

Sharjah Emirate's Baby, Child and Family-Friendly Achievements A 50-year journey

The Sharjah Child Friendly Office (SCFO) was established under the directives of His Highness Sheikh Dr. Sultan bin Mohammad Al Qasimi, Member of the Supreme Council and Ruler of Sharjah, and his wife, Her Highness Sheikha Jawaher bint Mohammed Al Qasimi, Chairperson of Supreme Council for Family Affairs, to work in collaboration with relevant bodies to design and implement targeted strategies and programs to support the rights of children and youth. SCFO is the official body tasked with granting 'Child Friendly' and 'Baby & Family Friendly' accreditations to relevant entities in Sharjah and works with national and international organizations to implement accreditation programs to further promote children's rights.

Sharjah's care for children and youth started in the early 1950s, when the first scout troop in the UAE was established. Sharjah has been leading in childhood and motherhood services in the country since the 1970's. This was evident as Sharjah was the first emirate to set up pioneer services dedicated to children and mothers including special needs children as illustrated below. Sharjah, being innovative in supporting children, mothers, and families, introduced 4 working days week. The below table summarizes the major historical milestones with the links for further information followed by the impact of the projects and the list of publications by SCFO.

Year	Program	Description	Number of organizations
1979	Sharjah Humanitarian City	A school for disabled Children & youth was established.	
1984	Child protection Center	The first Child Protection Center was established.	
1985	Sharjah Children	The first Children center in UAE was established.	26 children centers
1985	Children's festivals	Sharjah started organizing annual children's festivals and exhibitions	
1997	Children parliament	Sharjah Children Parliament aims to raise children's awareness of the importance of the practice of 'Shura', which means consultation in Arabic. The	

		council aims to help children to express their views to government officials.	
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2002	Sharjah Social Empowerment Foundation	The foundation established to provide services to orphans.	
2005	Youth parliament	Youth parliament encourages their positive participation in the development of their country and the service of their society.	
2007	Child helpline	The first Child helpline in UAE was established. Child protection center in Sharjah on toll-free helpline number 800 700	
2011	Sharjah Baby Friendly City (SBFC)	SBFC Project was launched in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) following an Emiri Decree No. (4) 2011 for organizing 'Sharjah Baby-Friendly Emirate' Campaign on 8 th February 2011. The emirate of Sharjah is the first in the country and region to launch such an innovative public health campaign. Since its launch in 2011, the SBFC project has sought to encourage and support a culture of breastfeeding in the emirate.	
2012	Baby-Friendly Health Facilities (BFHF)	The BFHF is based on the global Baby-Friendly Hospitals Initiative (BFHI). The Baby-Friendly Health Facility Initiative was based on an internationally accredited program launched by WHO and UNICEF in 1991 aiming to create a health care environment that supports breastfeeding as the norm. The initiative is a global effort for improving the role of maternity services to enable mothers to breastfeed babies for the best start in life.	6 hospitals and 12 primary health centers are baby-friendly.
2012	Mother-Friendly Workplaces (MFW)	The MFW initiative supports working mothers returning to work so that they can continue with breastfeeding and the absence of breastfeeding facilities at their workplace rapidly leads to the dependency on artificial baby milk. Thus, it is essential that workplaces	83 workplaces are mother-friendly

		contribute to giving babies and children “A Right Start for a Healthy Future” by providing breastfeeding room for the employees (to breastfeed their babies or express their milk), allowing employees to take breastfeeding breaks and designate a breastfeeding support group among the employees.	
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Year	Program	Description	Number of organizations
2012	Breastfeeding-Friendly Nurseries (BFN)	The BFN initiative educates and supports parents towards restoring a breastfeeding culture by supporting mothers on maintaining their milk supply and continuing breastfeeding. They are also a privileged environment to educate children under their care while continuing to create an environment portraying breastfeeding as the norm.	31 nurseries are breastfeeding-friendly
2012	Mother and Baby-Friendly Public Places (MBFP)	Most breastfeeding mothers rely on artificial baby milk whenever they go outside their house due to lack of breastfeeding rooms. The MBFP initiative supports breastfeeding mothers and babies in public places like malls, parks, museums, etc by providing breastfeeding rooms.	23 public places are mother and baby-friendly
2013	Website & social media channels	The Sharjah Child Friendly Office launched website and social media channels to promote breastfeeding and children rights.	
2013	Lughati Initiative	This initiative was launched to support school-aged children in Sharjah to learn Arabic in an attractive and smart way. These were developed in collaboration with Kalimat Publishing Group to improve the educational system and provide students with the necessary skills to use the modern technological tools in Arabic.	
2014	Family court	The first family court in UAE was established.	
2014	Maternity leave	Sharjah is the first emirate to announce maternity leave (90 days of full pay – up from 45 to 60 days previously)	



		plus breastfeeding hours for 12 months) and served as a model for other cities and emirates on implementing policies that support mothers.	
2014	Baby-Mother Friendly Caravan	A mobile mother room was launched and is stationed at public places having fairs, exhibitions, and festivities and wherever an onsite mother's room is not available. It provides a relaxed and private environment equipped with comfy seating, baby changing area and breastmilk pumping facility.	1

Year	Program	Description	Number of organizations
2014	First Sharjah Baby Friendly Awarding ceremony	First Sharjah Baby Friendly Awarding ceremony for the organizations registered under Sharjah Baby Friendly City project.	
2015	Baby-Friendly City title	Sharjah's innovative implementation of the BFHI alongside three community-focused initiatives within a localized context earned Sharjah the world's first 'Baby-Friendly City' title , by UNICEF and WHO.	Exclusive breastfeeding rate increased to 60% exceeding the national and global indicators.
2015	Healthy City	Sharjah was recognized as a 'Healthy City' by WHO after meeting 100% health standards and stipulated criteria.	
2016	Sharjah Child Friendly City project	The SCFC project was launched in collaboration with UNICEF and Sharjah officially submitted its bid to join UNICEF's Child Friendly Cities Initiative (CFCI).	
2016	Arab Parliament for children	The Arab Parliament for the Child is launched, and it is affiliated with the League of Arab States.	
2017	Sharjah a candidate city for 'Child Friendly Cities' Initiative	The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has announced Sharjah a candidate city for its 'Child Friendly Cities' Initiative, culminating the emirate's efforts over	



		the past three decades in protecting and elevating the status of children and youth.	
2017	Child Friendly Media project	The Sharjah Child Friendly Media Project has been launched to address the issue of child rights by training media professionals and equipping them with the knowledge and skills required to protect and care for the rights of the child in the Media field. Sharjah Media Corporation signed to child-friendly guidelines for media professionals which recommended by League of Arab States.	- 200 media professionals and children were trained. - 3 workshops for children.

Year	Program	Description	Number of organizations
2017	Child Friendly Urban Planning project	The Sharjah Child Friendly Urban Planning (CFUP) project is a unique and pioneering project that focuses on children and youth participating and expressing opinion in the decision-making process of child friendly urban planning city.	- More than 66 green parks and safe play areas - 143 children & 45 youth participated
2018	Child-Friendly City title	Sharjah was recognized as the first 'Child-Friendly City' following the adoption of UNICEF's revised more rigorous CFCI goals and results framework.	
2018	MOU with UNICEF	Sharjah Signed an MOU with UNICEF to accelerate the realization of child rights, in line with CFC action plan framework 2018-2023.	
2018	Children and Youth Friendly carnival	Sharjah Children & Youth Carnival was launched to celebrate the recognition of Sharjah as a Child Friendly City (CFC). The carnival is distinguished as it is for children, in which children themselves manage and organize events and activities. The carnival is organized	54 entities and more than 6000 children



		in collaboration with many entities working with and for children as well as members of steering and executive committees.	participated in 2 carnivals.
2019	Child Friendly Schools & Nurseries project	SCFO in collaboration with UNICEF, Sharjah Education Council and Sharjah Private Education Authority launched the child friendly schools and nurseries initiative to ensure that educational environments in Sharjah are safe, healthy, and protective, staffed with trained teachers, equipped with adequate resources, and offer conditions appropriate for learning.	26 public nurseries and 114 private schools registered.
2019	UNICEF's 'Child-Friendly Cities Initiative (CFCI) Inspire award	The Sharjah Baby Friendly City project won UNICEF's 'Child-Friendly Cities Initiative (CFCI) Inspire award for child friendly social services category.	
2019	Guinness Book of World Records	Sharjah won Guinness Book of World Records for 'the most children in one cut-out board' by setting up a 50-metre-long wall at Al Majaz Amphitheatre Island to serve as a frame in which 72 children posed for a world-record cut-out board photo.	72 children participated

Year	Program	Description	Number of organizations
2019	Song release to celebrate Sharjah as a 'Child Friendly City'	SCFO released a short film (song) to promote children rights and in the occasion of the first anniversary of the emirate being named a ' Child Friendly City ' by UNICEF. The film was released on several TV channels popular among UAE viewers, receiving an overwhelming response, with almost 200,000 views on YouTube alone within four days of its release and has reached more than 1.6 million views lately.	More than 1.6 million views
2019	Stories released to celebrate Sharjah as a 'Child Friendly City'	SCFO released three stories titled (1) The Choo-Choo Train (2) Our Big Dream (3) A Mystery in the City at the 38th Sharjah International Book Fair (SIBF). The books were published in Arabic, English and Braille languages. The stories were produced based on the age categories of children.	- 3 stories released - Books distributed in 7 events.



2020	Campaigns during Covid-19 : breastfeeding Parenting and Covid-19'	SCFO launched an awareness campaign targeting hospitals, health centers and the local community advising mothers who tested positive for Covid-19 to continue breastfeeding, following all recommended safety precautions and a community awareness campaign themed 'Parenting and Covid-19', to help parents and families find novel ways of coping with Coronavirus-related challenges, and to provide them with accurate and reliable information.	2 campaigns - Support provided to all hospitals and PHCs in Sharjah - 43 schools and 13 nurseries participated in the campaign where more than 10000 attended the session.
2020	Child Friendly Schools & Nurseries pilot phase	SCFO honored 13 schools and 13 nurseries as part of the 'Child Friendly Schools and Nurseries' project for completing the piloting phase. As part of its pilot phase, public nurseries and private schools in Sharjah were encouraged to promote and advance children's rights in their standard of education as learners and key beneficiaries.	13 private schools & 13 nurseries completed pilot phase

Year	Program	Description	Number of organizations
2021	'Child-Friendly Cities Initiative (CFCI) Inspire award	Sharjah succeeded in achieving UNICEF's 'Child-Friendly Cities Initiative (CFCI) Inspire award for the second time for child friendly governance.	
2021	Sharjah participates in General Comment No. 25	Sharjah an active stakeholder in supporting the efforts of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), participated in the first United Nations global declaration on the rights of the child in the digital environment, with the aim of establishing an international standard for the protection of children's rights in the digital world.	7 children participated from Sharjah.



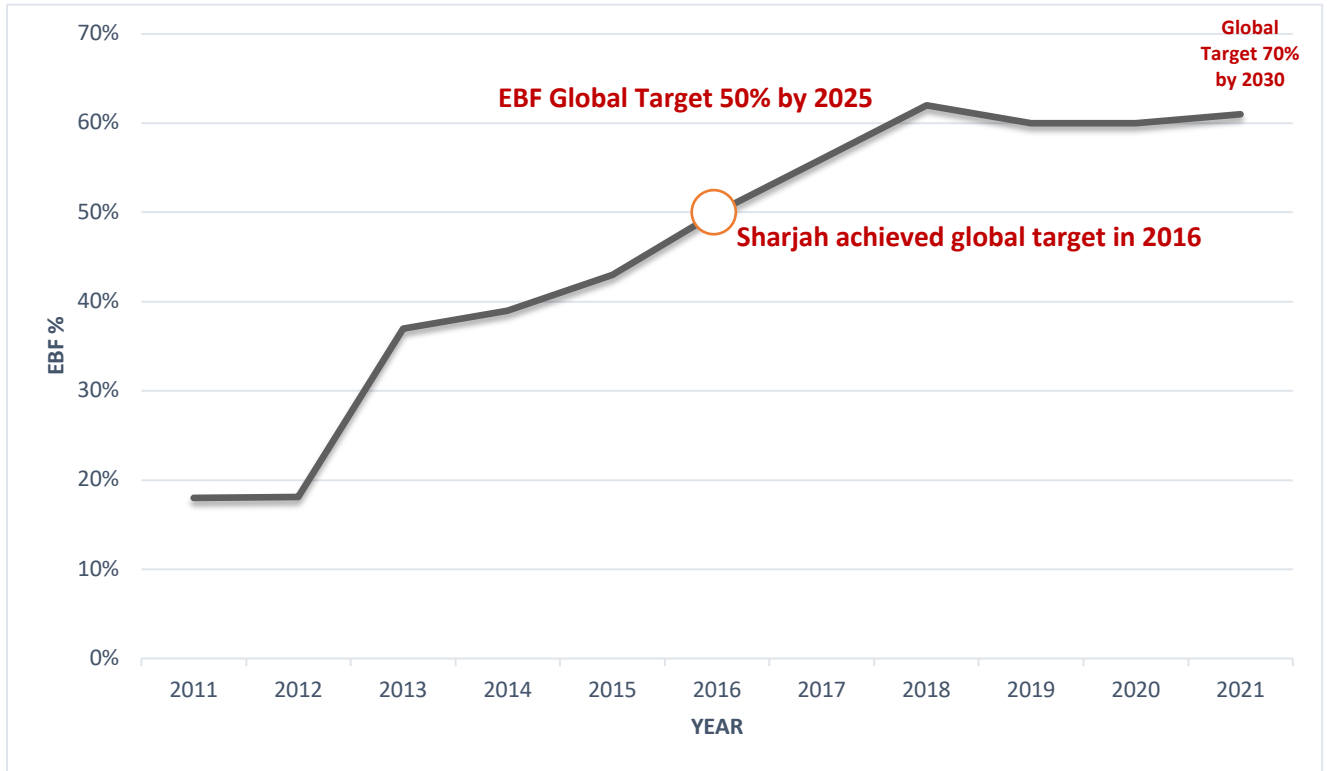
2021	Child Friendly Schools & Nurseries standards	SCFO launched standards for Child Friendly School and Nurseries at the RewirEd Education Summit at Expo 2020. The standard was guided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child and experience of UNICEF worldwide, in implementing rights-based approaches to education and evidence pertaining to child development.	
2021	Child Friendly Urban Planning principles	Sharjah set a global benchmark in child-friendly urban planning best practices at Expo 2020 with the launch of the 'Sharjah Principles for Child-Friendly Urban Planning'. The Sharjah Principles for Child-Friendly Urban Planning build on the emirate's approach of putting children first, with a focus on their specific needs in urban environments.	3 studies conducted
2022	Honoring 'Child Friendly Sharjah' in Cairo	The League of Arab States and the Arab Council for Childhood and Development honored the "Sharjah Child-Friendly Office" during the launching ceremony of the "Childhood-Friendly Media" guide under the title "Correcting Misconceptions about Children in the Arab Media," which was held in the Egyptian capital, Cairo.	
2022	Sharjah adopted 4-day work week	Sharjah being innovative in supporting children, mothers and families, introduced 4 working days week.	
2022	Healthy City	Sharjah was recognized as a 'Healthy City' for the second time by WHO after 100 percent fulfillment of the requirements and standards of healthy cities, within the World Health Organisation's regional network, with an increase of 12 percent of the conditions met for the first time.	

Year	Program	Description	Number of organizations
2022	Sharjah planning principles guidance for child friendly open public spaces	The guide released by His Highness Sheikh Sultan bin Mohammed bin Sultan Al Qasimi, Crown Prince and Deputy Ruler of Sharjah and Chairman of the Sharjah Executive Council seeks to ensure the basic rights of children and youth from different cultures and exhibits varied competencies without discrimination and	1 guideline released



		includes their right to express opinions and partake in decision-making processes, and will serve as a reference for Sharjah government bodies and relevant entities working in urban planning, architecture, road works, and municipality, including specialists, engineers, designers and developers engaged in planning public spaces.	
2022	<u>"My Childhood in Fifty Years' Time" story</u>	SCFO launched this captivating sci-fi book during the opening ceremony of the 41st Sharjah International Book Fair (SIBF), in partnership with the Ministry of Community Development (MOCD). The story, My Childhood in Fifty Years' Time has been created through the eyes and thoughts of children and published as a result of significant literary and education-related efforts in the Arab world, where children predict what the UAE would look like in the future as a leading technologically-advanced society.	12 children participated.
2023	<u>'Mother's Milk' book</u>	SCFO showcased a new book that is published after acquiring its copyright titled "Mother's Milk" to promote breastfeeding culture for young generations.	
2023	<u>Upscaled as 'Baby & Family' Friendly</u>	SCFO scaled up its community based 'Baby Friendly' initiatives to 'Baby & Family Friendly' extending its scope from promoting breastfeeding to a holistic approach of promoting baby & family friendly culture in Sharjah. Baby Friendly initiatives encouraged promotion, protection and support of breastfeeding by focusing mainly on babies and mothers, whereas Sharjah Baby & Family Friendly promotes all aspects of child developments with a renewed focus including parents, families, and other caregivers of young children.	Targeting more than 150 public and private organizations in Sharjah

SHARJAH'S EXCLUSIVE BREASTFEEDING (EBF) RATE 2011 – 2021



The impact of Sharjah Baby Friendly City Project	2011	2023
Rate of Exclusive Breastfeeding Rate (0-6 months)	18.1%	60%
Rate of Formula Feeding at 6 months of age	67%	10.9%
No. of Baby Friendly Hospitals	1	6
No. of Baby Friendly Primary Healthcare Centers	1	12
No. of Mother Friendly Workplaces	0	83
No. of Breastfeeding Friendly Nurseries	0	31
No. of Mother and Baby Friendly Public Places	0	23
No. of healthcare staff trained	50	3000

No. of CME hours awarded to healthcare staff	1000	55470
No. of published articles	0	10

The impact of Child Friendly Schools & Nurseries project (2019-2023)	
No. of schools participated	114
No. of nurseries participated	26
No. of consultations session with children	22
No. of consultations session with parents	6
No. of consultations session with teachers	36
Total no. of participants for consultations sessions	2000
No. of meeting with strategic partners	25
No. of field visits to schools & Nurseries	35
No. of trainings programs conducted	23
Total no. of participants for training programs	2500
No. of virtual trainings due to Covid-19	13
No. of schools registered for pilot phase	42
No. of nurseries registered for pilot phase	16
No. of schools completed pilot phase & awarded	13
No. of nurseries completed pilot phase & awarded	13
No. of promotional campaigns conducted	10

The impact of Child Friendly Urban Planning Project (2017-2023)	
No. of studies conducted	3
Block by block workshop	
No. of participants	48
No. of workshops	2
No. of parks designed by children using Minecraft methodology	15



Citywide public spaces assessment	
No. of accomplished parks & tracks	40
No. of participants	45
Duration	1 week
Exploratory walk	
No. of participants	50
No. of open public spaces assessed	230

Articles and Publications

S. No.	Authors	Article/Publication	Published in	Link	Year
1	Hessa Alghazal , Shehnaz Rashid and Evelyne Ruf	Article was published on 'The Sharjah Baby Friendly campaign: A community based model for breastfeeding promotion, protection and support'.	Breastfeeding Medicine Journal	http://doi.org/10.1089/bfm.2015.0095	Vol. 10. Issue No. 9: October 26, 2015
2	Hadia Radwan, Mona Hashim , Reyad Shaker Obaid , Hayder Hasan , Farah Naja , Hessa Al Ghazal , Hamid Jan Jan Mohamed , Rana Rizk, Marwa Al Hilali , Rana Rayess , Ghamra Izzaldin	Research Article: The Mother-Infant Study Cohort (MISC): Methodology, challenges, and baseline characteristics	PLOS ONE	https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0198278	May 2018
3	Mona Hashim, Hadia Radwan, Hayder Hasan, Reyad Shaker Obaid, Hessa Al Ghazal , Marwa Al Hilali , Rana Rayess, Noor Chehayber, Hamid Jan Jan	Research Article: Gestational weight gain and gestational diabetes among Emirati and Arab women in the United Arab Emirates: results from the MISC cohort	BMC Pregnancy & Child Birth	https://doi.org/10.1186/s12884-019-2621-z	2019



	Mohamed and Farah Naja				
4	Paul McJarrow, Hadia Radwan, Lin Ma, Alastair K.H. MacGibbon, Mona Hashim, Hayder Hasan, Reyad Shaker Obaid, Farah Naja, Hamid Jan Jan Mohamed, Hessa Al Ghazal Bertram Y. Fong	Research Article: Human Milk Oligosaccharide, Phospholipid, and Ganglioside Concentrations in Breast Milk from United Arab Emirates Mothers: Results from the MISC Cohort	Nutrients	http://dx.doi.org/10.3390/nu11102400	October 2019,11, 2400

S. No.	Authors	Article/Publication	Published in	Link	Year
5	Leila Itani, Hadia Radwan, Mona Hashim, Hayder Hasan, Reyad Shaker Obaid, Hessa Al Ghazal , Marwa Al Hilali, Rana Rayess, Hamid Jan Jan Mohamed, Rena Hamadeh, Hiba Al Rifai and Farah Naja	Research Article: Dietary patterns and their associations with gestational weight gain in the United Arab Emirates: results from the MISC cohort	Nutrition Journal	https://doi.org/10.1186/s12937-020-00553-9	2020, 19:36
6	Hadia Radwan, Randa Fakhry, Wegdan Bani issa, Nivine Hanach, Reyad Shaker Obaid, Moez Al Islam E. Faris, Suad Al Marzooqi, Hessa Al Ghazal, Mahmoud ElHalik, Diana DSuza, Marwa Al	Research Article: Maternal Mental Health and Infant Feeding Practices Cohort Protocol: Methodology and Baseline Characteristics	Hamdan Medical Journal (Official Publication of Sheikh Hamdan Bin Rashid Al Maktoum Award for	http://www.hamdanjournal.org/text.asp?2020/13/3/141/294172	Vol. 13; Issue. 3; July-September 2020



	Hilali, Rana Rayess, Noor Nazem Shihadeh, Cindy-Lee Dennis		Medical Sciences)		
7	Hessa Alghazal and Dayana Joosapillai	Report published on Sharjah Baby & Child Friendly City	WHO EMRO Nutrition Section	emro.who.int /nutrition/suc cess-stories	2020
8	Hadia Radwan, Mona Hashim, Hayder Hasan, Nada Abbas, Reyad Shaker Obaid, Hessa Al Ghazal , Farah Naja	Adherence to the Mediterranean diet during pregnancy is associated with lower odds of excessive gestational weight gain and postpartum weight retention: results of the MISC cohort	The British Journal of Nutrition is published by Cambridge University Press on behalf of The Nutrition Society	https://www. cambridge.or g/core/terms. https://doi.or g/10.1017/S0 00711452100 2762	2021

S. No.	Authors	Article/Publication	Published in	Link	Year
9	Hadia Radwan, Randa Fakhry, Nick Metheny, Wegdan Baniissa, Moez Al Islam E. Faris, Reyad Shaker Obaid, Suad Al Marzooqi, Hessa Al Ghazal , Mahmoud ElHalik, Cindy-Lee Dennis7	Prevalence and multivariable predictors of breastfeeding outcomes in the United Arab Emirates: a prospective cohort study	International Breastfeeding Journal	https://doi.o rg/10.1186/ s13006-021- 00428-7	2021
10	Hadia Radwan, Randa Fakhry, Godfred O. Boateng, Nick Metheny, Wegdan Bani issa,	Translation and Psychometric Evaluation of the Arabic Version of the Breastfeeding Self-	Journal of Human lactation	https://doi.o rg/10.1177% 2F08903344 221084623	2022



	MoezAllIslam E. Faris, Reyad Shaker Obaid, Soad Al Marzooqi, Hessa Al Ghazal , Cindy-Lee Dennis	Efficacy Scale-Short Form among women in the United Arab Emirates.			
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