

FOR IRAQ



THE UNITED NATIONS IN IRAQ IN 2021

UNAMI Public Information Office

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الأمم المتحدة - العراق
United Nations Iraq

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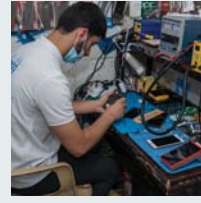
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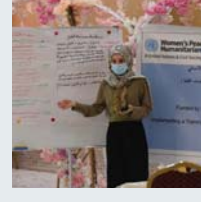
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SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNITED NATIONS SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR IRAQ AND HEAD OF UNAMI

MS. JEANINE HENNIS-PLASSCHAERT

FOREWORD

2021 was a pivotal year for Iraq, one in which difficult but necessary steps were taken. Within this context, the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) stepped up its support, in a way unseen since the Mission was established in 2003. Despite the mounting, compounded challenges, I am proud of what we managed to deliver.

Guided by a robust Security Council mandate in May - to monitor critical, long-awaited early general elections in October - the Mission found itself doing heavy lifting in the span of only four months. We had to expand, adapt, and improvise. Although opportunists

tried to misinform otherwise, our role was limited to support a purely Iraqi-led, Iraqi-owned process, at the request of the Government of Iraq.

We did what is right and what the UN does best: impartial, transparent, and balanced work in support of the public good. Throughout 2021, our position was firm and our message clear.

In parallel, UN Iraq continued and progressed in helping Iraqis address numerous political, security and human rights challenges, in addition to the ongoing humanitarian, stabilization and development support as well as COVID-19 vaccination programmes, mitigation measures and awareness-raising campaigns.

The new government will have to urgently tackle a long list of domestic priorities: from political, security and economic reform to resolving Baghdad-Erbil relations, accountability and justice as well as getting to grips with the effects of climate change and water scarcity, to name a few.

The UN remains firmly committed to supporting the people of Iraq in their quest to build a better future. We will continue to be the partner of all Iraqis, working closely together for that end.

Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert

Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of UNAMI

The United Nations in Iraq

Fast Facts about the United Nations in Iraq



Which UN organizations operate in Iraq?

The United Nations in Iraq comprises two field missions (UNAMI and UNITAD), UN Agencies, Funds and Programmes, working at the community, governorate and national levels across the Republic of Iraq.

UNAMI

United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) is a Special Political Mission established in 2003 by United Nations Security Council Resolution 1500, at the request of the Government of the Republic of Iraq.

UNAMI's mandate is to advise and assist the Government and people of Iraq on a number of political issues, including dialogue, reconciliation efforts and electoral process, as well as promoting the protection of human rights and judicial and legal reforms. The Mission also works with government partners

and civil society to coordinate the humanitarian and development efforts of the United Nations Agencies, Funds and specialised Programmes. While UNAMI itself does not deliver humanitarian and development programmes, it raises the profile of development and humanitarian issues in Iraq and connects Iraqi partners – both the Government and civil society organisations – with the technical expertise available within the United Nations Country Team in Iraq.

UNAMI is led by a Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, a deputy for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, and a deputy who

also is Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator.

Through its resolution 2576 (2021), adopted on 27 May 2021, the Security Council extended the mandate of UNAMI until 27 May 2022.

UNAMI has an authorized strength of 804 personnel (303 international, 502 national and 2 UNV).

The Mission's budget for 2021: USD 99 million.

The Mission is administered by the United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and supported by the Department of Peace Operations as well as the Department of Operational Support.

UNAMI's mandate

Resolution 2576 (2021) Adopted by the Security Council at its 8780th meeting, on 27 May 2021

The Security Council,

Recalling all its previous relevant resolutions on Iraq, in particular 1500 (2003), 1546 (2004), 1557 (2004), 1619 (2005), 1700 (2006), 1770 (2007), 1830 (2008), 1883 (2009), 1936 (2010), 2001 (2011), 2061 (2012), 2110 (2013), 2169 (2014), 2233 (2015), 2299 (2016), 2379 (2017), 2421 (2018), 2522 (2020) and reiterating Resolution 2107 (2013) on the situation between Iraq and Kuwait, and the values set forth in 2367 (2017),

Reaffirming the independence, sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity of Iraq, and emphasizing the importance of the stability, prosperity, and security of Iraq for the people of Iraq, the region, and the international community, particularly in light of Iraq's territorial victory over the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL, also known as Da'esh), and encouraging the international community to increase its support to Iraq in this regard,

Supporting Iraq in addressing the challenges it faces as it continues its stabilization efforts, including the ongoing fight against terrorism and ISIL, Al-Qaida and their affiliates, and continues the task of recovery, reconstruction, stabilization and reconciliation, including the requirement to meet the needs of all Iraqis, including women, youth, children, displaced persons, and persons belonging to ethnic and religious minorities, recognizing the threat of explosive ordnance and welcoming efforts to clear areas of such devices,

Commending the Government of Iraq's efforts to plan and execute genuinely free and fair Iraqi-led, Iraqi-owned early elections that are inclusive, credible, and participatory, and welcoming the Government of Iraq's request for further UN electoral advice, support, and technical assistance in this regard, including through the good offices of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General,

Welcoming the request of the Government of Iraq, reflected in the letter from its Minister of Foreign Affairs to the Security Council on 11 February 2021 (S/2021/135), and recognizing Iraq's efforts toward free and fair Iraqi-led elections that are inclusive, including with the full, equal and meaningful participation of women, and viewed by the Iraqi people as credible, as a decisive step for Iraq and Iraqis, reaffirming its support

for the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) whose role is instrumental for successful elections, and encouraging international partners of Iraq, including relevant regional organizations, to respond positively to Iraq's call to send electoral observers ahead of the elections, and encourage international community engagement in this regard,

Noting the Government of Iraq's desire to see displaced persons return to their areas of origin or resettle elsewhere, stressing the importance of achieving dignified, safe, and durable solutions undertaken on a voluntary and informed basis,

Welcoming the adoption of the Yazidi Female Survivors Law, recognizing the efforts to accelerate the implementation of its provisions, underlining the importance of its effective and timely implementation, and the need to hold perpetrators of conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence accountable, to provide mental health and psychosocial support to victims, and to provide reparations and redress measures for all survivors identified in the law, and calling upon the Government of Iraq to extend its provisions to all victims,

Recognizing that the adverse effects of climate change, ecological changes, and natural disasters, among other factors, can contribute to desertification and drought, the humanitarian situation and stability in Iraq, and emphasizing the need for comprehensive risk assessments by the Government of Iraq with the support of the United Nations, upon the request of the Government of Iraq, to take meaningful actions to adapt to or mitigate challenges posed by climate change and ecological change,

Expressing concern at the impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic in Iraq, recalling resolution 2565 (2021) and stressing once again that equitable access to safe, efficacious, and affordable tests, treatments and COVID-19 vaccines is essential to end the pandemic,

Welcoming efforts by the Government of Iraq to urgently deliver meaningful reforms aimed at meeting the Iraqi people's legitimate demands to address corruption, deliver essential and basic services, diversify its economy, create jobs, improve governance, and strengthen viable and responsive state institutions, and calling for State institutions to redouble efforts to pursue accountability for those responsible for crimes involving the killing, serious injury, abduction and disappearance against demonstrators and journalists, and to safe-

guard and respect the right of freedom of expression, and welcomes the call of Prime Minister of Iraq for an inclusive national dialogue to strengthen Iraqi unity,

Welcoming the 2021 budget agreement reached by the Federal Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq,

Recalling the fundamental principle of the inviolability of diplomatic and consular premises, and the obligations on host Governments, including under the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations and the 1963 Vienna Convention on Consular Relations, to take all appropriate steps to protect diplomatic and consular premises against any intrusion or damage, and to prevent any disturbance of the peace of these missions or impairment of their dignity,

Calling on the international community to remain strongly committed to providing support to Iraq for its humanitarian, stabilization, reconstruction, and development efforts,

1. Decides to extend the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) until 27 May 2022;
2. Decides further that the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and UNAMI, taking into account the letter from the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Government of Iraq to the Security Council on 11 February 2021 (S/2021/135), shall:
 - a. provide a strengthened, robust and visible UN team, with additional staff, in advance of Iraq's forthcoming election, to monitor Iraq's election day with as broad a geographic coverage as possible, to continue to assist with the election, in a manner that respects Iraqi sovereignty, and report to the Secretary-General on the election process;
 - b. engage, encourage, and coordinate with, and provide, as appropriate, logistical and security support to international and regional third-party observers invited by the Government of Iraq;
 - c. launch a UN strategic messaging campaign to educate, inform, and update Iraqi voters on election preparations, and UN activities in support of elections in advance of and on election day;
3. Requests the Secretary-General to provide a detailed summary report to the Council on Iraq's electoral process and UNAMI's assistance to that process, no later than 30 days after the conclusion of Iraq's forthcoming elections;

4. Requests further that the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and UNAMI, at the request of the Government of Iraq, and taking into account the letter from the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Iraq to the Secretary-General (S/2021/135), shall:
 - a. prioritize the provision of advice, support, and assistance to the Government and people of Iraq on advancing inclusive, political dialogue and national and community-level reconciliation, taking into account civil society input, with the full, equal, and meaningful participation of women;
 - b. further advise, support, and assist:
 - i. the Government of Iraq and the Independent High Electoral Commission with efforts to plan and execute genuinely free and fair Iraqi-led, Iraqi-owned elections and referenda, including through regular technical reviews and detailed reporting on electoral preparations and processes, as part of the Secretary-General's regular reporting cycle;
 - ii. the Government of Iraq and the Council of Representatives on constitutional review, the implementation of constitutional provisions, as well as on the development of processes acceptable to the Government of Iraq to resolve disputed internal boundaries;
 - iii. the Government of Iraq with progress on security sector reform, including by prioritizing the planning, funding, and implementation of efforts to strengthen state control and reintegration programmes for former members of armed groups, where and as appropriate, in coordination with other multinational entities;
 - iv. the Government of Iraq on facilitating regional dialogue and cooperation, including on issues of border security, energy, trade, environment, water, adverse impacts of climate change, infrastructure, public health, and refugees;
 - c. promote, support, and facilitate, in coordination with the Government of Iraq:
 - i. the coordination and delivery of humanitarian and medical assistance, notably to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and the safe, timely, orderly, voluntary and dignified return or local integration, as appropriate, of refugees and displaced persons, including through the efforts of the UN Country Team;
 - ii. the coordination and implementation of programmes to improve Iraq's capacity to provide effective essential civil and social services, including health care and education, for its people and



- continue to support Iraq's active regional and international donor coordination of critical reconstruction and assistance programmes, including through effective follow-up of international pledges;
 - iii. Iraqi, World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and other efforts on economic reform, capacity-building and setting conditions for sustainable development and recovery and reconstruction including in areas affected by terrorism, including through coordination with national and regional organizations and, as appropriate, civil society, donors, and other international institutions;
 - iv. the contributions of UN agencies, funds, and programmes to the objectives outlined in this resolution under the unified leadership of the Secretary-General through the Special Representative for Iraq, supported by their designated Deputy;
 - d. promote accountability and the protection of human rights, and judicial and legal reform, with full respect for the sovereignty of Iraq, in order to strengthen the rule of law and improve governance in Iraq, in addition to supporting the work of the UN Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ISIL (UNITAD) established in resolution 2379 (2017);
 - e. approach gender mainstreaming as a crosscutting issue throughout its mandate and to advise and assist the Government of Iraq in ensuring the full, equal and meaningful participation, involvement and representation of women at all levels of decision making, including in the context of elections, and the promotion of women's economic empowerment, by supporting the implementation of the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security in accordance with resolution 1325 (2000) and related resolutions;
 - f. Note the importance of treating children affected by armed conflict primarily as victims, and urge the Government of Iraq and UN Country Team to strengthen child protection, including the reintegration of children in accordance with Iraq's national laws and Iraq's obligations under international law; and to support the implementation of the conclusions of the Security Council's Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict;
 - g. and encourage both the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government to implement fully their 2021 budget agreement and to negotiate agreements on other outstanding issues;
5. Recognizes that the security of UN personnel is essential for UNAMI to carry out its work for the benefit of the people of Iraq and calls upon the Government of Iraq to continue to provide security and logistical support to the UN presence in Iraq;
 6. Expresses its intention to review the mandate and reporting cycle of UNAMI by 27 May 2022, or sooner, if requested by the Government of Iraq;
 7. Requests the Secretary-General to report to the Council every three months on the progress made towards the fulfilment of all UNAMI's responsibilities;
 8. Decides to remain seized of the matter.

UNITAD

United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Daesh/ISIL (UNITAD) is an independent and impartial accountability mechanism mandated by the United Nations Security Council to support domestic efforts to hold ISIL accountable by collecting, preserving and storing evidence in Iraq of acts that might amount to war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide committed in Iraq. UNITAD was established as a unanimous response from the international community to a request for assistance from the Government of Iraq. Effective cooperation with the Government of Iraq is central to the mandate and activities of UNITAD. Led by a Special Adviser, UNITAD works closely with domestic counterparts to conduct its work in a manner complementing investigations carried out by the national authorities, and in full respect for national sovereignty.



THE COUNTRY TEAM

The United Nations Country Team (UNCT) in Iraq comprises 25 members, including 15 resident and 3 non-resident agencies: FAO, ILO, OCHA, OHCHR, UNICEF, UNCTAD, UN WOMEN, UNDP, ESCWA, UNESCO, UNEP, UNHCR, UN-HABITAT, UNIDO, UNFPA, UNODC, UNOPS, WFP, WHO, UNMAS, ITC, IFC, IMF and IOM. (UN-ESCWA, UNEP and UNCTAD are the non-resident agencies.) In addition, the UNCT includes the World Bank Group.

Led by the Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Iraq/ Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, the UNCT works to improve the lives and livelihoods of all Iraqis by supporting the country in achieving the Sustainable Development Agenda and its related Sustainable Development Goals with the latest specialized expertise and evidence-based actions. The spirit of the Sustainable Development Goals is captured in a single phrase: 'to leave no one behind'. This is the principle that guides everything the United Nations does in Iraq. The overall framework under which the United Nations Country Team delivers is the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2020-2024 (formerly UNDAF), which presents the key shared development objectives of the United Nations in the country. The United Nations in Iraq has been working together in a new, coherent way to support the government to achieve its national development priorities and international development commitments, including the Sustainable Development Goals.



Where does the UN operate in Iraq?

The United Nations family operates in all the 18 governorates of Iraq and operate at the community, governorate, regional and national levels. National and international staff are deployed throughout the country and work in partnership with their local, provincial, regional and national counterparts.

What is the difference between UNAMI and the other UN entities operating in Iraq?

UNAMI is a political mission established in 2003 at the request of the Government of Iraq.

The presence of the UN organizations in Iraq is established on the basis of bilateral

agreements with the Government of Iraq.

UNITAD was established in 2018 as a unanimous response from the international community to a request for assistance from the Government of Iraq.

How long has the UN been present in Iraq and why?

Iraq is a founding member of the United Nations. A number of UN organizations have been operating in Iraq since 1955. Others established their offices in the early 1990s and again after 2003. The UN continues to be present in Iraq to respond to the needs of the Iraqi people and support their efforts to achieve a peaceful and prosperous future.



Interview with

Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General (DSRSG) for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance

MS. INGIBJÖRG SÓLRÚN GÍSLADÓTTIR

In 2021 you joined the UN family in Iraq as the DSRSG for political affairs and electoral assistance. How does it compare with your previous posts?

After 25 years as a politician in Iceland, I joined UN Women in 2011 and served as country representative in Afghanistan and Turkey and regional director in Europe and Central Asia. Later on, I worked for the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), as Director of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). I believe that all my previous positions have many things in common

with my current post as DSRSG for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance but especially my work with ODIHR, given its responsibility for election observation in OSCE participating States. This included assessment on the extent to which elections respect fundamental freedoms and are characterized by transparency and accountability. In this capacity, I have observed elections in more than 15 countries which was both a very valuable experience and strong preparation for the work this year in Iraq.

The COVID-19 pandemic continued, and proved yet another challenging year for the Mission. Our work remained re-

stricted, including travel throughout the country, and limited our capacity to organize events and trainings. However, it was also a year unlike any other, as early elections were held on 10 October 2021 and UNAMI was given a much broader mandate with Security Council resolution 2576 adopted on 27 May 2021. UNAMI was mandated to “advise, support and assist the Government of Iraq and the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) with efforts to plan and execute genuinely free and fair Iraqi-led, Iraqi-owned elections”. The Security Council decided further that UNAMI should provide a “strengthened,



robust and visible UN team, with additional staff, in advance of Iraq's election, to monitor Election Day with as broad a geographic coverage as possible".

This was by no means an easy task during COVID times, and within a very short timeframe. However, despite the challenging circumstances and conditions, UNAMI, in collaboration with the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), managed to deploy 150 United Nations international electoral experts and 550 national support personnel in advance of, and on, election day to monitor the elections.

How do you see UNAMI's contribution to the early general elections held in October 2021?

Technical assistance is the most frequent form of United Nations electoral assistance and UNAMI has traditionally been providing that assistance in Iraq but in 2021 it was further strengthened based on the request from the Iraqi government and approval of the Security Council. Significantly, in 2021 the United Nations had fivefold the electoral assistance footprint that UNAMI deployed for the 2018 elections. Technical advice, support

and assistance was provided to the IHEC as well as its 19 Governorate Electoral Offices, working from UNAMI's regional hubs in Baghdad, Basra, Erbil, Kirkuk and Ninewa. This assistance and support was significant for both the leadership and staff of IHEC and ultimately contributed to the overall assessment that these elections were technically well managed and transparent.

It is notable to mention that in addition to the mandated technical assistance, UNAMI also provided election monitoring that is not part of the UN normative framework for electoral assistance. Therefore, the 2021 Iraq experience constitutes an unprecedented exercise outside established policies and practice in the UN. I am sure that other missions can learn from our experience - both the positive and negative aspects - if the proposal is put forward to monitor elections in another country.

What were you most proud of in 2021? What were, in your opinion, UNAMI's and your main achievements in the political field?

In my role as DSRSG, maintaining oversight of this process, I am very proud of

the electoral assistance and monitoring we provided, that was both professional and well managed. Significantly, and in terms of our forward-looking approaches towards greater coordination and integration, it was encouraging to work in an environment of collaboration with UN joint forces in the weeks prior to Election Day. It was a major achievement to provide professional assistance and smooth election monitoring and to manage the biggest election mission worldwide in Iraq amidst the many challenges, including the COVID pandemic. We must convey tremendous credit to our elections team while also noting that the delivery of this mandate would not have been possible without the genuine collaboration and support of the UN family as a whole in Iraq, national counterparts, and our generous donor community.

One of the main priorities for UNAMI is the process of social cohesion. How do you think this process developed in 2021?

This was a very unusual and challenging year. We experienced many restrictions in our work due to the COVID pandemic. This may have affected, to some extent, our work on social cohesion as we



couldn't bring people together for meetings or trainings. It goes without saying that a precondition for social cohesion is that people can meet in person, talk, and listen to each other. There is much to be done in this area - as well as in community reconciliation - and that will be a priority of our work in 2022.

How do you see the role of the Iraqi youth in this process?

UNAMI continues to work with the government to create a favourable environment for inclusive national dialogue. The country's youth have a critical role to play in this regard not just as stakeholders, but as partners in the process of national reconciliation. One in five Iraqis is now a college-aged youth (i.e. between 15 and 24 years of age). Youth activism has surged since the 2019 protests in Iraq as networks of youth in the country have mobilized against corruption and continue to demand much needed political, social and economic reforms. Dialogue among these youth networks about governance reform has been marked by patriotic and non-sectarian narratives. Following on from the successful youth workshops in 2019 and 2020, during 2021, UNAMI

continued its youth projects throughout the country. Recommendations which emerged as outcomes from these sessions seek to ensure that the ideas generated by youth complement political discussions on national reconciliation, and in the process contribute to achieving lasting peace and stability in Iraq.

On numerous occasions you said publicly that women should be represented at all levels of decision making in Iraq. What do you think about the position of women in Iraq?

I strongly believe in the importance of including women in all decision-making and political processes in the society. It is a proven fact that the more gender equality, the more prosperous and peaceful the society becomes. That benefits all of us, men and women alike. Iraq has a long way to go towards gender equality but it has made some important steps recently such as the 25% quota for women in the electoral law. Iraqi women at grassroots level have been quite active and vocal. This has empowered women in general, as witnessed in a historic result in the 10 October elections whereby Iraqi women won 95 seats out of 329

seats. This demonstrates a remarkable increase in their representation from 25% to 29% as compared to the 2018 elections. What matters now is to translate this victory into positions of power in the newly elected Council of Representatives and the incoming government to ensure that women are part of the decision-making power and can directly influence the political agenda and the future of the country.

Engagement on the Missing Kuwaiti Persons and Property file, an important mandated task of the Mission, has also continued. How do you see Iraq - Kuwait relations at the moment?

A great accomplishment on the Kuwaiti Missing Persons and Property for 2021 was the completion of the formal identification of the human remains found in Samawah, Muthana Governorate in 2019 and 2020. This achievement has, we hope, brought some closure to the families of those missing persons and demonstrates the constructive collaboration and unwavering dedication of the Iraqi and Kuwaiti technical teams, during a time when the COVID-19 pandemic presented a significant challenge worldwide. We continue to support and encourage the Governments of Iraq and Kuwait to build upon the advances made over the past two years.

What were UNAMI's priorities in its political work in 2021?

While I arrived during the electoral period, the political role of UNAMI remained most pertinent.

Throughout the year we continued to provide support to reconciliation efforts, in particular the requirement to meet the needs of women, youth, persons with disabilities, and ethnic and religious minorities. Countering hate speech in all its forms also remained a focus of our work and I am proud to say that under the coordination of our Human Rights Office, this issue has been prioritised by all substantive sections. Additionally, we continued to support the Federal Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) to resolve outstanding issues through dialogue and to promote balanced relations between Baghdad and the governorates. With elections successfully completed, we look forward to supporting and engaging with the new government which we hope will address the needs of the Iraqi people and bring the prosperity they deserve.



Message from

Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General (DSRSG) for Iraq, Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq

MS. IRENA VOJÁČKOVÁ-SOLLORANO

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The UN's work supported the Government of Iraq's efforts in improving the living conditions for vulnerable people

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The past year has been eventful to say the least. It has been another year where everything was overshadowed by the COVID-19 pandemic across the globe, also in Iraq. One year marked by adapting to a new COVID-19 reality with the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) remaining strong in their operational delivery. One year marked by the joint signing of the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) between the Minister of Planning and myself. One year where the Government's desire to close the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) file led to

initiating the transition of the UN response from humanitarian to development assistance, which was reflected by the expansion of our geographic focus to the areas of IDP returns.

Overall, the UN's work supported the Government of Iraq's efforts in improving the living conditions for vulnerable people, strengthening equitable services delivery, and enhancing alignment of international engagements and cooperation with the 2030 Agenda.

The new UNSDCF, which is based on the National Development Plan and



Iraq Vision 2030 to help achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, was finally signed on 5 September 2021 marking the Government's determination to work on a longer term vision for Iraq and to work with the UN on strategic development goals.

The Government's determination to resolve the IDP situation is reflected in UNSDCF's Strategic Priority 5: Achieving Dignified, Safe, and Voluntary Durable Solutions in Iraq. In practice, this resulted in developing a mechanism focusing the nexus between the UN's humanitarian and development efforts. Eight Area Based Coordination (ABC) mechanisms have been put in place in complex areas of return.

The ABCs ensure that humanitarian and development actors coordinate and plan together with local government structures to facilitate the implementation of durable solutions for IDPs and returnees.

This process is also facilitating the midterm larger strategy to ensure

that the remaining IDPs are included in the governmental social protection system by 2024.

Equally, the Government has started to pay increased attention to the climate change agenda. This is reflected in Strategic Priority 4: Promoting Natural Resources and Disaster Risk Management, and Climate Change Resilience. The UNCT has increased its focus on climate change mitigation, including incorporating renewable energy and climate smart techniques wherever feasible.

Today, the UNCT has a total of twenty members with a presence in Iraq, working together to support the government and civil society actors to create conditions for the revitalization, stabilization and reform of social, and economic life.

None of this would have been possible without the Government's extensive collaboration and support that shows their commitment to improving the lives of its citizens.

Since my assignment as DSRSG/RC/HC to Iraq in 2020 I have seen remarkable progress. However, there are still many areas which will deserve heightened attention, such as the need for economic and social protection reform and mitigating the impact of climate change. There is hope for a bright future for Iraq and its citizens once a new Government will be in place and will take the strong lead in ensuring that the needs of all its citizens are taken care of.

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The Government has started to pay increased attention to the climate change agenda

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Interview with

Acting Director of the Office of Political Affairs, UNAMI

MR. MOHAMMED AL-NAJJAR

Working with UNAMI since 2005, Mohammed al-Najjar has played increasingly senior roles in the fields of peace and security. His sustained engagement with senior officials as well as political and religious leaders focusses on issues of national reconciliation, mediation, conflict resolution and peacebuilding. Mr. al-Najjar became Acting Director of the UNAMI Office of Political Affairs (OPA) in 2021. At a critical juncture in national and regional geopolitics, his efforts remain centered on the promotion of political dialogue between political parties and other segments of society.

How would you sum-up 2021 from your office's point of view?

2021 saw the realization of a key popular demand: early parliamentary elections. Throughout the year, OPA supported preparations for the October elections, engaging with all stakeholders to foster a conducive electoral environment. We assisted the President's Office and the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) in developing an Electoral Code of Conduct, whereby key political parties pledged to uphold the integrity of the electoral process. The Code of Conduct was signed on 15 September under the auspices of the President, in a conference also attended by the SRSG. Similar signing ceremonies took place throughout the country. OPA contributed enhanced monitoring and reporting

during and after the elections.

Stabilization is a central priority in Iraq. How does the Office of Political Affairs support political stability?

Through the good offices of the SRSG and DSRSG-Political, OPA actively encourages a peaceful transition of authority under the constitution, and the development of a government programme that delivers real reform, advancing national and community-level reconciliation to consolidate political stability and security. In Kirkuk, OPA maintained its engagement with government officials, political and religious leaders, and all local components to advance dialogue and trust-building in local institutions; elsewhere we advocated for the implementation of the



Sinjar Agreement; engaged with minorities and local authorities in the Ninewa Plains to support reintegration efforts and local community reconciliation dialogue; and also supported the enactment of the Yazidi Female Survivors Law.

What efforts has OPA made to engage with youth and disenfranchised communities?

In coordination with the Committee for Dialogue and Societal Peace in the Prime Minister's Office, OPA continued to facilitate dialogue among youth to promote peaceful coexistence. These dialogue sessions resulted in the formation of committees across governorates, which assembled at a National Dialogue Conference in August, with OPA represented on its advisory panel. The conference was attended by over 200 participants from across governorates, including intellectuals, young women and men, religious and tribal leaders. Discussions covered political and financial reform, constitutional review, combatting corruption, and economic diversification. The main outcome of the Conference was the

"National Dialogue Document" which outlined the thematic pillars and recommendations highlighted in the discussions. The document was endorsed by the Prime Minister and has been adopted by key political leaders. In parallel, OPA organized several meetings with protestors and political activists attended by the SRSR, to listen to their concerns and promote their participation in the elections. OPA also conducted a series of capacity-building workshops to empower youth for their effective political participation and peaceful dialogue.

Have you seen progress on Baghdad-Erbil relations?

OPA also extended its good offices towards the conclusion and implementation of a comprehensive agreement between the Federal Government and Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). On 31 March, the Council of Representatives (CoR) adopted the Federal Budget Law of 2021. Although it is not yet fully implemented, Baghdad resumed monthly transfers of IQD 200 billion in July 2021, allowing the KRG

to fully disburse salaries to its civil servants. This helped ease political tensions and defuse social unrest in the Kurdistan Region. Baghdad and Erbil must reach a predictable, fully institutionalized modus operandi, and OPA consistently affirms the importance of a strong relationship between the Federal Government and the KRG for the stability of Iraq.

And finally, some thoughts on the political outlook for 2022?

2022 will be a challenging year for Iraq – a new government must rapidly be formed, and a programme must be elaborated that addresses the multifaceted challenges facing the country – including unemployment, climate change, fighting corruption and public service delivery as well as building a better future for the Iraqi people. OPA will support mission leadership in inclusive engagement and dialogue with Iraqi leaders, community representatives, women and youth activists, as well as minorities and religious figures to address outstanding political, economic and social issues, notably the development of a sustainable Baghdad-Erbil relationship.



Electoral Assistance

**Interview with
Principal Electoral Adviser
and Director of UN Integrated Electoral Assistance**

DR. AAMIR A. ARAIN

“

In 2021, the UN mobilized resources to deploy what is considered as the biggest electoral mission worldwide to date, with a multipronged electoral mandate in support of an Iraqi-led and Iraqi-owned electoral process

”

What has been the greatest achievement of the UNAMI Electoral Assistance Office in 2021?

It was a watershed year in Iraq with the Council of Representatives (CoR) elections taking place on 10 October 2021. The Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) had an unenviable task of preparing an election that not only would decide the country's political future but would also determine whether the Iraqi public will remain confident about elections, in general, and in the country's electoral institution, in particular.

Faced not only with a new leadership and a reorganized bureaucracy, IHEC also had to conduct the elections based on a new electoral law and more specifically, a new electoral system. The new IHEC leadership also inherited an institution which was beset with public credibility issues owing to the way previous elections were conducted. Given such, the Iraqi political leadership, the IHEC and the Iraqi public looked upon the UN to help in terms of providing expanded technical electoral assistance and advisory support.

In response, the UN Security Council, in its Resolution 2576 of



2021, decided on a robust and strengthened UN electoral presence in Iraq with four key elements in its mandate: (1) technical assistance, (2) monitoring of election day, (3) strategic communications, and (4) coordination of international third-party observers invited by the government of Iraq.

To carry on with its mandate, UNAMI as early as the 4th quarter of 2020 had already set in motion the process for implementing an expanded UN electoral technical assistance project. With generous contribution coming from several member states, and with funds managed by UNDP, more UN electoral advisers started deploying to Iraq, by early January 2021. Of significant note, these electoral advisers were deployed both at headquarters and at regional hubs, providing advisory and technical support to the IHEC counterparts at the national office and the IHEC 19 governorate electoral offices.

As of 1 October, the United Nations had 160 electoral technical assistance personnel in Iraq, of whom 49 were international and 111 were national staff, a fivefold increase on its technical electoral assistance compared with the 2018 elections. Areas of electoral assis-

tance included support for the development of electoral regulations and procedures for, inter alia, the nomination and registration of candidates, electoral campaigning, field coordination, logistics, results tabulation, results display, and the processing and adjudication of electoral complaints and appeals. Furthermore, UNAMI assisted in the recruitment and training of polling staff, the development of a new and comprehensive public outreach campaign, guidance on media, voter registration, the implementation of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) mitigation measures, the procurement of electoral materials (including the printing of ballot papers), the procurement of COVID-19 safety items, the establishment of results display centers, simulations in advance of the Election Day and support for the conduct of the independent audit.

On top of these, UNAMI, in coordination with UNOPS, also mobilized hundreds of personnel to deliver on the Election Day monitoring mandate. UNAMI and UNOPS deployed 150 United Nations international electoral experts and approximately 550 national support personnel in advance of and on the Election Day.

The deployment of monitors was in three phases, with a preparatory team deployed to Baghdad two months prior to the elections to develop the monitoring methodology and begin operational preparations. Four weeks before the elections, five regional teams were deployed to UNAMI hubs in Baghdad, Basra, Kirkuk, Mosul and Erbil to prepare the ground for the short-term deployment of experts, while establishing the monitoring presence in the area of responsibilities.

United Nations electoral experts arrived one week before the elections and were deployed in all 18 governorates. During the Special Voting Day, they visited 79 polling stations in 25 polling centers. On the general Election Day, United Nations experts monitored 1,108 polling stations in 301 polling centers in all 18 governorates.

UNAMI also delivered on its strategic messaging campaign and coordination of third-party observers, which were the third and fourth elements of its electoral mandate for 2021. Several innovative campaigns and activities were launched, which aimed to educate, inform and update Iraqi voters on election preparations, as well as related



United Nations activities. They were also aimed at building public trust, spreading knowledge and tackling misinformation. These are on top of and complementing UN support for an intensified IHEC public outreach campaign.

Similarly, UNAMI supported IHEC in its preparations for inviting third party international observers. UNAMI also liaised with the Government of Iraq for the provision of logistical and security support, which helped the League of Arab States, the Organization of Islamic Conference and several embassies in their deployments in various parts of Iraq.

All these efforts are documented in a report on Iraq's 2021 elections submitted by the United Nations Secretary-General to the Security Council on 8 November 2021. The Secretary-General's Report fulfilled the request of the Security Council for a summary report submitted within a month after the 10 October elections.

What in your perspective were the greatest challenges faced during the elections?

For the 2021 Council of Representa-

tives elections, the challenges can be summarized into (1) organizing a professionally sound electoral process albeit during the period of the COVID-19 pandemic and (2) that the public sees the electoral process as such leading to wider acceptance of electoral results.

UNAMI support to IHEC was therefore geared towards promoting the latter's readiness on all aspects of technical and operational preparations and at the same time supporting the implementation of an intensive outreach and external relations initiative aimed at building public confidence on the electoral process. Following UNAMI's guidance, COVID-19 prevention and mitigation measures have been put in place for all electoral staff, political party agents, observers, visitors and voters.

It is worth mentioning that the current IHEC leadership was a welcoming partner in this regard. They have been receptive to technical inputs and advice and have been proactively solicitous in considering UN views prior to taking most key electoral management decisions.

It is similarly noteworthy that much of the UN advice provided in previous elections were heeded, including the

conduct of an independent audit of the election IT systems, the undertaking of several simulation activities to test the running of systems, as well as the various stakeholder engagements that IHEC have initiated along the process.

The public outreach campaign that IHEC launched for the 2021 elections was unprecedented in scope and coverage. IHEC, with the support of UNAMI, implemented a new and comprehensive public outreach campaign that included content tailored to groups such as women, young people, internally displaced persons, persons with disabilities, minorities and the military. Information was disseminated on national television, other traditional media and social media and through many direct engagement activities. In addition, 47 projects from 32 Civil society organizations (CSOs), funded through the UNDP's Low Value Grant initiative on Civic and Voter Education have further amplified outreach messages, with direct and online activities conducted in all 19 Governorates.

Regular press conferences as well as interviews were organized by the Commission and UNAMI, while various campaigns like #Ivote, #Ivoted and



#Vote4Iraq were launched on social media to interact directly with voters. More than 200 animated videos and infographics besides an even greater number of posts and a large number of videos produced by Governorate Electoral Offices (GEOs) were developed with UNAMI's assistance, incorporating sign language interpretation for the first time, which was also provided at press conferences. IHEC media conferences, statements and the entire process of manual counting were live streamed on its digital platforms. Systems and activities were also put in place to counter hate speech, disinformation, fake news and even attacks to IHEC, both on social media and through media guidance provided to IHEC. One of the main challenges that the institution was facing at the beginning of the process – rebuilding and boosting public trust on it – was successfully overcome by all efforts put in place.

It goes without saying that there are

still areas that remained challenging during the elections. Despite efforts, with UNAMI support, to improve electoral dispute resolution mechanisms, there are still areas that need to be addressed and which will largely require not just technical adjustments but will also necessitate further legal review. It is indeed helpful that there is better cooperation and coordination between IHEC and the Electoral Judicial Panel (EJP), which facilitated the processing of electoral challenges. UNAMI helped encourage such cooperation and in fact even held a briefing session for EJP members, which is a pioneering initiative. But more attention may need to be devoted to further strengthening and streamlining the electoral dispute adjudication process for future elections.

Looking forward, what is on the electoral agenda for 2022?

As mentioned by the IHEC Chairman in his consultative meeting in December 2021 with representatives of member

states which are contributing to the electoral project, it is important that IHEC sustains and builds upon the gains from its electoral experience in 2021. Immediately post-election, IHEC will launch a lesson learning process to take stock of the achievements, look at lessons learning and identify recommendations for further developing capacities for organizing future elections. The IHEC Chairman emphasized that given Iraqi realities, it is important that the international community and UNAMI remain key partners and that they remain present throughout this capacity development process. He enumerated four priority areas in the near term, including addressing legacy problems regarding the voter registry, improving the infrastructure, software and peopleware for election results management, enhanced public outreach, and further review of the legal and regulatory framework for the elections, including on electoral dispute resolution.

As the Principal Electoral Adviser and Director of UN Electoral Assistance, I expressed in the same forum that the UN electoral team will be fully dedicated to working with and engaging with IHEC on these matters in 2022. With support from donors, the electoral assistance project has been extended until December 2022 and project activities will be dedicated towards capacity development, with sustained expert advisory support both at IHEC national and field offices. UNAMI will be working together with IHEC in carrying on the post elections lessons learned and in implementing the capacity development recommendations that will come out of such process.

In addition to capacity development, there are whispers of possible Iraqi electoral events either in 2022 or 2023 at the local or regional levels. The regional parliamentary election in Kurdistan Region is due this year. Country-wide, there is also the provincial council elections which have been delayed since 2017. The new Iraqi parliament will be in the best position to decide on this.

In the meantime, UN electoral assistance efforts will continue to focus on developing capacities for future elections that remain Iraqi-led and Iraqi-owned.



Human Rights Office

Q&A with

Chief, UNAMI Human Rights Office, and Representative, United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

MS. DANIELLE BELL



What is the human rights mandate of UNAMI?

UNAMI Human Rights Office (UNAMI HRO) is responsible for the implementation of the Mission's human rights mandate in accordance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 2576 (2021) and its preceding resolutions to "promote accountability and the protection of human rights, and judicial and legal reform, with full respect for the sovereignty of Iraq, in order to strengthen the rule of law and improve governance in Iraq". In 2021, UNAMI HRO continued to support the government's efforts to ensure that human rights of all citizens are promoted and protected. UNAMI

HRO constructively engaged with the Government, civil society and the Iraq High Commission for Human Rights (IHCHR) to promote joint efforts for legislative, institutional and policy measures to promote respect for human rights and to increase engagement with United Nations human rights mechanisms.

How did the human rights situation evolve in Iraq in 2021?

In 2021, amidst the evolving political, economic and security situation, the people of Iraq continued to call for institutional reforms, and access to economic and social rights, including improved access to edu-

cation, health, water and better employment opportunities.

The demonstrations that started in October 2019, continued throughout the 2021, although at a relatively low scale. There have been increased calls for accountability for the demonstrations related targeted killings, abductions, enforced disappearance and to end impunity. Although the Government of Iraq took some steps, the lack of accountability remained a major concern together with challenges to freedom of expression and the right to peaceful assembly.

In the Kurdistan Region, the arrest, unfair trials and sentencing of activists exercising lawful dissent gave rise to serious concerns regarding the right to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly.

The elections were held for the Council of Representatives on 10 October 2021. UNAMI HRO monitored the human rights aspects of the elections during all phases. The newly elected Council of Representatives and formation of a new government (awaited) will offer opportunities for Iraq to expedite the endorsement of pending legislation, including the draft bills on anti-domestic violence, the anti-torture law and the freedom of expression law.

What has UNAMI HRO done to promote protection for freedom of expression and the right to peaceful assembly?

The protection of fundamental freedoms of expression and the right to peaceful assembly remained a core priority for UNAMI HRO which engaged in increased monitoring and reporting on targeted killings, abductions, threats and harassment of activists, human rights defenders, journalists and protestors. On 30 May 2021, UNAMI released a public report, *Update on Demonstrations in Iraq: Accountability for Human Rights Violations and Abuses by Unidentified Armed Elements*. The report focused on the steps taken by the Iraqi authorities to ensure accountability for human rights violations and abuses in the context of demonstrations-related violence and encouraged greater efforts to end impunity for targeted killings and disappearances of protestors and critics by unidentified armed elements. The report's recommendations encourage further efforts in the areas of investigations, accountability and protection.

As part of efforts to promote account-

ability in the context of demonstrations, in December 2021, UNAMI HRO delivered capacity building training for the members of the Fact-Finding Committee (FFC), established by the Prime Minister of Iraq. The technical support aimed at enhancing capacity of the members of the FFC to investigate the crimes and violation committed during the demonstrations and to hold perpetrators accountable.

What has been done to protect the human rights in the administration of justice?

In 2021, UNAMI HRO continued to implement the detention and trial monitoring programme to monitor compliance with procedural guarantees, detention safeguards and fair trial standards to help prevent the emergence of new grievances and address conflict drivers, such as structural discrimination, injustice, torture and impunity that had led individuals to choose violence and enabled ISIL to find support in Iraq. In August 2021, UNAMI Jointly with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights published a report entitled *Human Rights in the Administration of Justice in Iraq: legal conditions and procedural safeguards to prevent torture and ill-treatment*. The report, covering the period from 1 July 2019 to 30 April 2021, documented credible and reliable accounts of concerns about the human rights of detainees and basic fair trial standards. The limited accountability for torture and ill-treatment outlined in this report suggested acquiescence and tolerance of the practice as a means of eliciting a 'confession'. It provided an analysis of risk factors for torture and ill-treatment during interrogations in places of detention and offered recommendations aimed at strengthening the Government's response to torture. Following the release of the report, UNAMI HRO engaged in discussions and advocacy with authorities, civil society and lawyers in Federal Iraq and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

In November, UNAMI HRO launched an online social media campaign aimed to raise awareness on human rights in the criminal justice system, including fair trial standards to support efforts to combat torture. UNAMI HRO, jointly with the High Judicial Council, finalized the development of guidelines on key rights of suspects, accused and detained persons during different stages of criminal proceedings.



In 2021, amidst evolving political, economic and security situation, the people of Iraq continued to call for institutional reforms, and access to economic and social rights, including improved access to education, health, water and better employment opportunities



What role did your office play in addressing concerns about the freedom of expression in Kurdistan?

UNAMI HRO continued to document limitations on the freedom of expression of those voicing criticism and dissent towards the authorities and expressed concern regarding the restrictive measures taken in the Kurdistan Region against individual activists and advocated with the Government of Kurdistan to protect the right to freedom of expression, activists and journalists. On 12 May 2021, UNAMI released a public report *Freedom of Expression in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq*. The report documented allegations of unlawful restrictions of the rights of those raising critical voices against Kurdistan Regional authorities or its policies over the period March 2020 to April 2021. The report noted that journalists, activists, and others were subjected to arbitrary arrests and violations of procedural guarantees, the use of threats and/or other forms of pressure and intimidation. UNAMI HRO engaged in dialogue with the Kurdistan Region Government to foster accountability for human rights violations and redress for victims.

On 21 December, UNAMI/OHCHR released *Human Rights and freedom of expression: trials in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq*. The report examines criminal justice proceedings in four emblematic cases in the Erbil Criminal Court, concerning indi-

viduals known for their public criticism of authorities. It sets out an evidence-based analysis of the administration justice in Kurdistan and provides an assessment of risks individuals may face, including coming into conflict with the law, for exercising legitimate rights to freedom of expression.

During November 2021, UNAMI HRO commenced the implementation of its digital security and digital rights project and conducted five trainings on human rights on the interaction between human rights and digital rights as well as security and protection of civic space. A group of approximately 200 human rights defenders, bloggers and journalists, including those engaged in promoting the human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersexed (LGBTQI) community benefitted from this training. This project will expand in 2022.

What role did UNAMI HRO play in protecting human rights of vulnerable groups from the effects of COVID-19?

In 2021, the COVID-19 pandemic continued to have a devastating impact on communities across Iraq. Vulnerable groups, including women, children, minorities and internally displaced, were disproportionately affected by the effects of the pandemic and the preventive measures set in place to contain its spread. Since the outbreak of the pandemic in Iraq, already existing social stigma and discrimination against women and children, in particular domestic violence and the protection of minority communities have significantly increased, exacerbating an already fragile protection situation. Minority communities also suffered from the existing protection gaps and increased marginalization as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Between March and June 2021, UNAMI HRO reinforced its social media campaign, with 15 new graphic designs raising awareness on the impact of the pandemic on women and minority communities. UNAMI HRO, jointly with UNICEF, WHO and other UN agencies, launched a specialized campaign to strengthen health protection measures, encouraging the use of face masks through nine graphic illustrations and two rap songs. The campaign reached at least 160,000 viewers on UNAMI social media alone.

During September and October 2021, six



Iraqi NGOs partnered with the UNAMI HRO to inform the minority communities of Iraq in their own language on the human rights impact of COVID-19, advocated adhering to the health protection measures and the need to get vaccinated. The awareness-raising campaign included the dissemination of 17,000 posters translated into six minority languages spoken in Iraq - Syriac (Christian), Avesta (Zoroastrian), Kurmangi (Yazidi), Mandaean (Sabeian Mandaean), Turkmen (Turkmen) and Macho (Kaka'i). UNAMI online, social media graphic illustrations encouraged the general population to receive vaccination, countering rumours and misinformation with regard to the effects of the vaccines.

How did UNAMI HRO support the Government of Iraq in implementing its commitments with regard to enforced disappearances?

Enforced disappearance, both from the past and recent, is a serious human rights concern in Iraq. In support of the efforts undertaken by the Government of Iraq and to promote its engagement with the United Nations Committee on Enforced Disappearances (CED), UNAMI HRO, from 15 to 16 November, organized a two-day training for 25 Iraqi officials in Baghdad. The training, delivered by three international experts, including two members of the Committee on Enforced Disappearances, provided a platform to discuss Iraq's international obligations with regard to enforced disappearances.

To promote the role of civil society organizations on protection from enforced disappearances, UNAMI HRO also organized a separate one-day training ses-

sion with 11 civil society organizations on 14 November 2021. The participants agreed to engage in advocacy and outreach for the adoption of a national law criminalizing enforced disappearance and providing for a mechanism to combat enforced disappearances among other steps. On 30 August, UNAMI HRO also facilitated a virtual roundtable discussion among 11 Ninewa-based civil society activists, including five women to promote civil society activists' engagement on the protection of persons from enforced disappearance and capacity building on documentation of individual cases and conducting advocacy with the relevant authorities.

What is your office doing to strengthen Iraq's engagement with United Nations human rights mechanisms?

HRO engaged with the Office of the President, the Human Rights Department in the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to support the Government's efforts for the implementation of recommendations of UN human rights mechanisms, including the Universal Periodic Review. With funding support from UNAMI HRO, the Human Rights National Action Plan of Iraq was launched in July 2021. The National Action Plan, prepared by the Ministry of Justice and endorsed by the Council of Ministers, seeks to harmonize national legislation with international human rights standards, strengthen national policies for the protection and promotion of human rights, and build human rights capacity within government institutions and is focused to support the implementation of recommendations of United Nations human rights mechanisms. Discussions



were held with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Iraq's Permanent Mission in Geneva to identify options for the implementation of recommendations of the Universal Periodic Review with support from the OHCHR Voluntary Technical Assistance Fund.

What steps have you taken to address human rights of women and minorities?

UNAMI HRO engagement with NGOs from minority communities, their representatives and women rights NGOs enabled awareness raising, protection measures and support for minorities, women and girls. Through its tailored monitoring campaign, UNAMI HRO documented and highlighted challenges faced by minority and women candidates for the 10 October 2021 elections during all phases.

Protection of women and girls from domestic violence was at the core of advocacy efforts in 2021. On 2 March, UNAMI launched a short film, 'Breaking the Silence', an advocacy initiative to encourage efforts to criminalize domestic violence in Iraq, formalize an effective support system for survivors and hold perpetrators accountable for crimes committed inside the home.

The UNAMI HRO 2021 campaign and events during the 16 days of activism against gender-based violence strengthened the ongoing civil society exchange with government counterparts to strengthen the advocacy to criminalize domestic violence in Federal Iraq, formalize effective support systems for

survivors and hold perpetrators accountable for crimes committed inside the home.

UNAMI HRO continued efforts for the elimination of discrimination and harassment based on religion or ethnicity, poverty, identity and other barriers marginalizing minorities and women in obtaining identity documents and accessing basic services. On 21 March, the International Day on Elimination of Racial Discrimination, HRO organized a virtual screening event bringing together the Component Adviser from the Prime Minister's Office, the Racial Discrimination Commissioner from the Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights and civil society organizations to exchange and strengthen existing advocacy efforts in response to this year's theme 'Youth standing up against racism and discrimination'.

In order to address the underlying structural factors that left communities vulnerable to ISIL's extremist messaging, UNAMI HRO engaged in the promotion and protection of human rights of religious minorities to help achieve social cohesion. Through its Peace Narratives project, HRO promoted the engagement and role of Iraqi youth as catalysts for positive change in building social cohesion and peaceful coexistence; developed a multi-media platform to highlight examples of local youth-led peace narratives reaching out to religious and ethnic communities to address cross-cutting human rights concerns and how these initiatives contribute to strengthen social cohesion and foster a climate of tolerance in Iraq.

What are UNAMI's human rights priorities in 2022?

In 2022, UNAMI HRO will continue to support the Government of Iraq, civil society and the Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights to promote and protect human rights as per the Security Council mandate and in accordance with Iraq's national and international human rights commitments. UNAMI HRO priorities in 2022 include:

- Protection of civic and democratic space and creation of enabling environment for civil society actors, including human rights defenders, journalists and media workers through laws and policies compliant with international standards;
- Strengthening the rule of law and fair trial standards through a comprehensive legislative, policy and institutional reform process to ensure respect for international due process and fair trial standards;
- Promoting accountability for human rights violations and abuses, included targeted killings, abductions, threats and harassment of activists, human rights defenders, journalists and protesters;
- Protection and promotion of the rights of religious and ethnic minorities, diversity and inclusive and non-discriminatory policies to achieve social cohesion and peaceful coexistence;
- Promoting compliance with international law and the Constitution of Iraq, concerning accountability for perpetrators of domestic and gender-based violence, and conflict-related sexual violence and protection of women's rights and inclusion of women in decision-making processes;
- Promoting and advocating for endorsement of legislation and policies for the protection of civilians from the effects of violence and insecurity and respect for human rights during counter-terrorism operations in compliance with international human rights norms and standards;
- Protection of children affected by conflict, violence and insecurity and safeguarding human rights of children deprived of liberty.



Resident Coordinator Office (RCO) Development Support Office (DSO)

Although its name has changed several times, the duties and functions of RCO-DSO remain central to the core of UNAMI's mandate to support the Government of Iraq in addressing its development priorities. The Office has four sets of clients: (1) the Government, (2) the UN Country Team (UNCT), (3) other UNAMI sections, and (4) donors and other development actors in Iraq.

Knowledge Management: DSO field staff are local development experts in their respective governorates, providing information about development needs, trends, actors, programs, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and development strategies by the Government of Iraq (GOI) and others. They maintain a directory of local development actors in the governorates, and they publish reports on socio-economic news from around the country.

Organizing: DSO field staff serve as the secretariat for regular meetings with development actors in the area, including UN entities, NGOs, civil society organizations, community leaders, local officials, and the private sector to share information on the ongoing and needed activities at the governorate level.

Facilitation: RCO-DSO acts as the development coordination focal point between UN Agencies, UNAMI, Government, NGOs, and civil society. It also responds to UNCT requests for information that would assist them in writing proposals. Ad hoc assessment missions and conferences for agencies on specific issues are organized by RCO-DSO in addition to following up the action points.

Durable Solutions: RCO-DSO plays an important role in Area Based Coordination (ABC) groups, which focus on getting displaced families back into communities. DSO staff are the secretariat for these groups and follow up with local officials and service providers to implement plans of action to reduce the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) across Iraq.

Advocacy: RCO-DSO staff promote SDGs and community-based development solutions in the governorates through public speaking and participation in meetings and events. The Office also convenes the Development Partners Forum, which brings together the UN, World Bank, and international donors to prioritize their efforts in supporting Iraq's development.

Coordination: RCO-DSO supports the UNCT to run its many working groups such as the Program Management Team, Priority Working Groups, the M&E Working Group, and the Operations Management Team.

In addition to these regular tasks, RCO-DSO also responds to emergencies by providing reports on the ground to OCHA, authorities, and the UNCT.



By RICARDO RODRIGUEZ

Head of UNAMI Regional Office, Erbil

It seems like yesterday, but it's been more than five years since I arrived in the Kurdistan Region to head the UNAMI Regional Office. During this time, I have seen sunny and cloudy days, and even stormy ones.

But no matter the atmosphere of the day, the culturally diverse and determined team of UNAMI always makes all possible efforts to address the manifold challenges and press forward with the Mission's mandate.

Working in the Kurdistan Region (KR) has been a unique experience in my UN career. Unlike in my previous missions, the ability to move freely and the appreciation for the UN presence has made a big difference. Also, the people in the Kurdistan Region and the KR authorities have been quite welcoming and receptive of the UN

presence, which allows our office to actively engage with civil society, political actors, and government officials.

Politics in Iraq and in particular the Kurdistan Region has its own share of complications. UNAMI's political Affairs team in the KR keeps abreast with the political dynamics of the KR while the electoral, human rights and public information offices have provided the necessary support in their respective fields.

UNAMI's relations with the diplomatic community are also very strong and collaborative. There are 25 Consulates General based in Erbil and we regularly meet, providing a unique space to exchange views on the dynamic situation of the Region and brief on UN activities.

In the humanitarian field, the Kurdistan

Region has hosted hundreds of thousands of refugees and IDPs. Hence, the tremendous work done by the UN Country Team in coordination with local authorities to mitigate the suffering of these vulnerable communities.

Throughout the past year, in what has become the norm, I meet with demonstrators protesting outside the UN offices on varying local and international issues; I discuss matters of interest with political parties and government officials. We also interact with people from all walks of life – university students and faculty, civil society organizations, activists and artists – explaining what we do and promoting the UN principles.

I look forward to a very promising 2022 in working with the people and Kurdistan Regional Government.



A trusted partner, UNAMI Basra Office aims to better support the people of Basra

By SERGIY SOBISTYANSKY

Head of UNAMI Basra Office

Respected for its impartiality, UNAMI's Basra Office is making its mark on southern Iraq. We collaborate with a wide range of interlocutors to enhance political cooperation, build awareness of human rights issues and promote socio-economic development. Our activities benefit the local population who are firmly committed to advancing peace, progress and prosperity.

Embodying the international community's continued support to its national counterparts, UNAMI is present, proactive and visible. Our expertise, institutional memory and knowledge of local dynamics have earned us the ability to understand the outstanding issues and contribute to solutions.

This impartiality and trust have opened avenues for our meaningful

engagements. The Office has partnered with civil society activists to tap into their potential in the October 2021 parliamentary elections. They, and the residents of Basra from all walks of life, have managed to draw attention to the many local challenges they face, despite efforts to stifle their voice and courage with intensive intimidation and targeted killings.

As the number of NGOs has increased in the region, we succeeded in improving field coordination among the United Nations and other national and international humanitarian agencies resulting in a stronger footprint in the south. Since September 2021, the Basra team has organized and provided support for the regular monthly meetings on Water and Agriculture with a focus on the provision of safe drinking water in the southern governorates.

In the field of Human Rights, the Basra Office plays a key role in promoting and protecting freedom of expression, the right to peaceful assembly, and women's rights. The Office, working with senior government officials in Basra, Dhi Qar, Maysan and Muthanna, monitors the human rights situation in the southern region and organizes awareness-raising workshops, roundtable discussions and educational trainings on pertinent human rights issues such as prevention of torture, sexual and gender-based violence, and enforced disappearances.

We remain committed to supporting the people of Basra and the neighbouring local populations, implementing sound, progressive solutions to challenges by harnessing the wealth of knowledge, inspiration and generosity of southern Iraqis.



Advocating justice and equality, UNAMI Kirkuk engages a wide range of interlocutors

By **LAURA ROMANAZZI**
Head of UNAMI Kirkuk Office

The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) Office in Kirkuk is involved in myriad meetings with a wide range of interlocutors. We welcome and encourage candid discussions with government officials, support civil society activists to advance human rights issues, stand with youth groups who raise their voices for equal opportunities, and advise national and international humanitarian aid organisations in the implementation of their respective mandates.

Whether meeting officials of the governorate and representatives of its components, or facilitating visits by senior Mission leadership to discuss issues ranging from political and electoral developments to the environment and culture, our presence has leveraged and showcased the rich diversity of Kirkuk. On a crisp morning in December, the

Human Rights Office hosted a well-known women's rights activist. The intensity of her dark eyes outshone the pale colour of her face mask, and as her right hand rose to her heart in greeting, we acknowledged the seriousness of what was to follow: discussing the draft legislation against domestic violence. The activist spoke about the increasing occurrences of domestic and social violence and the need for justice. We stressed the importance of adopting legislation to protect women, of providing a safe environment for survivors of gender-based violence, and of raising awareness around these grave acts of injustice.

Just as we stood with her, so we did with another activist when he subsequently visited us with Kirkuk Representatives of People with Disabilities. With humble emotion and empathy, he calmly narrated the challenges, harassment, disrespect and disdain that people with visual,

hearing, and other forms of physical disability experience on a daily basis within Kirkuk Governorate. The group called on UNAMI to advocate for the implementation of the law on the Care of Persons with Disabilities and Special Needs and of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). We listened intently and reaffirmed our commitment to convey the urgency of enacting the required legislation to our interlocutors.

These two activists are truly an inspiration. They, and so many other like them, taught us humility, civility and, most importantly, optimism. They are an example to be followed.

Through their activism and love for their community, they showed us how much they can achieve and contribute to the development of Kirkuk.

Our engagement with all the people of Kirkuk continues.



UNAMI Mosul Office

Priceless moments as Ninewa beckons

By **ZOHRA TABOURI**

Head of UNAMI Mosul Office

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The Grand Library and the Al Rabea Theatre of Mosul University, destroyed by Da'esh, are being restored to their former glory under a UNDP project, to be inaugurated in early 2022

”

When I arrived in Mosul two and a half years ago to head the first United Nations Ninewa Office based in Mosul, Ninewa was still struggling to shake off the rubble from a brutal occupation by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) - commonly known as Da'esh - and the devastating pillage and conflict that ensued ending with the military defeat of Da'esh in 2017. But since those dark and grey days, barely a year before my arrival, I have witnessed the tremendous will and effort of the people of Ninewa to embrace hope and rebuild their lives. This impressive resilience and unity have resulted in a revival of the local heritage, culture, education and music of Ninewa, and enabled a peaceful sense of healing from the loss of loved ones.

Reviving the spirit of Ninewa was one

of the priorities of its communities, and 2021 was marked by a series of significant political, spiritual, cultural and educational events. The United Nations family in Iraq - political, human rights, electoral, humanitarian and development experts and advisers - rose to the challenge of supporting all communities and relevant interlocutors, from the provincial capital of Mosul to Ninewa Plains and the far-away areas of Sinjar and Telafar, to place the needs of the people above all else, and to engage in rebuilding peace and prosperity in the governorate.

The highlight for Mosul in 2021 was Pope Francis' historic visit to a neighborhood that holds the ruins of churches destroyed by Da'esh, and the UNESCO-led effort to rebuild the landmark al-Nouri Mosque and the Al-Tahira Church as well as heritage houses in the Old City. Another



er memorable moment in 2021 was the Ninewa Peace Festival on 5 and 6 October in Mosul by the Youth project Bytna Association for Culture and Arts. Held just a few days before parliamentary elections on 10 October, the event brought together urban and rural communities from across the Governorate to Mosul in a spirit of togetherness to share priceless moments of brotherhood and showcase Ninewa's rich cultural diversity.

This youth initiative also contributed, with the support of residents, to refurbish several devastated old residences in front of the al-Nouri Mosque. Bytna Association for Culture and Arts successfully transformed one of the residences into a local museum housing handmade crafts and gift shops to commemorate the beauty of the old city and its inhabitants. Finally, the Grand Library and the Al Rabea Theatre of Mosul University, destroyed by Da'esh, are being restored to their former glory under a UNDP project, to be inaugurated in early 2022. Old books and vintage manuscripts found their rightful place on the shelves of the Grand Library, as beautiful music filled the

theatre. Needless to say, when the Watar Youth Orchestra from Ninewa – comprised of talented local beginners and experienced musicians from all Ninewa communities - recently performed in the Al Rabea Theatre, the melodies carried a loud and clear message: Ninewa is undaunted, its resilience is undeniable.

As the people of Ninewa continue to

bounce back from devastation, communities are inspired to think collectively about how to help everyone recover and revive the spirit of Ninewa with the support of the United Nations family. Against all odds, the people of Ninewa remain determined to build a better future. May hopes and dreams for that brighter future continue to be realized.





UNITAD Continues to Support the Return of Identified Yazidi Victims of ISIL to Kojo; Families Lay their Loved Ones to Rest

Bringing a glimpse of solace to hundreds of Yazidi families and survivors, the Iraqi Government and the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ISIL (UNITAD) supported the second return of the remains of Yazidi victims recovered from various mass grave sites in Kojo.

On December 2021, 41 remains were returned to their families in a burial ceremony that was attended by representatives of the Iraqi Federal Government, the Kurdistan Regional Government, local authorities and Special Adviser and Head of UNITAD Christian Ritscher.

The ceremony was joined by the families of the victims, Yazidi religious leaders, community representatives and thousands of Yazidi; many who traveled from abroad to give their loved ones a proper burial according to

their religious and cultural traditions.

“Putting some soil on our beloved ones is a relief for us despite the hurt. Now we know what their destiny is, and where their grave is so we can visit and mourn” a relative of one identified Yazidi victim said.

Special Adviser Ritscher offered his condolences to Yazidi female survivors and families of the victims and assured them that UNITAD will continue to work in partnership with the Medical Legal Directorate and the Mass Graves Directorate to support the DNA-based identification of the victims remains and return them to their next of kin.

In his statement during the ceremony, Mr. Ritscher had commended the work of all those who help identify the victims, particularly the work of Iraqi federal authorities and authorities in Kurdistan region. He reiterated UNITAD’s commitment to holding ISIL perpetrators accountable for the crimes committed

against the Yazidi and all communities in Iraq.

“The resilience and determination of the Yazidi community, of Yazidi women and girls in particular are truly inspiring in their demand for justice and accountability for ISIL’s horrifying brutality” he added.

Mr. Ritscher acknowledged that the wheels of justice turn slowly but highlighted the significant progress UNITAD achieved this year. He recalled that the Team informed the United Nations Security Council last May that it had found, based on clear and convincing evidence, that genocide was committed by ISIL against the Yazidi as a religious group. He also highlighted how the recent conviction of an ISIL individual in Germany for the crime of genocide was “the first judgment in which these crimes against the Yazidi community are called what they are: genocide”.

“UNITAD will continue to build on this

successful partnership with national authorities, you the impacted communities and non-governmental organizations so we can together overcome the many hurdles faced in delivering justice for ISIL crimes” the Special Adviser said.

In response to the emotional and psychological toll such events are expected to take on the families and the survivors, psychosocial support (PSS) will continue to be an integral part of any return of remains ceremony, as well as any proceeding community outreach. During the December ceremony, PSS was provided on site – facilitated by UNITAD and led by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), Yazda, Emma Organization, Free Yezidi Foundation, Nadia’s Initiative and Norwegian Christian Aid. Additionally, UNITAD offers training to national NGOs that directly work with victims and survivors of ISIL to build national capacities in PSS.

This funeral and commemorative ceremony held in Kojo, Sinjar in December 2021 is the second phase of returning the human remains of ISIL victims for dignified burial, by the relatives and community. The first ceremony was held in February of the same year. It follows large-scale excavations of mass graves, including the Solagh mass grave which is often referred to as the mothers’ grave.

The identification of the victims’ remains happens through a series of campaigns that encourage the families of the victims to register their missing relatives with the national authorities and provide information as well as DNA reference samples for identification. The Medical Legal Directorate, with UNITAD’s support, continuously organizes such campaigns in different localities across the country, encouraging families of the victims of ISIL to participate and help accelerate the identification of more victims.

Besides being an important moment on the path to healing for the families of the victims, the identification of remains help build forensic evidence that links the crimes committed against those victims to the ISIL perpetrators, and thus help in turning the tide from impunity to justice.

Potential turning point in efforts to hold ISIL accountable before competent courts



In his first briefing on the work of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da’esh/ISIL (UNITAD) to the UN Security Council in December, Special Adviser Christian Ritscher emphasized that a potential turning point was being reached in efforts to deliver justice for the victims of ISIL crimes.

“If we strengthen our unity in addressing the inherent challenges that the scale of ISIL criminality presents, I believe we have the opportunity to turn the tide from impunity to justice”, Special Adviser Ritscher said, after reflecting on the progress made by the Investigative Team in the last six months, in cooperation with Iraqi authorities.

He stated that it is now possible to envision a new landscape where criminals who previously believed themselves to be out of reach of justice could be held accountable in a court of law. Thanks to the use of advanced technology to build structural case-briefs and detailed casefiles against ISIL members that link those individuals to specific international crimes.

In its seventh report, UNITAD announced that conclusions had been reached in a key line of investigation into the mass killing of prisoners at Badush Central Prison, with the Team finding that these attacks constituted war crimes and crimes against humanity. A structural case-brief finalized by the Team could now be used to support domestic prosecutions for these crimes.

Additionally, the report mentions that forensic analysis of battlefield evidence collected by the Team showed that ISIL’s development and deployment of chemical

weapons reflected a strategic priority implemented in line with a long-term plan. The Special Adviser noted that more than 3,000 individuals impacted by ISIL chemical weapons attacks had been identified, with local medical records showing children admitted for burns leading to death and longer-term health impacts on communities. He added that he will present a comprehensive case-brief that details the Team’s findings and legal characterization of ISIL’s chemical weapons programme in his next report to the Council.

The Special Adviser also informed the Council that the Team has uncovered the inner workings of the central department responsible for the collection, storage, management, and movement of ISIL treasury. He further confirmed that the Team has been working closely with Iraqi authorities to support the prosecutions of those responsible for ISIL financial crimes.

The ongoing cooperation between UNITAD and the Government of Iraq remains critical to the work of the Team, and deeper collaboration is expected to be a priority for Special Adviser Ritscher in his time as Head of the Team.

“To deliver on the promise made through Security Council resolution 2379 (2017) we must put this evidence to work before competent courts”, Special Adviser Ritscher said, and clarified that effective cooperation meant the sharing of evidence must be done in a manner which feeds into competent courts to bring justice to victims and hold perpetrators accountable for their international crimes, in accordance with UNITAD’s Terms of Reference and the principles of the United Nations.



Since early 2020, FAO has been working to measure the impact of COVID-19 on smallholder farmers' livelihoods and issued joint reports, providing regular snapshots of the food security situation, analysing ongoing trends and providing policy recommendations.

Throughout 2021, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in Iraq (FAO) supported vulnerable smallholder farming and breeders' returnee families to better withstand shocks and challenges through the rehabilitation and installation of modern dairy equipment; establishment of small/medium-scale village milk centers for collection, cooling, processing and marketing of dairy products; provision of inputs, including seeds and fertilizers; and introduction of new forage seeds, such as ryegrass, alfalfa mixture, barley, sorghum fodder and maize silage, under the European Union funded project "Support to agricultural livelihoods of rural and peri-urban returnees and communities in Nineveh Governorate, Iraq". In this context, training has been provided to 7237 livestock producers from 214 villages (including 4962 Women) and 3600 farmers on seeds production, post harvest management and business development.

Additionally, peer-to-peer training sessions for extension officers and farmers

were conducted across the country in 2021.

Overall, FAO's holistic approach to value chain development in the livestock sector contributed in 2021 to job creation within the small-scale private sector, empowerment of rural women, increased milk productivity, hygiene and overall food safety.

As sector leader, FAO supported in 2021 the Government of Iraq to enhance climate resilience agriculture through Global Environment Facility (GEF) and Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP) to increase water availability at the farm level and enhance water productivity; and to address land degradation through globally proven best sustainable land management practices.

Additionally, FAO contribute to rehabilitate several parts of Al-Jazeera Irrigation System, including the construction of seven bridges and civil work repairs to the pumping station, within the framework of Northern Aljazeera irrigation project (MA-DAD) funded by the European Union.



Dr Salah El-Hajj Hassan, FAO Representative confirmed that the rehabilitation of the irrigation system, enabled farmers to plant their land and produce a variety of crops including wheat, barley, tomato, potato among others. He highlighted that FAO will continue supporting farmers to increase agricultural production and improve farmers' income in order to reduce poverty and provide a better life. The direct and indirect beneficiaries of this project reached 35 000.

In 2021, FAO achieved long lasting results, through the introduction of renewable modern irrigation technologies under the project "Support to the rehabilitation of solar ground water irrigation-pumping systems in the regained areas" funded by Japan. "Solar pumps are clean, simple and energy-efficient alternative to traditional electric and fuel-driven pump sets". The system represents an easy way for Iraqi farmers to extract water for irrigation, especially for those living off the electricity grids with poor infrastructure around them", Fao Representative said.

FAO's next important and strategic step is to further develop an already excellent partnership with MoA and MoAWR through the EU funded project "Restoration and Strengthening the Resilience of Agri-Food Systems in Southern Iraq", by replicating the successful experience of the Northern project in the Middle and Southern Regions.

Since early 2020, FAO has been working to measure the impact of COVID-19 on smallholder farmers' livelihoods and issued joint reports, providing regular snapshots of the food security situation, analysing ongoing trends and providing policy recommendations. FAO also conducted in 2021 a remote study to track the impact of COVID-19 on crop and livestock production by surveying farmers, agricultural input suppliers, extension officers and government officials. This data fed into a joint FAO and Government led assessment that will inform the development of an early warning food security monitoring system.

To conclude and within the framework of this pandemic, important milestones have been achieved to strengthen veterinary services in targeted provinces in Iraq and build capacity in disease recognition, field and laboratory diagnostics, epidemiology, data collection and analysis, reporting and early warning systems for high-threat animal diseases under the Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) funded project "Improving Delivery of Animal Health Services and Disease Surveillance in Iraq". A robust veterinary service that have improved communications between regional and central Iraqi authorities, as well as with the herding community, will help to mitigate the threat of highly pathogenic animal diseases within the region and the impact of the Syrian crisis on Iraqi livestock.

Overall, FAO initiatives and strong partnership with relevant ministries contributed in 2021 to improving the agriculture sector, creating job opportunities in the rural areas and achieving a more resilient food system.



**A message from
UNDP Iraq Resident Representative**

MS. ZENA ALI AHMAD



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2021 marked the beginning of recovery from the effects of the twin crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic and the fall in oil prices, which wreaked havoc on Iraq economically, socially, and environmentally. UNDP supported the country in addressing the crisis and implemented a rapid COVID-19 response covering 18 governorates, as well as supported Iraq in elaborating its national COVID-19 Recovery Response. UNDP continued to implement critical stabilization activities to support the return of IDPs, restoring essential services and livelihoods, and developing local governance capacities. UNDP scaled up its efforts to improve social cohesion in Iraq, with a focus on the return and reintegration of most vulnerable families. This year, UNDP supported UNAMI to facilitate a successful national election, answering the cries for change that have emanated through Iraq and culminated in a wave of protests. Through advocating for positive change and supporting the stabilization of Iraq, as we look back on 2021 and look forward to a new year, UNDP stands ready to support Iraqis in creating a brighter future.”



What do you see as key highlights from 2021?

SUPPORT TO CLIMATE CHANGE

The detrimental effects of climate change were spotlighted this year at COP26. Our Environment, Energy, and Climate Change Programme supported the Government of Iraq to finalize the Nationally Determined Contributions to the Paris Agreement, including submission to the UNFCCC Secretariat in October 2021. UNDP also provided support to the Iraqi delegations participating in COP26, based on Iraq's environmental priorities of climate change and pollution. Also, this year, three innovative green energy projects were launched in the governorates of Erbil, Sulaymaniyah and Duhok under the Local Area Development Programme, as well as launched a green jobs project in Muthanna. UNDP will continue providing policy and technical support to tackle climate change in Iraq and improve national capacities in both mitigation and adaptation.

SPOTLIGHTING SOCIAL COHESION

In 2021, our Social Cohesion Programme launched the Community-based Reconciliation and Reintegration in Iraq Project to support the reintegration of 9,000 perceived ISIL-affiliated families back into their communities. Additionally, local peace mechanisms were strengthened

through support in capacity building, community consultations and networking with local and national government. Youth and women for peace groups were expanded to 10 groups in Anbar, Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninewa and Salah al-Din with 200 members in total. UNDP trained Community Peace and Dialogue Committees implemented 50 community peace initiatives, and four new committees were established in Diyala and Kirkuk, for a total of twenty-eight. As part of our Citizen Journalism Project, young journalists shared over 300 media products on our "Tanoua" platform and a handbook for citizen journalists on social cohesion in Iraq was released online.

Interfaith religious leader conferences were held for over 300 religious leaders

from Anbar, Ninewa and Salah al-Din, with a focus on reconciliation and Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE). Further, support related to PVE was strengthened through coordination with the National Committee on the Implementation of the Strategy to Combat Violent Extremism at the National Security Advisory on implementation of governorate-level plans and consultation with Iraqi youth. A new training programme was launched with the Iraqi Department of NGOs to support PVE in Iraq, and Memorandums of Understanding were signed with Folke Bernadotte Academy and swisspeace to increase interventions related to gender mainstreaming, peace-building, and mediation with local peace practitioners in Iraq.

STABILIZATION AND DURABLE SOLUTIONS

UNDP is the leading implementer of stabilization activities in Iraq, and our comprehensive approach focuses on rehabilitating key infrastructure, restoring essential services, creating sustainable livelihood opportunities, developing the capacity of local authorities, and fostering social cohesion. To date, UNDP has mobilized over US\$ 1.4 billion from 30 partners, and our ability to deliver at speed and scale makes UNDP the development partner of choice.

Since 2015, UNDP has:

- supported more than 6 million Iraqis by restoring essential services,





- supporting civilian livelihoods, and building municipal capacity.
- over 580 schools are fixed and re-opened, 3.2 million people have better access to healthcare, 3.8 million people have improved access to electricity and 3.9 million people now have access to clean running water.
- completed over 3,000 infrastructure projects, improving access to essential services such as water, electricity, housing, education, and health.
- provided short-medium and long employment opportunities to over 90,000 people.
- rehabilitated around 28,550 homes, helping people return home safely and with dignity.

With ample boots on the ground, UNDP supported the Government of Iraq's response to the COVID-19 pandemic by mobilizing over US\$ 41 million and establishing purpose built isolation centers across all 19 governorates.





WORK ON ANTI-CORRUPTION

UNDP is supporting anti-corruption efforts in Iraq by working with Iraqi institutions through the Anti-Corruption for Trust (ACT) in Iraq. As a result of regular policy dialogue, engagement, and advocacy, federal and KRI anti-corruption strategies reviewed by UNDP in 2020 were approved by the Council of Ministers. An initiative aimed at curbing corruption in Iraq and bolstering transparency and public accountability funded by the European Union was launched in May 2021, building on Iraq's national efforts to improve transparency and accountability across state institutions and supporting Iraq to deliver its national and international commitments against corruption. Additionally, we launched a new NGO Self-Assessment Tool, which was presented to selected non-governmental organisations in Iraq through online training sessions.

INSPIRING INNOVATION

Our UNDP Iraq Accelerator Lab has supported the higher education system in Iraq towards digital transformation through the Blended-Learning Project with the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MoHESR). The Project aims to support the upskilling of higher educational professionals to adopt new technological skills and in-



corporate blended learning into the new teaching methods curriculum for 35 Iraqi universities. The AcLab has also successfully mapped 50 innovative local solutions within the domains of COVID-19 pandemic, education, youth and unemployment, and climate change during 2021.

ADVOCATING GENDER MAINSTREAMING

Empowering women and girls in Iraq is a key focus for UNDP. During this year's 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, UNDP in partnership with the University of Baghdad's Center of Women Studies, established the first National Observatory for the Worst Types of Gender-Based Violence in Iraq. The observatory will serve as a hub of information that collects data

through reports from multiple sources, to study the occurrence of GBV with a goal toward eradication.

This year, we signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Women Empowerment Department to provide technical support to enhance the gender units' capacities in aligning the UN Sustainable Development Goals with gender related conventions and resolutions and to conduct a gender analysis in specific sectors. UNDP also supported the development of a "Women's Safe Spaces Guideline" for non-governmental organizations and trained 195 Social Workers across Iraq to enhance and develop their skills on providing a psychological support to 11,700 women and girls in distress. Our work to improve the empowerment of women in Iraq will continue in 2022.



UNEP in Iraq

In 2021 and despite the COVID-19 pandemic, UNEP continued to work with the government of Iraq to address environmental challenges, focusing on climate change, biodiversity loss, preventing pollution and unsustainable use of chemicals, through technical support to relevant governmental institutions and partners.

I- Climate Change

a- Supporting the Government of Iraq to develop its National Adaptation Plan

The Republic of Iraq is considered one of the most vulnerable countries in the Arab region to the impacts of climate change. In particular, a higher frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, such as drought, sand and dust storms are being experienced in recent years. These events are leading to rising environmental degradation throughout the country, threatening Iraq's progress towards sustainable development.

To that end, UNEP is working with the Ministry of Environment (MoE) and other governmental institutions to develop sector-based National Adaptation Plans that will enable the government of Iraq to effectively respond to the challenges of climate change. Priority sectors including Agriculture, Water Resources, Health, as well as other sectors of Sanitation, Gender and Disaster Risk Reduction were established and have all engaged with UNEP to identify and plan for technical

support activities and multi-sectoral cooperation to formulate and implement NAP processes. This has included identifying areas for resource mobilization, analyzing gaps in institutional capacity to initiate the NAP process, suggesting tangible ways of addressing capacity gaps as well as locating strategic opportunities for follow-up. This assistance is also expected to contribute to building awareness about the NAP process in the country and support the communication of the results to stakeholders both in-country as well as externally. In this context, UNEP has collaborated and joined forces with UNDP to launch a nationwide campaign on climate change which involved civil society organizations, private sector, vulnerable groups including women and youth with a view to raise awareness about the current and future climate change scenarios to increase resilience to climate change.

II- Environmental Under Review

a- Supporting the Government of Iraq to Establish its Network of National Protected Areas to Support a Healthy Ecosystem in the Country

The primary goal of the project is biodiversity conservation and sustainable use in Iraq. Iraq's biodiversity is facing many challenges and threats. Challenges are arising from the need to reconcile environmental protection with development while threats are arising from the unsustainable development activities.

The project objective is to: "Develop and start implementing the plan for the establishment of a national Network of Protected Areas". Milestones for biodiversity conservation are protected areas and a well-structured and managed network of protected areas that can be the key for preserving species and habitats and maintain their viability. Such a structured and managed network is presently missing in Iraq, due to several reasons, of which the most important are addressed by this Project.

Supported by the project, 2 new protected areas will be declared in Iraq – Dalmaj and Teeb, adding 211,200ha to the currently protected 284,022ha as area coverage for protected areas of Iraq, the Government of Iraq is currently reviewing the legislation in order to apply the necessary

arrangements for the declaring the two protected areas. The ongoing capacity development support contributed to embed the skills needed in Iraq for successful management of a PA network and the knowledge about the linkages between ecosystem conservation, ecosystem services and socio-economic benefits and livelihoods. Several training events, workshops, consultations, and technical meetings were conducted as well as several publications, toolkits, factsheets, and technical guidelines were developed to outline the benefits and value added of protected areas and the project is on track to achieve its ultimate objective.

III- Chemicals and Pollution

a- Supported the government of Iraq in ratifying the Minamata Convention on Mercury

UNEP supported Iraq in ratifying and initiating the implementation of the Convention. The objective of the project was to develop Minamata Initial Assessment for Iraq. The project has 2 components: (1) development of mercury inventory, and (2) development of the Minamata Initial Assessment (MIA).

The project established and trained a multidisciplinary team of stakeholders in Iraq, and estimated the inventory of mercury emissions and developed the MIA report by implementing the following activities: (a) calculating inventory releases of mercury in Iraq into the environment from various sources and with the participation of all concerned sectors and preparing the report of the initial inventory of mercury in Iraq; (b) preparing the health assessment and identifying the most important potential risks to the public health of the community; (c) preparing the legal and institutional evaluation and identifying the most important gaps; (d) identifying national priorities and preparing action plans to address them. This has resulted in the ratification of the Minamata Convention by Iraq on 16 September 2021 and becoming a Party to the Convention.

b- Supporting the Government of Iraq in developing National Implementation Plan (NIP) for Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants

UNEP is supporting the Government of Iraq with the objective of developing the National Implementation Plan (NIP) for

the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs). The project has 3 components: (1) development of POPs inventories, (2) development of National Implementation Plan, and (3) development of outreach strategy.

The project established a multidisciplinary team of stakeholders in Iraq and documenting the inventories of 3 categories of POPs: PCB POPs, pesticide POPs, and unintentional release of POPs. The project team documented significant amount of POPs that need to be safely eliminated, and developed action plans for elimination of each of the POPs categories. The three action plans have been combined into National Implementation Plan for the Stockholm Convention in Iraq. In addition, the project has also developed an outreach strategy and a roadmap for submission of the National Implementation Plan to the Stockholm convention Secretariat.

c- Supporting the Government of Iraq in strengthening institutional structure for environmentally sound management of chemicals

Under the coordination of the MOE, the project established a project team at the national level. The team conducted a mapping exercise that looked at the gaps and suggested solutions for various technical, financial, institutional, and legal working groups. Two reports have been developed by the legal team whereas the team has collected, and classified laws, legislation and instructions related to the management of chemicals in Iraq as well as drafted the institutional assessment of chemicals management in Iraq. In addition, a chemical management profile has been compiled for Iraq. This chemical profile will be a basis for Iraq to evaluate chemicals management in the country and make informed decisions on chemical management. Furthermore, several training programmes were conducted to enhance the institutional and individual capacities for sound management of chemicals in Iraq. This has resulted in designing a chemical registry for Iraq and developing 2 project proposals: (1) proposal for PCBs elimination, and (2) proposal for pesticide POPs elimination.

IV- From Rubble to Reconstruction

IOM and UNEP are collaborating in establishing a full-fledged debris recycling

center in Mosul in close cooperation with Mosul Municipality and the Ministry of Environment, after the ISIL conflict left only in Mosul 10-11 million tons of debris. This is possible thanks to generous financial support from the Government of Japan. Mosul's debris recycling center – the first of its kind in Iraq - is expected to be operational in early 2022 and is subsequently to be handed over to the local authorities. Looking forward, recycling goes well beyond conflict debris, and provides a sustainable solution for dealing with conventional construction and demolition waste. Thereby, reducing pressures from environmentally devastating river quarrying widely practiced in northern Iraq, and saving scarce urban land from being used as dumps.

UNEP priorities for 2022

UNEP will continue to support the Government of Iraq to address critical environmental issues. This will be done while taking into consideration the national priorities aiming to reduce environmental degradation and improve the quality of life of the Iraqi people, in accordance with its obligations under various international environmental agreements. Based on UNEP Programme of work 2022-2023 (POW) and the Mid-term Strategy 2022-2025, 2022 priorities will include:

- Advancing climate change agenda through promoting adaptation and resilience pathways focusing on national level planning for adaptation, ecosystem-based adaptation (EbA) and sector-based adaptation.
- Training and institutional development on transparency, Biennial Transparency Reports (BTRs).
- Supporting UN Decade for Ecosystem Restoration and Sustainable Land Management
- Establishing MPA networks and strengthening management effectiveness
- Supporting effective and synergistic implementation of MEAs (Stockholm, Rotterdam, Basel, and Minamata) at the national level.
- Strengthening environmental data availability.
- Finalizing the Strategy for combating pollution and supporting its implementation



UN HABITAT in Iraq

Message from the Head of Iraq Programme

MR. WAEL AL-ASHHAB

UN-Habitat, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, is mandated by the UN General Assembly to promote socially and environmentally sustainable towns and cities. It is the focal point for all urbanization and human settlement matters within the UN system.

UN-Habitat has been working in human settlements throughout the world since 1975, focusing on building a brighter future for people living in villages, towns, and cities of all sizes. Being the focal point for all urbanization and human settlement matters within the UN system, UN-Habitat is also a custodian of Sustainable Development Goal 11, which calls to "Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable."

With a focus on achieving its four interconnected and mutually reinforcing goals or domains of change – spatial inequality and poverty; shared prosperity; climate action and urban environ-

ment; and crisis prevention and response – UN-Habitat is well positioned to help cities and countries to confront even the toughest urbanization challenges, and to take advantage of the opportunities that urbanization offers to maximize positive contributions to overall sustainable development.

UN-Habitat has been active in Iraq since 1996 under the Oil for Food Programme. After 2003, UN-Habitat was largely engaged in recovery and reconstruction efforts, particularly supporting internally displaced persons (IDPs) and returnees through the provision of shelter and reconstruction planning solutions.

UN-Habitat Iraq supports the Government of Iraq at the national and local levels to promote transformative change in cities and human settlements through the lens of reduced spatial inequality, enhanced shared prosperity, improved urban environment and climate change mitigation, and effective urban crisis prevention and response. Through its partnership with the Government and development partners, UN-Hab-

itat works towards equitable access to institutions and services ensuring social cohesion, protection, and inclusion.

UN-Habitat facilitates sustainable, dignified and voluntary returns by rehabilitating and reconstructing houses and infrastructure in the return areas and supporting livelihoods. UN-Habitat also provides technical support to the government by proposing practical methodologies for transforming camps into urban settlements, and ensure protection of housing, land and property rights of all conflict-affected people.

UN-Habitat also responded to COVID-19 with specific focus on vulnerable communities in informal settlements, and conflict-affected areas. UN-Habitat continues to support vulnerable people and communities as well as the local authorities in this unprecedented crisis.

Wael Al-Ashhab, Head of Iraq Programme, UN-Habitat



UN-Habitat Core Programmes in Iraq

UN-Habitat aims to support the most vulnerable in conflict-affected neighborhoods and informal settlements and develop local capacity for better urban planning and achievement of SDGs. In 2021, UN-Habitat implemented six core programmes to achieve this objective:

1. Area-based urban recovery in conflict-affected cities through rehabilitation of war-damaged housing, public spaces and basic infrastructure such WASH, schools and health facilities;
2. Construction of low-cost housing units to accommodate returnees whose houses are destroyed beyond repair;
3. Support to livelihoods and local economic opportunities through job creation and vocational training;
4. Protection of housing, land and property rights of IDPs, returnees, and minorities;
5. Emergency shelter and NFI support to out-of-camp IDPs; and
6. COVID-19 response and planning.

Impact in 2021

- Improved living conditions of approximately 50,000 IDPs and returnees through rehabilitation of more than 5800 war-damaged houses and construction of more than 4,000 durable housing units.
- Rehabilitation and upgrading of public spaces and infrastructure including water and sanitation facilities, health clinics, and primary and secondary schools.
- Protected housing, land and property rights of approximately 40,000 IDPs, returnees and minorities through provision of legal support and recognition of occupancy rights.
- Training of unemployed youth and job creations, more 3,500 people were trained, and more than 20,000 job opportunities were created.
- Enhanced technical capacity of the Government of Iraq to collect, manage and analyse data for better urban planning, and to ensure effective implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
- Supported 9,000 Yazidi families to provide occupancy certificates for their houses, land and property.

Struggling Iraqi mother learns new gardening skills in EU project

UN-Habitat - Ms Shehla Alhialy

Mosul, Iraq. March 2021. After struggling to support her family for the past six years, Nafla Mohammad Ali is now a gardener at Al Yarmouk Park currently being transformed as part of the EU-funded area-based urban recovery programme.

Nafla and her family used to live on a chickpea plantation in the town of Batnaya, north of the Mosul but during heavy fighting in 2014 they fled to Mosul and settled near Al Yarmouk Park.

When her husband lost his job due to spinal issues, Nafla was forced to support both of them and five children.

"If I did not work for one day, my family would have nothing to eat for lunch," she remembers. "I was stressed and completely desperate for an opportunity."

She came across UN-Habitat's horticulture training programme which was recruiting female gardeners as one of the initiatives under the EU-funded urban recovery programme. She says her financial situation has improved drastically.

Nafla is one of the 30 vulnerable women selected from the 410 women who applied to UN-Habitat's "Horticulture Training Programme for Women." Many of the candidates enrolled in this programme are destitute widows whose families survive on charity and food provided by the local mosques.

The initiative provided Nafla and her colleagues with an intensive 10-day long vocational training comprising core lessons in horticulture, including soil composition, plant species, planting, pruning and general maintenance. The training was held in close consultation with Agriculture Department in Mosul University, Ninewa Agriculture Department and Mosul Municipality.

Mosul - Al Yarmouk Park: Ms Nafla the gardener

UN-Habitat/Ms Shehla Alhialy

"You might see me smiling now, but I have suffered much adversity in life. I have five kids, and my only dream right now is for them to have a good education and a better life than I have ever had. I don't want them to suffer like me," Nafla said.

Nafla and other female gardeners from her batch are expected to continue working on this programme for the next year. UN-Habitat is negotiating with Al Rabee Sector Municipality to hire five of the best trainees from their programme as full-time employees to help maintain Al Yarmouk Park. Other trainees will be enrolled on an entrepreneurship training course running in parallel to this initiative.

Once the project is completed, and the park is open to the public, Nafla intends to take her kids there.

"I feel so proud at the trees that I have planted and took care of with so much love. There is something maternal about the way I feel about them. I feel alive when I am out there working with plants," she says.

At a macro level, such public space rehabilitation initiatives contribute to social cohesion within war-torn communities. Free accessibility to public spaces play an integral role in the physical and social inclusion of the population, especially in Mosul's case, where the many green areas have been built over in the late 1980s and many parks are leased to recreational enterprises. Through this initiative, UN-Habitat will restore public access for over half a million people living in west Mosul to the park. The shade of the trees planted by Nafla and her colleagues will provide welcome shade during the blistering heat of Mosul's summer.



UN-Habitat strives to enhance partnership opportunities for area-based urban recovery projects in Heet

Heet, Iraq, 18 October 2021 – The two-square-kilometre Al-Baker neighbourhood, sprawling on the eastern bank of the Euphrates River, is the largest and most populated of the 14 areas comprising the city of Heet in Anbar province. After 2003 and due to the deterioration of the security situation in the surrounding rural areas, many low-income families moved to this neighbourhood, putting even more pressure on the city's limited resources.

During the conflict with the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) from 2014 to 2017, over six million Iraqis were displaced from their homes. Following the toppling of ISIL, many people could not return to their areas of origin due to the extensive damage or destruction of their homes and were forced to remain in displacement camps or find temporary solutions in rented or crowded accommodation with relatives, or unfinished buildings.

"After ISIL occupied Heet district in 2014 for two years, the infrastructure, houses, and public services of the district were destroyed, so we coordinated with the central government, Anbar governorate, Civil Society organisations and United Na-

tions to rehabilitate what ISIL destroyed. Because the biggest problem was in the residential buildings, we coordinated with UN-Habitat to rehabilitate the damaged houses," said Heet Mayor Muhanned Zbar.

"Additionally, we needed to extend water networks, upgrade the WASH facilities in the medical centres and establish parks and sport fields in Al-Baker neighbourhood, which suffered from the lack of many services and deserved the support," he added.

To encourage the sustainable return of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and enhance living conditions and livelihoods in conflict-affected governorates, UN-Habitat partnered in 2019 with the European Union and UN Development Programme (UNDP) to implement local recovery projects in five targeted communities, including Al-Baker in the town of Heet.

Having implemented a set of impactful recovery projects in Al-Baker West in close coordination with the local authorities, UN-Habitat was able to secure a complementary partnership with Alwaleed Philanthropies in mid-2020 for activities aimed at mitigating COVID-19 transmission and enhancing community resilience in Al-Baker East.

Between these projects combined, UN-Habitat has rehabilitated 180 war-dam-



aged houses; renovated a primary school; created a new park and two sports facilities; upgraded and extended potable networks serving over 600 houses, supporting water supply to 4,125 people; and upgraded seven health facilities, including Heet's General Hospital, to protect some 130,000 people among health personnel and community members in the current pandemic crisis.

"Aside from promoting a build back better approach that adopts greener technologies, these projects also contributed to supporting Heet's economy by recruiting local labour, operating machinery and purchasing construction materials available in the city," said Maan Sami, UN-Habitat Programme Officer in Iraq.

Overall, UN-Habitat projects have created over 6,500 working days for Heet residents in construction, civil works and landscaping, as well as offered vocational training for 120 unemployed youth. It has engaged Iraqi contractors, community groups and non-governmental organisations, thus creating opportunities for synergies and capacity building, and organised "soft activities" such as sports activities such as children's activities and planting campaigns.

UN-Habitat's 360-degree approach in Heet to solving community problems through local area development projects has also manifested itself through a lasting trust

relationship with the local authorities, specifically the mayor's office.

UN-Habitat's work in Al-Baker is an example of how the agency uses a multi-dimensional holistic approach in designing and implementing series of high-impact local area projects that, put together, aim to solve community problems, increase cohesion, and deliver on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) such as improving shelter conditions and combating climate change, but also promoting multi-stakeholder partnerships between donors, local authorities, private sector and civil society to enhance the effectiveness and impact of interventions (SDG 17).

As a result, the projects not only have improved living conditions and access to basic infrastructure but also increased the residents' sense of dignity, safety, security. Female headed households specifically highlighted the importance of solid walls and gates to protect them and their children.

Safe homes and safe places for children to play have become even more critical since schools were closed in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, forcing children to stay home all day. With the completion of Al Neجوم Park and its playground, children now have a safe space to go and play, and just 'be' children.





UNHCR in Iraq

Foreword from
UNHCR Representative in Iraq

MR. JEAN-NICOLAS BEUZE

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Despite the challenges in 2020 and 2021, the UNHCR team in Iraq stayed the course and continued to extend support to the most vulnerable with a variety of services
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2021 was yet another year in displacement for around 290,000 refugees and asylum-seekers, as well as almost 1.2 million internally displaced persons (IDPs). In addition to health risks heightened by their living conditions, the COVID-19 pandemic and its socio-economic impact significantly affected their livelihood opportunities – pushing many displaced families into further poverty and risk of harm as they were forced to adopt harmful coping mechanisms, such as a reduction in dietary nutrients, decreased expenditure on health and education, and child labour.

By the end of 2021, many of the 4.9 million IDP returnees in Iraq had yet to rebuild their houses, find a decent job, or have access to quality services, such as electricity, water, education or health.

During my time in Iraq so far, I have met with displaced families, including Iraqi, Syrian, Iranian or Turkish women, men and children who continue to show resilience. Most keep alive the wish to return home one day but indicate they do not feel the security and living conditions in their country of origin would allow such returns in the near future. Helped by our partners and thanks to the welcoming, in-



clusive policies, in particular adopted by the authorities in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI), they survive. More must be done now to make them less dependant on humanitarian aid and become economically self-reliant, like the refugee women who learnt to become pastry chefs at Domiz refugee camp in Duhok, and are now selling their sweets way beyond the camp.

Yazidi families originally from Sinjar and still in camps in Dohuk, along with many other Iraqi families displaced in the KRI, similarly long to return and, in the meantime, live in particularly challenging circumstances.

For the most vulnerable displaced families and those from the host communities that have so generously welcomed them, it is essential to maintain the lifeline provided by the humanitarian community and to scale up the efforts to increase their resilience. It is equally essential to strengthen the capacity of relevant public institutions

to deliver quality services to their own populations and refugees.

Despite the challenges in 2020 and 2021, the UNHCR team in Iraq stayed the course and continued to extend support to the most vulnerable with a variety of services, including targeted cash assistance, child protection services, gender-based violence prevention and response, psychosocial support, primary health care, legal counselling and legal aid including on civil documentation, family law matters, and housing, land and property rights (HLP). Towards the end of 2021, the refugee education integration policy was endorsed by the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) Council of Ministers. Under the new policy, children from the refugee and host communities will sit side by side in classrooms and pursue the same education. The integration will foster social cohesion and advance investment in both refugee and host community areas to provide better long-term op-

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opportunities for children.

Finally, tremendous achievements have to be celebrated. But many interventions are still required by relevant public institutions as well as civil society partners and the UN if one wants to help displaced families, and their hosts restore their dignity and not only realise their dreams but have their rights fulfilled.

Civil documentation support to IDPs: Key to access basic services

Lack of civil documentation is one of the main protection issues experienced by IDPs and returnees. The lack of identity documents increases the risk of rights violations. Iraqis without proper ID are at risk of arrest in particular at checkpoints, limiting their

possibility to travel within and across governorates. Their children may be denied enrolment in schools, or they may fail to receive medical services if they cannot prove their identity. To obtain or renew their ID, IDPs and returnees face numerous barriers. For example, in Iraq, one should travel to their home governorate in order to process civil documentation applications, a requirement which is often made difficult or impossible due to the same lack of documentation or due to well-founded fears of returning to their pre-displacement home. In addition, individuals with perceived affiliation or alleged family ties to extremist groups are required to obtain security clearance as a prerequisite to obtain their civil documents. In many cases, families have been compelled by civilian authorities, security actors and/

or community and tribal leaders to renounce ties with family members who are perceived or accused of being affiliated with extremist groups as a precondition to obtaining such clearance. And in many instances, they remain suspects in the eyes of the authorities who have to deliver them their ID. Assessments indicate that approximately 28 percent of in-camp IDPs, 25 percent of out-of-camp IDPs, and 16 percent of returnee households lack at least one key document.

As part of its efforts to facilitate access to civil documentation, UNHCR supported the Ministry of Interior and Civil Affairs Directorates to facilitate mobile missions to IDP camps and urban areas with large IDP populations to process applications for civil documents and to issue such documentation. In 2021, a total of 22 missions were completed, including five to Dohuk governorate, six to Erbil governorate, seven to Ninewa governorate, and four to Anbar governorate. Access to civil documentation is a key condition for Iraqis to be able to lead a normal life in their own country. Moreover, being able to establish one's legal identity is a precondition to access return grants and compensation schemes under the social protection schemes by the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Ministry of Migration and Displacement. This is why UNHCR will continue prioritizing support to the relevant authorities to deliver IDs to IDPs and the general population to have access to their documents. In 2021, UNHCR rehabilitated civil affairs directorates in Mosul and Salah al-Din governorates as part of its contribution to durable solutions.

Cash assistance to help vulnerable families cover basic needs

Many IDP, returnee, and refugee families in Iraq were already struggling to make ends meet prior to the global pandemic due to their displacement status. The COVID-19 pandemic and its related restrictions further exacerbated their already difficult socio-economic situation.

Cash is a tool which can take various forms to support refugees, IDPs, and returnees confront the challenges they face in their lives in Iraq. For in-



stance, Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance (MPCA) helps families to meet their most basic needs on a monthly basis, trusting displaced families to prioritize their spending according to their specific situation. This way of assistance not only upholds their dignity, but it also reduces their propensity to resort to harmful coping strategies to survive and contributes to the local economy and host communities, thus creating favourable social cohesion conditions. UNHCR, through cash agents, distributes cash assistance directly to displaced Iraqis through their mobile telephone e-wallets and to refugees following a quick biometric verification process using iris scan technology. This allows them to go to nearest service point and receive cash that they can then use as they see fit to meet their most pressing needs.

Families are prioritized for cash assistance through a set of variables used as proxies to assess their level of poverty and vulnerability. Such variables include family size and composition, the quality of shelter, the recent use

of harmful coping strategies, such as child labour, and the proportion of household expenditure on food, among others.

In 2021, UNHCR Iraq supported over 32,000 refugees and 67,000 IDPs and returnees with MPCA.

Our post-distribution monitoring that seeks to review how cash is actually being used confirms that refugees, IDPs and returnees mainly use cash to pay the rent, pay back debts, seek healthcare and buy food. Additionally, cash recipients reported having reduced feelings of stress in the 30 days after receiving such assistance.

To help refugees, IDPs and returnees withstand the bitterly cold winter, UNHCR provided winter cash assistance, a seasonal cash tool, to over 250,000 refugees and asylum-seekers and over 99,620 IDPs and returnees. This assistance supports families to make much-needed house repairs, buy winter-appropriate clothing and shoes, and other items such as blankets.

Further, over 149,000 refugees and

45,000 IDPs and returnees benefitted from one-time COVID-19 cash assistance in 2021. The assistance aimed to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 and cover the cost of basic hygiene items to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Finally, and in a smaller number of instances, UNHCR provides emergency protection cash assistance (EPCA) on a case-by-case basis to support refugees and IDPs who are exposed to imminent risks like eviction or harmful repercussions of failing to pay back debts, such as detention. As noted by a Syrian refugee who benefitted from EPCA: "I was let go from my job during the COVID-19-related lockdown and could not find another job. Debt collectors were coming to my house every day. My wife suggested that we go to UNHCR with the last IQD 4,000 (USD 2.7) I had in my pocket, and I am glad we did! With the grant we received, I was able to clear some of my debt and pay for my daughter's school bus. She's a bright student."



ITC in Iraq

Interview with

Head of Programme, Strengthening the Agriculture and Agri-food Value Chain and Improving trade policy in Iraq (SAAVI)

MR. ERIC BUCHOT **Seizing opportunities in agri-food value chains and trade in Iraq**



To begin with, can you explain ITC's project and its main goals in supporting development in Iraq?

The Strengthening the Agriculture and Agri-food Value Chain and Improving trade policy in Iraq project – or SAAVI for short – began last year and will run until 2025. It's being implemented by the International Trade Centre with funding from the European Union with the goal of contributing to inclusive economic growth and job creation, particularly for youth, by enhancing trade competitiveness in Iraq's agri-business value chain while improv-

ing trade policy.

Our work on agri-food value chains is broad, but takes a particular focus on the poultry and tomato sectors. We're working with local stakeholders to design strategies for improving the success of these sectors in domestic markets, while also supporting value chain alliances and MSME capacities and developing knowledge and skills. More sectors would be supported in the coming years. On trade policy, we're working closely with the Ministry of Trade and other partners to help with the preparations needed to support Iraq in its accession to the

World Trade Organisation.

What are the benefits of focusing on the agricultural sector?

The agriculture sector is particularly promising in terms of their contribution to job creation, sustainable growth, and private sector development and economic diversification in Iraq.

First of all, if we're looking at demand, the untapped potential in domestic markets is considerable and continues to grow. ITC's own estimates suggest that annual demand for products from the agriculture and agrifood sector will be approximately \$5.6 billion by 2025. On top of this, on the production side, there are favourable environmental conditions, established value chains, and acquired skills on which future growth can build. And, of course, progress in these sectors is likely to spill over into other agri-food value chains, creating opportunities in farming, packaging and processing, input supply, logistics, marketing, and other areas. ITC estimates more than 170,000 additional jobs could be created by 2030 with a growth rate of 3% in agriculture production (a moderate-growth scenario).

And what would WTO accession offer Iraq?

Accession to the WTO is a trade priority for Iraq in supporting its economic development and integration into the global trading system. A rules-based trading system, the WTO offers improved conditions for trade and greater predictability for both exporters and investors. Undertaking the obligations of WTO Membership can also help strengthen a country's trade-related institutions and streamline domestic trade related policies that can lead to significant domestic legal and regulatory reforms related to imports/exports. All of these commitments contribute to improving the national business environment, ultimately, making the country more attractive to foreign investors. Acceding to the WTO also brings greater protection for the private sector against harmful trade actions by other countries. The accession process, however, is a long and complex negotiation process, involving wide-ranging legislative and executive actions by acceding governments, that requires continuous political will, extensive inter-governmental coordination across a number of Ministries and regulatory agencies, human resources and institutional capacities.

SAAVI is working closely with the Ministry of Trade, which is leading the WTO accession process. The project has the ambition

to provide technical support to all governmental departments of Iraq throughout its bid for WTO Membership and in relation to all the streams of the negotiations and the related domestic reforms. It is also aiming at informing the private sector of Iraq about the business implications.

You're about a year and a half into the project, what has SAAVI accomplished so far?

The project started with an inception phase which was completed last November. During this period, our focus was on conducting qualitative and quantitative analysis, activity implementation, and building up ITC's field presence. To do this, we completed thousands of consumers, firm, and farm surveys across the country to inform our work, along with over twenty consultations at the districts, governorate and national-level. These were complemented by direct store checks and interviews with transporters, traders, farmers and input suppliers. During a relatively short period of time, SAAVI was able to collect, disseminate and highlight previously unknown data, key for private sector development in agriculture and agrifood sectors. This first phase served to develop a highly localized approach for SAAVI's activities and tailor it to the country's different realities.

On trade policy, ITC directly contributed to reinvigorate Iraq's WTO accession process. Through SAAVI, ITC has strived to create and maintain momentum through advisory and technical support, capacity-building, and by creating a platform for discussion among key stakeholders.

How is ITC working with the other agencies and domestic partners active in agriculture and trade policy?

We work closely with partners in the government and development partners to ensure that SAAVI is aligned with national priorities and that common goals are pursued as efficiently as possible. Further, ITC's work is fully integrated in Iraq's UN-SDCF.

In particular, SAAVI is integrated with other projects falling under the EU Special Measure for Iraq, which are being led by FAO, IOM, ILO, GIZ and UNESCO. As the only development agency, fully dedicated to supporting private sector development and SMEs, ITC through SAAVI complements the work of other agencies, filling a gap in development cooperation in Iraq. We've also been working with domestic partners on survey implementation, analytical work, and other activities, selected based on their capacities and experience.

How has the project adapted to the challenges created by the security situation and COVID-19?

SAAVI has been designed to help respond to the situation created by COVID-19. The panel study on the impact of COVID-19 on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Iraq, which was carried out in collaboration with the IOM and FAO, surveyed Iraqi firms in four rounds in June, September and December 2020 and June 2021, the last of which includes a focus on resiliency and recovery. Its results highlighted the challenges that firms faced throughout the pandemic and how they have increasingly adapted to them by adopting new business strategies, such as innovative approaches to marketing.

We work to ensure that risks to the project and conflict-related challenges are monitored, particularly in the regions where SAAVI is most active. Risk avoidance and mitigation have been built into the design of each of our activities from the beginning. As we progress, we are constantly revising and updating risk assessments and responses. The ever-evolving public health situation, for example, has required planning to incorporate potential delays or alternative modes of delivery.

What next steps are there for SAAVI in the near future?

The next year will be just as busy as the last. We're now wrapping up work on the sector strategies, preparing workshops on market and product requirement awareness, planning trainings targeting young entrepreneurs and others, and working on capacity building on trade. We are also kick-starting our work to support the formation of productive and commercial alliances and capacitating actors along value chains to enable them to better compete in markets.

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Interview with UNICEF Representative in Iraq

MS. SHEEMA SENGUPTA

You have marked your first 7 months in Iraq, which are your first impressions on the situation of children in Iraq and what has surprised you the most?

Iraq has certain contradictions which are reflected in the situation of the children. It is an upper middle-income country, but because of its fragility, the years of conflict, the inequities in the situation of children across regions, across the urban rural areas and across socioeconomic strata are huge. So, for example, while over 90% of kids are enrolled in primary school, only about 32 per cent actually graduate from up-

per secondary. This is a huge lost opportunity for the future generation.

What excites me is the energy, determination, and hopes that the adolescent and young people continue to display. They are determined to make a success of their lives, even those living in internally displaced settlements.

I recently was in a girls' school in Dohuk where the girls asked me for my advice on chasing their dreams to make them come true! This is amazing, the sheer grit and determination, to make it, to improve their lives and to realize their dreams. This in itself energizes me and



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We have continued to witness the ongoing frustration among young people with the lack of job opportunities
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the team as we want children in Iraq to be able to realize their rights and their dreams.

We have lived the second year of the pandemic, what is UNICEF overall perception of the situation in Iraq in 2021?

In Iraq, the COVID-19 pandemic continued to take a toll on the situation of children and UNICEF's programmes. The over 2 million confirmed cases, with more than 24,000 deaths in Iraq is a sad reminder of the situation we are living globally. UNICEF continues to work with the Government to strengthen vaccine uptake as the quickest way to improve the situation. UNICEF will support the Government of Iraq to put people at the heart of COVID-19 vaccine communications and demand strategies, focusing on building trust and confidence and preventing any knock-on effects for routine immunization. By late December, almost 30 per cent of those aged over 12 received one dose of COVID-19 vaccine and only 20 per cent received two doses. We will continue working with

the Government to increase uptake, including the "booster" or third doses that were introduced in late 2021.

Overall, the socio-economic situation in the country did not recover from the repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic. Children and young people, especially those living in rural areas, are trapped, or vulnerable to fall, in a vicious cycle of poverty, disparity, and deprivation. Estimates¹ indicate that poverty has almost doubled, reaching almost 2 out of 5 people in Iraq, with high exclusion of poor children and young people, mainly due to fragmented social protection schemes. UNICEF understands the gravity of the situation and the need of urgent social protection measures. Building a coalition with all relevant stakeholders is essential to address the needs of vulnerable people in a comprehensive manner, while avoiding duplication of efforts. An example is provided by the joint programme developed with ILO and WFP to drive the reform of the social protection system.

During 2021, we have continued to wit-

ness the ongoing frustration among young people with the lack of job opportunities. This is reinforced by a sense of prolonged disempowerment as there are limited fora for young people to actively engage at community, local and national levels. In UNICEF, we are actively working to open these spaces. Internally, we have created the Youth People Advisory Board, including young people from all over Iraq, to make sure young people are part of all decision-making processes within UNICEF, impacting the way we develop our programme for children and young people. At national level, a relevant example is the support provided to the Ministry of Youth and Sport, in collaboration with UN Volunteers (UNV), to create the first Iraq National Youth Volunteering Platform.

From the humanitarian perspective, UNICEF is happy to see the reduction of people in need of humanitarian assistance. According to the 2021 Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO), this has reduced from the estimated 5.6 million people, including 2.6 million children

(1) Conducted jointly by the Ministry of Planning, UNICEF, and the World Bank.

in 2020 to 2.5 million people, including 1.1 million children, in 2021. However, it is worth noting that the ongoing closure of camps, particularly in Kirkuk and Ninewa, led to secondary displacement, increasing the vulnerability of women and children. Based on the 2021 Multi-cluster Needs Assessment (MNCA), around 182,000 individuals remain displaced in camps in the Kurdistan region, while around 450,000 are displaced in out-of-camp settings. Over 1.2 million returnees are still considered in need of humanitarian assistance. Additionally, approximately 250,000 Syrian refugees remain in Iraq, mostly in the Kurdistan Region.

Among the key humanitarian concerns, particularly affecting children, there is a need for improved shelters, ensure every child has civil documentation, limited access to adequate WASH services, and barriers to accessing education.

And if we take a look at the global issues affecting children in Iraq, which ones would you highlight?

I have already referred to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the economic crisis, in addition, the health, nutrition and well-being situation of young children in Iraq is also hampered by the risks derived from the security issues, and drought, all these factors are interconnected.

In terms of health, we have optimistic estimates on newborn and under-five mortality, but significant inequities in mortality and undernutrition prevail across provinces. Immunization coverage have fluctuated in 2021, with monthly measles coverage ranging from 61 to 86 per cent. Despite the impact of the pandemic in the healthcare system, UNICEF continues to support the Ministry of Health to strengthen capacity in the digitalization of the information system and in sub-national financing and budget management.

Regarding education, Iraq has recently seen the return of children to schools, how does UNICEF look at the current situation of the education sector?

The best news for children arrived in the last quarter of 2021, with the reopening of schools, reuniting them with their friends. We cannot forget that schools do much more than teach



children how to read, write and count. It is where children learn social skills as well. In many cases, they also provide nutrition, health, and hygiene services; mental health and psychosocial support; and dramatically reduce the risk of violence, early pregnancy and more. It is the most vulnerable children who are the hardest hit by school closures, and globally we have learnt through history that the longer they are out of school, the less likely they are to return.

UNICEF has supported the Government of Iraq throughout the pandemic to enhance remote learning and we continue to support to ensure a quality and inclusive blended approach. If we take a step back and look at overall figures, access to primary education is high in Iraq, with a net enrolment rate of 91.6 per cent. However, access at other levels remains challenging – for instance, only 10 per cent of Iraqi children benefit from early childhood education (ECE), and children with disabilities continue to be neglected. Other worrisome indicator is enrolment into secondary education. When it comes to lower secondary

education, only 57.5 per cent children are enrolled, while upper secondary is 1 out of 3. We continue to work on facilitating access of girls to school as gender disparities are significant at these levels, with lower rates of girls transitioning to secondary levels. In terms of the impact of the pandemic, some initial estimates from the Directorates of Education have already pointed an increase in the numbers of out-of-school children of primary school age.

Which other important issues would you highlight affecting children in 2022?

Let me highlight two, climate change and violence against children.

On December 1, Iraq officially joined Paris Agreement, a major step for the country on the work to counter the negative impact of climate change in children's lives. Iraq faces significant challenges with respect to water scarcity, being the 42nd most water-stressed country in the world. Access to potable water and basic sanitation varies significantly between governorates and



between rural and urban areas. 2 out of 3 Iraqi (66 per cent) are not served with safely managed sanitation (connected to public sewerage networks and treatment plants), which represents a high risk due to aggravating water scarcity. In UNICEF, we are closely working with the government with a focus on local capacities to sustainably manage water resources.

In addition, UNICEF is calling for tangible measures to address the multiple threats posed by climate change in Iraq, including to increase investment in climate adaptation and resilience in key services for children and young people, to provide children and young people with climate education and skills, critical for their adaptation to and preparation for the effects of climate change; promote meaningful civic engagement of young people on climate change and include young girls and boys, especially the most vulnerable in all climate negotiations and decisions, and ensure the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic is green, low-carbon, and inclusive so that the capacity of future generations

to address and respond to the climate crisis is not compromised.

Finally, we are seeing every day, worrisome violent incidents involving children. We continue to work closely with national authorities to end violence against children, a national scourge, affecting 8 out of 10 children.

Despite a clear legal and policy commitment, there is a long way in Iraq to end violence, abuse and exploitation of women and children. In 2021, an estimated 1.7 people were in need of child protection humanitarian assistance and some 1.32 million people were at risk of different forms of Gender-based Violence. But this is a nation-wide issue, as grave violations of children's rights continued to be perpetrated with impunity in Iraq. In 2021, a total of 227 incidents of child rights violations were reported. Of these, 227 violations affecting 135 children (31 girls) were verified by the Country Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting, co-chaired by UNICEF. Sadly, killing and maiming were the most frequently occurring violation, affecting 123 children (22 girls). Finally, the continued denial of birth registration and civil documentation for children who were born during the conflict or in locations previously controlled by ISIL continues to represent a critical challenge, preventing an estimated 500,000 children from accessing basic services.

You have mentioned “the energy, determination, and hopes that the adolescent and young people continue to display” as one of your sources of inspiration. How is UNICEF going to support the engagement of young people of Iraq during 2022?

In 2022, UNICEF will continue to put young people at the center of our work. UNICEF will invest in, and partner with, over 200,000 of the most vulnerable young people by giving them meaningful opportunities to civically engage and volunteer in their own communities. This means young people themselves will identify and offer solutions to challenges they are faced with, for example when it comes to climate change, gender equality or employment issues. We will continue to listen to the voices of young people and include them in our advocacy and programming too, for example, our work with our Young People's Advisory Group members will

be strengthened, to hold a seat in our office.

In 2022, UNICEF will also further support the systematization of engagement of young people – this is key to sustain change and impact beyond UNICEF-supported programs alone. For example, we will support 50,000 young people to actively participate in local and national decision-making processes, including seeking their vital engagement in the Public Financing for Children Agenda.

UNICEF will also continue to promote and support a robust learning to earning agenda, a vital area for young Iraqis. In 2022, we aim to support over 50,000 young people with access to skills-development programs in the form of life skills, digital and entrepreneurship skills – all essential for a successful transition to productive adulthood. In the same vein, we will accelerate our partnership with the ILO, IFC and World Bank to create employment pathways for girls and boys. Social entrepreneurship and innovation – close to heart to us at UNICEF – and we aim to support over 2,000 of the most vulnerable girls and boys with seed funding to design and implement social or business entrepreneurship initiatives across Iraq.

Let me close with the importance of continuing to work to reduce child poverty in Iraq. In 2022, we will continue to support the Government on this endeavor, including the development of a National Social Protection Strategy which will set the priorities and mechanisms to reform the social protection system, bringing together non-contributory schemes targeting vulnerable families as well as a social insurance linked to areas from non-contributory schemes to health and education services.

Finally, we will also support the Government to transform the social safety net into an integrated cash-assistance system with linkages to health and education services, so poor families receive cash and children are supported to access education and encourage enrolment, pregnant women receive antenatal and postnatal care and children receive immunization services. This will ensure that across the life cycle of the child, the cash-assistance is linked to services.



UNESCO in Iraq

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UNESCO Representative to Iraq

MR. PAOLO FONTANI

“UNESCO has been working in Mosul for three years with its Initiative to Revive the Spirit of Mosul. Our work has a strong focus on heritage and education, including training and job creation. Its focus is people, fostering reconciliation and shared cultural identities. The Initiative strongly resonates with the message of human fraternity promoted by Pope Francis: bring back those crossroads of civilizations, cultures and religions that were part of Iraq’s and Mosul’s identity for many hundreds of years.”

”

Highlights of UNESCO activities in Iraq in 2021

Education

Education strategy: UNESCO along with UNICEF and the World Bank provided technical support to the Ministry of Education to develop the National Education Strategy 2020-2030.

Prevention of Violent Extremism: UNESCO and partners have currently strengthened the capacities of more than 3,750 (2300 females) of educational stakeholders from 130 primary schools in Al Anbar and Ninewa governorates. Moreover, UNESCO conducted 70 Psycho-Social Support training sessions for 450 teachers (126 females). For secondary schools and higher education, UNESCO developed a new training programme and trained 53 master trainers (18 females) to lead follow-on capacity building activities for beneficiaries.

Access to quality education: UNESCO promoted access to equitable and quality primary and secondary education for 130,341 (61,872 F; 68,649 M) IDPs, refugees, returnees and remainees, enrolled 44,983 out of school children, trained 3,435 primary and secondary teachers to teach education in emergencies, PSS, Life Skills resilience and e-learning methodologies. In parallel, UNESCO supports access to education in liberated areas in Ninewah, Salah Al Din and Thi Qar through rehabilitation of more than 40 schools including 40 WASH facilities and annexing additional 20 classrooms to increase classroom capacity. Reaching a total of 200 schools rehabilitated and 100 WASH facilities and 100 classrooms annexed.



Distance learning: UNESCO supported the Ministry of Education's Education TV channel in producing and broadcasting lessons to students who are unable to physically attend school because of COVID-19 restrictions in addition to those children who do not have access to schools in the first place. During 2021, additional 600 lessons were produced covering all grades 1-12 and subjects. Bringing the total lessons produced and aired during 2020 and 2021 to 1500 lessons. UNESCO rehabilitated two studios (for production and broadcasting) and one training/meeting hall and provided modern equipment in order to enhance the quality of production of lectures and broadcasting

Distance learning for teachers: UNESCO further extended its support to the Ministry of Education by providing interactive online training of trainers in the area of distance learning and e-learning pedagogies. UNESCO trained 75 Master Trainers (20F) from the Ministry of Education and General Directorates of Education in Baghdad/Rasafa 3, Basra, Qadissiyah and

Thi Qar. The Master Trainers will cascade the training to 4,000 teachers in their respective governorates

Education Management System and education sector enhanced capacity: UNESCO has developed a purpose-built EMIS for Iraq in partnership with UNICEF. UNESCO delivered 3,000 laptops to schools that are involved during 2021. 92 sets of classroom training materials, 50 online tutorials and 32 knowledge base articles for EMIS have been developed and deployed in English and Arabic. In addition, four different user and administrator manuals were developed. UNESCO Trained 34 master EMIS trainers. These Master Trainers will lead the EMIS trainings at school level. In addition, to providing support to the end-users (schools) and EMIS Call Center has been established at the MoE. In parallel, UNESCO conducted a comprehensive capacity needs assessment for the education sector, reaching over 10,000 stakeholders from the central MoE, governorate-level DoEs and schools including principals, teachers, students and their parents.

Access to higher education: UNESCO, in coordination with UNHCR, NOKUT and the Iraqi Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research have successfully piloted the UNESCO Qualification Passport system in Iraq. The UNESCO Qualifications Passport (UQP) aims at providing refugee with secondary education credentials they have lost during their flight. Twenty-four Syrian refugees took part in the Pilot and were evaluated by the Iraqi Credential Evaluators working with experienced evaluators. Twenty-one of the refugees met the requirements of the system and were awarded UQPs on 27 May 2021 by the Minister of Higher Education.

TVET/Skills development and job creation: 1216 Trainees (169 Female) graduated from the Vocational Training Centers in 2021, and 590 of the graduates got jobs in the ongoing project of rehabilitation in the old city of Mosul, in addition to 856 (33 Female) semi-skilled workers who received on training in Mosul.

Rehabilitation of historical and old sites

UNESCO has focused during on reconstruction in liberated areas specifically Mosul within the "Revive the Spirit of Mosul" flagship initiative. The reconstruction of 112 houses in the old city of Mosul started in 2020/2021 and is ongoing with an estimated completion date by end of 2022. In parallel, UNESCO is focusing on the historical landmarks in the old city namely Al Nuri Mosque, Al Hadba Minaret, Al Tahera Church, Al Sa'a Church and Al Aghwat Mosque as means for reconciliation and social cohesion. Phase I of all the sites are completed and phase II will start in January 2022 with an estimated completion date by end of 2023.





Foreword by

Chief Mine Action Programme, UNMAS Iraq

MR. PEHR LODHAMMAR

“When I in 2017 accepted the job to lead the UNMAS programme in Iraq, I knew of the stark challenges that lay ahead of me. Having worked in humanitarian mine action for more than two decades, it was not unusual to be thrust in the very midst of war and conflict. As a matter of fact, was to be expected and I was looking forward to the challenge.

Back then, the country was at the very pinnacle of its fight against Da'esh, and the promise of liberation could not erase the heavy cost of the conflict, which worsened during the final stages of the liberation. Thousands of lives lost, millions of civilians displaced, and a city, once one of Iraq's most flourishing metropolitan areas, left decimated. Although I came prepared, the sight of

Mosul city, decimated, debris-ridden, harbouring a smell intermixed with death, explosives and war, with the clear oxygen mostly sucked out from damaged greenery, still managed to paralyze me. Perhaps, it was because the city looked completely different than how I saw it the first time it in the late 90s.

Fast forward five years, the city has bounced back from the harrowing scene I saw the first time I passed through Mosul. I have been there countless times, and first-hand witnessed its transformation. Not only in Mosul, but across all liberated areas, these cities have undergone immense change. While more work needs to be done, we must also stop to reflect on how far these cities have come, in spite of the hardships they've endured.

2021 was a great year for UNMAS in

Iraq despite the challenges. The COVID-19 pandemic still maintained a reverberating impact, but we were very much prepared to acclimate to all possible scenarios, and consistently abided by government and WHO guidelines. This year, we finally launched our operations in Basra, our first task in the south of Iraq, generously supported by the European Union. We completed a socio-economic impact survey of our teams and presented the results to our stakeholders, including the Iraqi public. We concluded several communications initiatives championing gender mainstreaming, and released it for our Iraqi audience. While much more was achieved, on ground and in the field, these are the highlights for UNMAS in Iraq in 2021.

”



Socio-Economic Impact Survey and Corresponding Documentary:

In 2018, UNMAS worked with its implementing partners to begin the recruitment of women and the deployment of mixed-sex search teams for its explosive hazard management (EHM) operations. This provided the opportunity to further the understanding of the effects of breaking gender barriers and empowering women in mine action. In 2019, consistent with UN initiatives supporting women's empowerment, UNMAS Iraq saw the potential of its mixed-sex teams to gauge the socio-economic impact of women's employment, and, accordingly, the need for a baseline study. For this survey, the focus was on UNMAS mixed-sex teams in the Ninewa governorate.

In Ninewa, the survey data showed that women of mine action have made evident development in their skills, improved their agency, and felt empowered within their families and communities. In the workplace, they have demonstrated their capacity to the

majority of male colleagues and supervisors. At a personal level, their self-perceptions portray life changing levels of socio-economic-personal empowerment for many of them, and career ambitions by most. Elements of doubt and resistance to women in mine action remain in family, community and workplace environments. Women in this study who are coming from a more conservative environment admit their mine action empowerment is often constrained and expressed covertly given social pressures they feel subject to. Others are increasingly prepared to express their opinions and ideas overtly. A recent, positive development is an increase in inquiries by women and their parents about employment opportunities.

To supplement this survey, a documentary was filmed following two of the female survey participants, showcasing their journey navigating family, work, and community expectations.

Launch of “Safe Home”, UNMAS-Iraq Gender Drama, on Social Media

This six-episode drama took two years in the making, and was much interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. It follows the story of Ahlam, a young Iraqi woman recently hired as a searcher, leading her team to clear mines from contaminated areas in Iraq. The drama focuses mostly on the social challenges faced by women in mine action in the country, telling the story of Ahlam as she navigates familial and socio-cultural perceptions and expectations of women. The story is a realistic tale of many Iraqi women: featuring, a loving, yet overprotective family members, supportive and unsupportive colleagues, cultural expectations, as well as the stigmas faced by many women working in traditionally male-dominated roles.

The drama was launched and promoted on social media and received rave reviews, with many Iraqis, both women and men, finding Ahlam and her family easily relatable. The drama reached more than 310,000 people on Facebook and 360,000 people on Instagram, and was generally positively perceived. The drama can be viewed here. We encourage you to view it.

Finalization of “My Sinjar Reflections”, a Book Compilation Featuring Personal Stories Written by Former UNMAS Iraq Mixed-Sex Teams in Sinjar

The idea for the book took shape in July 2019 when proposed as an UNMAS Iraq initiative with the aim of capturing the personal histories and motivation of those engaged in explosive ordnance clearance in Sinjar, ancestral home of Iraq's Yazidi minority. The staff working for an UNMAS Iraq implementing partner were invited to express their thoughts if they wanted and 26 chose to do so on a voluntary basis. The point of the book was to give them space and the freedom to write a next chapter in the Yazidi's long history.

Virtually all of the contributors to the book were in some way victims of the horror of ethnic cleansing inflicted on the Yazidi community by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), also known as Da'esh in Arabic. The stories vary by individual and reflect the guidance given by UNMAS Iraq: contributors could express their thoughts in a style of their choosing. Some are descriptive, some historical, some inspirational, some very factual, some elegiac: essays, memoirs, poems, but they all reflect personal, often poignant history and motivation for undertaking their work. Each submission is accompanied by a photograph of the author. Many of the contributors to My Sinjar Reflections are women.



Investing in Women and Girls to Rebuild the Nation

Interview with

UNFPA Representative to Iraq

DR. RITA COLUMBIA

Give us a brief about UNFPA in Iraq.

UNFPA is the United Nations Population Fund. It is the UN agency for sexual and reproductive health. Working for Iraq since 2008, UNFPA has been working across the country to contribute to improving sexual and reproductive health services, promoting gender equality and women's empowerment, enhancing youth-related programmes and availing population data for development.

In close coordination with the Government of Iraq, the Government of the Kurdistan Region, and the civil society, and in collaboration with other UN agencies, UNFPA pursues the country's development priorities and strategies.

In 2020, UNFPA launched its third country programme (2020-2024) around UNFPA's three transformative results: end preventable maternal deaths, end unmet need for family planning, and end gender-based violence and harmful practices.

Through our programmes, we advocate for legislative reform to promote women's rights, zero tolerance of all forms of violence against women, and the eradication of practices harmful to women and girls. We also aim to influence policies that affect women's access to health care and train medical professionals on sexual and reproductive health and the prevention of gender-based violence.

Preventing maternal, newborn and child deaths and empowering women



to make informed choices and exercise their rights is key to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) by 2030. Achieving the SDGs will require new evidence-based approaches backed by innovative and sustainable financing mechanisms.

UNFPA works with partners in Iraq on the implementation of priority, evidence-based, cost-effective interventions in order to improve the health and well-being of women and girls and achieve progress on all development goals.

How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected gender-based violence and access to health services?

In 2021, the COVID-19 pandemic revealed the full extent of gender inequalities while creating a set of circumstances that threatens to reverse the progress made not only in Iraq but across the world.

Data collected showed an increase in gender-based violence, specifically domestic violence with women and girls confined to their homes and additional pressures on their family and

working life. Surveys also showed a decrease in access to reproductive health services meaning women are putting themselves at risk of preventable health complications.

What do you consider as UNFPA biggest achievements in 2021?

I believe our main achievements this year were introducing innovation to help protect women, increasing our support to women and youth with disabilities, and establishing partnerships with local authorities.

We brought to the Kurdistan Region in partnership with the Ministry of Interior the SafeYou App which is a mobile application that helps protect women and girls at risk of gender-based violence. The application also allows individuals at risk to press a Help button and send his or her location to up to seven people including the police.

This year, we also supported five disability-friendly health reproductive health facilities and established partnerships to increase young people with disabilities skills and leadership through sports.

Speaking of youth, UNFPA rehabilitated 21 youth centres belonging to the Ministry of Youth & Sports and the Ministry of Culture & Youth and will integrate life skills, livelihood and civic engagement education to young people. UNFPA worked with youth volunteers to rebuild the Ramadi Youth Centre which was once an ISIL prison. The centre is functional today and young people come to play sports and get life skills education and leadership trainings.

In addition, UNFPA supported eight women protection centres that provide shelter to women and girls survivors of violence. Our teams established four COVID-19 isolation maternity wards welcoming more than 25,000 pregnant women with COVID-19. Furthermore, UNFPA is providing mental health and psychosocial support in nine health facilities.

in 2021, UNFPA supported five centres of excellence providing women and families with family planning services. Five more centres will be opened in 2022.

UNFPA also established direct partnerships with Anbar and Diwaniyah, as well as the Secretary-General of the Council of Ministers to enhance response to gender-based violence at the Governorate levels.

What is your message to young people in Iraq and what role do they play in ending gender-based violence?

My message to Iraqis, especially the youth: You are the change-makers, you are the leaders and you are the soul of this country. You are the ones who should actively promote human rights and women's rights. There is evidence underscoring that women empowerment leads to happier, healthier and stronger societies.

The real conversation, in this case, should be around how we can uphold women's right to make their own reproductive choices and recognize women's rights in all spheres of life. You should be the ones to end harmful traditions that deprive girls of living their lives to the fullest. We are behind you and we support you, lead the way to positive change in your communities.



UNOPS in Iraq

Meet

Director of UNOPS Operational Hub in Amman

MR. MUHAMMAD USMAN AKRAM



Mr. Muhammad Usman Akram has over 20 years of experience in the UN system and the non-governmental organizations working in the humanitarian and developmental sectors, with duty stations in Pakistan, Central Asia, Egypt, Slovak Republic, Jordan and New York. From 2016-2018, Mr. Akram worked as the Head of Programme at the UNOPS Operational Hub in Amman to oversee the implementation of the UNOPS programme portfolio in all countries under the Hub including Iraq, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Yemen and the Gulf Cooperation Council.

Since January 2019, Mr. Akram was appointed the Director for the UNOPS Operational Hub in Amman. Mr. Akram holds a Master's degree in Economics from Macquarie University, New South Wales and speaks Urdu and English.

UNOPS has been working in Iraq since 2004, with an impressive portfolio and contributions across a number of sectors in Iraq. Reflecting on 2021, what would you highlight as the major accomplishments in Iraq this past year?

In 2021, UNOPS managed a portfolio of 18 projects spanning all three main areas of our mandate - procurement, project management and infrastructure. The total budget amounted to close to \$48 million, with



projects delivering on some of the most pressing priorities for Iraq.

Starting with our most recent contribution, I would like to highlight the support that UNOPS provided to October 2021 parliamentary elections, where we supported the UN Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI) by deploying around 150 United Nations international electoral experts and more than 450 national support personnel across all governorates in Iraq, as part of one of the largest election assistance projects implemented by the UN worldwide.

Within our infrastructure work, we supported access to critical municipal services and improved safety and security of the host communities through rehabilitation of 12 internal roads, installation of 200 solar street lights, and provision of 582 garbage containers in support of the operational capacity of the municipal services on waste management in Al Mansouriah in Al Khaless District in Diyala.

Given that 2021 was another year marked by the COVID-19 pandemic, in partnership with the Ministry of Health and Environment and our donors, UNOPS worked to support the capacity of Iraq's public health system. Over the course of last year alone, we delivered essential medical equipment to Jala-wla and Dijlah hospitals, and 6 Primary Healthcare Centers in the Diyala and Salah Al-Din governorates, including items like ventilators and oxygen concentrators. UNOPS also rehabilitated and equipped 7 Primary Healthcare Centers in Anbar governorate, providing them

with solar energy solutions.

Throughout the year, UNOPS continued to support our sister UN agencies both through the provision of HR services as well as through the management of the Iraq Information Center (IIC) on behalf of the Humanitarian Country Team. 27 operators handled over 200,000 calls and referred 2372 cases to 56 organizations in 2021. Given its unique position and close connection with communities, partners requested IIC to support the COVID-19 response. As part of this effort the IIC distributed 380,000 bulk SMS messages on vaccinations, launched a radio campaign on COVID-19 played over 500 times across eight stations in Iraq, produced three animations to promote COVID-19 awareness, and produced brochures and posters that were distributed at IOM clinics across Iraq. The operators were equipped with the latest messages provided by WHO and UNICEF so that they could answer callers questions with regards to the pandemic.

How are UNOPS projects contributing to the achievement of SDGs in Iraq?

Our interventions support Iraq's humanitarian and development priorities in a way that maximizes the benefits for the country and its people. From rehabilitating roads, water networks, hospitals and war-damaged shelters to restoring the municipal services and providing renewable energy solutions and peace and security services, we are determined to make a positive impact on the lives of Iraqis. Our projects support the achievements of SDG1 on ending poverty, SDG 7 on ensuring access to affordable mod-

ern energy, SDG9 on building resilient infrastructure, SDG11 on making cities and human settlements inclusive and safe, and SDG 16 on promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development. More importantly, this year, our support to SDG3 in ensuring health lives and promoting well-being for all was reflected in our support to Iraq's health sector both in terms of supporting their overall capacity, as well as focusing our support on COVID-19 response.

As a member of the UN Country Team in Iraq, UNOPS contributes to the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) through projects that promote social inclusion and protection, effective, inclusive, and efficient institutions and services, and attainment of durable solutions.

Looking at 2022 and beyond, what do you see as UNOPS continuing contribution to the future of Iraq?

UNOPS is a resource for technical expertise and implementation support across peace and security, humanitarian, and development efforts. We are committed to helping people and countries build a better future for all through expanding implementation capacity for countries to achieve the SDGs, respond and recover from the COVID-19 crisis, and address the climate emergency.

Our role in Iraq is no different. Since UNOPS started working in Iraq, the critical needs and developmental requirements for the country were the compass that guided our interventions. Through our partners' support, we provide innovative and developmental solutions to multiple issues faced by the country in order to assist the host communities as well as the returnees to enjoy better living conditions and to lend a helping hand to the government of Iraq in achieving the SDGs.

What do you want to say to UNOPS partners?

On behalf of UNOPS, I would like to extend my deep gratitude to all our partners in Iraq, including our national partners, our donors, and our sister UN agencies. Our achievements would not have been possible without their generous and timely contributions. We remain at our partners' disposal for future collaboration for the best interest of Iraq and the Iraqi people.



The United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) continued to run the Iraq Information Centre (IIC) on behalf of the humanitarian country team to empower beneficiaries with the resources and information they need to participate in their own recovery. The centre is the main accountability mechanism for the humanitarian response in Iraq, providing beneficiaries with critical infor-

mation about humanitarian assistance as well as a mechanism for reporting issues related to humanitarian assistance or the abuse of power through its free and confidential hotline. In 2021, the IIC received over 210,000 calls from individuals all over the country. The majority of calls related to legal/registration assistance, cash assistance, and protection. This year the centre has also explored

the importance of the humanitarian call centre mechanism and why it should exist. Accurate, accessible and timely information is essential for people in times of crisis. By empowering people to make well-informed critical decisions, the centre aims to uphold the humanity, dignity, and agency of people who have been displaced or affected by conflict.





An Interview with Call Centre Operators:

At the heart of the IIC lies the call centre, where 27 operators work 7 days a week to answer thousands of calls monthly from individuals seeking a diverse range of support. Ward (30) and Mustafa (36) were both born and raised in Erbil. They have worked for the Iraq Information Centre as call centre operators since 2018 and 2019 respectively. They both got involved after previously working for other humanitarian agencies in Iraq.

What they find most interesting about the job?

"I always wanted to be involved in meaningful work and working for the IIC is an opportunity to serve vulnerable people in my country. Our callers are so diverse and I enjoy interacting and learning about the lives of people with different cultures and perspectives." - Ward

What are some of the biggest challenges of the job?

"People call us expecting us to be able to provide them with immediate assistance. This isn't always possible and some cases have to be referred to responding partners. Hearing daily stories about the hardship that people face is difficult but I feel very passionate about the work and the organization, and if anything, it encourages me to perform the job to the best of my ability to help more people. - Mustafa

"Many callers find themselves in difficult situations and can therefore be both upset and frustrated. I always try to make sure that they know that I am listening and that I understand their concern. We have to learn to always remain calm and maintain professionalism with the callers." - Ward

"I'm taking lessons from their stories and I have learned that whatever happens we can always start over and never lose hope."

Story from a beneficiary:

Naam is the mother of eleven children. In 2014, when ISIS took over her village of Sinjar, in northern Iraq, she and her family walked through the desert for nine days. During the final three days of their trek, she could not feed her children. "By the time we were rescued and got to a camp, we could barely speak," Naam remembers. The camp of Shariya in Duhok, 93 miles from Erbil, in the Iraqi province of Kurdistan, hosts over 12,000 people. Naam's story is one of many who still reside inside camps like these.

Soon after she reached Shariya camp, Naam realized she was not receiving the right amount of cash for food and called the Iraqi Information Centre (IIC) that same day. It took three weeks for the camp to rearrange the distribution of assistance after the IIC contacted them with Naam's complaint. "Things are not perfect today. Our tent is spoiled and my husband does not earn enough for us to move into a real home," says Naam. "But for me, speaking to that operator on the phone was everything. I felt heard. I felt human again."





In 2021, WFP expanded resilience-building and livelihoods initiatives for communities in southern Iraq who are confronting poverty and climate change, and in areas that witnessed heavy displacement, alongside supporting the Government of Iraq to implement reforms in Social Protection and continuing to assist internally displaced people (IDPs) and Syrian refugees. More IDP camps closed and families returned to their areas of origin, or integrated into host communities, however some prematurely relocated families faced challenges in meeting their food needs. WFP adapted its assistance accordingly to support food-insecure IDPs no longer residing in formal camp settings. To help returnee families rebuild their lives, WFP's rural and urban livelihoods approaches, including youth programmes for youth, helped people grow self-reliance. The security situation generally improved; some protests after the October parliamentary elections caused disruptions to activities, but gradually a new leadership emerged. The COVID-19 situation persisted in 2021 with waves of

new cases and relatively slow vaccination rates, and the devaluation of the Iraqi dinar in December 2020 led to food price increases from early 2021. Despite challenges, WFP successfully supported 652,800 women and men, girls and boys across its life-saving and life-changing activities in Iraq in 2021, the second year of the Country Strategic Plan (CSP 2020-2024).

WFP's investment in a longer-term approach to strengthen the resilience of IDPs, refugees and vulnerable people and promote their self-reliance has been three-fold: rural and urban livelihoods initiatives, and youth skills training, reaching 104,300 people and hundreds of thousands more indirectly in the communities. Given the ongoing pandemic, 2021's urban livelihoods activities evolved to support people in need of vocational skills training and work opportunities in vulnerable communities in Iraq. The projects provided small business grants to foster entrepreneurship and help local economies flourish. Rural livelihoods 'Food Assistance for Assets' programmes provided vulnerable smallholder farmers and their communities with key tools, equipment

and support, with an emphasis on climate-smart programmes aimed to help households become self-sufficient again. WFP champions its participants who after returning to their areas worked hard and restored water channels, rehabilitated lands and used modern farming methods to restore livelihoods. The projects also contribute to "durable solutions" in collaboration with UN and local partners under the decentralised Area-based Coordinator (ABCs) approach.

WFP's 'EMPACT' ('Empowerment in Action!') digital skills and English training innovatively continued online due to the pandemic, with EMPACT graduate and young Syrian refugee Ziney winning a Pink Lady Food Photographer of the Year award.

The School Feeding Programme reached 262,100 schoolchildren however remained suspended for most of 2021, due to COVID-19 measures and remote learning. WFP proactively worked with the Ministry of Education to hand over the programme, with a partial transition to direct implementation by the government of 40 percent of operations in the 2021-



22 academic year. WFP provided technical advisory and procurement support informed by years of experience of delivering school feeding programmes in Iraq and worldwide. In parallel, WFP, United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) and partners introduced a pioneering 'Girls Education' project in Basra to help over 2,500 girls from financially struggling families complete their studies.

There were indications that the numbers of people with insufficient food consumption in comparison to 2020 decreased according to WFP's Hunger Monitoring System.

As part of the digitalization of the Public Distribution System for food rations (PDS), the 'Tamwini' ('My Food Ration') smartphone app was soft-launched to a larger audience by the Ministry of Trade and WFP. The app enables citizens to update their personal data using their smartphones instead of

travelling to faraway locations. The innovation is part of WFP's activities supporting Social Protection reform, towards a single registry of families in most need of assistance.

WFP continued to work closely with the host and donor governments, UN partners, World Bank and non-governmental organisation partners, to ensure ongoing capacity strengthening and complementarity of interventions. WFP co-led the Food Security Cluster and Cash Working Group, continuing to contribute to the efforts of the wider humanitarian and development community.

In October, WFP Iraq successfully completed the Gender Transformation Programme for achieving benchmarks of gender equality and women's empowerment across its work. WFP remains a strong proponent of both gender mainstreaming and conflict sensitivity in all aspects of its programmes.





Introduction

Founded in 1948, WHO is the United Nations agency that connects nations, partners and people to promote health, keep the world safe and serve the vulnerable – so everyone, everywhere can attain the highest level of health. To do so, WHO leads global efforts to expand universal health coverage, directs and coordinates the world's response to health emergencies, and promotes healthier lives.

For many years, WHO has supported the Ministry of Health in Iraq in health systems strengthening, health protection and promotion efforts, response to emergencies and public health priorities, prevention and control of communicable and noncommunicable diseases, and maternal and child health improvement.

COVID-19 response:

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, WHO worked hand in hand with the Ministry of Health to control the epidemic by establishing a coordination mechanism, focusing on preparedness and response, active surveillance and contact tracing, risk communication, training, testing and verification, case management and provision of medical supplies.

In 2021, WHO repurposed its team to guide and support the government's preparedness and response to the COVID-19 pandemic, including the launching of the vaccination services alongside the national health authorities, and in collaboration with key partners like UNICEF, the World Bank and other health actors during the year. By the end of 2021, more than 8.5 million people were vaccinated, including vulnerable groups and people living in hard-to-reach areas. Moreover, the vaccine uptake activities were intensified in 2021 by a Mass Vaccination Campaign launched by WHO and the Ministry of Health in all the Iraqi gover-

norates, where engaging communities in the COVID-19 vaccination rollout process has yielded a strong progress towards achieving the country's vaccination targets.

WHO also worked collaboratively with all partners on the timely procurement and delivery of COVID-19 vaccines. More doses of WHO-approved vaccines arrived over the year, including over 6 million doses procured for Iraq through the WHO supported COVAX Facility.

Health system strengthening:

The priorities for health system development in Iraq are based on the framework for action on advancing universal health coverage (UHC).

A significant objective of WHO support to Iraq was to provide technical and financial support for developing and implementing evidence-based health policies capable of making substantial contributions to UHC.

In 2021, WHO Iraq provided capacity building for 490 health workers and health experts in terms of the chemical



safety road map, guidelines of hypertension, diabetes, HEARTS protocols, primary health care measurement and improvement, WASH capacity building, System for Health Accounts 2011 (SHA 2011) and Health Accounts Production Tool (HAPT) to strengthen health financing dimension of universal health coverage, calculation of excess mortalities during the pandemic, and integration NCD services into primary healthcare services.

Communicable diseases:

WHO has supported the Ministry of Health (MoH) technically and logistically during the COVID-19 pandemic to control communicable diseases, including tuberculosis (TB), hepatitis, HIV/AIDS and neglected tropical diseases.

In 2021, the WHO and the MoH started a strategic partnership to tackle the ever-growing burden of Anti-Microbial Resistance (AMR) in Iraq and globally. A strategy was developed, and its implementation was initiated with investment in Infection Control and Prevention in selected Hospitals and Health Centers across the country.

Reproductive, maternal newborn child and adolescent health (RMNCAH):

In 2021, WHO supported the Ministry of Health in the provision of the quality reproductive, maternal newborn, child and adolescent health (RMNCAH) services through building the capacity of health care providers and having a pool of trainers on the updated WHO guideline of family planning, provision of adolescent-friendly health services, integrated management of childhood illnesses (IMCI), infant and young child feeding counselling, management of severe acute malnutrition of U-5 children (SAM) and growth monitoring of U-5 children.

Risk Communications and Community engagements (RCCE):

In response to the COVID-19 crisis, WHO, in cooperation with the Ministry of Health, targeted and reached more than 8,000,000 people by disseminating various health related messages and aware-

ness raising materials including 12 videos and 20 promotional cartoon materials with a focus on refugees, IDPs, and those who did not get MoH vaccine appointment message.

RCCE workshops were conducted with 120 faith leaders, tribe leaders, and educators from 12 governorates, emphasizing the importance of adhering to prevention measures, taking the vaccinations, and communicating health messages with their communities. This activity was instrumental in making a step change in health seeking behavior across Iraq and enabled a significant progress in the control of the pandemic in the country.

Donors contribution:

In 2020/21, WHO Iraq received a total of US\$53 million from its donors, out of which US\$31 million was for the COVID-19 response, and the remaining was for sustaining the provision of humanitarian health services to the most vulnerable. The contributions were received from donors such as BHA, Kuwait, ECHO, Germany, BPRM, Canada, UNOCHA, USAID, Norway, Italy and Saudi Arabia.



In 2021, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) focused on supporting Iraq in strengthening international and regional cooperation and facing drug trafficking, criminal networks, terrorism, human trafficking, border management, corruption and more.

International cooperation a means to halt transnational drug trafficking and criminal networks

UNODC supported the Government of Iraq, specifically the Ministry of Interior and the Iraqi Anti-Narcotics Directorate including the General Director, with two study visits to the cities of Paris and Marseille in France to enhance its efforts to counter cross-border drug trafficking.

UNODC, through the U.S. State Department's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) funded project "Strengthening the capacities of Iraqi law enforcement and criminal investigation services", has

been delivering technical assistance to support the Iraqi law enforcement agencies in addressing organized crime and terrorism challenges, with a special focus on combatting drug trafficking.

UNODC and the Government of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRG) address threats posed by foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs)

UNODC and the KRG, with support from the United States of America (USA), Launched the first Training workshop on the "Risks and Needs Assessment (RNA) Protocols in Prisons and the Related Sentence Planning, and Developing policies and protocols for the implementation and operation of a specified risk and needs assessment for terrorist and FTF prisoners" for the managers and staff of the prisons and reform centers under the jurisdiction of the Kurdistan Regional Government. This workshop is within the Framework of the Returning Foreign Terrorist Fighter Detention Programme (FTF) implemented by the UNODC Regional

Office for the Middle East and North Africa (ROMENA).

The programme aims to enhance the capacities of partner Government Ministries and Departments to manage threats posed by foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) through providing technical assistance to the sector of Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice. Furthermore, the programme aims at developing tailored and gender-sensitive strategies to address and counter-terrorist narratives within the prison system, consistent with national priorities, international humanitarian law and human rights law, as applicable and in accordance with relevant international law such as United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, known as (the Nelson Mandela Rules).

To dissociate from trauma, victims of terrorism depict themselves as a faceless body – a new UNODC project helps in their recovery

At a workshop providing psychological



support to victims of terrorism, Narin (not her real name) pictured herself as a body without a face. "I was abducted by ISIL at the age of 17 and was sold and raped by a dozen men," she says. "To this day, I still do not know what the fate of my abducted mother is, I still don't know if she is dead or alive," she adds. To help victims like Narin through legal and psychological support, UNODC, together with the Lebanese Association for Victims of Terrorism (AVT-L) is implementing a new project funded by the Dutch government.

At the launch event of the initiative, which brought together 21 Iraqi policymakers and senior criminal justice officials, an officer from law enforcement authorities said, "Iraq is home to more than 70,000 victims [of terrorism]. If we want to help communities affected by ISIL, law enforcement and criminal justice need to join forces to support displaced individuals and families who lost everything."

Following psychological counselling, Narin managed to reconnect with her feelings and emotions from before the abduction, an important first step towards her psychological recovery. "I was able to picture

my mother sitting down next to me and stroking my hair so gently," she said.

Through this new project, UNODC and the AVT-L are working on enhancing national capacity to guarantee victims' rights during criminal proceedings and to promote the rehabilitation process and empowerment of victims of terrorism within their communities through psychological support. Victims of terrorism have the potential to become messengers for peace, if provided with the necessary protection, assistance, and tools, to support countering terrorist narratives and the justifications used to incite violence. This project is honouring the strength and resilience of these victims and their families and supporting them to recollect the pieces of a life that got shattered while ensuring their needs and rights are safeguarded in the judicial system.

Launch of STRIVE Juvenile in Iraq to combat terrorist and violent extremism recruitment and exploitation of children

The Government of Iraq, together with

the EU and UNODC, launched the STRIVE Juvenile project in Iraq with the aim to develop and implement comprehensive national responses to prevent and counter-terrorism and violent extremism affecting children and juveniles.

The so-called Islamic State (ISIL) recruited thousands of children and juveniles in Iraq, using them as front-line fighters, as suicide bombers, to manufacture and plant explosive devices, conduct patrols, as guards and spies, and for a variety of support roles. Hundreds of foreign children and juveniles were also associated with ISIL, either traveling to Iraq alone or brought by family members.

Since 2019, the Government of Iraq has been implementing stabilization, reconciliation, and accountability programmes to strengthen locals' ability to counter terrorist radicalization and recruitment. Nevertheless, many ISIL-alleged affiliated/associated children and juveniles remained in Iraqi custody along with Iraqi ISIL fighters. Therefore, the Government of Iraq has expressed the urgent need to tackle the situation of children and young people who are currently in detention for



alleged affiliation/association with terrorist groups and has acknowledged that the promotion of their rehabilitation and reintegration, as well as the provision of fair and equal justice, are important to prevent future terrorist radicalization and violence.

UNODC supports Iraq's Border Management in Trebil

A unique and strategic point, the Trebil border crossing point (BCP) is the only official entry point to Jordan from Iraq. Trade movements at BCP came to a complete stop as a result of the conflict with the terrorist organization the "Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant" (ISIL) and started again in 2017. An enhanced and stronger Trebil border crossing point means increasing legitimate trade, preventing cross-border movement of illicit goods, and countering transnational organized crime. Rebuilding the BCP is a government priority as Iraq pursues sustainable development.

With generous support from the European Union, UNODC and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) are implementing a project titled "Enhancing the Capacity of the Government of Iraq at Trebil Border Crossing Point". As part of this project, customs and other law enforcement officers working at the

Trebil BCP in Iraq and the Karameh BCP in Jordan took part in in-depth training. The activity was organized by UNODC, IOM Iraq, and the World Customs Organization (WCO).

Safe Airports for a Safer Iraq: AIRCOP webinars on pre and frontline identification of suspicious passengers

Terrorist organizations and organized criminal groups have long focused on using borders to move suspicious passengers and illicit goods without being detected such as through aircrafts, ships, or containers. It is thus key to hold effective tracking and identifying mechanisms and to adopt a layered approach to aviation security in international airports.

With this approach in mind, UNODC and Interpol, as part of the AIRCOP project and thanks to funding from the Government of Japan, have delivered a series of virtual trainings to around 70 law enforcement officials operating at Iraqi international airports on tools and techniques to identify suspicious passengers and goods.

UNODC facilitates judicial exchange on the requirements for the protection of victims of human trafficking

Protecting victims of human trafficking

during the investigation and trial phases is the cornerstone of an effective criminal justice response. Too often, victims of human trafficking are not identified in the first place, and when they are identified, their rights are not respected during their interviews and testimony, as well as post-trial. Victims should be informed of their rights, should not face punishment including criminalization, detention, deportation, or other sanctions on account of crimes they were compelled to commit or were directly related to their exploitation.

The UNODC Global Action against Trafficking in Persons and the Smuggling of Migrants (GLO.ACT-Asia and the Middle East), funded by the EU, brought 9 judges from across Iraq to Cairo, Egypt, for a 3-day exchange with Egyptian judges and officials on the legal and judicial requirements for the protection of victims of human trafficking. The Iraqi judges included men and women trial and appeal court judges from across the country, including 2 judges from the Kurdistan region.

GLO.ACT facilitates a workshop on legislation and possible solutions to counter migrant smuggling

The issue of migrant smuggling and how best to address this crime has gained momentum in Iraq. To support Iraqi coun-

terparts UNODC, under the framework of the GLO.ACT Programme, organized a workshop bringing together a diverse group of governmental stakeholders to identify pathways likely to facilitate the drafting of national legislation on the Smuggling of Migrants (SOM).

During the workshop, representatives from the State Council, the Higher Judicial Council, various departments of the Ministry of Interior, including the Anti-Trafficking in Persons (TIP) unit and its sub-offices, the Ministry of Migration and Displacement, which has SOM as its mandate, discussed the importance to draft legislation that is contextualized and addresses the needs of returning vulnerable migrants.

The workshop also allowed participants to hear about what steps other Member States have undertaken to meet their international obligations under the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

Iraqi Anti-Crime Officials Strengthen Cooperation with UNODC and Austrian Police

Senior Iraqi police officers have arrived in Austria to meet with experts from UNODC to exchange expertise and discuss ways to cooperate closely to tackle the crimes of human trafficking and migrant smuggling. This is under the banner of UNODC's EU funded GLO.ACT Programme.

During the one-week visit, the officials will also spend time at the Joint Operation Office (JOO) of the Austrian Federal Police Authority, where they will learn about innovative investigative techniques and approaches to international police cooperation.

The JOO is the central anti-human trafficking and migrant smuggling agency in Austria. It works closely with other law enforcement agencies in the Member States of the European Union and countries outside of the E.U, including Iraq.

Stronger forensic services: Iraq and UAE exchange forensic experience and knowledge

As part of the project "Strengthening the Capacities of Iraqi Law Enforcement and



Criminal Investigation Services (2020-2023)," funded by the U.S. Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL), UNODC organized a study tour for nine Iraqi forensic experts to the Emirati forensic services. The Iraqi team was made of crime scene and narcotics forensic experts' part of the Ministry of Interior (MoI) and the Ministry of Health (MoH).

Some of the study tour's foreseen short-term and long-term achievements include the development of recommendations by the Iraqi delegation based on the outcome of the visit, the creation of a forensic networking channel focused on tackling criminal networks related to narcotics and psychotropic substances and the establishment of cooperation mechanisms for forensic intelligence and information exchange. The tour was hosted by the General Department of Forensic Science and Criminology (GD-FRC) in Dubai.

The Iraqi delegation, represented by Major-General Raheem Hashim Mohammed noted that the "UAE and Iraq have a lot of mutual similarities and a shared vision for the future. Developing strong expertise in forensics is crucial for our security forces to be able to face challenges that target our nation."

Mr. Raheem affirmed that "Crime is rapidly advancing. We should aim to develop forensics and use new techniques and

equipment that are important to analyze forensic evidence. Developing our capacities will be beneficial to the whole country. This visit is the main foundation for building a future for forensic services in Iraq, I'm confident this will enable us to counter illicit trafficking and organized crime more effectively."

Countering Corruption and Promoting Integrity in the Private Sector in Egypt, Iraq, and Libya

UNODC organized, in collaboration with the Egyptian Anti-Corruption Academy, the Iraqi Anti-Corruption Academy and the Libyan Ministry of Economy and Industry, three training workshops in Egypt, Iraq and Libya under the theme "Countering Corruption and Promoting Integrity in the Private Sector" with the participation of 59 representatives from the Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and with national counterparts working in the field of addressing corruption. These workshops were held within the framework of the project "Strengthening the Private Sector Capacity to Prevent Corruption and Enhance Integrity in the Arab Countries", funded by Siemens Integrity Initiative and being implemented by UNODC in six Arab countries; Egypt, Iraq, Libya, Morocco, Sudan and the UAE.



IOM in Iraq

Interview with IOM Iraq Chief of Mission

MR. GIORGI GIGAURI

IOM Iraq was established in 2003 and has more than 1,500 staff working in Baghdad, Erbil, Basra, Mosul and other sub-offices in key locations. IOM works in cooperation with the Government of Iraq to provide support across Iraq's 18 governorates.

IOM is a member of both the UN Humanitarian Country Team (UNHCT) and the UN Country Team (UNCT). As a member of the UNCT, IOM led the Programme Management Team (PMT) overseeing the development of the UNSDCF for 2020 – 2024, before handing over this position to UN-HABITAT in July 2021. IOM is still involved in the PMT through membership of all five Priority Working Groups (PWGs) and co-chair of PWG 2 (Growing the Economy for All) as well as PWG 5 (Achieving Durable Solutions). Additional coordination roles for IOM include: co-lead for the Camp Coordination and Camp Management Cluster (CCCM); co-lead of the sub-national Central/South Shelter-NFI Cluster; co-lead of the Durable Solutions Task Force (DSTF) since 2020; and coordinator of the national UN Network on Migration.

In 2021, Giorgi Gigauri joined IOM Iraq as the new Chief of Mission, based in Baghdad. In this capacity, he is also the Coordinator of the United Nations Network on Migration and Co-Chair of the UN Durable Solutions Taskforce.





The International Organization for Migration is committed to the principle that humane and orderly migration benefits migrants and society. 2021 was an important year for Iraq in terms of progress towards the Global Compact for Migration's objectives. What were the main achievements?

The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) is the first inter-governmentally negotiated agreement that covers all dimensions of international migration. We at IOM welcomed Iraq's decision to join the Champion countries initiative in solidarity with the GCM this February.

In March, the UN Network for Migration – through which IOM and other UN Agencies will support implementation, follow-up and review of the GCM – was formally launched in Iraq. It's a crucial framework for migration governance, and Iraq's engagement shows an ongoing commitment to strengthening migration management for the benefit of all.

In 2021, one of the most prominent migration stories concerned the men, women and children stranded at the border between Belarus and the European Union. How did IOM respond?

The difficult situation of migrants stranded at the border between Belarus and several EU countries could not be ignored. Indeed, of the hundreds stranded, it is believed that the majority were Iraqis. We had serious concerns for their welfare, especially for the vulnerable individuals in the group.

In line with the Government of Iraq's efforts, IOM worked with partners to scale up assistance for the stranded migrants, providing them humanitarian aid at the border and expanding opportunities for their voluntary return to Iraq.

The unfolding situation shows that IOM's commitment to promoting safe, orderly and regular migration is more crucial than ever. Respect for the rights, dignity and well-being of migrants must remain paramount.

Within Iraq's borders, a majority of the six million people displaced by the ISIL crisis have returned to areas of origin but many still need assistance with returns and other solutions. What work did IOM do in support of IDPs who needed help to return home?

In 2021, IOM helped facilitate the voluntary return of 1,142 families, a significant

increase from the 280 we were able to assist in 2020. We set up help desks in areas where IDPs are living, to help interested households register for assistance to depart voluntarily, and offered other forms of support — including referrals for help with missing civil documents and resources to assist those facing protection issues such as discrimination and gender-based violence. In coordination with health actors, IOM organized pre-departure health screenings and other medical assistance.

IOM teams also monitored returnees and host community members to better understand how they feel about the support received and the success of these operations.

With support from the Government of Iraq and IOM's generous donors, these families are now able to reintegrate into their areas of origin or relocate somewhere new, moving towards enduring, sustainable solutions to their displacement and thus contributing more broadly to post-conflict recovery in Iraq.

What humanitarian assistance was IOM Iraq able to provide in 2021, and what other types of projects did you implement?



As in previous years, IOM continued to intervene across the whole spectrum of humanitarian assistance for IDPs, returnees and host communities, operating in formal camp locations, informal displacement sites, out-of-camp locations and return communities, as well. Teams provided Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) services, shelter assistance, non-food items, Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS),

protection case management and protection monitoring services. We also supported the national response to the COVID-19 outbreak by providing essential health care services.

Throughout 2021, IOM strove to facilitate access to durable solutions to displacement – including return to areas of origin – and continue providing humanitarian assistance to IDPs in camps and informal settlements who are still unable or unwill-

ing to leave. Through our Peacebuilding and Stabilization Division, IOM provided IDPs and returnees in severely impacted areas with MHPSS services, as well as protection and legal assistance – including support to access civil documentation and other basic rights. IOM also worked to strengthen relations between divided communities through support to local peacebuilding mechanisms and helped IDPs facing tribal issues in their areas of





origin to find solutions through scaled-up tribal engagement efforts.

Thanks to a large base of donors and partners, IOM was able to maintain its humanitarian programming while expanding development programming and activities to re-establish community stability.

The ISIL crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic both had a significant impact on the Iraqi economy. How did IOM support the government's response plan in 2021?

Indeed, 2021's economic slowdown undermined the gradual progress made in Iraq toward economic recovery since the end of the ISIL conflict – the end of

two years of sustained economic growth. IOM continued to provide a wide range of assistance to help address returnee and host community needs, such as insufficient economic opportunities, to support sustainable reintegration. Specifically, medium- and short-term employment opportunities were supported through the provision of individual livelihoods assistance, which aims to enhance employability skills and create jobs through micro-enterprises.

IOM also provided Enterprise Development Fund (EDF) grants to businesses seeking to expand their operations, thus creating 1,674 new jobs. A total 364 small and medium enterprises (SMEs) were

supported with over 6 million USD, contributing overall to economic recovery in areas of return and origin, and enabling both returnees and host communities to improve their conditions.

During 2021, IOM celebrated the milestone achievement of 1,000 SMEs supported with EDF grants since the fund was launched in 2018, a testament to the programme's expansive reach, which has helped create 4,975 jobs for men and women — returnees and host community members alike — in key economic sectors across Iraq.

What is IOM looking forward to in 2022?

In 2022, IOM Iraq will finalize its three-year mission strategy (2022-2024) in line with IOM's global vision. Under this new strategic direction, we will prioritize three main pillars: Resilience, Mobility and Governance. These pillars relate to our ability to prevent and respond to drivers of displacement and forced migration, address the mobility concerns of migrants and enhance national migration governance capacity.

Following the significant adoption of the Law on Yazidi Female Survivors in March 2021, IOM – which supported Iraqi stakeholders in the process of drafting the law and designing a reparations framework for survivors of the ISIL crisis – will also continue working with the newly established Directorate of Survivors' Affairs to deliver reparations to survivors of conflict-related sexual violence.





UNIDO in Iraq

UNIDO continues to promote social stability and economic recovery in Iraq

UNIDO continues to promote social stability and economic recovery in Iraq. In 2021, UNIDO closed two projects and started implementation of one.

Closed project 1:

Human story: The story of Ibrahim

Ibrahim Abdulkarim is one of the beneficiaries of the Japan-funded project. He recently completed a course on mobile repair and now put his skills and new equipment to use. Ibrahim and his family are Kurds from Mosul and were thus targets of the country's sectarian conflict; they had to leave and managed to reach Sheikhan, a town in the Kurdistan Region.

Ibrahim was only 12 years old when the family fled, but he needed to work to help support his family and began selling phone accessories with his older brother. He now got the chance to participate in a UNIDO training course on mobile repairs and basic programming. All beneficiaries received a repair kit in-

cluding tools, multimeter, and DC power supply. "My equipment is carefully set up in my brother's small shop", said Ibrahim. "I'm very happy with the course as I learned some very useful skills".

The UNIDO course has given him and other beneficiaries the formal training that they had to miss, thus setting them up on promising career paths. And by changing one life, the Japanese-funded project changed his world.

Closed project 2

Human Story: The story of Nour Wahab

When Nour Wahab first arrived in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, after fleeing her hometown of Amude, Syria in 2013, she was scared in unfamiliar surroundings and painfully shy. It took her several years to settle into her new home in a refugee camp in Akre.

Three years ago, she began to design and make traditional Kurdish dresses for herself, returning to a hobby she had dabbled in when living in Syria. Other women saw Khalil wearing her designs and asked her to make dresses for them. Slowly, she developed a business that grew by word of mouth.

To take her business to another level, Khalil enrolled in the UNIDO training programme, where she has blossomed. "The main thing that was useful for me was to talk to people, to not be shy," the 33-year-old explained. "I have problems to even greet or talk to people from my extended family. I was shy. But this training taught me how to be confident and assertive."

In the training, she is putting together a business plan, designing logos, planning a marketing strategy, and creating a budget. She's also making friendships that will



last after the training is finished. “Now, I had the chance to sit and talk with others, and we became good friends,” she said.

New project:

UNIDO Supports Livelihood amid COVID-19 crisis in Iraq and introduces the Kitchen Gardening concept

With funding from the Government of Japan, UNIDO provides livelihood support to host communities and internally displaced people (IDPs) from Ninewa Governorate to help mitigate the effects of COVID-19. As a first step, and in order to identify needs and aspirations, the project concluded a livelihood needs survey with 922 respondents (out of which, 433 were female). 73% of those who took the survey are unemployed, and 757 want to go into business.

To achieve this, they need assistance: equipment and tools, training on business set-up, technical skills training and space for their business. UNIDO provides training on entrepreneurship development and technical skills, as well as equipment and tools support. The IDP Camps provide the space. All training programs have a session on COVID-19. For additional food security, the project is introducing the “kitchen gardening” concept, which provides displaced women in Akre with vital skills to be able to grow their own produce and support their families.



Investment Promotion for Iraq (IPI) – Phase II. (Donor: Italian Development Cooperation)

The aim of the Project “Investment promotion for Iraq – Phase II” is to promote existing and potential investments in Iraq to expand the share of the private sector contribution to the country’s GDP, to create employment opportunities for poverty alleviation and accelerate economic growth of Iraq. This is to be achieved through a comprehensive package of technical assistance services targeting local and national institutions mandated to regulate and facilitate investments, particularly investments into the country’s industrial zones.

The project has three major components:

- 1.) enterprise development and investment promotion;
- 2.) Industrial Zones development, and
- 3.) Capacity building of Iraqi Business Associations.

Despite the challenges imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021, UNIDO continued implementing its interventions across main provinces of Iraq.

Enterprise Development Centers (EDCs)

Three Enterprise Development Centers (EDCs) were established during the first phase of the project in Basra, Erbil and Thi Qar. The “Enterprise Development and Investment Promotion in Iraq” (EDIP) project focused on creating a cadre of local experts on enterprise development and investment promotion, who in turn provided business training and counselling to Iraqi SMEs as well as to finding foreign partner for mobilizing domestic and foreign investment through B2B events and facilitation of international partnership matchmaking. These experts became the core trainers, counsellors, and Investment Promotion experts of the EDCs.

Industrial Zones development

Enhanced capacity of Industrial Zones Commission and the relevant institutions by 40-hours training including modules on IZs laws, IZ Strategic Plans & Program Development, management, value chain, financial & economic analysis, urban planning, Principles of IZ Standard Operating Procedures, and PPP. The (26) participants represented the IZ Commission counterpart institutions at the federal government, Kurdistan Regional Government, and the relevant institutions at the provincial levels.



Decent Work Country Programme – Two years since the establishment of ILO's Country Coordination Office

By **DR. MAHA KATTAA**

ILO Country Coordinator in Iraq

The Iraq Decent Work Country Programme was signed between the ILO, the Government of Iraq and social partners in 2019, with the aim to promote decent work and build a stronger labour market through different areas of work. The Programme focuses on supporting private sector development and job creation; strengthening social protection and addressing child labour; and strengthening labour governance and social dialogue. It is implemented through projects, guided by the priorities of the Decent Work Agenda.

These priorities are closely aligned with the Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2020-2024, which was signed by the Government of Iraq and the United Nations. The





Framework covers five strategic priority areas – two of which are at the heart of ILO's mandate and expertise, further promoting the Decent Work Agenda in the country.

Since the signing of the Decent Work Programme, the ILO has set up offices in Baghdad and in Erbil to oversee the implementation of its projects and provide support to tripartite constituents on the ground, in close collaboration with other UN agencies and the donor community.

Two years on, we look back at some of the achievement made.

Supporting private sector development and job creation

Promoting decent job creation and supporting private sector development remain an urgent priority for Iraq and its people. The ILO's focus in 2021 has been on three key activities.

The first has been the launch of Employment-Intensive Investment Programme (EIIP) interventions in various sites. EIIP interventions provide short-term employment opportunities for women and men

and are linked to skills development and employment services. Under the PROSPECTS programme, which is supported by the Government of the Netherlands, EIIP interventions focus on improving water irrigation systems on farms and promoting sustainable waste management. We have also partnered with UNESCO, with the support of the European Union, to implement EIIP interventions to rehabilitate cultural heritage sites. What is vital is that through these interventions, Decent Work Principles are mainstreamed in EIIP.

We have also been supporting the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq to improve and upgrade employment services that include job and skills matching services, and on-the-job training opportunities. A Career Development and Employment Guidance Unit was established in Domiz camp, in collaboration with the Swedish Development Aid Organization and UNHCR to extend career guidance and job matching services to Syrian refugees.

Improving entrepreneurship among women, youth, IDPs and refugees is critical in promoting new employment opportunities. We have rolled-out ILO's Start and Improve Your Business (SIYB), Know About Business (KAB), and financial education programmes through various projects,

namely those supported by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), the Government of the Netherlands and IOM. This has been done through training a wide spectrum of trainers as well as members of refugee, internally displaced and host communities who are interested in setting up their own small businesses or improving existing ones.

Strengthening social protection and addressing child labour

A key milestone in strengthening and expanding social protection has been the launch of a new partnership between the ILO, UNICEF and WFP, to support the Government of Iraq in reforming social protection. Supported by the European Union, the joint programme is being implemented with Ministry of Planning, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, and the Ministry of Trade, targeting some of the most vulnerable groups and their families in Iraq and the Kurdistan region.

Within this programme, the ILO's activities will expand the scope and coverage of social insurance schemes and active

labour market programmes. The ILO is supporting the review of the draft retirement and social security law. The law is an important step in extending social security to workers in the private sector, which accounts to roughly 40 per cent to 50 per cent of employment.

In terms of addressing child labour, the ILO continues to implement a project to tackle the worst forms of child labour, with the support of the European Regional Development Protection Programme for Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq (RDPP II) – a joint European initiative by the Czech Republic, Denmark, the European Union, Ireland and Switzerland.

We have seen some great progress this year, in terms of building the capacities of relevant teams to address child labour and piloting of services to support children in or at risk of child labour, including the development of a Child Labour Monitoring System. Child friendly learning spaces have been established offering recreational activities and non-formal education to boys and girls under the age of 18 who are vulnerable to child labour. The programme has assisted many children in these pilot areas, and we hope to expand our efforts to support more children across the entire country.

Strengthening labour governance and social dialogue

As the only tripartite United Nations agency, the ILO promotes dialogue with governments and social partners ensuring an inclusive and participatory approach to programme and policy development.

In Iraq, this is no different. The Decent Work Country Programme was developed in close consultation with Iraq's Government and its worker and employer representatives, to ensure alignment with the national development frameworks of Iraq.

In terms of governance, we have seen great headway in efforts to support the development of a national policy on labour inspection and on Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) and building the capacities of partners on modern labour inspection procedures and OSH. Under a programme supported by the European Union, the ILO is finalizing an assessment report on the existing labour inspection system, that highlights challenges and gaps in the system and provides recommendations for improvement. These policies are vital in ensuring workers have access to safe working environments, in line with na-

tional legislation and International Labour Standards.

A National Employment Policy is also being developed with the Government and social partners to help facilitate job creation and decent work for all workers in the country. The ILO is also working with the Central Statistical Organization and the Kurdistan Statistical Organization on a national Labour Force Survey which will feed into the development of the National Employment Policy.

Finally, we have continued to work extensively on studies and assessments on the Iraqi labour market, especially in light of COVID-19. Most notable was the launch of a diagnostic report on the informal economy, together with UNDP, IOM, UN Women, the European Union, the Fafo Institute for Labour and Social Research and the Cash and Livelihoods Consortium for Iraq. The report presents a National Framework, in line with ILO's Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy Recommendation, 2015 (No. 204), which provides a road map for a strategy to guide the Government and its partners to promote decent work and strengthen the formal economy.





UN WOMEN in Iraq

Context and elections

Despite widespread dissatisfaction around the elections, women candidates have operated successfully and have exceeded the 25% women quota. With election results still pending validation from the Federal Supreme Court, women seem to have won 95 seats (29% of parliamentary seats and an increase of 12 seats over the set quota for women). Out of the 95 seats, 57 won with their voting power outside the quota system, a breakthrough for women's representation and political power in Iraq. With this unprecedented win for women's representation in the Iraqi Parliament, UNWomen hopes that this gain is also reflected in the number of women in ministerial positions and will translate in advancing the women's agenda forward, particularly in the areas of women political participation and Women Peace and Security (WPS).

Women Political Participation (WPP)

UN Women provided direct technical support to the Supreme Committee (SC) on Women's Political Participation set up by the Council of Ministers to enhance women's participation in the October parliamentary elections. UN Women was the only UN agency to sit on the SC on behalf of the international community and represented a significant opportunity to provide substantive technical assistance to the committee's work. They supported the development of the SC action plan aimed at creating an enabling environment for women political participation through gender sensitization of electoral frameworks and procedures; promoting the protection of women candidates from violence; raising community awareness on the importance of women's participation in decision making, and enhancing the capacities of relevant authorities supporting the role of women participating in the elections. The plan provid-

ed technical support to the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) to ensure that the Electoral Code of Conduct is gender-sensitive. It included specific provisions to enhance women's political participation and protection from different forms of violence perpetrated against them during the electoral process, both as voters and as candidates.

In addition, raising community awareness on women's political participation in national and local governance, the capacities of civil society, gender equality advocates, and media was established through capacity development and coalition building to effectively influence political parties and parliamentarians (particularly first time elected and young parliamentarians).

Women, Peace, and Security & 2nd Iraq National Action Plan (INAP II)

UN Women has provided the needed technical, operational, and financial sup-

port to the Iraqi government to develop and adopt the 2nd Iraqi National Action Plan (INAP II) to implement UNSCR 1325. In 2021, UN Women supported the KRI and Federal governments in establishing a coordination mechanism for implementing INAP II with line ministries and civil society and are currently finalizing the development of the M&E framework, communication plan, and sectoral plans for line ministries in close collaboration with civil society.

UN Women has partnered with the federal government and the KRG through the Women, Peace & Humanitarian Fund (WPHF) to support civil society organizations working in Conflict prevention, Humanitarian relief, and Forced displacement. The projects will be launched next year and cover most of Iraq, including Baghdad/Salah al-Din/Basra/Diyala/Anbar/Kirkuk/Thi Qar/Dohuk/Nineveh-Sinjar. WPHF is a global pooled funding mechanism composed of representatives from donors, United Nations entities, and civil society organizations. The overall aim is to re-energize action and stimulate a significant increase in financing for women's participation, leadership, and empowerment in peace and security processes and humanitarian response. Since its launch in 2016, the WPHF fund has supported over 200 civil society organizations and is present in 20 countries.

Women Economic Empowerment (WEE)

UN Women works to advance the economic empowerment and resilience of Iraqi women to have income security, decent work, and economic autonomy. In that path, UN Women has developed a WEE program strategy to deepen its programming further and achieve transformative results for women's economic empowerment. The strategy was developed by coordinating with the regional office and through consultations with the donors, the private sector, government, and civil society. The WEE Focus areas include creating an enabling environment for women in productive business, entrepreneurship, employability, and decent work.

It is worth mentioning that the WEE program strategy acts as an umbrella for

high-impact programming initiatives scalable programs. The WEE programming initiatives (WPI) adopt a human rights-based approach by strengthening the voices of women and girls to remove structural barriers for women's empowerment. They build on and complement the Iraqi development efforts, aligned with the UN Women strategic plan 2022-2025, contribute to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and are relevant to regional developmental targets.

Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and Violence Against Women (VAW)

To accelerate the process and promote the protection of women candidates and their electoral campaigns from all forms of violence during elections. UN Women advocacy efforts have supported the Supreme Judicial Council to issue a new order/regulation regarding the reporting procedures of Violence Against Women in Elections (VAWE). (Based on the latest procedures, women voters and candidates can directly approach judicial investigators instead of going through the police first). Initial reports indicate that the 2021 elections witnessed fewer incidents of violence against women and an increase in women's participation. This refers to a result of joint efforts from different stakeholders who have contributed to the implementation of the action plan with the support of UN Women and in close collaboration with national women machineries and electoral bodies.

UN Women strengthened the Iraq justice system to investigate and prosecute GBV cases and better respond to GBV cases. It was possible by increasing the capacities of domestic police and security forces on GBV. UNWomen also supported the General Directorate of Combatting Violence Against Women (GDCVAW) in the KRI and supported frontline workers to have better case management skills and the capacity to provide adequate protection and support. They gained knowledge and skills on GBV service delivery through technology-based solutions, domestic violence law and violence against women

law, judicial remedial measures for GBV related cases, and hotline management. Furthermore, the General Directorate of Combatting violence against Women (GDCVAW) quarterly statistical data suggests an increase in calls received and the number of registered protection cases after the training.

UN Women ensured active and close collaboration with relevant national and local public authorities and partnered with civil society organizations to provide protection services in Kirkuk and Anbar. Protection services have been provided through two UN Women's supported centers combining a hybrid approach remote and face-to-face support services to vulnerable women who are seeking support. Vulnerable IDP, host community, returnee, and refugee women were subjected to or at risk of domestic violence. Also, received accurate and up-to-date information about available services and mechanisms, and referrals. UN Women also supported the camps in Duhok by providing psychosocial and legal support and cash for work opportunities supporting a total of around 1,000 women and girls. In Mosul, 474 women and 181 girls received legal and psychological aid, and 160 received awareness-raising on GBV and COVID-19 impact.

Partnerships

In partnership with the Government of Sweden, WPS work will focus on advancing the implementation of INAP II to ensure that the needs and priorities of women and girls affected by conflict are met and addressed. The project will support the implementation of INAP II by governmental and non-governmental actors ensuring full collaboration and participation of civil society to enhance women's protection and participation in conflict prevention and resolution and post-conflict state-building.

UNWomen also partnered with UN agencies and the civil society on the 16-days of activism and two other campaigns, "Mask up" and "End GBV". The campaigns focused on encouraging the public to abide by the health and safety regulations imposed by the government and highlighting the importance



of eliminating GBV. Women activists, leaders, health workers, and many others interacted positively with both campaigns. As a result, the crusades were a success, and UN Women could reach out to the community and raise awareness on the importance of eliminating GBV.

The 16 days of activism included a range of activities in partnership with UNFPA, including an online media campaign, billboards, and “Let’s Talk conference” where the government, donor community, and civil society have been invited to join forces to eliminate Gender-based violence.

Word from UN Women Representative in Iraq

MS. DINA ZORBA

“UNWomen will continue working on strengthening women’s influence, voice, and participation in political and institutional mechanisms at a national and local level. We are working towards supporting the introduction of a women’s rights and gender-responsive agenda in constitutional, legal, and institutional frameworks in partnership with the Department of Women Empowerment and the High Council of Women and Development in Kurdistan.

We will also focus on enhancing dialogues and partnerships that promote intergenerational exchanges, particularly parliamentarians, and prioritize amplifying new voices amongst newly elected parliamentarians, youth, and civil society.

On another note, UN Women is also keen to provide continued support and assistance

in these processes and increase awareness and implementation of the UN resolutions on women, peace, and security at all levels. We acknowledge that significant strides have been achieved in promoting women’s meaningful participation, yet many remain. We will deepen cooperation with all stakeholders, including the federal and KRI government, international community, and civil society, to support Iraqi women’s role in peace and security and the advancement of the INAP II.

We believe that empowered women and girls are the best hope for sustainable peace and development following any conflict. They are the best drivers of growth, the best hope for reconciliation, and the best buffer against radicalization of youth and the repetition of cycles of violence.”





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