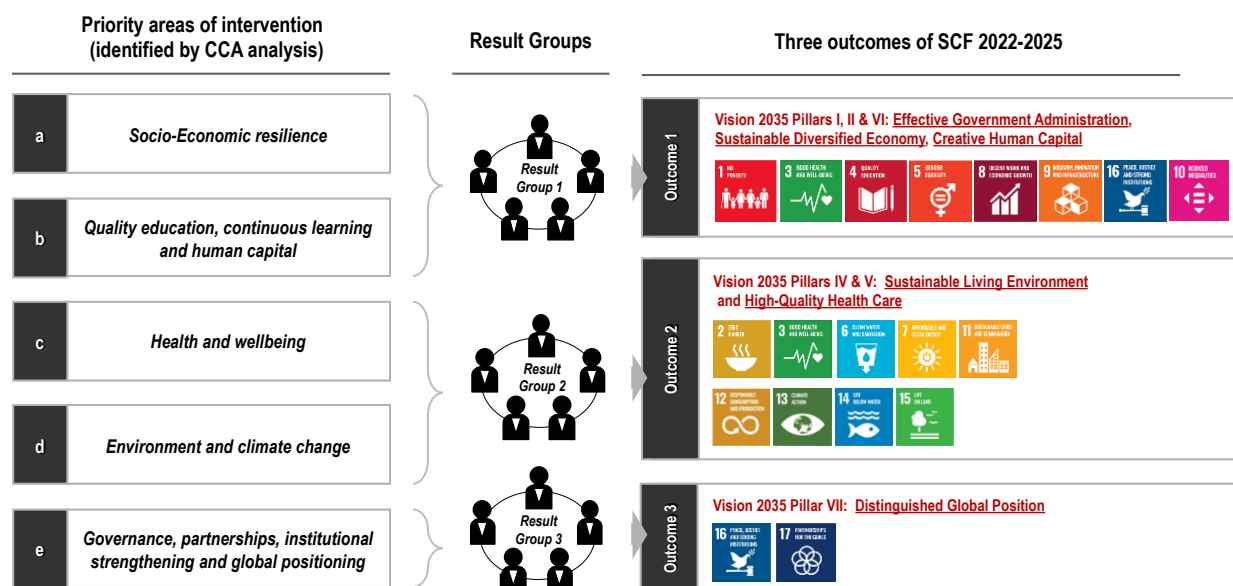


Figure 1. Integrated mechanism from CCA to SCF implementation

### An Integrated Approach to Joint Programming for Sustainable Development

The “One UN Kuwait's multidimensional policy direction” is then conceptualised and mapped based on an assessment of the greater synergies with the SDGs and KNDP. **Eight policy areas** are contextualised for promoting the two themes (i.e., socio-economic resilience, and quality education, continuous learning and human capital) that are underpinned by collective efforts for SCF Outcome 1. Meanwhile, **nine areas of policy direction** for the next two themes (i.e., health and wellbeing, and environment and climate change) appear to have greater synergy with KNDP Programs and SDGs than those associated with economic resilience intervention. As for the last theme (i.e., governance, partnerships, institutional strengthening and global positioning), **five policy areas** are directed and would influence the sustainability aspiration over socio-economic domains in other developing countries.

The most strategic, urgently needed contribution and support from UNCT under each of the five main themes can be summarised as follows:

#### **Socio-Economic Resilience (Theme One)**

1. **Provide integrated, evidence-based policy advice to tackle economic reforms; expand the role of the private sector; and foster entrepreneurs and SMEs for the knowledge economy.** UNCT can provide technical advice and policy support to the GoK to reduce the role of the State and diversify sources of funding; to enhance the sustainability of public finances, strengthen fiscal management and the associated risks, and improve the efficiency of social assistance programme; to develop/strengthen the innovation ecosystem and increase R&D investments, especially in emerging technology, and

expand the use of digital platform for business operations; and to foster entrepreneurial culture and further invest in supporting SMEs. (*SCF Policy Direction 4*)

2. **Provide technical assistance to enhance social cohesion and reduce vulnerabilities and discrimination and ensure that any future reforms of the safety net will include vulnerable groups that are non-citizens by offering different alternatives for contributions.** UNCT can provide technical assistance to the GoK to integrate and mainstream LNOB principles within the KNDP 2020-2025. Another area is to strengthen the institutional set-up and governance, and reform the existing welfare policies to become fiscally sustainable for future generations. This will include technical and policy advice on the diversification of the funding sources of the existing welfare system and improving access to government services for vulnerable groups (citizens and non-citizens). (*SCF Policy Direction 5*)
3. **Provide innovative approaches to achieve sustainable food security, and enhance resilience of food systems and minimise disruptions to supply chains** (*SCF Policy Direction 7 – new “Sustainable food security and resilient food systems”*)

Kuwait can benefit from **additional support at the policy level to build and enhance the resilience of food systems and minimise the disruptions to supply chains over the long-term.** Comprehensive solutions are needed, with careful consideration and understanding of the significant constraints to overcome the wide range of challenges that currently exist, including the adoption of capital-intensive technologies to product development; facilitating trade and diversifying supply sources and options; and linking SMEs and small farmers’ products to markets.

Kuwait may benefit from **early warning tools, including Food Price Monitoring Analysis (FPMA).** FAO can provide capacity development on how to use these tools. Another technology, called the passive refrigeration system (PRS), may also offer practical applications across the food supply chain to save energy at 81 per cent; reduce losses by 50 per cent; extend the shelf life of produces by up to three times; and improve the quality of preservation.

**Kuwait needs to look into innovative ideas as well as a comprehensive assessment of its entire agricultural and food system.** FAO can help develop a comprehensive country assessment to look closely into the potentials, challenges, production, trade, consumption, prices, food security and nutrition policy aspects. The study could assess the potential of Kuwait to **address its food self-sufficiency using the Controlled Environment Agriculture (CEA) to increase domestic fruit and vegetable production and promote pipeline stocks** (maintaining vast food processing resources) that can serve as food security stocks in time of crisis. Other studies can focus on improving traceability in food processing and distribution; using blockchain technologies; tokenisation; enabling consumers to trace local produce; and can inform setting the system and diagnosing constraints and adoption of innovations.

**As part of the overall country assessment, conduct a trade and policy analysis.** Nutrition and diet-related NCD analysis will be needed. It should be undertaken not only by developing food-based

dietary guidelines, but also by stocktaking the nutritional profile for the country and an assessment of problems arising from unhealthy diets.

## Quality Education, Continuous Learning and Human Capital<sup>6</sup> (Theme Two)

1. **Institutional mechanisms and systems strengthening to help integrate and institutionalise online learning practices developed beyond the pandemic recovery.** UNCT can support better implementation of blended/hybrid learning and transition towards digital education and innovation as an education game changer across the education sector and a key driver to reframe education for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. These new models will require closer examination in terms of governance and institutional requirements.
2. **Align skills with market needs by building partnerships with the private sector.** UNCT can support the involvement of social partners, particularly employers, in the development of training and education programmes that could help address the issue of skills mismatch, and which would enable educational institutions to review their programmes and curricula in line with private sector needs.
3. **Improve technical capacity for the Kuwait Labour Market Information System (KLMIS) as a critical mechanism and source of data to guide any policy change** relating to the impact of Covid-19 on labour markets and the administration of human capital. It can emphasise better data collection for labour market analysis in order to design and implement effective active labour market policies (ALMPs) that are well targeted and evidence-based.
4. **Improve the quality of teachers: system strengthening to develop teacher professional development standards framework** to promote inclusive and performance-based recruitment under decent work conditions, including training, placement, remuneration, promotion, and career development and advancement. This will require the harmonisation of teacher management programmes among the public and private sector and alignment between pre-service and in-service teacher professional programmes. This area also covers technical assistance to train teachers on the use of technology to promote 21<sup>st</sup> century teaching and learning, and to train teachers on issues related to CSE and SRH & RS issues at school.
5. **Strengthen Technical and Vocational Education and Training.** Provide technical assistance to create labour market-relevant curricula and design training programmes aligned with employment. This includes combining on-the-job training/internship programmes through an education/private sector partnership programme and help enable workers and learners' mobility and ensure keeping pace with the changing labour and market demands.
6. **Capacity building for Innovating labour market mobility.** UNCT offers a range of potential technical support in this area with focus on the following: **1) update the existing Labour Law, bylaws and policies**

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<sup>6</sup> SCF Policy Direction 8 – new “Quality education, continuous learning and human capital

to ensure they address policy gaps and discrimination against women personnel and existing gaps; **2) provide technical assistance around the newly developed national labour market strategy** and its four-pronged key intervention areas: education, digitalisation, foreign workers SMART admission, and reduction of the public sector workforce; **3) develop sustainable mobility schemes such as skills mobility partnerships (SMPs) as an innovative tool centred around workers' skills training and development;** **4) reform the sponsorship system;** and **5) build a sound industrial relations system** and the essential role of social partners in the design and implementation of policies and reforms.

### Health and Wellbeing (Theme Three)

1. **Link the health-associated activities, projects and policies planned under the KNDP and other country support priorities to the outcomes and results logic of the WHO Thirteenth General Programme of Work, 2019 – 2023 (GPW13)**, which introduces the Triple Billion targets, offering a measurable impact framework to improve global progress towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). To this end, measurement and reporting towards Vision 2035 will be aligned with reporting on the SDG indicators for health. *(SCF Policy Direction 14)*
2. **Support and endorse the development of citizen and community engagement platforms to promote health literacy, in addition to leveraging existing community-based interventions.** The scaling up of initiatives like Birth Kuwait and Birth Academy *(SCF Policy Direction 12)*
3. **Advance the development and implementation of national digital strategies and capitalise on the transition to online platforms during the pandemic towards digital health maturity.** Support the effective adoption of more widely used telemedicine and personalised medicine through the integration of mainstream apps to support healthcare coaching and advice to ensure timely access of credible advice to all. Professionalise a means of empowering nurses, social workers, and allied healthcare students to uptake this role as part of their training. *(SCF Policy Direction 14)*
4. **Use of the evidence from the behavioural insights framework to design policies and interventions in communal spaces, schools and workplaces that encourage the uptake of healthy habits (e.g., physical activity nudges).** *(SCF Policy Direction 11)*

### Environment and Climate Change <sup>7</sup>(Theme Four)

1. **Promote the sustainable use of the environment, centred around green recovery** by integrating climate action, sustainable energy and nature-based solutions into national crisis response plans and investment frameworks. This includes: 1) taking climate action as a means to generate co-benefits for community resilience and recovery; 2) harnessing solar solutions to achieve sustainable economic

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<sup>7</sup> SCF Policy Direction 10 – changed to “Green recovery, climate change and environmentally sustainable finance”

recovery and energy security; 3) advancing a more sustainable use of natural assets to reduce future risks; 4) promoting sustainable and responsible consumption, and environmental education and awareness; 5) leverage adaptation and investment in climate-resilient infrastructure, which includes recovery programmes, public spending, and regulations to help mitigate the impact of climate shocks; and 6) integrate green economy principles in the diversification agenda, increase climate resilient investments and sustainable energy transition.

2. **Address the policy gaps** that can be categorised as follows: 1) the continued-high levels of energy consumption and air pollution; 2) a relative lack of integrated modern technologies used in the sectors of seawater desalination, wastewater treatment and waste management facilities; 3) a weaker understanding (uncompetitive knowledge base) of the complexity of the relationship between climate change and socio-economic dimensions; and 4) a lack of proactive measures against climate change, engaged by the private sector in terms of finance and investment.

### 3. **Climate change action with a focus on environmentally sustainable finance**

**ESG Standard on Reporting and Disclosure.** Stimulate ESG reporting and disclosure practices by 1) designing an incentive mechanism to the reporting companies; 2) providing capacity building for materiality assessment and alignment with business strategies; 3) shaping a supportive regulatory framework in relation to ESG practices; and 4) targeting sustainable finance policies and rules to become mandatory.

**Kuwait Green Innovation Fund.** Establish a blended financing window (with the principle of “vulnerability-responsive”) by partnering with leading banks to develop sustainable/green transition projects and initiatives, and potentially categorise: 1) a Green Energy pillar (renewable energy project); 2) a Clean Air pillar (air pollution reducing project); and, 3) a Blue Ocean pillar (biodiversity and food security project), through the provision of loans (SDG-linked loans) or performance-based payments under the technical assistance facility, which mainly prioritises MSMEs, entrepreneurs and small women-led businesses.

**Integrated Waste Management Public Private Partnership.** Promote a public-private partnership for a waste management system that focuses on an integrated system of “prevention-sorting-recycling-recovery-reuse” towards a sustainable waste treatment plant and logistics. This should be accompanied by a well-structured regulatory framework, in collaboration with the WRDM and WTRT programmes, relating to the MYAH and TADWEER initiatives under KNDP.

**Kuwait Climate Action Lab.** Form an innovative action platform co-managed by national environmental authorities and international organisations, and partnered with the private sector, universities and NGOs.

**Climate-Related Statistical Capacity.** Integrate a set of climate change-related indicators with particular focus on the System of Environmental Economic Accounts (SEEA) framework in the existing national statistical system (i.e., eMISK, Baetona and CIS) that could help better inform decisions on climate action and environmental policies towards sustainable economic transformation.

#### **Governance, Partnerships, Institutional Strengthening and Global Positioning <sup>8</sup>(Theme Five)**

1. **Strengthen and consolidate the gender institutional setup.** UNCT can further enhance support to the GoK to advance gender equality and women’s empowerment, since SDG5 is a challenge and puts at risk the success of the SDGs; support for policy and institutional coherence and alignment of laws with international conventions; support the production of gender-disaggregated data and analysis, including for groups of vulnerable women, targeted interventions to support women’s political and economic participation, supporting GBV and access to justice especially for vulnerable women.
2. **Strengthen the institutional set-up of the human rights ecosystem.** Given the weak institutional capacity to protect human rights, underdeveloped legal framework and Kuwait’s challenging human rights record, UNCT is in a strong position to advocate for and support strengthening the role of the Human Rights Diwan, its independence and effective operations.
3. **It is also suggested to establish Kuwait “Innovative SDG Lab” as an alternative means of collaboration** that can be conceptually framed into the four clusters approach: 1) policy consultation (including research collaboration); 2) SDGs data innovation (i.e. strengthened capacity for the National Observatory on Sustainable Development); 3) community engagement for innovation (i.e. hackathons, partnership with the Chamber of Commerce and think tanks); 4) competition and challenges in the form of policy experimentation, most of which can encompass various areas to support implementation of such suggested policy direction. All of these are presented in Figure 2 and detailed programmatic interventions are elaborated as follows.

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<sup>8</sup> SCF Policy Direction 17



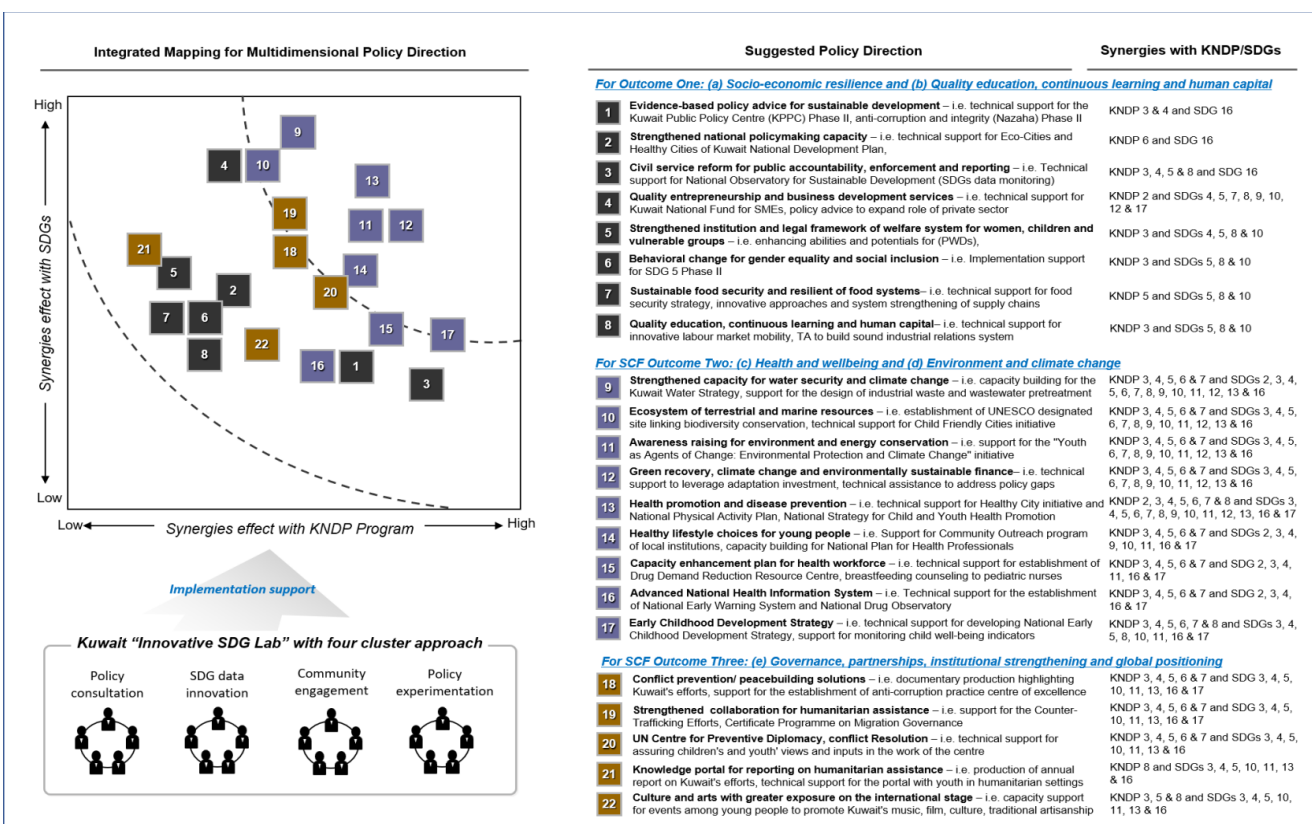


Figure 2. Multidimensional approach on policy directions with greater synergies with KNDP and SDGs

**Structure.** This CCA is structured around eight chapters and begins with an executive summary, which introduces the background, objectives, and overall approach and methodology used to develop the CCA, as well as a summary of findings. The first chapter presents an overview of the country's context at the political, economic, social and environmental levels. Chapter 2 examines the national vision and development priorities in light of the recent KNDP 2020-2025 and sustainable development. Chapter 3 analyses progress made towards Agenda 2030 and the SDGs, and identifies remaining challenges. Chapter 4 examines Kuwait's commitments under UN international norms and standards. Chapter 5 highlights the cross-boundary and regional issues affecting the development context. Chapter 6 is dedicated to multidimensional risks that might affect Kuwait's development trajectory, focusing on political stability; economic stability; food security and nutrition; infrastructure and access to social services; social cohesion and migration; environment and climate; and public health. This chapter covers the human rights situation, the Leave No One Behind analysis, and the state of gender equality and women's empowerment. Chapter 7 provides the foresight and future narrative of Kuwait beyond the Covid-19 pandemic, and way forward that summarises future opportunities and potential areas of programming. Chapter 8 focuses on the financing landscape and partnership opportunities.

# 1. Country Context

## 1.1 Political and Institutional Context

### *Political Context*

The State of Kuwait is a sovereign, constitutional Arab monarchy. It enjoys a partially democratic political system in which there is separation of legislative, executive and judicial powers. Kuwait has been ruled by the Al Sabah dynasty since the mid-18th century; it became fully independent from the United Kingdom on 19 June 1961. Since this time, Kuwait has used its wealth to create a comprehensive welfare state with extensive education and healthcare facilities, and has initiated major infrastructure projects. Today, the country is one of the largest exporters of oil in the world, possessing about 8 per cent of the world's known oil reserves. The combination of large oil revenues and low numbers of Kuwaiti citizens has enabled tremendous economic development, allowing citizens to lead comfortable lives.

Kuwait established its first directly elected parliament in 1963. The National Assembly comprises 50 directly elected members who serve four-year terms. The Assembly has the power to question and dismiss ministers, including the Prime Minister, and to block legislation. Although political parties are banned, there are various interest groupings or “blocs”. Ultimate executive power is held by the Amir, who appoints the Prime Minister and the government, and usually holds the major ministries.

Kuwait is unique among its Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) peers for having a vibrant parliamentary life and a strong electoral tradition. It has a vocal National Assembly (parliament), which can reject government legislation, cross-examine cabinet ministers and challenge the will of appointed government ministers. While this allows for greater civic participation, it has also hindered decision making around needed fiscal adjustments, reforms and meaningful diversification plans.

Political tension between the executive and the legislature has been on the rise and leads to frequent cabinet reshuffles. This ongoing tension has stalled progress on the draft debt law, the tax law, the budget structure and the fiscal deficit. It has also lessened the appetite to pursue intended government reforms, including the restructuring of the civil service and public administration, as well as the implementation of urgently needed economic structural reforms and diversification plans. The ongoing political gridlock has had significant implications on assembly meetings, resulting in approval delays for the National Development Plan 2020-2025 and the national budget for 2020-2021. The results of Kuwait's most recent parliamentary elections, in 2020, signal a continuation of the political gridlock, as well as a strong turn to conservatism, with an all-male elected parliament.

### *Institutional Context*

The influx of foreign labour has led to significant population growth for Kuwait. Between 1950 and 2020, the population increased 27-fold, increasing from 150,000 to more than 4.2 million.<sup>9</sup> As a consequence, the civil service also grew significantly. The size of the public sector workforce is approximately 20 per cent of the total workforce, compared to an average of around 10 per cent internationally. The permanent civil service workforce, as of 2018, numbered some 450,000 employees – an increase of

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<sup>9</sup> BTI 2020, Kuwait Report.

11.5 per cent from 2014. Today, Kuwait has one of the highest ratios of public employees to population, at 10 per cent (compared to the international average of around 3 per cent). As of 2019, the public sector workforce has been distributed across 83 entities: 17 ministries; 12 government departments; 21 public authorities; and 16 state-owned companies.<sup>10</sup>

Public sector wages form the large majority of government expenses: for 2020-2021, this represents around 34 per cent of the budget, while subsidies account for 3 per cent, i.e., some 7.5 billion KWD.<sup>11</sup> The payment of public sector wages adds up to approximately one-third of government expenditures. This is one of the highest public wage premiums in the world and constitutes a high fiscal burden: the wage bill rose from less than 10 per cent of Kuwait's gross domestic product (GDP) in 2011 to more than 20 per cent of its GDP in 2018. This is the steepest increase among any of the GCC States.<sup>12</sup> The main driving factor for this growth in bureaucracy remains the government's guarantee of jobs for all citizens; this means the government is the largest employer in the country. The Bertelsmann Stiftung Transformation Index (BTI) country report for 2019 describes Kuwaiti bureaucracy as functional, but bloated. The Global Competitiveness Report 2019 indicated that the biggest issue about doing business in Kuwait was inefficient government bureaucracy, caused by the duplication of roles and the overstaffing of growing government entities. Kuwait's ranking slipped from 52nd in 2017-2018 to 57th in 2019-2020.

The public sector suffers from a lack of transparency, as well as red tape and corruption. Administrative decisions can be arbitrary, which can present a high risk of corruption and promote unfair competition. However, the government has been tackling these issues and, in 2019, established the Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha). The UN has supported Nazaha to develop its anti-corruption strategy and action plan, and has built the capacity of its employees, which has helped to enhance its position. The creation of Nazaha has contributed to Kuwait's ranking improving by seven places on Transparency International's annual Corruption Perceptions Index: in 2020, the improvements it had made on tackling corruption led to Kuwait being ranked 42 out of 180 countries.

The main hindrances to the full implementation of the ambitious Vision 2035 and the Kuwaiti National Development Plan (KNDP) are the political gridlock and ongoing tensions between the executive and the legislature, which lead to frequent cabinet reshuffles and delays in reforms. This situation has had an impact on the government's ability to provide high quality public services and to foster competitiveness and growth. It impedes the implementation of complex policies such as economic diversification; climate change mitigation, environmental governance and greening the economy; food security and nutrition; the transition to a knowledge-based economy; and digital governance.

## 1.2 Demographic Situation

Kuwait faces three main challenges at the demographic level: 1) the large number of foreign workers, comprising some 70 per cent of the total population, which can be labelled as "the demographic imbalance"; 2) the youth bulge; and, 3) an ageing trend, signalled by declining rates of fertility.

<sup>10</sup> Wafa Saad, *Towards an Integrated Public Administration Reform for the Digital Governance*, KPPC, 2019.

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.mof.gov.kw/MofBudget/PDF/Budget21-20eng.pdf>.

<sup>12</sup> Kuwait Ministry of Finance and TICG: *Kuwait in Transition: Towards a Post-Oil Economy*.

### *The Demographic Dilemma*

Kuwait has witnessed rapid population growth due to its reliance on foreign labour. Between 1950 and 2020, the population grew 27-fold, increasing from 150,000 to more than 4.2 million; more than two-thirds of the population are foreign workers who reside in the country on a temporary basis. Kuwait's population is made up of approximately 30 per cent Kuwaiti nationals and 70 per cent non-citizens, who work predominantly in low-paid private sector service jobs. Two economic implications of these facts are worth highlighting. Expatriates are a key determinant of the economic structure, not only in the labour market but also in the production and consumption of goods and services in the economy. For nationals, the age structure ensures a continuous influx to the labour market for years to come. Kuwait's youth population is expected to exert pressures on the physical and social infrastructure, as well as on the government to generate more jobs. In response to Members of Parliament proposing a quota system for foreign workers, the Kuwaiti Prime Minister has stressed the government's long-term goal of cutting the expatriate share of the population from 70 per cent to 30 per cent: this implies some 2.5 million migrant workers would have to leave the country, which is a clear indication of mounting political pressure to address the demographic dilemma.

### *The Youth Bulge*

In terms of population age distribution, Kuwait has a relatively high proportion of youth among its citizens (see Figure 2). The median age of Kuwaiti citizens is currently 30 years, with nearly 40 per cent of the population under the age of 30. This large youth population is both a resource and a challenge for the government. It constitutes a significant, productive future labour force that can contribute and shape the national economy and the transition to a knowledge economy. However, this means the government will need to address the poor outcomes of the education system and support youth integration in a labour market capable of absorbing them. It will indicate how well the government will be able to develop human capital.

### *Declining Fertility Rate and Ageing*

In 2020, Kuwait's fertility rate was 2.1 births per woman, with a notable decline in the fertility rate since 1960, when the birth rate was 7.244 births per woman. This means that the number of Kuwaiti citizens is expected to decline and that the number of elderly people will increase in the long run relative to the overall youth population.

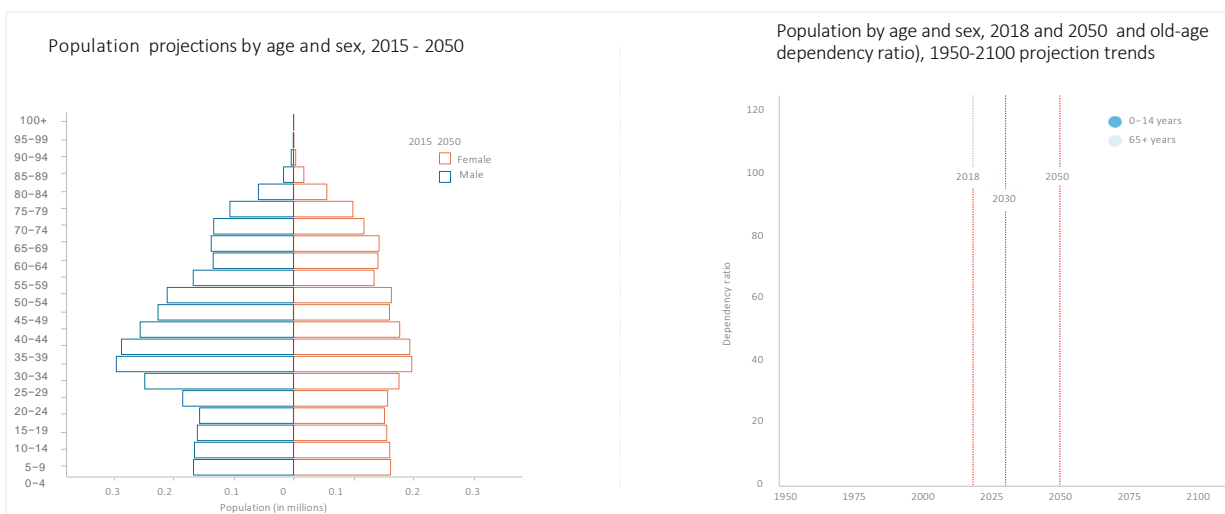


Figure 3. Kuwait population pyramid projections 2015-2030 and demographic dividend showing a shrinking trend, where the decreasing percentage of young people means that the number of workers may be insufficient to finance the pensions of future retirees.<sup>13</sup>

The decline in the rate of fertility, together with improved health care and healthcare facilities over recent decades, mean the number of people in Kuwait aged 65 and above is expected to increase dramatically over the coming decades. In 2020, the number of people aged 65 and above represented 2.83 per cent of the total population; this is projected to increase to 4.41 per cent by mid-2025, and is likely to reach 17.9 per cent by 2050.<sup>14</sup> This rapid demographic ageing trend is paralleled in epidemiological and health transitions, with non-communicable diseases replacing communicable diseases as the leading causes of morbidity and mortality. Care services for the elderly in Kuwait, including for those who suffer from ill health in later life, as well as long-term care provision, remain sparse, as does the use of formal or paid care services; however, traditionally in Kuwait, the elderly have tended to live with or near their children. At the same time, the viability of the informal, traditional forms of long-term care within the family unit are coming under threat as a result of various factors such as modernisation and urbanisation.<sup>15</sup>

The above trends signal the need to enhance healthcare services for the elderly and will require the Government of Kuwait (GoK) to improve the quality of life and health care within the country. Most importantly, these efforts need to be aligned with a more sustainable social protection model for citizens and residents.

### *Urbanisation and Impact on Population Growth*

Kuwait is one of the most highly urbanised countries in the world (urbanisation rate/percentage of population living in urban areas). Most of the population is concentrated in the Kuwait Metropolitan Area or a few other urban areas, which comprise around 8 per cent of the total area of the country. This rapidly increasing population has implications for housing, congestion and environmental pollution. Policies have

<sup>13</sup> UNICEF - MENA Generation 2030, Country Fact Sheet.

<sup>14</sup> [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/257770795\\_Healthcare\\_of\\_Aging\\_Population\\_of\\_Kuwait](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/257770795_Healthcare_of_Aging_Population_of_Kuwait) (accessed 8 June 2020).

<sup>15</sup> UNFPA Reference: "Ageing and Elderly Care in the Arab Region: Policy Challenges and Opportunities" <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12126-016-9244-8>.

been introduced by the State of Kuwait to manage population growth (i.e., health and mortality policies, population distribution and expatriate workers policies, urban-rural linkages policies).<sup>16</sup>

### 1.3 Economic Context

Kuwait is one of the leading producers and exporters of oil in the world and is a founding member of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). Oil revenues account for 90 per cent of government revenues. The high volatility of oil prices represents a risk for public spending, and Kuwait has experienced budget deficits since the 2014 global drop in oil prices. At present, there is no income tax, no tax on goods and services (such as the Value Added Tax, VAT), and no corporate tax on national businesses (with the exception of foreign businesses, which are taxed by the government).

Kuwait's economy remains heavily resource-based, and hydrocarbons and related products represent around 84 per cent of total exports. Given the slow progress being made on implementing the necessary economic reforms, the real GDP growth rate averaged around -1 per cent for the 2015-2019 period; this is lower than the GCC average of 1.7 per cent, and well below the Arab region's average growth rate of 2.5 per cent.<sup>17</sup> Kuwait's exports continue to be primarily raw materials, with little value added beyond extraction. In 2019, Kuwait ranked 4th in the Economic Complexity Index (ECI) among GCC countries, with a value of exports amounting to USD 59.8 billion. These exports were mainly to China (20.2 per cent), South Korea (16.0 per cent), India (14.7 per cent) and Japan (10.2 per cent). With the current fiscal structure, which remains excessively dependent on oil revenues to finance expenditure, the budget deficit is set to worsen sharply. The deficit for FY 2019-2020 stood at 3.9 billion KWD and is expected to further increase during FY 2020-2021 by 261.5 per cent, exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic and the ensuing disruption in global supply chains and the drop in global demand.<sup>18</sup> Despite a substantial downward revision of expected oil revenues in the revised FY 2021 budget, no significant fiscal adjustments are expected to be made in FY 2021. The revised FY 2020-2021 budget has seen a downward revision of government spending by only 1 billion KWD (relative to the initial budget announced in January 2020) and the fiscal deficit is expected to reach 14.1 billion KWD (see Figure 4).

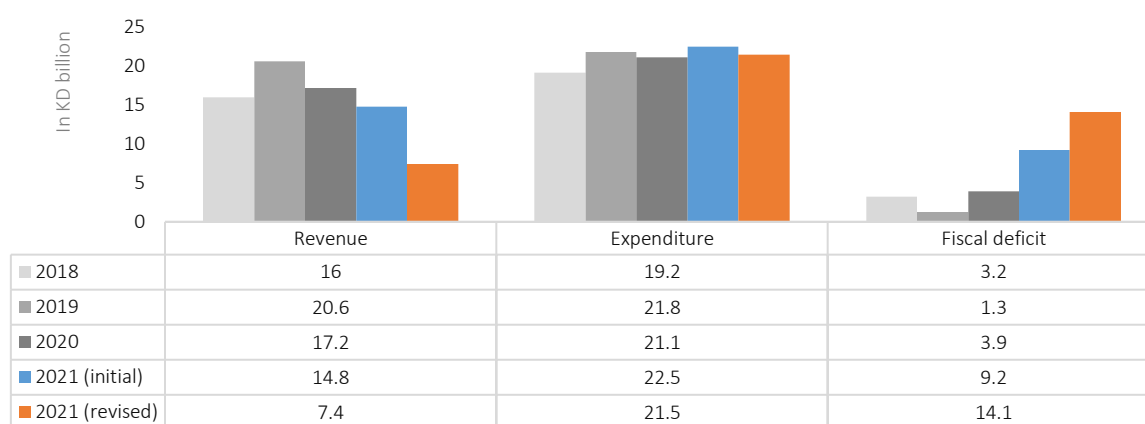


Figure 4. Kuwait's main budget items (2017-2021).

<sup>16</sup> UN-Habitat input.

<sup>17</sup> IMF, World Economic Outlook Database, October 2020.

<sup>18</sup> UNDP, Socio-Economic Assessment, draft April 2021.

While the overall government spending structure has remained largely unchanged, there was a slight reallocation within the revised budget to accommodate Covid-19 mitigation measures. Spending reductions compared to the FY 2020 budget were in the range of a high of 22 per cent (for economic affairs) and a low of 2 per cent (for spending on environmental protection). Additional spending for Covid-19-related measures focused on general public services and social protection, which saw an increase of 7 per cent and 1 per cent respectively (see Figure 5).<sup>19</sup>

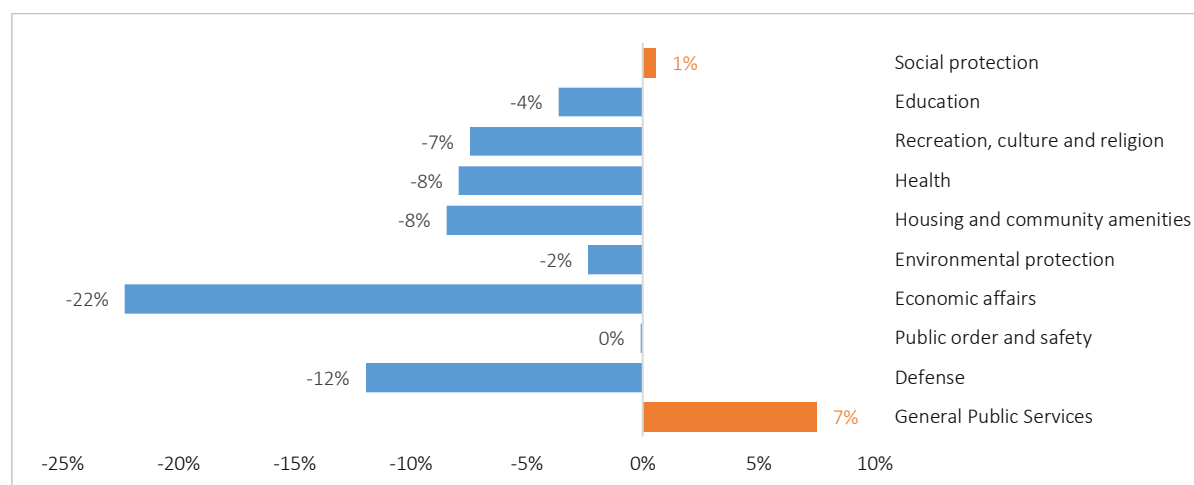


Figure 5. Government spending by functional classification (% change in FY 2021 relative to FY 2020).

**Economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.** The effect of the Covid-19 pandemic in Kuwait has been significant. By mid-May 2021, the country had registered 305,000 confirmed cases and more than 1,760 deaths.<sup>20</sup> Economic problems, already notable, were worsened by the effects of the pandemic. Having witnessed several years of low oil prices, Kuwait announced its highest-ever budget deficit in 2020, which came on the back of eight consecutive previous budget deficits. The GoK needs the oil price to be at \$90 per barrel to balance its budget; it has been struggling since the sharp drop in oil prices in 2014. Fitch, the American credit rating agency, continues to define Kuwait's status as "AA", but its future outlook has been changed to "negative", mainly due to the political instability arising from the stand-off between the government and parliament. Kuwait's parliament is adamant about rejecting proposals to borrow from international markets to cover the fiscal shortfall, and about cutting spending in the public sector. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has called for reforms in Kuwait's economy, including diversification so that the economy's well-being is less tied to oil prices; however, many projects such as the Northern Economic Zone are at a standstill, due to the impasse between the government and parliament.

**Kuwait suffers from a high level of public expenditure for subsidies,** despite the government's decision to cut fuel subsidies in 2016. So far, Kuwait has decided to keep spending levels largely unchanged, although it has faced consecutive budget deficits since the 2014 drop in global oil prices in 2014, which ended a sixteen-year-long fiscal surplus.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>19</sup> UNDP, Kuwait Socio-Economic Assessment, draft April 2021 (to be cited with exact title once finalised).

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/country/kuwait/>.



**With the legislative restriction on debt issuance, the GoK has been left with limited financing instruments to fund budget shortfall.** The General Reserve Fund (GRF) has always been a key adjustment mechanism for fiscal stability in Kuwait, shielding the effect of the boom-and-bust cycles of oil prices from the domestic economy. Since October 2017, Kuwait has been waiting for its parliament to approve the new debt law, which would increase both the debt ceiling and the borrowing period. As a result, it was unable to raise any debt financing and had to dip into the GRF – and, indeed, had exhausted it by 2020 – in order to cover its recurring deficits in the wake of the dual shock.<sup>21</sup>

**Global restrictions on movement and preventive measures to reduce the movement of goods and services that rely on transportation, as well as labour migration, have brought about overall disruptions to supply chain logistics.** These factors have impeded shipments of food, agricultural inputs and other essentials, thus threatening food security and nutrition, particularly for the most vulnerable segments of population (Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), 2020b). In Kuwait, the supply of products to consumers was affected only moderately, thanks to government competencies in maintaining the food supply during the crisis, despite incurring heavy costs. The government used a variety of instruments, and reduced risks associated with international markets. The Ministry of Commerce has developed a strategy to make food available for all by focusing on markets and mobilising the private sector. The work of the Kuwait Flour Mills and Bakeries Company has been well acknowledged in Kuwait for its contributions to ensuring food security. At the onset of the pandemic, volunteers and civil society were also significantly involved in keeping needed supplies available, as they had been affected by lockdown measures.<sup>22</sup> These efforts contributed to ensuring food was available for all, by focusing on markets, consumer needs and preferences, and most prominently mobilising the successful efforts of the private sector and civil society.

**Kuwait's economy is expected to recover with 2.4 per cent growth in 2021,** driven by a more accelerated pick-up in global energy demand and prices, while oil production levels continue to lag, only increasing at 0.2 per cent, in accordance with the OPEC+ commitment. As the vaccination programme gains increased momentum and Covid-19-related restrictions are further eased, non-oil sectors will continue their growth trajectory, estimated to reach 4.4 per cent in 2021 to reflect stronger domestic demand. Over the medium term, growth will recover even further with continued public spending and credit growth, averaging around 3.2 per cent. Inflation is expected to increase as economic activity recovers.<sup>23</sup>

At the same line, the Coface Kuwait Report 2020 predicts that after having recorded the sharpest contraction in 2020, the Kuwaiti economy is expected to slightly recover in 2021, thanks to supportive base effects, higher oil prices and looser OPEC+ oil production cuts. The improvement in the oil sector will be vital to bringing growth back into positive territory, as it accounts for some 40 per cent of the GDP. Increases in global production volumes in 2021 will boost the external demand for Kuwait's exports, as 90 per cent of the country's exports consist of oil. Consequently, net exports are expected to contribute positively to growth in 2021.

A modest recovery in oil prices should also promote non-oil activity, supported by looser social distancing measures in the absence of a second lockdown. Services, which have as much impact on the GDP as oil, are expected to experience a small recovery due to the weakness of real estate and governmental services. The implementation of the VAT in 2021 is not expected to have an impact on private demand,

<sup>21</sup> UNDP, Kuwait Socio-Economic Assessment, draft April 2021 (to be cited with exact title once finalised).

<sup>22</sup> UN-75 Talks events: "Managing broken supply chain during Covid-19 crisis in Kuwait", May 2020.

<sup>23</sup> Kuwait Outlook 2021, World Bank, April 2021, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/gcc/publication/economic-update-april-2021>.



as the government has been reluctant to cut workers' benefits and subsidies. Nevertheless, investments could remain sluggish as a result of low productivity, slow bureaucracy and labour constraints.<sup>24</sup>

## 1.4 Social Context

### Education

**The composition of the education system.** Kuwait has 777,000 children enrolled in the education system from the pre-primary to tertiary levels.<sup>25</sup> Net enrolment rates are 88 per cent at the primary level, 94 per cent at the intermediate level and 82 per cent at the upper secondary level, which corresponds to 7,000 out-of-school children at primary levels, 11,000 at intermediate levels, and 24,000 at upper secondary levels.<sup>26</sup> In Kuwait, girls are outperforming boys in learning outcomes, according to the latest Human Capital Index GCC 2020 Report (see Figure 6).

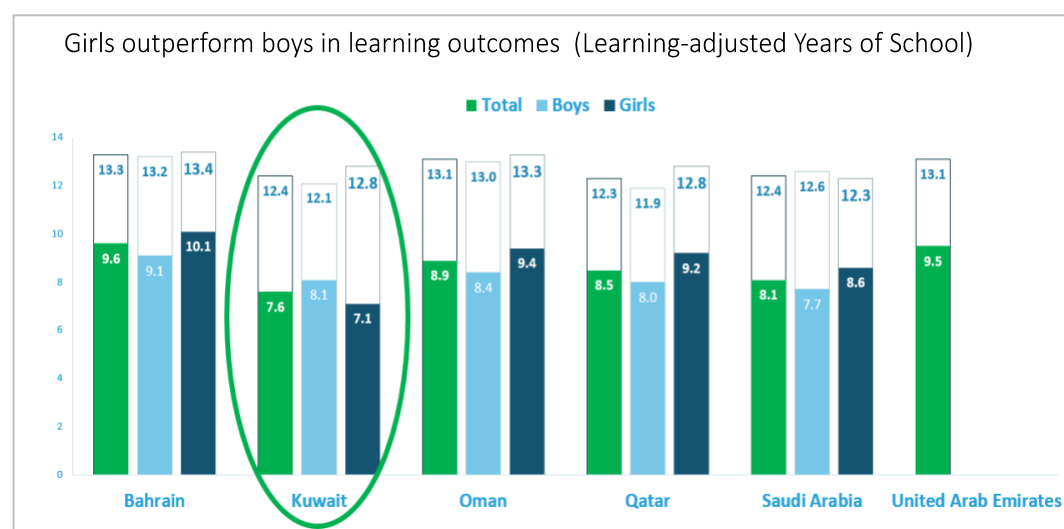


Figure 6. Sex disaggregated data in Kuwait - World Bank Human Capital Index GCC 2020 Report.

Stateless children, including the “Bidoon”, are among the out-of-school and are not entitled to state compulsory education under Act No. 1 of 1965. Children with disabilities are protected under the Disability Law and early interventions are required by law. The recent 2020 United Nations Country Team (UNCT) Alternative Report to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) notes that the GoK takes a charitable rather an empowerment and rights-based approach to providing education to children with disabilities. Many schools do not accept or are not equipped to accept children with disabilities. Furthermore, the same report notes a lack of coordination between the Ministry of Education’s (MoE) Special Education Department, which runs schools for children with physical, vision,

<sup>24</sup> Coface, Kuwait Country Memo, 2021.

<sup>25</sup> See: <https://en.unesco.org/gem-report/report/2020/inclusion>.

<sup>26</sup> See: <https://en.unesco.org/gem-report/report/2020/inclusion>.

hearing and mental impairments, and the Higher Council of Disability, which provides financial subsidies for families of children with disabilities to access private schools.<sup>27</sup>

**The country's K-12 education system is highly stratified**, consisting of public schools that primarily service Kuwaiti students (86 per cent Kuwaiti, 14 per cent non-Kuwaiti), and private and community schools that cater to expatriate and migrant student communities (73 per cent non-Kuwaiti, 27 per cent Kuwaiti). In total, 38 per cent of all students are enrolled in private education.<sup>28</sup> Despite the high levels of private school enrolment, spending for primary-level education is high at around 14 per cent of government expenditure.<sup>29</sup> The majority of this expenditure is on teachers' salaries and many teachers come from outside Kuwait, primarily from Egypt, and are offered low salaries (280-350 KWD/month).<sup>30</sup>

**Quality is challenging.** In early childhood education, there is no comprehensive or coherent framework or curriculum. The outdated K-12 curriculum and teaching and learning materials have started to be updated, but there is much work to do.<sup>31</sup> Comprehensive Sexual Education (CSE) or a curriculum that can facilitate knowledge related to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRH&Rs) is relatively absent;<sup>32</sup> instructional hours are limited, and learning by memorisation is a commonly used teaching strategy. The 2015-2020 Education Development Plan aimed to focus on quality, but the implementation status of the plan is unclear. Learning is assessed through a large-scale formal assessment in early grades and after secondary school.

**High reliance on expatriate teachers.** Given the small pool of local teachers, the majority of educators in both private and public schools are recruited from foreign countries. A total of 30,915 non-Kuwaitis, of which 17,110 were women and 13,805 men, were employed by the MoE in 2015.<sup>33</sup> To meet its obligation to employ more Kuwaiti nationals, the government is looking increasingly to replace the expatriate labour force in teaching with Kuwaiti teachers, and has announced plans to terminate the contracts of expatriate teachers in oversupplied disciplines. This decision comes at a time when high teacher turnover rates have resulted in a shortage in the basic education segment. The broader GCC already faces the second-highest teacher shortage in the world. With 7,000 new schools coming on-line in the region in the next five years, Kuwait will have to compete to meet any requirements for international educators with other countries with sizeable expatriate communities (e.g., Qatar and the UAE).

**Human capital formation and the learning gap.** According to the September 2020 World Bank Human Capital Project (HCP), Kuwaiti children are expected to complete 12.0 years of schooling; however, when this is adjusted for actual learning outcomes, children only complete on average 7.4 years, which indicates some 4.6 years of learning are lost (see Figure 7).<sup>34</sup> More than half of children (51 per cent) cannot read or understand a short age-appropriate text by the age of 10 (the learning poverty indicator), which is more than double the average of high-income countries (24 per cent).<sup>35</sup> These poor foundational skills hold students back from further learning during their school years and beyond. Inequalities in education outcomes are substantial. For example, while both boys and girls underperform, boys perform below girls

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<sup>27</sup> UNCT Kuwait Alternative Report to the UNCRC (forthcoming).

<sup>28</sup> Kuwait National Development Plan, 2020-2035.

<sup>29</sup> See: <https://en.unesco.org/gem-report/report/2020/inclusion>.

<sup>30</sup> UNCT Kuwait Alternative Report to the UNCRC (forthcoming).

<sup>31</sup> UNDP, Socio-Economic Assessment, draft April 2021.

<sup>32</sup> UNFPA.

<sup>33</sup> Kuwait Central Statistics Bureau, 2017.

<sup>34</sup> [https://databank.worldbank.org/data/download/hci/HCI\\_1pager\\_KWT.pdf?cid=GGH\\_e\\_hcpexternal\\_en\\_ext](https://databank.worldbank.org/data/download/hci/HCI_1pager_KWT.pdf?cid=GGH_e_hcpexternal_en_ext)

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/education/brief/learning-poverty>

at all levels of education, and are more likely to drop out of school or repeat grades, and are less likely to complete tertiary education.<sup>36</sup>

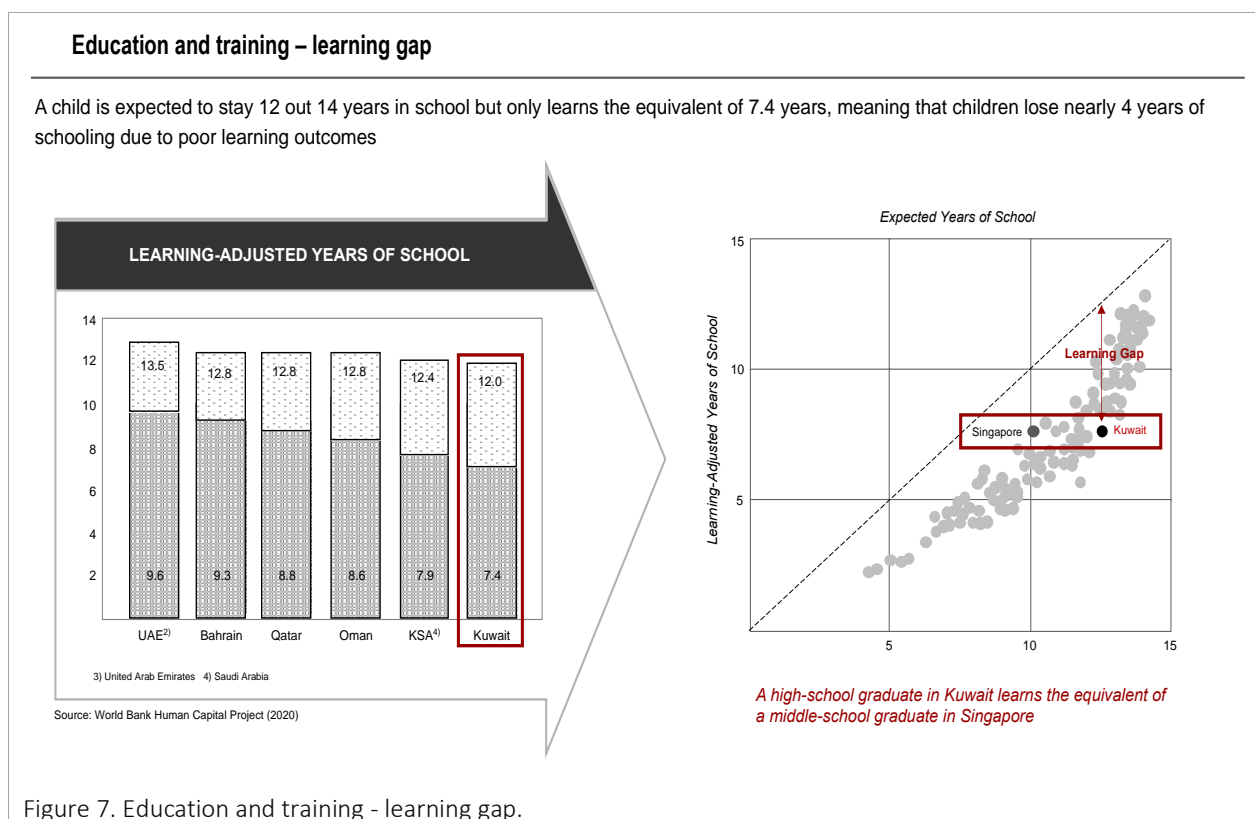


Figure 7. Education and training - learning gap.

**Impact of Covid-19 on the education sector.** The GoK suspended all public schools on 12 March 2020. This was subsequently extended until August 4 in a swift response to the Covid-19 pandemic. The UNCT Alternative Report to the UNCRC noted that the MoE transition to online education was so haphazard and chaotic that some parents and children chose not to participate during the entire 2019-2020 school year. Private schools, however, were noted as having made a better transition to online learning.<sup>37</sup> In public schools, assessment efforts were stopped for the remainder of the 2019-20 school year, and students who had successfully passed more than four subjects based on their first semester grades were automatically promoted to the next grade in the following school year. The only exception was for Grade 12 students, who continued studies through remote learning.

**Transition to online education and adoption of a hybrid model.** For the 2020-2021 school year, the MoE began remote service delivery of education on October 4 and issued technical guidance relating to the safe return to school.<sup>38</sup> The MoE planned for asynchronous learning for KG-3 and synchronous learning for Grades 4 onwards. Student attendance for virtual class settings was to be taken, and regular teacher and student engagement was expected. The MoE prepared video-recorded lessons from elementary to secondary levels for basic and specialised subjects. Guidance for specialised subjects such as physical education, differentiated by levels, was also provided. The MoE printed and distributed textbooks with

<sup>36</sup> See: <http://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/470081571223580152/MNA-MNC05-KWT-LPBRIEF.pdf>.

<sup>37</sup> UNCT Kuwait Alternative Report to the UNCRC (forthcoming).

<sup>38</sup> [https://www.moe.edu.kw/about/PublishingImages/Dalel\\_ershady.pdf](https://www.moe.edu.kw/about/PublishingImages/Dalel_ershady.pdf)

protocols for distribution to parents of students at all levels. Training was provided for teachers, parents and students at the elementary and intermediate levels for remote service delivery, with particular focus on the use of Microsoft Teams for digital classroom connections. In addition, training was provided on communications with the school, teachers, and parents via social media and other channels. In terms of student assessment, the MoE suspended all exams, both written and online, for the 2020-2021 school year. The issue of assessment remains a challenge in Kuwait, as both the MoE and schools struggle to put in place a hybrid model of education (involving a mix of online and in-person) and reach agreement on its implementation.

**Experience to date has revealed that not all students were able to engage properly with remote learning, either because of a lack of access to technology, motivation, family support or teacher skills.** The longer children are away from school, the more likely they are to disconnect from school and drop out of education. This is particularly true for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. In addition to the shock of school closures, the Covid-19 pandemic affected family incomes, putting pressure on private schools, some of which were unable to cope with the crisis or the withdrawal of fee-paying students; there was also a ripple effect on public schools, which had to absorb these students.<sup>39</sup> Furthermore, almost 2,000 non-Kuwaiti public-school teachers were laid off from the public school system and unable to return to Kuwait. Many private school teachers were laid off and unpaid.<sup>40</sup>

Building a knowledge-based economy requires the emergence of highly productive, skill-intensive sectors (beyond the few already existing in Kuwait, i.e., oil and banking) and a workforce ready to operate in these sectors. From a social investment point of view, it means developing policies that lead to the creation of human capital. The GoK needs to institutionalise the lessons learned and good practices acquired during the pandemic to accelerate the pace of online education and overall education reforms. Moving forward, this will require further investments in lifelong learning policies and programmes, a critical shift in preparing Kuwait's existing workforce to evolve into a digital economy, with the subsequent associated risks of changing employment conditions, disruption and future automation. New strategies should be developed to drive reskilling and upskilling agendas for older workers, in addition to the existing workforce. Even within the existing higher education system in Kuwait, there is a lack of incentives, financial support, policies or programmes for continued education. It is important to establish appropriate incentives for Kuwaitis to pursue and invest in their own continuing education, and to reskill themselves for the work of the future and, most importantly, to encourage them to work in the private sector.

### *Healthcare Sector*

The healthcare sector is a central priority area to achieve Kuwait Vision 2035. It aims to improve the quality and efficiency of public health services in line with international benchmarks, while boosting private sector activity. Significant improvements in healthcare outcomes have been achieved in Kuwait over the past 20 years, especially in terms of extending life expectancy and reducing infant mortality rates. The state has traditionally played a significant role in the provision of Kuwait's health care. The Ministry of Health (MoH) serves as the principal provider of health care services in Kuwait, and also regulates the conditions under which the private sector may operate.

<sup>39</sup> <https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/365801588601466966/undefined>.

<sup>40</sup> <https://gulfnews.com/world/gulf/kuwait/kuwait-expats-make-up-27-per-cent-of-teachers-for-2020-2021-academic-year-1.74399068>.

**Healthcare services are broadly structured into primary, secondary and tertiary care categories**, with small local service providers offering primary care in each area of the country as a means of reducing the burden on hospitals. Primary care is delivered through a network of health centres and clinics providing general practitioner; dentistry; maternal and childcare; laboratory; radiology; and preventive medical services. Secondary health care is provided through six general hospitals: Jahra Hospital; Amiri Hospital; the Mubarak Al Kabeer Hospital; Sabah Hospital; Farwaniya Hospital; and Al Adan Hospital. The private sector is almost entirely restricted to primary and secondary care provision, with government hospitals offering more specialised tertiary care and advanced treatments, including intensive care unit admissions and major blood transfusions.<sup>41</sup>

**The imbalance in the health workforce** was signalled as one of the most urgent issues in Kuwait's health system, which relies heavily on an expatriate workforce.<sup>10</sup> Overseas workers account for 62 per cent of doctors and 94 per cent of nurses.<sup>11</sup> There remains an absence of health workforce plans and management systems in Kuwait. For this reason, there are many human resources gaps in the health sector, particularly at the intersection of requirements and available workforce, including doctors, dentists, pharmacists, nurses, technicians, emergency medical technicians, paramedics and in public health management.<sup>12</sup> According to Public Authority for Civil Information (PACI) statistics, the ratio of skilled health professionals per population of 1,000 is 6.8, which meets the World Health Organization's (WHO) threshold of 3.45 skilled health professionals (nurses, midwives, physicians, etc.) per 1,000 population: this is a standard which has emerged in the context of universal health coverage. However, these ratios were shown to be insufficient for the challenges faced by the health system during the pandemic, which led to the urgent recruitment of skilled health professionals from abroad (e.g., from Cuba and Pakistan) in order to address the needs-based shortages.

**Private vs. public health care coverage** in Kuwait varies as a result of the different rights granted to nationals and expatriates residing in the country. Kuwaiti nationals are entitled to free public health care, while expatriates (or their employer) have to pay a fee, albeit a small one (50 KWD), with each residency renewal to access government healthcare. It should also be noted that the vast majority of expatriates in Kuwait are male labourers who receive lower wages, which may help to explain the following statistics:

- Among nationals who use outpatient services, around 40 per cent use private centres, while 51 per cent use public centres (the remaining 9 per cent use oil sector health centres);
- Among expatriates, only 29 per cent use private health centres, while 66 per cent use public institutions for outpatient services;
- Among Kuwaiti nationals who use inpatient services, around 14 per cent use private centres, while 81 per cent use public centres.
- Among expatriates, 64 per cent use public health centres, while 35 per cent use private health centres.<sup>42</sup>

**Kuwait's burden of disease statistics** provides an additional dimension with which to frame key health outcomes. The country has an extremely high percentage of individuals with diabetes (15.8 per cent) and ranks 11th worldwide for obesity (37.9 per cent); this does not take into account the proportion of people classified as being overweight. Diabetes and obesity bring with them a number of complications that

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<sup>41</sup> <https://oxfordbusinessgroup.com/overview/keeping-pace-population-growth-fuels-rapid-development-health-services>.

<sup>42</sup> Kuwait Health Report 2020, <https://mussaad.medium.com/kuwait-2020-health-report-5d62412ad05a>.

include an increased risk of cardiovascular disease, stroke, diabetic nephropathy and neuropathy, all of which contribute to an increased burden on the healthcare system (Figures 8 and 9).

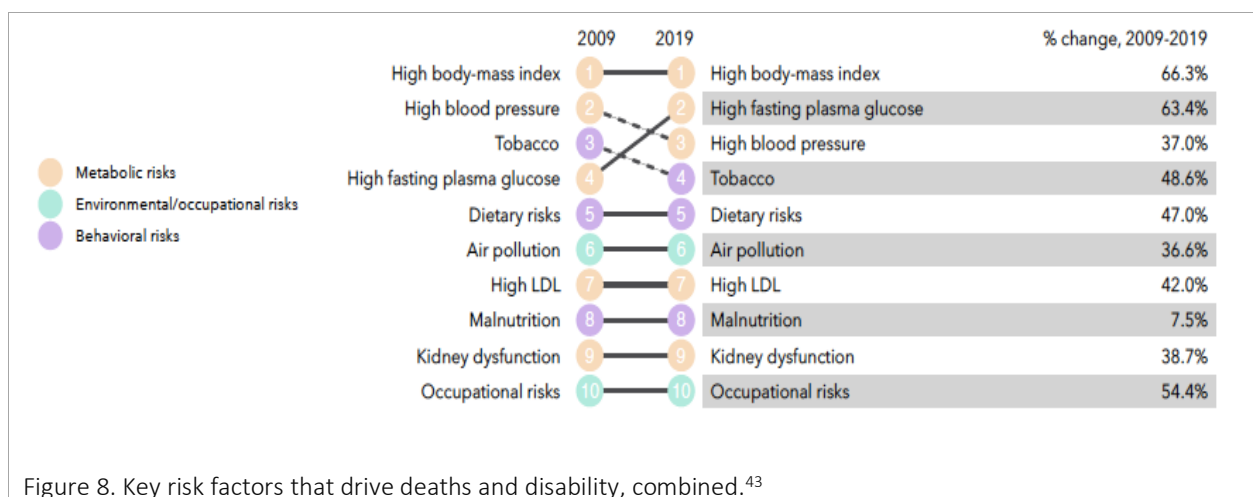


Figure 8. Key risk factors that drive deaths and disability, combined.<sup>43</sup>

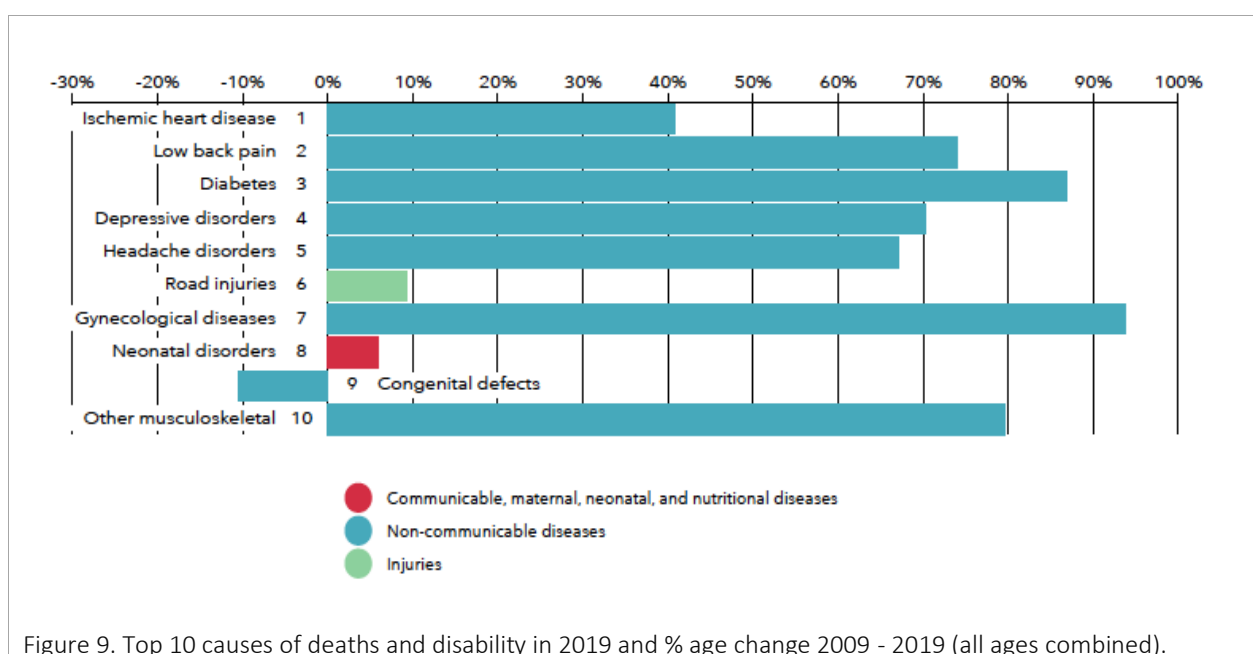


Figure 9. Top 10 causes of deaths and disability in 2019 and % age change 2009 - 2019 (all ages combined).

**Kuwait spends around 4 per cent of its GDP on healthcare**, while other countries of similar population size and GDP spend far more. This indicates that Kuwait's primary driver of healthcare expenditure is the *public sector*, which accounts for 84 per cent of the roughly 2.5 billion KWD (US\$8.23 billion) spent per year. Almost a decade ago, the 2011-2012 GoK budget was the first in which the MoH spent more than 1 billion KWD (US\$3.3 billion) on the public healthcare system. Today, that same MoH budget is more than 2 billion KWD. Overall, Kuwait has invested in its healthcare system at a rate that is proportionally higher

<sup>43</sup> Source: [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(20\)30925-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(20)30925-9).

than most other GCC countries. As a result, the public hospital sector has significantly increased its capacity. Kuwait currently has 20 public hospitals, and the new Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Hospital is considered to be the largest in the Middle East.

**State-sponsored medical tourism for Kuwaiti nationals has been identified as a financial burden** on the government budget and, to a certain extent, the way the programme is used constitutes an abuse of the process. The founding principle of this programme was intended as a response to the lack of specialist surgical and non-surgical procedures in Kuwait, due to the small size of the patient population; however, this has led to abuses of the system as a result of the benefits associated with the programme. In June 2019, a ministerial decree was announced to further reduce medical tourism expenditure. This is reflected in the 2019-2020 budget report, published by the Ministry of Finance (MoF), which stated that 250 million KWD (US\$822 million) had been allocated to treatment abroad. Compare this to the previous budget, for 2018-2019, which allocated 373 million KWD (or US\$1.23 billion). Further rationalisation of health expenditures and a reform of the mode of health financing in are becoming essential to achieving equitable and efficient healthcare services. A reform of this nature could help the GoK in to improve its healthcare indicators.

#### **The implications of the Covid-19 pandemic on the healthcare sector<sup>44</sup>**

**Government actions.** The High Committee for Crisis Management, headed by the Prime Minister, decided on significant courses of action for Kuwait's coronavirus response. The Health Emergencies Committee, headed by the Minister of Health, coordinated the details of the coronavirus response. The GoK took prompt actions as a response to the Covid-19 pandemic, including measures relating to international travel, curfews, social distancing, public transportation and the prevention of transmission.

**The hospital capacity burden.** From May-November 2020, Kuwait's hospital bed capacity was over-occupied by patients receiving treatment for Covid-19. In 2019, the national hospital bed capacity, including public and private hospitals, had been estimated at around 8,625;<sup>39</sup> during the pandemic, the number of patients exceeded the number of available national hospital beds from May 15 (9,124 patients) to November 14 (8,604 patients).

**Limited access to general medical treatment facilities.** From March-July 2020, clinics and hospitals were closed to outpatients because hospitals were full of Covid-19 patients. According to a YouGov survey commissioned by Gilead Sciences Middle East, 54 per cent of survey respondents in Kuwait wanted to avoid going to a hospital for general health needs while the global pandemic was active.<sup>45</sup> As a result, chronic diseases and other health issues became less of a priority, while diseases requiring laboratory testing went undiagnosed. The same survey found that 60 per cent of respondents preferred telehealth or remote access to healthcare professionals for their health needs while the Covid-19 pandemic was active.<sup>46</sup>

**Vulnerability to infection of Covid-19 for low-income expatriates.** In the early stages of the pandemic, the majority of infected cases were among low-income expatriate workers. Once full lockdown measures had been implemented, the trends of the incidence rate among expatriates began to slow down. One study analysing the first 1,123 Covid-19 positive patients in Kuwait shows that 26 per cent were Kuwaiti

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<sup>44</sup> UNDP socioeconomic analysis- initial draft April 7, 2021.

<sup>45</sup> <https://www.pressreader.com/kuwait/arab-times/20201109/281663962531416>.

<sup>46</sup> <https://www.arabtimesonline.com/news/54-of-kuwait-residents-delaying-healthcare-appointments/>.

nationals, while 73 per cent were non-Kuwaiti; non-Kuwaitis were two times as likely to die from the disease. The pandemic has amplified societal and structural inequalities that have existed in the health system among marginalised subpopulations. Further studies and research are needed to examine factors affecting vulnerable populations and the barriers to their full access to health services.

**Mental health issues and domestic violence for women and people with disabilities.** According to a joint survey of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Kuwait Public Policy Centre (KPPC) during the Covid-19 pandemic,<sup>47</sup> women and people with disabilities experienced significant mental health issues and domestic violence. The survey revealed that 59.8 per cent of women were suffering from depression during the pandemic. It also showed that 32.4 per cent of people with disabilities experienced severe or extremely severe anxiety, while 40.7 per cent experienced severe psychological distress.

**On Reproductive Health:** The advanced state-funded health care system in Kuwait also provides free RH services and relevant treatment to citizens while expatriates pay nominal fees for non-emergency health services and government-subsidized medications. Certain countries with higher population growth such as Kuwait have a state-funded health care system, suggesting the multifactorial contributors to successful family planning. The methods adopted by couples are likely influenced by sociocultural practices and the health care infrastructure. Further studies are needed to understand the effect of COVID-19 on access to family planning services across the Region.<sup>48</sup>

The pandemic has revealed key weaknesses and priority areas in the healthcare system in which the UN can further support the GoK. 1) Enhance the emergency preparedness and response capacities; optimise the health workforce to address emerging health security threats and future pandemics, as a key strategy.<sup>49</sup> 2) Establish and implement a comprehensive healthcare workforce plan and management system to optimise the capacity and capabilities of the healthcare workforce for current and future needs, and implement a healthcare competency and performance management process. 3) Enhance mental health and community-based services, with special attention given to the most vulnerable segments. 4) Support healthcare system reforms to improve healthcare governance, access to services, improvements to healthcare funding, and insurance to ease access to healthcare for vulnerable groups and the overall operational healthcare capacity. A further major area to consider is how to expand the role of the private sector, and how to leverage ICT to enable a transition to e-health and promote innovative technologies.

### *Food Security, Nutrition and Sustainable Agriculture*

Achieving food security and improving nutrition are among the top priority directions of Kuwait, in line with the Vision 2035 and the National Development Five-Year Plan 2020-2025, and its commitment to the Sustainable Development Agenda 2030. The latest available estimates indicate<sup>50</sup> that in the 2017-19 period, **the prevalence of severe food insecurity** was 4.9 per cent and the prevalence of moderate or severe food insecurity was 12.3 per cent. During the same period, the prevalence of undernourishment in the total population was < 2.5 per cent. Kuwait still experiences a malnutrition burden among its under-five population. During 2017-2019, the prevalence stunting among under-fives was 6.4 per cent, the

<sup>47</sup> Survey methods are described in the previous report (Chun S, Salman A, 2020).

<sup>48</sup> Source: UNFPA

<sup>49</sup> WHO (2017) Country cooperation strategy at a glance: Kuwait.

<sup>50</sup> All the data in this paragraph have been extracted from: FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO. 2020. The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2020. *Transforming food system for affordable healthy diets*. Rome, FAO.



prevalence of wasting among under-fives was 3.1 per cent, and the prevalence of being overweight among under-fives was 5.5 per cent. Kuwait's adult population also faced a malnutrition burden during the 2017-19 period. The prevalence of anaemia among women of reproductive age was 23.8 per cent, while the prevalence of obesity in adults was 37.9 per cent.

**The agriculture sectors face significant challenges such as the severe scarcity of fresh water, limited arable land, land degradation** (i.e., soil erosion, vegetation degradation), salinisation and harsh weather conditions, and the overfishing of some wild stocks (e.g., kingfish), which create significant obstacles to achieving food security and improving nutrition. Kuwait has the lowest amount of renewable fresh resources in the world. Some 95 per cent of the country's water supply comes from non-conventional water resources, i.e., desalinated sea water, treated municipal wastewater and brackish underground water. Only 5 per cent is supplied from fresh groundwater, the only conventional water source. 65 per cent or more of reclaimed water is being used in green sectors, mainly for landscape irrigation and fodder production.<sup>51</sup> The large amount of groundwater used for irrigation produces negative effects on soil quality (e.g., increased salinisation). The desalination of water brings environmental costs associated with the production of brine.

**The annual supply of fish per capita is low and Kuwait is highly reliant on imports.** Domestic production from the fisheries has been on the decline since the 1990s. Aquaculture production remains limited. Building resilience for the sector implies protecting the health and livelihoods of its stakeholders (i.e., fishers, fish farmers, fish processors and traders) by means of emergency measures during crises (e.g., Covid-19 outbreak), and investing in the development of a resilient sector over the long term. For capture fisheries, management measures should be implemented to protect overexploited fish stocks; illegal, unreported or unregulated fishing should be combatted in accordance with the Port State Measures Agreement.

**Agricultural land and water for livestock are scarce in Kuwait.** There is a lack of low-cost alternatives for forage production. More diversified forage production systems, i.e., more efficient water and soil use and less environmental impact on land, are crucial to achieve long-term sustainability. Long-term transformation would require a focus on diversification; markets; improving supply chain bottlenecks; investments in sustainable livestock production; biosecurity; and the control and eradication of animal diseases, including zoonotic diseases.

**Domestic food production is unable to meet local food demand, and Kuwait is import-dependent.** For some key products, such as cereals, sugar and milk, the import dependency ratio reaches 100 per cent. In recent years, the development of agri-tech and domestic agricultural production has become a key issue for Kuwait, as the GoK has highlighted the importance of food security.

**The implications of the Covid-19 pandemic on food security:** Kuwait has demonstrated strong commitment in curbing the coronavirus and has addressed the impact on all sectors. **Measures were geared to ensure food availability for all by focusing on markets, consumer needs and preferences** and, most prominently mobilising the successful efforts of the private sector.<sup>52</sup> The GoK has emphasised the importance of food security and nutrition. **Issues of food loss and waste, overweight and obesity, and**

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<sup>51</sup> Source AQUASTAT: <http://www.fao.org/aquastat/en/countries-and-basins/country-profiles/country/KWT>.

<sup>52</sup> <http://www.fao.org/in-action/fapda/tool/index.html#main.html>.

**noncommunicable diseases (NCDs)** have received increasing attention and will need to be addressed within a thorough, cross-sectoral framework.

**The food system presents a huge opportunity to act to improve dietary habits.** For this reason, it is vital to promote healthy diets across the food system, focusing on awareness-raising campaigns to advise all segments of society of the importance of maintaining a healthy diet. In addition, there is a need for behavioural changes relating to healthy diets. To improve diet and nutrition, sustainable aquaculture should be supported across the food system, with a focus on value addition, supporting packaging and freezing storage, or encouraging government's purchases. It is the same for chicken and livestock.

**Digital platforms** are becoming a priority as they provide a unique opportunity to develop greater efficiency, transparency and traceability.<sup>53</sup> Particular attention has been given to e-commerce; providing larger benefits for farmers to access markets; and reducing waste.

**Biosecurity concerns are becoming more fundamental.** The Covid-19 pandemic has revealed the need to prepare for, prevent and respond to zoonotic diseases in areas where similar threats may take hold. Collaboration using the One Health approach to address pandemic threats and priority zoonotic diseases to support national platforms focusing on emerging priorities require due consideration.

### *Social Protection and the Welfare System*

**Kuwait's welfare system is typical of a rentier welfare state,** financially independent from society, in which the prime function of the state is to redistribute resources to society. This is due to the historical presence of abundant oil resources that, combined with a small population, has allowed the state to design a generous welfare system, one in which citizens, regardless of gender, receive free healthcare, free education, a public sector job (for life) and an interest-free loan to build a family house. In addition, Kuwaiti citizens receive subsidised energy (notably electricity and water) and basic food items through the distribution of ration cards. The state is thus the main provider of social welfare – including jobs for citizens – and covers these expenses through the sale of oil. **Kuwait's welfare policies are inextricably linked to citizenship in a country in which access to citizenship is accompanied by considerable benefits in terms of access to the state's welfare provisions.** Kuwait's expatriate population does not have access to the welfare benefits provided to Kuwaiti citizens.

**Many welfare benefits are constitutionally enshrined as rights for Kuwaiti citizens,** and the constitution mentions the role of the state as caretaker. Article 11 states: "The State ensures aid for citizens in old age, sickness or inability to work. It also provides them with services of social security, social aid and medical care." Free education is a constitutionally enshrined right for Kuwaitis; the expatriate population, the stateless (e.g., the Bidoon), and the children of Kuwaiti women married to expatriates, are excluded from this right. Other universal services such as subsidies on products are accessible for all inhabitants of Kuwait. In recent years, however, electricity and water prices have increased in residential buildings inhabited by expatriates. Public health care is free for Kuwaitis, while expats pay an annual fee to access public health care and must pay additional costs for certain services. In recent years, due to the growing pressure on the welfare system and the increase of populist debate in parliament, the expatriate population has been targeted by measures aimed at reducing welfare spending.

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<sup>53</sup> <http://www.fao.org/3/CA2885EN/ca2885en.pdf>.

**The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted existing weaknesses in Kuwait's social ecosystem.** Hundreds of expatriates lost their jobs during this pandemic: many did not receive pay for several months, while others found themselves stranded without the means to return home. These individuals had limited access to financial support; with the absence of a functional social safety net, they found it difficult to fulfil their basic needs. Without the means to earn an income during subsequent lockdowns, many were unable to feed themselves and their families. For most, no source of income meant no food and no way of purchasing basic necessities. Kuwaiti civil society, businesses and charities came together during the Covid-19 pandemic to address basic needs for those in precarious situations, to fill gaps in the provision of food supplies and basic needs, as well as in healthcare services and the provision of other types of social support. However, this serves as **further evidence of current policy gaps in Kuwait's welfare system.** **Within the broader scope of reforming Kuwait's social safety network, these dimensions need to be addressed to ensure future reforms support social cohesion and inclusion.**

**Income inequality.** Overall, the average Kuwaiti GDP per capita of Kuwait's total population (including expatriates) in 2018 was recorded as US\$33,537.90 (equivalent to 266 per cent of the world's average). Income inequality among Kuwait's population is high. According to the Credit Suisse Research Institute, the Gini Coefficient of Income Distribution for 2018 was 80.9 per cent. Income inequality in Kuwait is mostly due to the presence of labour market segmentation between Kuwaiti nationals and non-Kuwaitis. Around 50 per cent of employed Kuwaiti nationals earn more than 1,200 KWD per month (around 175,000 individuals), while of the expats working in the private sector, only 1.2 per cent earn above this amount (representing some 15,000 jobs). Kuwait was the first country in the GCC to have set a minimum monthly wage for low-skilled and domestic workers of 60 KWD (about US\$200 – or US\$ 2,400 per year).

**Poverty line.** There is no uniformity as to the definition in Kuwait of when an individual is considered to be in poverty. **Kuwait considers a Kuwaiti citizen to be vulnerable if they maintain an income of less than 559 KWD per month (~US\$1,850).** This is the equivalent to the minimum monthly salary of a public sector worker. Any Kuwaiti citizens earning below this amount will have access to social benefits. This amount is around nine times higher than the minimum wage of 60 KWD per month paid to some 600,000 domestic workers and low-skilled workers.

**The recent pandemic has triggered a higher demand on social protection programmes.** Social protection systems play a key role in preventing social risks and are considered to be a coping mechanism when the social risk is realised. The pandemic has affected many categories of the population, especially those who were initially vulnerable (e.g., people with disabilities, low-skilled workers or stateless groups such as the Bidoon). This has increased the demand on social protection programmes (i.e., cash transfers, unemployment benefits, free health care, etc.) and consequently increased financial pressure on the government. Kuwait already has a generous, comprehensive social protection system; however, it is only for Kuwaiti citizens. This welfare and social protection system is made up of workers social insurance schemes and social assistance programmes for the neediest populations.

**The existing social safety system and related policies target 15 categories of Kuwaitis considered to be vulnerable populations:** housewives; divorced women; the elderly; the financially needy; unmarried women; Kuwaiti women married to non-Kuwaitis; student families; people with disabilities; the sick; families of prisoners; widows; students abroad; orphans; adopted children; and addicted inmates released from prison.

**Demand for social assistance programmes had been increasing** before the pandemic, according to the World Bank. The number of beneficiaries had risen to 42,641 people and 48,275 families in December 2019, up from 14,064 people and 20,979 families in 2010. The demand for these programmes has increased because of the pandemic, given that many workers have lost their jobs. The cost of all of these programmes was already high before the pandemic, having reached 0.27 billion KWD in 2016 and 1.2 billion KWD in 2020, representing 2.8 per cent of GDP.

**Sustainability issues.** The current wealth distribution system is inefficient and unequitable. The GoK is increasingly faced with fiscal issues as oil incomes fluctuate and (since 2014) decrease, and as current spending increases due in particular to a high wage and pension bill and the generous welfare system. Some long-term demographic dynamics further burden the welfare system such as the declining birth rate and the ageing Kuwaiti population. The sustainability of the system is increasingly in question. Current spending on salaries and transfers dominates total government expenditure, crowding out development spending on infrastructure and projects. Figure 10 shows that government transfers to the Kuwait's Public Institution for Social Security (PIFSS) alone in some years have been larger than government net capital expenditure. In addition, the cost of salaries is more than twice as large, and has been trending rapidly upwards, more than doubling over the last decade.<sup>54</sup>

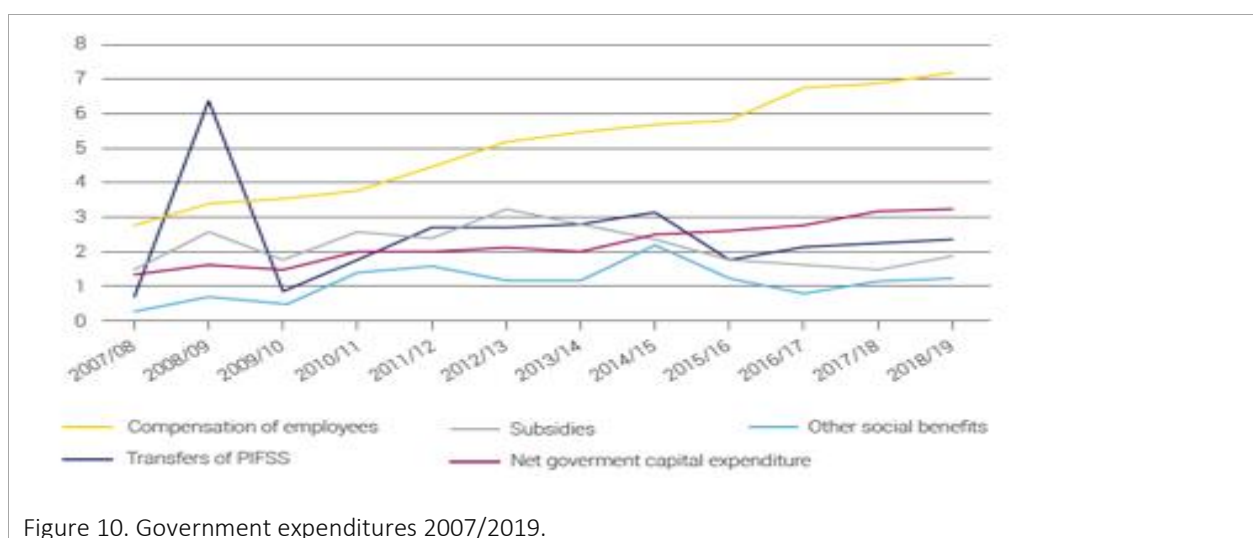


Figure 10. Government expenditures 2007/2019.

Moving forward, the Kuwaiti welfare system needs to diversify its sources of income by increasing the share of social contributions from employees and employers. The welfare system needs also to be drastically reformed to become fiscally sustainable for future generations, more inclusive, fairer and more transparent, and benefit lower-income households specifically. There is an urgent need to consolidate existing social safety tools and introduce stringent means-testing, a policy that is currently not applied for political and administrative reasons. The concept of general wealth sharing needs to rethink those benefits that are higher cost (such as excess public employment or energy subsidies), while keeping those benefits that are not so expensive (such as rental and housing support, marriage grants and food subsidies). This would enable the GoK to build the political justification for reforming existing social safety and security mechanisms, which are currently inefficient and fragmented and, in many cases, benefit

<sup>54</sup> Steffen Hertog, *Reforming Wealth Distribution in Kuwait, Estimating Costs and Impacts*. LSE Middle East. 2020.

higher-income households more than lower-income ones.<sup>55</sup> Most importantly, there is an urgent need to ensure that any future reforms of the safety net will include vulnerable groups that include non-citizens.

### *Labour Market*

**A heavy reliance on foreign labour** has been a significant pillar of Kuwait's economic structure. Over the past decades, expatriate workers have played a crucial role by helping to address shortages of workers and skills, thus cushioning the economy from overheating due to wage pressures. The economy has been locked in a low productivity growth pattern by existing laws that do not protect all workers; diminished workers' negotiation rights; a lack of adequate social protection for non-citizens; very low mandated minimum wages; low input and participation from trade unions and chambers of commerce in economic, labour and social policy development; and the availability of cheap, low-skilled workers. This has had the effect of binding the low-skilled workers to an employer, while affecting the skills development, career choices and growth prospects of Kuwaiti nationals. Over time, a dual labour market has emerged in which expatriate workers predominately occupy private sector jobs, while the vast majority of nationals work in the public sector.

**Low productivity pattern.** The current labour market structure is not conducive to supporting economic diversification and moving to a higher value-added economic structure. The majority of the labour force is low-skilled; one-third of the workforce is illiterate or has elementary-level education, and two-thirds have less than secondary-level education. Non-oil growth in Kuwait has been driven by factor input, while the role of total factor productivity (TFP) has been negative. Labour productivity growth has been negative, reflecting the abundant supply of low-skilled workers and the lack of incentives for firms to invest in capitalisation and for workers to invest in upskilling.<sup>56</sup>

**The labour market is highly segmented along sectoral, nationality and gender lines.** Around 85 per cent of working Kuwaitis are government employees, and those in the private sector are concentrated in a few highly paid sectors such as finance, insurance and mining. The private and household sectors are the main employers for the non-Kuwaiti workforce. Expatriates are mostly low-skilled, with more than two-thirds having only intermediate or primary-level education; this is in contrast to employed nationals, who have mostly above secondary-level education.<sup>57</sup> However, some 69 per cent of Kuwaitis enrolled in universities major in humanities and the arts, while only 31 per cent specialise in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. Kuwait also has significant labour market heterogeneity across genders and age groups, **with higher unemployment among youth.** Kuwaiti women are less likely to participate in the labour force than Kuwaiti men (30.8 per cent and 47.7 per cent in 2017, respectively) and face higher unemployment rates. Women's unemployment in the 15-24 years' age group almost doubles men's in the same age bracket (37.1 per cent for female nationals versus 20.5 per cent for male nationals).<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> IMF, Kuwait Selected Issues, 2015 <https://www.elibrary.imf.org/view/journals/002/2015/328/article-A005-en.xml>

<sup>57</sup> IMF Country Report No. 15/328

<sup>58</sup> Kuwait Central Bureau Statistics, 2018.

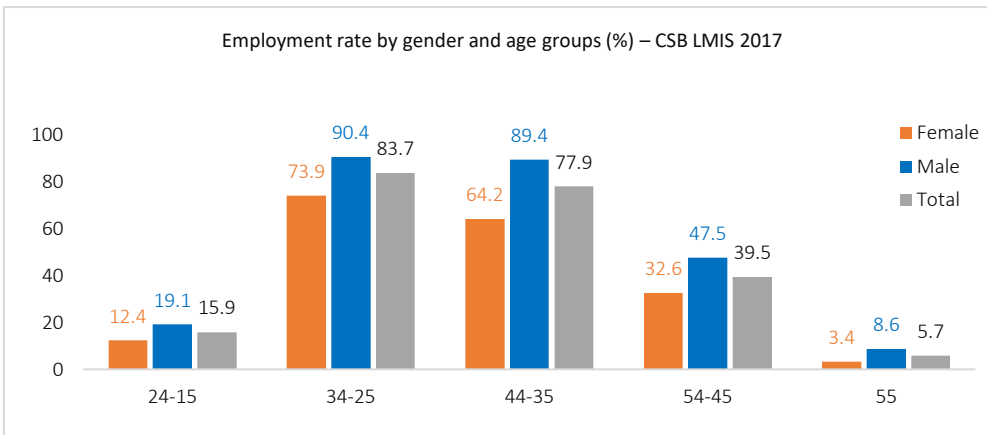
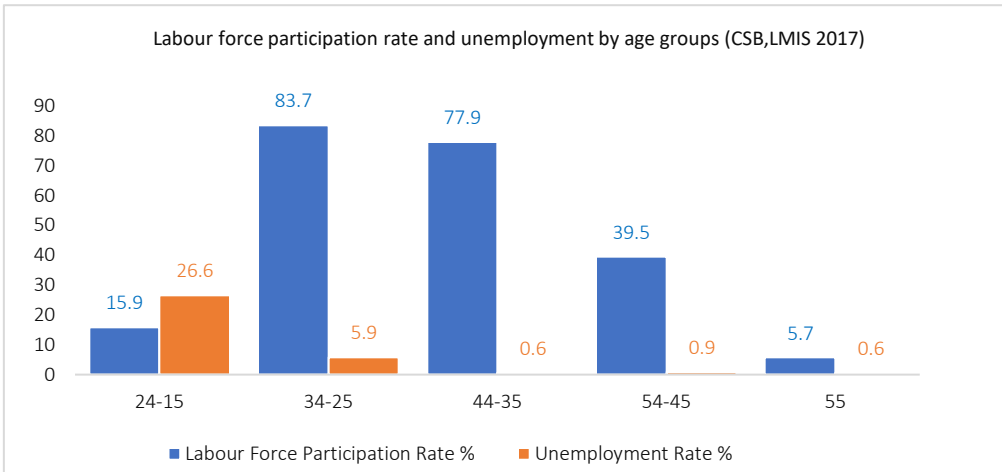


Figure 11. Labour force participation rate and unemployment by age groups (CSB, LIS 2017).

**Kuwait labour market structures lack the right incentives to create a dynamic, skilled workforce capable of sustaining an expansion of Kuwaiti nationals joining the private sector.** Current policies to address labour market distortions and keep unemployment among nationals low through public employment, quotas and permanent wage subsidy programmes in the private sector are neither effective nor sustainable in the long run. The policies need to be underpinned by educational and training reforms, as well as labour policies to improve skills, pay and productivity in the private sector; working conditions and job safety and protection; strong social security systems; freedom of association; and the right to join unions. In other words, the need is for human-centred policies that address all the decent work deficit that is widespread in the labour market.<sup>59</sup>

**Recent measures to slash the numbers of migrant workers.** As of May 2021: a total of 447,000 residency permits were cancelled in 2020; 276,000 in the private sector; 14,000 in the government sector; 94,000 in

<sup>59</sup> ILO

the domestic labour sector; and 63,000 family or dependent visas.<sup>60</sup> The GoK announced a set of measures to further reduce the number of foreign workers in line with government orientations to reach 30 per cent; this means that the existing expatriate population (skilled and low-skilled), estimated at 3.4 million, is to be reduced by 2.4 million.

**Income disparity and wage gaps.** Labour market compensation in Kuwait is characterised by a considerable wage gap between Kuwaitis and expatriate workers. The average monthly wage of a Kuwaiti citizen active in the labour market is 1447 KWD (private sector 1205 KWD versus 1533 KWD in the public sector). For female Kuwaiti citizens, the average wage in the private sector is 938 KWD (versus 1,474 KWD for males) and 1302 KWD in the public sector (versus 1871 KWD for males). On the other hand, the average monthly wage for non-Kuwaitis in the private sector is 289 KWD, while for female non-Kuwaitis it is 402 KWD. For non-Kuwaiti males, the average public sector wage is 757 KWD, and for female non-Kuwaitis it is 681 KWD. **These numbers reveal a gender wage gap across all categories, with the exception of private sector non-Kuwaiti workers.** In contrast, the expatriate labour force within the same age category maintained a mean income of between 176-188 KWD per month.

The median wage of a Kuwaiti citizen with primary or lower-level education was 850 KWD per month in 2015, whereas for a non-Kuwaiti this figure was 100 KWD per month. In terms of the relative ratio, the gap between low-skilled Kuwaitis and foreigners is the largest, with Kuwaitis being paid around eight times more than foreigners. From an employer's perspective, foreigners have the largest cost advantage in the low- to medium-skilled labour market segments.<sup>61</sup> Kuwaiti citizens with a university degree maintained a median wage of 1,350 KWD per month, compared to a median wage of 490 KWD a month for expatriates with a university degree. **Existing private sector jobs held by foreigners almost all pay very low wages (around 96 per cent are less than 600 KWD/month)** and only around 60,000 of the 1.61 million foreigners earned more than that amount.<sup>62</sup>

Existing labour market structures lack appropriate incentives to create a dynamic, skilled workforce capable of sustaining an expansion of Kuwaiti nationals joining the private sector. Current policies to address labour market distortions and keep unemployment among nationals low through public employment, quotas, and permanent wage subsidy programmes in the private sector are neither effective nor sustainable in the long run. They need to be underpinned by educational and training reforms, as well as labour policies to improve skills, pay and productivity in the private sector.

### *Housing Issue*

One of the most critical issues affecting young Kuwaitis is **the ongoing housing crisis**. Certain benefits come with being a Kuwaiti citizen, one of which is that every Kuwaiti family has the right to obtain a house or plot of land, regardless of income or personal wealth. By doing this, the government aims to make its distribution of homes among Kuwaiti families equal; however, the policy has in fact fostered inequality. Some Kuwaitis who did not need government homes have still obtained them, and use them for speculative purposes. This practice, plus the scarcity of housing, has driven up real estate prices to the point where very few can afford to buy a home. Today, many young Kuwaitis are worried about their chances of securing housing in the immediate future for several reasons: (1) land prices in Kuwait are very

<sup>60</sup> Al-Qabas daily quoting the migration report of the Central Statistics Bureau for the year 2020. Actual Report was not accessible for exact referencing.

<sup>61</sup> Steffen Hertog, Reforming wealth distribution in Kuwait, LSE Middle East Countries, 2017

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

high, usually averaging around 250,000 KWD for a 400 square metre plot, which is the average sized plot in the country; (2) mortgages from commercial banks are difficult to obtain; (3) there is a lack of different types of housing, as houses and apartments are the only available choices available; and (4) the results of housing welfare efforts show that **supply levels are still below their targets, where delays in setting up housing companies as a means for involving the private sector in housing welfare, in addition to weak operational capacity and delays in completing existing projects, have all caused the housing demand crisis to escalate.**

**Access to housing remains a challenge for Kuwaiti women, particularly divorced women from low-income groups.** Women are excluded from Kuwait's low-interest loan policy, which is an initiative provided to married men to encourage them to build their own homes. Kuwait's housing law also forbids Kuwaiti women from owning government-supplied or subsidised housing that is available to Kuwaiti men by virtue of their position as rab al'usra (heads of families). The only exception to this law is for divorced women with children, who can claim a rent allowance if they do not intend to remarry and have no one to support them.

**Unsustainable provision of land and housing.** The demand for housing is much higher than the supply. As of 2020, 91,077 Kuwaitis were on the waiting list for a government-subsidised house, according to statistics from the Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW). Last year, PAHW witnessed the highest number of people added to the waiting list, around 6,260. **Access to land rather than a shortage of land is the problem.** The government is exacerbating the issue by building housing projects in areas that require long commutes to work, in places with no general amenities that are located away from Kuwait City, where many family members live.<sup>63</sup> An additional examination of the **system of housing provision and legislation could shed light on the way the distributive property mechanisms of the state have contributed further to this inequality.** By providing land and houses at nominal rates, the PAHW is ultimately transferring public land to private individuals where there is no need. This creates large imbalances in the market, as once land has been transferred to individuals, it can be resold at market value, and gains can be made almost immediately.

Passive housing policies and regulations have created false aspirations for citizens, which have led to policies today that focus solely on the provision of housing. There is a need for housing policies that cater to citizens' needs and instil progressive desires. Re-evaluation of existing housing policies needs to focus on empowering citizens, rather than on creating false desires, which rely on limited resources that are not sustainable for future generations.

## 1.5 Environment and Climate Context

Rapid economic expansion, development and urbanisation have affected Kuwait's natural resources and environmental quality in a number of areas over the past two decades. Issues of concern include desertification; pollution and health hazards; inadequate handling and treatment of urban and industrial waste and sewage; air pollution in Kuwait City and its industrial states; marine pollution, especially in the vicinity of harbours; large scale coastal erosion based on reclamation activities along the coast, which have destroyed valuable local marine ecosystems; and open sea marine pollution, which affects coastal and marine habitats and biodiversity. More than 98 per cent of the population currently live in urban

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<sup>63</sup> Statistics from the Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW), 2020.



areas, which are mostly located along the coast. Rising sea levels could lead to the flooding of low-lying urban infrastructure, the inundation of coastal ecosystems and the deterioration of groundwater quality - that is in addition to the risk to urban livelihoods and infrastructure.<sup>64</sup>

**Kuwait's ranked 61st out of 180 countries in the 2020 Environment Performance Index, an increase of 52 points.** Kuwait has the second-highest score among the GCC and the fourth-highest among Arab countries. In terms of specific scores, Kuwait ranked 21st on water resources (score 21) and water quality (score 21); however, with respect to air quality and pollution, Kuwait's ranking is low on PM 2.5 exposure (score 153) and exceedance (score 150); climate and energy (score 161) and air pollution (score 162).

Kuwait has a hyper-arid desert climate that is highly variable with recurrent extremes. Maximum daily temperatures can reach 45°C in the summer during which there is no rainfall. **Kuwait is one of the world's most water-stressed countries**, with the lowest per capita renewable internal freshwater availability of any country, requiring extensive seawater desalination to meet the water demand. **Kuwait's arid climate is exacerbated by low annual rainfall, which leads to an increase in drought occurrences.** Climate change may increase the length, severity and frequency of droughts, which will intensify existing water problems, and could severely affect plant cover, possibly leading to an increase in wind erosion and sand encroachment.

**Kuwait is affected by the negative impacts of climate change, especially in the various vital and environmental sectors such as human health, coastal areas, water resources, food and nutrition security, marine environments and fisheries.** Climate change contributes to causing or increasing events such as heatwaves, rainstorms and other rapid floods, as well as the number and intensity of dust storms and rising sea levels and the consequent impacts on infrastructure projects and future long-term investment.<sup>65</sup> Sand and dust storms also contribute to serious health impacts and road traffic accidents

**The energy sector plays a vital role in Kuwait's economy, society and environment. Kuwait relies almost exclusively on oil products and natural gas to meet its energy needs**, with each source of fuel accounting for about half of the total primary energy consumption. Kuwait plans to substitute natural gas for oil in the power generation sector in order to retain oil-export revenues for savings and investment. In the period to 2035, energy demand in Kuwait is projected to increase by a third in the Business-as-Usual Case, growing at a much slower pace than over the past couple of decades due to decelerating GDP and population growth. The share of oil in total primary energy demand steadily declines, to just over 40 per cent in 2035, a result of the government's push to switch from oil to natural gas and solar energy for power generation. **Natural gas demand is expected to grow at a fast rate, by 2.2 per cent per year from 2015-2035.**

**Kuwait's renewable energy capacity at the plants accounts for less than 1 per cent of the total generating capacity in Kuwait.** Renewable-energy generation capacity is expected to increase to 5 GW, this capacity will still be insufficient to meet the Amir's stated goal of 15 per cent energy demand from renewable energy by 2030.<sup>66</sup> **Kuwait is planning significant expansion in its generating capacity**, mainly combined-cycle plants, over the next couple of decades. Ramping up its capacity of renewables and retrofitting or purchasing flexible units, however, would be a more sustainable path forward. While the choice of fuel

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<sup>64</sup> Input from UN Habitat.

<sup>65</sup> Kuwait National Adaptation Plan 2019-2030

<sup>66</sup> Kuwait Energy Outlook, 2019.

for power generation can be largely attributed to the fact that Kuwait is rich in fossil fuel resources, the overall structure of the power sector itself in Kuwait adds to the slow adoption of renewables.

Despite Kuwait's vast solar and wind resources, the country has only recently started to harness its renewable energy potential. The first renewable energy plants are being built at the Shagaya complex, currently under construction and scheduled for completion by 2030. The project is expected to reduce the pressure on traditional power plans and has three main objectives: 1) create around 1,200 innovative job opportunities for Kuwaiti youth; 2) secure electrical energy and diversify its sources; and 3) create a parallel industrial economy that is not mainly dependent on oil. The project is expected to produce 15 per cent of Kuwait's energy by 2030, by using a number of renewable energy sources such as solar, thermal and wind.<sup>67</sup>

### *Government Measures and Global Commitments*

The GoK, represented by the Environment Public Authority (EPA), has committed itself to ensuring the implementation of its National Adaptation Plan (NAP), in partnership with other governmental and non-governmental institutions. **The NAP includes medium and long-term strategies to increase strength and resilience in the face of climate challenges, and to increase national capacity to adapt to climate change.** It also includes a description of the state of the environment, the most important sectors affected by climate change and a climate change risk assessment. **Adaptation to climate change requires the work of all stakeholders and integration in the design and implementation of initiatives in several sectors, including water, coastal areas, the marine environment, human health and others.** Accordingly, stakeholders have been identified according to each sector and the consequent risks.<sup>68</sup>

Kuwait has ratified most relevant global and regional environmental agreements, including the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC Rio), the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement. As part of the UNFCCC, Kuwait has committed to joining a global coalition to limit global warming to below 2 °C (preferably 1.5 degrees Celsius) in the world's climate from pre-industrial levels by 2020. However, major challenges remain in terms of effective compliance and implementation of these agreements.

| National Communications (+ year of most recent emissions inventory) | Biennial Update Reports (+ emissions inventory) | National climate change policy documents | Medium-term national renewable energy target | International climate finance received (Excl. Global Facility Support)                                      | International climate finance provided |
|---|---|--|--|---|--|
| 2<br>(in 2000)  | 1<br>(in 2016)                                  | -  | 15% of power demand (43 GW) by 2030          | 15% improvement in generation efficiency and 30% reduction in consumption by 2030 (baselines not available) | -                                      |

Table 1: Mapping of Kuwait on UNFCC reports, national climate change policy documents, renewable energy targets and climate finance received and provided<sup>69</sup>

<sup>67</sup> Kuwait VNR 2019

<sup>68</sup> Kuwait National Adaptation Plan 2019-2030.

<sup>69</sup> Source: [https://agsiw.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Luomi\\_Climate-Change\\_Online-1.pdf](https://agsiw.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Luomi_Climate-Change_Online-1.pdf)

As per the table above, Kuwait has submitted most recent reports and emissions inventories, including its efforts targeting fossil fuel-related emissions on its economy. As per the Paris Agreement, countries are encouraged to move over time towards economy-wide emissions reduction or limitation targets. Thus far, Kuwait has not set any quantitative emissions reduction target. In its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC), **Kuwait refers to plans to develop a long-term low greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions development strategy (to meet the Paris Agreement, Article 4.19); however, no quantitative targets have yet been identified.** It states that efforts will be based on business-as-usual emissions in 2020-2030, and points to the importance of diversifying the country's energy mix in avoiding increases in GHG emissions by 2035.<sup>70</sup>

While the recent Covid-19 pandemic presents a challenge in ensuring a sustainable use of the environment, it also presents an important opportunity to generate a green recovery, by integrating climate action, sustainable energy and nature-based solutions into national crisis response plans and investment frameworks. This includes 1) taking climate action as a means to generate co-benefits for community resilience and recovery; 2) harnessing solar solutions to achieve sustainable economic recovery and energy security; and 3) advancing the more sustainable use of natural assets to reduce future risks. Additional considerations for Kuwait are how to make strategic choice on integrating low-carbon, climate resilient growth in the post-Covid recovery agenda and to re-evaluate the use of the economic diversification lens while developing further its climate change policies.

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<sup>70</sup> Mario Luomi, *Gulf States Climate Change Policies Amid a Global Pandemic*, The Arab Gulf States Institute - Washington, September 2020 ([https://agsiw.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Luomi\\_Climate-Change\\_Online-1.pdf](https://agsiw.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Luomi_Climate-Change_Online-1.pdf)).

## 2. Cross-boundary, Regional and Subregional Perspectives

Kuwait is surrounded by powerful neighbours Saudi Arabia, Iran and Iraq, and its strategic location and massive oil reserves make it one of the world's richest countries per capita. Kuwait stands out from the other Gulf monarchies as having the most open political system. But tensions have persisted between parliament and the cabinet, and the government is facing increasing calls for radical political reform from the opposition. Regional tensions, including ongoing conflicts in Iraq, Syria and Yemen, and more recently maritime security incidents on the high seas and strained relations between the United States and Iran, particularly over nuclear issues, continue to negatively affect foreign direct investment (FDI) flows, tourism, opportunities for trade expansion and regional partnership projects.

### *Kuwait's Global Positioning*

Kuwait's foreign policy is anchored around the following main principles: respect the sovereignty of nations; pursue a policy of non-interference in the internal affairs of other nations; maintain good neighbourly relations; maintain international legitimacy and the rule of international law; maintain international peace and security; call for peaceful solutions to international and regional conflicts through dialogue and peaceful means; and work on achieving the goals and principles of the United Charter.

Ever since the State of Kuwait became an active member of the United Nations, it has been an effective partner in the maintenance of international peace and security, a committed partner in sustainable development and a leader in humanitarian action. Kuwait plays a crucial role in development partnership, both in the Arab region and worldwide. Its annual average Official Development Assistance (ODA) contribution reached an average of US\$304 million, which is delivered through the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED). In addition, Kuwait has provided loans to 106 countries worldwide and grants to 44 countries across the globe, for the purpose of implementing development projects in sectors such as transportation, industry, energy, water and wastewater, peacebuilding and many others.<sup>71</sup>

Kuwait is positioning itself globally and regionally as a key impartial actor in the areas of mediation, peacebuilding and development. Since its independence in 1961, Kuwait has pursued a balanced, fair, and ambitious foreign policy, based on openness and connectedness with the international community. Kuwait's initiatives are aimed at achieving international peace and security, while achieving the principals of shared friendship with various countries around the world.<sup>72</sup> The vision, articulated by the late Amir, continues to inform the nation's approach to matters of international trade and development, and to international relations in general. Kuwait believes that cooperation should be the focal point of efforts at harnessing the fruits of globalisation and uplifting the lives of people around the world. The country follows this policy in letter and spirit.

### *Kuwait's Role as a Key Humanitarian and Development Partner in the Region*

Kuwait has taken steps in recent years to increase its role on the regional stage, primarily through humanitarian interventions and political mediation. Kuwait has generously supported diplomatic, humanitarian and reconstruction initiatives in Yemen, Syria, Iraq and Palestine, as well as in African

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<sup>71</sup> Kuwait VNR, 2019

<sup>72</sup> <https://www.mofa.gov.kw/en/kuwait-state/kuwait-foreign-policy/>

countries as an observer at the African Union. As Kuwait's ability to bridge regional and international approaches in conflict prevention remains vital, the changing regional dynamics might prove difficult for the country to navigate regional rivalries while it strives to maintain its regional neutrality.

### **The role of the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (commonly known as the “Kuwait Fund”).**

A measure of the country's confidence and modern and progressive outlook is most clearly reflected in the fact that the Kuwait Fund extends grants and loans on concessionary terms to finance development projects in developing countries. Kuwait sees the Kuwait Fund as providing a bridge of friendship and solidarity between the State of Kuwait and the developing nations and a means of promoting sustainable development around the world.

Kuwait was a non-permanent member of the Security Council from 2018-2019. Since 2013, the country has been a prominent humanitarian donor among the GCC countries, with the humanitarian aid directed almost exclusively to the major crises in Syria, Iraq and Yemen; however, Kuwait has massively decreased humanitarian aid pledges over the past two years. Kuwait has received international praise for leading intra-GCC efforts to address the “Gulf (Qatar) Crisis”. Kuwait, largely through the late Amir, has played an important role as mediator between GCC members to find a solution since 2017. Recently, Kuwait spearheaded the negotiations that resulted in the signing of the Al Ula Declaration, reached at the 41st GCC Summit, on 5 January 2021, in Al Ula, Saudi Arabia. The country has sought to preserve and strengthen the relevance of the GCC, and has also often served as an intermediary between the GCC and Iran.

### *Regional Geopolitical Dynamics*

**Regional tensions continue to affect several border issues.** Kuwait remains part of the Saudi Arabia-led coalition, which has been engaged in the complex conflict in Yemen since 2015. Kuwait has managed to resolve its border dispute with Saudi Arabia and has introduced a flexible arrangement based on a rigid physical border and a fluid economic border. This flexibility, leading to the co-management and equal profit sharing of hydrocarbons, has largely averted longer dispute. The agreement is praised for being innovative, and rests on constructive ambiguity and avoidance of direct confrontation.

**The 2013 border agreement between Kuwait and Iraq** over the Khor Abdullah estuary was contested in 2017 by Iraqi lawmakers, who questioned their governments decision and mobilised protestors in Basra. In Basra, the Euphrates and Tigris merge into the Shatt al-Arab waterway, before flowing into the Gulf. Iraqi fishermen, suffering from low fish stocks due to rising levels of pollution, have been increasingly forced to cast for fish in Kuwaiti waters.<sup>73</sup> Despite its substantial losses, the Islamic State (IS) group in Syria continues to pose potential security threats to Kuwait. Unlike in previous years, between 2017 and 2021, there were no terrorist incidents caused by the IS group on Kuwaiti territory. However, GoK efforts to counter violent extremism within its territory continue to be a priority.

**Relations with Iraq.** Kuwait has strengthened its relations with Iraq, and the two countries have worked closely together to identify missing Kuwaiti persons and property, and finalise compensation payments from the First Gulf War. The final compensation payment is due in 2022, which will complete all outstanding Chapter VI obligations of Iraq towards Kuwait. Moreover, since 2020, the Tripartite Commission has closed 30 cases of persons missing since 1991. Of those, 28 were matched to the official

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<sup>73</sup> BTI 2020 Report.

Kuwaiti list of mission persons; one was matched to the list maintained by Saudi Arabia; and one was matched to the list maintained by Iraq.

**Iraq-Kuwait political relations and Khour Abdullah.** Efforts at building a peaceful relationship Iraq and Kuwait have always been a priority. Iraq has maintained the stability of the region for decades, blocking the threats posed by Iran and terrorist groups. The policy of Kuwait is to support a stable Iraq that is well-equipped to block any future threats to the region from Iran, Afghanistan or other groups with similar political threats. In 1993, the General Assembly issued Decree 833 (among many decrees issued at that time) after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait which stated: “The Khour Abdullah Agreement or the Agreement to Regulate Maritime Navigation in Khour Abdullah is an international border agreement between Iraq and Kuwait.” This agreement, however, was not supported by the people of Iraq. This led to protests demanding the return of the land from Kuwait, claiming that the minimum maritime access for Iraqi ships through the port of Al Fao (50 km) would mean that Iraqi ships would have to get permission to manoeuvre through Kuwaiti waters to enter and exit, which would have a major impact on their economy. In September 2020, these discussions came to the fore once again and Iraqi parliament members demanded that the agreement, which had been signed in 2012, be revoked. Kuwait has worked to stabilise the tensions with its neighbour, and maintaining the peace between the two countries will remain a priority.

**Iran dialogue.** Kuwait, along with several other countries, has offered to mediate between the United States and Iran due to the heightened tensions between the two nations as well as between Iran and Arab Gulf States. On 27 May 2020, DPM/FM Sabah Al-Khalid met visiting Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Araghchi and they discussed the issue of stabilising the region through constructive negotiations, including by signing a non-aggression pact.

In 2020, the UN and Kuwait finalised the United Nations Strategic Cooperation Framework (UNSCF) for 2020-2025, which is aligned with the National Development Plan 2020-2025. This is the first ever UNSCF in Kuwait and includes regional dimensions and exchanges that involve UN agencies as well as non-development departments and organisations. The framework has yet to be signed, and the UN is waiting for the GoK to set a date for the signature. To complement its longstanding neutral foreign policy, Kuwait approached the UN at the end of 2018 with an idea to establish a regional conflict prevention centre. Kuwait is leaning towards establishing a UN regional special political mission, along the lines of the UN conflict prevention agenda, with a Kuwaiti-owned centre as a second option. While the country still faces some political and socio-economic difficulties (demography, budget deficit, political opposition turmoil etc.), Kuwait remains an “island of stability” in the region.

### 3. National Vision for Sustainable Development

Kuwait's National Vision 2035 "New Kuwait" stems from the vision of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al Sabah. He sets out the nation's long-term goal, "to transform Kuwait into a financial and trade centre, attractive to investors, where the private sector leads the economy, creating competition and promoting production efficiency, under the umbrella of enabling government institutions, which accentuates values, safeguards social identity, and achieves human resource development as well as balanced development, providing adequate infrastructure, advanced legislation and inspiring business environment."<sup>74</sup>

**Vision 2035 aims to ensure Kuwait can attract investment, develop competitiveness, and improve legislation to support economic and social systems.** The Kuwait National Development Plan (KNDP 2020-2025) sets out the nation's long-term development priorities. It is organised around five themes or desired outcomes, and seven pillars or areas of focus for investment and improvement. Each pillar has a number of strategic programmes and projects that are designed to have the most impact on achieving the vision of a New Kuwait (Figure 12). **The seven pillars include:**

- Effective Public Administration – aims to reform administrative and bureaucratic practices for the purpose of reinforcing transparency, accountability and efficiency in the government.
- Creative Human Capital – aims to reform the education system for the purpose of better preparing youth to become competitive and more productive members of the workforce.
- Diversified Sustainable Economy – aims to develop a prosperous and diversified economy for the purpose of reducing the dependency on revenues generated from oil exports.
- Developed Infrastructure – aims to develop and modernise the national infrastructure for the purpose of improving the quality of life for all.
- High Quality Healthcare – aims to improve the quality of services in the public health care system and develop national capabilities at a reasonable cost.
- Sustainable living environment – aims to ensure the availability of living accommodation through environmentally sound resources and tactics.
- Global Positioning – aims to enhance Kuwait's regional and global presence in scopes such as diplomacy, trade, culture and philanthropy.

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<sup>74</sup> Kuwait National Development Plan (2015-2020).

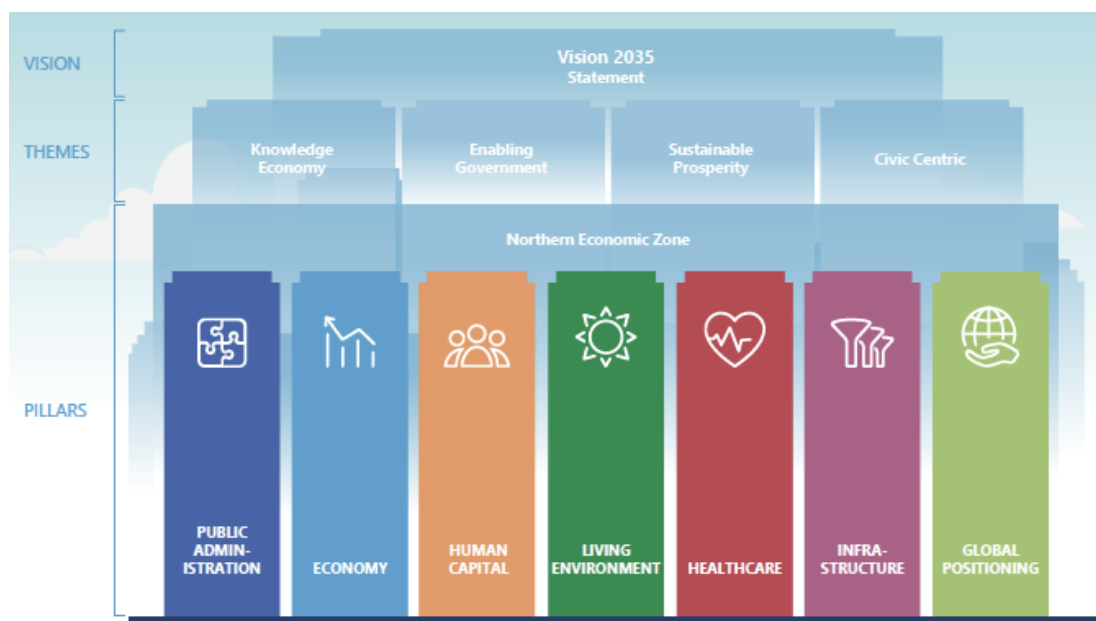


Figure 12. Vision 2035 and KNDP strategic pillars (KNDP 2020-2025).

The KNDP envisions a radical shift towards economic diversification and away from the oil dependence and public-sector expansion that have characterised the country's development in recent decades. The plan aims to position the private sector as an engine for economic growth. The KNDP has been produced as an evidence-based plan with a strong orientation on policy directions (52 policies). It includes 20 key global indicators, and additional sub-indicators, to track and measure Kuwait's progress with the plan and its performance compared against other countries. Kuwait is aiming, in all indicators, for a position within the top 35 per cent of countries by 2035. The KNDP 2020-2025 is currently under review by the parliament and awaiting final approval from the GoK.



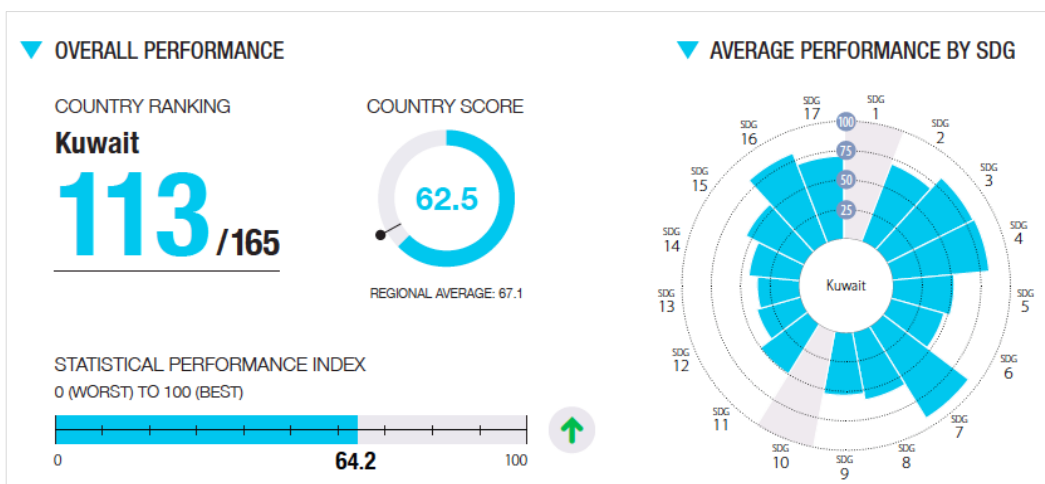
## 4. Country Progress Towards the 2030 Agenda

### 4.1 The Institutional Framework for Agenda 2030

The GoK has setup an institutional framework to steer the implementation of Agenda 2030 with the establishment of a **National Steering Development Committee (NSDC)** to provide an overarching leadership and guidance for the orderly and participatory rolling-out of Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Kuwait.<sup>75</sup> In addition to the NSDC, a **National Observatory on Sustainable Development and Anticipation of the Future (NOSD)** was created to play a further coordination and follow-up role among all partners; it assumed the responsibility of preparing the first Kuwait Voluntary National Report (VNR) in 2019. Neither body has been fully functional, and there have been almost no activities to further the SDGs across the different national and sectoral strategies. The UN can support the General Secretariat of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development (GSSCPD) to build the capacity and capabilities of these two bodies, so they become fully operational beyond the development of the VNR and maximise their coordination and steering functions across all stakeholders.

### 4.2 Kuwait's Performance on the SDGs

According to the Sustainable Development Report 2021, Kuwait ranks 113 (of 165) countries while achieving an index score of 62.5.<sup>76</sup> The overall score measures Kuwait's total progress towards achieving all 17 SDGs. A snapshot of the Kuwait SDG Dashboard on the same index (Figure 13) shows that Kuwait faces some challenges in achieving SDGs 4, 7 and 17; has significant challenges with SDGs 2, 3, 5, 9, 11, 14, 15 and 16; and faces major challenges with SDGs 6, 8, 12 and 13. Kuwait provides non-indicative reporting on SDG 1 (considered achieved as per VNR 2019) and no data is available for SDG 10.



<sup>75</sup> Kuwait Voluntary National Review Report 2019.

<sup>76</sup> <https://dashboards.sdgindex.org/profiles/kuwait>.



Figure 13. Kuwait SDGs dashboard and trends (2021).

### 4.3 Integration of the SDGs Within the KNDP 2020-2025

A review of the detailed set of outcomes, programmes, policies and key performance indicators (KPIs) in the KNDP 2020-2025 reveals that all adopted targets and indicators have been formulated towards 2035, according to Vision 2035. However, the main concern is that none of the programmes and policies (with the exception of the Northern Economic Zone) have set targets over the next five years (i.e., from 2020-2025). There are also no references to any of the SDG targets or Agenda 2030. So, it becomes unclear how the GoK will measure, manage and report on progress towards Agenda 2030.

All of the selected KPIs in the KNDP 2020-2025 rely strictly on international indices (or on their composite indices) until 2035, and run the risk of these indices being modified or changed - as is often the case every couple of years when a methodology is amended or the number of reporting countries varies: this therefore affects the ranking, reliability and achievements over the course of the next 15 years. **When examining the extent of integration of the SDGs within the KNDP, evidence suggests that the 17 SDGs are well integrated across the various thematic pillars in the KNDP at the goal level with strong commitments. However, the significant gap is that the KNDP does not integrate the SDGs at the target and indicator levels – thus creating considerable misalignment for the future monitoring of progress.** The UNCT can support the GoK to develop a complementary plan to the KNDP that fully aligns Vision 2035 to the Agenda 2030 and the SDGs and which includes a set of relevant targets and indicators. When examining the level of reporting on progress towards the SDGs (based on data from the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSTAT) from February 2021), it becomes evident that Kuwait is falling considerably behind in measuring, monitoring and reporting on progress. Figure 14 shows that in 2015, Kuwait reported on 74 targets; numbers have continued decreasing so that only 17 targets were achieved in 2019, and seven in 2020. A similar pattern can be observed for the SDG indicators. Overall, Kuwait's level of reporting on the total SDG indicators (231 unique indicators) was around 52.5 per cent between 2015-2020.

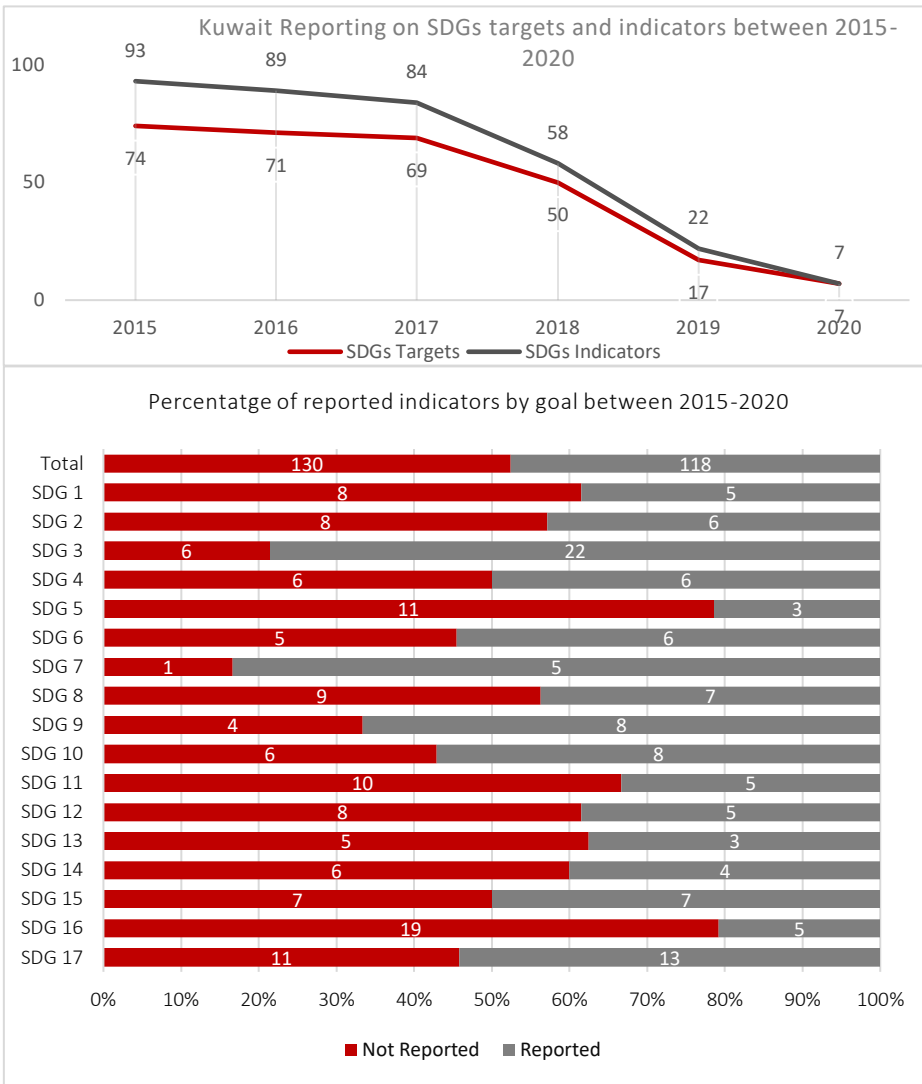


Figure 14. Reporting towards the SDGs showing a downward trend between 2015-2020 on the number of targets and indicators, (\*based on UNSTAT data, February 2021).

#### 4.4 Summary of SDG Challenges and Gaps

##### SDG 1. No Poverty

*End poverty in all its forms everywhere.*

**Situation of vulnerable groups.** Kuwait is a high-income country and, as such, rates of extreme poverty are almost non-existent. **Kuwait does not report currently on SDG 1 and, therefore, no data is available to evaluate progress made.** In the latest VNR 2019, Kuwait reported that it had reached a 100 per cent achievement on SDG 1 and that it had surpassed the poverty line of US\$1.90 per individual, per day. Despite this positive development, the recent Covid-19 pandemic revealed that many vulnerable people and groups suffered greatly when the entire economy came to a stop; with the strict closures and

lockdowns, many lost their jobs or saw their income reduced or wage payments delayed by many months, without any means of accessing basic needs or food.

One of the main barriers to full achievement of SDG 1 is the fact that Kuwait currently does not have adequate data sources on levels of income, poverty rates or social protection coverage. In addition, there is no established poverty line, minimum standard of living or minimum wage for all citizens and expatriates. A further challenge is that Kuwait lacks statistics and aggregated data on vulnerability, poverty and multi-deprivations faced by low-income households and vulnerable individuals and groups. Without these essential measurements and data, Kuwait will not be able to genuinely define who is poor or how they are poor or be able to devise an appropriate and inclusive policy response.

Kuwait currently provides generous social protection to its citizens, who benefit from the existing social protection and programmes provided to Kuwaitis such as orphans, elderly, widows, divorcees, housewives, families of prisoners, students abroad, orphans, people with chronic illnesses and others by the Ministry of Social Affairs (MOSA). However, **vulnerable non-citizens (such as low-wage migrants, domestic workers and Bidoon) lack basic social protection and rely mostly on charities and civil society organisations (CSOs) for additional support.** In total, some 2.95 million foreign workers do not contribute to any pension schemes or take part in contributory social protection plans.

Kuwait can further address extending pro-poor policies and connect economic policies to generate benefits among the various segments of the population and ensure adequate spending strategy.

**Existence of social protection systems and measures.** The KNDP does not currently contain any specific policy to address SDG 1. However, Policy 3.9, “Rebalance the social protection systems and transition to an integrated social safety net”, is compiled under “knowledge economy” instead of “sustainable prosperity”. Considering this specific policy contributes to the outcome “inclusive social protection system”, it is linked naturally to SDG 1 and Target 1.3 “Implement nationally appropriate social systems and measures for all” and “Implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors”, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable. The selected KPI (gender gap index) limits SDG 1 to the gender dimension, and does not support proper progress on this goal.

## **SDG 2. Zero Hunger**

*End hunger achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.*

Kuwait relies heavily on food imports, making it vulnerable to the unpredictability of global trade. FAO estimates that between cereal import dependency ratio (3-year average) 2016-2018 was 98.8 percent,<sup>77</sup> and value of food imports in total merchandise exports (3-year average) 2017-2019 was 7 percent (FAOSTAT). Due to the harsh climate and Kuwait having low agricultural capacity, cereals and preparations were the top food commodity group imported in 2019. Their import value was US\$0.78 billion in 2019, up 575.6 per cent, or US\$0.67 billion, compared with 2000. Wheat was the top cereal imported in 2019: some 0.4 million tonnes was imported.<sup>78</sup>

While hunger is not an issue for Kuwait, the high incidence of people who are overweight or suffering from obesity as a result of poor nutrition is alarming (37.9 per cent of the adult population according to

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<sup>77</sup> Latest available data. <sup>71</sup> Source: FAOSTAT website: <https://www.fao.org/faostat/en/>.

the 2020 Sustainable Development Report). Kuwait reported on SDG 2 in the last VNR, stating that it had achieved SDG 2 and that extreme hunger was not a pressing priority. Throughout the pandemic, the Public Authority for Food and Nutrition (PAFN) was working closely with relevant government and non-government stakeholders to constantly assess the prevalence of food insecurity in the country, and also to ensure uninterrupted access to adequate, safe and nutritious food for all. As an example of community efforts towards achieving this objective, the Kuwait Food Bank (KFB) continues to support thousands of families, the elderly and orphans in need. KFB implements the “Subsidies’ Bank Project”, which provides food and drink throughout the year to vulnerable groups across the six governorates, with the support of the General Secretary of the Awqaf (Committee to Handle Domestic Violence Cases), to ensure that all people in Kuwait have access to sufficient food supplies. These initiatives are a clear indication that further support to vulnerable groups is needed to ensure food security for all.

***Issues of food loss and waste, overweight and obesity, and diet-related NCDs*** require considerable attention and need to be addressed within a thorough and cross-sectoral framework. Maintaining a healthy lifelong diet helps prevent all forms of malnutrition (i.e., undernutrition, micronutrient deficiency, overweight or obesity) and promotes growth and development. The food system presents a huge opportunity to act to improve dietary practices. The food system presents a huge opportunity to act to improve dietary practices. The important challenge today is to improve nutrition in a sustainable manner through the implementation of coherent policies and better coordinated actions across all concerned sectors, actors and stakeholders, and to transform food systems (making them more sustainable, inclusive and efficient) for healthy diets and improved nutrition.

SDG 2 is reflected within the KNDP under the theme “civic centric” which minimises the sustainability dimension of this goal. ***The main gaps in the KNDP relate to the fact that there are no policies or interventions to tackle emerging issues surrounding sustainable, inclusive and resilient food systems including aquaculture and fisheries, food security or sustainable agriculture.*** These areas are becoming critically important post-pandemic and, as such, require further integration in the national development framework. Two programmes in the KNDP relate to SDG 2: Programme 7 (Improve our health and wellbeing) and programme 8 (contribute to the global community); the latter is to support the humanitarian and relief efforts provided to other countries. Kuwait measures SDG 2 from healthy diets and nutrition angle without giving a great deal of consideration to food security and sustainable agriculture, and limited attention to link between environment and climate impact on SDG 2. The KNDP also includes one related outcome (optimised healthcare quality) and has selected one KPI (non-communicable disease mortality); as such, the selected KPI does not capture the complexity and multisectoral interlinkages of the goal. Special attention needs to be paid to incorporate and report on targets 2.1, 2.2, 2.4, 2.5, 2.a, 2.c.

***Lessons learned from the Covid-19 pandemic have revealed the importance of developing a national food security strategy*** that takes into account the need for agriculture, food security, fisheries and small and medium-sized farmers, technology and agri-tech, and innovation to become less reliant on exports. Another consideration for the GoK is to report on Target 2.a.1 (Agriculture orientation index for government expenditures), as the last report was in 2015, and expenditure levels were at only 0.5 per cent.

There is an increasing recognition that without a proper strategic plan, Kuwait will not be in a position to transform its agricultural sector and food systems to achieve food security and a stable food supply chain. There is need for robust and comprehensive solutions, more careful consideration and understanding of

the significant constraints involved in overcoming the existing wide range of challenges, including the adoption of capital-intensive technologies for product development, facilitating trade and diversifying supply sources and options, as well as linking SMEs and small farmers' products to markets.

### **SDG 3. Good Health and Wellbeing**

*Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.*

Kuwait has traditionally provided all inhabitants of the country with essential, comprehensive and high-quality health care and services across the spectrum of health promotion, prevention, treatment, rehabilitation and palliative care. However, due to several factors, including the increase in population size and recent slow economic growth, the national health service system in the country has faced several challenges. Interlinking KNDP with the targets of SDG 3 represented, therefore, an opportunity for Kuwait to double its efforts in order to efficiently and effectively, increasingly meet the health needs of all people, Kuwaitis and non-Kuwaitis.

Overall, data availability for SDG 3 is much better than for other goals. Kuwait has shown notable progress with regard to SDG 3 (good health and wellbeing), by investing in the healthcare system through quality healthcare infrastructure. The Atlas of Sustainable Development Goals has recently estimated that Kuwait is at a completion rate of 86 per cent towards achieving SDG 3 (Atlas of Sustainable Development 2017, World Bank<sup>79</sup>). The maternal mortality ratio of Kuwait is 12 per 100,000 live births,<sup>80</sup> and the skilled birth attendance is 100 per cent.<sup>81</sup> Life expectancy at birth is 80.9, and mortality rates from road and traffic accidents have decreased from 21.8 in 2015 to 15.43 in 2019 per 100,000 live births by 2030. Kuwait has already exceeded Target 3.2, with the under-5 mortality rate standing currently at 7.90 deaths per 1,000 live births, and the rate is expected to drop to 5 deaths by 2030. The neonatal mortality rate stands at 4.5 deaths per 1,000 live births. There is no data available for Target 3.7, "By 2030, ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services, including for family planning, information and education, and the integration of reproductive health into national strategies and programmes."

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) recommends that more efforts be made to reduce maternal deaths by establishing the Maternal Death Surveillance and Response system (MDSR), which will provide information that effectively guides immediate as well as longer-term actions to reduce maternal mortality; and to count every maternal death, permitting an assessment of the true magnitude of maternal mortality and the impact of actions to reduce it.

The KNDP covers the goal under three desired outcomes: enhanced healthy literacy; improve wellness and active healthy lifestyles; and optimised healthcare quality. According to the SDG 3 dashboard and trends, progress towards this goal is stagnating and significant challenges remain. The GoK is launching a set of reforms to restructure the healthcare system between 2020-2025, and these efforts are expected to improve overall progress towards this goal; have an impact on the healthcare insurance system; increase the role of the private sector; strengthen the capacity of the systems and the workforce; and introduce a set of new policies to promote healthy nutrition and lifestyle.

Many challenges are preventing Kuwait from fully achieving SDG 3: a lack of clarity on the degree to which non-citizens, including Bidoon and low skilled migrants, domestic workers, people with disabilities and

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<sup>79</sup> Source: Executive summary, VNR's first draft on SDGs, "Human-Centred Sustainable Development-- (GSSCPD), 2018

<sup>80</sup> <https://www.unfpa.org/data/world-population-dashboard>

<sup>81</sup> <https://www.unfpa.org/data/world-population-dashboard>

other vulnerable groups, are included in health-related data and statistics. Existing statistics are not aggregated enough or available in a timely fashion to provide insight or inform policymaking. Furthermore, access to healthcare services and the quality and appropriateness of health care and services are not systematically evaluated, and data is often not made available. A further overarching challenge is in ascertaining the appropriate governance mechanisms to work toward the achievement of the SDGs. This includes the problem of forming coordination structures and mechanisms across the different levels and hierarchies of the healthcare sector.

#### **SDG 4. Quality Education**

*Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all*

Kuwaitis have access to free education, but challenges remain in improving the overall quality of education outcomes. Within SGD 4, Kuwait is not reporting on Targets 4.6 (achieving literacy and numeracy of youth) and 4.7 (ensure all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development). This last target is essential to support vulnerable groups and gender equality and human rights in terms of providing access to education for vulnerable groups. Kuwait is also not reporting on Target 4.3 (equal access to all women and men to vocational training).

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) recommended that Kuwait strengthen and update legislation relating to the right to education in line with its international obligation to provide free and compulsory primary education for all, without discrimination, under Article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and as a party to the Convention against Discrimination in Education. UNESCO also recommended that Kuwait consider extending the period of compulsory education to encompass secondary education, thereby coming a step closer to achieving Target 4.1 of the SDGs on ensuring that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education, and that it progressively introduce at least one year of compulsory and free pre-primary education, in accordance with the Education 2030 Framework for Action and Target 4.2 of the Goals. UNESCO further recommended that Kuwait ensure equal access to inclusive, high-quality education for all, including for vulnerable groups such as the Bidoon and other stateless children, regardless of their social and legal status

The KNDP includes four programmes and eight policies that support SDG 4. Overall, this goal is covered well under national development priorities. The main concern is that the only selected KPI within the KNDP (Kuwaitis in the private sector) does not measure the right scope of the proposed policies or reflect the real scope of SDG 4 and, as such, the target can be redefined (i.e., Kuwaitis in high skilled jobs in the private sector).

#### **SDG 5. Gender Equality**

*Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.*

Kuwait ranked 64/150 countries on the UNDP 2020 Gender Equality Index (improving from its previous ranking, 70/159, in 2015). The Index reflects gender-based inequalities in three dimensions: reproductive health, empowerment and economic activity. On the other hand, the World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Index 2020 seeks to measure the relative gaps between women and men across four key areas: health, education, economy and politics. Kuwait does not score well, and ranked 143/156 countries (down from 86th place in 2006).

Kuwait was able to enhance the status of Kuwaiti women in terms of health indicators, including female life expectancy and maternal mortality (as well as under-five mortality), all of which have notably improved;<sup>82</sup> female literacy has risen, as has female enrolment in primary and secondary education, and currently women make up the majority of university graduates.<sup>83</sup> Kuwait scores well on education attainment for women and girls (Figure 15), however, this has not been translated into economic or political empowerment (Figure 16, where women still face many barriers to their full empowerment).

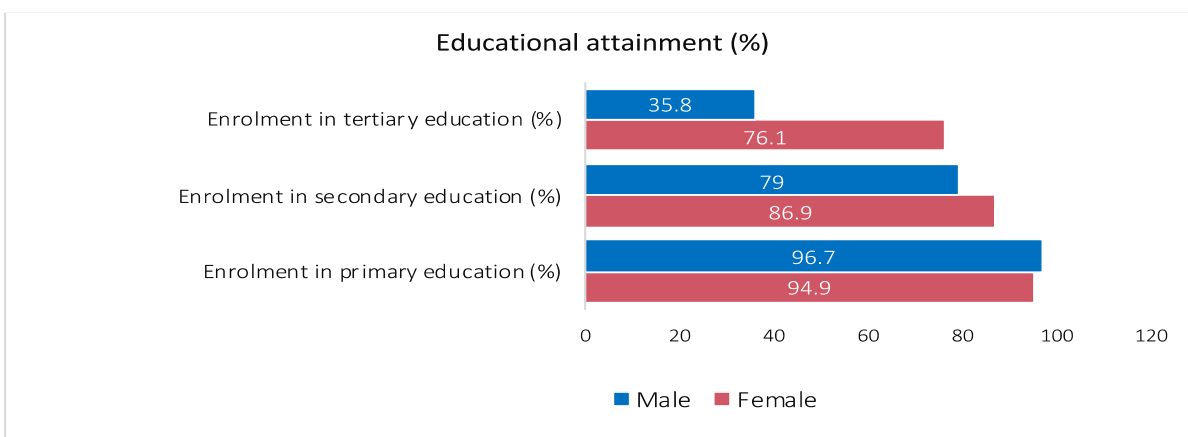


Figure 15. Education attainment by level and gender (%).

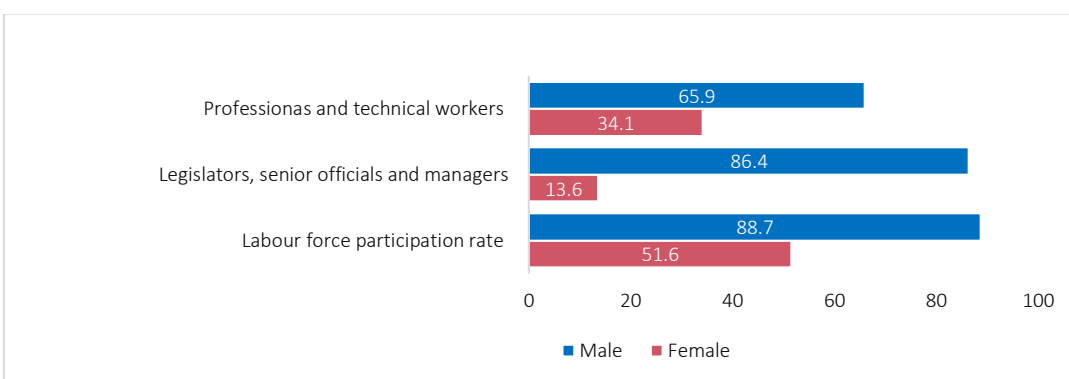


Figure 16. Economic participation and opportunity by gender (%).

The Kuwait National Assembly recently passed Law 16/2020 on the Protection from Domestic Violence, a very positive development pursuant to Target 5.1 (Indicator 5.1.1: Whether or not legal frameworks are in place to promote, enforce and monitor equality and non-discrimination on the basis of sex). However, implementation of this law has yet to begin and there remains a significant gap to achieving Target 5.2

<sup>82</sup> UN ESCWA. 2015. *The Demographic Profile of Kuwait*.

<sup>83</sup> UN ESCWA. 2016. *Against Wind and Tides: A Review of the Status of Women and Gender Equality in the Arab Region (Beijing +20)*. Beirut: UN ESCWA,



(Eliminate all forms of violence against all, women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation). In 2020, public outreach and advocacy was mobilised by the GoK and national partners from CSOs, the private sector and academia, when Kuwait participated in the “16 days of activism against gender-based violence” global campaign for the first time. This was an important milestone in terms of raising the awareness of the public about the need to address gender-based violence in all its forms. However, to date, the lack of a comprehensive legal definition of gender-based violence remains a significant obstacle to the achievement of SDG 5.1, as does the continued existence of Article 153, the so-called “honour killing” defence in certain cases of femicide. Kuwait needs to continue its efforts to combat all forms of trafficking of women, and to address violence against and the exploitation of women, especially domestic workers who suffer physical, sexual or psychological violence and make the necessary changes to the labour law. The GoK also needs to address gender inequalities in economic resources, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services and inheritance policies.

Overall, Kuwait still faces multiple challenges in achieving SDG 5, as women are still affected by a number of direct discriminatory laws and legal practices such as the penal code; the personal status act; the nationality law; the code of criminal procedure and trial; the civil act; the private sector labour law; and the housing welfare law. Other direct and indirect discriminatory stereotypes and biased social norms still affect women’s social, economic and political empowerment. The female labour force participation rate is around 50 per cent for all women, while it is close to 30 per cent for Kuwaiti women. The ratio of women in managerial positions is 13.6 per cent compared to the global average of 27.6 per cent, while there is currently no woman elected to the National Assembly following the 2020 general election. Currently, the number of women appointed to ministerial positions is only 6.7 per cent.

Most of the available data and trends relating to gender-based violence cases date from 2017, and those relating to the number of girls getting married between the ages of 15-19 date from 2015. Despite the absence of up-to-date data, gender-based violence is widespread and is estimated to affect 53 per cent of women, according to a 2018 study.<sup>84</sup> Ministry of Justice data shows that the number of girls getting married under the age of 15 had been progressively decreasing and reached zero in 2015 and 2016.<sup>85</sup>

National statistics are often outdated and lack the right data disaggregation, where national averages often conceal inequalities affecting vulnerable women groups (Bidoon, domestic workers, women with disabilities, etc.). There are significant gaps in information and data to support and inform policies and decision-making processes in a timely manner.

There are no women in the judiciary, and women are not represented in higher courts or judicial decision-making bodies. There is a need to expand measures of the efficacy of representation or participation of women in political life beyond the parliament and the cabinet.

With regards to Target 5.c (Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels) and specifically Indicator 5.c.1, Kuwait has taken some steps to consider the potential for a gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) system. In 2018, a national workshop was held under the auspices of the GSSCPD to orientate representatives from line ministries on GRB.

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<sup>84</sup> <https://alqabas.com/article/607181-s-الرجل-من-الكونتيات-معنفات-من-الرجل-s>

<sup>85</sup> [https://iraq.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/situational\\_analysis\\_final\\_for\\_web.pdf](https://iraq.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/situational_analysis_final_for_web.pdf)

The KNDP includes three programmes covering five policies that relate to SDG 5: Programme 2 (Foster a dynamic private sector), which includes Policies 2.5 (Make it easier to start, operate and expand businesses) and 2.8 (Enable entrepreneurs and small and medium enterprises (SMEs) by expanding the private sector's role in SME incubation, funding and upscaling); Programme 3 (Equip people with the skills and incentives for the future), which includes Policies 3.8 (Encourage the social, economic, and political inclusion of youth, women, persons with disabilities, and the elderly) and 3.9 (Rebalance the social protection system and transition to an integrated social safety net); and Programme 7 (Improve health and well-being), which includes Policy 7.1 (Improve youth wellbeing by combating substance use and road injury and promoting sports). While these programmes and policies will certainly benefit women in Kuwait, there is a need to expand the scope and enhance gender equality throughout the KNDP and consider a national strategy that ensures gender equality is addressed as a comprehensive and consolidated portfolio.

## **SDG 6. Clean Water and Sanitation**

*Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.*

Despite a dry, challenging climate, Kuwait ensures access to clean and affordable water for all residents. Access to safe water and sanitation and sound management of freshwater ecosystems are essential to human health and to environmental sustainability and economic prosperity. Ensuring universal access to safe and affordable drinking water for all by 2030 requires investment in adequate infrastructure, the provision of sanitation facilities, and the promotion of hygiene at every level.

Kuwait relies almost entirely on the sea water desalination process to obtain fresh water (some 61 per cent of the country's water supply comes from the desalination of sea water),<sup>86</sup> while the remaining percentage comes from groundwater, which is non-renewable due to the scarcity of rainfall and treated wastewater. However, the seawater desalination process consumes high energy and has an adverse impact on marine and coastal ecosystems. Kuwait seeks to enhance adaptation to its lack of water resources by using higher efficiency systems such as reverse osmosis in water production, developing awareness campaigns for citizens about the rationalisation of electricity and water consumption, and using modern techniques to rationalise the consumption of water by humans and in agriculture and industrial systems.

In the recent VNR, four indicators were selected as priority under SDG 6; this represents 44 per cent of the global list of indicators under SDG 6, and is the same as the average number of indicators considered by other GCC countries.

There are a number of indicators in which Kuwait achieves 100 per cent progress, namely, Indicator 6.1.1 (Proportion of population using safely managed drinking water services), Indicator 6.2.1 (Proportion of population using safely managed sanitation services, including a hand-washing facility with soap and water), and Indicator 6.3.1 (Proportion of wastewater safely treated). While it is important to demonstrate the continuity of such high percentages by using statistical data to confirm Kuwait's success, these indicators are less of a priority for Kuwait than other countries. Given Kuwait's efforts in supporting other countries in this sector, it is also advised to cover Indicator 6.a.1 (Amount of water- and sanitation-

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<sup>86</sup> <https://water.fanack.com/kuwait/water-resources-in-kuwait/>

related official development assistance that is part of a government-coordinated spending plan, supported by statistical data).

In the KNDP, Programme 6 (Build a liveable and harmonious environment) and Policy 6.1 (Improve water resource management including wastewater treatment and reclamation water use efficiency and desalination), the desired outcome is “an integrated water management” and the selected KPI is “rate of sewage water treatment”. As such, there is room to integrate the SDG 6 KPIs within the KNDP. The desired outcome is the same as Target 6.5 (Implement integrated water resources management at all levels), the KPI is the degree of integrated of water resources management and in 2018 Kuwait reported an achievement rate of 82 per cent.

## **Prosperity (Economy Sector) – Includes SDGs 7-10**

### **SDG 7. Affordable and Clean Energy**

*Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.*

Today, Kuwait faces energy challenges as a result of its high and rapid growth of domestic energy consumption, reaching 18 percent of its total primary energy production. Kuwait relies heavily on fossil fuel energy but plans to focus on developing renewable energy to meet the national target. Current methods of energy production in Kuwait rely on 90 percent oil and 10 percent natural gas, electricity and water production plants consume 70 percent of oil and its derivatives. Sustainable energy in Kuwait is challenged mainly by the undefined policy and goals with respect to energy efficiency and renewable energy. Thus far, a number of fragmented efforts have been carried out by a range of public and private organisations. These efforts need to be concentrated in order to reach the intended goals more effectively.

In its Intended National Determining Contribution (INDC), Kuwait confirmed it is seeking to adapt to the negative impacts and consequences of climate change. Kuwait is also working on moving to a low carbon equivalent emissions economy system based on its future business-as-usual emissions over the period 2020-2030. Kuwait has recently adopted an ambitious vision to generate 15 per cent of its total energy needs from renewable sources by 2030. To achieve this target, the government has allocated 100 KM<sub>2</sub> in the west of the country to develop large-scale renewable energy projects with a total capacity of 2 GW (the Al Shagaya Renewable Energy Park).

**Access to electricity.** While Kuwait achieves 100 per cent at this target, it is important to maintain that percentage and provide statistical data that demonstrates full achievement.

In the last VNR, Kuwait reported on two indicators as priorities under SDG 7: this represents 50 per cent of the global list of indicators under SDG 7, and less than the average number of indicators considered by other GCC countries by two indicators. The lack in addressing this goal stems from the economic and consumption elements, where generous existing energy subsidies (on fuel and electricity) promote unsustainable modes of consumption. The new Kuwait Vision 2035 is essentially grounded on a transformation towards a non-oil economy; therefore, it is suggested that Kuwait’s non-oil policy be highlighted and to show how this affects the domestic consumption of conventional energy sources.

The KNDP includes Programme 2 (foster a dynamic private sector) and Programme 6 (build a liveable and harmonious environment), and will be supported by three policies: 2.3 (develop economies of scale by aligning and incentivising the priority sectors for the economy); 6.3 (advance innovation in low emission technologies and promote fuel efficiency standards), and 6.4 (boost the role of renewables in the utility sectors).

## **SDG 8. Decent Work and Economic Growth**

*Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.*

Economic growth in Kuwait has been uneven and has failed to meet the demand for productive employment and decent work. Economic planning has been detached from social policies and sustainable planning for equality and prosperity for all. The overdependence on oil, the slow diversification away from oil, the dominance of low-productivity sectors and the distorted labour market have all hampered efforts to move towards sustainable growth that safeguards the wellbeing of citizens and residents.

Most policy measures introduced by the GoK in the labour market over the past five years—such as increased nationalisation quotas, new restrictive residency measures for the foreign workforce, the activation of the National Fund for SMEs, the introduction of new subsidies to increase nationalisation in the private sector or the introduction of the Kuwaiti Professional Qualification System—have not yet achieved the expected goal of curbing public sector employment and increasing employment rates of Kuwaiti nationals in the private sector. The wage gap, benefits and discrepancies in work conditions between the public and private sectors remain unaddressed. Figure 17 provides a summary of the labour market structural problem and key challenges.

## Overview of Kuwait Labour Market – Structural Problem

The labour market is equated with various structural issues, including skill-mismatch, public sector preference, market segmentation, lack of incentives, all broadly associated with Kuwaitization

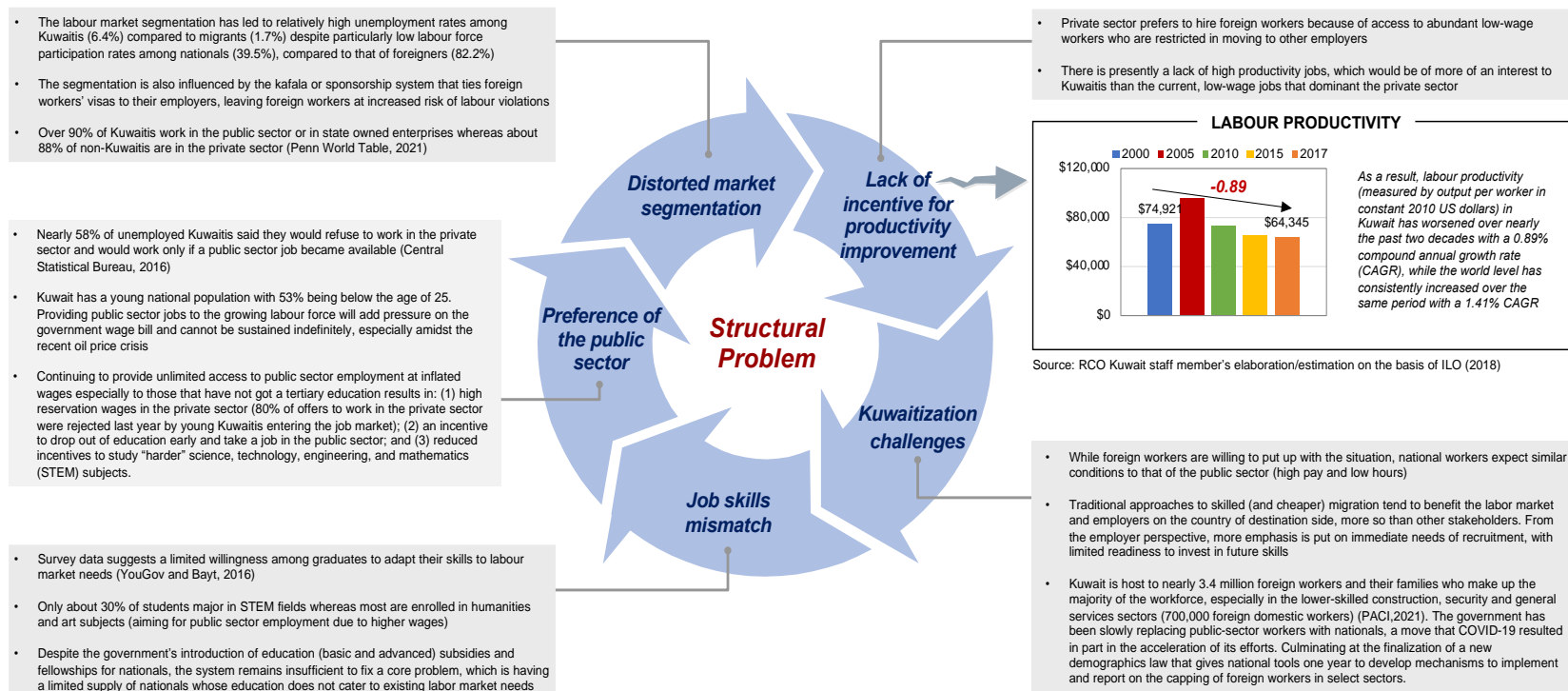


Figure 17. Kuwait labour market structural problem.

The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) 2020 provided recommendations for Kuwait to continue its efforts to implement and fully enforce the legislative framework that ensures the protection of migrant workers and their rights, and to take effective measures to improve their living conditions. This applies to domestic workers in particular, who are considered to be among the most vulnerable groups. Most importantly, the International Labour Organization (ILO) Committees of Experts continue to advocate for changes to the Kuwaiti labour law to address the following areas: the need to criminalise discrimination in employment and occupation; include measures to prevent or criminalise sexual harassment; and allow migrants to establish workers unions and join them.<sup>87</sup>

Additional needed improvements relate to SDG 8.5 (Full employment and decent work with equal pay) to enforce equal pay for the same work and remove pay discrimination across gender and nationality; SDG 8.8 (Protect labour rights and promote safe working environments), while the Public Authority of Manpower (PAM) and the Occupational Safety and Health Center do inspect issues relating to safe working environments in Kuwait, their remit does not extend to domestic workers; and SDG 8.10 (Universal access to banking, insurance and financial services), which requires further inclusion of domestic workers and to allow them to open checking accounts (salary accounts). These three indicators are important because narrowing the wage gap in decent work and protecting labour rights will be critical to dealing with such challenges as distorted market segmentation and preference for the public sector. Meanwhile, the improved access to banking indicator is also critical to enable domestic workers to be more included in the banking system.

In order to ensure the provision of decent work for all – including women, migrants, people with disabilities and the stateless – there is an urgent need to rethink social safety nets and how they can provide coverage for non-Kuwaitis when they face hardship situations; to continue efforts to completely dismantle the kafala system and improve protection for migrant workers; to enforce labour regulations and provide domestic workers equal rights (this includes through the inclusion of domestic work under the Labour Law and amendments to Law No. 68 on Domestic Workers, together with its effective implementation, and through the effective inclusion of people with disabilities in the workplace).<sup>88</sup>

Kuwait has set up the small and medium-sized business incubators through MoSA to assist women going through financial hardship and has established an investment promotion body. The challenge is that none of the results or the success rate are published or made available to policymakers to enhance existing policies and programmes.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) has been working with the GoK on ethical recruitment in the framework of the Strength project, funded by UNDP. As a result of this pilot project, the GoK intends to make recruitment through recruitment agencies mandatory for all employers, especially in the private sector. The GoK will benefit greatly from joining the Global Policy Network on ethical recruitment to benefit from the international experience and exchange of best practice in licensing and monitoring recruitment agencies.

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<sup>87</sup> [https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=1000:13100:0::NO:13100:P13100\\_COMMENT\\_ID:4049891;https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=1000:13100:0::NO:13100:P13100\\_COMMENT\\_ID:3957880;https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=1000:13100:0::NO:13100:P13100\\_COMMENT\\_ID:3344008](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=1000:13100:0::NO:13100:P13100_COMMENT_ID:4049891;https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=1000:13100:0::NO:13100:P13100_COMMENT_ID:3957880;https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=1000:13100:0::NO:13100:P13100_COMMENT_ID:3344008).

<sup>88</sup> CEDAW; SR Disabilities; UPR: ILO CEACR).

Together with the World Bank, the GoK has been developing a four-pronged Labour Market Strategy, which builds among other things on a smart admission system. This smart admission system rests on two pillars: the establishment of a certification system for recruitment agencies and the introduction of a qualification framework for the testing of skills of foreign workers. IOM can further assist the GoK in the establishment of the certification system by training and certifying recruitment agencies in Kuwait on Impact Reporting and Investment Standards (IRIS).

With regard to the introduction of a qualification framework for the skills testing of foreign workers, IOM is currently in discussion with the GoK the concept of Skills Mobility Partnerships (SMPs) with Countries of Origin (CoO). Building such SMPs with CoOs would require a Labour Market Information System (LMIS) both in Kuwait and in the CoO, which would enable the identification of sectors in which future skills would be needed (skills anticipation). In these sectors, the CoO and the GoK would jointly invest by setting up joint skills development programmes, which would result in joint certificates or mutually recognised certificates (skills recognition). With an SMP of this type, the GoK would be able to better ensure it was bringing in the foreign workers with the skill sets that were needed in Kuwait.

### **SDG 9. Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure**

*Build resilient infrastructure, promote sustainable industrialisation and foster innovation.*

Recognised as the requirement for economic diversification of the country, industrial development is seen as a way to move forward from the oil economy, due to the currently limited industrial sector. The GoK has announced plans to boost the industrial sector's output by 25 per cent in the coming years, from its current 9 per cent. However, the importance of industrial sector has already been given consideration by the GoK. The Kuwait Public Authority for Industry (PAI), established in 1996, is the primary sector regulator in Kuwait and is in charge of developing the country's national industrial strategy; encouraging the participation of local industries; expanding the production base; and allocating industrial land sites. The country's vision for industrial development is stated in Kuwait's 2035 development strategy. The main economic pillar of KNDP 2035 focuses on the objective of developing a prosperous and diversified economy to reduce the country's dependence on oil export revenues. It is based on four strategic components: 1) the development of a national tourism sector; 2) the creation of a business environment for private sector growth; 3) diversification of the production base; and 4) attraction of investors and support to the knowledge economy. Long-term development priorities in Kuwait's 2035 KNDP strategy, "New Kuwait", are reflected in 164 programmes, projects and initiatives that aim to transform the country into a regional leader for finance, industry and culture. These include achieving a three-fold increase of foreign direct investment (FDI), developing US\$100 billion worth of infrastructure through public-private partnerships (PPPs), and enhancing Kuwait's position as a global centre for petrochemicals production.

The strategic initiatives for the promotion of industry include ensuring the provision of various incentives through customs and tax exemptions, financing, subsidies for land industrial development, preferential treatment in procurement, exemptions for duties in buying machinery, equipment, spare parts, raw material and packaging materials with an aim to promote local industries. Moreover, due to the shortage in the number of Kuwaiti nationals in the industrial sector, workforce training is also a strategic initiative in the list of GoK priorities, supported through the PAI, which provides financial support to train workers and employees. In addition, the Government of Kuwait has taken measures to reduce the processing time for business permits and applications with a view to increase the ease of doing business.

The entrepreneurial culture and the role of private sector are still limited, as the GoK provides 80 per cent of jobs for Kuwaiti nationals in the public sector with high incentives. As a result, private sector employment remains unattractive for nationals and it relies on expatriate workers with lower wages. The IMF report of 2017 on Kuwait has identified that such labour market segmentation keeps the labour market rigid for nationals, and discourages the movement of Kuwaiti labour to the private sector, productivity gains, risk-taking and entrepreneurship. High reservation wages from Kuwaiti nationals also contribute to higher salaries in the private sector, with a negative impact on competitiveness.

Overall, these policies have been significant impediments to private sector growth and diversification and have contributed to keeping the GoK wage bill high. To add to this challenge, the population is growing; this creates pressure on the government to generate more jobs for youth in the attractive public/government sector, which already has one of the highest public sector wage bills in the world. Therefore, the main challenges around industrial development in Kuwait include the lack of an entrepreneurial culture, especially in non-oil sectors; the absence of internal comparative advantages; inadequate institutional facilities; and a lack of necessary technical and managerial skills.

Another major bottleneck in the development of SMEs in Kuwait is the limited supply of land to meet the needs of expanding or new manufacturing operations. Moreover, given their significant potential in terms of job creation, facilitating access to finance and land, especially for SMEs, reducing the burden of administrative procedures, easing trade barriers, reducing excessive regulations and fostering competition, and further encouraging foreign direct investment are recognised as necessary measures to address the industrial development challenges. The economic diversification achieved by the United Arab Emirates in the past decade and the successful ongoing efforts of Qatar in the same direction are notable examples among other GCC countries of developing a sustainable economic model that assures intergenerational equity.

## **SDG 10. Reduced Inequalities**

*Reduced inequality within and among countries.*

Kuwait currently does not currently report on SDG 10 and there is no data available according to the Sustainable Development Report 2021.

Kuwait already has a generous and comprehensive social protection system,<sup>89</sup> made up of workers' social insurance schemes and social assistance programmes for needy populations (mainly citizens), who benefit from social allowances, housing loans, employment subsidies, free education and healthcare, as well as flexible working conditions and care for people with special needs. The system targets 15 categories of vulnerable population.<sup>90, 91</sup>

Demand for social assistance programmes has been increasing since before the pandemic, according to the World Bank. Covid-19 has added additional pressure on the budget. Indeed, the GoK has committed to increasing the budget of ministries and government departments for 2020-2021 by 500 million KWD

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<sup>89</sup> The World Bank. Social Safety Nets in Kuwait Towards Gender-Sensitive Policies.

<sup>90</sup> Azoulay, R., Palier, B., (2020). *The Welfare System in Kuwait Mechanisms of wealth: distribution and challenges for economy and society*. Sciences Po and LIEPP study.

<sup>91</sup> The defined 15 groups include: housewives, divorced women, elderly, financially needy, unmarried women, Kuwaiti women married to non-Kuwaitis, student families, ill individuals, family of prisoners, widows, students abroad, orphans, adopted children, and addicted prisoners released from prison.



(US\$1.6 billion)<sup>92</sup>. The Covid-19 pandemic has significantly increased the discrimination and violence already experienced by vulnerable people.<sup>14</sup> One of the vulnerable groups is low-income migrants and domestic workers. Currently, low-income expatriates have limited access to (and must pay for) essential healthcare services, even though the national health service provides free services to Kuwaiti citizens.<sup>15</sup>

To achieve greater social cohesion, the KNDP and national development priorities need to address the economic and social inequalities that exist. To ensure universal health coverage, financial sustainability, effective governance and systematic responses to crises, the current health financial support system must change to National Health Insurance, together with community health centres and a healthcare safety net for low-income employees and households. There is an urgent need to rethink and formulate a safety net for vulnerable groups that will address existing inequalities and enhance social welfare. Special attention is also needed for people with disabilities who require further integration into the education and labour markets.

Signing and ratifying pending conventions, protocols and treaties for effective migration management would reaffirm Kuwait's unwavering desire and ongoing sustained efforts to comply with international standards on migration management. As of today, Kuwait has ratified 19 of the ILO conventions, including seven of the eight core conventions.

Additional efforts are needed to address human rights and vulnerability issues such as the prevalence of discrimination (on the basis of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status), the existence of laws, policies and practices countering discrimination, and to improve the overall situation of low-skilled migrants, domestic workers and refugees.

## **SDG 11. Sustainable Cities and Communities**

*Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.*

Over the past six decades, Kuwait has experienced unprecedented, rapid population growth with only a small increase in the size of urban areas. This alarming rise in urban density in Kuwait has caused issues for residents' lifestyles, the economy and the environment. These issues have been exacerbated by urban planning that has perpetuated a city-centric urban form without modelling the impacts of current patterns of urban growth. Today, Kuwait is faced with the challenge of achieving sustainable urban development. Kuwait's population has grown from 0.99 million in 1975 to 4.20 million in 2020. Kuwait, being a city-state in which more than 98 per cent of the total population resides in the urban areas,<sup>93</sup> faces many challenges in achieving sustainable development. The two main impacts are housing shortage and traffic congestion, as these are the two most significant social impacts for Kuwaitis. This combination has promoted the development of urban sprawl, long commuting distances, and high levels of motorisation and traffic congestion. This has led to considerable negative impacts on people's health and on the environment.

Kuwait has a two-part strategy for planning its future. The first part is the Kuwait National Development Plan (KNDP), which sets out the economic development strategy up to 2035. The second part is the Fourth Kuwait Master Plan (4KMP). This outlines the physical planning strategy until 2040; it includes plans to further distribute the increased population towards the northern and southern parts of the country by

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<sup>92</sup> <https://www.arabnews.com/node/1642286/middle-east>.

<sup>93</sup> Secretariat of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development (GS-SCPD), Kuwait National Report on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development, 2016.

developing new cities, which would, in turn, create new jobs. The New Kuwait 2035 vision is underpinned by the connectivity in and between new smart cities, and digital transformation towards smart infrastructure.

Kuwait is administered by the central government. Each government ministry (such as the Ministries of Health, Education, Housing Welfare, Social Welfare, etc.) has a specific role in the urban area. Therefore, to improve urban legislation, cooperation and the active participation of all these ministries is needed. The Kuwait Municipality is the key agency devoted to the planning and development of the urban areas and act as a focal point for the improvement of urban legislations.

In the 2019 VNR, Kuwait reported on three indicators. For Target 11.1 (Access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services & upgrading slums), Kuwait is free of slums. All urban dwellers live in houses and enjoy free access to high quality social services, including healthcare, education, public water, wastewater and electric networks and others. The Public Authority of Housing Welfare (PAHW) is the entity responsible for providing various housing welfare alternatives for eligible citizens. With respect to Target 11.2, (Accessing safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all), the Kuwait Public Transportation Cooperation (KPTC) provides extensive public transit services, which also cover transportation from the mainland to Kuwaiti islands. However, although A public transportation system is available and affordable, Kuwaiti citizens commonly use their own transportation (private cars). This urban pattern causes significant congestion and pollution, and often poses challenges to mobility.<sup>94</sup> For Target 11.6, (Reduce the adverse per capita environmental impact of cities, including by paying special attention to air quality and municipal and other waste management), Kuwait has reported a decrease in the percentage of municipal solid waste from 12.51 per cent in 2012 to 11.09 per cent in 2016.

Significant challenges remain for SDG 11, including the lack of data disaggregated by income, sex, age, disability, migratory status, geographical location and other characteristics.

**Access to housing.** The KNDP includes a KPI for “unmet demand for housing” – this is mainly under the PAHW and primarily concerns housing for Kuwaitis and excludes non-Kuwaitis. At the outcome level, “upgraded land, air and sea connections”, the selected KPI is a composite indicator from the competitiveness index (CGI) = Transport infrastructure Indicator. The issue is that this indicator does not provide for each component (land, sea and air) separately and cannot be used to measure or report progress on the SDGs.

## **SDG 12. Responsible Consumption and Production**

*Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.*

Kuwait officially endorsed its Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) National Assessment report in October 2021. The assessment was developed in collaboration with UNEP West Asia office as a step forward to develop and implement Kuwait’s SCP national action plan (target 12.1). The aim of the SCP status report was to identify Kuwait’s SCP priority sectors based on current national strategies and significance to economic development and human welfare. During the assessment, a national steering committee lead by Kuwait Environment Public Authority (KEPA) was officially established, several sessions were held with relevant stakeholders from governmental authorities, national experts, private sector, and

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<sup>94</sup> VNR 2019

civil society organizations. Hence, national priorities under SDG 12 were identified as 1. Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy, 2. Solid Waste Management, with a 3. special focus towards the Industrial sector.

One of the issues of concern resulting from the sustained urban sprawl and population growth is the **ensuing amount of solid waste** that will increase as a result. This has prompted Kuwait to apply several policies and procedures to reduce the production of solid and hazardous waste and to ensure its recycling, re-use and orderly disposal. The State of Kuwait is in the process of developing a National Solid Waste Strategy, along with its plan of action and monitoring framework, with an implementation period of 30 years (Target 12.4).

**Food loss and waste.** An individual in Kuwait wastes 95 kg of food on average per year, and Kuwaiti families waste 397,700 tons of food per year, as revealed by the Food Waste Index Report for 2021, issued by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the partner organisation “WRAP”. Consumers can help reduce food waste within households, and the GoK can increase climate action by including food waste in the nationally determined contribution to the Paris Agreement, while enhancing food security and reducing costs for households. Prevention of food loss and waste can become an essential area for inclusion in Covid-19 recovery strategies.<sup>95</sup>

The Joint Committee on Environment and Development in the Arab Region set out to develop a regional Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) strategy for the region. Their recent report identified energy, water, waste, rural development and poverty eradication, education, and sustainable lifestyles and tourism as the main avenues of SCP focus in the region, with the direct and most overarching problems pertaining to energy production and consumption, and water supply and use. **Kuwait has among the highest water consumption level in the world** with a daily use of around 500 litres per capita, more than double the average international rate, according to the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR).

Kuwait has been attempting to apply SCP in the energy sector. In August 2007, the Ministry of Electricity and Water (MEW) of Kuwait launched a nationwide conservation campaign and action programme at the start of the summer season, the Tarsheed National Programme for Energy (Water and Electricity) Conservation (“Tarsheed”). The programme was implemented with the cooperation of the Kuwait Society of Engineers. The initiative involves the dissemination of knowledge and awareness on the issue and calling for energy conservation through (SMS) messages, television and radio ads, fliers taped to car windshields and fed into mailboxes, as well as street billboards.

**Hazardous waste management is an underdeveloped sector in Kuwait**, and there is rarely any controlled disposal of hazardous waste in the region, although certain areas of dumps are usually designated as being for hazardous waste. Kuwait is now starting with key elements such as legal and institutional matters; preparation of national waste inventories and data management systems; techniques for waste minimisation; management and safe disposal; mobilisation of financial and human resources, etc.

In the latest VNR, Kuwait reported on four indicators as priority under SDG 12, this represents 40 per cent of the global list of indicators under SDG 12 with one suggested indicator out of the universal list. This is slightly more than the average of indicators considered by other GCC countries (by one indicator). However, only Target 12.2.2 can be reported on quantitatively at this point. The other two indicators

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<sup>95</sup> <https://www.arabtimesonline.com/news/kuwaiti-families-waste-397-7-thousand-tons-of-food/>

could only be reported on qualitatively due the lack of a clear methodology from the outset, and the lack of data at the local level.

Overall, Kuwait is making slow progress in **planning for the persistent organic pollutants (POPs)**; this includes undertaking inventories of the pollutant and the development of a national implementation plan according to the Stockholm Convention on POPs. This is ongoing work that the Kuwait Environment Public Authority (KEPA) and KISR are currently leading.

**Kuwait's policy is to phase out the fuel subsidies**, which in turn will reduce the material footprint. This correlates to Indicator 12.c.1 (Amount of fossil-fuel subsidies per unit of GDP (production and consumption) and as a proportion of total national expenditure on fossil fuels).

**Kuwait international efforts in joining the international environmental agreements and enforcing these agreements at the national level.** Kuwait also hosts the Basel Convention Regional Centre, which gives Kuwait a leading role in the GCC region in this space. KEPA is working closely with industries and the private sector to promote sustainability. This correlates with Indicator 12.6.1 (Number of companies publishing sustainability reports (Tier III)).

The KNDP has good coverage for SDG 12. The main weakness is that Kuwait is not currently reporting on Tier I Target 12.b (Develop and implement tools to monitor sustainable development impacts for sustainable tourism that create jobs and promotes local culture and products). It would be important to incorporate this so as to enhance Kuwait's position as a global leader in international development, and to capture the extent of its international contribution.

### **SDG 13. Climate Action**

*Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.*

Kuwait's arid climate puts it at high risk from climate change and Kuwait plans to take action to develop climate change adaptation. As a result of the geographic location, climatic conditions, geological nature, the characteristics of its soil, the attributes of vegetation cover and its patterns of land use, Kuwait suffers from numerous environmental challenges, including higher temperature rates; higher airborne dust and sand falling ratio; an increased frequency of sandstorms; a lack of seasonal rains; limited water resources; increased desertification; and a decline in vegetation cover. The increasing rise in average temperatures is accompanied by the scarcity or lack of rainfall.<sup>96</sup>

Kuwait has faced a number of consequences as a result of climate change, including desertification, an increase in sea levels, an increase in temperature, and a loss of biodiversity. As a result of its economic dependence on oil, Kuwait is considered to have high vulnerability to oil-related measures that might be implemented by developed countries. Climate change will directly affect sea levels, which in turn will have a massive effect on fisheries, aquacultures and coral reefs. In addition, a change of this type could have an effect on the country's air quality: any minor change in climate could bring about a major increase in air pollution, exacerbated by the geographical location of the country. In turn, these changes, specifically those occurring to the air or affecting the means of livelihood, will have a major consequence on the quality of life, health and wellbeing of the people of Kuwait, both directly and indirectly. It is estimated

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<sup>96</sup> KEPA, Intended Nationally Determined Contributions, the State of Kuwait - November 2015.

that the intermediate (upward) changes in temperature that are likely to take place over the coming years could cause up to 30 per cent increase in rainfall and up to 2.4°C increase in temperature.

Kuwait's ongoing efforts towards adaptation are centred around five streams of effort: strengthening coastal information systems; adapting to dust storms; increasing food security; using district cooling systems in newly developed residential cities; and adapting to the lack of water resources. The Environment Protection Law has been enacted to promote "environmental culture in Kuwait" and aims to increase awareness of sustainable natural resource management and its effect on the climate. Additionally, a programme for water conservation has been developed to adapt to the scarcity of water resources in the country.

Kuwait has developed its first National Adaptation Plan (NAP) 2019-2030 to enhance national adaptive capacity and resilience in order to reduce vulnerability to the impacts of climate change. The NAP was developed by KEPA together with UNEP and UNDP. The NAP has included many recommendations for adaptation at sectoral and national levels. The Action Plan recommends the preparation of sectoral action plan for adaptation with emphasis on the four main sectors. The mobilisation of financial resources, therefore, is urgently needed for technology transfer, as well as for implementing the proposed adaptation measures.

**Climate risks and vulnerable sectors.** Overall, Kuwait suffers from four major gaps. Within **the fisheries and marine sector**, there is a lack of climate adaptation and development plans and projects in Kuwait to help with meeting local food security requirements, as well as an absence of a strategic adaptive framework capable of responding to emergency situations and hazardous crises. Kuwait has implemented key adaptation measures to cope with climate change impacts; however, there are still major gaps and still more to do in all sectors. **Water resources management** and the need for broader implementation of new technologies, as well as a lack of information, studies, and knowledge, are the primary gaps in the water management sector. Within **the coastal zone sector**, the major gaps have been identified as a lack of restrictions, legislation and policies, in addition to inadequate communication. Finally, the major gaps within the **health sector** relate to insufficient climate information, which results in a lack of awareness, along with a lack of financial and physical capacities in Kuwait.<sup>97</sup>

#### **SDG 14. Life Below Water**

*Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development*

Kuwait's environment comprises numerous marine and coastal habitats, including coral reefs, sea grass, swamps and nine islands, rich with coastal habitats: this is significant for the country's biodiversity.<sup>98</sup> The marine life is rich in its natural resources and adds to Kuwait's national wealth; its sensitive coralline islands are the habitat for endangered sea turtles and birds.

Rapid industrial and urban development alongside the coastal areas has led to an increase in the different types of pollutants, including petroleum hydrocarbons, metals, wastewater and contaminated solutions from the desalination facilities, which are now present in the water. Furthermore, the country has faced several problems relating to the improper planning and implementation of projects, as well as the random construction of boat shacks on the shores, which have put pressure on the coastal and marine resources

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<sup>97</sup> Kuwait National Adaptation plan 2019-2030

<sup>98</sup> Kuwait, State of Marine Environment Report, 2017

and hindered the normal water flow mechanism respectively. In addition, pollution from the gas industries is considered to be one of the serious sources of contamination of the marine environment.<sup>99</sup>

Kuwait's environment pollution indicators show that the level of wastewater pollution is significantly alarming. Scientific evidence has revealed that the wastewater contains hazardous chemical and biological pollutants, which could endanger marine and human life, especially important given that the country depends largely on the consumption of fish for food and on sea recreational activities. Similarly, indicators relating to water quality in the marine environment are considered to be average: there is an increase in the presence of algae and pollutants, which in turn cause a decrease in fish reproduction, and eventually leads to a decrease in the fish stocks. The fish stock is considered a vital element for food security and is one of the few renewable resources in Kuwait. This decrease of the fish stock is a combined result of overfishing, high salinity levels and the destruction of fish habitat, as well as pollution and climate change.

The KNDP includes Programme 6 (Build a liveable and harmonious environment) and Policy 6.1 (Improve water resource management, including wastewater treatment and reclamation, water use efficiency, and desalination) that reflect SDG 14.

Kuwait can accelerate the achievement of SDG 14 by following through on the initiatives included in the National Adaptation Plans. In addition, it can improve the generation of data on the coastal marine environment; increase the coverage of assessment and data on marine resources and fisheries stocks; integrate marine protection and conservation into national development plans and urban development strategies in coastal areas; improve overall marine fisheries management; enhance the regulation and management of impacts on oceans from urban, industrial and agricultural development, including petrochemical and energy installations, coastal chemical industry and chlorine plants, eutrophication and pollution from urban and agricultural runoff, disposal of domestic and industrial discharges, dredging and filling operations.

### **SDG 15. Life on Land**

*Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.*

Kuwait has a diverse environment, which includes vital ecosystems along with deserts that contribute to around 90 per cent of the total area of the country. This desert ecosystem involves various dominant plant groups, along with their species, in addition to swamps, seasonal desert ponds and many other characteristics that give Kuwait its current rich nature. The desert ecosystem is socially and economically vital: it is an important source of food, feed and fibre production, in addition to aesthetic and recreational products. Kuwait's wild ecosystems have undergone severe dry periods for almost 10 years, which have had a major effect on its structure. The total desert area that was open for grazing and camping in 1999 consisted of 75 per cent of Kuwait's total land mass. However, by 2014, this area had been reduced to only 51 per cent.

Kuwait is affected by significant challenges. These include the loss of agricultural land due to the nature of the salinity of the arid country's soil, as well as increased levels of salinity in the groundwater used for irrigation; major erosion of desert soil, which have occurred as a result of the effects of strong wind and

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<sup>99</sup> Kuwait VNR 2019

floods that have caused the loss of organic material; oil pollution, resulting from crude oils in different areas in the south and north-eastern part of Kuwait; the loss of topsoil because of heavy winds, which lead to sandstorms; a deterioration in the natural characteristics of the soil (hardening and compression); and deformation and changes in the topographical and hydrological aspects of the land.

Kuwait has recognised the importance of preserving natural areas as habitats for large groups of species; consequently, 10 wild natural reserves have recently been established. KEPA has conducted a national strategy on biodiversity for 2011-2020. The strategy aims to protect biodiversity in all its forms; encourage sustainable use; and promote awareness among all stakeholders of the importance of preserving biodiversity and enhancing stakeholder participation in the implementation of this strategy.

Targets 15a and 15.b are reflected within the KNDP Programme 8 (Contribute to the global economy) and Policy 8.1 (Boost economic diplomacy and international development). To further advance SDG 15, Kuwait needs to follow through on the full implementation and update its national strategy on biodiversity to make the results and progress available.

### **SDG 16. Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions**

*Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and built effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.*

**Effective, accountable and transparent institutions.** Kuwait has made considerable progress on SDG 16, as reported in the VNR 2020, in the following areas: passing Law No 2/2016 establishing the Public Anti-Corruption Authority (PACA), the establishment of the Kuwait Integrity and Anti-Corruption Strategy (KIACS) led by PACA (NAZAHA), which aims to promote values of integrity and anti-corruption in the public and private sectors. The strategy includes some 60 initiatives to enhance the integrity and promote advocacy and coordination among anti-corruption stakeholders at the national level.

Major challenges remain with the existing government structure, the machinery of government, the quality of the public service, heavy bureaucracy, policy coordination and a bloated public administration. Despite the fact that many reforms and programmes have been considered (civil service reform, restructuring of the overall public administration, reforms of the public employment including the public sector pay and compensation) approvals and implementation have stalled. Without these critical reforms Kuwait will not be able to achieve Agenda 2030 and build strong and effective institutions.

Another area in which Kuwait is falling behind is in the achieving of sustainable and efficient financial management and diversification of resources.

**Respect for human rights.** Kuwait has ratified many international agreements and conventions; however, a number of human rights conventions still need to be ratified as detailed under Chapter 6. Human Rights Situation. Kuwait still has to address many challenges and human rights issues, including the prevalence of discrimination and harassment; improving access to justice; the prevalence of violence (including physical, psychological, and sexual violence); human trafficking; improving the rule of law and access to justice; access to information; improving fundamental freedoms; improving the effectiveness of the national human rights institutions; the situation of detainees, the freedom of the press; the freedom of expression; rights to assembly and party formation; and lastly, improving women's political empowerment.

Kuwait also needs to improve the overall situation of vulnerable groups, as highlighted under Chapter 6.3 Leaving No One Behind (LNOB) analysis.

### **SDG 17. Partnerships for the Goals**

*Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the global Partnership for Sustainable Development.*

Kuwait is committed to world peace, to regional and global partnership, and international solidarity. The Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED), established in 1961, is Kuwait's main institution to provide overseas development assistance (ODA). It has given out more than US\$19 billion since then, in donations and grants that have benefitted more than 106 countries around the globe. Kuwait's ODA increased between 2012 and 2017, maintaining a funding level above 2.1 per cent of the country's GDP at a time when revenues were dwindling due to a drop in oil prices.

The main gaps under SGD 17 include: a full reliance on government funding for the SDGs; limited involvement of the private sector, civil society, non-government sector and the philanthropic sector; and weak statistical capacity and limited access to data, which lead to gaps in good quality data for policy making and to monitor the SDGs. Despite having the appropriate institutional set-up in terms of the Sustainable Observatory Centre within the GSSCPD and the special SDG Governance Committee, there is a lack of published data and reports around the SDGs and progress made towards their achievement. There is limited evidence of sectoral strategies and national plans integrating the SDGs (e.g., the National Strategy for Persons with Disability, National Health Plan, etc.). Additional challenges include weak mechanisms for policy coordination and coherence, as well as the monitoring and evaluation of the SDGs.

The KNDP does not include a specific SDG partnership framework and would greatly benefit from developing a complementary budget allocation for each of the goals to ease monitoring and reporting on progress.

- Most selected targets in the KNDP 2020-2025 are related to international development indicators without many references to the SDGs. This approach is the reason why Kuwait is losing out on recognising and reflecting its efforts on the international development agenda and SDGs. The UNCT can provide further support to redefine and re-shape selected targets in a way that will enhance better monitoring and reporting on SDGs.
- KNDP addresses and reflects the SDGs mostly at the goals level, but is not reporting on Tier I indicators. Kuwait does not report on 17.2 (financial development assistance); 17.11 (trade); 17.9 (capacity building).
- Target 17.4, related to assisting developing countries in attaining long-term debt sustainability: not reported on by Kuwait – it is not reflected, even though Kuwait contributes to that effort.
- KNDP outcome - recognised leader in international development: its KPIs (total humanitarian aid flows). This is a good KPI, but value of aid does not necessarily reflect Kuwait's generous contribution and efforts across the various SDGs.
- Leveraging efforts and reporting on SDGs. It would be ideal for Kuwait to integrate SDG KPIs in the performance framework; if not, it should adopt at least Tier I indicators to facilitate the reporting and achievement of the SDGs.



#### 4.5 Summary of Gaps Preventing Kuwait from Achieving Agenda 2030

- i. **Lack of a clearly defined national SDG framework** with clear data monitoring and reporting mechanisms. Despite the fact that Kuwait has adopted Agenda 2030 since 2015 and has recently put in place the institutional set-up within the GSSCPD, the main concern is the lack of a national sustainable development framework with clear action plans and targets in terms of how the GoK intends to achieve and mainstream the SDGs into sectoral strategies. This framework should be supported by an SDG finance plan to guide planning, budgeting, monitoring and reporting. The Kuwait Vision and KNDP could serve as frameworks, but then the challenge is the issue related to the various actions plans.
- ii. **Lack of an Agenda 2030 partnerships framework** for success that will allow the GoK to leverage strategic contributions, resources, ideas and innovations towards the SDGs. These partners include parliament, the media, academia and research institutes, businesses and industry, non-government organisations (NGOs), civil society, ministries and government bodies.
- iii. **Critical lack of dated, reliable, high frequency and disaggregated data and statistics to report on the SDGs** that support policy making, especially to measure and monitor progress towards the SDGs. More importantly, the existing statistical system does not take into account or measure poverty, vulnerability or affected vulnerable groups. This could mean that even when the government might be doing well, there is no data to report on progress. There is a need to support the GoK in building an **SDGs data roadmap** to compensate and bridge the data gaps.
- iv. **Weak capacity gap to mainstream, manage, monitor, report and advance the SDGs** across the various government entities at the technical and organisational levels.
- v. **Weak engagement of the private sector, civil society and NGOs** to achieve the SDGs: this is considered a huge gap to advancing SDGs.
- vi. **Insufficient attention to social cohesion and the inclusive growth** that ensures that vulnerable groups (especially migrants and women) are not left behind and are part of the national development priorities.
- vii. **Weak institutional setup and capacity to address and advance human rights and gender equality issues.**
- viii. **Challenges related to expanding access to social protection, decent jobs and economic services to vulnerable groups such as migrant workers.**

## 5. Commitments Under International Norms and Standards

### Overview of Commitments and Links to Agenda 2030

Kuwait has ratified seven out of the nine core human rights treaties and two optional protocols:<sup>100</sup> the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT); the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR); the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW); the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD); the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR); the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC); the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD); the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict (CRC-OP-AC); and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children child prostitution and child pornography (CRC-OP-SC).

Kuwait maintains regular dialogue with the UN Charter and treaty-based bodies, including the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) and special procedures of the UN Human Rights Council, and files periodic progress reports on ratified UN core human rights treaties. Kuwait underwent its Third UPR in January 2020. In total, Kuwait received 302 recommendations of which it accepted 230 (acceptance rate of 76 per cent of recommendations accepted compared to 64 per cent from the previous UPR 2015 – showing a more positive trend (see Figure 18). Kuwait has extended a standing invitation to all Special Procedures since 13 September 2010.<sup>101</sup> Special Procedures visits since 2015 were: 2016 - the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, the Working Group on discrimination against women in law and in practice; 2018 - the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities.

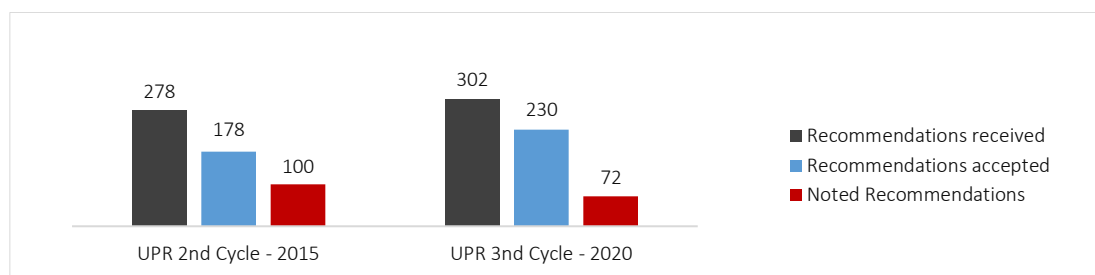


Figure 18. Trends in Government of Kuwait adoption of the UPR recommendations.<sup>102</sup>

Kuwait ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1994, with reservations to Articles 9 (2) (equal rights with regard to nationality); 16(f) (equal rights on guardianship and adoption); and 29 (1) (administration of the convention and arbitration in the event of a dispute).

<sup>100</sup> Status of Ratifications Interactive Dashboard at: <https://indicators.ohchr.org/>

<sup>101</sup> A standing invitation is an open invitation extended by a Government to all thematic special procedures. By extending a standing invitation States announce that they will always accept requests to visit from all special procedures.

<sup>102</sup> Source of data: [https://lib.ohchr.org/HRBodies/UPR/Documents/Session35/KW/Infographic\\_Kuwait.pdf](https://lib.ohchr.org/HRBodies/UPR/Documents/Session35/KW/Infographic_Kuwait.pdf).

Kuwait has ratified 19 of the ILO Conventions including seven of eight Fundamental Conventions. Kuwait has the longest experience in tripartite participation among the Arab States, with long-standing national tripartite consultative bodies. The ILO continues to support the GoK in various areas, including the implementation of fundamental principles and rights at work; labour inspection; labour law; social dialogue; and the governance of labour migration, including the protection of migrant domestic workers. The latest UPR provided recommendations for Kuwait to continue its efforts to implement and fully enforce the legislative framework ensuring the protection of migrant workers and their rights, and to take effective measures to improve their living conditions - in particular for domestic workers, who are considered among the most vulnerable groups.

Kuwait has ratified most relevant global and regional environmental agreements and has participated in the three global climate summits: the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC Rio); the Kyoto Protocol; and the Paris Agreement. As part of the UNFCCC, Kuwait has committed to joining a global coalition to achieve a 2°C increase in the world's climate from pre-industrial levels by 2020. However, major challenges remain in terms of effective compliance and implementation of these agreements.

GCM and UN Network on Migration. The GoK was among the countries who adopted the Global Compact for Migration (GCM) and its objectives in December 2018. This indicates the efforts of the State of Kuwait towards achieving safe, orderly and regular migration. In alignment, the first UN Network for Migration (UNNM) in the Gulf region was established in Kuwait. The GoK prepared the first voluntary report and a network on migration was established in the country. However, GCM principles are not yet fully implemented, and many of the migration-related SDGs (i.e., 8,10, 16 and 17) would be achieved if the objectives of the GCM were followed by the government with the support of relevant UN agencies.

#### Scope of International Obligations that Have Not Been Ratified with International Human Rights Mechanisms and Treaty Bodies<sup>103</sup>

Kuwait has not ratified the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (ICED); the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (ICMW); the Optional Protocol of the Convention against Torture (CAT-OP); or the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights Aiming to the Abolition of the Death Penalty (CCPR-OP2-DP). Kuwait has not accepted any of the individual complaint procedures or inquiry procedure.

Kuwait has also not ratified the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC), or the ILO's Domestic Workers Convention (No. 189).

Since 2010, the United Nations General Assembly has called on countries to establish a moratorium on the use of the death penalty, progressively restrict the practice, and reduce the offences for which it might be imposed, all with the view toward its eventual abolition. Kuwait supported the recommendation that it meet minimum standards in the application of the death penalty, particularly regarding the restriction of the death penalty to the most serious crimes; however, Kuwait did not support recommendations that it establish a moratorium on the death penalty, prolong a moratorium on

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<sup>103</sup> <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G19/324/15/PDF/G1932415.pdf?OpenElement>.

executions or consider abolishing the death penalty. Kuwait needs to consider abolishing the death penalty and re-establish a formal moratorium on executions with a view to ratifying the second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

In 2016, the Human Rights Committee called on Kuwait to accede to the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aimed at the abolition of the death penalty and to consider the possibility of acceding to the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) also recommended the ratification of the Second Optional Protocol to the Covenant.<sup>104</sup>

### Moving Forward on Pending Ratifications

Kuwait needs to continue its efforts to align with international norms and standards. As such, it needs to 1) remove reservations to ratified treaties, and ensure that its domestic legislation is aligned with international human rights standards; 2) consider the remaining recommendations under the latest UPR 2020, which called on Kuwait to continue with the accession, ratification and implementation of the international human rights instruments in close collaboration with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and other United Nations bodies; and 3) ratify the core United Nations' human rights treaties to which it is not yet party.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> CRPD/C/KWT/CO/1, para. 21.

<sup>105</sup> Human Rights Commissioner Letter to the Government of Kuwait, December 2020.

## 6. Multidimensional Risk Analysis

### 6.1 Risk Analysis

This chapter of the CCA provides an overview of potential risks that might impact Kuwait's development trajectory towards Agenda 2030. **Currently, Kuwait faces major long-term structural challenges and external risks, which include the slow implementation of infrastructure projects and domestic political uncertainty.** The government's strong fiscal buffer could reduce incentives to undertake politically difficult, but much-needed, fiscal reforms. Comprehensive reforms are urgently needed to rebalance the economy away from the energy sector to a more diversified growth path underpinned by innovation, private sector entrepreneurship and job creation, and an improvement in the skills mix of its labour force. External risks include spill-overs from regional geopolitical tensions and conflicts, a supply overhang in global oil markets, and global financial volatility that dampens private investment and financing of public-private partnerships (PPPs).

The selected priority risks were based on consultations of the UNCT and include political stability; economic stability; food security and nutrition; infrastructure and access to social services; social cohesion and migration; public health, environment and climate; regional and global influences; financing landscape; and partnership strategy.

**Overall country risk assessment.** Kuwait has a country rating of A4. It is considered to have a somewhat shaky political and economic outlook and a relatively volatile business environment that can affect corporate payment behaviour. Corporate default probability is still acceptable. The business climate rating is A3 which is relatively good.<sup>106</sup> Kuwait's main strengths are the vast financial buffers offsetting low oil prices; a positive international position; the reform efforts and improvements in economic diversification efforts; the low inflation environment; the high living standards; and the low social discontent. On the other hand, its main weaknesses include a high dependence on oil and on government spending; slow economic diversification efforts; the delays in parliament to pass the law on public debt; the continuous stalemate between the cabinet and the opposition-dominated legislative power; the slow-moving bureaucracy; and its high dependence on expatriate workers (70 per cent of the population).<sup>107</sup>

**Political stability and risks.** The ongoing friction between the executive and legislative branches continues to lead to frequent cabinet reshuffles, and parliamentary opposition to critical fiscal reforms remains a key challenge. This friction and the frequency with which it happens are now to the fore in the stalled progress on the draft debt law, budget structure and fiscal deficit, and the lessened appetite for reform is expected to continue and draw attention away from more pressing issues related to the country's development and stalled progress, which Kuwait cannot afford at this point. The newly sworn-in government is facing what could be a "perfect storm", combining a troublesome mix of political and economic problems that might lead to substantial change, and perhaps instability. These developments raise the spectre of a crisis similar to that of 2012, when Kuwait experienced two separate elections and massive demonstrations. Another risk area is the red tape, corruption and mismanagement of public

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<sup>106</sup> Coface Kuwait Risk Memo, 2020.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

funds, which has gained more attention in recent years and will inevitably come under more scrutiny as people's economic situations could start to deteriorate post-pandemic.

The recent election (coupled with the Covid-19 crisis) could have significant implications regarding delays in reforms, and affect the institutional arrangement (i.e., a chain of communication and decision-making process) and public financing initiatives and reforms, including subsidy cuts, an integrated tax administration system, and other taxation related issues. Moving forward, the new parliament – and government – need to avoid deadlock over pressing issues such as passing the public debt law delays and necessary legislations for implementation of the national development plan and related budget. There is a need to also to reach consensus and agree on reforming administrative and bureaucratic practices to reinforce integrity, transparency and accountability throughout the government, improving effectiveness and efficiency in policy implementation and service delivery.

### Economic Stability and Risks

**At the global level.** The potential of a global recession, which might result in prolonged stagnation where the international economic system will take time to recover from the shock of the pandemic, with revenues of companies very likely to see a noticeable dip.

**At the domestic level.** A lower-for-longer price environment for oil and gas may continue to put pressure on Kuwait's fiscal balance, and the delay in diversification means limited engagement of the private sector and makes it even more urgent to speed up economic diversification efforts. **Another risk for Kuwait is the risk of running out of cash despite strong financial buffers.** Kuwait has very large financial buffers, thanks to the vast assets in its General Reserve Fund (GRF) that is managed within its sovereign wealth fund, the Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA), of which the assets and income can be used to finance the fiscal deficit. Beyond the GRF, the KIA is responsible for the management of Kuwait's Future Generations Fund (FGF), as well as other funds on behalf of the State of Kuwait. Total and liquid assets of the GRF were estimated at 56 per cent and 24 per cent of the GDP respectively in June 2019, according to the IMF. However, the use of these funds to finance deficits has encouraged wider budget imbalances, resulting in increased financing requirements. Due to the lack of public debt laws and rising fiscal pressures, the government's liquidity risk will rise during the upcoming period.

Parliament's approval of the law halting the automatic transfer of an annual 10 per cent of the state's revenue to the FGF could contribute to the depletion of these resources. Although oil prices are expected to inch up in 2021, they seem unlikely to stand above the fiscal break-even price of Kuwait, estimated at US\$65.7 per barrel in 2021. Moving forward, Kuwait needs significant urgent fiscal consolidation measures (e.g., the reallocation of public expenditures, expanding contributory social security to informal workers and migrant workers, etc.), the removal of subsidies<sup>108</sup> and the reduction of the oversized and unsustainable public sector.

The economic slowdown affects various industries and sectors, including retail, hospitality, tourism and transportation among others, and Kuwait is likely to witness short- to medium-term unemployment among those associated with these sectors. In this context, the outlook for growth will be significantly worsened, possibly leading to the scenario of a prolonged crisis in which a considerable number of

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<sup>108</sup> Gelan, A.U. (2018). "Kuwait's energy subsidy reduction: Examining economic and CO2 emission effects with or without compensation." *Energy Economics* 71: 186–200.

businesses might be compelled to lay off more employees or completely close down. This is just one of the channels in which negative economic growth is transmitted to local businesses and households. The government needs to rethink its mitigation measures in a way to support SMEs and vulnerable industries in the short and medium term.

#### Risks Posed to Local Agriculture, Agribusiness, Aquaculture; Water Security

Kuwait is a dry desert country with extremely long summers that are hot and dry (average temperature is 46.2°C) and mild winters (average temperature 6.2°C) with scant rainfall (average of 110 mm per year). Its evapotranspiration rates (3.0-14.1 mm.d<sup>-1</sup>) exceed annual rainfall. Kuwait's soil is predominantly sandy with low organic matter content and poor moisture and nutrient holding abilities. Natural water resources are minimal, presently desalinated seawater and brackish groundwater is used for agriculture (Table 2). Its harsh climatic conditions, and vulnerable water and soil resources are the major constraints facing the agriculture sector in Kuwait.<sup>109</sup> Around 90 per cent of Kuwait's land is considered not agriculturally viable. There are 2,880 farms. As a result of the environmental and water resource constraints, additional irrigation and protected greenhouse production are heavily relied on. While this has contributed to an increase in agricultural production and greenery development in Kuwait, it has also adversely affected the long-term sustainability of these activities, and led to the degradation of land and water resources in the country.

While Kuwait's native soil is non-saline, the use of saline water with total dissolved salts ranging from 3,000 to 8,000 ppm under the prevailing extreme arid environmental conditions has resulted in the progressive salinisation of farm lands, where the application of any irrigation water would increase the amount of salt in the soil. Family farming is not prominent in Kuwait, and the majorities of farms are not relied on for economical return or as a main source of income. The majority of the employees in the agricultural field are expatriates and have little or no background in agriculture

**Food security risks.** Kuwait relies heavily on food imports from other countries because of its relatively low agricultural production capacity. Environmental and water resource constraints mean that food self-sufficiency through local agriculture is an unsustainable and unattainable goal.

There is a high probability that future pandemics or crises might result in a disruption to the supply chain and affect household consumption. Many companies, especially SMEs, might experience longer closures or lockdowns, a sharp decline in revenues and increased costs of doing business, in part attributed to restricted supply chains. Under unfavourable fall of demand in which domestic consumption is depressed by increase in domestic prices, delays in import deliveries, and economic contraction and eventually putting a lot of strain on supply chains and logistics between and across national boundaries.

**Risks of recurring supply chain disruption.** In Kuwait, the supply of products to consumers was only moderately affected during the crisis, thanks to the government's competency in maintaining the food supply, despite incurring heavy costs. Restrictions on movement and other preventive measures have led to a reduction in the transportation of goods and services, as well as an impact on labour migration, which have caused general disruptions in supply chains logistics. These factors have hindered the shipment of food and agricultural inputs and essentials, thus threatening food security and nutrition, particularly for the most vulnerable segments of population (FAO, 2020b). The State of Kuwait has demonstrated a strong

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<sup>109</sup> <http://www.fao.org/family-farming/countries/kwt/en/>

commitment to curbing the virus and addressed the impacts on all sectors of society. Kuwait used variety of instruments and reduced risks associated with international markets. This ensured food availability for all by focusing on markets, consumer needs and preferences, and most prominently mobilised the successful efforts of the private sector and civil society.

Moving forward, the UN can support further government needs to invest in a comprehensive national strategy for food security that can integrate logistics and transport; sustainable food chain management and logistics from production to markets; new business models to sustain agri-food enterprises; fish and livestock supply chains; and overall food systems, including the promotion of R&D and technologies to address water productivity and environmental constraints to domestic food production.

**Public health risks, nutrition and diet-related NCDs.** The prevalence of obesity among adults and children, has been on the rise in Kuwait, and is now among the highest in the world (FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO, 2020). This has become a public health concern, and has led to an awareness of the elevated risk of diet-related NCDs. There is a need for a behavioural change towards healthy diets, and to make the food systems more nutrition-sensitive; this is even more the case with the ongoing pandemic. People affected by obesity, diabetes and NCDs are at a higher risk of Covid-19 (FAO, 2020d). As a result of the lockdown directives to stay at home during the pandemic, the risks of eating unhealthily have become higher. It is therefore essential to promote healthy diets across food systems, focusing on awareness campaigns to advise all segments of society to maintain a nutritious and healthy diet.

Public health risks related to the probability of a resurgence of Covid-19 cases in Kuwait or of other global pandemics failing to be contained or oil prices dropping further because of reduced oil demand due to a protracted global slowdown will lead to unfavourable macro-financial dynamics for Kuwait, widening fiscal and external imbalances and further eroding fiscal buffers.

**Risk of ongoing education disruption due to school closures.** Recent closures of schools and universities due to the effort to slow the spread of Covid-19 have already put the education of thousands of Kuwaitis at risk, especially children and youth, and people with disabilities.<sup>110</sup> The somewhat limited capacity of educational institutions to support e-learning options (e.g., remote or distance learning) for students remains a considerable factor that risks interrupting the country's concerted efforts to shift towards a human capital-led knowledge economy. This will also have implications for vulnerable groups and poor households, who might not have either the financial resources or capacity to support their children with e-learning.

**Risks of work disruption due to automation and future of work and lifelong learning.** Kuwait currently does not have a strategy to drive the re-skilling and upskilling agenda for older workers and the existing workforce in light of the potential automation of jobs. There is no clarity on who will do what or how. Even within the higher education system, there are a lack of incentives, financial support, policies and programmes to create the right motivation for Kuwaitis to pursue and invest in their continuing education and to re-skill themselves for the future of work. Mitigating this risk requires investing in lifelong learning policies and programmes to prepare the existing workforce for the shift towards the digital economy and the risks associated with changing employment conditions, disruption and future automation.

**Environment and climate risks.** Climate projections for Kuwait include increased temperatures, which will put pressure on Kuwait's water resources and lead to increased demand for municipal, agricultural and

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<sup>110</sup> UNDP, Socio-Economic Assessment, Draft April 2021



industrial water requirements. This, in turn, will put more pressure on the groundwater. Extreme weather such as droughts or floods are expected to affect human health, with an increased rate of respiratory diseases and injuries due to weather conditions. Coastal areas in Kuwait will face the destruction of infrastructure because of increased sea levels, as well as the erosion of beaches and negatively affected marine resources. Raising temperatures and sea levels will also have an impact on the marine life and fisheries as a result of coral bleaching, fish migrations and disturbances in microplankton.<sup>111</sup>

Kuwait currently faces serious climate challenges. The country is known for its harsh climate, hot weather and frequent sandstorms, all of which pose serious health threats to citizens, and are further associated with unfavourable dynamics in socio-economic activities. In particular, the marine ecosystem is at risk, mainly due to climate change driven by increasing sea surface temperatures. This type of climate trend puts a particular burden on the fisheries, the second largest industry sector (after oil-related) in the country. Furthermore, Kuwait's soil is considered inadequate for farming, attributed to its droughtiness and relatively low amount of rain. Kuwait is thus constrained by the amount of land it has available for farming and the number of crops it can grow, which also puts Kuwait food security at risk. In addition, fresh water is a scarce resource, owing to the absence of rivers and the low levels of precipitation. Coupled with such constraints, an increasing population and associated water demands remain further challenges. As a result, Kuwait is considered to have not only one of the highest energy consumptions per capita in the world, but one of the highest waste generation rates: a lack of sustainable waste management practices puts the health of residents at risk. Kuwait needs to invest more aggressively in setting GHG emissions and develop climate change policies to help alleviate and minimise these risks.

**Risks of air pollution.** Kuwait has always been extremely dependent on oil production, perpetuating the problems that are associated with air pollution. While the country has worked towards generating more renewable energy sources, its abundance of oil – and the global dependence on it – have enabled production to continue. Outdoor air pollution is a mix of chemicals, particulate matter and biological materials that react with each other to form tiny hazardous particles. It contributes to breathing problems, chronic diseases, increased hospitalisation and premature mortality. According to the WHO guidelines, the air quality in Kuwait is considered unsafe. The most recent data indicates the country's annual mean concentration of PM<sub>2.5</sub> is 61 µg/m<sup>3</sup>, which exceeds the recommended WHO guideline level of 5 µg/m<sup>3</sup>. Contributors to poor air quality in Kuwait include vehicle and industrial emissions, oil refineries and dust storms.<sup>112</sup> Seasonal variations in pollution do exist, with higher concentrations of occurring in winter and summer. Long term effects include lung cancer, cardiovascular disease, chronic respiratory illness and developing allergies. Air pollution is also associated with heart attacks and strokes.

An increasingly hostile climate, rapidly growing levels of ecosystem fragility, limited progress on diversification to sustainable energy, and chronic challenges in waste management systems all pose serious risks to recovery from the pandemic and economic crisis. The convergence of these issues with the pandemic and economic crisis calls for integrated solutions. Integrating environmental solutions into national crisis response plans and investments will help manage risks, build resilience of crisis-affected communities and advance resilient forms of recovery.

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<sup>111</sup> Kuwait Adaptation Plan 2019-2020.

<sup>112</sup> WHO issues new guidelines in 2021 - WHO issued a new guideline in 2021 which reduced the PM2.5 value from 10 to 5 µg/m<sup>3</sup>



Figure 19. Annual CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in Kuwait (2019). 103

**Regional and cross-boundary tensions.** Regional tensions, including ongoing conflicts in Iraq, Syria and Yemen, and more recently maritime security incidents on the high seas and the strained relations between the US and Iran, particularly over nuclear issues, pose risks that could negatively affect economic stability; FDI flows; tourism; opportunities for trade expansion; and regional partnership projects. Spill-over effects need to be mitigated through ongoing dialogue and engagement, diplomacy and Kuwait's maintaining a regional mediation and peacebuilding role.

## 6.2 Human Rights Situation

The human rights analysis builds on and incorporates the most recent input from the UPR January 2020, and includes inputs from civil society. The analysis also draws on Kuwait's commitments under the 2019-20 regional review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, in addition to more recent references from the Human Rights Committee, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and OHCHR. Additional reports from the non-governmental community were also reviewed such as the Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, Freedom House Report 2021, the Freedom of the Press Index 2020 and the Bertelsmann Stiftung's Transformation Index (BTI) 2020.

The human rights situation in Kuwait remains challenging and complex, with noted improvements as a result of ongoing government commitment to reforms and willingness to align the legal framework for the protection of human rights and equality with international human rights standards. The most pressing human rights issues include discrimination against women; the stateless (Bidoon); migrants and domestic workers rights; sexual discrimination; restrictions on freedom of association and political party formation; political prisoners; restrictions on free expression, the press and the internet, including censorship, internet site blocking and interference; and trafficking in persons.<sup>113</sup> According to the Freedom House Index 2021, Kuwait ranks first among the GCC states on political and civil rights: it allows labour unions,

<sup>113</sup> Kuwait 2020, Human Rights Report: <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/KUWAIT-2020-HUMAN-RIGHTS-REPORT.pdf>.

who have been historically very vocal and influential, and allows Human Rights Watch into the country; it is considered quite open to constructive dialogue on a range of human rights issues.<sup>114</sup>

### **The National Human Rights Institutional framework**

The institutional and organisational framework of human rights institutions are not fully functional.

Pursuant to [Law No. 67 of 2015](#), the Kuwait National Human Rights Institution (KNHRI) - the Human Rights Diwan was established. It is supervised by the Council of Ministers, and its aim is to promote and protect human rights, respect for public and private freedoms in light of the Constitution and the provisions of international conventions ratified by the State of Kuwait. According to its law, the Diwan shall be independent in the exercise of its functions, activities and competences as provided by law. With Emiri decree No. 269 of 2018, the 11-member (four being women, including the deputy president) Board of Directors of the Diwan was appointed for a four-year period with possibility of a one-time extension. On 29 April 2018, parliament modified Article (4) of Law no. 67 of 2015. The modification introduced the involvement of the National Assembly in the selection of the president and the deputy of the KNHRI. It has not yet been classified by the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI). To date, the Diwan is not fully operational and its legislation is not fully compliant with the Paris Principles. Appointments of key secretariat staff have not yet been finalised and, overall, the Diwan in its current state has limited value, and its interactions and consultations with civil society and NGOs are not significant.

The National Human Rights Reporting and Coordination Mechanisms (NRCMs) in Kuwait has a liaison committee (inter-ministerial committee) led by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs tasked with the preparation of periodic reports to human rights treaty bodies (and UPR). However, the Committee is perceived to lack independence, as well as effective consultation and participatory mechanisms with civil society. Another issue is the lack of data and statistics on human rights issues, which are essential to guide evidence-based interventions and legislative change.

The National Assembly's Human Rights Committee, which operates independently of the government, is an advisory body that primarily hears individual complaints of human rights abuses and works with plaintiffs and relevant stakeholders to reach a mutual settlement. The Committee seems to have adequate resources and is considered effective.<sup>115</sup> Other institutions with competence in the area of human rights are the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; the Public Authority of the Disabled (PADA); the Central Agency for Illegal Residents, which oversees Bidoon resident affairs; the Ministry of Interior; and PAM (The public Authority of Manpower). The existing institutional setup of these various government entities with regard to human rights makes it unclear which is the main authority responsible for the execution of recommendations of the Human Rights Council.

Recommendations from the UPR suggest that Kuwait should continue its efforts to look into the establishment of an effective and independent national human rights institution in accordance with the Paris Principles. Going forward, the provision of institution-building capacity development support for the Human Rights institutions, and further technical assistance to its programmatic efforts, could become a

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<sup>114</sup> Human Rights Watch report

<sup>115</sup> <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/KUWAIT-2020-HUMAN-RIGHTS-REPORT.pdf>

priority area for the UNCT so as to ensure Kuwait has an effective and fully functional human rights ecosystem that provides clarity in terms of which government entities handles what functions.

## **Implementation of International Human Rights Obligations – Human Rights Situation**

### **A. Cross-cutting Issues**

#### Equality, non-discrimination and access to justice

Many women are still affected by various discriminatory provisions in Kuwaiti laws such as the Personal Status Act; the Criminal Code; the Prisons Act; the Civil Code; the Nationality Act; the Education Act; and the Private Sector Labour Act. None of these are fully aligned and, in some cases, are even contrary to Kuwait's obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and other relevant international human rights instruments.

Anyone in Kuwait can resort to the Constitutional Court to file a discrimination complaint, including non-Kuwaitis. While this is an important step forward in combatting discrimination, complainants must go through the process of filing a complaint to the Constitutional Court and pay a one-time fee that amounts to 5,000 KWD (more than US\$15,000). This effectively renders this remedy inaccessible for many individuals who cannot afford the fee. Migrant workers and particularly domestic workers also face various barriers to justice, as a result of multiple structural, economic and linguistic barriers, in particular in labour dispute mechanisms before PAM.

#### Human rights and counter-terrorism

The Committee against Torture conveyed its concerns at the absence of information about measures to guarantee the absolute prohibition of torture in all its legal and other provisions against terrorism.<sup>116</sup> It recommended that the GoK include in its legal and other provisions against terrorism a clear statement that torture was absolutely prohibited in all circumstances and could not be invoked as a justification of a superior order.<sup>117</sup>

### **B. Civil and Political Rights**

#### Right to citizenship

UPR 2020 stated that certain groups in Kuwait continue to face systematic discrimination based on citizenship. These groups include Kuwaiti women, married to non-Kuwaiti men, who cannot transmit their nationality to their children. Another group is the stateless Bidoon people, who face delays in regulating their situation, which affects their access to certain government services, to jobs, and to financial and economic services.

#### Right to life, liberty and security of person, conditions in detention, torture and ill-treatment

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<sup>116</sup> Committee against Torture, Concluding Observations, (CAT/C/KWT/CO/3), para 10, [Treaty bodies Download \(ohchr.org\)](https://www.ohchr.org/Treaty_bodies/Download)

<sup>117</sup> [Ibid, para 12.](#)

## Right to life

The Constitution provides that “[no] person shall be subjected to torture or to degrading treatment,” but does not specifically address capital punishment or a right to life. Kuwait still maintains capital punishment and carried out seven executions by hanging in 2017, the first time since 2013.<sup>118</sup> Kuwait’s policy reflects a growing trend in the region to increase the use of – or to lift moratoria on – the death penalty. There were no reports by or on behalf of government authorities, or by independent organisations of any acts committed in terms of arbitrary deprivation of life, unlawful killings and disappearance.

Kuwait legislation maintains the death penalty for offences that did not meet the threshold of the most serious crimes within the meaning of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICPR). The Human Rights Committee called on Kuwait to give due consideration to abolishing the death penalty. The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) urged the State party to abolish the death penalty and halt all executions of persons with psychosocial or intellectual disabilities, in accordance with the limits regarding the death penalty and the execution of persons with disabilities established under international law.<sup>119</sup> Kuwait needs to consider abolishing the death penalty, re-establish a formal moratorium on executions with a view to ratifying the second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

## Torture and ill-treatment

The Committee against Torture, in its concluding observations following the 2016 State report, expressed concern at consistent reports of torture and ill-treatment, in particular during prolonged detention of persons by the police and security forces, in response to terrorist activities, as well as in relation to peaceful protests by human rights defenders and members of minorities. It further expressed concerns that such practices were often not sufficiently investigated or were sanctioned by relevant authorities. The Committee was concerned at consistent reports of a widespread practice by police officers of extracting confessions under both physical and psychological torture, as well as ill-treatment in police stations and investigation centres, including the General Department of Criminal Investigation, the Drug Enforcement Administration and the State Security Agency, in violation of Article 159 of the Criminal Code. It was further concerned that coerced confessions have been accepted by courts even after medical examinations have confirmed signs of torture, and that courts have refused in practice requests for independent medical examinations from the alleged victims.<sup>120</sup>

## Conditions of detention

The CAT noted its concern at consistent reports that certain places of deprivation of liberty, including the so-called “Talha” Centre for Deportation and the Central Prison Complex near Kuwait City, have poor material conditions, and that certain detention facilities were overcrowded. It was also concerned at reports that minors were not separated from adults in police stations, and that male guards in police stations may be guarding female detainees after their arrest. In addition, concerns were raised at the provisions in Article 48 of the Criminal Code, which stipulate that detainees who face the death penalty

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<sup>118</sup> Human Rights Watch report, 2017.

<sup>119</sup> Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Concluding Observations, (CRPD/C/KWT/CO/1), para 21, [Treaty bodies Download \(ohchr.org\)](#)

<sup>120</sup> [https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CAT%2fC%2fKWT%2fCO%2f3&Lang=en](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CAT%2fC%2fKWT%2fCO%2f3&Lang=en).

should not mix with other detainees. This could give rise to cell isolation practices, including solitary confinement, that violate the provisions of the Convention.<sup>121</sup>

#### Administration of justice, including impunity and the rule of law

The Human Rights Committee raised a set of concerns related to: the insufficient independence of the judiciary from the executive branch in such matters as the appointment, promotion and disciplining of judges. It was also concerned that non-citizen judges lacked security of tenure, as their judicial appointment must be renewed every two years. It noted the existing provisions in the Criminal Code concerning so-called “honour” crimes against women and girls, and recommended that measures are taken promptly to end impunity for such crimes.<sup>122</sup> The CRPD expressed concerns about the absence of legal stipulations on the provision of procedural and age-appropriate accommodations to persons with disabilities in all legal proceedings and the lack of information regarding their accessibility to the justice system and absence of accessible information about their rights. The Committee against Torture was concerned that detained persons did not enjoy, in practice, all the fundamental legal safeguards from the very outset of their deprivation of liberty, in particular after being arrested by the police.

#### Fundamental freedoms and the right to participate in public and political life

The Human Rights Committee conveyed its concerns about the adoption of new legislation to further curb the right to freedom of expression and opinion under Law No. 37 (2014) on communications, and Law No. 63 (2015) on cybercrime. It was further concerned at the criminalisation of defamation and blasphemy, and the application of restrictive, vague and broadly provisions to prosecute activists, journalists, bloggers and other individuals for expressing critical views. The same Committee raised concerns about Article 12 of Law No. 65 (1979) on public gatherings, as it barred non-Kuwaitis from participating in public gatherings, and about the overly broad prohibition on public gatherings without the prior authorisation of the Ministry of Interior.

#### Prohibition of all forms of slavery

The Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, called on the GoK to protect and assist all victims of trafficking, including victims of labour trafficking and domestic servitude, with full respect for their human rights. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women welcomed the legal and institutional measures taken by the GoK to counter trafficking in persons, including efforts to investigate cases and prosecute perpetrators.<sup>123</sup> The Kafala issue is addressed in detail under the Migrant Workers chapter.

#### Freedom of expression, association and rights to peaceful assembly

Kuwait’s constitution guarantees the right to freedom of assembly for Kuwaiti citizens (Article 44). The traditional semi-public gatherings run by families or tribes, called diwanias, continue to be held frequently, at which business ventures and political opinions are exchanged. However, political parties are still banned in Kuwait. BTI 2020 reports that the GoK restricts the registration and licensing of some

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Human Rights Committee, Concluding Observations (CCPR/C/KWT/CO/3), [Treaty bodies Download \(ohchr.org\)](#)

<sup>123</sup> The Committee against Discrimination against Women, Concluding Observations (CEDAW/C/KWT/CO/5), [Treaty bodies Download \(ohchr.org\)](#)

NGOs.<sup>124</sup> Political protests and street demonstrations, which used to be frequent, have become rare since the period of heightened activism between 2011 and 2014. Activists took to the street twice in September 2018 to protest rising censorship in the country, after the censorship board of the Ministry of Information banned 948 books from the 43rd Kuwait International Literary Festival in 2018.

Several recommendations in the 2020 UPR process were put forward in this regard. These were mainly to amend the legislation (i.e., 1979 Public Gatherings Act, the 2015 Cybercrime Law, and the 2006 Press and Publications Law); to protect the freedoms of association, peaceful assembly and expression; and to release those detained for exercising these rights.<sup>125</sup>

In the 2020 World Press Freedom Index, Kuwait's rank fell to (105), down from (90) in 2015. Kuwait's media is considered among the freest and most outspoken in the region, although there are some "red lines" that are not to be crossed, including subjects that may cause religious offence or criticism of the Amir. Journalists exercise a degree of self-censorship and, in some instances, a few journalists and media outlets have been detained or closed. The Arabic Network for Human Rights Information (ANHRI), Gulf Centre for Human Rights (GCHR), the International Service for Human Rights (ISHR) and Reporters Without Borders (RSF) conveyed their concerns regarding the new Cyber Crimes Law no. 63/2016, which seeks to regulate a number of online activities and could be used to limit freedom of expression on the internet and various social media networks.

Opportunities for further UNCT support in the following areas:

- Amend the Printing and Publications Act, the Cybercrime Act and the Communication Law to bring them into line with international standards on the right to freedom of expression.
- Amend and repeal all laws and policies restricting freedom of opinion and expression, and protect human rights defenders, journalists and bloggers from persecution and harassment.
- Introduce legislation to regulate asylum proceedings in accordance with international law.
- Amend restrictive laws regulating the rights to association, peaceful assembly and freedom of expression, both online and offline, so that they are fully compliant with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, particularly articles 19 and 21.
- Amend the relevant laws on public gatherings and NGOs to guarantee the freedoms of association and peaceful assembly, in line with international standards.

### **C. Economic, Social and Cultural Rights**

#### Right to work and to just and favourable conditions of work

Once a leading actor among its Gulf neighbours for the passing of Law No. 68 of 2015 on domestic workers, Kuwait is now falling behind in reform of the kafala (sponsorship) system, which leaves migrant workers vulnerable to abuse and forced labour. The expectation is for Kuwait to follow suit and focus its efforts in the following areas: implement fully the existing legislative framework for the protection of migrant workers and address gaps in protection; continue efforts to protect the rights of migrants; take

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<sup>124</sup> Bertelsmann Stiftung, BTI 2020 Country Report — Kuwait. Gütersloh: Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2020.

<sup>125</sup> <https://uhri.ohchr.org/en/search-human-rights-recommendations>.

effective measures to improve the working and living conditions of migrant workers, in particular domestic workers; and advocate also for the inclusion of domestic work in the Labour Law.

#### Right to education

UNESCO recommended that Kuwait strengthen and update legislation relating to the right to education in line with its international obligation to provide free and compulsory primary education for all, without discrimination, under Article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and as a party to the Convention against Discrimination in Education.

### **D. Rights of Specific Persons or Groups**

#### Women and girls

Women in Kuwait continue to face discriminatory limitations on their rights at many levels, including for divorce and child custody, inheritance, asset ownership, access to justice and freedom of movement, as well as in the basic rights of citizenship, the workplace, and in certain circumstances, the value of their testimony in court.<sup>126</sup>

**Marital status.** In accordance with the Kuwaiti Personal Status Law No. 51/1984, a woman's male guardian must give consent for her to be married, while the same is not required for a man. A Muslim woman may not marry a non-Muslim man (Art. 18); polygamy is permitted between a man and up to four women, with no provision requiring the permission or even the knowledge of his first wife/wives (Art. 21); the minimum age of marriage for a girl is 15 and for a boy it is 17 (Art. 26); divorce is defined as the annulment of a marriage at the will of the husband or his representative (Art. 97); a woman may demand separation on the grounds of harm (Art. 126), but harm in a marriage is proven through the testimony of two men or of one man and two women (Art. 133); there is no provision permitting a woman to file for divorce on the grounds that her husband has married another wife.

Guardianship of children is generally granted to the father (Art. 209). After a divorce, a woman who remarries loses custody of any children (Art. 191). A non-Muslim woman can have custody of her child only until the child reaches the age of 7 (Art. 192). A woman's custody of a son is terminated once the child enters puberty; custody of a daughter is terminated with the daughter's marriage and the consummation of that marriage (Art. 194).

**Inheritance rights** put men in a privileged position: a husband is entitled to a one-half share of the inheritance of a deceased spouse if there is no son or grandson, and a one-quarter share if there is a son or grandson. A wife is entitled to a one-quarter share if there is no son or grandson, and a one-eighth share if there is a son or a grandson (Art. 299). In cases of family inheritance, a male receives twice a female's share (Art. 327).

**Social and economic rights.** The Personal Status Law legitimises male dominance over women. Article 89, for instance, specifies that a husband should not forbid his wife from working outside the home unless the work negatively affects "family interests", which can be interpreted in a manner detrimental to women's autonomy.

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<sup>126</sup> <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/KUWAIT-2020-HUMAN-RIGHTS-REPORT.pdf>.



**Nationality rights.** Under the Nationality Act of 1959, women do not enjoy equal citizenship rights to men. Female citizens are unable to transmit citizenship to their non-citizen husbands or to their children. Failure to provide equal citizenship rights to women subjects their children to statelessness when a woman is married to a stateless Bidoon resident. Male citizens married to female non-citizens do not face such discrimination, and their children are accorded the full legal protections of citizenship.

The UN Human Rights Council (HRC) conveyed concerns regarding the full protection of women's rights, in compliance with international standards and continues to focus on the following areas:<sup>127</sup>

- Ensuring the full implementation of CEDAW, achieving increased gender equality in laws, legislations and wages.
- Emphasising the equality of Kuwaiti women and men regarding the right of their children and spouses to enjoy the same rights and duties as men.
- Increasing recognition of the special vulnerabilities of all residents and national women and children.
- Promoting equality between men and women and guaranteeing women's equality in matters of divorce and inheritance.
- Implementing policies and programmes for combatting all forms of domestic violence against women and defining violence as crimes and applying punishments proportional to the gravity of the offence.

### Children

The existing laws and constitution support everybody's rights and the GoK reports that "the children of illegal residents enjoy all rights enshrined in the Convention"; however, systematic, legal discrimination still exists against the Bidoon and poor migrants, and this inevitably has an impact on their children in terms their ability to access other rights, including citizenship, education and health. The most vulnerable children are those born to unmarried non-Kuwaitis, and those born to Kuwaiti mothers and non-Kuwaiti fathers. Especially concerning for these children is their lack of ability to access other rights, including nationality, health and education.

There is a need to amend legislation to prohibit child marriage for girls and boys; harmonise the minimum age of marriage for both sexes to 18; and repeal discriminatory laws that lead to married girls' removal from mainstream education. Bidoon and other stateless children are greatly affected due to their lack of nationality (including limitations to obtaining birth certificates), which precludes their access to government services and free education.<sup>128</sup> The main recommendation from the UN to the GoK is to update legislation to allow citizenship to be passed on to children of Kuwaiti mothers, and to ensure children of Bidoon enjoy their rights, as enshrined in the Convention, without discrimination.

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<sup>127</sup> UN Human Rights Council (HRC), Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review – Kuwait, April 2015, A/HRC/29/17.

<sup>128</sup> UNCT Kuwait Alternative Report to the UNCRC, 2020.

## Persons with disabilities

The CRPD, in its concluding observations following the consideration of the initial report for Kuwait in October 2019<sup>129</sup>, expressed concerns about the lack of: (a) inclusive employment policies and the low employment rate of persons with disabilities, despite the quota on their employment in the public, private and oil sectors; (b) employment opportunities for non-Kuwaiti persons with disabilities; (c) information on sanctions that have been effectively imposed for non-compliance with the employment quota system and for the denial of reasonable accommodations, as well as on monitoring mechanisms available to persons with disabilities to address discrimination in matters related to employment and conditions of work; (d) disaggregated data on persons with disabilities in employment. The Committee recommended that the GoK take advantage of the strategy to employ persons with disabilities developed by the Public Authority for Disability Affairs to increase and develop employment opportunities in the open labour market; that it increase the inclusion of persons with disabilities, including by implementing the 4 per cent quota, by providing individualised support and by prohibiting the denial of reasonable accommodation at all levels of employment, including recruitment, promotion and vocational training for all persons with disabilities, including non-Kuwaitis with disabilities; and that it impose sanctions on employers in case of non-compliance.

## Migrants, refugees and asylum seekers and internally displaced persons

IOM reports<sup>130</sup> that some of the key gaps found in the context of protecting foreign workers rights and which can be summarised in the following points:

- The regulatory frameworks are designed to deal with solving problems due to unethical practices after they occur. Frameworks should work on deterring and preventing unethical practices rather than the solving them after they occur.
- The Kuwaiti regulation does not define the minimum required skill set of foreign workers, neither are the mechanisms for skill recognition established. This gap can place many foreign workers at risk of fraud by recruiters or employers. Foreign workers might come to a job to find out that either they are overqualified or underqualified. This skill mismatch is inefficient for all stakeholders.
- There is a gap in legislation that would regulate the relationship between the employer and the recruitment agency and the relationships of recruitment agencies in Kuwait with those in countries of origin. Furthermore, there is no mention of labour recruiter's activities overseas. This is an area in which many unethical practices can occur.
- The requirement that recruitment agencies should treat data pertaining to foreign workers as confidential and work on protecting the data is not mentioned in the Kuwaiti laws. This could put foreign workers at risk of abuse from the employer or the recruiter.

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<sup>129</sup> The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Concluding Observations, (CRPD/C/KWT/CO/1), [Treaty bodies Download \(ohchr.org\)](#)

<sup>130</sup> IOM Report on gaps in protecting foreign workers in Kuwait - Report is still in draft version and not yet published.

- From reviewing the laws and regulations, the involvement of stakeholders such as employers, civil society, recruitment agencies and migrant workers in policy design and implementation is not evident. Their involvement could play a progressive role in policy design.

## 5. Stateless (Bidoon)

The main human rights concern in Kuwait involves the rights of the Bidoon, a community of stateless people who claim Kuwaiti nationality, and remain in legal limbo. They are stateless residents denied citizenship due to the Nationality Act of 1959 and consist primarily of Kuwaiti descendants who did not obtain the nationality at the time of independence in 1961, either because they did not apply for it or because they lacked the necessary documentation.

The UN can support GoK to address the following pressing issues:

- Increase efforts to address cases of statelessness, providing the right to acquire nationality when appropriate, in particular for the Bidoon population.
- Ensure the rights of stateless individuals are protected.
- Accede to the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness and put in place a transparent process that addresses the concerns of the Bidoon people.
- Carry out the necessary legal reforms so that Kuwaiti women can transmit their nationality to their descendants on an equal footing with men.
- Ensure equal access to education, healthcare and employment for the Bidoon population.

## E. Human Rights Issues and Alignment with SDGs and the KNDP 2020-2025

In the latest UPR 2020 review, Kuwait received a set of recommendations that might assist in advancing the SDGs. The highest number of recommendations were related to SDGs 16, 5, 8, 10 and 4 (see Figure 20). These recommendations covered issues including gender equality and women's empowerment; the right to nationality; the rights to freedom of expression, opinion and peaceful assembly; and ways to address Kuwait's marginalised populations, the Bidoon and migrant workers.

Appendix 8. "Analysis of human rights recommendations and alignment with SDGs and KNDP" summarises the level of alignment and integration of these recommendations within national priorities in the KNDP 2020-2025, and how they relate to each SDG. The major gap is that most of the recommendations are not sufficiently addressed or reflected in the KNDP 2020-2025, with the exception of a few recommendations related to SDG 3 (health and wellbeing) and SDG 5 (gender quality).

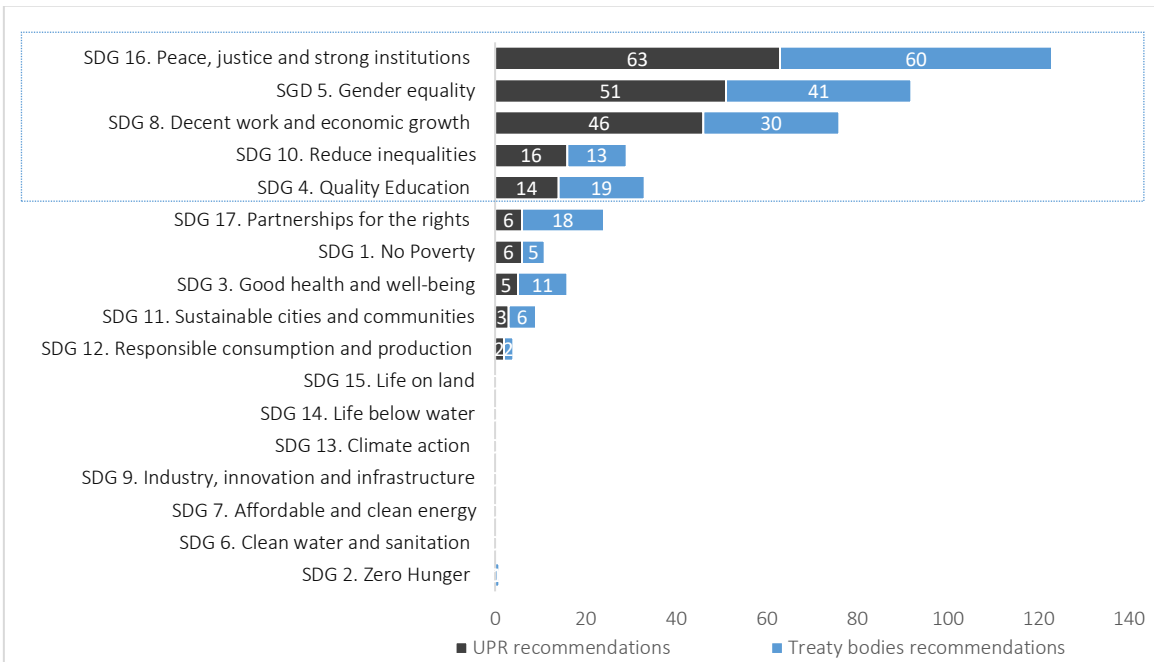


Figure 20. Distribution of UPR 2020 recommendations across all the 17 SDGs showing which areas requiring further focus.

UNCT can further support the GoK to develop a clear roadmap on how best to advance and overcome human rights challenges in a way that integrates all the various issues according to international standards under a consolidated portfolio.

### 6.3 Leave No One Behind (LNOB) and Groups in Vulnerable Situations

Kuwait maintains its commitment to being an all-inclusive, rights-based, equal-opportunities country, to dignifying the development of human capital, and to economic, social and environmental sustainability. In 2019, Kuwait themed its first Voluntary National Review (VNR) “empowering people and ensuring inclusiveness and equality”, to reflect its continued commitment to achieving a resilient society, free of inequalities and discrimination. Despite this strong commitment, the review of the latest KNDP 2020-2025 and the VNR reveal a number of challenges and gaps, as well as a limited scope in addressing the principles of inclusion and Leave No One Behind (LNOB).

The UNDP Human Development Index 2019 rates Kuwait as 64th out of 189 countries; however, when looking beyond the average figures, Kuwait does not measure or report on vulnerability or poverty. In addition, Kuwait does not have minimum data statistics to measure, and lacks detailed statistics about the specific vulnerable groups. Most references to vulnerability for non-Kuwaitis are taken from a philanthropic and charity perspective, where the Kuwait Awqaf Public Foundation, the Kuwait Food Bank (KFB) and various CSOs fill the gap and provide the necessary basic needs and services. The recent pandemic has revealed that the existing social safety net is inadequate to support non-citizens.

There is currently a lack of a comprehensive national plan/strategy in Kuwait to identify vulnerable groups or vulnerability drivers with clear targets, and to integrate policies and programmes that support all vulnerable groups (including Kuwaitis and non-Kuwaitis) under one portfolio. Often, programming is addressed in a fragmented way, and social services and support are uneven.

Vulnerable groups in Kuwait are often identified at large as citizens who are widows; the elderly; low-income families; Kuwaiti women married to non-Kuwaitis; persons with disability; families of prisoners; and orphans. For non-citizens, vulnerable groups include migrants; domestic workers; the Bidoon community; children of non-Kuwaitis; women; refugees and asylum workers; people living with disabilities; people living with HIV/AIDS; and the LGBTI community.

The main challenge to fully address the LNOB agenda is the lack of available and reliable disaggregated data in Kuwait, given that the Central Bureau for Statistics does not measure or publish any data and statistics on the various groups to guide and inform government interventions and policies. Getting accurate and reliable data and statistics to assess and understand which groups are excluded or deprived; what causes the neglect they experience and what are its effects; and which policies and programmes need to be defined to ensure their situation is addressed, progress is tracked and their status improved. Advancing the LNOB agenda in Kuwait also requires that existing challenges and gaps be reflected in any future welfare system reforms.

## **Groups in vulnerable situations**

### **Low-skilled migrants**

Kuwait is host to a vast number of low-skilled migrants from countries in South Asia and South East Asia. These migrants comprise the majority of the population, and the government is committed to reducing their numbers over the next decade from 70 per cent to 30 per cent. These migrants face increased risks, and find themselves in vulnerable situations as a result of the following factors: i) over-representation in the informal sector or unstable employment, leaving them without social protection; and ii) limited or restricted access to essential services such as healthcare and housing, as well as to education, skills development and training.

The Covid-19 pandemic has further restricted the mobility of migrant workers, leaving more than 2.4 million workers in a state of uncertainty.<sup>131</sup> Their livelihoods were threatened by both the economic standstill and restrictions on travel, with public transportation halted. Lockdowns, dismissals from employment including without payment of outstanding wages, and overall restrictions of movement have caused economic distress and financial insecurity, aggravated by their ineligibility for social insurance measures, and limited access to food, shelter or medicines. Many migrants live in overcrowded camps in which social distancing is difficult, putting them at a particularly high risk of infection. At the same time, many of these migrants have either been unable to return to their home countries or have been unwilling to do so because of unpaid wages and/or end-of-service benefits.

The decision to halt public transportation during the Covid-19 pandemic primarily affected migrant workers who live for the most part in workers' cities: some 99 per cent of trips taken by Kuwaitis are in

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<sup>131</sup> Kuwait Central Bureau of Statistics.

private vehicles. Migrants are already restricted from getting a driver's licence or sponsoring their families to live with them.<sup>132</sup>

Different types of workers were also faced with exploitation due to illicit visa trading between employers with no compensation for 'contractual' violations of their rights. Migrant workers who left Kuwait – whether during the amnesty period or via deportation or voluntary return – without receiving their due wages and/or end-of-service benefits from former employers have also raised concerns. Shelter, food and medical security remain of concern, especially during lockdown measures, as clusters of migrant workers and their families were unable to secure food and water throughout the periods of lockdown.

In 2015, Kuwait introduced the Domestic Workers Law No. 68/2015 to protect domestic workers by placing their employers under numerous obligations. Law No. 68 includes detailed provisions concerning the relationship between domestic workers and their employers, lays the ground for increased protection of domestic workers, and regulates the relationship between the workers, employers and the recruitment bureaus. However, the weak enforcement of the law remains a real challenge. Domestic workers are excluded from national labour laws which amounts to systematic exclusion of domestic workers from enjoying equal rights and equality.

**The employer-migrant worker relationship under the kafala sponsorship system.** The kafala sponsorship system is considered a key factor of vulnerability. It places the migrant workforce in precarious socio-economic positions that violate their labour and human rights, through which the kafeel (sponsor) has complete authority over the migrant worker, who is dependent on the goodwill of the national sponsor. In law and practice, the kafala system facilitates forced labour conditions. It creates an environment in which 1) there is the prohibition of or limited possibilities for labour mobility; (2) passports/identity documents can be confiscated, leading to restrictions on workers' freedom of movement; (3) employers have control over the residency status of migrant workers; and (4) employers are able to file absconding reports, which lead to migrant workers falling into an irregular status that can lead to their arrest, detention and deportation.

**As a manifestation of the kafala system, near-forced labour conditions are prevalent for many domestic workers due to the inadequate implementation of Law No. 68/2015 on Domestic Labour.** This leads to many domestic workers having to work for no or little compensation, including failure to tackle (a) non-payment or the late-payment of wages; (b) poor accommodation and inadequate food; (c) the prevalence of abuse, exploitation and overwork; (d) the confiscation of passports; (e) a prohibition on leaving the house on the rest days (f) the inability to freely transfer or terminate employment; (g) unequal power in the labour relationship, including where employers file absconding reports, or arbitrarily terminate contracts, leading to the cancellation of residency permits and/or deportation.

### *Stateless (Bidoon)*

The Bidoon population in Kuwait are a social group, the majority of whom are stateless but claim to be Kuwaitis and eligible of the Kuwaiti nationality. The GoK considers them to be illegal, which led to the establishment of the Central Agency for the Remediating of the Illegal Residents' Status. The resolution of

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<sup>132</sup> <https://lsecities.net/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Resource-Urbanisms-Asias-divergent-city-models-of-Kuwait-Abu-Dhabi-Singapore-Hong-Kong-LSE-Cities.pdf>

the status for the approximately 93,000 Bidoons residing in Kuwait presents an ongoing challenge for the government. The Central Agency, established by the Ministry of Interior, continues to process citizenship claims, granting citizenship or related rights to groups of Bidoon people on a case-by-case basis. Between 2011 and December 2016, 8,157 Bidoon persons were granted nationality. In 2018, the government announced that they were going to grant nationality to an additional 4,000 Bidoon persons and were looking into options and alternatives to review the remaining eligible persons for nationalisation.<sup>[1]</sup> The Bidoon who do not regularise their status with the Agency remain unable to access a range of public services, including healthcare and education. During the latest UPR process, Kuwait accepted recommendations to ensure that the Bidoon enjoy equal access to education, healthcare and employment, and the need to ease the process for their acquisition of nationality.

In October 2020, a draft 'Bidoon law' was put forward by the Speaker of Parliament H.E Marzouq Al Ghanem, along with other members of parliament, in an effort to address the issue of the Bidoon. UNHCR worked closely with the Kuwaiti parliament and cabinet of ministers during the drafting process to ensure that the law met international standards and was in line with international laws. However, following the resignation of the GoK in November 2019, the passing of H.H the late Amir and the Covid-19 outbreak, the law has yet to be approved.<sup>[2]</sup> Bidoon activists have also rejected the draft law and described it as "discriminatory". UNHCR's efforts with the GoK focus on three main areas, including 1) records and data; 2) the assessment of cases; 3) providing possible solutions that meet the standards of international laws.

## *Children*

According to the Kuwait alternative report to the implementation of the CRC 2020, discrimination is legal against the Bidoon and poor migrants and, inevitably, has an impact on their children in terms of their ability to access other rights, including citizenship, education and health. The most-vulnerable children are those born to unwed non-Kuwaitis and those born to Kuwaiti mothers and non-Kuwaiti fathers. These children are particularly being discriminated against in their ability to access other rights, including nationality, health care and education.

There is a need to amend legislation to prohibit child marriage for girls and boys, to harmonise the minimum age of marriage for both sexes to 18, and to repeal discriminatory laws that lead to married girls' removal from mainstream education.

Stateless and Bidoon children are greatly affected because of their lack of nationality (including limitations on obtaining birth certificates), which precludes their access to government services and free education.<sup>133</sup> The main recommendation from the UN to the GoK under the UPR 2020 is to update legislation to allow citizenship to be passed on to children of Kuwaiti mothers, and to ensure the children of Bidoon enjoy their rights enshrined in the convention without discrimination.

Children who suffer from obesity require further support for healthy diets. It is estimated that 10 per cent of children under 5 are overweight; that 42 per cent of children between the ages of 5 and 19 are overweight; that nearly one in 10 children under 5 is moderately or severely overweight; and that up to

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<sup>[1]</sup> CCA 2018.

<sup>[2]</sup> <https://www.aljarida.com/articles/1572449410382985800/>.

<sup>133</sup> UNCT Kuwait Alternative Report to the UNCRC, 2020.

42 per cent of 5-19 year olds are overweight (with boys having a higher rate of obesity). The prevalence of both obesity and Type-2 diabetes is increasing rapidly, and exclusive breastfeeding rates up to six months are under 10 per cent. Nutrition education in schools is neither mandatory nor generally integrated into the curriculum or prioritised in practice. There is a need to develop a nutritional programme and a social norms/behavioural change strategy that starts with health-building habits from early childhood all the way through university.

Underweight children. Kuwait has made important strides in combatting malnutrition: 2010-2015 data showed that only 3 per cent of children under 5 were underweight and that 6 per cent were stunted. There is a need to encourage maternal health and exclusive breastfeeding through integrating child health and nutrition education into childbirth preparation/parenting classes.

Children with disabilities who are non-Kuwaitis mainly lack social protection and specified rights to ensure their access to quality education and other specialised services.<sup>134</sup> Another area of concern for children with disabilities - both Kuwaitis and non-Kuwaitis - is the lack of disaggregated data from the education system to better assess the extent of the level of integration.

### *Women*

The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) noted with concern that the access of women to justice is hindered by discriminatory laws on marriage and family relations and employment, the legalisation of harmful practices, the non-criminalisation of numerous forms of gender-based violence against women and the application of discriminatory judicial proceedings in this regard. CEDAW was also concerned about stereotyping and gender bias on the part of judicial personnel.<sup>135</sup> It should be noted that the GoK passed Law 16/2020 relating to protection from domestic violence.

### *Youth*

Youth in Kuwait face considerable challenges, starting with the high unemployment rate, which remains by far the major issue affecting young Kuwaitis and fresh graduates, and is due in part to limited access to the job market, especially in the governmental sector. According to the ILO, youth unemployment hit an all-time high in 2020, rising to 16.5 per cent; for Kuwaiti youth, it was around 26 per cent. While the public sector is unable to handle the influx of young Kuwaitis looking for jobs, the private sector also struggles to hire young Kuwaitis, as they prefer public sector jobs. Government statistics indicate some 80 per cent of Kuwaiti youth declined to work in the private sector in 2019. This is a significant change from the year before, when 58 per cent said they would only be willing to work in the government sector.<sup>136</sup>

Other issues affecting youth in Kuwait relate to unhealthy lifestyles and the high level of obesity, poor quality of education, access to housing and limited public engagement. Effective youth empowerment is a key political challenge for the GoK. Concerns have been frequently expressed in the media about the

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<sup>134</sup> UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, October 18, 2019.

<sup>135</sup> The Committee against Discrimination against Women, Concluding Observations (CEDAW/C/KWT/CO/5), Treaty bodies Download (ohchr.org)

<sup>136</sup> UNDP Social Economic Assessment 2021. Initial draft



risk of alienation, radicalisation, drug abuse and violence among youth. The impact of the youth demographic bulge is exacerbated by the reliance on the public service for employment.

### *People with disabilities (PWD)*

Kuwaiti Law No 8/2010 on the rights of persons with disabilities, prohibits discrimination against persons with permanent physical, sensory, intellectual and mental disabilities in employment, education, air travel and other transportation, access to health care, or the provision of other government services. It imposes penalties on employers who refrain without reasonable cause from hiring persons with disabilities. The law also mandates access to buildings for persons with disabilities. The government generally enforces these provisions.

In 2020, PADA estimated that the number of PWD is around 55,339 or 1.3 per cent of the total population (4,21 million). This number is based on those registered with PADA; it could exclude a large number of non-Kuwaitis given that PADA provides services mainly to Kuwaiti citizens. The number of registered PWD is driven by service and not by inclusion. There is a lack of data and statistics to provide the key characteristics of PWD by nationality, age and gender. The two main areas in which PWD suffer most from discrimination are at the level of full inclusion in the education system and the labour market.

**PWD and education.** Non-citizens with disabilities have neither access to government-operated facilities, nor receive those stipends paid to citizens with disabilities to cover transportation, housing and social welfare costs. Non-citizens with disabilities can attend private schools only, which generally lack accessible materials and reasonable accommodation. Most children with disabilities who are citizens attend public school.

**PWD and employment.** Despite legislative progress related to employment (Kuwaiti law prohibits discrimination against persons with protected characteristics, including disabilities, and labour quotas of 4 per cent exist, with penalties issued to employers who refuse without reasonable cause to hire PWD), PWDs are more likely to be underemployed or unemployed, and generally earn less. Furthermore, workplace programmes/supported employment does not yet exist for PWD. Women with disabilities and those who are non-Kuwaiti are more likely to be unemployed and gender-based norms, inequality and discrimination against women and girls exist in both public and private spheres.<sup>137</sup>

**PWD and government services.** The GoK offers a range of institutional and community-based supports run by PADA or provided by NGOs and charities. Private provision for education, health care and social care is also available for those who can afford it. Pre-Covid, non-contributory social protection government spending was seen as generous, since it included cash transfers and subsidies for fuel, food, housing, electricity, water and telecommunications,<sup>138</sup> including PADA disability grants (cash transfers) for PWD and a General Assistance Programme of monthly cash benefits.<sup>139</sup> The Zakat Fund, run by the

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<sup>137</sup> Source: UNDP - PwD Covid Kuwait Survey Data Report, UNDP, April 2021 (confirm exact citation with UNDP Team)

<sup>138</sup> Anna Carolina Machado et al., [Overview of Non-contributory Social Protection Programmes in the Middle East and North Africa \(MENA\) Region Through a Child and Equity Lens](#), International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth (IPC-IG), UNDP, UNICEF, 2018. For example: (1) a housing programme, started in 1954, provides an allowance for priority Kuwaiti families (martyrs, prisoners, orphaned minors and supporting persons with disabilities). In 2009 the programme covered around 40 per cent of Kuwaiti families (93,040 households); (2) energy subsidies accounted for around 7 per cent of the GDP in 2016.

<sup>139</sup> Categories of vulnerable Kuwaitis entitled to receive public assistance are defined in the Public Assistance Act No. 12 of 2011 and Decree No. 23 of 2013, which concerns entitlement to and evaluation of public assistance and includes: single, widowed and

independent government authority Zakat House, provides additional monetary aid from personal donations by citizens to those with the most need. Non-citizens with disabilities do not, as yet, have access to government social protection including stipends for transport, housing or social care and welfare costs.

### *Refugees and Asylum Seekers*

There were 718 refugees and 1,090 asylum seekers registered with UNHCR in Kuwait as of March 2021, of which some have illegal residency status. Refugees and asylum seekers, like stateless persons who work informally in the Kuwaiti economy, are at high risk of trafficking for both labour and sexual exploitation, with very limited or a total lack of access to critical services including healthcare, food, basic needs and education. UNHCR coordinates a number of critical humanitarian cases in close coordination with the Ministry of Interior.

### *Persons with HIV and AIDS*

Persons with HIV and AIDS suffer greatly from social and cultural stigma. There is currently a lack of statistics on the exact number of patients with HIV/AIDS in Kuwait. Local human rights NGOs have reported limited incidents of societal violence or discrimination against persons with HIV/AIDS, who generally do not disclose their status due to the social stigma associated with the disease. Consular officers who usually review medical visa applications to countries with strong HIV/AIDS treatment report that local doctors and hospitals do not usually diagnose patients on their medical reports so the patient is not subject to discrimination and social stigma. The main challenge is that the lack of the data and statistics makes it difficult to assess the scale or impact of the vulnerability of this group.

## **6.4 Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment**

*(N.B: The most recent gender justice report 2021 was not available for this initial CCA draft)*

The State of Kuwait has maintained a strong commitment to achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls. The Kuwaiti Constitution stipulates the equality of all people, although gender is not specifically mentioned as a category for distinction. Kuwait has also ratified the CEDAW, subject to two reservations, and participates in the Beijing Platform five-year yearly review process.

### *Social and economic empowerment*

The Kuwaiti constitution rules against discrimination on the basis of race, origin, gender, language or religion. In practice, however, gender discrimination in socio-economic and political life has been systematic, and equal rights on paper have not transformed into equal opportunities. Family rather than the individual is constitutionally defined as the key unit of society, and gender hierarchy is a key characteristic of most Kuwaiti families. The paternalistic legal guardianship system, the laws and social practices that govern marriage, divorce, housing and inheritance place men in a higher position than women within this gender hierarchy. Various other laws regulating marriage, divorce, child custody, housing rights, women's property, for example, the Personal Status Law, Civil Law and the Penal Code, also contain discriminatory articles. Kuwait's nationality law does not allow Kuwaiti women married to

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abandoned women, families with children of school age, orphans, elderly people, families whose main breadwinner has a chronic illness, families of imprisoned household heads, and Kuwaiti women who are married to expatriates and cannot cover the costs of basic subsistence.

non-Kuwaiti men to pass their nationality on to their spouses or children on an equal basis to those Kuwaiti men married to foreign spouses. Labour laws prohibit women from working in dangerous or harmful trades, but do not specifically protect women's rights.

Kuwait is ranked 53rd out of 162 countries on UNDP's 2019 Gender Equality Index (an increase from its previous rank 70th out of 159 in 2015). The index reflects gender-based inequalities in three dimensions: reproductive health, empowerment and economic activity. On the other hand, on the World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap index 2020, which seeks to measure the relative gaps between women and men across four key areas: health, education, economy and politics, Kuwait does not score well, and is ranked 122nd out of 153 countries (down from 86th place in 2006).

Women enjoy relative freedom to make independent decisions about their health and reproductive rights. Abortion is prohibited: it is considered a criminal act under the penal code and women having an abortion are liable to a penalty of up to 10 years' imprisonment. UNHCR has recommended that the GoK amend this law and make provisions for the protection of the right to life of pregnant women. Women have full and equal access to health care. Healthcare services at government-run clinics and hospitals are generally provided free of charge or at a cost for all residents of Kuwait.<sup>140</sup>

Unlike foreign-born women who reside in Kuwait, a single Kuwaiti woman cannot rent her own dwelling. While such a policy is not enshrined in law, landlords often refuse to rent apartments to Kuwaiti women unless they can provide proof of marriage. Home ownership remains a challenge for Kuwaiti women, particularly divorced women from low-income groups. Women are excluded from Kuwait's low-interest loan policy, which is provided to married men. This challenge highlights the importance of the right to equality, which implies that each woman is to be treated as an individual in her own right, rather than as dependent on her husband or father.<sup>141</sup>

All Kuwaiti citizens, men and women, are guaranteed free and equal access to the education system, from primary school through to university level. Students are also provided with equal opportunities to study abroad. However, Kuwaiti women are required to seek the permission of their male authority figures to accept study-abroad scholarships. Kuwaiti women comprise almost two-thirds of university-level students and more than half of the student population of the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training.

Kuwait ranks 59th out of 156 countries on educational attainment in the World Economic Forum Gender Gap Index 2021, placing it the first in the Arab region. Women are enrolled in all major subjects, and graduate at higher rates than men in specialisations that are linked to knowledge economy: 88.7 per cent of women have reached at least a secondary level of education, compared to 84.5 per cent of men; in terms of enrolment in tertiary education, the rate for women (76.1 per cent) almost doubles that of men (35.8 per cent).

Despite higher educational attainment at the tertiary level, the labour force participation rate for women in Kuwait is 58.8 per cent compared to 87 per cent for men. Women's contributions to the Kuwaiti labour force increased from 20 per cent in 1985 to about 58 per cent in 2019 (Kuwaiti women's rate is lower - around 30 per cent), with the majority of the increased number of Kuwaiti female employees work in the public sector (91 per cent). Women can be found in most professional fields including engineering,

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<sup>140</sup> Human Rights Council, 35<sup>th</sup> session: Report of the Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and in practice on its mission to Kuwait, 2017

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

architecture, medicine and law. However, they do not have full freedom to choose their professions: women are prohibited from working in the police, the army and the judiciary.

### *Women's political empowerment*

In December 2020, and despite the Covid-19 pandemic, Kuwaitis headed to the polls to elect members of the National Assembly. Voter turn-out was higher than expected, at around 60 per cent. None of the 31 female candidates secured a parliamentary seat, and the sole female MP lost her seat. Compared to previous years, this is the highest number of women to have ever run for parliament since they were given the right to vote and run for office in 2005.

The majority of the registered voters in Kuwait were women, accounting for 52 per cent. Based on the 2019 data from the Ministry of Interior, around 80 per cent of eligible young women (between ages 21-35) were not registered. Although efforts and involvement leading up to the elections showed a high level of political awareness amongst Kuwaiti women, the startling results raised questions over the future of Kuwaiti women's political participation. **The failure to elect any women parliamentarians points to the long-standing challenges related to deep-rooted traditions and prejudice faced by female candidates.**<sup>142</sup>

The number of women elected to parliament continued on a downward trend between 2009 and 2020 (see Table 1). The recent election results confirm the declining trend: whereas, in 2009, four women were elected for the first time as MPs, in 2016 only one woman was elected and in 2020, no women at all won a seat. The election for Kuwait's National Assembly (parliament) resulted in an all-male parliament, signalling an alarming change in direction. Two days after the recent election (on December 22), the Kuwaiti National Assembly had to appoint only male members to the Women's Parliamentary Committee - mainly because of the 29 female candidates who ran for office, not a single one was elected.

Table 2. Trends in political representation (women in national elections)

| Election Year | Total Number of Seats | Number of Women Elected | % of Women Elected | Number of Seats Held by Women (Elected & Appointed) | Number of Women Candidates/All Candidates | % of Women Candidates/All Candidates |
|---------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|---|---|--------------------------------------|
| 2006          | 50                    | 0                       | 0 %                | 1   | 28 / 252                                  | 11.1 %                               |
| 2008          | 50                    | 0                       | 0 %                | 1   | 27 / 275                                  | 10 %                                 |
| 2009          | 50                    | 4                       | 8%                 | 2   | 16 / 210                                  | 7.6%                                 |
| Feb 2012      | 50                    | 1                       | 2%                 | 5   | 24 / 344                                  | 7 %                                  |
| Dec 2012      | 50                    | 3                       | 6%                 | 5   | 15 / 387                                  | 3.8%                                 |
| July 2013     | 50                    | 1                       | 2%                 | 4   | 8 / 308                                   | 2.5%                                 |
| 2016          | 50                    | 1                       | 2%                 | 1   | 15 / 287                                  | 5.2%                                 |
| 2020          | 50                    | 0                       | 0%                 | 4   | 33 / 395                                  | 8.35%                                |

<sup>142</sup> <https://www.egic.info/kuwait-2020-elections-results>

The Gender Gap Index 2020 ranks women's political empowerment in Kuwait 142nd out of 153 countries, and the Women Power Index 2021, by the Council on Foreign Relations, ranked Kuwait 189th out of 193 UN member states on their progress towards gender parity in political participation. The index measures the political parity score as an aggregate of women's representation across five indicators of political participation: heads of state or government; national cabinets; national legislatures; national legislature candidates; and local legislatures. The index measures women's descriptive representation, which refers to the numerical presence of women rather than women's impact or policy preferences.

Women's political representation in Kuwait has been declining due to cultural, institutional and structural barriers. A study conducted by Kuwait University suggested that there were three factors limiting women's political participation: 1) cultural dynamics and women's lack of trust in the electoral process; 2) the misunderstanding and misinterpretation of religious texts concerning the role of women in public and private life; and 3) the comparatively limited ability of women to mobilise volunteers and resources to mount effective political campaigns.

### *Gender-based violence*

The root cause of domestic violence has always been a complex issue, often tied to norms and beliefs relating to family structures and concepts of guardianship, honour and discipline. As with other forms of abuse within the family, it is also considered a private matter and therefore not addressed publicly. Despite a lack of up-to-date figures, the problem is widespread, affecting 53.1 per cent of women in Kuwait, according to a 2018 study.<sup>143</sup> With respect to violence against women, data from the Ministry of Justice in 2017 reveals that its prevalence decreased among female Kuwaitis and non-Kuwaitis; 173 cases were reported in 2017 (for Kuwaitis and Non-Kuwaitis combined) down from a total of 282 cases in 2014.

**Due to social barriers in Kuwait, there is a lack of statistics and data with regard to domestic violence.** In the past, women needed to file a complaint at the police station and then would often have to return home to their abusers. A shelter was inaugurated in 2017, but because there was no law to fund the shelter, it was never operational.

### *Kuwait National Assembly has passed the country's first domestic violence law in August 2020.*

The passing of the law is considered a major victory for women's rights in Kuwait, as the majority of domestic violence is gender-based violence. The legislation sets the minimum standard and legal protection procedures for victims of domestic violence. The bill is expected to protect survivors of abuse, activate the shelters and criminalise domestic violence. This law is an important step towards empowering women and achieving social justice. The law creates a national committee – with representatives from various ministries and civil society – to draw up policies to combat domestic violence and protect women. The committee is also expected to submit recommendations to amend or repeal laws that contradict the new domestic violence law. The new legislation also establishes shelters and a hotline to receive complaints of domestic violence, provides counselling and legal assistance for victims, and allows for emergency protection orders (restraining orders) to prevent abusers from contacting their victim. One of the articles describes domestic violence as a form of physical, psychological, sexual or financial mistreatment, whether in words or in actions. The new law still contains a number of gaps and much work remains to be done. While the bill provides penalties for violating protection orders, it does

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<sup>143</sup> <https://alqabas.com/article/607181-s-الرجل-من-الكوتيتيات-معنفات-من-الرجل-s>.

not set out penalties for domestic violence as a crime on its own. It also does not include former partners or people engaged in relationships outside of wedlock, including those engaged to be married or in unofficial marriages. The law is also perceived to be poorly implemented and the legal code still provides men who kill women with far greater protection: Kuwait does not explicitly criminalise marital rape. Under Article 153 of the Kuwaiti penal code, a man who finds his mother, wife, sister or daughter in the act of adultery and kills them is given a reduced sentence of either a small fine or a maximum three-year prison sentence. Under the same law, Article 182, an abductor who uses force, threats or deception with the intention to kill, harm, rape, prostitute or extort a victim is spared any punishment if he marries the victim with her guardian's permission.

### *UNCT and gender equality*

UNDP has established a strategic collaboration framework with the General Secretariat of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development (GSSCPD), as well as with the UN Women Regional Office for the Arab States, who have partnered together to support a two-year project with the Women and Research Studies Centre (WRSC) at Kuwait University (KU). The project focuses on three key areas: 1) the enhancement of women's participation in political and public life; 2) the enhancement of women's participation in all sectors through increased awareness; and application of gender-positive policies to promote women's participation; and 3) making data available to support elaboration of a comprehensive national plan to address violence against women.<sup>144</sup> The project led to the initiation of a number of research studies; a complete desk review for laws and services; and the establishment of the first political incubator in the MENA region for the empowerment of women. The incubator aimed at preparing 50-60 Kuwaiti women for leadership roles in both the public and the private sector.

### *The national women's machinery*

The GoK continues to show strong commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment, and has gone to great lengths to enable women to exercise their rights and perform duties in a manner consistent with the constitution, which guarantees their political, social and economic rights.<sup>145</sup> Kuwait has developed numerous departmental and intergovernmental coordinating mechanisms on women's equality, including the Coordination Committee on Women's Affairs, which advises the Cabinet of Ministers, and the National Assembly's Committee on Women's Affairs, the mandate of which is to examine existing legislation relating to women, draft new laws and monitor their implementation.

**The major challenge is the lack of clarity about the impact of the activities of the national machinery on gender equality, its mandate, and the human and financial resources allocated to individual mechanisms.** In this regard, CEDAW expressed concerns about the absence of a dedicated central authority leading the national machinery on women's empowerment and the absence of a comprehensive plan of action to achieve gender equality, despite Kuwait's commitment to adopt such a plan in the context of the UPR.<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> Source: [https://www.kw.undp.org/content/kuwait/en/home/projects/support-kuwait\\_s-implementation-of-sdg-5.html](https://www.kw.undp.org/content/kuwait/en/home/projects/support-kuwait_s-implementation-of-sdg-5.html)

<sup>145</sup> CEDAW.

<sup>146</sup> <http://hrlibrary.umn.edu/cedaw/cedaw-kuwait2011.html>.

*Key challenges to gender equality can be summarised in the following key points:*

- Lack of strong policies to advance women in the judiciary, leadership, management and decision-making positions in the civil service and in the private sector. Similarly, other GCC States took more aggressive steps by imposing quotas to boards of directors and leadership positions that can serve as an example.
  - Lack of a national institution to oversee the gender equality theme across the various sectors and ensure policy coherence; fragmentation and project-based approach to gender equality lacks strategic programming without clear ownership.
  - Weak and inefficient coordination: too many entities involved. Much of the delay over the past three years, both with the legislation and activation of the shelter, has been due to the fact there were many entities involved, including the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Social and Labour Affairs, and civil society representatives, all of which at times had different agendas.<sup>147</sup>
  - Entrenched societal attitudes continue to hamper more active participation by women in the political process, and the interests of women are poorly represented in practice. Neither the political groupings nor the tribes generally promote women's participation as candidates.
  - Less attention is given to Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) services to women in their life cycles and lack of awareness programmes in this regard with a focus on birth spacing.<sup>148</sup>
- Moving forward, the UNCT needs to update the programming approach to ensure gains and progress achieved to date are consolidated and used as a strong foundation to establish more comprehensive programming.
  - Support the GoK to develop a national strategy for gender equality and women's empowerment to mainstreaming all policies, initiatives, programmes and projects under one umbrella and facilitate consolidation of a one portfolio approach.
  - Support the government to develop coherence in the institutional and policy framework regarding gender equality and improving gender-disaggregated data.
  - Bridge the gaps in the existing legal framework in line with international standards. The review and amendment of existing national laws might be perpetuating the violence. Other provisions cover mandatory training programmes for all government sectors involved in family protection, awareness programmes on detection, reporting and survivor advocacy, and issuing an annual report on domestic violence statistics.
  - Strengthen the development and implementation of data collection strategies and expand the depth of gender-disaggregated statistics to support evidence-based decision making in this area.

<sup>147</sup> <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2020/09/kuwait-brighter-future-beckons-domestic-violence-sufferers>.

<sup>148</sup> Source: UNFPA.

## 7. Looking Ahead: Kuwait Future Narrative Post-Covid-19

### *Kuwait Future Narrative and Scenarios Foresight*

The Kuwait future narrative post-Covid-19 comes a year after one of the most challenging and disruptive years in recent history. Kuwait, like most countries is gearing up to a post-recovery and back-to-normal phase, which will require re-thinking and re-adjusting national development priorities to find the best way to overcome the huge challenge that lies ahead.

A year of closures and lockdowns has exponentially increased the pace of digitalisation: virtual interactions have become the main engine for growth. It is within this context that this chapter presents the prospects of bouncing back from the dual crisis as a more inclusive and sustainable economy. The proposed narrative builds on the various analyses and findings of the previous chapters, while incorporating recent global trends and leading practices in the following six priority themes: 1) socio-economic resilience; 2) quality education, continuous learning and human capital; 3) health and wellbeing; 4) environment and climate change; and, finally, 5) governance, partnerships, institutional strengthening and global positioning; and 6) cross-cutting issues and challenges.

The three proposed foresight scenarios use the implications of the Covid-19 pandemic as their basis. They then examine these implications for Kuwait's strategic national development priorities, as well as recent global trends on emerging innovative policies relevant to Kuwait, and how these might benefit from future programming support.

**Scenario A. Pessimistic and gloomy recovery with stricter and more frequent lockdowns.** Under this scenario, Kuwait's economy experiences a sluggish recovery as a result of ongoing coronavirus, which has been spread from coronavirus variants, or a new pandemic, coinciding with a global recession and a further deterioration of the economy, with lower oil prices at around US\$35 per barrel (after having fallen to US\$27 per barrel in April 2020). This scenario increases the pressure on the GoK to cut expenditures and deal with the liquidity crisis. Under this scenario, Kuwait experiences strict, widespread lockdowns of non-essential activities, and the healthcare system is only just able to cope. The ongoing political turmoil turns into a crisis; there is considerable loss of employment, and foreign workers are deported. This scenario has implications on vulnerable groups, gender equality and women's empowerment, since any cuts in social expenditures risk including assistance to women considered vulnerable (e.g., widows, women married to non-Kuwaitis); the loss of women-run businesses; and a reduction of employment among women, which is compounded by the loss of domestic help on which they are dependent to keep their jobs. Social unrest might become a threat as a result of the sluggish economic situation. The private sector bears the brunt of this, and many businesses and SMEs close. Vulnerable groups are highly affected, and non-citizens face extreme hardship. The security forces might have to shift priorities to maintain security, and law and order. Under this scenario, the implementation of the KNDP will be further delayed, which will affect Kuwait's progress towards Agenda 2030.

**Scenario B. Moderately optimistic - better recovery, but uneven across sectors with limited lockdowns.** The early vaccine rollout and higher oil prices support this outlook for Kuwait; the new containment of the pandemic supports a quicker recovery, which coincides with global economies and trade bouncing back. Under this scenario, the service sector is affected, reflecting continued weakness in some areas.



Activity in oil-exporting countries is set to rebound, and oil prices have recovered with improved global demand and a price of around US\$55 per barrel (as in mid-March 2021), trading at about 4 per cent above the 2019 average. Fiscal packages are introduced to cushion the impact of the pandemic. Kuwait's government has reprioritised spending, and parliament has approved the bundle of proposed reforms. Labour market conditions remain weak and uneven. The exodus of foreign workers continues, but at a slower pace - especially in sectors that have been hit hardest during the pandemic. The KNDP might be affected partially, and non-critical programmes might be further delayed.

**Scenario C. Return to pre-Covid-19 landscape with frequent partial economic lockdowns.** Under this scenario, Kuwait is recovering back to Q1 2020; there is a more positive economic outlook and higher levels of GDP growth as a result of faster vaccine rollout, fewer closures and lockdowns, and fewer restrictions of movement. Economic non-oil growth is strengthened to an estimated 3 per cent in 2019, driven by government and consumer spending. The pandemic is contained, and the healthcare system is able to meet demand. Occasional lockdowns affect the education system and the overall economy. Some sectors are affected by bankruptcies and closures; the private sector sheds between 15-20 per cent of its workforce as a result of the mass exodus of foreign workers in most affected sectors (e.g., services, construction and tourism). SMEs face increased pressure and likelihood of closures. There are higher levels of vulnerability among migrant workers, domestic workers, the stateless, and women working in the private sector. Kuwait continues to see foreign workers leaving as a result of government measures to reduce the demographic imbalance, but this happens at a steady pace. The education system has already adapted to hybrid learning models, and can easily switch between online and physical. The KNDP is implemented, but at a slower pace; Kuwait might not be able to achieve the SDGs by 2030.

### *Implications for UNCT and Future Opportunities*

Kuwait CCA 2021 comes in a year that is shaping the recovery and lays the groundwork for a more inclusive, resilient and green economy. The three scenarios above will have different implications and present different opportunities for the UN. Considering the scope of the CCA horizon is beyond the immediate emergency stage, it is intended to support the shift towards faster and better recovery and provide policy and programme actions that will support the GoK over the next three to four years, while ensuring progress towards the SDGs and Agenda 2030.

The immediate challenge for Kuwait - like most countries - is to protect lives and livelihoods and strike the right balance between fostering recovery and safeguarding debt sustainability and financial stability. Kuwait was on a recovery path pre-pandemic from already depressed oil prices in 2015, and its credit risk rating remains stable, reflecting its strong efforts to reform the economy to become more diversified, transparent and efficient, as evidenced by its substantially improved performance in the World Bank's 2020 "Doing Business" report. As such, **scenario A might be less probable** if we consider Kuwait's swift response and proactive measures to mitigate and manage the pandemic and, most importantly, the fiscal measures it used to relaunch the economy.

**Under scenarios B or C,** Kuwait will need to tackle transformational challenges to lay the groundwork for a sustainable, inclusive, greener economy by leveraging accelerating global trends such as digitalisation. Kuwait can use the pandemic as an opportunity to recover and build forward better, while focusing on institutionalising good practices (such as the health measures acquired and tested during the pandemic and fast-paced digitisation for government services and education) and integrating green recovery; increasing the resilience of the economy and society to future potential pandemics and shocks; and

improving wellbeing and equality among all citizens and non-citizens. From robust economic growth, the business environment will undergo a radical change due to the emergence of new business models. Financial sector reforms should focus on bolstering resilience and deepening inclusion. Sustaining reforms to foster private sector-led and diversified growth will be critical. With limited scope for public employment going forward, a vibrant private sector must emerge to absorb the large number of Kuwaitis entering the labour market in the coming years.

Future opportunities to support the State of Kuwait to implement Agenda 2030 in accordance with its national development priorities have been identified as realistic under scenarios B and C, and will revolve around six themes: 1) socio-economic resilience; 2) quality education, continuous learning and human capital; 3) health and wellbeing; 4) the environment and climate; and, finally, 5) governance, partnerships, institutional strengthening and global positioning - under the three outcomes of the UN-Kuwait Strategic Cooperation Framework 2020-2025 (corresponding to each of the three existing Result Groups) (see Figure 21); and 6) cross-cutting issues and challenges.

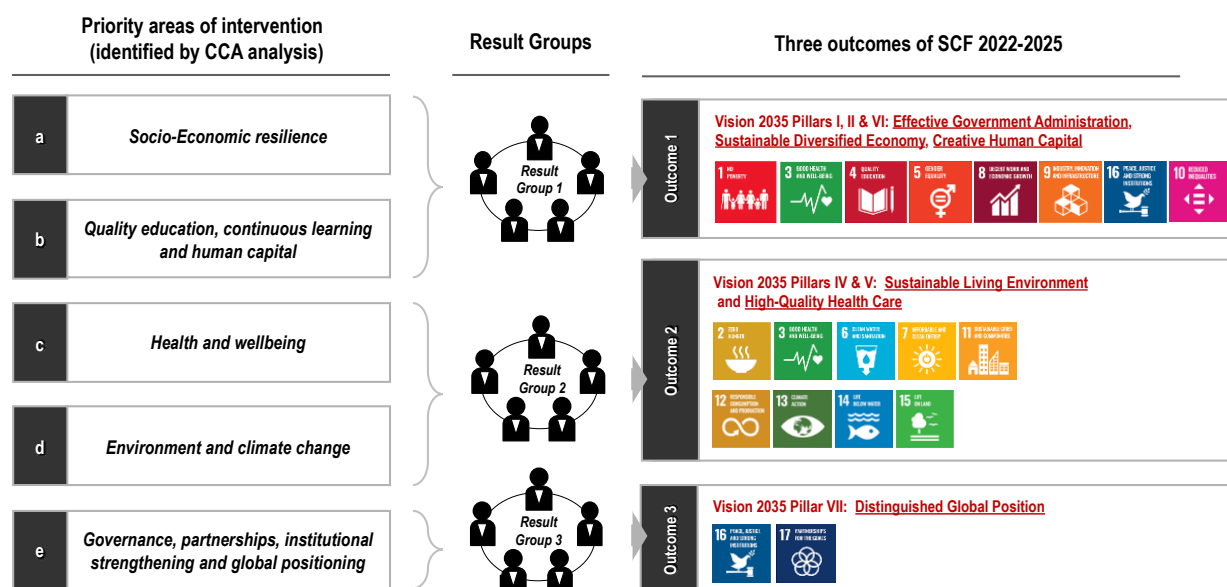


Figure 21. Integrated mechanism from CCA to SCF implementation

The “One UN Kuwait's multidimensional policy direction” is then conceptualised and mapped based on an assessment of the greater synergies with the SDGs and KNDP. Eight policy areas are contextualised for promoting the two themes (i.e., socio-economic resilience, and quality education, continuous learning and human capital) that are underpinned by collective efforts for SCF Outcome 1. Meanwhile, nine areas of policy directions for the next two themes (i.e., health and wellbeing, and environment and climate change) appear to have greater synergy with KNDP Programmes and SDGs than those associated with economic resilience intervention. As for the last theme (i.e., governance, partnerships, institutional strengthening and global positioning), five policy areas are directed and would influence sustainability aspiration over socio-economic domains in other developing countries.

**It is also suggested to establish Kuwait “Innovative SDG Lab” as an alternative means of collaboration** that can be conceptually framed into the four clusters approach: 1) policy consultation (including research collaboration); 2) SDGs data innovation (i.e. strengthened capacity for the National Observatory on Sustainable Development); 3) community engagement for innovation (i.e. hackathons, partnership with the Chamber of Commerce and think tanks); 4) competition and challenges in the form of policy experimentation, most of which can encompass various areas to support implementation of such suggested policy direction. All of these are presented in Figure 22 and detailed programmatic interventions are elaborated as follows.



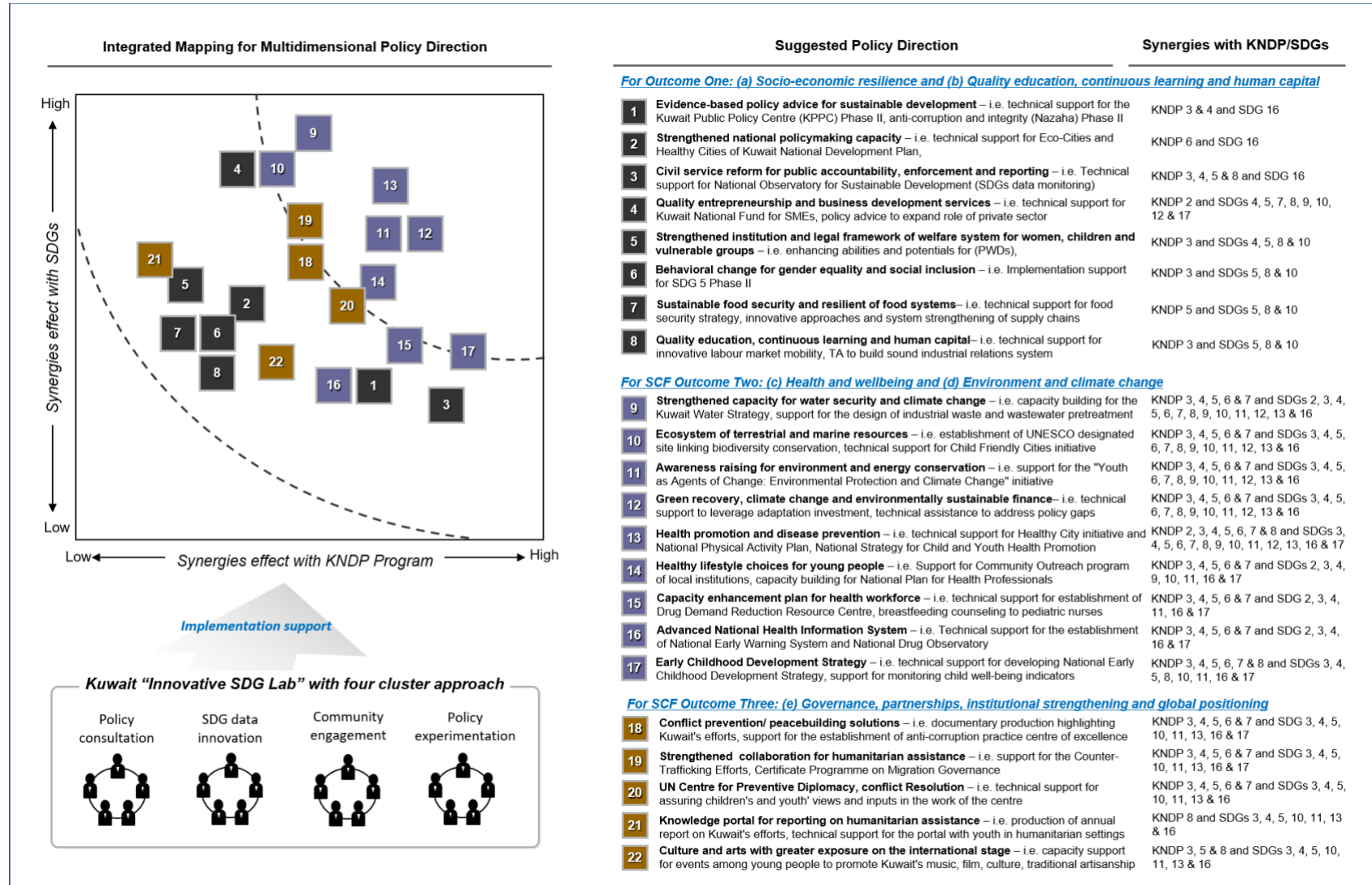


Figure 22. Multidimensional approach on policy directions with greater synergies with KNDP and SDGs

## 7.1 Socio-Economic Resilience

The most strategic, urgently needed contribution from UNCT under the socio-economic theme comes in the following three areas:

4. **Provide integrated, evidence-based policy advice to tackle economic reforms; expand the role of the private sector; and foster entrepreneurs and SMEs for the knowledge economy.** UNCT can provide technical advice and policy support to the GoK to reduce the role of the State and diversify sources of funding; to enhance the sustainability of public finances, strengthen fiscal management and the associated risks, and improve the efficiency of social assistance programme; to develop/strengthen the innovation ecosystem and increase R&D investments, especially in emerging technology, and expand the use of digital platform for business operations; and to foster entrepreneurial culture and further invest in supporting SMEs. (*SCF Policy Direction 4*)
5. **Provide technical assistance to enhance social cohesion and reduce vulnerabilities and discrimination, and ensure that any future reforms of the safety net will include vulnerable groups that are non-citizens by offering different alternatives for contributions.** UNCT can provide technical assistance to the GoK to integrate and mainstream LNOB principles within the KNDP 2020-2025 by developing dedicated programme/initiatives. Another area is to **strengthen the institutional set-up and governance, and reform the existing welfare policies to become fiscally sustainable for future generations** so they are more inclusive, fairer and more transparent, and specifically benefit lower-income households. Consolidate existing social safety tools and introduce stringent means-testing. This will include technical and policy advice on the diversification of the funding sources of the existing welfare system and improving access to government services for vulnerable groups (citizens and non-citizens). (*SCF Policy Direction 5*)
6. **Provide innovative approaches to achieve sustainable food security, and enhance resilience of food systems and minimise disruptions to supply chains** (referenced from FAO policy note).<sup>149</sup> (*SCF Policy Direction 7 – new “Sustainable food security and resilient food systems”*)

Global restrictions on movement and preventive measures to reduce the movement of goods and services that rely on transportation, as well as labour migration, have induced overall disruptions in supply chain logistics. These factors have impeded shipments of food and agricultural inputs and essentials, thus threatening food security and nutrition, particularly for the most vulnerable segments of the population (FAO, 2020b). In Kuwait, the supply of products to consumers has been affected only moderately, thanks to government competencies in maintaining the food supply during the crisis, despite incurring heavy costs. Kuwait can benefit from additional support at the policy level to build and enhance the resilience of food systems and minimise the disruptions to supply chains over the long-term.

As Kuwait aspires to set SMART short to long-term goals for the whole spectrum of the agricultural sector, it requires a robust strategic plan to transform its food systems to achieve food security and a stable food supply chain. Comprehensive solutions are needed, with careful consideration and understanding of the significant constraints to overcome the wide range of challenges that currently exist, including the

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<sup>149</sup> From impact to transformation – improving the food supply chains in Kuwait in the context of Covid-19 pandemic – Kuwait policy note 2021

adoption of capital-intensive technologies to product development; facilitating trade and diversifying supply sources and options; and linking SMEs and small farmers' products to markets.

Kuwait may benefit from **early warning tools, including Food Price Monitoring Analysis (FPMA)**. Food price indicators are key, informing production decisions, for producers and policymakers. After the 2008 crisis, as a response to the increased demand for early warning and monitoring systems, FAO developed tools such as FPMA. It is a user-friendly online application that can be made available for countries, with their own data; it can also incorporate retail and export prices. FAO can provide capacity development on how to use the tool. The new technology, called the passive refrigeration system (PRS), may offer practical applications across the food supply chain to save energy at 81 per cent; reduce losses by 50 per cent; extend the shelf life of produces by up to three times; and improve the quality of preservation. This type of innovation as a key element of Kuwait Vision 2035 would counter the challenges Kuwait faces in the sector. This needs to be put together into one concrete strategy, with sub-pilots in collaboration with FAO and other UN Agencies and the GoK.

Given the production constraints, **Kuwait needs to look into innovative ideas as well as a comprehensive assessment of its entire agricultural and food system**. FAO can help develop a comprehensive country assessment to look closely into the potentials, challenges, production, trade, consumption, prices, food security and nutrition policy aspects. The study could assess the potential of Kuwait to **address its food self-sufficiency using the Controlled Environment Agriculture (CEA) to increase domestic fruit and vegetable production and promote pipeline stocks** (maintaining vast food processing resources) that can serve as food security stocks in time of crisis. Other studies can focus on improving traceability in food processing and distribution; using blockchain technologies; tokenisation; enabling consumers to trace local produce; and can inform setting the system and diagnosing constraints and adoption of innovations.

**As part of the overall country assessment, conduct a trade and policy analysis.** Nutrition and diet-related NCD analysis will be needed. It should be undertaken not only by developing food-based dietary guidelines, but also by stocktaking the nutritional profile for the country and an assessment of problems arising from unhealthy diets. Based on these findings, draw lessons on how agriculture and food systems could have the biggest impact.

## 7.2 Quality Education, Continuous Learning and Human Capital

*(Reference Human Capital Policy Brief, Input from UNICEF and Kuwait UN 75 events)*

*(SCF Policy Direction 8 – new “Quality education, continuous learning and human capital”)*

7. **Institutional mechanisms and systems strengthening to help integrate and institutionalise online learning practices developed beyond the pandemic.** UNCT can support better implementation of blended/hybrid learning. Key issues for hybrid/blended learning include support for safe school reopening, better management, teacher preparation, and engagement with parents and students. Investments in safe school operations; prioritising the most marginalised, and promoting teacher and student wellbeing and protection are needed (“Global framework for Re-opening Schools). UNCT can also further support **digital education and innovation as an education game changer across the education sector and a key driver to reframe education for the 21<sup>st</sup> century**. These new models will require closer examination in terms of governance and institutional requirements.

8. **Align skills with market needs by building partnerships with the private sector.** UNCT can support the involvement of social partners, particularly employers, in the development of training and education programmes that could help address the issue of skills mismatch, and which would enable educational institutions to review their programmes and curricula in line with private sector needs. Such involvement would help increase the credibility of Kuwait's education systems and could also equip youth with the skills needed by employers. Further support can **improve technical capacity for the Kuwait Labour Market Information System (KLMIS) as a critical mechanism and source of data to guide any policy change** relating to the impact of Covid-19 on labour markets and the administration of human capital. It can emphasise better data collection for labour market analysis in order to design and implement effective active labour market policies (ALMPs) that are well targeted and evidence-based. Improve the quality of employment services, including career guidance, job search assistance and counselling, to raise awareness about emerging sectors and job opportunities, thereby contributing to better skills matching, with targeted initiatives to increase the recruitment, retention and promotion of women.
9. **Improve the quality of teachers: system strengthening to develop teacher professional development standards framework** to promote inclusive and performance-based recruitment of Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti nationals under decent work conditions, including training, placement, remuneration, promotion, and career development and advancement. This will require the harmonisation of teacher management programmes among the public and private sector and alignment between pre-service and in-service teacher professional programmes. This area also covers technical assistance to train teachers on the use of technology to promote 21st century teaching and learning, and to train teachers on issues related to CSE and SRH&Rs issues at school.
10. **Strengthen Technical and Vocational Education and Training.** Provide technical assistance to create labour market-relevant curricula and design training programmes aligned with employment. This will ensure TVET curricula and training programmes are of high quality and include employable and transferrable skills, including entrepreneurial and basic ICT skills. This includes combining on-the-job training/internship programmes with the TVET curricula through an education/private sector partnership programme, and promoting TVET skills exchange and transfer among the member states (both regionally and globally). It will also promote collaboration on enhancing transparency and cross-border recognition of TVET qualifications to raise the quality of TVET programmes and enable workers and learners' mobility and to ensure TVET programmes to keep pace with the changing labour and market demands.
11. **Innovating labour market mobility.** UNCT offers a range of potential support in this area with focus on the following: **1) update the existing Labour Law, bylaws and policies** to ensure they address policy gaps and discrimination against women personnel and existing gaps, and at the same time integrate the latest trends and practices in a post-covid 19 recovery (remote work, part-time, etc.); **2) technical assistance around the newly developed national labour market strategy** and its four-pronged key intervention areas: education, digitalisation, foreign workers SMART admission, and reduction of the public sector workforce; **3) develop sustainable mobility schemes such as skills mobility partnerships (SMPs) as an innovative tool centred around workers' skills training and development**, while placing special emphasis on multi-stakeholder collaboration. With effective implementation, SMPs can help Kuwait meet its labour market needs and improve workers' skillsets; **4) reform the sponsorship system**, combined with efforts to tackle illegal and clandestine visa trading, and remove or ease current restrictions on foreign workers' being able to change sponsors (including between



government and private sector contractors, between sectors, and without the permission of the first sponsor); and **5) build a sound industrial relations system and the essential role of social partners in the design and implementation of policies and reforms**. Social partners as anchors to hold the government accountable, develop a democratic society and ensure social cohesion. This includes support to develop a strategy to extend coverage to all of the working population, including non-Kuwaitis: (i) comprehensive assessment of migrant workers' behaviour and expectations; (ii) design the schemes and pay close attention to the process of contributions collection and benefit delivery; (iii) legal protections for migrant workers and promotion of decent work conditions.

### 7.3 Health and Wellbeing

5. **Link the health-associated activities, projects and policies planned under the KNDP and other country support priorities to the outcomes and results logic of the WHO Thirteenth General Programme of Work, 2019 – 2023 (GPW13)**, which introduces the Triple Billion targets, offering a measurable impact framework to improve global progress towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). At a country level, the Triple Billion targets initiative measures the percentage of the population that: 1) benefits from universal health coverage; 2) is protected from health emergencies; and, 3) enjoys better health and wellbeing. To this end, measurement and reporting towards Vision 2035 will be aligned with reporting on the SDG indicators for health, including those that address country priorities in NCD (i.e., hypertension, obesity, trans fats policy) and which member states like Kuwait already have capacity to monitor. This addresses the need of short-term targets for Vision 2035 and rectifies the heavy reliance on international indices to measure progress. *(SCF Policy Direction 14)*
6. **Support and endorse the development of citizen and community engagement platforms to promote health literacy, in addition to leveraging existing community-based interventions**. The scaling up of initiatives like Birth Kuwait and Birth Academy while preserving their unique community working models will contribute to the sustainability of their impact and success in advocating for and raising awareness of good practices in the area of lactation counselling, as well as prenatal and postnatal care. *(SCF Policy Direction 12)*
7. **Advance the development and implementation of national digital strategies and capitalise on the transition to online platforms during the pandemic towards digital health maturity**. Support the effective adoption of more widely used telemedicine and personalised medicine through the integration of mainstream apps to support healthcare coaching and advice to ensure timely access of credible advice to all. Professionalise a means of empowering nurses, social workers, and allied healthcare students to uptake this role as part of their training. *(SCF Policy Direction 14)*
8. **Use of the evidence from the behavioural insights framework to design policies and interventions in communal spaces, schools and workplaces that encourage the uptake of healthy habits (e.g., physical activity nudges)**. *(SCF Policy Direction 11)*

### 7.4 Environment and Climate Change

*(SCF Policy Direction 10 – changed to “Green recovery, climate change and environmentally sustainable finance”)*

4. **Promote the sustainable use of the environment, centred around green recovery** by integrating climate action, sustainable energy and nature-based solutions into national crisis response plans and investment frameworks. This includes: 1) taking climate action as a means to generate co-benefits for community resilience and recovery; 2) harnessing solar solutions to achieve sustainable economic recovery and energy security; 3) advancing a more sustainable use of natural assets to reduce future risks; 4) promoting sustainable and responsible consumption, and environmental education and awareness; 5) leverage adaptation and investment in climate-resilient infrastructure, which includes recovery programmes, public spending, and regulations to help mitigate the impact of climate shocks; and 6) integrate green economy principles in the diversification agenda, increase climate resilient investments and sustainable energy transition.
5. **Climate change action with a focus on environmentally sustainable finance.** The GoK has made significant efforts by designing and implementing several projects and programmes to enhance the quality of the environment. For the electricity sustainability initiative, the country invests in energy-efficient desalination plants, while projects on solar and wind energy parks are also underway, thereby targeting an increase in the renewable energy share of the electricity mix. Furthermore, the country has scaled up its efforts to improve data infrastructure for use in environmental research that could better inform decisions on environment policies further. Meanwhile, wastewater treatment plants are being built for industrial use, which could further be used for the irrigation of green spaces being built to support climate conservation. In terms of promoting behavioural change, the government efforts to strengthen awareness-raising initiatives; collaborate with various non-governmental organisations to increase the sustainable/efficient use of water resources; support individual-level recycling; and change its waste management practices be more environmentally responsible are also emphasised in the form of awareness campaigns.

Within this context, the GoK can consider **the following five innovative approaches and policy ideas:**

**ESG Standard on Reporting and Disclosure.** Stimulate ESG reporting and disclosure practices by 1) designing an incentive mechanism to the reporting companies; 2) providing capacity building for materiality assessment and alignment with business strategies; 3) shaping a supportive regulatory framework in relation to ESG practices; and 4) targeting sustainable finance policies and rules to become mandatory. The initiative can primarily focus on firms operating in sectors relating to waste, efficient desalination plants and wastewater treatment plants, as well as making use of underdeveloped open spaces for more greenery.

**Kuwait Green Innovation Fund.** Establish a blended financing window (with the principle of “vulnerability-responsive”) by partnering with leading banks to develop sustainable/green transition projects and initiatives, and potentially categorise: 1) a Green Energy pillar (renewable energy project); 2) a Clean Air pillar (air pollution reducing project); and, 3) a Blue Ocean pillar (biodiversity and food security project), through the provision of loans (SDG-linked loans) or performance-based payments under the technical assistance facility, which mainly prioritises MSMEs, entrepreneurs and small women-led businesses.

**Integrated Waste Management Public Private Partnership.** Promote a public-private partnership for a waste management system that focuses on an integrated system of “prevention-sorting-recycling-recovery-reuse” towards a sustainable waste treatment plant and logistics. This should be accompanied by a well-structured regulatory framework, in collaboration with the WRDM and WTRT

programmes, relating to the MYAH and TADWEER initiatives under KNDP. Depending on the nature of the proposed waste management projects, various procurement options need to be explored in terms of a feasibility assessment, including solicited or unsolicited procurement schemes, Minimum Revenue Guarantee and Redemption of Excess Revenue, New Risk-Sharing Structure, as well as procurement schemes (e.g., BTO, BTL, BOT and BOO).

**Kuwait Climate Action Lab.** Form an innovative action platform co-managed by national environmental authorities and international organisations, and partnered with the private sector, universities and NGOs. The focus should be on 1) a Climate Fund Partnership cluster to strengthen a global and regional network for green funding and to collaborate with existing green promoting platforms; (2) a Knowledge for Advisory cluster to provide innovative and technical advice while exploring opportunities to establish a green material bank to cope with construction-related pollution; and, 3) a Tool of Change cluster to integrate awareness-raising efforts for behavioural change at the individual, community and corporate level.

**Climate-Related Statistical Capacity.** Integrate a set of climate change-related indicators with particular focus on the System of Environmental Economic Accounts (SEEA) framework in the existing national statistical system (i.e., eMISK, Baetona and CIS) that could help better inform decisions on climate action and environmental policies towards sustainable economic transformation. The set of proposed indicators consists of five areas, including drivers, emissions, impacts, mitigation, and adaptation, thus associating emissions with indicators in social, economic and environmental domains and sustainable development.

6. **Address the policy gaps.** Notwithstanding such tremendous nationwide efforts, several policy gaps still exist (see Appendix 7. Analytical presentation on climate action gap). These can be categorised as follows: 1) the continued-high levels of energy consumption and air pollution; 2) a relative lack of integrated modern technologies used in the sectors of seawater desalination, wastewater treatment and waste management facilities; 3) a weaker understanding (uncompetitive knowledge base) of the complexity of the relationship between climate change and socio-economic dimensions; and 4) a lack of proactive measures against climate change, engaged by the private sector in terms of finance and investment. Although the first gap can be associated to a certain extent with macro-level industrial strategies, the other three gaps might be addressed in a more effective manner by embracing a focus on sustainable finance practices. This is mainly because doing so could strengthen private sector engagement, and any form of capital (both human and financial) would thus contribute to more environmentally friendly processes, particularly on the technology front. While being engaged in sustainable finance practices, continuous efforts to promote a culture of recycling and responsibility, especially at the individual and community level, would be required to maximise the likely impact on society as a whole.

## 7.5 Governance, Partnerships, Institutional Strengthening and Global Positioning (SCF Policy Direction 17)

4. **Strengthen and consolidate the gender institutional setup.** UNCT can further enhance support to the GoK to advance gender equality and women's empowerment, since SDG5 is a challenge and puts at risk the success of the SDGs; support for policy and institutional coherence and alignment of laws with international conventions; support the production of gender-disaggregated data and analysis, including for groups of vulnerable women, targeted interventions to support women's political and

economic participation, supporting GBV and access to justice especially for vulnerable women. UNCT can provide support and TA for culture and gender-sensitive research on population ageing, and data collection to provide a solid base for policies and planning, and to make sure, ageing issues are integrated into national development programmes and strategies.

5. **Strengthen the institutional set-up of the human rights ecosystem.** Given the weak institutional capacity to protect human rights, underdeveloped legal framework and Kuwait's challenging human rights record, UNCT is in a strong position to advocate for and support strengthening the role of the Human Rights Diwan, its independence and effective operations; in addition, the reform of the relevant legislation to bring it in line with international standards must be prioritised in the human rights agenda. A key tool in the planned improvement of the human rights situation is the KNDP, for which development OHCHR and other UNCT agencies would be in a position to support.

## 8. Financing Opportunities and Partnerships Strategy

### Financing Opportunities

It has widely been recognised that the financial resources required to achieve the SDGs considerably exceed what is currently available. According to estimates from the UNCTAD (2018), the total investment needed to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is estimated at about US\$3.9 trillion per year, with current investment levels falling short of that by some US\$1.4 trillion. Given the additional need for financial resources to mitigate the significant impact of the Covid-19 crisis, which is expected to continue in the coming months and years, achieving the sustainable development agenda with a business-as-usual approach remains highly unlikely.

As such, the financing landscape in Kuwait is mainly affected by three challenges: 1) the unprecedented impact of the pandemic on government finances; 2) low oil prices and the unsustainable political, social and economic context in Kuwait; and 3) the lack of a clear SDGs financial plan within the KNDP 2020-2025.

Given the above, three particular resource mobilisation channels – i.e., trade, public finance and debt sustainability, all of which are closely interrelated – should be revisited and improved in terms of effectiveness through strengthened institutional capacity; the oil export revenue-fiscal sustainability nexus was discussed in the economic context section of Chapter 1, while the public financing-equitable healthcare nexus was in the social context section of the same chapter. Meanwhile, privatising the education system through an innovative public-private partnership procurement scheme was developed in a way that three potential benefits can be obtained by doubling efforts at the national level: 1) sharing fiscal burden between private and government entities towards “shared prosperity and shared ownership” for our sustainable future; 2) enhancing educational efficiency while improving educational outcomes of the younger generations; and 3) meeting the increasing demand for high-quality education under the pressure of growing populations in response to demographical transition (Figure 23).

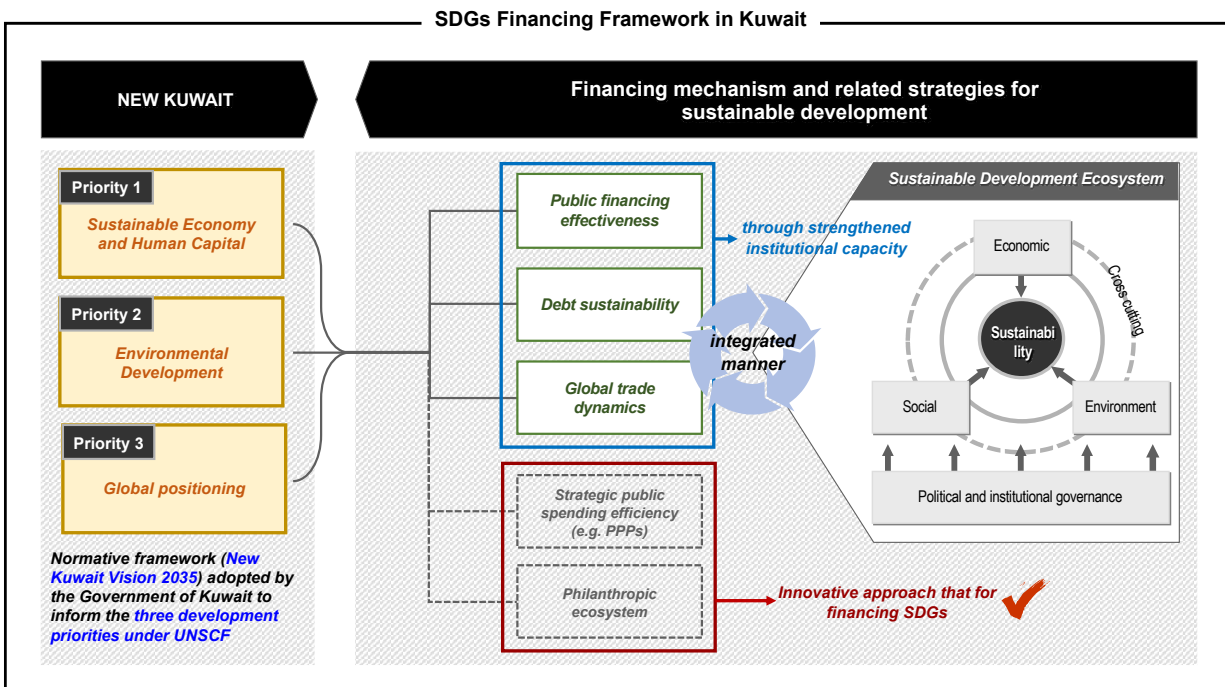


Figure 23 Proposed SDGs financing framework in Kuwait

### Opportunity to Leverage Kuwait's Philanthropic Ecosystem

Multiple charities, businesses, high wealth individuals and government bodies currently provide considerable financial support to compensate for the weak social protection and safety nets for non-citizens and those in need. Months into the pandemic, Kuwait established the Kuwait Relief Fund, which successfully raised funds totalling US\$177 million (Figure 24) based on a mix of government funding and private donors (75 per cent and 37 per cent respectively), which placed the fund among the highest funds raised per capita (US\$56) (Figure 25) in countries with similar funds. This is one area in which UNCT can provide further support to the GoK to help better plan and explore innovative and sustainable funding models and tools to fund unforeseen national emergencies in Kuwait. This will help the GoK better shape the philanthropy ecosystem and ensure better alignments with national priorities and how best to institutionalise and coordinate relief efforts to the most vulnerable in Kuwait, especially those that are not covered by the social safety net. Key enablers include rethinking and strengthening the existing operating model; governance; institutional set-up; laws and regulations; policies; advocacy and communication; performance system; and metrics for the various components of the ecosystem. **Most importantly, how to engage and expand the private sector contribution in the long term, create alignment and interlinkages with the private sector's various initiatives and corporate social responsibility agendas.**

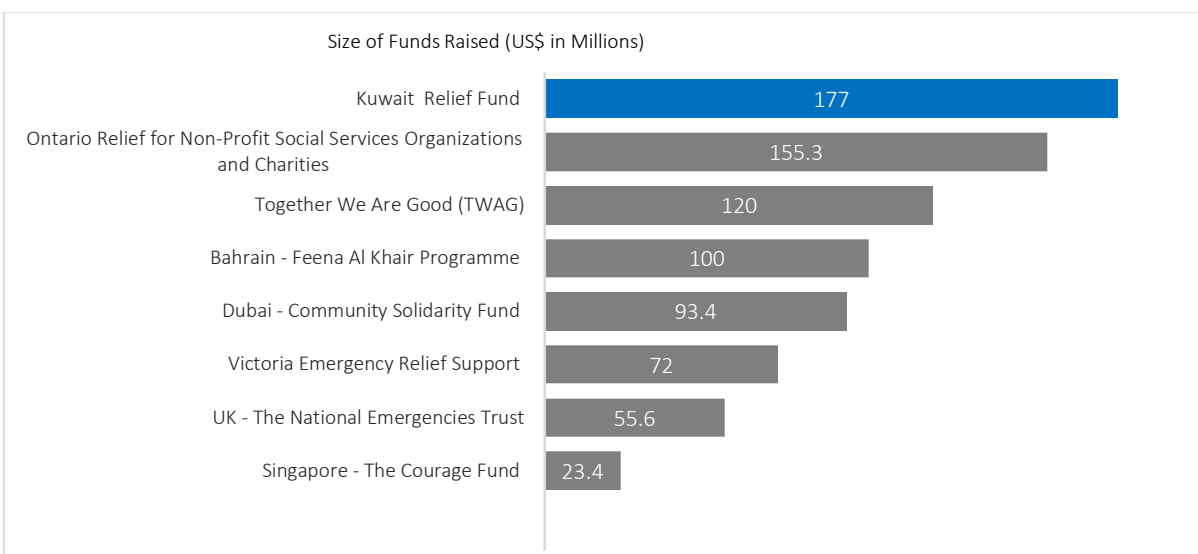


Figure 24. Kuwait Relief Fund compared to other funds that were set during the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020

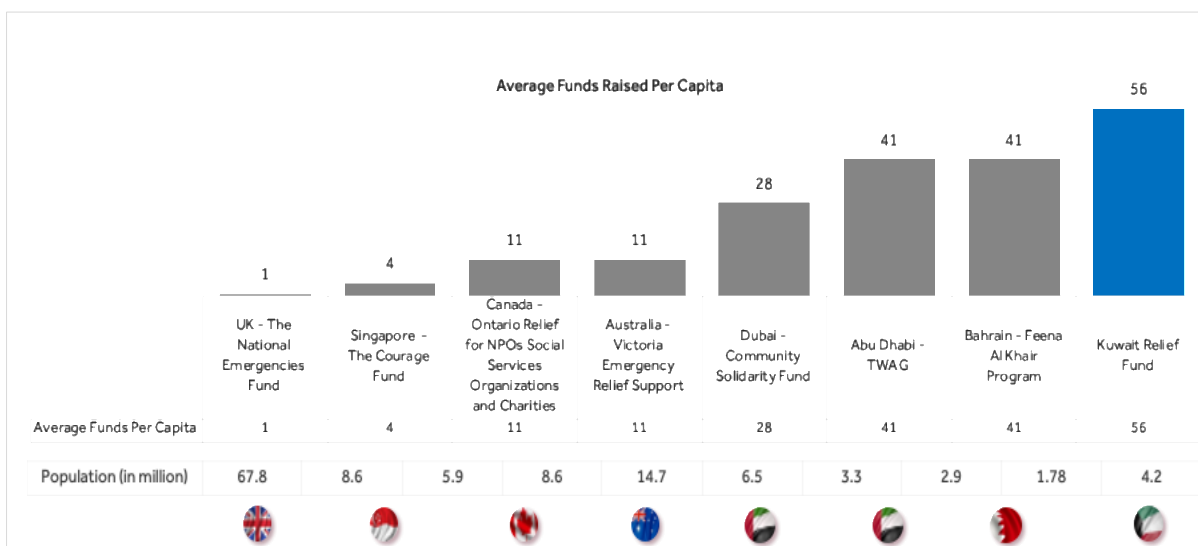


Figure 25. Average funds raised per capita where Kuwait ranked among the highest and most generous with an average funds raised per capita at US\$56.

**Partnership Strategy** will mainly include government agencies, while achieving a greater engagement of the private sector, civil society and the philanthropic sector. Due to a growing partnership landscape and challenges in donor economies, new stakeholders and innovative partnerships through development funds, multilateral agreements, PPPs, and philanthropists' engagement will need to be sought.

Appendix 13. "Stakeholders Mapping 2020-2021" provides the most recent partnership mapping that will serve as an initial baseline to support future partnerships and allows enough flexibility for the UNCT and the GoK to develop a joint resource mobilisation strategy with the private sector, other Funds, and

philanthropies. These new partnerships need to explore and promote government cost-sharing and stronger partnerships with the individual contributors and corporate partners that can leverage greater resource flows to Vision 2035, KNDP pillars and the achievements of the SDG priorities.

**Communication and Advocacy Strategy.** The UN Communication Group (UNCG) in Kuwait has been established in recognition of the need, value, and contribution of communications in achieving the UNCT outcomes and promoting the image of a strong and unified UN system in Kuwait. In addition to raising awareness and fostering understanding of the contribution of the UN towards the national development processes, well-coordinated and targeted internal and external communication and advocacy has the potential to enhance the positive visibility of the UN in Kuwait. The communication aspect is fundamental to implementing the UNCT Workplan, the SCF 2020-2025, and moving towards the Communicating as One implementation modality. Coherent and harmonised messages promote the vision of a united UN system, speaking with One Voice, which will, in turn, strengthen partnerships with key stakeholders, including partners and beneficiaries.

The overall objective of the UNCG is to enhance advocacy for Agenda 2030 and the implementation of the SDGs in Kuwait, while ensuring the three main cross-cutting issues (human-rights, gender, and climate change) are integrated into all the UNCT communication. The strategy also seeks to enhance national capacities and advocacy support for a more integrated planning and coordination.

## 9. Conclusion

The main objective of the Common Country Analysis (CCA) is to provide an independent, collective, integrated, forward-looking and evidence-based analysis (deep dive) of Kuwait's development system. The Kuwait 2021 CCA serves as a concise, inter-agency overview of Kuwait's standing in each dimension of sustainable development. The CCA adopts an overarching framework, the **"One UN Kuwait Approach: A Unified Framework of Sustainable Development Ecosystem,"** – which builds on and is a synthesis of evidence-based analysis in a multidimensional manner.

The CCA identifies the most critical development challenges currently affecting Kuwait's progress towards Agenda 2030, the Kuwait Vision 2030, and the KNDP 2020-2025. These development challenges can be summarised as follows: **(1) the political and institutional challenges** driven mostly by the ongoing political gridlock that is impeding major economic, institutional and structural reforms; **(2) The demographic challenge** due to the demographic dilemma, the youth bulge, the declining rate of fertility and aging population; **(3) The fiscal and institutional challenge** due to the heavy reliance on oil and high level of public expenditure on subsidies, in addition to the legislative restriction on debt issuance; **(4) the socioeconomic challenge** includes multiple areas: the education sector due to the poor quality of education outcomes, the slow pace of education reforms, the high reliance on expatriate teachers, the human capital formation, and the learning gap. The health sector due to the imbalance in the health workforce and reliance on expatriates, the heavy burden of non-communicable diseases, the hospital's capacity burden, and the vulnerability of low-income expatriates to access health services. The challenge

of social protection and the welfare system due to the inefficient and inequitable distribution of rentier welfare benefits. The labour market is affected by the heavy reliance on foreign labour, low productivity pattern, high unemployment among youth and high segmentation along sectoral, nationality and gender lines. The housing issues that are affecting young Kuwaitis due to the unsustainable housing and land provision, high land price, difficulty obtaining mortgages, and low supply levels; and **(5) the environmental and climate challenges** due to the negative impacts of climate change, especially in the various vital and environmental sectors such as human health, coastal areas, water resources, food and nutrition security, marine environments and fisheries, and lastly, the reliance of the energy sector most exclusively on oil products and natural gas.

**The CCA 2021 adopts an integrated approach to joint-programming for sustainable development and identifies strategic programming opportunities** for UNCT to support the GoK in further addressing its development challenges. These priorities revolve around five key themes: 1) socioeconomic resilience; 2) quality education, continuous learning and human capital; 3) health and wellbeing; 4) environment and climate; and, finally, 5) governance, partnerships, institutional strengthening, and global positioning – under the three outcomes of the UN-Kuwait Strategic Cooperation Framework 2022-2025.



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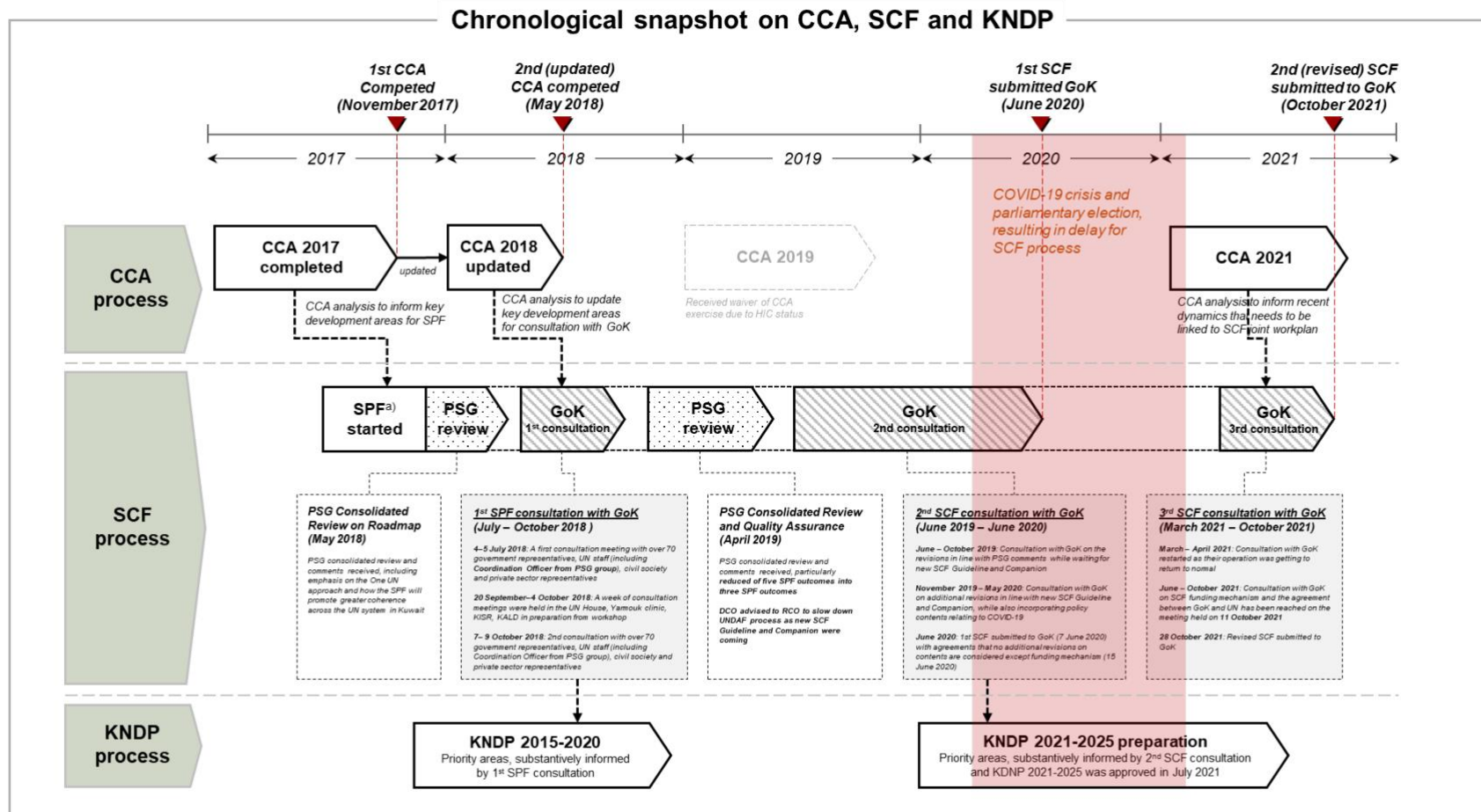
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## Appendices

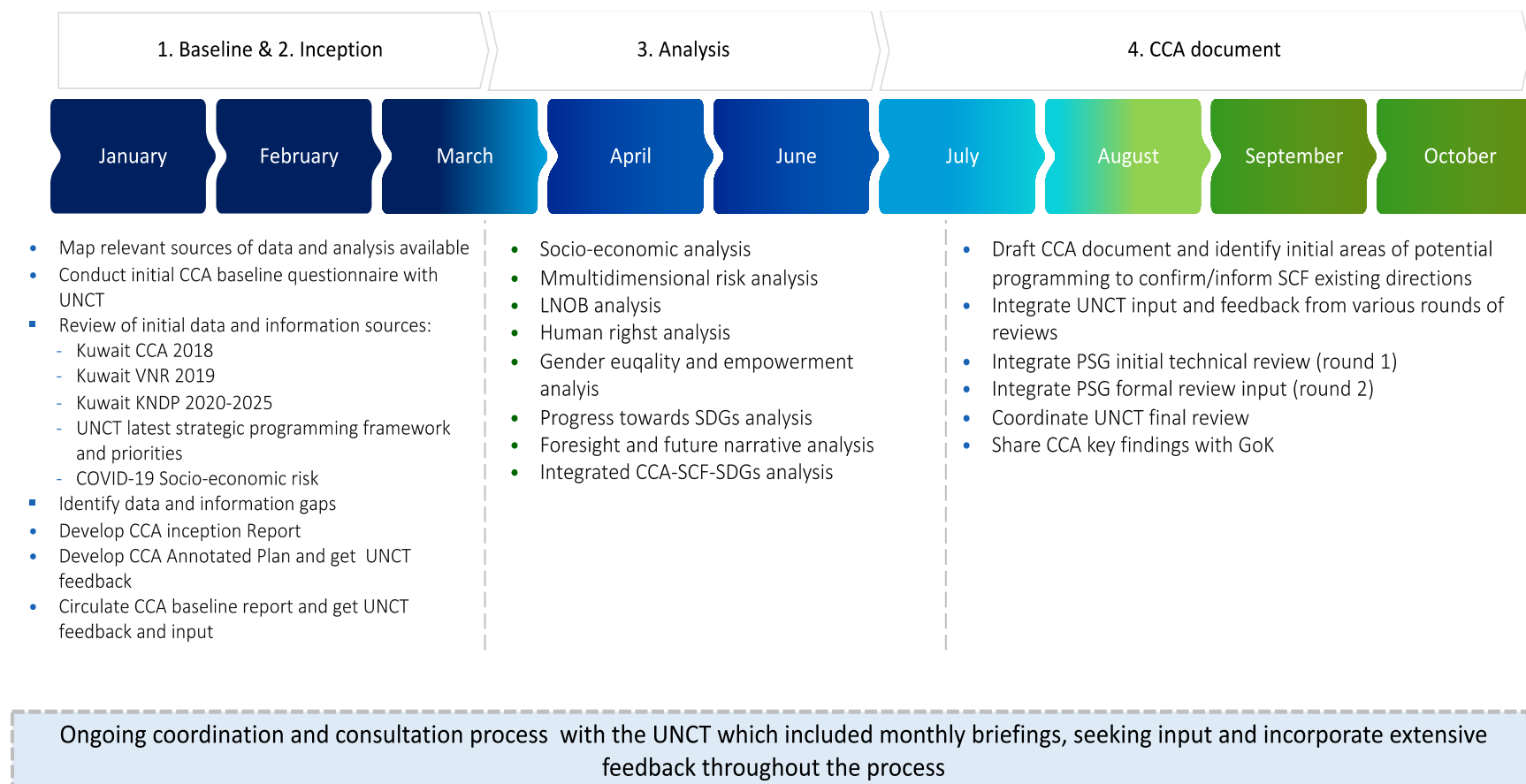
Appendix 1. Chronological snapshot on CCA, SCF and KNDP



<sup>a)</sup> SPF: Strategic Partnership Framework aligned with classical UNDAF guideline



Appendix 2. The CCA 2021 development approach was anchored around three stages while ensuring UNCT ongoing participation throughout the entire process



### Appendix 3. List of UN Agencies with input to the CCA

|            |  |
|------------|--|
| FAO        | Food and Agriculture Organization                                      |
| DPPA       | Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs                      |
| ILO        | International Labor Office   |
| IOM        | International Organization for Migration                               |
| OHCHR      | The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights                   |
| OMT        | UNCT Operations Management Team  |
| UN Habitat | United Nations Human Settlements Programme                             |
| UN Women   | United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women |
| UNCT       | United Nations Country Team  |
| UNDESA     | Department of Economic and Social Affairs                              |
| UNDG       | United Nations Development Group                                       |
| UNDOC      | United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime                               |
| UNDP       | United Nations Development Programme                                   |
| UNEP       | United Nations Environment   |
| UNESCO     | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization       |
| UNESCWA    | United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia         |
| UNFPA      | United Nations Population Fund   |
| UNHCR      | United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees                          |
| UNICEF     | United Nations Children's Fund   |
| UNIDO      | United Nations Industrial Development Organization                     |
| UNITAR     | United Nations Institute for Training and Research                     |
| UNOPS      | United Nations Office for Project Services                             |
| UNRC       | United Nations Resident Coordinator                                    |
| WFP        | World Food Programme   |
| WHO        | World Health Organization  |
| WB         | World Bank   |

## Appendix 4. Government of Kuwait Institutional framework for Agenda 2030 and SDGs

The Government of Kuwait has setup the institutional framework for steering the implementation of Agenda 2030 with the establishment of the National Steering Committee (NSDC), by a by a ministerial decision (decrees 21 and 29), in collaboration with the GSSCPD, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) and the Central Statistical Bureau (CSB). The aim of the Committee is to provide an overarching leadership and guidance for the orderly and participatory rolling-out of Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals in Kuwait. The Committee is chaired by GSSCPD<sup>150</sup>.

In addition to NSCD, a National Observatory on Sustainable Development and Anticipation of the Future (NOSD), was set up to play a further coordination and follow-up role among all partners. assumed the responsibility of preparing the first Kuwait Voluntary National Report (VNR). The NOSD participation offered the opportunity to build the technical, monitoring and coordination capacity of the Observatory leadership and staff in a way in which it would enable them to assume future reporting responsibilities throughout the implementation of the SDGs agenda. The setting up of NSDC and NOSD were part of an integrated effort by the Government of Kuwait to roll out the SDG agenda as a national and participatory undertaking.

Table 3. Composition of the National Steering Committee (NSDC) for Agenda 2030

| Government Entities                          |   |
|--|---|
| Ministry of Social Affairs                   | Ministry of Electricity and Water       |
| Ministry of Finance                          | Ministry of Education                   |
| Ministry of Foreign Affairs                  | Ministry of Interior                    |
| National Assembly                            | Public Authority of Manpower            |
| Ministry of Health                           | Public Authority for Food and nutrition |
| Ministry of Justice                          | Public Authority for Industry           |
| Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority | Public Authority for Housing Welfare    |
| Kuwait Environment public Authority          |   |
| Local and International Observer Partners    |   |
| State Audit Bureau                           |   |
| United Nations Development Program (UNDP)    |   |
| World Bank (WB)                              |   |
| Private Sector                               |   |
| Chamber of Trade and Commerce Kuwait         |   |
| Civil Society                                |   |
| Kuwait Environment Protection Society        |   |
| Kuwait Economic Society                      |   |
| Kuwait Society of Engineers                  |   |

<sup>150</sup> Kuwait Voluntary National Review Report 2019

Appendix 5. SDGs driven review of the KNPD 2020-2025 Programmes reveals low level of integrating the SDGs across the various programs

|        | Program # 2                     | Program # 3   | Program # 4                                      | Program # 5                                     | Program # 6                                | Program # 7                      | Program # 8                        |
|--------|---------------------------------|---|--|---|--|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
|        | Foster a dynamic private sector | Equip the people with the skills and incentives for future growth | Develop a transparent and synergistic government | Build a connected and integrated infrastructure | Build a livable and harmonious environment | Improve our health and wellbeing | Contribute to the global community |
| SDG 1  |                                 | 1   |  |   |  |                                  |                                    |
| SDG 2  |                                 |   |  |   |  | 1                                | 1                                  |
| SDG 3  |                                 |   |  |   |  | 7                                | 1                                  |
| SDG 4  | 1                               | 5   |  | 1   |  |                                  | 1                                  |
| SDG 5  | 2                               | 2   |  |   |  | 1                                |                                    |
| SDG 6  |                                 |   |  |   | 1  |                                  | 1                                  |
| SDG 7  | 1                               |   |  |   | 2  |                                  |                                    |
| SDG 8  | 5                               | 6   | 4  |   |  |                                  | 4                                  |
| SDG 9  | 6                               |   | 1  | 3   | 2  |                                  | 1                                  |
| SDG 10 | 1                               | 5   |  |   |  |                                  | 1                                  |
| SDG 11 |                                 |   |  | 3   | 3  | 2                                | 1                                  |
| SDG 12 | 1                               |   | 1  | 1   | 2  |                                  | 1                                  |
| SDG 13 |                                 |   |  |   | 2  |                                  | 1                                  |
| SDG 14 |                                 |   |  |   | 1  |                                  |                                    |
| SDG 15 |                                 |   |  |   |  |                                  | 1                                  |
| SDG 16 |                                 | 2   | 4  |   |  |                                  | 2                                  |
| SDG 17 | 3                               |   | 3  |   |  |                                  | 3                                  |

Level of Coverage of the SDGs within the KNPD Programs

High Medium Low

### Key Findings

- The initial analysis of the KNPD reveals that many programs and their respective policies contribute to the SDGs at the goal level. However, further investigation at the SDGs targets and KPIs level reveals weak integration.
- The least addressed SDGs are SDG 1, 2, 6, 14, and 15: considerable implications for vulnerable group's livelihoods, social safety net, the environment, and climate.

## Appendix 6. Snapshot of key risks areas

### Key Strengths

- Vast financial buffers offsetting low oil prices; the positive international position;
- Reforms efforts and improvements in economic diversification efforts;
- Low inflation environment;
- Tight living standards and low social discontent.

### Key Weaknesses

- High dependence on oil and government spending
- Low economic diversification efforts;
- Delays in parliament to pass the law on public debt,
- Continuous stalemate between the cabinet and the opposition-dominated legislative power;
- Slow-moving bureaucracy;
- high dependence on expatriate workers (70% of the population).

### High Risks

- ❑ **Political stability and risks:** and ongoing friction between the executive and legislative branches continues to lead to frequent cabinet reshuffles and parliamentary opposition to critical fiscal reforms remains a key challenge.

- ❑ **Economic stability and risks**  
The potential of a global recession that might result in prolonged stagnation where the international economic system will take time to recover from the shock of the pandemic, with revenues of companies very likely to see a noticeable dip.

- ❑ **Regional and cross-boundary tensions:** Regional political tensions and risk to affect negatively affect economic stability, FDI flows, tourism, opportunities for trade expansion, and regional partnership projects.

### Moderate Risks

- ❑ Risks of work disruption due to automation and future of work and life-long learning
- ❑ Risks posed on local agriculture, agribusiness as well as water security & Food security risks
- ❑ Risk of ongoing education disruption due to school closures
- ❑ Environment and climate risks
- ❑ Public health risks, nutrition and diet-related non-communicable diseases (NCDs)

## Appendix 7. Analytical presentation on climate action gaps

| Dimensions                   | Program/initiative   | Description   | Potential gap   |
|------------------------------|--|---|---|
| Efficient energy consumption | Research on updating the current desalination plants and next-generation desalination plants | Energy efficient plants, respectful of the environment and a higher capacity  | Lack of modern technologies in the desalination of the seawater, coupled with higher energy consumption in practice   |
|                              | SHABAKA initiative   | Aims to create a smart electricity grid and improve the management of energy resources and to facilitate the inclusion of distributed renewable energy into the energy mix  | Little to no use of renewable energy, challenged by a rise in energy demand, with little engagement from the private sector   |
|                              | TAQA initiative  | Increases the domestic production of renewable energy by exploring solar and wind energy sources  |   |
| Protecting the ecosystem     | Electronic environmental Monitoring Information System of Kuwait (eMISK) and Beatona         | eMISK aims at promoting and facilitating an information management system in support of policies and programs that enhance integrated coastal and ocean management, while the Beatona initiative aims to increase public awareness through sharing real-time environmental news and information | Insufficient amount of information and studies on the impact of the change in seawater temperature on the biodiversity and marine ecosystem, which has further been challenged by an absence of accurate data and comprehensive indicators responsive to environmental sustainability |
|                              | Technical capacity development on regional database  | Establishment of a regional database and information centre to support the fisheries management and aquaculture development, which aims at establishing a regional database and information centre to support the fisheries management and aquaculture development                              |   |
|                              | Coastal Information System (CIS)   | The system supports the protection of coastal zones and marine environments through the provision of coastal area information to planners and decisionmakers  |   |
|                              | The “Our Seas: Theories, Data, and Policies” symposium                                       | Highlighted the importance of human intervention regarding rising sea levels  | Inadequate control of grazing in natural reserved areas, intensified by low public awareness about the importance of natural reservation areas  |
|                              | Coastal Management Program   | Responsible for producing Integrated Coastal Zone Management  |   |
|                              | Fisheries farms  | Important step to adapt to climate change under the food security sector  |   |
|                              | Green belts projects and increasing protected areas  | Aims to adapt to the increase in dust storms<br>Plant areas with trees and shrubs of 50-180 km in length and 5-20 km in width   |   |
|                              | Building desalination plants   | In the process of protecting freshwater sources and to maintain ecological stability  | Less seriousness in practice regarding rising temperatures and climate change, which would require active engagement with the private sector (and its capital) and key stakeholders   |

| Dimensions                             | Program/initiative   | Description   | Potential gap   |
|--|--|---|---|
| Responsibility towards the environment | Education campaigns on household desalination                    | Teaches people in rural areas the “in-house water desalination techniques” at a low cost  | High per capita water consumption, which would require technical expertise from the concerned stakeholders  |
|  | Water conservation technologies                                  | Adaptation option designed to contribute to reducing water consumption by 20 per cent   |   |
|  | Water resources development and management program (WRDM)        | Identifies ways to optimise the use of water resources and management through applied research, which was designed to develop integrated water policies, management options, and action plans   | Challenges associated with water scarcity, security and resilience on the ground  |
|  | Wastewater Treatment and Reclamation Technologies program (WTRT) | Research on reclaiming and reusing Kuwait’s wastewater to utilise it for irrigation purposes  | Inadequate infrastructures networks and facilities to treat and transmit treated sewage effluent water  |
|  | MYAH initiative  | Aims to implement integrated water management resources practices and improve the sustainability of water use by identifying additional needs for wastewater treatment capacity and exploring new usage opportunities for treated water |   |
|  | TADWEER initiative   | Aims to leverage waste for reuse and energy production, and to reduce ecological and health risks posed by untreated waste and to improve the waste disposal and solid waste management processes                                       | Lack of environmentally responsible waste management practices in an integrated manner (prevention-sorting-recycling-recovery-reuse) with less engagement with the private sector |
|  | eMISK industry project   | Aims at establishing a national program for collecting an environmental inventory of industrial facilities.   |   |
|  | eMISK waste project  | Aims at finding and implementing a solution to manage the fleet of industrial liquid waste vehicles and organising the logistics process  |   |
| Climate conservation                   | Green spaces infrastructure                                      | Development of new varieties of crops that can adapt to high temperatures and have high resistance to salinity and drought  | Underdeveloped open spaces and need for more green spaces in the longer-term perspective  |
|  | Omniya plastic bottles recycle initiative                        | Aims to collect empty plastic bottles and recycle them instead of sending to landfills  | Lack of awareness about the importance of recycling at the individual and community level.  |

## Appendix 8. Analysis of human rights recommendations and alignment with SDGs and KNDP

| Summary of human rights recommendations<br>( from UPR 2020 and Treaty Bodies)  | SDGs                                       | Affected Vulnerable Groups  | Reflected in the KNDP 2020-2025   |
|--|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Promote economic development and raise the standard of living of the entire population</li> <li>- Promote and adopt social policies including affordable housing, education, health care and employment</li> <li>- Ensure that everyone, without discrimination is free to enjoy their economic rights unimpeded (CERD; CRPD; SR Disabilities; UPR)</li> </ul>  | <b>SDG 1.</b><br>No Poverty                | Entire population   | <b>x</b>  |
|  | <b>SDG 2.</b><br>Zero Hunger               |   |   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ensure equal access to education, health care and employment for the Bidoon population is enshrined in legislation</li> <li>- Increase access to healthcare, especially for women, children, elderly and persons with disabilities</li> <li>- Ensure that victims of domestic violence have access to medical and legal services</li> <li>- Abolish requirement for male guardian consent prior to providing medical treatment to a woman</li> <li>- Continue efforts to provide care for the elderly (CAT; CEDAW; CRPD; SR Disabilities; UPR)</li> </ul> | <b>SDG 3.</b><br>Good Health and Wellbeing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Bidoon</li> <li>- Women</li> <li>- Persons with disabilities</li> <li>- Elderly</li> </ul> | <u>Program # 7</u><br>Policy 7.1<br>Improve youth wellbeing by combatting substance use and road injuries and promoting sports<br><br>Policy # 7.1<br>Scale up the healthy cities initiative<br>And promote community development and individual wellbeing at the local level<br><u>Outcome</u><br>Improved wellness and active lifestyles<br><u>KPI</u><br>Youth overweight rate |



| Summary of human rights recommendations<br>( from UPR 2020 and Treaty Bodies)   | SDGs  | Affected Vulnerable Groups   | Reflected in the KNDP 2020-2025  |
|---|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ensure equal access to education, health care and employment for the Bidoon population is enshrined in legislation</li> <li>- Guarantee equal access to education, including children with disabilities and children of illegal residents</li> <li>- Redouble efforts for the total elimination of illiteracy</li> <li>- Continue to strengthen and update legislation relating to the right to education in line with international obligations (CERD; SR Disabilities; UPR)</li> </ul>   | <b>SDG 4</b><br>Quality Education                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Children of Bidoon</li> <li>- Children with disabilities</li> </ul>   | X  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Continue legislative and institutional efforts to promote equality between men and women</li> <li>- Streamline ongoing programs aimed at gender equality, particularly closing the gender gap in leadership positions, including the judiciary</li> <li>- Criminalise domestic violence with proportional penalties</li> <li>- Prevent early and forced marriages in compliance with international standards</li> <li>- Ensure that the ongoing review of domestic laws guarantees gender equality and the rights of women and girls (CEDAW; CCPR; UPR)</li> </ul> | <b>SDG 5</b><br>Gender Equality                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Women and girls</li> </ul>  | <u>Program 3</u><br>Policy # 3.8<br>Encourage the social, economic and political inclusion of youth, women and persons with disabilities and the elderly<br><u>Expected Outcome:</u><br>Inclusive social protection system<br><u>KPI</u><br>Gender Gap Index |
| n/a   | <b>SDG 6.</b><br>Clean Water and Sanitation           |  |  |
| n/a   | <b>SDG 7.</b><br>Affordable & clean energy            |  |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Continue efforts to completely abolish the kafala system</li> <li>- Enforce labour regulations and provide domestic workers equal rights</li> <li>- Enable effective inclusion of persons with disabilities in the workplace (CEDAW; SR Disabilities; UPR)</li> </ul>  | <b>SDG 8.</b><br>Decent Work and Economic Growth      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Migrant workers</li> <li>- Domestic workers</li> <li>- Persons with disabilities at the work place</li> </ul> | X  |
| n/a   | <b>SDG 9.</b><br>Industry, innovation, infrastructure |  |  |

| Summary of human rights recommendations<br>( from UPR 2020 and Treaty Bodies)  | SDGs  | Affected Vulnerable Groups   | Reflected in the KNDP 2020-2025 |
|--|---|--|---------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Take measure to implement the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities</li> <li>- Protect vulnerable groups from discrimination by ensuring access to legal redress</li> <li>- Provide equal rights to all Bidoon and process their nationality applications</li> <li>- Take measures to put an end to discrimination based on gender or sexual identity</li> <li>- Intensify efforts to promote the rights of women, children and persons with disabilities and migrants (CCPR; CRPD; UPR)</li> </ul> | <b>SDG 10.</b> Reduced Inequalities                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Persons with disabilities</li> <li>- Bidoon</li> <li>- Women and girls</li> <li>- Migrants</li> <li>- Children</li> </ul> | X                               |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Monitor accommodation conditions for migrant workers to ensure their right to adequate housing (CESCR)</li> </ul>   | <b>SDG 11.</b> Sustainable Cities and Communities   | Migrant workers  | X                               |
| n/a  | <b>SDG 12.</b> Responsible consumption & production |  |                                 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Find effective solutions to the exposure to air pollution and other environmental concerns (CERSC)</li> </ul>   | <b>SDG 13.</b> Climate Action                       | Entire society   | X                               |
| n/a  | <b>SDG 14.</b> Life below water                     |  |                                 |
| n/a  | <b>SDG 15.</b> Life on land                         |  |                                 |

| Summary of human rights recommendations<br>( from UPR 2020 and Treaty Bodies)  | SDGs   | Affected Vulnerable Groups  | Reflected in the KNDP 2020-2025   |
|--|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Fully operationalise the national human rights institution to ensure it complies with the Paris Principles, and continue to engage meaningfully with civil society</li> <li>- Strengthen the normative and institutional framework for the protection of human rights</li> <li>- Strengthen the independence of the national human rights institution</li> <li>- Finalise the creation of the national human rights institution in line with the Paris Principles</li> <li>- Ensure that all allegations of domestic violence are promptly investigated and prosecuted</li> <li>- Protect victims of trafficking by issuing residence permits on humanitarian grounds and holding perpetrators accountable</li> <li>- Adopt laws that protect documented and undocumented migrant workers from abuse and forced labour</li> <li>- Improve detention conditions and ensure compliance with the Nelson Mandela Rules</li> <li>- Increase undertakings towards the effectiveness of the recently created governmental human rights agencies<br/>(CAT; CERD; CEDAW; CCPR; SR Trafficking; WG DAW; UPR)</li> </ul> | <p><b>SDG 16.</b><br/>Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions</p> | <p>National Human Rights Institution (NHRI)</p> <p>Legal and institutional reform</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Civil society</li> <li>- Women and girls</li> <li>- Undocumented migrants</li> <li>- Detained persons</li> </ul> | X   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Promote regional and international cooperation with respect to human rights</li> <li>- Promote regional and international cooperation with respect to combating terrorism with respect to human rights</li> <li>- Increase international cooperation in combating trafficking<br/>(UPR)</li> </ul>  | <p><b>SDG 17.</b><br/>Partnerships for the Goals</p>             | <p>Entire society</p>   | X   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Prohibit discrimination based on disability in the Constitution and in Law No. 8/2010</li> <li>- Ensure that Bidoons enjoy their universal rights including freedom of movement</li> <li>- Ensure that everyone, including Bidoon, children, persons with disabilities, migrants exercise their rights<br/>(CRPR; CCPR; SR Disabilities, UPR)</li> </ul>  | <p><b>Leave No one Behind</b></p>                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Women and girls</li> <li>- Migrants</li> <li>- Bidoon</li> <li>- Children</li> <li>- Persons with disabilities</li> </ul>  | <p><u>Program # 3</u><br/>Policy # 3.9<br/>Rebalance the social protection system and transition to an integrated social safety net<br/><u>Expected Outcome:</u><br/>Inclusive social protection system<br/><u>KPI</u><br/>Gender Gap Index</p> |

#### Appendix 9. List of laws of relevance to women's empowerment<sup>151</sup>

- Nationality Law of 1959
- Penal Code of 1960
- The constitution of 1962
- Law No (79) of year 2015 on amending some articles of law No (21) of year 1962
- Law No (32) of year 1967 concerning the military
- Law No (2) Of year 1967 concerning the establishment of the National Guard
- Personal Status Act of 1984
- Decree of law No (23) of year 1990, Articles No (19 and 61)
- Law No (53) of year 2001, Article No (3)
- Law No (36) of year 1982 amended in law No (37) of year 2002
- Private Sector Labour Law No 6 of 2010
- Law on Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of 2013
- Child Law No 111 of 2015
- Law No 12 (2015) concerning the establishment of the Family Court
- Law No 68 of 2015 on domestic workers
- Kuwait Family Court Law (2015)
- Domestic Violence Law (2020) ([new](#))

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<sup>151</sup> Source: Kuwait VNR 2019

Appendix 10 Summary of key recommendations that have not been agreed or partly agreed by the GoK on women's rights and require further support in the latest UPR 2020.

| Human Rights Theme                                       | Recommendations to advance Women's Rights<br>(UPR and UN Treaty Bodies)  | GoK position        |
|--|--|---------------------|
| Ratification of & accession to international instruments | Ratify the Optional Protocols to the Convention against Torture and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women   | Noted               |
| Discrimination against women                             | Accelerate the law reform process, by repealing or amending all discriminatory provisions relating to marriage and family relations  | Noted               |
|  | Take further steps to repeal and abolish discriminatory laws, and guarantee to provide rights equally to all, in particular to women and children  | Noted               |
|  | Remove all gender-discriminatory provisions from the Nationality Law   | Noted               |
|  | Ensure equality between all citizens, both in law and in practice, regardless of gender, gender identity or sexual orientation   | Noted               |
|  | Amend or repeal the Personal Status Act in order to eliminate discrimination against women in areas relating to marriage and family relations  | Noted               |
|  | Reform the Kuwaiti nationality law of 1959 to grant women the right to pass their nationality on to their children   | Noted               |
|  | Review the personal status laws and the Nationality Act to eliminate all discrimination against women, including granting Kuwaiti women equal rights with men in passing on their nationality to their children                                    | Noted               |
| Violence against women                                   | Address all forms of discrimination and violence against women, including by promulgating effective laws to prevent, combat and criminalise domestic and gender-based violence, simultaneously with setting up a redress mechanism for the victims | Supported/<br>Noted |
|  | Ensure full equality between men and women and criminalise domestic violence   | Supported/<br>Noted |

| Human Rights Theme                             | Recommendations to advance Women's Rights<br>(UPR and UN Treaty Bodies)  | GoK position        |
|--|--|---------------------|
|  | Strengthen women's rights by amending the Nationality Law to ensure Kuwaiti women have equal rights with men to transmit citizenship and by beginning data collection on gender-based violence and ensuring access to justice for all victims, to include domestic workers | Noted               |
|  | Continue efforts towards equality between women and men and the fight against violence against women, by repealing article 182 of the Criminal Code and amending the Nationality Act in order to ensure gender equality in the transmission of nationality                 | Noted               |
|  | Abolish the provisions set out in articles 153 and 197 of the Criminal Code and create effective and independent complaint mechanisms for reporting sexual and domestic violence   | Supported/<br>Noted |
|  | Define as crimes domestic violence, sexual violence and marital rape, with penalties proportional to the seriousness of these offences   | Supported/<br>Noted |
| Rights related to marriage & family            | Continue advancing equality between men and women and guarantee women's equality in matters of divorce and inheritance   | Noted               |
|  | Raise the minimum legal age for marriage to 18 years   | Noted               |
| Rights related to name, identity & nationality | Carry out the necessary legal reforms so that Kuwaiti women can transmit their nationality to their descendants on an equal footing with men   | Noted               |

Appendix 11. List of International agreements and conventions (non-exhaustive)<sup>152</sup>

| Agency | Name of International Agreement/Convention   | Type of Agreement | National Counterpart | Ratification Status | Level of Implementation / Enforcement                   |
|--------|--|-------------------|----------------------|---------------------|---|
| OHCHR  | International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights   | UN Treaty         | NHRI                 | Ratified            | Partially Enforced as per CCPR/C/KWT/CO/3 (2016)        |
| OHCHR  | International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination  | UN Treaty         | NHRI                 | Ratified            | Partially Enforced as per CERD/C/KWT/CO/21-24 (2017)    |
| OHCHR  | International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights   | UN Treaty         | NHRI                 | Ratified            | Partially Enforced as per E/C.12/KWT/CO/2 (2013)        |
|        | Slavery Convention (amended, 1926)   |                   |                      |                     |   |
|        | Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others           |                   |                      |                     |   |
|        | Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery |                   |                      |                     |   |
|        | International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination  |                   |                      |                     |   |
| OHCHR  | Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women   | UN Treaty         | NHRI                 | Ratified            | Partially Enforced as per CEDAW/C/KWT/CO/5/Add.1 (2019) |
| OHCHR  | Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment                                 | UN Treaty         | NHRI                 | Ratified            | Partially Enforced as per CAT/C/KWT/CO/3 (2016)         |
| OHCHR  | Convention on the Rights of the Child  | UN Treaty         | NHRI                 | Ratified            | Partially Enforced as per CRC/C/KWT/CO/2 (2013)         |

<sup>152</sup> UNCT - CCA baseline survey questionnaire, April 2021

| Agency | Name of International Agreement/Convention   | Type of Agreement | National Counterpart | Ratification Status | Level of Implementation / Enforcement            |
|--------|--|-------------------|----------------------|---------------------|--|
| OHCHR  | Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities  | UN Treaty         | NHRI                 | Ratified            | Partially Enforced as per CRPD/C/KWT/CO/1 (2019) |
| OHCHR  | Optional Protocol to CRC on the involvement of children in armed conflict  | UN Treaty         | NHRI                 | Ratified            | Partially Enforced                               |
| OHCHR  | Optional Protocol to CRC on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography   | UN Treaty         | NHRI                 | Ratified            | Partially Enforced                               |
| OHCHR  | International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families  | UN Treaty         |                      | Not Ratified        | Not enforced                                     |
| OHCHR  | Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance   | UN Treaty         |                      | Not Ratified        | Not enforced                                     |
| OHCHR  | Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights aiming to the abolition of the death penalty  | UN Treaty         |                      | Not Ratified        | Not enforced                                     |
| OHCHR  | Optional Protocol of the Convention against Torture  | UN Treaty         |                      | Not Ratified        | Not enforced                                     |
| OHCHR  | Interstate communication procedure under the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance  | UN Treaty         |                      | Not Ratified        | Not enforced                                     |
| OHCHR  | Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, ratified pursuant to Act no. 5 (2006), enacted 27 March 2006. |                   |                      | Ratified            |  |
| UNHCR  | 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 protocol   | UN Convention     | Government of Kuwait | Not Ratified        | Not Enforced                                     |
| UNHCR  | Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness   | UN Convention     | Government of Kuwait | Not Ratified        | Not Enforced                                     |



| Agency | Name of International Agreement/Convention  | Type of Agreement             | National Counterpart         | Ratification Status | Level of Implementation / Enforcement |
|--------|---|-------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------------------|
| UNHCR  | Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment        | UN Convention                 | Government of Kuwait         | Ratified            | Fully Enforced                        |
| ILO    | C029 - Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29)  | International Law & Standards | Public Authority of Manpower | Ratified            | Partially Enforced                    |
| ILO    | C087 - Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87) | International Law & Standards | Public Authority of Manpower | Ratified            | Partially Enforced                    |
| ILO    | C098 - Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98)                    | International Law & Standards | Public Authority of Manpower | Ratified            | Partially Enforced                    |
| ILO    | C105 - Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105)                                    | International Law & Standards | Public Authority of Manpower | Ratified            | Partially Enforced                    |
| ILO    | C111 - Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111)                    | International Law & Standards | Public Authority of Manpower | Ratified            | Partially Enforced                    |
| ILO    | C081 - Labour Inspection Convention, 1947 (No. 81)  | International Law & Standards | Public Authority of Manpower | Ratified            | Partially Enforced                    |
| ILO    | C144 - Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976 (No. 144)      | International Law & Standards | Public Authority of Manpower | Ratified            | Partially Enforced                    |
| IOM    | Global Compact on Migration   | Multi-lateral Agreement       | Ministry of Foreign Affairs  | Not Ratified        | Partially Enforced                    |
| ILO    | Convention 138 - Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (no. 138)   | International Law & Standards | Public Authority of Manpower | Ratified            |                                       |
| FAO    | Agreement on Port State Measures (PSMA)   | Multi-lateral Agreement       | None                         | Not Ratified        | Not Enforced                          |
| UNESCO | Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in           |                               | MoE                          | Ratified            |                                       |

| Agency | Name of International Agreement/Convention  | Type of Agreement | National Counterpart | Ratification Status | Level of Implementation / Enforcement |
|--------|---|-------------------|----------------------|---------------------|---------------------------------------|
|        | the Arab States. Paris, 22 December 1978.A3:F19   |                   |                      |                     |                                       |
| UNESCO | UNESCO's 1974 Recommendation concerning Education for International Understanding, Co-operation and Peace and Education relating to Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms |                   | MoE                  |                     |                                       |
| UNESCO | Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education  |                   | MoE                  | Ratified            |                                       |
| UNESCO | Convention on Technical and Vocational Education. Paris, 10 November 1989.  | Convention        | NCCAL                | Ratified            |                                       |
| UNESCO | Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in the Arab States. Paris, 22 December 1978.   |                   | MoE                  | Ratified            |                                       |
| UNESCO | Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, UNESCO 16 November 1972  | Convention        | NCCAL                | Ratified            |                                       |
| UNESCO | Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, UNESCO 2005  | Convention        | NCCAL                | Accession           |                                       |
| UNESCO | Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict with Regulations for the Execution of the Convention. The Hague, 14 May 1954.           | Convention        | NCCAL                | Accession           |                                       |
| UNESCO | Protocol to the Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict. The Hague, 14 May 1954.  | Protocol          | NCCAL                | Accession           |                                       |
| UNESCO | Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property. Paris, 14 November 1970.                 | Convention        | NCCAL                | Acceptance          |                                       |

| Agency   | Name of International Agreement/Convention  | Type of Agreement             | National Counterpart | Ratification Status | Level of Implementation / Enforcement |
|----------|---|-------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|---------------------------------------|
| UNESCO   | Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage. Paris, 2 November 2001.   | Convention                    | NCCAL                | Ratified            |                                       |
| UNESCO   | Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. Paris, 17 October 2003.  | Convention                    | NCCAL                | Ratified            |                                       |
| UNESCO   | 1960 Convention against Discrimination in Education   | convention                    |                      | Acceptance          |                                       |
| UNESCO   | International Convention against Doping in Sport. Paris, 19 October 2005  | Convention                    |                      | Acceptance          |                                       |
| UNICEF   | UN Convention on the Rights on the Child, including reservations for Article 7 and 21; Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and Child Pornography | Convention                    |                      | Ratified            |                                       |
|          | Convention concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour, 1999 (no. 182)   | convention                    |                      | Ratified            |                                       |
| UN WOMEN | Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)  | UN Convention                 | MOFA / GSSCPD        | Ratified            | Partially Enforced                    |
| UN WOMEN | Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action   | International Law & Standards | MOFA / GSSCPD        | Ratified            | Partially Enforced                    |
| UNV      | UN Volunteers Strategic Framework 2018-2021   | UN Convention                 | N/A                  | Ratified            | Fully Enforced                        |
| UNV      | General Assembly resolution 70/1, "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", 25 September 2015  | UN Convention                 | N/A                  | Ratified            | Fully Enforced                        |
| UNV      | General Assembly resolution 70/129, "Integrating volunteering into peace and development: the plan of action for the next decade and beyond", 17 December 2015              | UN Convention                 | N/A                  | Ratified            | Fully Enforced                        |

| Agency | Name of International Agreement/Convention   | Type of Agreement             | National Counterpart | Ratification Status | Level of Implementation / Enforcement |
|--------|--|-------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|---------------------------------------|
| UNV    | General Assembly resolution 71/243, "Quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system", 21 December 2016 | UN Convention                 | N/A                  | Ratified            | Fully Enforced                        |
| UNV    | ILO manual on the measurement of volunteer work  | International Law & Standards | N/A                  | Ratified            | Fully Enforced                        |
| UNDP   | UN Convention Against Corruption - 2003  | UN Convention                 | Nazaha/GSSCPD        | Ratified            |                                       |
| UNDP   | CESCR - International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights - 1996  |                               | MOFA/GSSCPD          | Ratified            |                                       |
| UNDP   | UNFCCC - United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change - 1995  | Framework Convention          | KEPA/MOFA/GSSCPD     | Ratified            |                                       |
| UNEP   | Basel Convention   | Multi-lateral Agreement       | EPA                  | Ratified            |                                       |
| UNEP   | Cartagena protocol   | Multi-lateral Agreement       | EPA                  | Ratified            |                                       |
| UNEP   | Convention on Biodiversity   | Multi-lateral Agreement       | EPA                  | Ratified            | Fully Enforced                        |
| UNEP   | Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)  | Multi-lateral Agreement       | EPA                  | Ratified            | Fully Enforced                        |
| UNEP   | Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change  | Protocol                      | EPA                  | Accession           |                                       |
| UNEP   | Minamata Convention on Mercury   | Multi-lateral Agreement       | EPA                  | Ratified            |                                       |
| UNEP   | Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer   | Protocol                      | EPA                  | Accession           | Fully Enforced                        |
| UNEP   | Paris Agreement  | Agreement                     | EPA                  | Ratified            |                                       |

| Agency | Name of International Agreement/Convention   | Type of Agreement       | National Counterpart | Ratification Status | Level of Implementation / Enforcement |
|--------|--|-------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|---------------------------------------|
| UNEP   | The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance Especially as Waterfowl Habitat                                      | Multi-lateral Agreement | EPA                  | Accession           |                                       |
| UNEP   | Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade | Convention              | EPA                  | Ratified            |                                       |
| UNEP   | Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutions (POPs)   | Multi-lateral Agreement | EPA                  | Ratified            |                                       |
| UNEP   | United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification  | Multi-lateral Agreement | EPA                  | Ratified            |                                       |
| UNEP   | United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change  | Multi-lateral Agreement | EPA                  | Accession           | Partially Enforced                    |
| UNEP   | United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea  | Multi-lateral Agreement | EPA                  | Ratified            |                                       |
| UNEP   | Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer  | Convention              | EPA                  | Accession           | Fully Enforced                        |

## Appendix 12. Initial List of Public Sector Stakeholders in Kuwait

### List of Public Sector Stakeholders<sup>153</sup> (*non-exhaustive*)

|        |   |
|--------|---|
| CoM-GS | Council of Ministers General Secretariat                                |
| CSB    | Central Statistics Bureau   |
| EPA    | Environment Public Authority  |
| GPFA   | Government Performance Follow-up Agency                                 |
| GSSCPD | General Secretariat of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development |
| KACA   | Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority  |
| KCCA   | Kuwait Chamber of Commerce & Industry                                   |
| KFAS   | Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences                       |
| KISR   | Kuwait Institute for Science Research                                   |
| KMun   | Kuwait Municipality   |
| KNA    | Kuwait National Assembly  |
| KPA    | Kuwait Port Authority   |
| KPPC   | Kuwait Public Policy Centre   |
| KU     | Kuwait University   |
| MoA    | Ministry of Agriculture   |
| MoAIA  | Ministry of <i>Awqaf</i> and Islamic Affairs                            |
| MoCI   | Ministry of Commerce and Industry                                       |
| MoE    | Ministry of Education   |
| MoEW   | Ministry of Electricity and Water                                       |
| MoF    | Ministry of Finance   |
| MoFA   | Ministry of Foreign Affairs   |
| MoH    | Ministry of Health  |
| MoHE   | Ministry of Higher Education  |
| Mol    | Ministry of Interior  |
| MoJ    | Ministry of Justice   |

<sup>153</sup> <https://www.e.gov.kw/sites/kgenglish/Pages/OtherTopics/KGD.aspx>

**List of Public Sector Stakeholders<sup>153</sup> (non-exhaustive)**

|       |   |
|-------|---|
| MoO   | Ministry of Oil                                     |
| MoSAL | Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor                |
| MoSY  | Ministry of State for Youth Affairs                 |
| NCCAL | National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters      |
| NCED  | National Center for Educational Development         |
| PAAET | Public Authority For Applied Education and Training |
| PAAF  | Public Authority For Agriculture and Fish Resources |
| PADA  | Public Authority for Disabled                       |
| PAM   | Public Authority For Manpower                       |
| PAS   | Public Authority for Sports                         |
| YPA   | Youth Public Authority                              |

**Appendix 13. UNCT Kuwait Stakeholders Mapping 2020 - 2021**

| FAO  | Affiliation                        | How influencer? And in what fields? | Beneficial areas for the UNCT | Type of existing partnership if any |
|--|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <u>Partners/contacts in PAAF</u>   | Government                         | Agriculture                         | CF; Programmes delivery       | Other                               |
| <u>Potential partners</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- IICO (International Islamic Charitable Org)</li> <li>- Direct Aid</li> <li>- Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED)</li> <li>- Kuwait Red Crescent</li> <li>- Zakat Fund</li> <li>- MOFA</li> <li>- Ministry of Information</li> </ul> | Governmental and Semi-Governmental | Government, development affairs     | Other                         | Other                               |

| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- National Bank of Kuwait</li> <li>- Al-Ahli Bank</li> <li>- Gulf Bank</li> <li>- CBK</li> </ul>  | Banks  | Financial                              | Other   | N/A   |
|--|--|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Chalhoub Group</li> <li>- Al-Tayer Group</li> <li>- Al-Shaya Group</li> <li>- Gulf Marketing Group</li> <li>- IGGCO</li> <li>- Agility</li> <li>- Careem</li> <li>- Al-Ghanim Group</li> <li>- Al-Kharafi Group</li> <li>- Azadea Group</li> <li>- Al-Sater Group</li> <li>- Easa Husain Al-Yousif</li> <li>- Gulf Catering Co</li> <li>- Mezzan Holding</li> <li>- Al-Mulla Group</li> <li>- Kuwait Financial Center</li> <li>- GTC</li> <li>- Al-Homaizi Group</li> </ul> | Private Sector   | Agriculture, food, development sectors | Other   | N/A   |
| UNV  | Affiliation  | How influencer? And in what fields?    | Beneficial areas for the UNCT   | Type of existing partnership if any   |
| Ministry of State for Youth Affairs, Youth Public Authority (YPA)  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Government</li> </ul> | Volunteering, Youth                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In Cooperation Framework (on human capital and skills development through volunteering)</li> </ul> | <p>In coordination with Ministry of Youth, through UNDP, UNV conducted trainings for civil society organisations engaged on</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>volunteering in health emergencies (in 2020) and</li> <li>evaluating volunteering contribution to development (in 2018)</li> </ol> |



|  |  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|--|
|  |  |  |  | In 2018, UNV had also held discussions with Ministry of Youth, Youth Public Authority (through UNDP) on a proposal to help develop volunteering strategy |
|--|--|--|--|--|

| UNICEF                         | Affiliation | How influencer? And in what fields?                                       | Beneficial areas for the UNCT          | Type of existing partnership if any   |
|--------------------------------|-------------|---|--|---|
| Ministry of Education          | Government  | Child rights (Education)  | Cooperation Framework Program delivery | Joint planning of programs is ongoing – waiting for SCF to be signed  |
| Ministry of Youth              | Government  | Child rights (Youth Empowerment and Employment)<br>Child rights           | Cooperation Framework Program delivery | Joint planning of programs is ongoing – waiting for SCF to be signed  |
| Ministry of Health             | Government  | Child rights (Child protection and mother & child health)                 | Cooperation Framework Program delivery | Joint planning of programs is ongoing – waiting for SCF to be signed  |
| Ministry of Social Affairs     | Government  | Child rights (Child Protection and Early Childhood Development)           | Cooperation Framework Program delivery | Joint planning of programs is ongoing – waiting for SCF to be signed  |
| KFAS Academy                   | Private/    | Child rights (Education, MHPSS support to parents, teachers and children) | Cooperation Framework Program delivery | UNICEF has MOU with KFAS Academy – exchange of materials and support to parent/teacher platform for online learning |
| Public Authority for Nutrition | Government  | Child rights (Nutrition, Health and Early Childhood development)          | Cooperation Framework Program delivery | Joint planning of programs is ongoing – waiting for SCF to be signed  |

| UNICEF  | Affiliation | How influencer? And in what fields?   | Beneficial areas for the UNCT             | Type of existing partnership if any                                  |
|---|-------------|---|---|--|
| Kuwait Commission for Education, Art and Sciences | Government  | Child Rights (Education, Child protection, MHPSS)                                   | Cooperation Framework<br>Program delivery | Joint planning of programs is ongoing – waiting for SCF to be signed |
| EU  | Embassy     | Child rights (Education, child protection, early childhood development)             | Joint advocacy and joint events           | Joint advocacy   |
| Bareec  | NGO         | Child Rights (Mental Health and Psychosocial Support, Education)                    | Cooperation Framework<br>Program delivery | Joint events   |
| ENARA   | NGO         | Child Rights (education, disabilities, Mental Health and Psychosocial Support)      | Cooperation Framework<br>Program delivery | Joint events   |
| Kuwait University                                 | Private     | Child Rights (Education, Youth Empowerment, Mental Health and Psychosocial Support) | Cooperation Framework<br>Program delivery | Joint events   |
| KAFO  | NGO         | Child Rights (Mental Health and Psychosocial Support)                               | Cooperation Framework<br>Program delivery | Joint events   |

| UNFP   | Affiliation   | How influencer? And in what fields?   | Beneficial areas for the UNCT  | Type of existing partnership if any  |
|--|---|---|--|--|
| Mr. Nasser Alshaikh<br>Youth Development Sector-<br>Research and Development  <br>Telephone: +965 22050873<br>Ministry of State of youth Affairs | Government<br><br>Head of research<br><br>Ministry of State for Youth Affairs | Government<br><br>Gender, Youth & Adolescent health, Population Development | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In cooperation Framework,</li> <li>• Programmes delivery</li> <li>• Program Delivery</li> </ul> | <p>In 2018 UNFPA GCC provided TA to the ministry for developing the national youth policy of Kuwait.</p> <p>Previous partnership through a UNDP UNFPA joint project in 2018 on youth development</p> |
| H.E Lulwa Saleh Al Mulla<br>Chairperson<br>Women's Cultural and Social Society   | CSO   | Women empowerment, Gender Issues, and Women health                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocacy</li> <li>• Programmes delivery</li> </ul>  | The Society works on Gender issues and advocate for women empowerment. They  |

| UNFP  | Affiliation  | How influencer? And in what fields?  | Beneficial areas for the UNCT   | Type of existing partnership if any   |
|---|--|--|---|---|
|   |  |  |   | delegated participant for the Nairobi Summit on ICPD.<br><br>Participating at ICPD25, Commitment to ICPD 25 Agenda<br>Potential partner for future programmes                     |
| Ms. Alia Faisal Humoud Zaid Al-Khaled                     | Private sector Influencer  | Social Influencer, Journalist, Columnist in Al-Anbaa newspaper   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advocacy</li> </ul>  | Ms. Alia is a social influencer who advocates to mainstream women equality in all domains. In 2019, UNFPA GCC office facilitated her participation at the Nairobi summit on ICPD. |
| HE. Dr. Khaled Mahdi GSSCPD                               | Government Secretary-General of The Supreme Council for Planning & Development | <p>H.E Dr. Khaled is a member of several government boards and high-level committees, such as Kuwait Institute for Scientific Researches, Kuwait Masterplan 2040 and many others.</p> <p>Statistics, population, national planning</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In Cooperation Framework</li> <li>Programmes delivery</li> </ul> | UNFPA GCC had previous co-operation with GSSCPD in one to one meetings with Mr. Mahdi. A proposal of co-operation was submitted in 2019 accordingly.                              |
| Ms. Salwa Al Sakran<br>Board Member<br>Kuwait Labor Union | Government<br>Kuwait Labour Union  | <p>Ms. Salwa is the head of the gender equality unit at the Kuwait Labor Union</p> <p>Women empowerment, gender equality</p>   | <p>-In cooperation frameworks</p> <p>-Advocacy</p>  | <p>Strong advocate for women empowerment and the mandates of UNFPA.</p> <p>Participating in several CB activities held by UNFPA</p>   |

| UNFP  | Affiliation  | How influencer? And in what fields?                        | Beneficial areas for the UNCT           | Type of existing partnership if any   |
|---|--|--|---|---|
|   |  |  |   | Advocate before and post- ICPD 25 – Nairobi summit                                      |
| Dr. Nadia Al Hamdan   | The head of family consultancy centre at the University of Kuwait.                                     |  | -In cooperation frameworks<br>-Advocacy |   |
| Ms. Nevein Yosry  | The Head of International Relations at Kuwait Red Crescent Society Project and operation coordination. |  | -In cooperation frameworks<br>-Advocacy |   |
| Ms. Dina Al Qady,<br>Head of the Women centre<br>University of Kuwait                   | Academia   | Gender equality, GBV                                       | Advocacy                                | Member of UNFPA contact list who received updates, statements and newsletters regularly |
| Dr. Badr Mal Allah<br>Director<br>General Arab Planning Institute<br><br>api@api.org.kw | Regional Organisation  | Population and Development,<br>Youth development, planning | Advocacy                                |   |

| ILO                           | Affiliation   | How influencer? And in what fields?  | Beneficial areas for the UNCT   | Type of existing partnership if any   |
|-------------------------------|---|--|---|---|
| Public Authority for Manpower | Government entity regulating economic opportunities for national and foreign labour workforce | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• International Relations Department that facilitates dialogue with countries of origin</li> <li>• Supervising and registering the workforce in the private and oil sectors</li> <li>• Establishing procedures for trade unions and employers federations</li> <li>• Issuing regulations on the rules and procedures for granting work permissions</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government tripartite constituent</li> <li>• Direct implementation of Decent Work Country Programme</li> </ul> <p>Various departments such as labour inspection and monitoring and evaluation jointly working towards creating a productive work environment</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decent Work Country Programme signed in December 2018 between the government of Kuwait and International Labour Organization</li> <li>• Full involvement in planning and strategy of programmatic activities and events</li> </ul> |

| ILO   | Affiliation  | How influencer? And in what fields?  | Beneficial areas for the UNCT  | Type of existing partnership if any  |
|---|--|--|--|--|
|   |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supervising nationals working abroad or within international entities</li> <li>• Monitoring the entry of expatriate workers</li> </ul> <p>Domestic Work Department and Labour Relations Department are in direct communication with migrant communities who have been extended the agency to access justice</p>   |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Member of tripartite structure of constituents</li> </ul>   |
| General Secretariat of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development | Government entity supervising Decent Work Country Programme progress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participate in developing future policies, identifying country's development-related directions and improve relevant areas and linking education outcome to development process</li> <li>• Propose appropriate ways and mechanisms to ensure successiveness of the development plans</li> <li>• Link developmental projects to the government's programme of action in order to identify the country's targets of the economic path according to a timeline</li> <li>• Making recommendations to enhance complementarity of both the public and private sectors towards achieving overarching development goals</li> <li>• Develop perspectives on how to improve the government's</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supervisory role in relation to Decent Work Country Programme implementation</li> <li>• Allocation of programmatic funds and regular budgetary follow-up</li> <li>• Hosting frequent project board meetings to go over progress</li> </ul> <p>Linking the UN work plans to national development plans</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decent Work Country Programme signed in December 2018 between the government of Kuwait and International Labour Organization</li> </ul> |

| ILO                                     | Affiliation                                  | How influencer? And in what fields?   | Beneficial areas for the UNCT   | Type of existing partnership if any  |
|---|--|---|---|--|
|   |  | <p>programme of action and identify the mechanisms necessary for implementation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Upgrade the executive competencies of existing systems and monitor their work through regular reporting to the Council of Ministers</li> </ul> <p>Monitor the execution of major national projects, review relevant proposals and report on the same</p> |   |  |
| Kuwait Trade Union Federation           | Trade unions for private and public sectors  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Representative body for private and public sector trade unions</li> </ul> <p>Formulating strategies to improve governance of migrant communities and foreign labour</p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tripartite constituent representing workers</li> <li>• Direct implementation of Decent Work Country Programme</li> </ul> <p>Hosting of meetings, events and workshops related to such topics as abolition of the sponsorship system and setting a strategic work plan for the promotion of the interests of expatriate workers in Kuwait</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decent Work Country Programme signed in December 2018 between the government of Kuwait and International Labour Organization</li> </ul> <p>Member of tripartite structure of constituents</p> |
| Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry | Private sector entity representing employers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Representing employer interests and business establishments in the Decent Work Country Programme</li> <li>• Organising commercial and industrial interests and defending them</li> <li>• Gathering information and statistics on commerce and industry</li> </ul> <p>Voicing opinions and suggestions on matters related</p>                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tripartite constituent representing employers</li> </ul> <p>Direct implementation of Decent Work Country Programme</p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decent Work Country Programme signed in December 2018 between the government of Kuwait and ILO</li> </ul> <p>Member of tripartite structure of constituents</p>                               |

| ILO   | Affiliation   | How influencer? And in what fields?   | Beneficial areas for the UNCT  | Type of existing partnership if any   |
|---|---|---|--|---|
|   |   | to economic affairs in the country  |  |   |
| Ministry of Interior  | Government entity maintaining stability and security within the state | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public security, law and order as well as upholding state values</li> <li>Possesses a heightened awareness of labour migration statistical facts and issues manifesting in the country</li> <li>Deals with due diligence related to presence of migrant workers</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regulatory frameworks governing movements and livelihoods of migrant workers</li> </ul> <p>Working in collaboration with various United Nations agencies to promote legal labour migration channels that realise fair work</p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Decent Work Country Programme signed in December 2018 between the government of Kuwait and ILO</li> </ul>  |
| Ministry of Foreign Affairs   | Government entity facilitating international relations                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Handles international relations between Kuwait, other states and intergovernmental organisations</li> <li>Opening recruitment corridors to enhance tripartism and social dialogue between all parties involved</li> <li>Represents the state in discussions with countries of origin for migrant and domestic workers</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regulatory frameworks governing smooth entry of migrant workers from countries of origin</li> <li>Promotion of diplomatic relations with countries of origin</li> </ul> <p>Working in collaboration with various United Nations agencies to promote the Strategic Cooperation Framework</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Kuwait has ratified nineteen International Labour Organization conventions including seven of eight fundamental conventions</li> <li>Kuwait is a donor to the ILO Regional Office for the Arab States</li> </ul> |
| Ministry of Justice and Kuwait Institute for Judicial and Legal Studies | Judicial entities working on the maintenance of justice               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leading on dispute prevention and resolution mechanisms and enhancing access to justice</li> <li>Working on issues related to nationals and migrant workers in the country</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Executive decision-making body for justice and dispute resolution</li> <li>Mediatory role in assessing legal conflicts</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Decent Work Country Programme signed in December 2018 between the government of Kuwait and ILO</li> </ul>  |

| OCHA                                      | Affiliation                | How influencer? And in what fields? | Beneficial areas for the UNCT  | Type of existing partnership if any |
|---|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|
| Ministry of Foreign Affairs               | Government                 | International Relations             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Implementing partners under international positioning pillar in SCF</li> <li>- Main governmental body for MOUs with UN agencies</li> </ul>                      | Existing MOU with UN agencies       |
| International Red Crescent Society/ IICO  | International Organization | Humanitarian Aid                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Capacity Development programmes can be offered to staff on humanitarian related areas such as needs assessment, information management, coordination</li> </ul> |                                     |
| Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development | Government                 | Aid and Development                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Implementing partner under international positioning pillar in SCF</li> </ul>   |                                     |

| UN Women   | Affiliation | How influencer? And in what fields?     | Beneficial areas for the UNCT  | Type of existing partnership if any |
|--|-------------|---|--|-------------------------------------|
| General Secretariat of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development                    | Government  | National development                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Coordination of national development</li> </ul>                                   | - N/A                               |
| Dr. Lubna Al-Kadhi, Director of the Women's Research and Studies Centre, Kuwait University | Academia    | Gender equality and women's empowerment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- programmes delivery</li> <li>- advocacy</li> <li>- social mobilisation</li> </ul> | - N/A currently                     |

| UNHCR                       | Affiliation  | How influencer? And in what fields? | Beneficial areas for the UNCT | Type of existing partnership if any   |
|-----------------------------|--------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|---|
| Ministry of Foreign Affairs | - Government | Government                          | advocacy /sponsoring          | - Office and Cooperation Agreement between UNHCR and the State of Kuwait 1996 |



|   |                  |                                |                      |          |
|---|------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------|----------|
| Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development | - Government     | Development and Infrastructure | advocacy /sponsoring | MoU 2016 |
| Ministry of Information                   | - Government     | Media                          | advocacy /sponsoring |          |
| Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor      | - Government     | Government                     | advocacy /sponsoring |          |
| Kuwait Awqaf Public Foundation            | - Government     | Islamic Philanthropy           | advocacy /sponsoring |          |
| Zakat House                               | - Government     | Islamic Philanthropy           | advocacy /sponsoring | MoU 1999 |
| Kuwait Red Crescent Society               | - Government     | Government                     | advocacy /sponsoring |          |
| Zain Kuwait                               | - Private Sector | Telecommunication              | advocacy /sponsoring | MoU 2016 |
| AlGhanim Industries                       | - Private Sector | Education                      | advocacy /sponsoring | MoU 2017 |
| Agility                                   | - Private Sector | Logistics                      | advocacy /sponsoring |          |
| Kuwait Finance House                      | - Private Sector | Islamic Philanthropy           | advocacy /sponsoring |          |
| AlRahma International                     | - NGO            | Islamic Philanthropy           | advocacy /sponsoring |          |
| Bleems                                    | - Private Sector | Tech.                          | advocacy /sponsoring |          |
| AlHamra Tower                             | - Private Sector | Real Estate                    | advocacy /sponsoring |          |

| UNESCO  | Affiliation     | How influencer? And in what fields? | Beneficial areas for the UNCT                                | Type of existing partnership if any  |
|---|-----------------|-------------------------------------|--|--|
| The National Council for Culture, Arts and Literature (NCCAL) | Governmental    | Culture                             | Identified as one of the main partners in CF for output 1.12 | Sponsored the project: "Preservation and promotion of Kuwait's cultural heritage" from 2017-2019       |
| Dar al-Athar al-Islamiyyah (DAI)                              | Non-State Actor | Culture and Arts                    | programmes delivery and advocacy                             | Partner of the project: "Preservation and promotion of Kuwait's cultural heritage" from 2017-2019      |
| Kuwait National Museum (KNM)                                  | Governmental    | Culture and Arts                    | programmes delivery and advocacy                             | Partner of the project: "Preservation and promotion of Kuwait's cultural heritage" from 2017-2019      |
| Al-Sadu House   | Governmental    | Culture and Arts                    | programmes delivery and advocacy                             | Participants at the 2016 Katara Intercultural dialogue and cultural diversity conference (Doha, Qatar) |

| UNESCO   | Affiliation                                | How influencer? And in what fields?                            | Beneficial areas for the UNCT    | Type of existing partnership if any  |
|--|--|--|----------------------------------|--|
| Kuwait Foundation for the advancement of sciences, (KFAS)      | Non-State<br>Non-governmental organisation | Sciences   | programmes delivery and advocacy | Ongoing discussions on potential joint activities towards enhancing STI in the private sector through studies/research/events.   |
| Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research, (KISR)               | Non-State<br>Research Institute            | Sciences   | programmes delivery and advocacy | UNESCO Cairo office and KISR organised a consultation meeting for the preparation of application dossiers for the Arab Geopark Network in 08-09 August 2018. During the event, Kuwait expressed interest in submitting nomination dossier for the natural park of Sabah Al Ahmad Al Sobah as UNESCO inspiring Geopark. |
| UNESCO National Commission for Kuwait<br>Ministry of Education | Government                                 | Education, Sciences, Culture and Communication and Information | Advocacy and sponsoring events   | This is a specific UNESCO body: The National Commissions are established by respective governments under Article VII of UNESCO's Constitution.   |

| UNDP                                     | Affiliation   | How influencer? And in what fields?   | Beneficial areas for the UNCT  | Type of existing partnership if any   |
|--|---|---|--|---|
| Kuwait Anticorruption Authority (Nazaha) | Government entity that aims to a society free of all forms of corruption in Kuwait. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish the principle of transparency and integrity in economic</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Governance and institutional management are efficient, transparent, accessible, competitive and accountable.</li> </ul> | Kuwait anti-corruption strategy and implementation plan developed in collaboration between Nazaha and UNDP that |

| UNDP                                   | Affiliation  | How influencer? And in what fields?   | Beneficial areas for the UNCT  | Type of existing partnership if any   |
|--|--|---|--|---|
|  |  | <p>and administrative transactions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fight against corruption crimes including, but not limited to those committed against public funds and those relating to bribery, abuse of power, nepotism, money laundering, falsification and forgery, illicit gaining, customs smuggling, tax evasion and any crimes impeding the work of NAZAHA.</li> <li>• Promote the principle of cooperation and partnership with states and regional and international organisations</li> </ul> <p>Implement the United Nations Convention against Corruption.</p> | Systems in place to ensure institutional accountability and transparency and national capacities strengthened for quality planning, implementation and monitoring of development policies, laws and plans. | servers creating a prosperous Kuwaiti society characterised by transparency, good governance and integrity where every individual and institution plays a responsible role in the society.  |
| Women Research & Studies Center (WRSC) | The Women's Research and Studies Center was established in 2010 as a Women's Studies Unit in the College of Social Sciences. It became a Center in 2012 in a partnership with the General Secretariat of Supreme Council of Planning and Development and Kuwait University and UNDP. Its | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raising awareness among the Kuwaiti society on the gender gaps and on the discrimination, women go through in the Region is the main goal of the lectures series programme of the</li> </ul>   | Contributing to the achievement of Kuwait's commitment towards SDG5.   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The establishment of WRSC centre.</li> </ul> <p>The collaboration between WRSC, UNDP and UN Women resulted in Women Empowerment in Politically and economically aspects. As well as increase and raise awareness in Women issues within Kuwait and the region.</p> |

| UNDP   | Affiliation  | How influencer? And in what fields?  | Beneficial areas for the UNCT  | Type of existing partnership if any  |
|--|--|--|--|--|
|  | mission is to create effective partnerships to strengthen the socio-cultural, economics, political and legal participation of women in the community.  | <p>Women's Research and Studies Center (WRSC).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being a role model and proactive advocacy capacity.</li> </ul> <p>CAPACITY BUILDING: A main component of the work of the Center is building the capacity of the Civil Society Organisations and the professionals working on gender issues.</p>  |  |  |
| Public Authority for Disability Affairs (PADA) | Governmental entity, part of its mandate is to implement an integrated action plan clearly responsible for all aspects of persons with disability welfare, in addition to provide solutions for diagnostic and rehabilitation challenges and the ongoing extensive social care services for all nationals with disabilities on an equal basis. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protection, health and social care for persons with disability.</li> <li>• Increase awareness of persons with disability about their rights and chances in active participation.</li> <li>• Establishment of a collaborative system for comprehensive social inclusion of persons with disability.</li> </ul> <p>Encouragement of implementation of partnership initiatives between the government, private sector and civil society organisations to integrate disability issues within the national priorities vision</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all.</li> <li>• Reduce inequality within and among countries.</li> <li>• Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.</li> </ul> <p>Revitalise the global partnership for sustainable development.</p> | Enhanced human capacities and organisational effectiveness towards prevention, early detection and accurate diagnosis associated with maximum rehabilitation for persons with disability to achieve full participation of persons with disability in social life and national development with considering human rights perspective. |

| UNDP                             | Affiliation  | How influencer? And in what fields?   | Beneficial areas for the UNCT  | Type of existing partnership if any   |
|----------------------------------|--|---|--|---|
|                                  |  | particularly in social responsibilities of the private sector.  |  |   |
| Ministry of Interior (MoI)       | A ministry that is responsible for the public security, and law and order. The major internal security organisation under the ministry is the national police. The ministry is also responsible for managing the election process together with the ministry of justice. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The MOI is the main counterpart for anti-drug and drug abuse prevention.</li> </ul> MOI is also the main partner for the UNODC |  | Implementation of the joint Anti-Drug Project between UNODC and UNDP, which is closing in March 2020. |
| Ministry of Youth Affairs (MoYA) | A ministry dedicated to the affairs of a nation's youth, together with the formation of ministerial committees at the level of the Council of Ministers, which are composed of young members, are tangible forms of progress.  | The Ministry is still "young" – newly established and their advocacy capacity is still limited at this stage.   | They can be invited for various UN events, not only ministry officials but also youth representatives as well. | Youth project has closed.   |

| IOM Kuwait/ IOM | Entity                                      | Focus/ Field | Beneficial areas for the UNCT | Type of partnership   |
|-----------------|---|--------------|-------------------------------|---|
|                 | Ministry of Foreign Affairs ( <b>MoFA</b> ) | Government   | Cooperation                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Sponsorship to events</li> <li>-Facilitations and clearance for projects and activities</li> <li>-Partnership</li> <li>- Mr. Talal Al-Mutairi, Assistant Foreign Minister for Human Rights (nominated by MoFA as the State of Kuwait's official focal point on the Global Compact for Migration (GCM))</li> </ul> |

| IOM Kuwait/ IOM | Entity   | Focus/ Field  | Beneficial areas for the UNCT                                       | Type of partnership   |
|-----------------|--|---|---|---|
|                 | Ministry of Interior ( <b>Mol</b> )  | Building Government capacity in the field of Counter-Trafficking/ Border Management/Labour Migration/awareness campaigns on counter-trafficking   | Specialised projects  | -Ongoing cooperation<br>-Exploring partnerships on the operationalisation on the NRM  |
|                 | Public Authority for Manpower ( <b>PAM</b> )   | Capacity building of the Kuwait Government Shelter for Female Foreign Workers/Technical guidance and consultation in the field of labour for private sector and domestic workers/Ethical recruitment initiatives (IRIS) | Advocacy / Cooperation Framework/ Migration Management/ Labour laws | -Capacity building<br>-Facilitation of projects and activities at the Kuwait Government Shelter for Female Foreign Workers<br>-cooperation of joint activities<br>- Partnerships focused on mainstreaming ethical recruitment |
|                 | General Secretariat of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development ( <b>GSSCPD</b> )        | -Migration Governance Framework / KNDP 2035<br>-Engagement on mainstreaming ethical recruitment   | One UN  | -Donor for ethical recruitment projects<br>In discussion on project to support national efforts on migration governance<br><br>Cooperation  |
|                 | G.C.C Joint Program Production Institution ( <b>GCCJPII</b> )                                    | Media and film production / Event coverage  |   | Cooperation Agreement   |
|                 | The Permanent National Committee for Preventing Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants | -Standardised victim notification and verification procedures for VoTs and implementation of referral mechanisms<br>- Operationalising the national referral mechanism across the board                                 |   | Long term implementation of the National Referral Mechanism (NRM)   |

| IOM Kuwait/ IOM | Entity  | Focus/ Field  | Beneficial areas for the UNCT                    | Type of partnership   |
|-----------------|---|---|--|---|
|                 | Kuwait Institute for Judicial & Legal Studies ( <b>KIJL</b> ) | Human Rights/Migration /Counter-Trafficking   | Cooperation Framework                            | Cooperation Agreement   |
|                 | Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development ( <b>KFAED</b> )    | Enhance cooperation in areas of interest  | Cooperation Framework                            | MoU   |
|                 | International Islamic Charitable Organization ( <b>IICO</b> ) | Migration and humanitarian activities/consultations   | Specialised projects                             | MoU   |
|                 | Social Work Society ( <b>SWS</b> )                            | Psychosocial support/ awareness campaigns on counter- trafficking/ support to vulnerable migrants   |  | Sheikha Bibi Al-Sabah is the <b>IOM</b> Good-Will Ambassador (Founder of <b>SWS</b> ) Cooperation |
|                 | Embassy of the Netherlands                                    | Empowering Media Professionals on Reporting Responsibly<br><br>Enhance the capacity of protection services providers to identify and refer victims of trafficking | - Potential projects in areas of mutual interest | Medium term project<br><br>- MoU  |
|                 | Private Sector and CSO's                                      | Collaboration with the private sector to provide personal preventative equipment such as masks and gloves to workers after the lockdown is over                   |  | Short term  |
|                 | Recruitment agencies  | Promote ethical international recruitment (IRIS standard certification) for agents and brokers responsible for employing temporary contractual workers to Kuwait  |  | Long term / IRIS project  |
|                 | Kuwait Trade Union Federation (KTUF)                          | Support with the implementation of capacity building, technical   |  | Cooperation agreement   |

| IOM Kuwait/ IOM | Entity      | Focus/ Field  | Beneficial areas for the UNCT | Type of partnership   |
|-----------------|-------------|---|-------------------------------|-----------------------|
|                 |             | workshops and research studies related to IOM fields of focus.<br>Delivery of IOM training sessions that cover the topics of counter-trafficking and victim identification and protection, printing, and dissemination of the IOM employer guide for SME's, and awareness raising and victim identification and protection. |                               |                       |
|                 | Ooredoo     | Support vulnerable migrants and potential victims of human trafficking via non-food items and organise activities for residents at the Kuwait government shelter for female foreign workers.<br>Facilitate community cohesion activities through the development of humanitarian, social and economic interventions.        |                               | Cooperation agreement |
|                 | UN Agencies | UNDP (Support on the rights of temporary contractual workers in Kuwait through accelerating digital transformation)<br><br>UNODC (Identification of gaps recognised from the  |                               |                       |



| IOM Kuwait/ IOM | Entity | Focus/ Field   | Beneficial areas for the UNCT | Type of partnership |
|-----------------|--------|--|-------------------------------|---------------------|
|                 |        | <p>amnesty period during the Covid-19 outbreak / Mainly on the procedures implemented to identify VoTs)</p> <p>UNWOMEN (Inclusion of gender component)</p> <p>UNHCR (Movement and operations)</p> <p>ILO (Partnership on a video production aimed to raise awareness on the domestic labour law in Kuwait, across various media outlets)</p> |                               |                     |

| UN-Habitat | Affiliation  | How influencer? And in what fields?                              | Beneficial areas for the UNCT                                       | Type of existing partnership if any  |
|------------|--|--|---|--|
| UN-Habitat | <p><b>Private Sector:</b></p> <p>1- White Lavender Foundation</p> <p>2- Boulevard</p> <p>3- ABK</p> <p><b>Government:</b></p> <p>- Min of Foreign Affairs:</p> | Private sector response depends on their annual plan priorities. | All Depends on the type of event / activity carried out by the UNCT | <p>Organising and execution of CSR activities.</p> <p>Signed MoU Agreement through which 10Yrs celebration was carried out in Boulevard</p> <p>Liaising with entities inside and outside Kuwait</p> <p>Facilitating the entry requirements of official delegates</p> |

|  |   |   |  |   |
|--|---|---|--|---|
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- International Organisations Affairs.</li> <li>- Development &amp; International Cooperation Affairs.</li> <li>- Protocol Affairs</li> <li>- PAAET</li> </ul> <p><b>NGOs:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Kuwait Engineers without Borders.</li> <li>- Kuwait Engineering Society.</li> <li>- Mabarrat Al Khair</li> </ul> | Kuwait MoFA continuously supports UN entities where needed. |  | <p>in collaboration with Min of Interiors.</p> <p>Logistical facilitations</p> <p>Providing facilities regarding the requirements of the last campaign of UN-H (31 Octo 2019 to 15 March 2020).</p> <p>Signed MoU</p> <p>Signed MoU</p> <p>Signed MoU</p> |
|--|---|---|--|---|