

UNAMI Herald

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November — December 2023



الأمم المتحدة - العراق
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Year-end message from the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq

Baghdad, 23 December 2023 - Looking back to last year, I stated that, with political stability and bright opportunities on the horizon, Iraq stood an excellent chance of rapidly advancing its sustainable development. One year later, important steps and promising initiatives have indeed emerged.

But while the country is well positioned to seize the many opportunities in front of it, doing so

will not be an easy feat. Hence, I can only reiterate the words of Secretary-General António Guterres during his visit earlier this year: “The United Nations is committed to supporting Iraq in the consolidation of its democratic institutions and the advancement of peace, sustainable development and human rights for all Iraqis.”

On behalf of the United Nations family in Iraq, I wish you all a happy, peaceful and healthy New Year.



UN Special Representative for Iraq attends Election Day simulation

Baghdad, 12 December 2023 – The Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, attended today a simulation of Election Day processes that was held by Iraq’s Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC). The simulation included a comprehensive demonstration of all electronic devices to be used on Election Day, such as voter verification devices, polling station count optical scanners, results transmission devices, and cameras. This simulation was conducted successfully, showcasing the technical readiness of IHEC for the



Governorate Council elections, scheduled for 18 December 2023. In accordance with its 2023 mandate, UNAMI advises and assists the work of IHEC. UNAMI will not observe or

monitor the 18 December elections, and is therefore not in a position to undertake an assessment of the manner in which the elections are conducted.

Election Day



UNAMI on X

Baghdad, 19 December 2023 - Yesterday's Governorate Council elections mark another important milestone. With Iraq well positioned to continue on its path towards stability and sustainable development, UN - Iraq looks forward to further cooperation with Iraqis at all levels.

In this edition ...

#16DaysOfActivism campaign launched in Iraq

Baghdad, 22 November 2023 - Today, the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers, the Women Empowerment Department and the United Nations in Iraq, joined forces to launch the #16DaysOfActivism campaign, a dedicated effort to combat all forms of violence against women and girls.

The event gathered government officials, members of parliament, the UN, diplomatic missions, and development partners. Through two insightful panel discussions, the focus was on empowering women and establishing robust frameworks for their protection. The shared commitment and collaborative discourse underscore the collective determination to create positive, lasting change in the pursuit of social equality and the elimination of violence.

The text of the UN Iraq speech by Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, delivered on her behalf by Ms. Sandra Lattouf, Officer-in-Charge UN Resident Coordinator starts at page 10.

Art exhibition and film screening event commemorating International Human Rights Day

Baghdad, 13 December 2023 – UNAMI's Human Rights Office, in collaboration with the Babylon Film Institute and Tarkib Organisation for Arts and Culture, held a human rights arts exhibition and film screening to mark the 75th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The artworks and films exhibited at the event provided innovative and insightful perspectives on a range of critical human rights topics affecting not just Iraq but countries around the world, these included the impact of climate change, violence against women, the situation of youth, the rights of children, the rights of persons with disabilities and other pressing human rights concerns.

More on page 21.

Iraq Iraq's #PasstheBaton campaign: uniting against corruption for a brighter future

Baghdad, 07 December 2023 - Iraq, in commemoration of International Anti-Corruption Day, highlights its unwavering commitment to eradicating corruption through a nationwide campaign, with support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The #PasstheBaton Campaign aims to confront the pervasive challenges of corruption and spark transformative change.

More on page 57.

Iraq takes center stage and makes its mark at the UN Climate Change Conference

Dubai, UAE, 03 December 2023 – Yesterday, the President of the Republic of Iraq, H.E. Abdul Latif Rashid, inaugurated Iraq's first ever pavilion at this year's global climate event, COP 28. The inauguration was attended by Dr. Abdallah Al Dardari, the United Nations Development Programme Regional Director for Arab States. This opening marks the start of a high-level discussion entitled "Climate Security for Sustainable Development in Iraq". The discussion highlighted comprehensive strategies for addressing climate security in Iraq, emphasizing the integration of water, food and energy security. The pavilion is set to host over 30 sessions, organized by various Iraqi ministries and UN agencies.

More on page 76.

Visit to Iraq by the Independent Strategic Review Team mandated by Security Council resolution 2682 (2023)

Baghdad, 07 November 2023 - Mr. Volker Perthes, Head of the Independent Strategic Review Team of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), arrived in Baghdad for an official visit to the Republic of Iraq from 6-27 November 2023. His visit is conducted within the framework of the Independent Strategic Review requested by the Government of Iraq and mandated by the Security Council.

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In the UNAMI Herald articles are sorted according to the topic and in a

UNAMI-supported roundtable highlights youth-government collaboration to advance Iraq's interests



Baghdad, 21 December 2023 - Underlining a shared commitment to partner together to advance Iraq's interests, a select group of youth and key government stakeholders convened a roundtable discussion that focused on visions to shape the future of their country.

The meeting, organized by the Office of Political Affairs and Analysis (OPAA) of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) in close partnership with the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), served as a forum for the youth to present their views, leading to a meaningful discussion on the way forward. The meeting brought together a select number of youths supported by UNAMI and members of the Youth High Council, established in August by H.E Prime Minister Mohammed Shia Al-Sudani with representatives from relevant ministries.

Central to this gathering on 14 December 2023 was fostering constructive dialogue between the

younger generation and their leaders. The meeting also provided a unique platform for the youth to voice their concerns and present a set of recommendations which they drafted with the technical support of UNAMI OPAA. This support culminated in the development of two pivotal policy papers - one exploring prevalent political, economic, and social issues impacting Iraq's youth, while the other specifically addresses strategies to mitigate the adverse effects of climate



change on the country.

The recommendations were warmly welcomed by the government representatives, who committed to sustained collaboration with the youth to advance critical issues and pledged to adopt and implement various initiatives proposed by the youth.

This shared commitment to amplify the voice of youth and effect positive change was clearly illustrated.

Dr. Shahba Al-Azzawi, an advisor to the Prime Minister, reaffirmed Prime Minister Al-Sudani's steadfast support to the youth of Iraq. She reiterated the PMO's partnership with UNAMI's youth project, emphasizing her commitment to maintain coordination with the youth groups and sustain the program's momentum.

OPAA Director, Mr. Manoj Mathew, conveyed his appreciation to the participating officials, recognizing their presence as a testament to Iraq's commitment to youth political engagement and climate change mitigation.

Bridging divides – one town hall meeting at a time

Mosul, 31 October 2023 – While the conflict in Iraq is long ended, the work of reconciliation and reintegration remains.

To address these critical issues, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Iraq through its Social Cohesion Pillar is supporting communities to come together in town hall meetings to discuss and find effective solutions to the challenges faced by both returnees and host communities.

The goal - to foster acceptance of reintegration, and reconciliation and build much-needed peace and unity through social cohesion initiatives.

As September came to a close, UNDP, working with Local Peace Committees (LPCs) organized three such town hall meetings in Ninewa, Salah al-Din, and

Kirkuk Governorates.

Seeking social unity

These meetings attracted diverse groups of participants including members of the LPCs, youth and women group members, civic activities, members of the academia and media as well as religious and tribal leaders, among others.

"Ninewa is indeed a safe and secure place now, but the ongoing need for reintegration of returnees is persistent and requires the active involvement of everyone to achieve this goal," Salih Hasan Ali, Qaymaqam (Mayor) of Mosul emphasized while opening the first town hall meeting that took place in his town.

The mayor called on participants to use this as an opportunity to address the differences in the community and look



toward maintaining national unity.

"The town hall meetings have been instrumental in increasing awareness about the LPCs, who, for safety purposes, sometimes work quietly," Nashat Mohammad, the director of Iyhadiya sub-district, Tel Afa district, Ninewa Governorate shared.

His community in Iyhadiya still has

Bridging divides – one town hall meeting at a time

many returning with the encouragement of LPCs. “Now people understand that their work is important and can connect with them directly, which is good for building cohesion in our communities,” Nashat added.

The town halls use a question-and-answer format with local leaders forming a panel and UNDP partnering with LPC members to moderate and address questions from participants. Answers are provided in real-time, while leaders understand the needs of their communities.

“Returnees need to be provided with legal aid because many of them lost their legal documents during the conflict. The process is long and cumbersome for many, that is why we are requesting that you consider having some legal aid clinics for them, they can run alongside these meetings,” Nagham Daham, a civil activist and community member shares during the meeting.

Nagham adds that many returnees now live in slum areas and requested more support and documentation to enable them to settle in their areas of origin.

Cohesion in school curriculum

In Kirkuk Governorate, the meeting had a large turnout of youth. One of them, Zeena Abdul Hamid – a youth civil activist – found the meeting engaging. She hopes that all the recommendations will be fulfilled, particularly in the education sector.



“Awareness needs to be included in our education curriculums to address the issues of bullying and stigmatization that were raised many times in the meeting. The Ministry of Education needs to be a part of these meetings and all the teachers trained because they are dealing with children who are our future – it is easier to teach them cohesion at a young age,” Zeena explains.

Altogether, the three meetings attracted 285 participants, 84 of whom were women. Collectively, these participants recommended that more such meetings be within the communities to include tribal leaders and in schools to promote acceptance, safety, and cohesion for all.

“This meeting came at the right time when we desperately need to maintain community cohesion and dialogue. Such meetings, especially in

the presence of the governor, are a strong factor in strengthening civil peace and its continuity in society,” Muhammad Abdel Wahid Qoja / Chairman of the Tuskhurmata Peace Committee in Salah al-Din.

Since 2020, UNDP through its Social Cohesion Pillar has been promoting town hall meetings as platforms for community cohesion. Recommendations from these platforms have been instrumental in understanding and addressing community needs for local leaders, local community groups, and UNDP – making peacebuilding a joint community effort.

UNDP’s Integrated Social Cohesion Programme supports efforts towards peaceful and more cohesive societies in Iraq. Its work is made possible with the generous contributions of the Government of Denmark.

Electoral



Baghdad, 06 November 2023 - The Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, Mr. **Claudio Cordone**, met today with the **Chair and Board of Commissioners of the IHEC**. They discussed progress on the Governorate Council elections process, including measures to ensure a successful electoral campaign and support for women candidates.



Baghdad, 15 November 2023 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. **Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert**, participated today in a meeting on the Role of Media in Promoting Participation in Elections, which was organized by the President’s Consultative Body at the **Presidency of the Republic**.

Photo courtesy of the Presidency Media Office.



Baghdad, 21 November 2023 – The Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC), together with the Office of the National Security Adviser, organized a three-day briefing to women candidates in Baghdad, a briefing that is being replicated throughout the country at the governorates, for women candidates in those governorates. The event served to inform the women candidates about the relevant aspects of the electoral law, the electoral procedures, complaints systems, seats allocation and calculation of women quota. Additionally, there was an extensive session on cyber security and aspects to observe for safe use of social media in electoral campaigns. UNAMI Office of Electoral Assistance worked closely with IHEC on the formulation of the agenda and training/briefing methodology.



Kirkuk, 04 December 2023 – The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, **Claudio Cordone**, met with **Judge Hussein Abdel-Sada** and the head of the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) in Kirkuk to discuss the preparations for the forthcoming Governorate Elections, including training of the polling station personnel and the issuing of biometric cards. UNAMI continues to support IHEC in its efforts to ensure a smooth running of the Governorate Elections.



Baghdad, 05 December 2023 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, **Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert**, accompanied by her Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, **Mr. Claudio Cordone**, met with the **Chairman and Board of Commissioners of the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC)** at their national office in Baghdad. The IHEC Chairman and Board of Commissioners provided comprehensive updates on the preparations for the upcoming governorate council elections scheduled for 18 December. Photos courtesy of IHEC.



Baghdad, 07 December 2023 – The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, **Mr. Claudio Cordone**, attended the fourth and final full-scale real-time **election simulation** at the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC). The simulation, which involved 38,040 polling stations across Iraq, was conducted successfully. The IHEC has now finalized all necessary preparations and is technically ready for the Governorate Council elections on December 18.



Mosul, 18 December 2023 – Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance **Claudio Cordone** showing his interest at a polling station in Mosul, Ninewa Governorate, on Election Day.



Basra, 18 December 2023 - Today, Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq/Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, **Mr. Ghulam Mohammed Isaczai**, visited several polling stations on provincial elections day in Basra. A significant moment for Iraq.

Visit to Iraq by the Independent Strategic Review Team mandated by Security Council resolution 2682 (2023)

Baghdad, 07 November 2023 - Mr. Volker Perthes, Head of the Independent Strategic Review Team of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), arrived in Baghdad for an official visit to the Republic of Iraq from 6-27 November 2023. His visit is conducted within the framework of the Independent Strategic Review requested by the Government of Iraq and mandated by the Security Council. In its resolution 2682 (2023), the Security Council requested "that the Secretary-General, in line with best practices, conduct and provide the

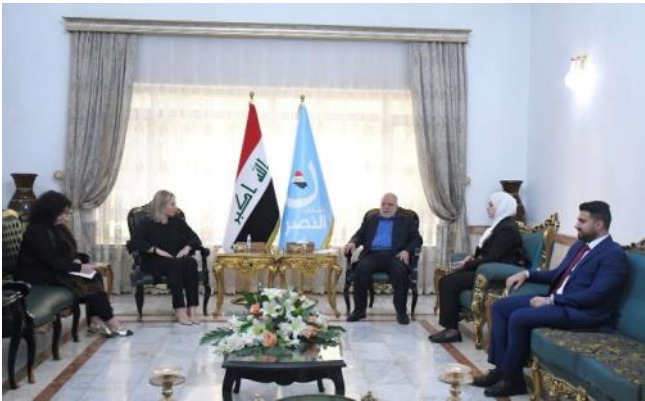
Security Council, no later than 31 March 2024, with an independent strategic review of UNAMI, in consultation with the Government of Iraq, in addition to UN agencies, member States, regional organisations, independent experts and civil society, and the Government of Kuwait, consistent with paragraph 4 of resolution 2107 (2013), including: (a) assessing current threats to Iraq's peace and security, assessing the continued relevance of UNAMI's tasks and priorities, and providing recommendations to optimize UNAMI's

mandate, mission structure and staffing to support the Government of Iraq in addressing the challenges of peace and security; (b) further assessing the options to support the Government of Iraq in strengthening effective regional cooperation."

In accordance with this mandate, Mr. Perthes will conduct consultations with government officials and other key stakeholders on the issues relevant to the mandate of the Independent Strategic Review.

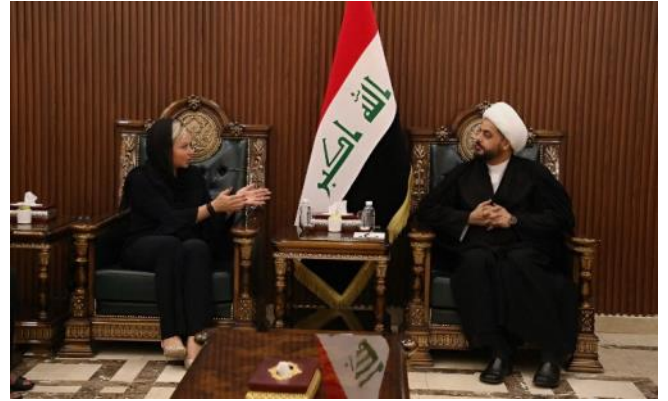
Mr. Perthes is expected to report to the Secretary-General on his findings.

Political Consultations



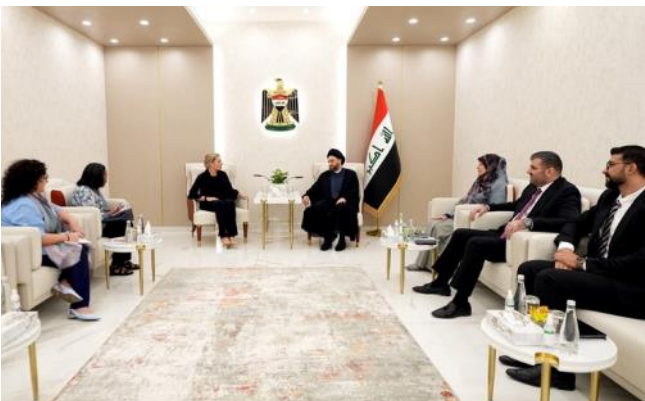
Baghdad, 07 November 2023 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), **Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert**, met in Baghdad with the Head of the Al-Nasr coalition, **Mr. Haider Al-Abadi**. They discussed current political and security developments in Iraq and the region.

Photo courtesy of the Al-Nasr Coalition.



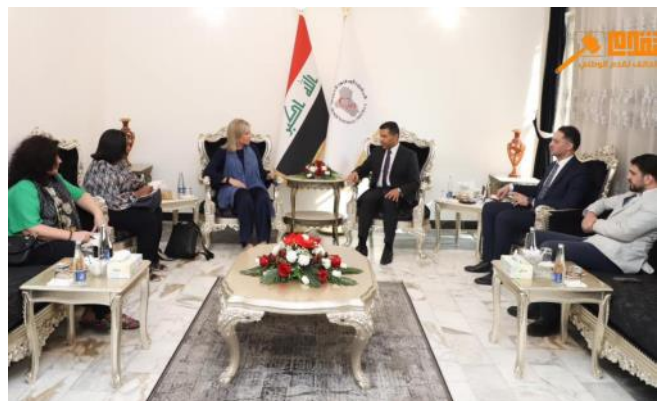
Baghdad, 07 November 2023 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), **Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert**, met today in Baghdad with the Secretary-General of the Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq movement, **Qais al-Khazali**. They discussed current political and security developments in Iraq and the region.

Photo courtesy of Al-Ahad.



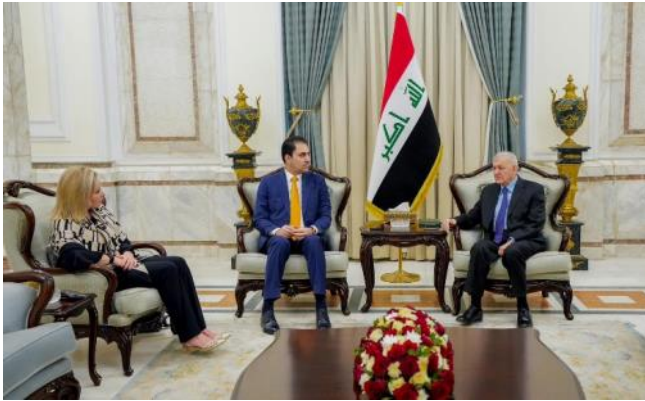
Baghdad, 12 November 2023 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), **Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert**, met today with the Head of Hikma National Movement, **Mr. Ammar Al-Hakim**. They discussed the current political situation in the country and the region.

Photo courtesy of the Al-Hikma Movement.



Baghdad, 13 November 2023 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, **Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert**, met today with the Secretary-General of the Iraqi National Project, **Sheikh Jamal Abd al-Wahhab Khamis al-Dhari**. They discussed the current political situation in the country.

Photo courtesy of the Iraqi National project.



Baghdad, 15 November 2023 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, **Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert**, was received in Baghdad today by the President of the Republic of Iraq, **Mr. Abdullatif Jamal Rashid**. Also present in the meeting was the First Deputy Speaker of the Iraqi Council of Representatives, **Mr. Mohsen al-Mandalawi**. They discussed the political situation in the country.

Photo courtesy of the Presidency Media Office.



Baghdad, 15 November 2023 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, **Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert**, met in Baghdad today with **Mr. Mohammed al-Halbousi**. They discussed the developments and Iraq's priorities.



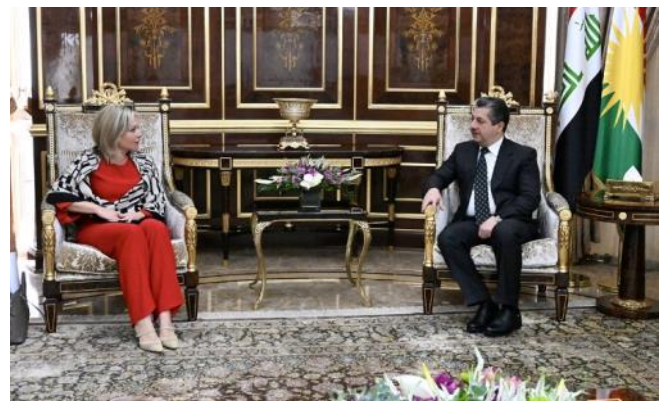
Kirkuk, 04 December 2023 - The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, **Claudio Cordone**, met today with **Rakan al-Jobouri**, Acting Governor of Kirkuk. The discussion focused on the Governorate Elections. Both agreed on the importance of maintaining stability and coexistence in Kirkuk.



Baghdad, 06 December 2023 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, **Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert**, was received in Abu Ghraib District by **Mr. Jamal Al Dhari**, the Head of Abu Ghraib District, **Mr. Othman Adel**, and other dignitaries.



Kuwait City, Kuwait, 13 December 2023 - Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, **Mr. Claudio Cordone**, met today in Kuwait with **Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Alahmad Alsabah**, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs. Discussions focused on the importance of speeding up the work on Kuwaiti missing persons and property, and the role of UNAMI in supporting the process.
Photo courtesy of the Kuwait MOFA.



Erbil, 16 December 2023 - The Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), **Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert**, was received today in Erbil by the Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Region, **Mr. Masrour Barzani**. They discussed the current political and security situation in the country, with a primary focus on Erbil-Baghdad relations.
Photo courtesy of the KRG.



Erbil, 16 December 2023 - The Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), **Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert**, was received today in Erbil by the President of the Kurdistan Region, **Mr. Nechirvan Barzani**. They discussed the current political and security situation in the country, with a primary focus on Erbil-Baghdad relations.

Photo courtesy of the Media Office of the Presidency.



Baghdad, 19 December 2023 - The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, **Mr. Claudio Cordone**, on behalf of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), signed the **condolences book** today at the Kuwaiti embassy in Baghdad for the passing of the Emir Shaykh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.



Baghdad, 21 December 2023 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, **Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert**, met today with the Iraqi Prime Minister, **Mr. Mohammed Shia Al-Sudani**. They discussed the general situation in view of the significant milestone achieved by the governorate council elections, with the SRSG reiterating UN Iraq's support to Iraqis at all levels.

Photo courtesy of the Media Office of the Prime Minister.



Baghdad, 24 December 2023 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, **Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert**, met today with the Acting Speaker of the Council of Representatives, **Mr. Mohsen Al-Mandalawi**.

Photo courtesy of CoR Media Office.

Security

UNAMI on X

Baghdad, 8 December 2023 - UNAMI condemns this morning's rocket attack on the US Embassy in Baghdad. All diplomatic premises must be protected in line with international law, as underscored by the Iraqi Government.

We reiterate that Iraq's stability and security are front and centre in all our engagements. Iraq cannot afford to be drawn into a wider conflict, which would threaten hard-won stability and the achievements made so far.

Baghdad, 09 December 2023 - UN Iraq is very saddened by the loss of life and injuries arising from the horrific fire in Soran, Erbil Governorate. We send our sincere condolences to those who have lost loved ones and wish the injured a full recovery.

Baghdad, 10 December 2023 - On the sixth anniversary of the territorial defeat of Da'esh (ISIL), we remember those who sacrificed their lives in this crucial battle and reiterate our commitment to supporting #Iraq in preventing the resurgence of terrorism and violent extremism.

The protection of human rights, respect for diversity and democratic processes are essential elements to a cohesive and prosperous Iraq.

UNFPA and Rudaw Media Network launch pioneering programme to empower women in media

Erbil, 12 December 2023 – UNFPA and Rudaw Media Network have officially partnered to initiate a 12-month training programme to enrich women's experience in media and journalism across Iraq.

Garik Hayrapetyan, Deputy Representative of UNFPA and Ako Mohammed, CEO of Rudaw Media Network, signed the agreement in Erbil, marking a significant collaboration between a media organisation and a UN agency in Iraq. The "Basics of Journalism" project seeks to empower and educate women interested in journalism, addressing a fundamental challenge in contemporary journalism—the ability to investigate, gather, and disseminate accurate and reliable information, particularly on women-related subjects. Focusing on nurturing journalism skills, fostering ethical reporting, and embracing the digital age, the project bridges the knowledge gap, equipping participants with the tools they need to become professional journalists.

In addition to professional skills training, the project is more than a training program—it is a call to action. Participants will be exposed to the United Nations Population Fund

(UNFPA) mandate, the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) agenda, and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with a particular focus on climate change. Armed with this knowledge, the graduates will emerge as advocates for the SDGs, ICPD agenda champions, and women's rights defenders.

Moreover, this groundbreaking partnership marks a pivotal collaboration, bringing together the United Nations, the private sector, and

CSO in a unified effort. The collective goal is to amplify women's voices and actively address crucial issues pertaining to women in the media. This alliance stands as a testament to the power of diverse sectors working in harmony for positive social change.

Notably, the Iraqi Private Banks League will provide financial support for the program's first phase, emphasising a collective commitment to increasing women's representation in journalism in the Kurdistan Region and Iraq.



The first Women Protection Centre in Mosul, supported by the Government of France, is nearing completion



Mosul, 27 December 2023 - The first Women Protection Centre in Mosul, as part of the UNFPA-led project 'Restoring Women, Youth, and Health Services in Iraq', funded by the Government of France (Ambassade de France en Irak), and implemented by UN-Habitat, will soon be officially

turned over. A 475-square-meter facility in the Al-Akhaa area is equipped with administrative offices, bedrooms, a kitchen, a dining room, restrooms, and a storage room. In collaboration with the Ninewa Governorate Office and the Women's Empowerment Department in the

governorate, the Centre will provide protection for women and girls who are survivors of violence and abuse.

A recent visit by the General Consul of France in Mosul and UNFPA and UN-Habitat Iraq reviewed the final details before the handover to the Ninewa Governorate.

This center, scheduled to begin operations in January 2024, is dedicated to offering protection and essential services for women and girls who have endured violence. Through this collaborative effort, the aim is to empower women in Iraq, creating an environment where they can recover and rebuild their lives after surviving abuse.

The project underscores a joint commitment to address the crucial need for both physical protection and comprehensive support services for women and girls in the region.

Throughout the construction process, overseen by skilled professionals from the city of Mosul, the project has already generated job opportunities and employed local personnel.

#16DaysOfActivism campaign launched in Iraq



Baghdad, 22 November 2023 - Today, the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers, the Women Empowerment Department and the United Nations in Iraq, joined forces to launch the #16DaysOfActivism campaign, a dedicated effort to combat all forms of violence against women and girls.

The event gathered government officials, members of parliament, the UN, diplomatic missions, and development partners. Through two insightful panel discussions, the focus was on empowering women and establishing robust frameworks for their protection. The shared commitment and collaborative discourse underscore the collective determination to create positive, lasting change in the pursuit of social equality and the elimination of violence.

Here is the text of the UN Iraq speech by Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, delivered on her behalf by Ms. Sandra Lattouf, Officer-in-Charge UN Resident Coordinator:

“Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,
Distinguished guests,

It is a pleasure to be part of the launch of this 16 days of activism campaign to address violence against women and girls.

Now, I think that the global theme of this year’s campaign, which focuses on investing to prevent violence against women and girls, is particularly resonant. Across the globe, including here in Iraq.

The harsh reality is: one in three women experience physical or sexual violence at least once in their lifetime. And the costs are extremely high. In so many ways. Hence,

preventing such violence is key.

Key to the women and girls first and foremost, as their suffering is unimaginable. But also key to families, communities and society at large.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Late last year, an ambitious programme was adopted by Iraq’s Government under the leadership of Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani. As I stated in my most recent briefing to the Security Council: in the period which followed, the country saw the emergence of several important steps and promising initiatives poised to improve service delivery, boost economic growth and enhance wellbeing across all sectors of society.

And I sincerely hope that all Iraqi women and girls. Particularly since the government programme explicitly includes goals to empower and protect them.

That said, and as we all know, it will not be an easy feat – let alone a given. In a complex and fast evolving environment, such commitments all too often get pushed aside for competing priorities.

So, yes, an event like this one can act

as a necessary reminder of the work we all must do. Violence against women and girls will not tackle itself. Relentless efforts are needed to prevent and address it. Through various means. And, at the end of the day, eliminating such violence is all about investing our collective will, resources and time so as to bring about lasting change.

Now, when we speak about violence against women and girls, what are we really talking about?

Of course, the very real threat of physical and sexual violence still awaits many women in society.

This is true, also, for other forms of violence, such as emotional abuse, which can manifest as efforts to degrade, control, shame or humiliate. Threats, intimidation and harassment are also included.

All are too often part and parcel of a woman’s life... And while exclusion and marginalization can be driving factors, women in halls of power are certainly not immune.

Sadly, these acts of violence can happen anywhere. In homes, in communities, in workplaces, in governance structures – no space or area is exempt.

When preparing for this event, I was glad to learn of the focus placed on enhancing the role of women in decision-making processes. The connection between violence against women, and women’s participation is not one which is always made. But, let us think about it for a moment.

Take, for example, a woman experiencing violence in her own home – whether physical or emotional. It’s not hard to see why she may have a harder time than others in casting her vote during elections or in participating in community-based governance.

Another example: a woman thinking of putting herself forward in local or national elections. If she thinks this



#16DaysOfActivism campaign launched in Iraq *(continued)*

will result in protection risks, whether through online abuse or the threat of harassment or intimidation, she might think twice. And, we must remember that there are also structural forms of violence – ways in which women are systematically excluded from the tables around which big decisions are made.

It is crystal clear that no country can achieve its goals – whether political, economic or social – without the participation and leadership of its women. And, it is just as clear that efforts to support women to assume their role as decisionmakers must take place alongside initiatives to address all violence against them.

Now - what needs to be done? To name just a few steps:

First and foremost, laws will have to change. For instance, it is high time that a law against domestic violence is adopted. Accountability and adequate support to survivors amount to the very least Iraqi women and girls deserve.

Tailored policies and strategies will also prove crucial. And, here, UN Iraq has been glad to partner with the Iraqi Government in developing a strategy to counter hate speech,

which will include elements targeting violence against women.

This is one example of policy change that will help to lessen the threat of violence facing women who put themselves forward in leadership positions.

Thirdly, taking up again the theme of investment: we need to, as they say, put our money where our mouth is. Talking is not enough; there must be investment in government and civil society institutions which have the expertise to advance women's rights, participation and empowerment. And this needs to encompass the provision of services critical to survivors of violence, including psychosocial and livelihood support.

Fourthly, we must ensure that our messages today are not, simply, confined to events like this one. In other words: sensitization is key to

preventing violence against women and girls. There have been many successful examples of awareness-raising campaigns led by government and civil society actors, which the United Nations has been proud to support. But we must see more – across all channels and mediums, from print news to townhalls to television shows. The role of the media is critical in this respect.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As I said: in Iraq, today, opportunities abound. This is as true for women and girls, as it is for men and boys.

But opportunities are only as strong as the efforts made to harness them.

So, let us take inspiration from each other today and recommit to preventing and eradicating violence against women and girls.

Thank you."



Survivors, saviors, leaders – not victims

During these 16 Days of Activism, let us remember that women are their own saviors.

Baghdad, 25 November 2023 – Over the last several years, violence against women and girls has surged – an estimated one in three women globally will experience physical and sexual violence in their lifetime. And as horrifying as this statistic is, unfortunately, it does not include other forms of violence, that often go unreported: verbal, psychological and economic violence.

In Iraq, almost 1 million women and girls are estimated to be at risk of some form of such violence. Around 26 per cent of Iraqi women report having already experienced violence at the hands of an intimate partner – and Iraqi experts say many cases go unreported.

"We face a big issue of unreported domestic violence," says Lieutenant Colonel Mina Raad, an Officer with the Women's Division of Baghdad's Community Police. "Of the women who report, most of them ask for help from the female officers rather than the male officers."

Indeed, women and girls are not just victims of violence; they are key actors in its prevention and response. Take community policing (CP) in Iraq, for instance – a method of law enforcement that encourages partnership between the public and the police to manage safety and security based on community needs. CP Officers are unarmed; come from the communities they serve; and conduct extensive outreach to make themselves highly visible and approachable.

"It is absolutely necessary for women to hold positions as CP officers," says Sara

Kadhum, who works in the Strategy Centre of Baghdad's CP Department. "Our participation empowers women to speak more freely: an abused woman is more comfortable reporting the problem to another woman, compared to if she was sharing this information with a man," shares Kadhum. CP is dedicated to rebuilding trust between the public and law enforcement institutions, which is only possible with the inclusion and support of women.

"In some cases, women are too embarrassed to speak about private or sensitive matters," Raad continues.



Survivors, saviors, leaders – not victims *(continued)*

This is particularly the case when it comes to rape, domestic violence, electronic blackmail, sexual harassment and assault, and other forms of violence that demand silence from survivors, out of shame or honor, both of which arise from the patriarchal norms that women around the world continue to fight against.

“In our society, a woman is usually embarrassed to show up in public with an unacquainted man. Our society does not welcome the idea of a woman meeting and sharing her problems with another man,” explains Suad, the head of IOM’s legal team in Ninewa’s Tel Afar district, where she leads a team providing free legal consultations, representation, awareness-raising and more in displacement-affected communities.

Another challenge that exacerbates the possibility of violence against women and girls is the absence of legal documentation. Without legal documentation, women’s financial assets can be managed or seized by partners or family members, subjecting them to economic control by others. They can be denied their property and access to livelihood opportunities, leaving them without their own homes and land, and make them more vulnerable to exploitation as they try to support themselves and their families. This violence affects not only the women themselves, but also their families, especially their children.

“Many women lack civil documentation like marriage certificates, and the men who were heads of their households are

either lost, dead or have perceived affiliated with Daesh,” says Ayat, a lawyer working for IOM’s legal team in Anbar’s Qaim district. “Without marriage certificates, the women can’t obtain legal documentation for their undocumented children, who then cannot attend school”. Violence against women thus trickles down.

“The women we support are so relieved when they can share their stories with a woman lawyer,” adds Ayat. “Certain cases are so sensitive that women cannot share or discuss precise details with a man comfortably or explicitly.” Being able to communicate freely, without hesitation or judgment, is imperative to making a strong legal case and seeking justice. Not only are many women put at greater ease by working with a female lawyer, but no longer alone, they are empowered by the solidarity, and encouraged by the example, ultimately making them more courageous in asserting their rights.

“I was the first woman lawyer in Zummar and Rabia. There were no women lawyers before,” shares Suad. “After me, five more women lawyers joined the court.”

Women’s leadership is growing in Iraqi civil society too, especially when it comes to protecting women and girls from violence.

“Women have the drive to realize change,” says Kawthar Al Mahamdi, President of the Soqya Foundation for Relief and Development, based in Anbar’s Fallujah district and supported by IOM through the WASL Civil Society Fund.

“However, because of the marginalization we face – especially women affected by armed groups – we often bear the burden of others’ mistakes, turning us into tools for fueling conflicts,” adds Kawthar. The Foundation supports women’s economic empowerment through skills and capacity-building trainings for entry into local industries, as well as social and psychological support.

“Every woman has the right to live without fear of violence,” says Dalia Al Mimari, of the IOM WASL-supported Human Line Foundation, a woman-led and women-focused civil society organization based in Mosul. “Our vision is to end violence and discrimination against women and achieve social justice for them. Our foundation provides legal, psychological and economic support services to women victims of war, and we also work to enable them to participate effectively in the political, economic, social and cultural fields,” adds Dalia.

Whether in law enforcement offices, courts, or communities, women are leading the charge to protect their own. As we mark the 16 Days of Activism, let us not only condemn violence against women and girls, but also celebrate and support the women who are working tirelessly to prevent and respond to all forms of violence. Their leadership is not just beneficial—it is essential. Under their leadership, we can create a world where all women and girls live free from violence.

It is women who will save us all.

By Sarah Gold, IOM

UNESCO Iraq and the Northern Technical University (NTU) launch “16 Days of Activism - UNITE! Standing Together for the Rights of Women and Girls” Campaign

Mosul, 03 December 2023 - UNESCO Iraq office, in collaboration with the Northern Technical University (NTU) organized the kickoff event of the “16 Days of Activism UNITE! Standing Together for the Rights of Women and Girls” Campaign, at the Central Library, NTU, Mosul.

The event brought together 45 Student leaders/ representatives of student volunteer committees who presented their inspiring advocacy campaign proposals to be curated until the 10th December (International Human Rights Day) in their communities inside and outside the University campus.

The proposals encompass a multitude of activities spanning art, drama, sport,



and awareness raising sessions supporting the rights of women and girls, for a variety of target groups. The

campaign is supported by the Governments of Korea, Japan, and United Arab Emirates.

#16DaysOfActivism is a call to action and a reminder that violence against women and girls is the most pervasive human rights violation worldwide

Baghdad, 01 December 2023 - “I wanted to run away and seek help,” said Kani, a brave 17-year-old girl who fought to reclaim her freedom after being kidnapped and forced into an unwanted child marriage.

UNICEF wants a world where girls like Kani can reach their full potential.

#16DaysOfActivism is a call to action and a reminder that violence against women and girls is the most pervasive human rights violation worldwide.

“I wanted to run away and seek help,” said Kani, a brave 17-year-old girl who

fought to reclaim her freedom after being kidnapped and forced into an unwanted child marriage. We want a

world where girls like Kani can reach their full potential. There is #NoExcuse.



The Gender Based Violence (GBV) Sector Coordination Group and Government partners launch the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence!

Baghdad, 05 December 2023 - The Gender Based Violence (GBV) Sector Coordination Group, in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the General Directorate of Combating Violence Against Women, launched the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence!

UNFPA Iraq took the stage in a panel discussing the outcomes of the GBV UN-Cluster System, shedding light on the importance of transitioning to local leadership. This shift aims to boost accountability and sustainability and align efforts with the country’s development priorities. By supporting

the government and fostering local ownership, we pave the way for a more effective response to all forms of violence.

UNFPA is committed to providing

technical assistance, capacity building, and resources to empower local organizations. Policies and support that prioritize local participation, ensures a united front against GBV.



UNFPA Iraq Deputy Representative, Garik Hayrapetyan, underscores commitment to end violence against women and girls

Baghdad, 10 December 2023 - UNFPA Iraq Deputy Representative, Garik Hayrapetyan, underscores commitment to end violence against women and girls during the closing of #16DaysOfActivism. Reflecting on progress, acknowledging challenges, and renewing the commitment to a society where everyone can live free from violence.



IOM Iraq wraps up #16DaysOfActivism with workshops through its Women Legal Counseling centres in Kirkuk and Salah al-Din

Kirkuk, 13 December 2023 - Empower through education! IOM Iraq wrapped up #16Days with workshops through its Women Legal Counseling centres in Kirkuk and Salah al-Din, providing women with essential tools—from legal advice to mental health support—to combat various forms of violence.



UNDP Iraq and UNAMI Human Rights Office, are keeping the activism alive

Erbil, 13 December 2023 - While the #16DaysOfActivism 2023 campaign has concluded, every day is 16 days of Activism in Iraq! UNDP Iraq and UNAMI Human Rights Office, are keeping the activism alive with women judges!

Today in Erbil, they engaged 21 women judges in a dialogue on their pivotal role in two key areas:

- advancing justice and eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls;
- enhancing accountability against perpetrators of all forms of violence against women and girls.



UNAMI HRO organizes a roundtable discussion aimed to address online violence against women and girls

Basra, 14 December 2023 – UNAMI Human Rights Office organized a roundtable discussion as part of the #16DaysOfActivism. The event aimed to address online violence against women and girls. Participants were 7 women and 13 men from Basra, Dhi-Qar, Maysan and Muthanna governorates included representatives from Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights (IHCHR), Women's Empowerment Department of the local government of Basra, Ministry of Interior's Community Police and Family and Child Protection Units, and academia took part in. During the event, the participants engaged in a



comprehensive dialogue on challenges and potential solutions pertaining to online violence, and suggested recommendations to address this issue.

Human Rights

UNAMI Human Rights Office raises awareness on human rights all over Iraq

Iraq, November – December 2023 – The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq is tasked by the Security Council resolution 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. Here is an overview of the recent UNAMI Human Rights Office's activities in this field.

Sulaymaniyah, 01 November 2023 - UNAMI Human Rights Office organized a two-day workshop in Sulaymaniyah on NGOs engagement with the United Nations mechanisms for the promotion and protection of human rights. The workshop was attended by 28 participants including journalists, activists, and representatives of civil society organizations. The participants discussed the avenues for NGOs to get familiar with the UN human rights mechanisms. Moreover, the relevance

of building networks and the engagement in the national processes

related to these UN mechanisms was also discussed during the workshop.



UNAMI Human Rights Office raises awareness on human rights all over Iraq *(continued)*



Mosul, 04 November 2023 - The Human Rights Office of the United

Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and the Iraqi Women

Journalists Forum organized a two-day training workshop in Mosul [3-4 November] on the human rights-based approach and principles in journalistic reporting. The workshop was attended by 22 journalists (11 women and 11 men). The participants discussed the international legal framework, human rights instruments and norms, and the application of the human rights-based approach in journalism. This is the fifth workshop held this year in a series of training courses under the Global Drive for Media Freedom and the Safety of Journalists initiative supported by the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.



Kirkuk, 04 November 2023 – UNAMI’s Human Rights Office (UNAMI HRO) and INSM Network organized a training on “Digital Security and Digital Rights” for 29 participants (15 men and 14 women) including human rights defenders, activists, journalists, bloggers, and lawyers. The training provided the participants with practical tools on how to safely navigate the cyberspace,

strengthen their access to the right to freedom of expression and enhance protection against hate speech in the digital environment. The event, which was held at the premises of the Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights, was the fourth in a series of five similar joint trainings to be held in Federal Iraq and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.



Baghdad, 14 November 2023 – UNAMI’s Human Rights Office and the Office of Electoral Assistance organized a one-day workshop entitled “Fact-Checking for the Protection of Freedom of Expression and Countering Hate Speech” for 14 representatives, including 7 women, from civil society organizations, Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights (IHCHR) and Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC). The workshop discussed strategies and tools to counter the issues of misinformation,



disinformation and hate speech on social media, including through the fact-

checking, and agreed to develop a code of conduct for their respective organizations.



Al Najaf, 15 November 2023 – In the framework of the Human Rights 75 Initiative, UNAMI’s Human Rights Office, in coordination with the Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights (IHCHR) - Najaf Office held a roundtable with Iraqi Civil Society Organisations (CSO) in Al Najaf on the due process rights of defendants under Iraqi and international law. Sixteen participants (four women and twelve men) from CSOs and the IHCHR attended the roundtable. Discussions focused on the Iraqi and international human rights law framework protecting the right to legal counsel, the right to remain silent and the right to prepare an adequate defence. The roundtable also covered the legal framework governing legitimate arrests and investigations as well as the

prohibition of torture. UNAMI Human Rights Officers discussed with participants the Iraqi Criminal Procedure

Code, the International Covenant for Civil and Political Rights and the Convention against Torture.



UNAMI Human Rights Office raises awareness on human rights all over Iraq *(continued)*

Al Najaf, 16 November 2023 - UNAMI's Human Rights Office, in coordination with the Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights (IHCHR) held a roundtable with Al Najaf Police Command on the due process rights of defendants under Iraqi and international law. Twenty-four police investigative officers attended the roundtable, which focused on the Iraqi and international human rights law framework protecting the right to legal counsel, the right to remain silent and the right to prepare an adequate defence. The roundtable also covered the legal framework governing legitimate arrests and investigations as well as the prohibition



of torture. UNAMI Human Rights Officers discussed with participants the Iraqi Criminal Procedure Code, the

International Covenant for Civil and Political Rights and the Convention against Torture.

Mosul, 27 November 2023 - The UNAMI Human Rights Office organized a roundtable discussion as part of the activities of the 16 Days of Activism. The event aimed at addressing online violence against women and girls. Participants (19 women and 6 men) included representatives of Mosul local government, the judiciary, non-

governmental organizations, lawyers and IHCHR. During the event, participants engaged in a comprehensive dialogue, addressing prevalent challenges, suggested insightful recommendations, and shared best practices to ensure the protection of those at risk of online violence.



Kut City of Wasit, 27 November 2023 - In collaboration with Tech 4 Peace, UNAMI's Human Rights Office organized a one-day workshop entitled "Fact-Checking for the Protection of Freedom of Expression and Countering Hate Speech" for 14 participants, including seven women, from civil society organizations, the Iraqi Bar Association (Kut) and local journalists. The workshop discussed the right to freedom of expression and its limitations, as well as techniques and tools available offline and online to check the facts and counter misinformation, disinformation, mal-information and hate speech in social media.



Kirkuk, 27 November 2023 - The UNAMI Human Rights Office organized a second training for the staff members of the Ministry of Interior's Family Protection Units (FPU) from Kirkuk on working with survivors of domestic violence. The training was conducted as part of UNAMI's efforts to provide support its partners through capacity-building activities. Six FPU investigators and assistants benefitted from this training which included discussions on recommendations and best practices on interviewing victims who were subjected to traumatic experiences.



UNAMI Human Rights Office raises awareness on human rights all over Iraq (continued)

Erbil, 2 December 2023 - UNAMI Human Rights Office (HRO) and INSM Network jointly conducted a three-day Training of Trainers (TOT) from 30 November to 2 December on “Digital Security and Digital Rights”. The 12 participants (six men and 6 women) included human rights defenders, journalists, bloggers, lawyers, and civil society representatives.

The training provided participants with the tools to enhance their safe use of cyberspace and uphold their rights to freedom of expression and protection against hate speech online. The training covered data collection and storage, how to safely browse the internet, including protection against hacking, and how to prevent online intimidation, harassment, threats and bullying. The training also introduced participants to different training



methodologies aimed at strengthening their presentation and delivery skills in order to enable them to effectively disseminate the training within their networks. This TOT is the fifth and the last

training of a series of trainings held this year as part of UNAMI HRO and INSM's joint engagement to build capacity of human rights defenders on Digital Security and Digital Rights in Iraq.



Baghdad, 4 December 2023 - As part of the ‘Human Rights 75 Initiative’ to mark the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), UNAMI Human Rights Office held a consultative workshop on the theme of advancing racial justice. Seventeen [17] participants attended the workshop, including the Prime Minister’s Advisor on Women’s Rights representative, members of the Parliamentary Human Rights Committee, representatives from the Ministry of Culture, from IHCHR and civil society organisations, as well as representatives of Iraq’s component groups.

During the workshop, participants heard presentations on the importance of the

UDHR in promoting racial justice and on the need to strengthen the national legal framework to promote equality. Participants exchanged ideas and

discussed strategies aimed at advancing racial justice by combating racism, racial discrimination, and associated intolerance in Iraq.



Kirkuk, 4 December 2023 – UNAMI Human Rights Office organized a roundtable discussion as part of the 16 Days of Activism. The event aimed to address online violence against women and girls. Participants (6 women and 7 men) from Kirkuk, Diyala, and Salah al-Din governorates included

representatives from IHCHR offices, NGOs, MoI’s Family Protection Units, and journalists. During the event, the participants engaged in a comprehensive dialogue on challenges and potential solutions pertaining to online violence, and suggested recommendations to address this issue.



Mosul, 7 December 2023 – Today, UNAMI Human Rights Office organized a round table discussion under the theme “enhancing child protection” in Mosul. The event discussed forms of child right violations and raised awareness on how to effectively protect the rights of children in areas that have been affected by conflict. Participants included representatives of NGOs, government agencies and community stakeholders dealing with the subject matter. During the event, the

participants identified gaps in relation to the protection of children and developed a

shared understanding of effective strategies for promoting child rights.



UNAMI Human Rights Office raises awareness on human rights all over Iraq (continued)

Erbil, 10 December 2023 - On the occasion of Human Rights Day and the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, UNAMI Human Rights Office, in coordination with Tishk International University in Erbil, organized a briefing session on human rights and UNAMI's work thereto. Students and professors from the International Relations and Diplomacy Department of Tishk

International University participated in the session. Participants were briefed on UNAMI's human rights monitoring and reporting, focusing on priority areas of work in the Kurdistan region, including civic space and the administration of justice among other topics and discussed the relevance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in today's context.



Baghdad, 12 December 2023 - The UNAMI Human Rights Office held a workshop for NGOs, and civil society networks to discuss accountability for criminal violence in family settings. During the workshop, 22 participants including 21 women and one man proposed strategies to effectively collaborate with government's authorities, courts, and other relevant stakeholders, including to strengthen monitoring mechanisms for such cases and implement comprehensive awareness campaigns within communities aiming to tackle this issue at its roots. The participants noted that a strong legal

framework geared towards the protection of women is key in ensuring

accountability for violence in family settings.



Kirkuk, 12 December 2023 - The UNAMI Human Rights Office organized a roundtable discussion on human rights and drug policy, bringing together representatives from the Department of Labor and Social Affairs, the Department of Health, the Narcotics department of the Ministry of Interior and the local government. The event included an introduction to the International Guidelines on Human Rights and Drug Policy, followed by a discussion about the current challenges in Iraq. #StandUp4HumanRights.



Karbala, 14 December 2023 - UNAMI Human Rights Office in collaboration with Iraqi Human Rights Watch Society, convened a workshop in Karbala Governorate to discuss challenges in prosecuting perpetrators of criminal violence within family settings. Seventeen women and four men from NGOs, civil society networks and the Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights (IHCHR) participated in the discussion. Among key recommendations aimed at curbing impunity were the emphasis on the need to expedite the enactment of anti-domestic violence legislation, intensifying awareness campaigns on the dangers of impunity, fostering increased coordination between relevant



governmental institutions and civil society, and enhancing monitoring and

reporting mechanisms for cases of criminal violence within family settings.

An insightful legal awareness event was successfully held in Penjwen, bringing together 27 respected Mullahs and Union of Scholars officials

Baghdad, 17 November 2023 – With support from UNFPA, an insightful legal awareness event was successfully held in Penjwen, bringing together 27 respected Mullahs and Union of Scholars officials. This collaborative effort aims to shed attention on the negative impacts of early marriage as well as the relevant laws and consequences.

Engaging discussions emphasised the necessity of protecting young girls' rights and empowering them to pursue their educational and personal goals. Mullahs, as respected members of society, play a critical role in educating and directing their communities toward a future in which early marriage is no longer an obstacle to personal growth

and social progression. Together, we can create a society where

every girl has the opportunity to reach her full potential.



TARKIB Organization for Arts and Culture, in collaboration with UNAMI Human Rights Office, launches a week-long, human rights-themed art exhibition entitled 'CYCLE – UDHR75'



Baghdad, 23 November 2023 - As part of global celebrations to mark the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), TARKIB Organization for Arts and Culture, in collaboration with UNAMI Human Rights Office, launched a week-long, human rights-themed art exhibition entitled 'CYCLE – UDHR75'. The exhibition, which is taking place at the French Institute in Baghdad, presents an eclectic mix of artwork by 20 Iraqi artists, including paintings, sculptures, photography, installations, and digital works. Through these diverse artistic mediums, the exhibition

aims to provoke meaningful dialogue between artist and audience on a range

of complex and interconnected social, political, and environmental human rights issues.

The artworks seek to provide an innovative and insightful perspective on a range of critical human rights topics including violence against women, climate-induced migration, water scarcity, the situation of youth, and other pressing human rights concerns.

Speaking at the opening of the exhibition, Mr. Dimiter Chalev, Chief of UNAMI Human Rights Office, highlighted the importance of the arts as an effective tool to promote human rights. "Not only does the exhibition use exciting and innovative ways to provoke discussion on current human rights issues, it also emphasizes the enduring relevance of the UDHR for all Iraqis as part of the global human rights family."



UNAMI Human Rights Office delegation visits the Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights headquarters

Baghdad, 23 November 2023 - A delegation from the Human Rights Office of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, headed by Chief HRO Mr. Dimiter Chalev, visited the Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights headquarters in Baghdad and met with a number of officials from the relevant sections. Discussion focused on a wide range of human rights topics.



The UNAMI Human Rights Office and the Babylon Film Institute launch the Babylon Documentary Film Festival in Baghdad

Baghdad, 24 November 2023 – The UNAMI Human Rights Office, in partnership with the Babylon Film Institute, launched the two-day Babylon Documentary Film Festival at The Gallery in the Karrada area of

Baghdad city. The festival features the screening of a selection of short and feature-length human rights documentary films from Iraq and around the world, followed by question-and-answer session between the

audience and filmmakers. The films focus on key contemporary global human rights issues that particularly resonate with audiences in Iraq, including children's rights, minorities' rights, the rights of persons with disabilities, and the impact of climate change.

This is the first in a series of three similar film screenings scheduled to take place in Iraq this year, with the others to be held in Hilla City, Babil Governorate, and in Mosul, Ninewa Governorate, in December. These screenings are organised as part of the 'Human Rights 75 Initiative' of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to mark the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.



International Human Rights Day and the 75th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights commemorated in Baghdad

Baghdad, 11 December 2023 - The College of Education for Woman at University of Baghdad, in collaboration with the UNAMI Human Rights Office, today marked the International Human Rights Day and the 75th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) with an event that brought together Iraqi government

officials and civil society representatives and included a dialogue session and a play. The event, organised as part of the UDHR75 initiative, aimed to engage young people in the promotion of human rights and the principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The event was attended by representatives of the Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Youth and Sports, and the Minister of Defense. Also in attendance were the Adviser of the Prime Minister for Political Affairs, the President of University of Baghdad, members of the Parliament Human Rights Committee, Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights members, the heads of the human rights departments in different governmental entities, and Civil Society Organisations.

University staff and students also participated in the event, where UNAMI and Government of Iraq representatives delivered speeches to mark the occasion. In addition, there were a number of activities, including a dialogue on human rights, and a play presented by University of Baghdad students.



Art exhibition and film screening event commemorating International Human Rights Day



Baghdad, 13 December 2023 – UNAMI's Human Rights Office, in collaboration with the Babylon Film Institute and Tarkib Organisation for Arts and Culture, held a human rights arts exhibition and film screening to mark the 75th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The artworks and films exhibited at the event provided innovative and insightful perspectives on a range of critical human rights topics affecting not just Iraq but countries around the world, these included the impact of climate change, violence against women, the situation of youth, the rights of children, the rights of persons with disabilities and other pressing human rights concerns.

During the event, which was attended by government officials [including from the High Judicial Council and the Parliamentary Human Rights Committee], representatives of the diplomatic community, civil society organisations and the Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights,

participants met with artists to discuss their work and interacted with the filmmakers and representatives of the Babylon Film Institute through a question-and-answer session.

Speaking at the event, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of UNAMI, stated: "The exhibits and films on display shed light on topics which impact the rights of people, not just in Iraq, but across the globe. As the saying goes, a picture is worth a thousand words. And I am convinced that today's exhibit can help to expand our understanding of persistent human rights challenges. And importantly, it can inspire us all to do more to place human rights front and centre in our work and daily lives".

Here is the text of the remarks made by Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) at this



event:

"Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,
Distinguished guests,
Thank you for joining us today.

Today's event is part of UNAMI's efforts to mark the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

And, I think it represents a unique opportunity. An opportunity to engage with a diverse group of artists and filmmakers who are using their talents to speak out for human rights. The exhibits and films on display shed light on topics which impact the rights of people, not just in Iraq, but across the globe.

As the saying goes, a picture is worth a thousand words. While something of a cliché, this often rings true. In other words: the exhibit today can help to expand our understanding of persistent human rights challenges.

And importantly, it can inspire us all to do more to place human rights front and centre in our work and daily lives.

Now, it is undeniable that the Universal Declaration was a milestone achievement, which has since paved the way for over 70 human rights treaties at global and regional levels.

Its adoption seems even more remarkable when we remember the context in which it occurred. The United Nations was in its infancy; the world was reeling from a devastating and inhuman war; and the so-called East-West divide was taking clear shape.

Yet, the international community still found a way to agree to this aspirational text. This was no easy feat.

And, reminding ourselves of it could, perhaps, act as a modest source of hope in what sometimes feels like an increasingly divided world; a world in which human rights continue to be flattened under the weight of conflict. So - let me emphasize, I am deeply grateful to the talented people who have made this event possible.

After today's screenings, there will be a question-and-answer session with filmmakers. And I can think of no better way to galvanize our commitment to human rights than to learn from those who use their art to shed light on the dark spots of our living history.

Thank you all, again, for being here. And, please, enjoy the exhibit."

UNAMI Human Rights Office, in collaboration with the High Council for Women and Development, held a high-level meeting aimed at pioneering a coordination mechanism that unites Kurdistan Regional Government stakeholders in the fight against domestic violence

Erbil, 20 December 2023 – Breaking barriers and creating solutions! Following seven consultative workshops with key stakeholders in Erbil, Dohuk and Sulaymaniyah governorates throughout 2022 and 2023, UNAMI Human Rights Office, in collaboration with the High Council for Women and Development, held a high-level meeting aimed at pioneering a coordination mechanism that unites Kurdistan Regional Government stakeholders in the fight against domestic violence. Representatives from the KR Ministry of Interior, the judiciary, the public prosecution office, the police as well as the Directorate of Combating Violence against Women joined this endeavour. The goal? To craft a seamless network ensuring effective



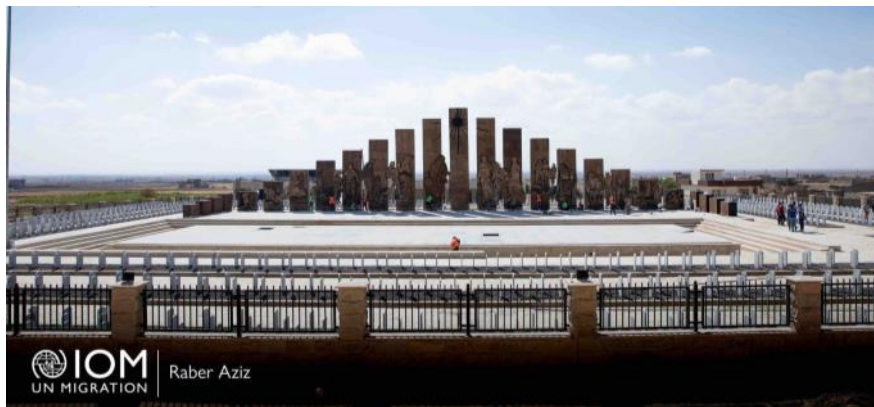
coordination, information sharing, and policy advocacy tackling domestic violence head-on. This coordination mechanism aims to deliver comprehensive and coordinated support services, empowering survivors, and holding perpetrators

accountable.

More than a mere meeting, the event marks a game-changer in the fight against domestic violence, working towards transformation, empowerment, and a united front against this societal challenge!

Yazidi Genocide

A step toward healing: Yazidi genocide memorial opens in Solagh, Sinjar, Iraq



Sinjar, 8 November 2023 – “When this genocide happened, I was right here,” Chinar, 18, said, standing before the Grave of Mothers in Solagh, Sinjar. “They separated the old women from the rest of us. I was 10 years old.” Nine years later, the site where nearly 90 Yazidi women were martyred by Daesh is forever memorialized with the Yazidi Genocide Memorial.

On 18 October 2023, Chinar and dozens of other Yazidi survivors welcomed the opening of the memorial site – a common space to remember and grieve

that stands as a physical testament to the Yazidi community’s strength and resilience.

“It is so hard for me to be here today, but it is important to remember what happened to us. I only know my siblings were killed; I don’t know where their bodies are, so this memorial provides me a space to come and pray [for the dead] and to remember.”

Nadia Murad, former resident of Sinjar and member of the Yazidi community, donated part of her Nobel Peace Prize to purchase the land that the memorial

stands on. “I felt it was important for it to stand right here,” she said during a speech at the inaugural ceremony, “keeping watch over the graves of the mothers, where my own mother, along with many others, was left right here, but never forgotten.”

“I hope it will be a tribute that can provide solace and ease our personal grief, while making sense of our community’s trauma,” she said.

Built at the request of survivors by Nadia’s Initiative and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Iraq, with support and funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the memorial site pays homage to the resilience and courage of the Yazidi community, who endured systematic violence and persecution during the Daesh occupation. Over 3,000 members of the Yazidi community were executed and buried in mass graves in what the United Nations, European Union, Iraq and a number of countries have declared a genocide against the Yazidi religious minority.

The memorial is hoped to provide some

A step toward healing: Yazidi genocide memorial opens in Solagh, Sinjar, Iraq *(continued)*

closure and a space for healing for families who, until now, have not been reunited with the bodies of their loved ones. It offers one form of justice that the Yazidi community targeted by Daesh so desperately deserve.

"We have been subjected to massacres 74 times, and no one knows about them," Samar, 18, said. "The significance of this memorial is that it allows people to learn about what happened to us. It will stay here for a long time."

Designed using 3D imagery as a gift by Yazidi architect Dersim Khairy Namo, and in close cooperation with local artists, engineers and community leaders, the 10,000-square-meter space hosts nearly 3,000 unmarked marble gravestones in remembrance of the lives lost in August 2014.

"We did not have a proper place for mourning; we had to commemorate the genocide on the street, or in a wilderness, which was not befitting," Ibrahim, 19, said. "Now we have a dedicated place, we will not be at a loss as to where to hold our collective mourning. We will not be scattered."

"Remembrance is the first step towards recovery," said Giorgi Gigauri, Chief of Mission for IOM in Iraq, during a speech at the event. "One crucial step in this process is the timely provision of individual reparations and the coordination of other transitional justice measures to address the horrors of Daesh's genocide and crimes against humanity, as outlined in the Yazidi Survivors Law."

"Reparations and transitional justice are not only important for the well-being and recovery efforts of the Yazidi community, but also for the collective

healing of the country," he said.

USAID Mission Director Elise Jensen emphasized that "with art and remembrance, we transform tragedy into timeless tributes. The Yazidi Genocide Memorial stands as a symbol of our commitment to honour the lives lost in the Yazidi genocide, etching their memory into our collective consciousness. These sculptures symbolize resilience, healing and the enduring spirit of humanity. Proudly partnering with Nadia's Initiation and IOM Iraq, USAID is uplifting communities and offering a powerful symbol of hope for generations to come."

The ceremony was attended by Dr. Ahmed Al Badrani representing the Prime Minister of the Government of Iraq and the Minister of Culture, Tourism and Antiquities; Dr. Dindar Zibari representing the Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government; Mr. Ahmad Al Asady, the Minister of Labour and Social Affairs; Dr. Khalaf Sinjari, the Prime Minister Advisor for Yazidi Affairs; Judge Raed Hamid Hussain representing the President of Iraq's Supreme Judicial Council; Ms. Sarab Barakat, Directorate General of the Directorate for Survivors Affairs; Ninewa Mr. Najm Al Jabouri, Governor of Ninewa; and Mr. Claudio Cardone representing the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq. Representatives of diplomatic missions and international organizations, community leaders, survivors and family members of the Yazidi community were all also in attendance.

A moving performance by a local Yazidi band closed the ceremony. While

touring the site, guests admired paintings created by Yazidi survivors who participated in a mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) activity previously implemented by IOM and supported by USAID.

As part of efforts to advance transitional justice and durable solutions for the Yazidi and other minority communities in Iraq, IOM also provides protection, mental health and psychosocial support, housing rehabilitation and legal services to Yazidi and other survivors of war, with support from USAID.

IOM worked closely with Iraqi authorities to develop the Yazidi Survivors Law and is supporting the Directorate for Survivors Affairs to provide reparations to Yazidi, Turkmen, Christian and Shabak survivors, including throughout the application process. Over 1,141 applications for reparations have already been processed and nearly 900 verified survivors have begun receiving monthly salaries under this law.

Written by Megan Giovannetti, IOM Iraq.



Bringing survivors together for the common goal of transitional justice

Baghdad, 09 December 2023 - Today is the International Day of Commemoration and Dignity of the Victims of the Crime of Genocide and of the Prevention of this Crime Survivors of genocide and CSRV, young Yazidi, Turkmen and Shabak activists are fighting for transitional justice in Iraq. Here is their story.

Transitional Justice is not a given, it is fought for – and there is power in numbers. When people come together for a collective good, change is made.

During this year's 16 Days of Activism, let's shed a spotlight on the courageous survivors of genocide and sexual

violence during war time who use their voices to advocate for those who cannot, and who lead the fight for their rights and reparations.

Last October, a number of these courageous women came together for a weekend of learning exchange in the northern Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Hosted by IOM Iraq and the Dr Denis Mukwege Foundation, the learning exchange brought members of the Global Network of Victims and Survivors to End Wartime Sexual Violence (SEMA) together with survivors from the Yazidi, Shabak and Turkmen communities to share

experiences, expertise and to learn new skills on leading survivor-first activism. Sitting on a tall sandstone step at the Lalish temple, the holiest temple for Yazidis, Sarab, 21, is surrounded by fellow Iraqi and international survivors for a day of cultural exchange. She shares what stood out for her during the weekend workshop with the SEMA network.

"At first, I thought there were only Yazidi survivors; but then it turned out that there are many other different peoples with survivors," said Sarab. "Now we know how to expand our network and how to bring together

Bringing survivors together for the common goal of transitional justice *(continued)*

more survivors.”

Sarab is a member of the Survivors’ Voices Network (SVN) in Iraq. This network aims to ensure meaningful, representative, and unified participation of survivors in the implementation of the “Yazidi Survivors Law,” a reparations law passed in 2021 allowing survivors to apply for compensation in the form of monthly salaries. The law also includes provisions for other forms of reparations, such as plots of land, educational and employment opportunities, opening health and psychological rehabilitation centers, searching for those who remain missing, among other goals.

Sarab highlighted a crucial lesson she learned from her fellow activists during the international learning exchange: mental health is key. “They advised us to be comfortable psychologically,” she said. “First, I just deal with myself and how to be good and healthy before helping others.”

The SVN also brings Yazidi and other minorities survivors together as a safe space to share stories, meet women with similar experiences, and learn how to utilize their voice for the collective good.

Khawla, 27-year-old Yazidi survivor from Kocho, said: “Certainly, I have changed immensely after entering the network and participating in leadership workshops. It brought me out of a circle of fear. Before, I could not advocate for myself. Now, I go and demand my rights and my voice is heard; I speak publicly.”

“When [survivors] networks work together,” she continued, “it shows perpetrators that we are not giving up; we are going to work hard to expand the reach of our voices and the places where they should be.”

Tatiana, 40, is the co-founder and national coordinator of the National Movement of Survivors of Sexual Violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo and a SEMA member. She has been doing activist work since 2004, growing her national network to over 7000 survivors. She believes it wasn’t only the young survivors who learned a great deal from this workshop, but also the seasoned survivor-activists like herself.

“This weekend workshop was not only about giving them my experience, but I also learned too much from these young girls,” she said. “My role was to encourage them and to give them what it means to be empowered, to be



independent and to decide for themselves.”

“I told myself that they are young, but they are engaged with the cause, and they are able to think. And I believe it is very important to give them more trainings and workshops for them to move forward,” she added.

Vasfije, a 41-year-old survivor from Kosovo, is another one of the participants of the workshop. She has been an activist for the past five years, traveling to different countries to spread awareness about sexual violence in conflict. After witnessing the power of survivors’ networks, she hopes to create one for other women from Kosovo.

“This will be so more survivors can have an open network of support and to share their stories, because most of them are not comfortable with sharing their stories at home,” she said.

“It does not matter what religion you are, what government you have, or who the war was against. We all understand each other better than someone who did not experience sexual violence.”

Sitting back with Sarab in the mountainous temple of Lalish at the end of this fruitful weekend, she feels hopeful for the future of Yazidi survivors and the justice they will obtain. “It feels good to have many people around you. It makes you stronger. You feel unified to have people around you,” she said. “Now I feel like something good is going to happen for us because I am seeing all the people around us – it is motivating.”

The dr Denis Mukwege Foundation supports survivors’ networks in more than 10 countries. It was started by Dr. Denis Mukwege, a Congolese gynecologist and co-laureate of the 2018 Nobel Peace Prize, alongside Iraqi Yazidi human rights activist Nadia

Murad, for “their efforts to end the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war and armed conflict.” The dr Denis Mukwege Foundation also assists SEMA, a global network composed of members from 26 countries who share their experiences and fight together against rape as a weapon of war.

Since 2019, IOM has been supporting the empowerment of women survivors of conflict-related sexual violence perpetrated by so-called ISIL to engage in advocacy for their rights and broader transitional justice process. We have been providing different forms of capacity building and direct assistance for their advocacy activities, in partnership with prominent international organization for supporting survivors of CRSV - dr Dennis Mukwege Foundation and local NGOs.

Thanks to the United States Agency for International Development, the United Kingdom Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, German Federal Foreign Office and the Netherlands Ministry for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation for their generous support of the Survivors’ Voice Network in Iraq and contributing to this culture and learning exchange workshop.



UNFPA Iraq country office has won the UNFPA Dare to Dream Innovation Award 2023 for its ‘Limitless Abilities’ project!

Baghdad, 19 November 2023 – UNFPA is incredibly excited to announce that UNFPA Iraq country office has won the UNFPA Dare to Dream Innovation Award 2023 for its ‘Limitless Abilities’ project! This project aims to increase the inclusiveness and participation of young people with disabilities in society".



ILO and IFI are collaborating to establish the Iraqi Business and Disability Network

Baghdad, 19 November 2023 - The ILO through the project "Towards More and Better Job Opportunities by Promoting Private Sector Development in Southern Iraq - with a Focus on Green Business," is supporting the Iraqi Federation of Industries, to establish the Iraqi Business and Disability Network with the aim of inclusion persons with disabilities in the Iraqi labour market. The network will encompass representatives of employers from various sectors and representatives from entities who are actively involved in the inclusion of persons with disabilities into the labour market. This initiative will serve as a platform for mutual learning and inspiration among companies in this

field. By the end of 2023, approximately forty National Business and Disability Networks (NBDNs) will exist in all world regions. Almost all of them will also be members of the ILO Global Business and Disability Network (GBDN), which functions as a network of networks facilitating peer-to-peer sharing and the adoption of good practices in managing NBDNs. "Towards More and Better Job Opportunities by Promoting Private Sector Development in Southern Iraq - with a Focus on Green Business," project is implemented by the ILO, with the support of Italy through the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS).



UNFPA celebrates the resilience, determination, and incredible abilities of persons with disabilities

Mosul, 07 December 2023 - Today, we celebrate the resilience, determination, and incredible abilities of persons with disabilities. Their contributions to our society are immeasurable, and their strength inspires us all. Hayat was disabled due to a medical error caused by a corrupted needle during insemination, in addition to other sufferings such as poverty, loneliness, and a society that ignored her abilities because of her disability. She faced her illness and poverty, completed her studies, graduated, and

mastered handicrafts, making accessories, and painting. Today, she is a brilliant perseverant, full of hope and determination to build a more beautiful future for herself. "I realized that nothing is impossible in life, and my disability will not prevent me from progressing in my life. I'm constantly learning new things. I am currently giving training to my peers within the center," says Hayat. Ahmed, 26 years old, was born and lives in the city of Mosul with his family. Ahmed was lucky to find a new path to a better life when he met someone who told him about the Al-Hadba Center and the services provided by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in cooperation with the Iraq Health Access Organization and the facilities available for access and participation of persons with disabilities. Ahmed participated in a variety of

sports activities and life skills training. He also experienced physical therapy and interacted with his teammates in training, gaining new abilities, and giving him greater optimism for his future. "Always embrace hope, for it is the guiding light that illuminates the path through life's trials and tribulations," says Ahmed. Despite the uncertainty and challenges of life in Mosul, Sawsan found hope in the Al Hadbaa center, which empowered youth and girls with disabilities. Regardless of physical limitations from birth, her spirit remained unbroken and through the centre's diverse programs, including life skills training, handicrafts, and business acumen, Sawsan discovered the tools to navigate the world of entrepreneurship. Sawsan emerged from her struggles, her determination unwavering, and her future full of opportunities.



Statement of the United Nations Resident Coordinator on the International Day of Persons with Disabilities

Baghdad, 3 December 2023 – “As we mark the International Day of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs), the United Nations in Iraq emphasizes its unwavering commitment to supporting the government and Iraqi society address the needs, rights, and aspirations of persons with disabilities. The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), ratified by Iraq in 2013, shows Iraq’s own commitment to realizing the full rights of persons with disabilities. It is estimated that approximately 12% of Iraq’s population experience some form of disability. This figure rises to 18% among children. People with disabilities have been especially challenged by decades of armed conflicts, violence, and economic



shocks. Disability exclusion is commonly overlooked problem in many societies, and achieving disability inclusion demands acknowledgment of the efforts of individuals with disabilities to actively participate in the economic and social facets of society. The Government of Iraq, United Nations agencies, international non-governmental organizations, and civil society, are all working to address the barriers faced by people with disabilities. Our shared pledge is to ensure that no one is left behind. Guided by the principles entrenched in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, we are steadfast in dismantling stereotypes, and championing accessibility by supporting quality education, promoting dignified employment opportunities, reducing inequalities, and nurturing sustainable communities.

Some simple steps that will lead to better access to job opportunities and social services for people with disabilities include:

- Creating awareness by increasing awareness of the needs and

potential of individuals with disabilities, including children and young adults. Enhanced visibility is a key step that leads to greater participation in society by persons with disabilities and providing disability-friendly services and amenities.

- Empowering the Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) by bolstering their capacity and engaging them in consultative processes.

- Fostering cross-ministerial coordination and collaboration in service delivery and data management. This not only ensures the provision of services for Persons with Disabilities but also strengthens job creation initiatives.

Seven of the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) refer to disability inclusion as part of the strategy to achieve a better world by 2030. As we celebrate the strength, diversity, and contributions of persons with disabilities, the United Nations will remain committed to supporting the government and civil society organizations in Iraq to promote disability inclusion across all domains.”

The impact of inclusive vocational training in fostering independence and meaningful employment for all, including persons with disabilities



Baghdad, 03 December 2023 - On the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, let’s meet Hawaraa from

Barsa, a shining example of triumph and resilience. After successfully completing the vocational training program in sewing, she’s now actively utilizing her skills in the workforce, working alongside her peers.

Hawaraa’s journey inspires us all, highlighting the impact of inclusive vocational training in fostering independence and meaningful employment for all, including persons with disabilities.

The ILO, in collaboration with UN-Habitat Iraq, is implementing vocational training programmes under the European Union in Iraq funded project “Increasing Access to Employment Opportunities for Vulnerable Urban Population in Basra City” in Response to the COVID-19 Crisis to support youth like Hawraa in their journey to better employment opportunities, including self-employment.

IOM on X

Baghdad, 03 December 2023 - Breaking barriers: IOM Iraq message on International Day of Persons with Disabilities

We are committed to achieve the UN sustainable development goals for, with and by persons with disabilities.

Let’s continue to work together in creating an equitable and inclusive society for everyone.

UNITAD on X

Baghdad, 03 December 2023 - Today, we mark the International Day of Persons with Disabilities (#IDPD2023), reflecting on the resilience of survivors of ISIL crimes which are associated in many cases with physical disfigurement and a significant impact on mental health.

UNITAD ensures inclusive support to witnesses and survivors as they participate in justice processes with accessible facilities, through a trauma-informed approach to investigations and through the Team’s dedicated Witness Protection and Support Unit.

UNESCO Iraq Office commemorates International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists

Baghdad, 03 November 2023 - UNESCO Iraq Office commemorated the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists with extensive discussions in Baghdad. The event brought together journalists, representatives from the Iraqi judiciary, the Ministry of Interior, and civil society organizations focused on media affairs.

Iraqi journalists shared their experiences of attacks on themselves and their colleagues, highlighting how perpetrators often evade punishment. These incidents were collectively addressed with the aim of finding solutions to prevent their recurrence.

During the event, journalists paid tribute to their colleagues who lost their lives to violence and terrorism during Iraq's democratic transition over the past two decades. They emphasized that many of these cases remain unresolved, with perpetrators enjoying a high level of impunity.

Judge Amer Hassan, the representative of the High Judicial Council and the head of the Media and Publishing Court, reiterated the judiciary's commitment to achieving justice for



media and journalism victims. He emphasized the need for specialized courts for media-related cases. Major General Saad Maan, the security advisor to the Minister of Interior, highlighted the importance of journalists reporting such cases and urged the families of slain journalists to pursue legal action for reopening these cases and conducting fresh investigations.

Journalists at the event stressed the necessity of establishing a national team comprising journalists and civil organizations responsible for

monitoring cases related to journalists, including assaults, murder, and abduction. They expressed concerns about the rising impunity for perpetrators.

UNESCO presented the latest reports addressing impunity indicators in countries worldwide, including Iraq. It underscored the shared responsibility of the government and relevant authorities in ending impunity, as well as the role of journalists, civil society organizations, and media outlets in promoting advocacy to break the silence and end impunity.

UNESCO Iraq Office discussed the agenda of the Kurdistan Committee for Freedom of Expression and Media Development



Erbil, 09 November 2023 - UNESCO's CI Sector engaged with the National Coordination Office in Kurdistan, the Government's Media and Information Office, and members of the Journalists' Safety and Issue of Impunity Committee in Iraqi Kurdistan to establish the committee in the KRI. This initiative is part of the "Breaking the Silence" project, funded by the Dutch Embassy in Iraq, aiming to promote government accountability

and judiciary follow-up on journalists' safety and impunity issues.

UNESCO is actively working to establish a dedicated mechanism in the Kurdistan Region to uphold freedom of expression, ensure journalists' safety, and combat impunity. The collaboration involves local partners such as security forces, the judiciary, the Ministry of Justice, the Independent Commission for Human Rights, the Syndicate of Journalists in

Kurdistan, and representatives from civil society organizations.

This endeavor builds upon earlier efforts in Erbil and Sulaymaniyah this year, where committee participants agreed to create a national mechanism for Kurdistan Iraq in line with United Nations and international community standards on freedom of expression and media development indicators. Authorities in the Kurdistan Region have committed to establishing this mechanism, complementing its counterpart in Baghdad. Notably, the national mechanism in the capital has been awaiting approval from the Prime Minister since 2016, while the regional government is actively working to approve it. This reflects a genuine desire to comply with UNESCO's recommendations, the Human Rights Council, and the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression.

UNESCO appreciates the significant cooperation from the Kurdistan Region authorities and their commitment to the United Nations' Action Plan for the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity 2022-2032.

UNESCO Iraq Office conducts training for Federal Police officers on freedom of expression standards



Baghdad, 30 November 2023 - As part of the Multi-Donors Programme (MDP) aimed at bolstering freedom of expression and ensuring journalist safety, UNESCO Iraq recently organized a training course for media and public relations officers within the Federal Police. The course delved into international standards for freedom of expression, emphasizing the coordination of relations with the journalistic community in Iraq. It specifically addressed the safety of journalists and the importance of

flexibility when dealing with media coverage teams.

In collaboration with the Federal Police leadership and the Ministry of Interior, UNESCO successfully trained over 38 media and public relations officers from various units. The focus of the training was on establishing coordination mechanisms and fostering collaboration, fulfilling a crucial component for activating the mechanism dedicated to protecting journalists and combating impunity. This initiative aligns with UNESCO's

continuous endeavors in Iraq, marking a significant milestone in bridging law enforcement and journalists.

During the training, officers shared valuable observations that will be integrated by UNESCO into a comprehensive guide on freedom of expression standards. This guide, developed in collaboration with the Iraqi judiciary, aims to harmonize the efforts of the judiciary, interior, and journalists. Its purpose is to facilitate conflict resolution and minimize friction among these stakeholders, ultimately supporting and safeguarding freedom of expression.

Furthermore, the training underscored the role of media officers within the Federal Force in instructing their personnel regarding the annulment of the "Baghdad Operations Letter" that authorized journalists' coverage, a policy discontinued since 2015. This cancellation has been reaffirmed by subsequent directives from security leadership. In accordance with the Journalists' Rights Law, all journalists are entitled to legal protection and the freedom to practice their profession.

Empowering journalists: UNESCO's focus on safeguarding freedom of expression in Iraq



Baghdad, 07 December 2023 - UNESCO Iraq Office recently organized a training and evaluation session as part of the Multi-Donors Programme (MDP), aiming to bolster freedom of expression and ensure the safety of journalists. This event took place in Baghdad and specifically targeted Iraqi female journalists. Key stakeholders, including the Women's Empowerment Department at the Cabinet, the Media and Communications Authority, and the

Independent High Commission for Human Rights, actively participated in the training.

The session included a comprehensive review of the activities carried out in 2023 under this initiative, highlighting the accomplished objectives in supporting journalists. Additionally, attention was drawn to the challenges faced by female journalists, with journalists emphasizing the significance of acquiring digital skills and integrating augmented artificial

intelligence tools into their practices. They urged UNESCO to take these demands into consideration for future projects.

A notable point of discussion centered on the legal prosecutions faced by female journalists and social media activists, ranking as the second-highest priority. This concern was formally communicated to international organizations in Iraq and the Iraqi government.

The journalists underscored the urgency of addressing legislative and regulatory aspects to promote freedom of expression and ensure journalists' safety, taking into account governmental procedures. Information literacy and the enhancement of digital awareness were also crucial topics, acknowledged for their profound impact on the professional sector.

UNESCO Iraq Office emphasized the need to implement advocacy strategies to curb recurrent attacks on journalists, whether in the online sphere or the real world. These attacks, often locally driven, pose a growing concern and are aimed at stifling voices and impeding the pursuit of social justice.

A delegation of UNITAD senior investigators visited Ad Duluiyah district



Baghdad, 04 November 2023 - A delegation of UNITAD senior investigators visited Ad Duluiyah district, as part of UNITAD's continuous efforts to engage with survivor and victim communities that suffered ISIL's atrocities across Iraq.

Ad Duluiyah witnessed various crimes committed by ISIL perpetrators, some of which may amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity.

During the visit, the UNITAD delegation was received by Sheikh Thaker Al Juboori, local tribal leader, and Hamzah Al Kawan, mayor of Ad Duluiyah, who gave their detailed accounts about ISIL's attacks on the district in 2014, and how the community came together to defend the district during such challenging times.

UNITAD's investigators stressed that this visit comes in line with the Team's efforts to ensure that ISIL's crimes against the Sunni community in Ad

Duluiyah, as well as against all affected Iraqi communities are properly investigated, emphasizing that all those crimes are being documented in accordance with the highest international standards and made public for the world to see the breadth and the magnitude of ISIL heinous crimes.

Accompanied by Sheikh Al Juboori, UNITAD's team visited Al Naba' Al Atheem school which was used as a

first aid clinic during ISIL's siege on Ad Duluiyah in 2014. The school administrators and officials described the overall situation during the attacks and the targeting of the first aid clinic by ISIL, the condition of the clinic at the time, and the lack of basic supplies during the siege enforced by ISIL.

Additionally, the investigators visited "the Wooden Bridge", which is one of the city's primary bridges, and which was destroyed by ISIL during the siege, to cut off any lifeline of supplies to Ad Duluiyah. The investigators also visited the city's police station and the grounds of what was the front lines of the battlefield against ISIL.

Concluding the visit, the team laid a wreath at the memorial dedicated to the city's victims of ISIL, calling on those who have any information to provide about ISIL's crimes to come forward with their accounts to support investigations and pave the way for accountability for ISIL crimes that targeted all Iraqi communities.



Baghdad, 07 November 2023 - Special Adviser **Christian Ritscher** was pleased to meet H.E. Mr. **Arshad Salihi**, Chairperson of the Human Rights Committee at the Iraqi Parliament and members of the Committee. They discussed the latest in UNITAD's work and progress in key lines of investigations and the Team's different lines of investigations, in particular into ISIL's use of Chemical Weapons as well as ISIL's crimes against various Iraqi communities including the Shia Turkmen.

Special Adviser Ritscher stressed the importance of continued cooperation with Iraqi authorities to fulfill the Team's mandate towards the common goal of pursuing accountability for ISIL's international crimes in Iraq.



Baghdad, 07 November 2023 - UNITAD and "Victims of Iraq in Speicher-1700" NGO conclude an MoU signed by Special Adviser **Christian Ritscher** and its Chairman **Mr. Kamil al-Rikabi**, at UNITAD office in #Baghdad, to enhance mutual cooperation in line with the Team's continued engagement with Iraqi civil society and victims' communities.

The MoU builds on the increased cooperation between UNITAD's dedicated unit investigating ISIL's heinous crimes against the predominantly Shia unarmed cadets at Tikrit Air Academy (known as Camp Speicher) and the NGO comprised of victims' families advocating for their rights.

Special Adviser Christian Ritscher was honored to take part in Paris Peace Forum's panel on lessons learned from innovative approaches to peacebuilding

Paris, France, 14 November 2023 - Special Adviser Christian Ritscher was honored to take part in Paris Peace Forum's panel on lessons learned from innovative approaches to peacebuilding, where he stressed the role of cooperation with Iraqi authorities and the communities affected by ISIL in accountability processes.

Special Adviser Ritscher mentioned

lessons learned in evidence preservation and analysis to enable evidence-based trials before competent courts, and allowing meaningful participation of the survivors in accountability processes which is a great step towards reconciliation and peacebuilding.

For the full panel discussion, visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WC C7V5yS5Ps>



UNITAD participates with its flagship digitization project for promoting accountability for ISIL core crimes at the Space for Solutions during Paris Peace Forum 2023



Paris, France, 14 November 2023 - Highlighting its innovative solutions to evidence preservation and analysis, UNITAD participated with its flagship digitization project for promoting accountability for ISIL core crimes at the Space for Solutions during Paris Peace Forum 2023.

The project, implemented in close partnership with the Iraqi judiciary, and funded by EU, presented the forum's visitors with information on efforts towards accountability and justice, featuring accomplishment in the digitization of 10+ million pages of crucial documents associated with ISIL. For the sixth year in a row, the Paris Peace Forum brought together key players in global governance on November 10-11 at the Palais Brongniart. The aim of the 2023 Forum was to "Seek Common Ground in a

World of Rivalry", against a backdrop of global polarization (most notably between China and the United States) jeopardizing international cooperation on issues vital to humanity – all in an environment marked by the eruption of conflict in the Middle East.

Project presentation

A significant volume of information on ISIL crimes is held in Iraq's courts, agencies, and civil society organizations, left behind by ISIL in the aftermath of conflict. If the integrity of this information is preserved, it can be used as admissible evidence in judicial proceedings. This is crucial to promote accountability for ISIL crimes, serving justice and enabling reconciliation. The digitization of documents and ability to exploit seized ISIL devices requires expert intervention. European Union funds

granted to UNITAD since 2020 aimed to address these challenges and provide technical assistance to national stakeholders. By enabling an accessible database for investigations, and providing the tools to organize evidence independently, Iraqi judicial capacities are strengthened, fostering reconciliation and trust in the legal system, in line with international standards.

Organization presentation

Between 2014 and 2017, ISIL controlled large swathes of Iraqi territory, committing grave breaches of international humanitarian and criminal law, that may amount to war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. In 2017, the Government of Iraq called on the international community to hold ISIL members accountable for their crimes. In response, the UN Security Council adopted resolution 2379, establishing UNITAD; an Investigative Team working to promote ISIL accountability in Iraq and globally.

Impact

Since 2020, the project has identified 42 entities with crucial ISIL records. 10+ million pages of ISIL documents have been digitized, assisting numerous third-states' requests in ISIL-related investigations.

UNITAD on X

Baghdad, 18 November 2023 - This World Day for the Prevention of and Healing from Child Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Violence, we are reminded of the suffering of Iraqi children who endured and survived ISIL atrocities.

UNITAD publishes a milestone report on sexual violence against women and girls committed by ISIL in Iraq

Baghdad, 3 December 2023 - The United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ISIL published today its milestone report on the sexual violence committed by ISIL in Iraq against women and girls during the years 2014-2017. The report presents a comprehensive overview of the Team's current findings on the nature of some of the gravest international crimes ISIL committed against all Iraqi communities.

The report provides legal analysis of these heinous crimes, which ISIL perpetrated against women, men, girls, and boys, within the framework of International Criminal Law and International Humanitarian Law.

"With this report, UNITAD reaffirms its steadfast commitment to pursuing justice for the heinous crimes committed by ISIL against various Iraqi constituencies. Our dedicated thematic unit investigating the sexual crimes against women, men, boys, and girls remains at the forefront, rigorously working with a trauma-informed approach to unveil

the breadth of ISIL's brutality in Iraq, while adhering to the highest international standards" indicated Special Adviser and Head of UNITAD Christian Ritscher. He, further, added that: "we are grateful for the support of the Iraqi authorities which have facilitated our investigations, and we remain indebted to the brave victims, especially women and girls, who came forward and spoke up, sharing their heart-wrenching accounts and witness testimonies to ensure that ISIL perpetrators are held accountable before competent courts, and that justice is served to all those victims and survivors."

The report is released coinciding with the 16 Days of Activism campaign, which is taking place this year under the slogan "UNiTE! Invest to Prevent Violence Against Women and Girls". This slogan resonates with UNITAD's dedicated mandate to expose the magnitude of ISIL's crimes and promote accountability for these heinous crimes as a critical step in preventing violence and crimes against women and girls from

reoccurring. We echo the calls of victims for justice as a crucial step towards healing for all those impacted.

The report can be found on UNITAD's website at https://www.unitad.un.org/sites/www.unitad.un.org/files/scgb_report_e-report_en.pdf



Special Adviser Ritscher Briefs UN Security Council on 11th Report - UNITAD is at a critical juncture, sovereign decision rests with Iraq

Baghdad, 04 December 2023 - Special Adviser and Head of UNITAD Christian Ritscher briefed the United Nations Security Council on the 11th report detailing the Team's work over the past six months.

This report includes "significant milestones in the work of the Team and comes at a critical juncture for the Team itself and its future direction", as he mentioned. He reiterated UNITAD's unwavering commitment to deliver on its core mandate in line with resolution 2379 (2017) and the Team's Terms of Reference. At the same time, the Team has taken steps to implement resolution 2697 (2023), which extended UNITAD's mandate until September 17, 2024, only, and requested it to fulfill additional tasks towards the implementation of both resolutions.

Special Adviser Ritscher explained that since September, the Team has shifted its investigative resources, to respond to the requirements of Security Council resolution 2697 (2023) and its timeline, in a way that expedites the less advanced investigations and their planned outputs. He noted, however, that some of the Team's key and

complex investigations most probably cannot be completed in one year, including "the question of ISIL's genocidal intent against the Shia community and the Team's work on Al Hol returnees, a file that is expected to need years of work in Iraq and elsewhere."

He explained that over the past weeks, he has been working closely with counterparts in the Government of Iraq and commended their continued support of the Team's work and the constructive consultations which started in follow-up of Resolution 2697. He, further, noted that "our shared goal is to ensure that the work of the Team

can be used to support accountability efforts in Iraq and throughout the world."

One key achievement during the reporting period was formally sharing with the Iraqi judiciary a comprehensive case-assessment report on ISIL's development and deployment of Chemical Weapons in Iraq: "This report is a milestone in UNITAD's pioneering line of investigations that examines how ISIL developed and deployed Chemical Weapons in Iraq, including against the Shia Turkmen minority in the town Taza Khurmatu," as Special Adviser Ritscher elaborated. The Team has implemented a modality



Special Adviser Ritscher Briefs UN Security Council on 11th Report - UNITAD is at a critical juncture... (continued)

of cooperation with the Iraqi judiciary to develop joint case files of alleged ISIL perpetrators who fled Iraq. The first joint case file on international crimes allegedly committed by one ISIL perpetrator has been completed, provided to the concerned country, and helped lead to the arrest of this suspect. "this joint modality represents a framework through which the Team and Iraq can meaningfully and closely cooperate, share information, and put to use their respective evidence and knowledge to hold ISIL members accountable for their international crimes."

He expressed his hope that such prosecutions for ISIL members on charges of international crimes can happen in Iraq, mentioning that the establishment of a domestic legal basis for international crimes: "would open new horizons for Iraq as it paves the way for trials against ISIL perpetrators on such charges, with the participation of Iraqi victims and witnesses. This is

not only what UNITAD is meant to support, but also the main demand of victim and survivor communities in Iraq: to see their day in court."

Special Adviser Ritscher underscored that the consent of the Host Government in any given context is key for a UN mission to conduct its work, stressing that it is even more crucial for an investigative team with a unique mandate, such as UNITAD. "We have conducted our work accordingly with full respect to the sovereignty of Iraq and will continue to do so. It remains up to Iraq to exercise its sovereign right to decide on the future of this mission," he further explained.

He commended the commitment of Iraq to support the Team's cooperation with third states. "With the approval of the Chief Justice, Foreign Minister and the Chair of the National Coordinating Committee, I am pleased to note that an agreed modality that better outlines the Team's evidence sharing with third states has been concluded, per

Resolution 2697."

Special Adviser Ritscher warned that: "a premature and abrupt ending of UNITAD can only mean a loss for all those concerned. This is why I urge the Government of Iraq and the esteemed members of this Council to give due consideration to the end state of our mandate more than the end date."

Concluding, Special Adviser Ritscher stressed the need to keep the plight of ISIL's victims and survivors at the core of collective efforts towards justice and accountability. "They are the ones who see the work of UNITAD as a beacon of hope, and an opportunity to have their voices heard, their suffering acknowledged, and their stories told... We must ensure that those who had the courage to speak-up against ISIL crimes are not let down or left behind."

You can read full briefing at <https://www.unitad.un.org/content/special-adviser-christian-ritscher-briefing-uns-04-dec-2023-11th-report>



Baghdad, 02 December 2023 - Special Adviser **Christian Ritscher** was pleased to welcome H.E. Chair of the National Coordinating Committee (NCC) **Dr. Zaidan Khalaf Al-Atwani**, Advisor to H.E. Prime Minister of Iraq for Human Rights, and his team at UNITAD HQ Baghdad.

They discussed recent developments in UNITAD's work and its upcoming 11th report to the United Nations Security Council, and ongoing cooperation with the Government of Iraq and NCC in accordance with relevant SC resolutions.

Special Adviser Ritscher extended his sincere thanks to Dr. Al-Atwani for his positive engagement and efforts to ensure that Iraq can maximize the benefit of the Team's work, and to ensure that the common goal of achieving justice to the victims and survivors is best served.



New York, 05 December 2023 - Special Adviser **Christian Ritscher** was pleased to meet H.E. **Dr. Abbas Kadhim Obeid**, Charge d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Iraq to the United Nations.

They discussed cooperation between UNITAD and Iraq counterparts in line with relevant UNSC resolutions, towards the common goal of accountability for crimes committed by ISIL in Iraq.

Special Adviser Christian Ritscher meets with representatives of members of the United Nations Security Council

New York, 06 December 2023 - During his visit to New York, Special Adviser Christian Ritscher met with representatives of the P5 –Permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, as well as some of the current non-permanent members and those

expected to start their term in January.

In his meetings, Special Adviser Ritscher briefed on the latest developments in UNITAD's work and updates following resolution 2697 (2023) which required the fulfilment of additional tasks in consultation with the Government of Iraq.

He emphasized the significance of a meaningful completion of the Team's mandate and an orderly transition, while stressing the importance of the international community's continued support to promote accountability for ISIL's international crimes in Iraq.

Special Adviser Ritscher discussed innovative methods for investigating and documenting evidence

New York, 07 December 2023 - Special Adviser Christian Ritscher took part in the side event "A Crack in the Wall: Universal Jurisdiction, Open Source Evidence, and Accountability in Hard Cases", co-hosted by Wayamo Foundation, Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Germany and France. Special Adviser Ritscher discussed innovative methods for investigating and documenting evidence. He also delved into connecting open-source information with evidence acquired from different sources using cutting-edge technology that UNITAD has developed and utilized in its investigations. Special Adviser Ritscher explored how technology can supplement the

meaningful participation of survivors as witnesses in accountability processes through universal jurisdiction. While

the role of technology is key, witness participation in accordance with the principle of orality is central.



UNITAD pays tribute to all victims and survivors of ISIL international crimes in Iraq

Baghdad, 09 December 2023 - Marking the International Day of Commemoration and Dignity of the Victims of the Crime of Genocide and Prevention of this Crime, UNITAD

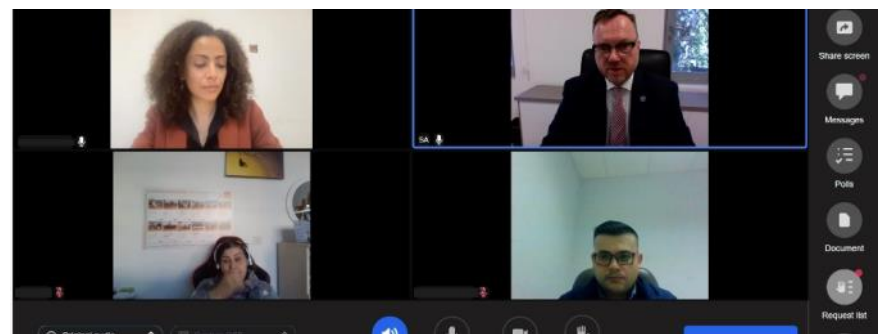
pays tribute to all victims and survivors of ISIL international crimes in Iraq, including Yezidi victims of genocide committed by ISIL in 2014. Pursuing accountability for genocide is

key to prevent the recurrence of such atrocities, and achieving justice is crucial for the healing of affected communities who yearn to see their day in court.

UNITAD-NGO Dialogue Forum convenes its Sixth Biannual Plenary Roundtable: discusses UNITAD's 11th report to the Security Council and implementation of Resolution 2697

Baghdad, 18 December 2023 - The United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ISIL (UNITAD) its sixth Biannual Plenary Roundtable meeting of the UNITAD-NGO Dialogue Forum.

The biannual roundtable brought together representatives of Iraqi civil society and international NGOs with UNITAD's leadership and experts, to discuss the Team's work over the past 6 months, and its 11th report to the Security Council. Special Adviser and Head of UNITAD Christian Ritscher also updated participating NGOs on the ongoing developments with regard to the implementation of resolution 2697. Participants relayed their concern for the future of investigations and accountability process, in Iraq and in third states with competent jurisdictions, for ISIL's international crimes, shall UNITAD's mandate comes to an end. On his part Special Adviser Ritscher explained, in his opening remarks, that "there is no way forward



for the Team to operate without the consent of the Government of Iraq." At the same time, he stressed that the issue of witness consent and witness protection remains central to UNITAD's work in line with the Team's Terms of Reference and applicable rules and regulations of the United Nations.

Further, Special Adviser Ritscher updated on the developments in investigations as detailed in the Team's 11th report and his briefing to the UNSC. He explained the ongoing close cooperation with counterparts in the

Government of Iraq which has continued to support and facilitate the Team's work, highlighting the constructive consultations with Iraqi counterparts, especially with the National Coordinating Committee, on the way forward to ensure that the work of the Team over the past years is not lost. He reiterated that UNITAD will continue its consultations with the Government of Iraq on a Road Map for the completion of the Team's mandate, per SC resolution 2697. Further, he noted the importance of ensuring that Iraq can maximize the utilization of

UNITAD-NGO Dialogue Forum convenes its Sixth Biannual Plenary Roundtable: discusses UNITAD's 11th report ... *(continued)*

UNITAD's work towards holding ISIL perpetrators accountable for international crimes before competent courts in Iraq.

During the plenary discussions, several participants commended UNITAD's work in Iraq through its investigations covering ISIL crimes against all affected community, and also its work to support national capacity building efforts with various counterparts from government institutions as well as Iraqi civil society organizations. Representatives of organizations expressed the importance of witness protection. They also discussed the importance of prioritizing certain lines of investigation in the coming months and requested that all stakeholders maintain focus on the common goal of accountability for ISIL's international crimes in Iraq. They advised on continued involvement of the impacted

communities in tri-partite meetings and discussions that involve the Iraqi government, NGOs and UNITAD. One participant stressed the importance of the recent handing over of a comprehensive report on ISIL's Chemical Weapons crimes to the Supreme Judicial Council, mentioning it was positively perceived within the Shia Turkmen community, who were subject to a chemical weapon attack in Taza Khurmatu in 2014.

Moreover, participants discussed important aspects of UNITAD's work, including mass grave excavations and the identification of victims' remains which are carried out in partnership with the Mass Graves Directorate and Medico-Legal Directorate.

The UNITAD-NGO Dialogue Forum was launched in December 2020, with the aim of serving as a platform that brings together all relevant

international and Iraqi NGOs for regular collaboration, exchange of ideas and best practices, as well as exploring areas for enhancing cooperation. It convenes two types of events; the first is a series of thematic roundtable discussions in a panel-format, addressing specific thematic areas relating to UNITAD's investigative activities. The events bring together international and local experts with UNITAD team member for an in-depth discussion on one theme for each roundtable. The second type of events is the biannual plenary roundtable which has served as an open platform for suggestions on how to better engage with NGOs. The plenary biannual meeting also introduces a space where survivors and community leaders can have their voices heard by both UNITAD and the NGO community.

UNITAD conducts a training for MLD's Anthropology Unit on operating FARO ScanArm

Baghdad, 11 December 2023 - Reinforcing its commitment to advancing forensic capabilities of Iraqi National Specialists, UNITAD, in partnership with the Medico-Legal Directorate (MLD), conducted a training for MLD's Anthropology Unit on operating FARO ScanArm, which UNITAD has provided to MLD.

The 3-week training, held in Baghdad, enables MLD Forensic Anthropologists to perform postmortem trauma reconstruction and analysis, using data from the scans. Such technology has a pivotal role in the preservation of the evidence and its accessibility in courtroom proceedings.



Migrations

The International Organization for Migration develops a tool to assess a location's vulnerability to climate-induced displacement

Baghdad, 06 December 2023 – IOM has recently published “Drivers of Climate-Induced Displacement in Iraq: Climate Vulnerability Assessment”.

Climate change and environmental degradation have contributed to the displacement of at least 55,290 individuals in assessed locations in central and southern Iraq between January 2016 and October 2022.

This figure represents an estimated 15

per cent of the original population that used to reside in these locations. In other words, more than 1 in 10 people from these locations have been displaced in the past six years. Given the uptick in environmental migration observed in 2022, this trend is expected to worsen, particularly in the absence of adequate mitigation and adaptation strategies.

Migration in response to environmental

degradation and natural hazards is a growing trend. As climate change raises the intensity and frequency of environmental hazards such as droughts, floods and storms, more and more people are expected to leave their homes.

Additionally, unpredictable temperatures and rainfall patterns affect people practising land- and water-based livelihoods, with important

The International Organization for Migration develops a tool to assess a location's vulnerability... *(continued)*

consequences for food security and living conditions.

Iraq is already witnessing the effects of climate change and environmental degradation. Temperatures are rising, rainfall is decreasing, droughts are more severe, water scarcity is increasing, sand and dust storms and flooding are more frequent.

Strikingly, temperatures in Iraq are soaring up to seven times faster than the global average, while annual rainfall is predicted to decrease by 9 per cent by 2050. Adding to these challenges, damming and other water management policies in neighbouring countries have reduced Iraq's water supply. At the same time, Iraq's demand for water continues to rise due to a growing population, the expansion of cities and inefficient agricultural and industrial practices.

As the processes of climate change and environmental degradation intensify,

the number of environmental migrants is likely to increase significantly. The drivers of environmental migration – and their impact on vulnerable communities – are a critical area of research needed to inform targeted programming and advocacy.

The International Organization for Migration's (IOM) Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) in Iraq has conducted emergency tracking (ET) of families displaced by drought conditions since June 2018. Enumerators continually collect data on locations of displacement, the number of families displaced, the type of shelter in which they reside and the year of their displacement.

These figures are then published in quarterly reports. However, not enough is known about what drove these families to displace, including the extent of environment degradation, the impact of this degradation on

livelihoods and social cohesion or the availability of services and infrastructure.

The Climate Vulnerability Assessment aims to address this evidence gap, providing a more comprehensive and thematic assessment of locations of origin (that is, locations that have already recorded displacement as a result of climate change and environmental degradation). Through this pilot, the assessment aims to build an evidence base on the conditions in areas that have already recorded displacement, and to support identification of trends which indicate that locations and communities may be vulnerable to displacement in the future. Understand the situation so that you can join us in taking action.

The report is available at: <https://tinyurl.com/mta3xwje>

Whether seeking safety, shelter, or better opportunities, Iraqi migrants have positively influenced their host communities



Baghdad, 18 December 2023 - George Gigauri, IOM Iraq Chief of Mission's message on the International Migrants Day:

“Today, on International Migrants Day, we celebrate the resilience and diversity that migrants bring to our global community.

Whether seeking safety, shelter, or better opportunities, Iraqi migrants have positively influenced their host communities, contributing to traditions, businesses, and more.

At IOM Iraq, we take pride in not only supporting internally displaced people and returnees during crises, but also supporting the Iraqi Government in addressing root causes of displacement through initiatives like the Enterprise

Development Fund (EDF) - an innovative programme that supports livelihoods and job creation in small and medium enterprises in Iraq. The EDF has supported over 2,400 enterprises, generating about 12,000 jobs since 2018, empowering migrants and fostering economic growth.

EDF is a testament to the transformative power of joint endeavors in migration. By thinking together and acting now, we build resilient communities that can withstand challenges associated with migration.

Thank you.”

Humanitarian

Consistent funding from the European Union provides unwavering legal support to vulnerable Iraqis

Baghdad, 07 November 2023 - UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, is grateful for the continued support of the European Union through its Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) to assist Iraqis in getting their identity documents. For the third consecutive year, the European Union's assistance has helped provide civil documentation to vulnerable Iraqis including ones forcibly displaced by Da'esh violence

and those who may have never had such identity documents before. Civil documents such as birth and nationality certificates and identity cards are pivotal for Iraqis to access public services and participate in the public affairs of their country.

Many Iraqis have expired, lost or damaged civil documents due to fleeing violence, persecution and displacement. Others may have never had access to such documentation due to

administrative and socio-economic barriers, making them at risk of being stateless if unable to prove their Iraqi nationality.

The importance of obtaining civil documentation cannot be understated. It is the first step for Iraqis to establish their legal identity and ensure they are recognised in their country. Without civil documents, Iraqis would not be able to enrol their children in school, receive medical care or apply for social

Consistent funding from the European Union provides unwavering legal support to vulnerable Iraqis *(continued)*

security benefits. They will also be unable to participate in most aspects of civic and political life.

The European Union's steadfast partnership has enabled UNHCR and its partners, including two local organisations, to help Iraqis get access to civil documents through outreach and awareness sessions on topics related to the importance of civil documentation and how to obtain it; individual legal counselling for those who may have difficulties proving their Iraqi nationality, their marriage or the birth of their children; and the facilitation of mobile missions by the Iraqi Civil Affairs Department to deliver these documents to the most vulnerable across the country.

Over the past three years, almost 210,000 Iraqis have benefited from UNHCR and partners' assistance thanks to the European Union funding. From January to June 2023, more than 13,000 civil documents were issued to Iraqis and over 26,000 are waiting to be issued. In addition, 37,000 individuals received legal counselling or legal representation and about 11,600 participated in legal awareness sessions. Furthermore, UNHCR and its partners supported 40 mobile civil documentation missions.

Immense achievements have been made possible thanks to the European Union's generous funding; however, there are still needs. UNHCR estimates that over 430,000 individuals are still missing at least one core civil document. The main barriers for individuals to access civil documentation include the high cost of



obtaining or renewing these documents and the difficult procedures that it could entail, especially for those being suspected of affiliations with extremist groups such as Da'esh or who are otherwise unable to legally prove their marriage, birth or lineage in court.

"The ongoing partnership with the European Union through its Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations has been instrumental in resolving some of the obstacles faced by Iraqis in accessing their identity documents. Supporting authorities to deliver civil documentation are interventions that are not really visible but that are truly indispensable so that Iraqis are not deprived of their fundamental rights such as enrolling their children in schools, accessing medical care or renting a home," said Mr. Jean-Nicolas Beuze, UNHCR Representative to Iraq. "As Iraq is

moving towards stabilisation and development, it is great to see ECHO's support pave the way of this transition by ensuring that Iraqi previously displaced by Da'esh violence are fully integrated in public services and the Iraqi society thanks to having been given back their identify documents."

"Our continued support has played a crucial role in helping vulnerable Iraqis obtain their identity documents, which are key to accessing essential public services," said Mr. Pedro Luis Rojo Garcia, Head of EU Humanitarian Aid operations in Iraq. "Our partnership with UNHCR and local organizations has made a real difference in the lives of many Iraqis, supporting them to rebuild and reintegrate into society. We are committed to continuing our work in Iraq and address the remaining challenges to ensure that no one is left without these essential documents."

Stabilization and Development

Raising awareness and knowledge of the public about the upcoming population and housing census

Baghdad, 07 November 2023 - The upcoming population and housing census is a cornerstone for informed decision making that will shape the future of Iraq.

To build a collective understanding of the significance of the census, the media sector is a potent tool in increasing the awareness and knowledge of the public.

Together with the Federal and KRG's Ministries of Planning, Central Statistical Organization and Kurdistan

Region's Statistics Office, UNFPA organized a two-day communication and advocacy workshop for journalists, and media professionals who can shape the narrative, educate, inspire, and advocate.

The role of the media is essential in supporting the technical teams to ensure an accurate understanding of the importance of the census and its relevance on a national level, from the engagement to the implementation of the census.



Sharing their experiences and early challenges

Baghdad, 08 November 2023 - Inspired women who expanded their businesses through IOM's Enterprise Development Fund (EDF) are mentoring future business owners as part of IOM's Graduation Approach project.

The graduation approach is an 18-month initiative that helps women to reach a sustainable living, offering:

- Mentorship
- Financial education
- Vocational training
- Business grants
- Mental health support.



DSRSG/RC/HC for Iraq discusses development challenges with NGOs/CSOs

Baghdad, 8 November 2023 - Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq/Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Mr. Ghulam Mohammed Isaczai, had a fruitful meeting today with NGOs/CSOs. Discussed developmental challenges and Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF).



UNICEF implements a resourceful, cost-effective project aimed at addressing the consequences of climate change

Baghdad, 16 November 2023 - Reem Khalid, a six-year-old student, enjoys a moment of drinking clean water next to the UNICEF-provided water cooler at Al-Anwar Al-Satia School.

With funding from Embassy of the Netherlands in Iraq, UNICEF is implementing a resourceful, cost-effective project aimed at addressing the consequences of climate change, ensuring a brighter future for every child.



With IOM's help 302 families were able to return home after years of displacement

Baghdad, 20 November 2023 - With this cold weather, there is nothing like warmth of home.

In the past two weeks 302 families from Shariya, Bersive 1 camps in Dohuk, and Kilo 18 camp in Anbar were able to return home after years of displacement.

With the help of IOM's Facilitated Voluntary Movement programme, their journey to recovery starts now.



Housing key to economic security for displaced people: report

Berlin, Germany, 21 November 2023 - Internally Displaced People (IDPs) who have access to adequate housing are over three times more likely to not rely on humanitarian assistance and twice as likely to have stable income according to a study published today by the International Organization for Migration's Global Data Institute (GDI) in partnership with Georgetown University in the United States.

The PROGRESS report is a comprehensive analysis of the state of solutions to internal displacement worldwide.

"Our findings are shifting the debate from 'when does displacement end' to 'when do solutions start'," said Ugochi Daniels, IOM Deputy Director General for Operations.

"Together with the communities we serve, IOM is committed to leave no one behind in the quest for a sustainable, resilient future. PROGRESS shows us where investments can be made for effective solutions, which match what IDPs also tell us: adequate housing, livelihoods, and local integration in

situations when displacement persists."

The report focuses on 15 countries, providing crucial insights into the challenges and opportunities faced by IDPs. It shows the importance of job creation, security, and fostering a sense of belonging within communities for overcoming displacement-related vulnerabilities and, subsequently, reduce disparities between IDPs and their host communities.

Fifteen countries currently host 37.5 million of the 71.1 million IDPs worldwide, a concentration that underscores the critical need for swift and targeted interventions to address internal displacement amid escalating humanitarian crises.

The PROGRESS report focuses on the countries selected as pilots by the Office of the Special Advisor on Solutions to Internal Displacement: Afghanistan, Central African Republic, Chad, Colombia, Ethiopia, Iraq, Libya, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Vanuatu and Yemen. To supplement existing datasets, 74

focus group discussions were conducted with IDPs, returnees and host communities in 10 countries to see what displacement-affected communities themselves think are the barriers to finding solutions, and the ways of overcoming them.

"We are struggling, we can't afford the current living conditions, with commodity prices increasing every time," an Ethiopian community leader told a focus group discussion, pointing to their dependence on relief and the importance of access to livelihood opportunities during displacement. "Besides, we have lost everything we had before displacement, and it makes us too vulnerable to money shortages."

The report is available at <https://dtm.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd11461/files/progress/PROGRESS%20REPORT%202023.pdf>



UN-Habitat is hopeful that the additional 153 houses will further support the safe and sustainable returns

Sinjar, 23 November 2023 - The next phase for the rehabilitation of houses under the KOICA-funded project (KOICA Iraq Office), "Promoting Peace and Stability in Iraq by Facilitating Sustainable Returns", started earlier this month.

Following the successful rehabilitation and handover of 47 houses in Jafriyah and Old Tel Qasab, UN-Habitat is hopeful that the additional 153 houses will further support the safe and

sustainable returns of the most underserved villages of Old Tel Banat, Mam Elias, Nisryiah, and Shihabiyah in Sinjar.

Providing adequate housing, registering housing, land, and property (HLP) rights claims, and improving access to basic water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) facilities are all essential to restoring dignity and peace for IDPs and returnees in Sinjar.



Two birds, one stone!

Baghdad, 28 November 2023 - IOM supports returnees to Tel Azer in rebuilding their homes, creating jobs in the area in the process.

IOM provides grants to the returnees which they spend in the local market to buy construction material, and hire local hands.

This is one of the sessions before the reconstruction begins. During the session, IOM goes over construction planning and materials for the grant to be spent most efficiently.

This will hopefully encourage more IDP's to return and breathe life into the

community.

This project was made possible with the

generous support from the Government of Japan.



The Al Bardiya water complex in Hibhib, Diyala Governorate, receives a new pump and mainline

Diyala, 29 November 2023 - The Al Bardiya water complex in Hibhib, Diyala Governorate, has received a new pump and mainline, thanks to the generous support of Korea through UNDP Iraq's Funding Facility for Stabilization. This project will improve the quality and quantity of water produced by the complex, which serves over 15,000 Iraqis. The existing water networks in the

area were not able to meet the demand after the area expanded. The new pump and mainline will ensure that the facility can operate at full capacity and provide water to all the people who need it.

UNDP is proud to be part of this initiative that improves the lives of Iraqis and contributes to the stabilization and recovery of the country.



IOM starts a well with a distillation plant that can provide fresh drinkable water to not only Hamdaniya but also 500 nearby households

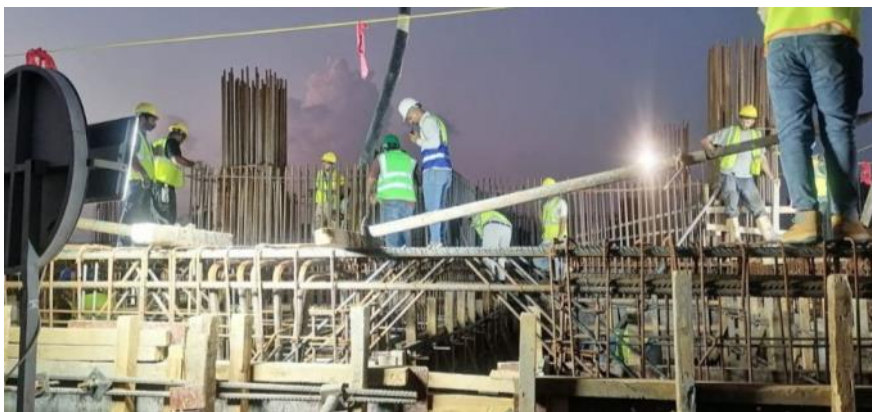
Ninewa, 03 December 2023 - Without water, there won't be life.

Until recently, Hamdaniya complex in Al-Ba'aj, Ninewa Governorate, was without drinking water.

IOM started a well with a distillation plant that can now provide fresh drinkable water to not only Hamdaniya but also 500 nearby households.



JICA renews commitment to boost infrastructure projects for transformative development in Iraq



Baghdad, 4 December 2023 - The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Iraq and Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Iraq Office renewed its long-standing, partnership agreement related to the establishment of socio-economic infrastructure projects in Iraq, with the support of the Government of Iraq (GoI). This agreement is focused on ensuring accelerated implementation of these critical projects, that meet the needs of the people of Iraq for basic public services, all of which contribute to development and a robust national economy.

Led by the Government of Iraq in partnership with UNDP and Japan

Implemented by the GoI, with loan assistance from JICA, this partnership enters its second decade, aiming to improve economic recovery and living conditions of Iraqis nationwide thanks to the generous support provided by the Japan Official Development Assistance (ODA) loan program.

"JICA and UNDP will continue its support to the GoI, addressing these challenges through this partnership, with an objective to improve livelihoods, as well as enhancing Iraq's socio-economic status for generations to come," says JICA Iraq Chief Representative YONEDA Gen.

The GoI has underscored the need for increased investment in infrastructure ensuring its inclusion in the recently

approved federal budget of 3 years. The prioritization of this within the national budget supports ongoing project implementation, laying the groundwork for new projects across the country, focused on public service sectors such as electricity, health, irrigation and water and revenue-generating sectors, such as the excavation industry and seaport development.

"Through this Triangular Cooperation, UNDP will continue to support the Government of Japan as they continue this fruitful engagement with the Government of Iraq. Together, we are ensuring the forward movement of the country, towards a brighter future - full of advancement, development, but more importantly, hope," says UNDP Iraq Resident Representative Auke Lootsma.

This signed agreement reaffirms the commitment between JICA and UNDP to improve the state of national infrastructure, for a robust economy, better public services in local communities and increased engagement of the private sector, encouraging economic diversification and job creation, all of which advance Iraq's progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030.

IOM Iraq fixes 1,200 desks in 11 schools in Mosul city to support education and plants over 300 trees

Mosul, 05 December 2023 - Through a cash for work campaign that employed 50 men and women, recently IOM Iraq fixed 1,200 desks in 11 schools in Mosul city to support education and planted over 300 trees. This project was made possible with support from the Government of Germany through KfW Bank.



3.5 million people benefit from wastewater treatment plants



Baghdad, 09 December 2023 – Today, the Government of Iraq, UNICEF and the German delegation inaugurated eight wastewater treatment plants at the Medical City in Baghdad. The eight plants of the largest medical complex in Iraq will benefit more than 3.5 million people in Baghdad.

Dr. Maximilian Rasch, Chargé d’Affaires of the German Embassy stressed in his opening remarks that “This climate-resilient project mitigates the impact of water scarcity, secures a greener environment, and raises awareness of the importance of wastewater treatment. It also directly benefits local communities in Baghdad. Germany is a prime partner of the Iraqi Government and will continue to support the country and its people.”

Before the installment and operationalization of these wastewater treatment plants, more than 2,300m³ of untreated water was discharged into the Tigris River daily. The discharged

untreated water degrades natural resources and puts the health of children and their families at risk.

“I am proud to witness the operationalization of these wastewater treatment plants,” said Dr. Anna-Christine Janke, Director of the Office of the German Development Bank KfW in Iraq. “It is a further example of our partnership with UNICEF in

contributing to improved water sanitation,” she added.

“UNICEF is committed to supporting the Government of Iraq in upholding the rights of children to quality health care and safe environment as enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child,” said Sandra Lattouf, UNICEF in Iraq Representative. “This project is part of our commitment to mitigate climate change and secure a better and greener environment towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.”

With funding from the German Government, through the German Development Bank, KfW, UNICEF supported Baghdad Medical City in installing and operationalizing eight wastewater treatment plants. These plants will enable the Medical City to secure safely managed sanitation benefitting health care workers, patients receiving health care services, and the surrounding communities.

“I applaud UNICEF and Germany



3.5 million people benefit from wastewater treatment plants *(continued)*

through the German Development Bank KfW for their valuable support,” said Dr. Hassan Al Tamimi, Director General of Baghdad Medical City. “This project guarantees optimum use and conservation of

water through recycling and ensures a greener and cleaner environment.” The project was implemented in two phases, where eight wastewater treatment compact units were delivered, installed, and operated. To

ensure the sustainability of the project, the technical staff at the Medical City were trained to oversee the management and operationalization of the project.

UN-Habitat, EU and partners discuss how to improve living conditions and enhance the quality of urban life for Basra's residents

Basra, 11 December 2023 – Today, UN-Habitat, in collaboration with the European Union, gathered partners and multi-level stakeholders in Basra to assess the progress of the EU-funded project titled 'Increasing Access to Employment Opportunities for Vulnerable Urban Population in Basra

City in Response to the COVID-19 Crisis.'

During the meeting, representatives from Basra's governorate office, Municipality, and relevant Directorates discussed ongoing initiatives, addressed challenges related to underserved neighborhoods and

informal settlements, water scarcity, waste management, and expressed appreciation for the joint efforts and resources invested by UN-Habitat, led by the European Union, represented by Barbara Egger, Head of Cooperation at the European Union in Iraq and Muslim Qazimi, Head of the Country Programme, and , to improve living conditions and enhance the quality of urban life for Basra's residents.

This marked the third Steering Committee Meeting for the multi-annual project, focused on upgrading basic services in urban and informal settlements within the neighborhoods of Al-Ahrar, Al-Kubiyah, and Jurf Al-Melah, build capacities of the vulnerable urban population through vocational training provided by ILO and facilitating policy dialogues concerning the regulation of informal settlements.



UNICEF on X

Baghdad, 11 December 2023 – UNICEF and the Ministry of Planning held a meeting to discuss the priorities for the next period and to review the mechanisms of organizing work.

UN-Habitat and UNICEF Iraq review joint efforts in improving Mosul's urban Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) infrastructure development

Mosul, 12 December 2023 - UN-Habitat and UNICEF Iraq convened in Duhok to review joint efforts in improving Mosul's urban Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) infrastructure development and strategize future steps for enhancing the local quality of life.

The WASH team from UNICEF, led by Eng. Sepal Sadeeq, WASH Specialist, and UN-Habitat team, headed by Ryosuke Teraoka, the Head of Kurdistan Region of Iraq Office, represented the respective organizations.

Recently, UNICEF oversaw the handover of the Second Wastewater Treatment Plant at Bab Sinjar Housing

Complex, a UN-Habitat construction funded by the Government of Japan. They're now collaborating with the Iraqi Government's partners to upgrade the complex by installing security fencing and a solar system.

Looking ahead to 2024, UN-Habitat aims to construct a new Social Housing Complex in Mosul. Meanwhile,

UNICEF aims to address climate change concerns, emphasizing initiatives like Moving Bed Biofilm Reactor and solar systems, alongside capacity development.

It's evident that the upcoming year will strongly emphasize the unity of sustainability and development by UN-Habitat and UNICEF.



UNDP brings light to Al-Sakrah!

Baghdad, 12 December 2023 - UNDP team members worked day and night to restore the electricity to Al-Sakrah district, demonstrating dedication and commitment to improving the lives of others. The UNDP Iraq's Funding Facility for Stabilization extended the supply

networks from the Anah substation to Al-Sakrah communities, and today over 5,000 people finally have a stable electricity supply. This was possible through the generous support of USAID. We are grateful for their partnership in making this project a success.



Passion to opportunity

Baghdad, 14 December 2023 - When refugees can participate without discrimination in the local market, they contribute as employers, employees and clients.

Saif Al-Din's story exemplifies how refugees can use their skills and talents to benefit everyone around them. His fishing shop not only boosts the local

economy but serves as a hub for the refugee and host community.

At the world's largest gathering in support of refugees, UNHCR call for further inclusion of refugees in the local economy to give them a chance to contribute to the economic growth of the countries they live in.



The Women's sewing workshops - rebuilding lives one stitch at a time in Iraq

Baghdad, 18 December 2023 - In the heart of the Iraq cities of Al-Qaim, Rummaneh, Baiji, and Mosul - an echo of progress rings through the women's sewing workshops.

The workshops are part of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and its partner World Vision International (WVI)'s for training programme returnees and host communities recovering from years of conflict in Iraq.

They are intended to provide new skills to various women who are rebuilding their lives after several years of conflict. The women were either internally displaced during the ISIL conflict, former refugees returning from Al-Hol Camp, or vulnerable members of the community. Trainees were carefully selected through an inclusive and conflict-sensitive method.

An act of kindness - Giving back to the community

As the hum of sewing machines echoed through the centres, a heart warming story unfolded. The women of the sewing workshops agreed to use their new skills to give back to their community.

"We engaged in discussions about how we can contribute to support our community and extend a helping hand to those in need," Jalilah Ahmed, a 42-year-old widow and mother of seven, one of the sewing workshop trainees shared.

During the discussions, Jalilah and fellow trainees agreed to make school uniforms for orphaned and vulnerable schoolgirls. In the hands of these determined trainees, 480 school uniforms are made - 340 in Al Qaim and Rummaneh, 100 in Baiji, and 40 in Mosul.

This act of kindness means the programme has met its foremost goal - to restore lives and build livelihoods in

a socially cohesive community that can identify each other's needs and support one another through difficult times.

In total, 280 women were trained in the sewing workshops - 100 in Al Qaim and 60 each from Rummaneh, Baiji, and Mosul.

As part of the workshops, the women also received, mental health and psycho-social support services as well as training on peacebuilding and social cohesion within their community. It is during these discussions that they agreed on how to use their newfound skills to extend a hand to the vulnerable in their communities.

"This contribution was a reward for us the trainees, we are grateful for the trust that UNDP and WVI placed in us to be effective members of our community. Everyone has noticed our presence, our capabilities, everyone has seen that we are effective! It is an amazing feeling after the previous crisis period that we went through," Jalilah added.

Suad Khalif, another participant from Rummaneh in Anbar echoed similar sentiments saying; "The distribution of school uniforms not only helps mitigate the financial burden on families but also fosters a sense of unity and support within the community, it's a big family supporting each other."

The training was carried out in partnership with the Vocational Training Centres management, and the Directorates of Education in each location.

"We thank UNDP and WVI for championing these positive initiatives,



The Women's sewing workshops ... (continued)

by providing school uniforms to those in need in our community, more girls will be encouraged to attend schools – hence promoting increased access to education,” Mr. Khamees Mohammed, the director of Al-Qaim Directorate of Education, Anbar.

The women's sewing workshops were part of UNDP's Socio-Economic and Community Resilience for the Prevention of Violent Extremism (SERVE) Project. The project's main goal was to provide livelihood and economic integration support to

returnees as well as their host communities. Participants in the project activities also received Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Services (MHPSS).

A total of 1,580 individuals have benefitted from these efforts including 818 women, half of them youth, and 862 men, of them 448 young men. In addition to training, several participants also received small business grants and were provided with access to sustainable employment opportunities in the

trades they had learned.

The women's sewing workshops are a testament to the impact of community-driven initiatives in restoring hope and rebuilding lives in communities previously affected by conflict.

This program's work is made possible by the generous contributions of the Government of Germany (SERVE II) and the Government of Japan (SERVE I).



UN-Habitat, with the generous support of the Government of The Netherlands through LAND-at-Scale, starts a new project titled “Policy Dialogue on Legislative Reform to Improve Land Governance and Secure Tenure Rights”

Baghdad, 26 December 2023 - UN-Habitat, with the generous support of the Government of The Netherlands through LAND-at-Scale, has started a new project titled “Policy Dialogue on Legislative Reform to Improve Land Governance and Secure Tenure Rights”. One element of this project supports the registration and resolution of housing, land, and property (HLP) rights claims in Sinjar. Earlier this week, the UN-Habitat team conducted a women-only awareness-raising session for 21 attendees, to inform them of their rights to restore or obtain HLP documentation, and file compensation claims for destroyed or damaged property. Further, 30 internally

displaced people (IDPs) and returnees in the conflict-affected area of Dugrey registered their HLP rights claims.

The other component of this project aims to bolster the capacity of the

Government of Iraq's land management system through initiating policy dialogues to reform the existing land legal framework for improved security of tenure for all Iraqis.



Agriculture

FAO and partners continue with field observations to implement full package of smart agricultural practices

Basra, 01 November 2023 - Implementing smart agricultural practices in central and southern governorates, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in Iraq, Ministry of Agriculture and partner farmers team is following up with field observations to implement full package of smart agricultural practices used in Babel and Najaf thanks to FAO project implemented with Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Water Resources, and Ministry of Environment. Among these practices, the delegation followed the implementation of the use of integrated soil and water management techniques to prepare land for wheat cultivation

for the 2023-2024 winter season. Thanks to FAO donor partners [SIDA, Government of Canada], FAO is

supporting Iraq's agricultural sector and addressing the challenges of climate change.



FAO improves animal health services and disease surveillance in Iraq



Baghdad, 10 November 2023 - In a significant step towards improving animal health services and animal disease diagnosis in Iraq, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) and the Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources-KRI (MoAWR-KRI), has launched the “Regular Maintenance for Equipment Operation and Calibration Workshop” in Iraq. This is the final workshop in a comprehensive training programme consisting of seventeen workshops that took place between December 2021 and November 2023.

The project entitled “Improving Delivery of Animal Health Services and Disease Surveillance in Iraq” is funded by the United States Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA).

The workshop held at the Central Veterinary Laboratory/Veterinary Directorate in Baghdad, from 5th to

9th November 2023, convened twenty-four participants from the veterinary laboratories of Baghdad, Erbil, Duhok, Ninawa, Muthanna, Basra, Anbar, and Wassit.

The training aimed to assist participants in operating veterinary laboratory equipment smoothly and reliably. This will help to implement a quality control procedure, test accuracy and increase the shelf life of all equipment.

The workshop covered the composition, levels of maintenance (preventive and corrective maintenance) and calibration of various laboratory equipment. Theoretical discussions were followed by practical sessions, where participants gained hands-on experience in level one and level two maintenance, equipment management, facility and tool requirements.

This training will equip participants with the knowledge, skills and

procedures required for safe and proper operation use, care and maintenance of equipment. This will prevent breakdowns or malfunctions and ensure accurate and reliable results.

The workshop also focused on the regular and routine action taken on equipment through systematic component testing, measurements, adjustments, calibrations, parts replacement, and cleaning.

During the opening session, FAO Representative in Iraq, Dr. Salah El Hajj Hassan, stressed that, “the accurate diagnosis of animal diseases can be ensured in well-equipped laboratories with a range of standardized fully functional diagnostic equipment operated by experienced staff. This can be achieved by improving the skills of laboratory staff for the proper, safe use, care and maintenance of equipment and facilities”.

This initiative embodies FAO's commitment to the One Health approach, linking human, animal, and environmental health. By improving animal health services and laboratory equipment, and fostering partnerships, it advances several SDGs, including SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being) and SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure), supporting FAO's mission for a healthier, more sustainable Iraq.

Celebrating Olive Tree Day!

Baghdad, 26 November 2023 - FAO Iraq, in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and European Union in Iraq funding, drives change for Nineveh's olive farmers. Embracing tech and automation to enhance efficiency, boost production, and foster sustainable growth. FAO is committed to building a brighter, greener future for Iraq's local communities.



Date palm farmers attend a field training sessions on implementing smart agricultural practices in Abu Al-Khasib, Basra



Basra, 27 November 2023 - In the presence of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Country Representative for Iraq, Dr. Salah El Hajj Hassan, and in cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture and funding from the European Union, the follow-up of a series of field training sessions on implementing smart agricultural practices is underway for date palm farmers in Abu Al-Khasib, Basra. Smart

agricultural practices are important to enhance the productivity, quality, and marketing of date palm. They contribute to improving crop yield and supporting the local economy. FAO Iraq is committed to supporting local farmers to develop value chain date palm and achieve sustainable growth in the agricultural sector in Iraq. FAO will continue the series of the field training sessions in Basra and Thi-Qar.

FAO initiates the use of sustainable energy to help rural households adapt to water scarcity

Baghdad, 01 December 2023 - The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in Iraq, in collaboration with the Ministry of Water Resources (MoWR), Ministry of Environment (MoE), and the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), has initiated the use of sustainable energy as part of the project funded by the Government of Canada to help rural households adapt to water scarcity and enhance the food-energy-water nexus.

The initiative aims to use sustainable energy in agricultural activities, enhancing the livelihoods and income of farmers while improving the country's food security. A technical team from FAO Iraq, along with experts from the MoWR, MoE, and MoA, are conducting field visits to the proposed areas for implementing the initiative in Najaf



and Muthanna governorates and collecting required data.

This project will achieve several benefits that will support Iraq's efforts

in addressing the impacts of climate change, such as reducing greenhouse gas emissions and adapting infrastructure to water scarcity.

FAO and EU raise hope for buffalo producers in Southern Iraq with promoting sustainable agriculture and empowering rural women

Basra, 03 December 2023 - In a groundbreaking move towards sustainable agriculture and under the "Restoration and Strengthening the Resilience of Agri-Food Systems in Southern Iraq" project funded by the European Union and implemented in cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) is taking transformative actions to uplift buffalo breeding sector in Southern Iraq.

This initiative, mainly focuses on supporting the role of rural women, livelihood enhancement, and introducing practical applications for sustainable agriculture.

In this context, a number of marketing points (Caravans) were directly delivered to beneficiary women's groups in Qurna, Basra as part of a group of 19 caravans for women's groups in Basra, Dhi Qar and Maysan. This strategic move aims to empower women,

enhance their pivotal role in the dairy value chain, and elevate the marketing potentials of dairy products.

A distribution ceremony was also held at Al-Qurnah Extension Farm under the patronage of his excellency the Minister of Agriculture, represented by Dr Mithaq Al Khafaji, and in the presence of Dr Ibrahim Al Saedi from the Advisory Board in the Prime Minister's Office, the Assistant to Al Basra's Governor for Agriculture Department Affairs, the Director of Agriculture in Basra, the head of Basra framers' association and a large number of farmers, during which a first batch of 200 butter churns out of a total of 1,000 were distributed. These machines use cutting-edge technology and are designed to significantly reduce manual churning time from 2-3 hours to 20 minutes, with minimal effort enabling rural women to save time and efforts for other household and daily life priorities.

This event signifies a substantial step forward in promoting sustainable agriculture, empowering local communities, enhancing livelihoods, and introducing cutting-edge suitable machinery and equipment.

Led by the FAO international expert Dr Chedly Kayouli, this component of the project program focuses on fortifying the rural dairy value chain in the marshes of South Iraq, including handling, storage, cooling, processing, and marketing.

In his opening speech, FAO representative, Dr. Salah El Haggi Hassan, expressed his enthusiasm, stating "Today's events represent a major step towards empowering women and fostering sustainable agriculture in Southern Iraq. The collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and local authorities and the financial support and partnership with the European Union has been instrumental in achieving these milestones. We are actively working to build on the success of this project and keep pace with similar achievements. We hope that these initiatives will lay the groundwork for sustainable agriculture, improved livelihoods, and the integration of new technologies and practices in the region."

The Technical Deputy of the Ministry of Agriculture, Dr. Mithaq Al Khafaji, also emphasized the project's significance, saying, "The collaboration between the Ministry of Agriculture and FAO is crucial for the development



FAO and EU raise hope for buffalo producers ... (continued)

of the agri-food sector in Southern Iraq. This initiative aligns with our vision to strengthen the resilience of rural communities and promote sustainable agriculture."

Dr Ibrahim Al Saedi highlighted the extremely important progress made by this project to develop the dairy sector and support rural women, which can be considered as one of the most successful examples to be scaled up further.

The participating officials highlighted the ongoing significant impact of FAO-EU funded project activities in the region, expressed appreciation for the positive effects on local communities, and reiterated their full support and

commitment to ensure the continued success of these transformative initiatives.

The mission extended to green fodder fields in the Nahr Al-Saba village/Al Mdayna district, where officials observed the ongoing success of the forage program, which introduced, for the first time in southern Iraq, soil and climate conditions resistant crops. Smart irrigation techniques continue to contribute to exceptionally high production rates, resulting in a significant increase in milk production and improvements in farmers' incomes. The project, under the broader umbrella of the EU Agri-Food Business

Development Programme, aims to improve governance and job creation along several agri-food value chains in Iraq. This initiative represents a major stride in fostering sustainable agriculture, empowering women, and strengthening agri-food systems in Southern Iraq. FAO remains committed to supporting initiatives aligned with United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including but not limited to Goal 1: No Poverty, Goal 2: Zero Hunger, Goal 5: Gender Equality, and Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth.

Empowering women: Norway and FAO join forces to support rural women affected by climatic changes in Iraq



Baghdad, 4 December 2023 - The Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, represented by the Norwegian Embassy in Iraq, and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) are set to launch an innovative project entitled "Integration of Climate-Smart Practices for Improved Livestock-based Rural Livelihoods of Vulnerable Farmers in Iraq."

This ambitious three-year initiative, supported by generous funding of 15,000,000 NOK, aims to transform the livelihoods of vulnerable rural households in the governorates of Basrah, Thi-Qar, and Karbala.

This project will focus on the economic empowerment of rural communities, particularly women; the long-term objective is to enhance resilience and improve food security of vulnerable rural communities in target areas, which will be achieved by enhancing climate resilience and improved productivity through climate-smart agricultural practices.

FAO Iraq Representative, Dr. Salah El Hajj Hassan, highlighted the value of cooperation with Norway and expressed gratitude for their generous funding. He stated, "This partnership is an example of the transformative potential of international collaboration. We are proud to work alongside Norway Government and local partners to empower vulnerable communities and enhance sustainable agriculture in Iraq."

Norwegian Ambassador to Jordan and Iraq, Mr Espen Lindbæck said: "We are incredibly proud to join forces with FAO in empowering vulnerable communities in Iraq through sustainable and climate-smart activities. Climate change in Iraq does not only affect the agricultural sector, but also creates barriers to development, threatens human rights and creates insecurity in plethora of sectors. I believe this project will give hope to the most vulnerable communities that often

disproportionately suffer from the impact of climate change. Food security, gender equality and climate action are at the top of the Norwegian agenda, and I think this collaboration shows how countries can work together to make a positive impact for all.

"Dr Mithaq Al-Khafaji, Technical Assistant at the Ministry of Agriculture, expressed his appreciation: "This project is of the utmost importance in Iraq. It represents a vital collaboration with FAO and Norway, providing critical funding for a project that will have a profound impact on the agricultural sector. We are grateful for their support and look forward to making a significant difference in our communities.

The Director General of the Department for Iraqi Women's Empowerment at the Council of Ministers, Ms. Yusra Karim Mohsen, stressed the importance of such projects in supporting and empowering rural women, thanking the organization and its partners for their commitment to advancing the situation of women in rural areas and ensuring that they enjoy equal opportunities, which strengthens their role in their communities.

The project is aligned with Iraq's national priorities and contributes to key sectors and Sustainable Development Goals, including zero hunger, gender equality, decent work, climate action and rural livelihoods. It also supports Norway's development cooperation themes and the UN framework for sustainable development cooperation, with a focus on climate change, food security and gender equality.

FAO Iraq visits green fodder fields

Basra, 05 December 2023 - The use of soil and climate conditions tolerant crops and smart irrigation techniques introduced for the first time in Southern Iraq, have resulted in remarkably high production rates. This is a groundbreaking move by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in Iraq and its partners, boosting farmers' incomes and transforming livelihoods.



FAO-EU partnership highlights climate-smart agriculture initiatives during EU Ambassador's visit



Basra, 15 December 2023 - The FAO-EU funded project "Restoration and Strengthening the Resilience of Agri-Food Systems in Southern Iraq" stands as a beacon of hope in the face of climate challenges. His Excellency Thomas Seiler, the EU Ambassador in Iraq, toured on Wednesday project sites in Hasja and Alsubagih Villages (Al-Chibayish District, Thi Qar Province), witnessing impactful strides.

The project, implemented in collaboration with the Iraqi Ministry of Agriculture and local partners focuses on empowering tomato and date farmers as well as buffalo breeders, securing rural livelihoods in a water scarce environment.

The field visit included two sites in the Mesopotamian Marshes that showed the introduction of nutritious animal fodder crops, able to cope with saline soils and water and dairy processing and marketing by women groups.

- Ryegrass have been introduced as a more resilient fodder crop that is able to cope with saline soils and water, coupled with drip irrigation systems and harvesting machines. The improved feed enhances animal health and increases yields and quality of milk as well as household income.

- 20 women groups profited from new batch of 20 new fully

equipped caravans fostering their active participation in the dairy sector as entrepreneurs by ensuring the processing and marketing of high-quality dairy products.

With EU support and MoA collaboration, FAO enhances farmers' capacity, fostering climate resilience. Encouraging crop diversification for improved soil management and increased productivity, which contribute increasing income through value chain development and market linkages.

EU Ambassador H.E Thomas Seiler commented: "The visit has underlined the critical importance of initiatives to help farmers adapt to a changing, deteriorating natural environment. The European Union values its partnership with FAO, and together we are actively addressing climate change challenges.



Our joint efforts aim to create climate resilient solutions for communities in southern Iraq."

FAO Iraq Representative, Dr. Salah El Hajj Hassan, underscored FAO's commitment to a holistic approach in developing major value chains: "By integrating smart agricultural practices, we aim to ensure better production, better nutrition, a better environment, and ultimately, a better life for communities. FAO takes pride in working hand in hand with the European Union, leaving no one behind, as we jointly strive to create enduring positive change in southern Iraq." "Our holistic approach in developing the dairy and plant value chains, coupled with the introduction of smart agricultural practices, is our commitment to building lasting resilience and sustainability. FAO is proud to be working with the European Union to create lasting positive change in southern Iraq."

Rene Verduijn, FAO Senior Resilience Specialist, added: "Our support stems from a holistic value chains approach where we deal with the gaps and challenges identified in selected commodities "from farm to fork." FAO works together with other UN agencies, the Government, private sector and civil society to improve these value chains and see real impact under the banner of an EU-funded "Agri-Food Business Development Programme."

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the European Union remain steadfast in their joint commitment to combat the profound effects of climate change in Southern Iraq. Through the implementation of sustainable agricultural practices and the continuous support of local communities, FAO and the EU are dedicated to building resilience to overcome challenges and ensure a sustainable and prosperous future for the region.

Solar-powered wells revive farming in post-ISIL Iraq

Baghdad, 17 December 2023 - In the village of al-Fadiliya in Iraq, Younis Jalal Salman, a 55-year-old farmer, has been a change-maker in his community. A farmer for over 30 years, he runs a farm that covers 30 acres of land and consists of olive trees, grapes, figs, and pears.

Younis shares his farm with his five brothers, five sisters, and their families. Their household comprises over 40 people, including his mother, who was left paralyzed during the conflict.

In 2014, the conflict with the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) began, significantly impacting Younis and his family. They lost most of their crops and were forced to flee.

"We risked leaving behind our only source of income that my entire family depended on," says Younis.

After liberation from ISIL, Younis and his family returned to their farm, hoping to rebuild their lives. However, they were met with absolute devastation.

"Our land was left burnt, and our well was left damaged. We struggled to irrigate our crops, having dipped into our savings to make ends meet," says Younis.

To help farmers like Younis restart their lives, UNDP's Funding Facility for Stabilization, with funding from Japan, rehabilitated wells and upgraded them with solar power. To date, UNDP has rebuilt over 40 wells across Ninewa and equipped them with 36 solar systems, reaching over 1,700 farmers and their families.

Previously, farmers had to use generators or electricity to operate the well, which cost around US\$700 per month in diesel for 10 barrels.

However, today, Younis shares that they have significantly benefited from the solar panels and helped his family adapt to modern solutions while preserving traditional

agriculture practices. "Since we shifted to solar panels, this has saved us a lot of money. We don't have to worry about the cost of running the well now, only ensuring the panels are maintained."

The use of solar-powered wells not only helps farmers save money but also positively impacts the environment. Climate change has led to increasingly erratic weather patterns, making it difficult for farmers to predict and plan their harvests. The traditional reliance on fossil fuel-powered water pumps has also contributed to greenhouse gas emissions, further exacerbating climate change.

Switching to solar-powered wells not only helps farmers like Younis adapt to changing climate but also reduces their carbon footprint and helps combat climate change.

Younis's farm serves as a model for the community. He hopes organizations will support other farmers to adopt solar-powered wells. He believes that this is the way forward for sustainable agriculture in Iraq.

"As a farmer, I know how important it is to have a reliable water source for irrigation. Solar-powered wells provide a consistent power source

without costly diesel generators. Plus, they're environmentally friendly and don't require any ongoing fuel costs. It's a win-win for farmers and the environment," says Younis.

Today, Younis has expanded his orchard to include 660 trees and a well to serve it.

"However, the water levels decrease significantly after drawing water from it for two hours," says Younis Jalal Salman.

His family hopes to extend the water network from the solar powered well to irrigate the new orchard.

Younis has influenced other farmers to adopt solar-powered wells. During harvesting season, they hire workers from the village to support. His farm benefits ten other families who also live on the farm.

Younis's story shows the resilience of farmers in the face of adversity. Solar-powered wells provide a sustainable and cost-effective solution to the water supply problem that farmers face in post-ISIL Iraq. His efforts to influence other farmers to adopt solar-powered wells will have a lasting impact on the environment and the community, which is crucial in the face of climate change.



FAO Iraq announces the launch of Phase II for Animal Health Advancements in Iraq

Baghdad, 27 December 2023 - The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in Iraq is proud to announce the launch of Phase II of the project titled "Improving Delivery of Animal Health Services and Disease Surveillance in Iraq" with funding from the United States Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA). This transformative initiative, which will be implemented by FAO with the support

of the Iraqi Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), will build on the successes and best practices from the Phase I of the project from 2019 to 2023.

During the initial phase, the project achieved significant outcomes that laid the foundation for enhanced animal health services and disease surveillance in Iraq. A comprehensive review of the legal framework governing veterinary services identified

the need for streamlined regulations to avoid fragmentation and potential gaps. The collaborative efforts of FAO, DTRA, and MoA resulted in the successful training of 1,595 individuals of national executives, including 499 women (31.2%) and 1,096 men, through workshops between 2021 and 2023.

The impact of the project extended across diverse groups of farmers, animal owners, traders, association

FAO Iraq announces the launch of Phase II... *(continued)*



members, laboratory staff, field veterinarians, and professionals from related departments. Workshops facilitated public awareness, empowering participants to identify and respond to priority animal diseases promptly. Veterinarians gained new skills, leading to improved service delivery and were supplied with globally dependable lab equipment to enhance diagnostic capabilities.

Additionally, the introduction of electronic reporting technology in six targeted governorates advanced early warning responses, aiding timely decision-making. The success of Phase I sets the stage for the continuation and expansion of these crucial efforts in Phase II.

Building upon the achievements and lessons learned from Phase I, a two-year agreement is signed, allocating US\$ 3.9 million to further enhance disease recognition, diagnostics, epidemiology, data analysis, reporting, and early warning systems.

The phase II of the project, named

"Strengthening Iraq Veterinary Legislation and Expanding Delivery of Animal Health Services and Disease Surveillance," will strategically train veterinary staff in Sulaimanya, Dayala, Maysan, and Najaf governorates. Leveraging the expertise of Phase I-trained technical staff, this initiative marks a significant leap towards a sustainable and resilient animal health sector.

FAO Iraq Representative, Dr. Salah El Hajj Hassan underscores FAO's unwavering commitment to establishing solid veterinary services aimed at mitigating the risk of high-threat animal diseases spreading throughout Iraq and neighboring regions. He affirms, "Improving animal health is crucial for reinforcing the overall well-being and livelihoods of our region." FAO takes pride in its collaborative efforts with DTRA and the Ministry of Agriculture, contributing actively to the reduction of threats and fostering a resilient and secure environment."

MoA Technical Deputy, Dr Mithaq Al Khafaji, underscores the ministry's commitment to the collaborative effort, stating, "Through this partnership with FAO and DTRA, we reaffirm our dedication to building a resilient veterinary sector. This joint initiative is a testament to our shared commitment to the well-being of our communities, ensuring the health and prosperity of both our livestock and our people."

FAO Assistant Director General for the Near East and North Africa (NENA) region, Dr Abdulhakim EL Waer praised these collaborative efforts and stressed: "Launching Phase II of this project is a crucial stride in reinforcing veterinary services." This initiative not only enhances Iraq's capacity but also contributes to regional resilience against high-impact animal diseases. This initiative reflects FAO's commitment to sustainable development in the NENA region, ensuring the health and prosperity of communities."

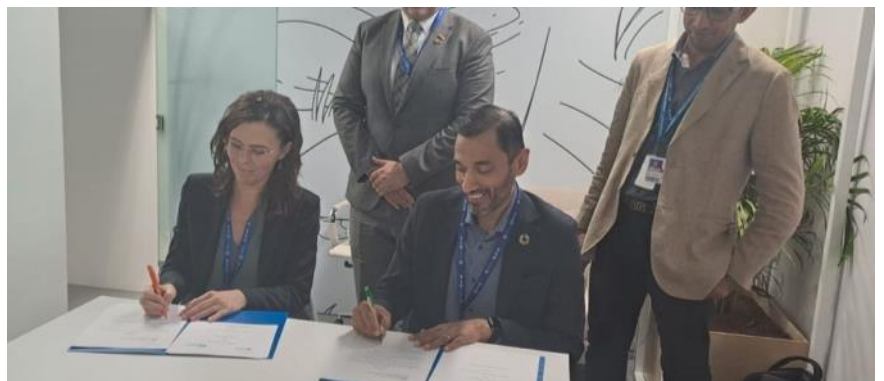
Activities under Phase II will result in an enhanced early warning system supporting early detection, diagnosis, and control of outbreaks. The joint project will also focus on developing strategies and policies to sustain veterinary services within the targeted governorates through a train-the-trainer model.

This initiative aligns with several United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, including Goal 2: Zero Hunger, Goal 3: Good Health and Well-being, Goal 5: Gender Equality, and Goal 13: Climate Action, showcasing the commitment to a comprehensive and integrated approach towards sustainable development.

The World Food Programme and the Stockholm Environment Institute sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) at COP28

Baghdad, 27 December 2023 - The World Food Programme (WFP) and the Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI) recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) at COP28 creating a framework for research and cooperation, fostering:

- Rural circularity for sustainable agriculture
- Addressing the Water–food–energy nexus
- Linking adaptation and mitigation planning



Path to prosperity: Bartella businesses receive safety and hygiene training

Mosul, 31 October 2023 - A training program on Safety and Hygiene implemented by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) has successfully brought together a diverse array of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) operating in and near Bartella, a small town located in Nineveh Governorate, 21 kilometers east of Mosul.

The Safety and Hygiene Training Program for SMEs in Bartella is a holistic endeavor designed to empower local businesses with the expertise and competencies required to guarantee workplace safety, uphold rigorous hygiene standards, and flourish in the fiercely competitive business arena. The intensive 7-day program united 14 chosen project beneficiaries, serving as a forum for imparting technical knowledge and skills. This training took place from October 15 to October 21, 2023.

The training program is also committed to promoting inclusivity and gender diversity among its participants. The program attracted a mix of four female and 10 male entrepreneurs reflecting the shared desire to improve business practices and ensure safety and hygiene standards within their respective enterprises.

These 14 SMEs span over a wide spectrum of products contributing to the rich economic tapestry of the region by producing a variety of local food items that are a staple in Iraqi and regional cuisine. These SMEs produce various items like bulgur, pasta, dairy products such as cheese, butter and yogurt, tahini (sesame paste), sweets and pastries, and olive oil.

The training program covered the most important elements of food production, including, but not limited to workplace hygiene and safety, personal hygiene, safe food handling practices, necessary equipment, the importance of temperatures, packaging and storage management, and quality control of products.

Ms. Raida Yaqub Matti, one of the 14 SME owners told UNIDO she learned valuable information through this training program. "From this course, I learned how to preserve the product and how to properly preserve raw materials so that they maintain their validity and resistance to conditions," Matti, who owns Al Mahaba Bakery



in Bartella stated. "We were suffering from a lot of material damage due to our lack of knowledge of how to preserve these materials at appropriate temperatures, as well as using accurate measures and weights," she added.

Matti continued, "We need to have products at the level of imported foreign products, and thus to be able to compete and achieve more profits." She stated. Commenting on how businesses that received the Safety and Hygiene training could contribute to the Bartella community, Matti said, "Increasing and raising the percentage of sales means increasing profits and expanding work, thus providing more job opportunities."

Training also included business management methods such as how to staff the business efficiently, intensive financial management procedures, employee relations and management, and strategies for promoting and marketing their products to gain a competitive advantage in the market.

Another trainee and owner of Rashi Al Fauni Tahini Company in nearby Bashiqa, Sabah Sulaiman Jameel, was happy to be chosen to be a part of the training. "Participation in UNIDO's training is the first of this kind," he stated, "I learned a lot about methods of managing my business, whether in terms of financial management, production management, or management of individuals and workers," he stated, "Previously, we only had basic information in these areas, which was strengthened, developed, and expanded through these courses." Jameel added, "We also learned how to maintain or raise the quality of the

product, promotion, and marketing in order to achieve greater sales."

Since the training has been completed, a comprehensive assessment will be conducted in the coming days to understand the specific needs and requirements of the beneficiaries for their businesses. This assessment will identify the equipment, tools, or resources necessary for them to implement the training's principles effectively. These vital resources will be procured to support the beneficiaries' businesses and ensure that the training's benefits are realized in practice.

The trainers leading this initiative include experts from the Ministry of Industry and Minerals in Iraq. Their knowledge, experience, and commitment to advancing business practices and safety standards are invaluable to the success of this training program in addition to their wealth of expertise in various aspects of industrial and business operations, further enhancing the quality of the program.

Ms. Ramina Athnael Yousif, Technical Trainer and Associate Director of Project Development within the Ministry of Industry and Minerals was one of several trainers involved in the Safety and Hygiene Training Program for SMEs. "Training programs [like these] play an important role in supporting small and medium business owners." She emphasized.

Yousif gave examples of how training programs like these help SMEs, such as increasing awareness of employers and employees on safety and hygiene in the workplace, promoting compliance so that business owners can avoid legal problems and penalties, reducing work injuries and

Path to prosperity: Bartella businesses receive safety... *(continued)*

absences, thus increasing productivity, reducing costs associated with occupational accidents and illnesses, and enhancing the business' reputation through a commitment to safety and cleanliness.

"In general, safety and hygiene training programs contribute to improving the work environment and ensuring employee safety and business success. Therefore, it plays a vital role in supporting SMEs and enhancing their sustainability." Yousif added.

Another technical trainer for the EDP program, Mr. Bjar M. Salih, believes that training programs such as these hold immense importance for SMEs, equipping them with the necessary knowledge and resources to enable them to achieve enhanced efficiency, cleanliness, and productivity in their operations.

Mr. Salih also mentioned that trainees showed great enthusiasm about the comprehensive training as they appreciated the academic knowledge provided that could be added to their traditional expertise. "The significance of this training lies in addressing the deficiency of basic academic knowledge among SME operators in Iraq", he

stated, adding "It also serves to bridge the marketing gap, facilitating the expansion of their customer base."

UNIDO emphasized that it plans to provide the same training with another group of 14 or more SME owners in Iraq. "Investing in SMEs is more than just fueling a sector; it's about shaping Iraq's future. These enterprises serve as catalysts for industrial innovation and progress," said Eduardo Moreira, International Project Coordinator for UNIDO. "They decentralize economic activity, spreading prosperity and growth from the urban centers to the most remote regions. Their importance goes beyond economics, it's a strategic imperative that brings jobs, sustains communities, building a stronger and more resilient Iraq."

The Safety and Hygiene Training Program for SMEs is being implemented by UNIDO with funding from the government of Japan under the "Emergency livelihood support to mitigate the food insecurity crisis among vulnerable people in Iraq" project.

UNIDO and Iraq are grateful to the government of Japan for funding various projects over the past two

decades. Since the International Donors' Conference on the Reconstruction of Iraq held in Madrid in October 2003, Japan continued its financial assistance to the country. Assistance packages are comprised of billions of grant aid for immediate assistance with a focus on the recovery of living standards for Iraqi people (in the fields of health, water and sanitation, security, etc.) and loans to meet medium-term reconstruction demands (in the fields of ports, bridges, roads, oil facilities, gas power plants, and more).

The Government of Japan has also been a great contributor in recent years by providing assistance to thousands of people affected by conflicts. This includes entrepreneurship training and business startups, job training in the fields of hospitality and agribusiness, as well as supporting existing businesses in improving their capacity through UNIDO. These programs were successful in improving the lives of refugees, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), and vulnerable host communities in Iraq.

Human security and sustainable development in Iraq and the Arab World: reality, challenges, and ways forward

Baghdad, 16 November 2023 - Iraq (ILO News) An international conference was held in Baghdad on the 15th and 16th of November, bringing together academics, stakeholders, tripartite constituents and partners from across the spectrum, to discuss issues related to sustainable development and human security in Iraq and the Arab World.

The two-day event was held Under the Patronage of the Prime Minister of Iraq, H.E. Mohammed Shia'a Al-Sudani, and organised by the Baghdad-based Bait Al-Hikma think tank, in collaboration with the International Labour Organization, the Journalists Syndicate, the International Federation of Universities, the Areed platform, and several Iraqi and Arab universities, academies, and research centres.

Among other partners, the ILO provided technical and financial support for this conference as part of boarder efforts of a European Union funded programme to reform social protection in Iraq.

The conference shed light on the reality of sustainable development in Iraq and the Arab World through 160 research



papers conducted by academics from across the region. Participants included those from Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, Libya, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, Syria, Yemen, Somalia, Sudan, the United Arab Emirates, and the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Some of the studies will continue to be presented virtually next week.

The research and discussions aim to identifying some of the threats and challenges facing human security, while exploring the relationship between human rights and sustainable development goals in Iraq and the Arab World.

"This conference sheds light on the reality of sustainable development in

Iraq and the Arab World through research and statistics, to identify the most significant threats to human security at the individual, family, and societal levels. We would like to thank everyone who contributed to the success of this conference," said Adnan Ibrahim Mohammed, representative of the President of the Republic of Iraq, H.E. Abdullatif Jamal Rashid.

"This conference comes at an appropriate time, as Iraq continues to suffer as a result of climate change. This is where the role of scholars and researchers is important, in drawing up policies in this regard, and guiding the decision makers on the right paths to pursue," said Aref Al-Saadi, cultural

Human security and sustainable development in Iraq and the Arab World: reality, challenges, and ways forward *(continued)*

advisor in the Iraqi government on behalf of the Prime Minister.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development includes 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which focus on the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainability. The conference delved into the issue of human security and the important role it plays in bringing about positive change and promoting a better future for all - hence contributing to the Sustainable Development Goals in Iraq and across the Arab World.

"The conference will formulate a set of proposals that will contribute to addressing these issues and finding solutions to these challenges," said Adel Baghdadi, Vice Chairman of the Board of Trustees of Bait al Hikma.

The conference was divided into four main themes. The Conceptual and General Framework of sustainable development, focused on the challenges and historical development of human security in the Arab World. The Social Field examined issues related to the role of human and social capital in sustainable development, including women empowerment, the role of civil society, demographic transitions and good governance. The Economic Field looked at the relationship between the quality of education, labour market demands and job opportunities and related issues and challenges, such as youth

unemployment, food security and the role of the private sector in stimulating production and investment. The fourth and final theme focused on the Environmental Field, related to combatting pollution, climate change, and challenges related to water security, environmental degradation and depletion of natural resources.

ILO Country Coordinator for Iraq Maha Kattaa emphasised the importance of decent work to sustainable development and human security in Iraq. In her presentation, Kattaa highlighted some of the pressing challenges facing Iraq's labour market, such as high unemployment among women and youth, high levels of informality, gaps in social protection coverage, and their impact on income, education and standards of living.

Kattaa also highlighted the importance of ILO Recommendation No. 205 on Employment and Decent Work for Peace and Resilience, which provides guidance on addressing world-of-work issues in response to crisis situations, including health pandemics, armed conflict, natural disaster, environmental degradation, and forced displacement.

ILO's work in Iraq and across the region is grounded in Recommendation No. 205, where employment, decent working conditions and social dialogue help contribute to peace and resilience,

within the framework of the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus.

"Adopting an integrated approach that contributes to job creation, and that strengthens social protection, rights at work, and social dialogue will bring Iraq closer to achieving its Sustainable Development Goals, namely SDG 1, SDG 5 and SDG 8," said Kattaa.

"The support of the International Labour Organization to the Government of Iraq and social partners, through the implementation of the Decent Work Country Programme, puts the people of Iraq at the heart of development efforts that promote the decent work agenda and social protection," Kattaa added.

Under the European Union funded programme to reform social protection in Iraq, the ILO and Bait Al-Hikma have been collaborating through monthly roundtable discussions on key issues related to Iraq's labour market and its social protection system. Similar to this conference, these sessions centre around evidence-based research developed by ILO and key scholars and academia. They seek to strengthen dialogue and propose systematic and context-specific solutions to ensure inclusive economic growth and social development in Iraq.

The ILO, the Central Bank of Iraq and partners celebrate success of the financial Inclusion Initiative for MSMEs under the PROSPECTS Programme



Baghdad, 20 November 2023 - The International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Central Bank of Iraq (CBI) celebrated in Baghdad key milestones achieved through their joint project.

Around 200 loans have been disbursed

to aspiring entrepreneurs through the initiative, playing a crucial role in creating and retaining over 1,200 job opportunities in the Dohuk and Ninewa governorates. Meanwhile, almost 3,000 young men and women, along with small and medium-sized project

owners, underwent ILO-run business and financial training as part of the programme.

People targeted through the project include displaced persons, returnees, and host community members. The initiative has provided young women and men and small businesses with access to much-needed financial and training services to start and develop their own businesses, while addressing barriers to decent self-employment.

The event, which was organized under the patronage of the Governor of the CBI, saw the attendance of senior representatives from the Embassy of Netherlands, along with key players in the field of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) development and

The ILO, the Central Bank of Iraq and partners celebrate ... (continued)

access to finance. These include representatives from employers' and workers' organizations, key partner ministries, representatives of foreign embassies, active business development service providers, financial service providers, and other international organizations in the entrepreneurship eco-system.

"Small enterprises face two main problems: the first is accessing the official financial or banking sector; the second is related to guarantees," said Ammar Hamad Khalaf, Deputy Governor with the Central Bank of Iraq. "Our joint initiative not only equips the youth with the necessary skills to comprehend the intricacies of starting new businesses, but also facilitates access to financing with ample guarantees. We aspire to extend our reach beyond Duhok and Ninewa, fostering further economic empowerment and growth."

At the event, partners highlighted the tangible impact of the project, emphasizing the transformation in both young people's perception of self-employment as a career option and the financial institutions' understanding of the needs of business start-ups and MSMEs in terms of both financial and non-financial services. This intervention falls under the broader ILO's efforts to support decent employment creation and private sector development. It is being implemented

within the framework of the PROSPECTS partnership in Iraq, supported by the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

"Access to finance and training on business skills are important, as young entrepreneurs in Iraq struggle to access start-up capital and growing their businesses. For displaced persons, these challenges are even larger," said Jacob Wiersema, Chargé d'affaires, Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Iraq. "For the Netherlands, private sector development and employment for forcibly displaced persons and host communities are key priorities. Through programmes such as ILO's Start and Improve Your Business (SIYB) and Financial Education (FE) trainings, we hope to support entrepreneurs in their journeys towards accessing finance and trainings to improve and grow their start-ups."

As a result of extensive consultations and design thinking that spanned over a year, the ILO and CBI launched this innovative financial inclusion model for MSMEs in April 2021. The partnership includes the Iraqi Company for Banking Guarantees (ICBG) and three commercial banks: Cihan Islamic Bank, Middle East Investment Bank, and National Iraqi Bank.

"We are extremely proud to witness these positive results today along with

our partners," said Maha Kattaa, ILO Country Coordinator in Iraq. "Our approach encompasses skills training, financial inclusion, and entrepreneurship support to foster sustainable economic growth and address the challenge of unemployment, especially among the youth. This initiative has been and will continue to equip the latter with the resources to establish jobs for themselves and others, aligning with the ILO priorities of the Decent Work Country Programme."

In 2021, Iraq's unemployment rate was 16.5 percent, with a higher rate observed among the female labor force at 28.2 percent compared to the male labor force at 14.7 percent. Notably, the youth unemployment rate exceeded three times the adult rate, standing at 35.8 percent.

At the event, partners also called on other international organizations to replicate and build on this model, advocating for sustainable development over the traditional grant-subsidy approach commonly adopted across interventions aimed at providing financial support to local communities. PROSPECTS is a global partnership, which brings together the ILO, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Finance Corporation (IFC), and the World Bank (WB).

ILO and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs organize a workshop to validate Iraq's strategic blueprint for reducing inequalities in the world of work

Baghdad, 23 November 2023 - The International Labour Organization (ILO) in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs organized a workshop to validate Iraq's strategic blueprint for reducing inequalities in the world of work including gender equality.

The primary objective of the hybrid

validation workshop was to foster active engagement among key stakeholders including ministries, social partners and civil society organizations. It focused on refining the initial draft of the comprehensive and integrated strategy devised to prevent and reduce inequalities within the world of work.



ILO, Italian Agency for Development Cooperation and Basra University mark Global Entrepreneurship Week

Basra, 23 November 2023 - The ILO, with the support of the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS), partnered with Basra University to mark Global Entrepreneurship Week.

Through a series of engaging workshops, our certified trainers introduced hundreds of students to the ILO's Start and Improve Your Business (SIYB), Financial

Education, and Green Business programs. We are excited to contribute to fostering an entrepreneurial spirit among Basra University's students and promoting sustainable business practices.

This initiative falls under the newly launched project, "Towards more and better employment through enhanced support to private sectors in southern

Iraq – with a focus on green business," implemented by the ILO with the support of AICS.

We are grateful for AICS's unwavering commitment to empowering youth and promoting sustainable development in Iraq.

A capacity-building training on employment services and career guidance using ILO's tools held in Basra

Basra, 01 December 2023 - Twenty-seven participants from the Directorate of Labour and Social Affairs and employment services providers in Basra completed a capacity-building five-day training on employment services and career guidance using ILO's tools.

The training is designed to elevate the standards of employment services and career guidance provided to job seekers. Notably, participants from the Directorate of Labour and Social Affairs will play a pivotal role in operating the upcoming new employment services center that will be established at the Vocational Training Center in Basra. This initiative marks a significant step toward enhancing support for job seekers to find decent jobs in Basra.

In collaboration with UN-Habitat Iraq, the ILO is implementing employment promotion activities under the European Union in Iraq-funded project

"Increasing Access to Employment Opportunities for Vulnerable Urban Population in Basra City in Response to the COVID-19 Crisis".



The new system recognizes work's central role, including in the private sector, as a key enabler for social protection benefits



Karbala, 03 December 2023 - In a significant step towards enhancing the landscape of labour legislation and social security in Iraq, Al-Nabaa Dialogue Forum, in partnership with the International Labour Organization (ILO) and supported by the European Union, recently held a pivotal two-day seminar and workshop in Karbala. This event, centred on the theme "Retirement and Social Security Law for Workers: Legislation and Implementation Mechanisms," marks a crucial stride in Iraq's commitment to reforming its labour laws and expanding social protections.

Following the enactment of the

Retirement and Social Security Law for Workers No. (18) of 2023, the seminar aimed to underscore the urgency of its full and timely implementation. Mr. Ali Al-Talqani, President of Al-Nabaa Dialogue Forum, emphasized the ongoing efforts of the forum in collaboration with the ILO. He highlighted the importance of continuous awareness and response to the needs of citizens, employers, and various social groups, especially after the government's legislation.

The seminar included key speeches from the Iraqi Council of Representatives and expert interventions from the ILO and the Al-

Nabaa Dialogue Forum. The event also featured the active participation from trade unions, government institutions, and academic representatives, fostering a comprehensive dialogue on the law's practical applications.

Mr. Igor Bosc, Chief Technical Advisor for Social Security at the ILO, reinforced the centrality of social protection in policy-making. He stressed the new system's recognition of work's central role, including in the private sector, as a key enabler for social protection benefits.

The discussions notably focused on addressing the technical and practical challenges of implementing the law. This included considerations of financial sustainability and the protection of the working class and economically fragile communities.

Firas Al-Muslmani, a Member of Parliament, praised the Social Security Law as one of the most significant legislations of the current parliament session. He underlined the inclusion of various irregular professions under the law, highlighting its broad scope and the provision of retirement salary and health insurance to beneficiaries and their families.

The seminar concluded with extensive training, discussions, and plans for future actions to ensure the effective implementation of the law, reflecting a shared commitment to advancing the rights and protections of workers in Iraq.

Iraq successfully concludes its first cooperative training programme

Baghdad, 14 December 2023 - Iraq successfully concluded today its first cooperative training programme, which followed the regional Training of Trainers (TOT) cooperative workshop held in Beirut in October. The five-day training sessions used both ILO's Think.Coop and Start.Coop tools and saw the participation of 36 attendees representing six local cooperatives and three informal groups.

The training is key in providing cooperative and informal group members with a comprehensive understanding of cooperative principles, values, and equipping them with the necessary skills and knowledge. This training aims to empower participants to either initiate

their own cooperatives or enhance their management capabilities by

formulating business plans centred around specific thematic areas of focus.



Over 11.000 new jobs created in Iraq with IOM support

Baghdad, 19 December 2023 - The International Organization for Migration (IOM) has provided financing to 2,424 small and medium enterprises (SMEs) across Iraq through its Enterprise Development Fund (EDF) since its initial launch in 2018, helping to create 11,217 new jobs and improve 12,980 already existing jobs for host, returnee and internally displaced communities alike.

EDF is an innovative programme designed to support livelihoods and rapid job creation by revitalizing the private sector and contributing to economic development, aligned with key priorities of the Government of Iraq. Iraqi SMEs recovering from the aftershocks of war, conflict, economic crises and the COVID-19 pandemic face a variety of challenges, most saliently access to finance due to limited capacity of financial institutions, high interest rates, and collateral requirements, as well as perception of high risk from financial institutions for IDPs, returnees and vulnerable populations.

"I don't only want the benefit for myself," Ahmed, one of the beneficiaries said of his business's growth after he received a grant from IOM. "I want to see all my employees and their families grow and prosper." Ahmed received a \$27,500 grant through IOM's EDF that allowed him to further expand his bakery and add a new line of cakes. The 17 workers he had before the grant grew by another seven.

"EDF is a key pillar in IOM's comprehensive approach to achieve durable solutions for the Iraqi people in and areas of return and integration"



said IOM Chief of Mission in Iraq, Mr. Giorgi Gigauri. "We believe that empowering businesses is critical for Iraq's recovery and development, and we remain committed to working towards this goal together with affected communities and migrants, the Government of Iraq and international partners."

The EDF programme also includes adaptations tailored to specific sectors and groups of individuals, such as women, youth and farmers – allowing it to remain flexible, scalable and inclusive. For example, EDF-Women funds women-owned and women-staffed businesses to increase women's participation in the private sector and labor market at large; while EDF-Tameer focuses on displacement-affected persons who want to restore or restart their businesses in their areas of return.

EDF-Agriculture works to improve access and linkages to existing value chains for SMEs in all stages of agribusiness, and EDF-Innovation provides funding to talented entrepreneurs to expand their early-stage start-ups. The

newly launched EDF-Green targets innovators in sustainable development and those contributing to climate adaptation and resilience in Iraq. targets innovators in sustainable development and those contributing to climate adaptation and resilience in Iraq.

"A driving force behind Germany's commitment in Iraq is to foster economic growth, create employment and – with this – contribute to social peace and stability. As part of our engagement, we support IOM and the EDF to enable Iraqi businesses, contribute to strengthen the resilience of IDPs and empower women to become part of the work force", said Dr. Maximilian Rasch, Chargé d'Affaires a.i. of the German Embassy.

The EDF programme has been supported by the Government of Germany, the European Union, the Korea International Cooperation Agency, the Government of Finland, the Government of the United States, and the Government of Japan.

To learn more about EDF, please go to <https://edf.iom.int/>

Iraqi Anti-Corruption Academy launches Laserfiche: a digital transformation milestone against corruption



Baghdad, 7 November 2023 - E-governance represents a fundamental shift in the way governments around the world are embracing their mission. By harnessing the potential of technology, Governments are able to establish clear administrative objectives, enhance the quality of public services, make evidence-based decisions and policies, all of which increase transparency and secure public trust. Technology-driven transparency: An effective management system

The Iraqi Anti-Corruption Academy (IACA) under the federal Commission of Integrity (CoI), in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), launched the enterprise management system 'Laserfiche' on November 7, 2023 -- advancing digital transformation efforts and bolstering anti-corruption measures in Iraq. This marks a significant milestone in embracing digitalization. And this launched

brought together representatives of the UNDP and the CoI.

"I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Commission of Integrity for their commitment and continued collaboration with UNDP," stated Auke Lootsma, Resident Representative of UNDP Iraq. "This work marks the evolving first steps of Iraq's digital transformation journey towards e-governance. Iraq is enhancing inclusive and transparent governance, while strengthening its international reputation and building trust with the global community." Discussions during the event explored how the Laserfiche system makes the workflow easier, more efficient, and more transparent. Participants also delved into the key benefits and challenges of implementing digital solutions like Laserfiche to address corruption in Iraq, sharing success stories and specific examples of how technology has already made a

difference in anti-corruption initiatives. The event provided a platform for sharing recommendations to move forward and mainstream digitalization efforts.

What is Laserfiche?

Laserfiche is an enterprise management system designed to streamline workflows and bolster digitalization efforts within government agencies. It operates by digitizing content management, automating complex processes, and ensuring the accessibility and searchability of crucial information. Unlike traditional manual systems reliant on physical paper documentation, Laserfiche offers a future-forward solution that significantly enhances efficiency, transparency, and accountability. By automating cumbersome workflows, it expedites document approvals, eliminates the risk of document loss or damage, and minimizes personal interventions that may disrupt standard procedures. Laserfiche-like systems play a significant role in ending corruption, making it a game-changer for the Iraqi Anti-Corruption Academy and government agencies.

Iraq's unified efforts to end corruption Since the formation of the new Government in late 2022, Iraq has been taking bold steps against corruption towards building a diversified and sustainable economy. Led by H.E. the Prime Minister, the Government of Iraq prioritizes unified efforts to end corruption, diversify the economy and foster sustainable development for the good of the people of Iraq.

UNDP Iraq is conducting Integrity Week in Erbil

Erbil, 23 November 2023 - UNDP Iraq is conducting Integrity Week in Erbil with the Judicial Institute of Kurdistan for public officials from ministries and institutions of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. The programme provides a space for knowledge exchange and experience sharing for public officials on a variety

of topics of anti-corruption, arbitration and mediation.

Organized within the framework of UNDP's Anti-Corruption and Arbitration Initiatives funded by the EU, the week aims to bolster Iraq's efforts in ending corruption and boost foreign investment.



Dive into the data realm!

Baghdad, 08 December 2023 - IOM Iraq conducted a criminal data analytics training for Community Policing Department's Strategic Centre staff in the Ministry of Interior (MoI), empowering MoI to analyze data, identify patterns, and enhance crime prevention efforts.



Iraq unveils groundbreaking Handbook for enhancing financial investigations and upholding the rule of law

Baghdad, 27 November 2023 - This week, Iraq took a significant stride toward combatting crimes, that generate illicit gain, by launching a Financial Investigations Handbook. The handbook aims to enhance the effectiveness of financial investigations throughout the country.

"This is a first of its kind, and I commend the efforts of those who took part in its development. Iraq's success in confiscating assets generated from money laundering crimes is evidence of its commitment to the international standards for combating money laundering and terrorism financing," His Excellency Dr. Faeq Zaidan, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Judicial Council said while opening the launch ceremony.

The Handbook is poised to become a critical asset in the country's pursuit of accountability and the establishment of a robust financial system. It is a comprehensive guide, designed in simple and accessible language, with the goal of equipping Iraqi authorities with the necessary knowledge and techniques to effectively investigate financial irregularities and illicit activities. By providing clear instructions and practical insights, the handbook empowers law enforcement agencies, auditors, and legal professionals to uncover hidden financial trails, expose corrupt practices, and ensure justice is served. "Our investigative judges and judicial investigators participated in a series of workshops on financial investigations organized by the UNDP, which had a big impact on the procedures applicable to investigate organized crimes

including corruption, narcotics and money laundering crimes," said HE Judge Abd Aljabar Azeez Hasan, Chief Justice of the Judicial Council of the Kurdistan Region.

Judge Kawa Fathi Maasom, the President of the Prosecution Agency of the KRI described the handbook as a practical guideline that unifies the Iraq financial investigation procedures, which are applied by the judiciary and law enforcement authorities.

These efforts were made possible with the support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Iraq with funding from the United States Government.

"We commend the courage and persistence of those working in our 11 partner institutions on countering corruption, financial crimes, and money laundering. We also thank them for their trust in engaging with UNDP throughout this collaborative process of devising the Handbook for Financial Investigations, which we are launching today," Mr. Auke Lootsma, the UNDP

Iraq Resident Representative said during the event.

The launch was attended by the Presidents of the Federal and KRI Commissions of Integrity; the Presidents of the Federal and the KRI Board of Supreme Audits; and high-ranking officials from the Federal and KRI Ministries of Interior, the KRI Assayish Agency and the Anti-Money Laundering and Countering Terrorism Financing Office of the Central Bank of Iraq.

By embracing this invaluable resource, Iraq sends a powerful message to its citizens and the international community that it is determined to root out corruption. The Financial Investigation Handbook serves as a beacon of hope, enabling Iraq to safeguard its financial integrity, attract foreign investment, and foster economic growth. With its release, Iraq takes a significant step forward in its fight against corruption, reinforcing its commitment to transparency, accountability, and the rule of law.



Iraq's #PasstheBaton campaign: uniting against corruption for a brighter future

Baghdad, 07 December 2023 - Iraq, in commemoration of International Anti-Corruption Day, highlights its unwavering commitment to eradicating corruption through a nationwide campaign, with support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The #PasstheBaton Campaign aims to confront the pervasive challenges of corruption and spark transformative change.

Recognizing corruption as a fundamental cause of instability and conflict, Prime Minister Mohammed Shia Al Sudani and his government

have prioritized the fight against corruption for sustainable development. Iraq's commitment, as ratified through the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) in 2008, underscores its dedication to transparent governance. Recent efforts to diversify the economy, reduce dependency on oil, boost youth employment, and attract foreign investment hinge on the elimination of corruption.

Standing alongside Iraq in its anti-corruption endeavors, UNDP, with financial support from the European Union, provides legislative, training,

and digital assistance to reinforce collaborative efforts for meaningful



Iraq's #PasstheBaton campaign: uniting against corruption for a brighter future (continued)

progress in Iraq's Anti-Corruption portfolio.

Overview of the #PasstheBaton Campaign

Launching on December 8, the campaign calls upon citizens, public and private sectors, the international community, and UN Agencies to unite in the fight against corruption.

Participants will symbolically pass the baton through social media, signifying shared accountability and responsibility.

The campaign aims to raise public awareness and encourages institutions to recommit to anti-corruption efforts.

In collaboration with the Federal Commission of Integrity and the Commission of Integrity in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, the campaign specifically targets Iraq's youth, who make up nearly 60% of the population. Recognizing their potential, the government places youth at the forefront of interventions for sustainable development goals and societal transformation.

Join the #PasstheBaton Campaign

Everyone is invited to participate by recording themselves running with a rolled white paper on December 8. Participants will pass the baton to a friend, colleague, or stakeholder, using their voice to raise hopes, commitments, and demands for a corruption-free Iraq. The campaign aims to educate participants about corruption through quizzes and provides a downloadable guideline on recognizing, reporting, and combating corruption.

Impact on Vulnerable Populations

The campaign delves into the impact of corruption on vulnerable populations, emphasizing its disproportionate effects on women, children, persons with disabilities, and displaced populations. Corruption exacerbates inequalities faced by women, including economic burdens and limited access to essential services. It deepens food insecurity, reduces job opportunities for youth, and contributes to illegal migration. Addressing corruption through sustainable solutions requires global cooperation and a holistic, unified approach by all stakeholders.

On International Anti-Corruption Day, marking the twentieth anniversary of the United Nations Convention against Corruption, Iraq and UNDP aim to ignite a nationwide movement that transcends borders, empowering citizens to build a future free from

corruption.

Spread the Word!

Help promote widespread participation by sharing the #PasstheBaton Campaign on social media. Let's unite against corruption and create a brighter, corruption-free future for Iraq.

Watch the campaign video at: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1yqPq7R40ZzdOFAn-hu7u0ZbvVTIV0NGn?usp=drive_link

Baghdad, 9 December 2023 – In participating in the #PassTheBaton campaign, the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, sent the following message:

“Corruption is one of the biggest challenges facing Iraq. It undermines stability and progress. It drains state resources. And it hampers development and economic growth.



Now, the Iraqi government has voiced its commitment to combatting corruption.

And in this fight, the United Nations stands ready to support.

Obviously, some carry more onus than others. But, ultimately, combatting corruption is the responsibility of everyone.

In other words: Reject it! Report it! And fight it!

And of course, the accountability of Iraqi institutions to the people they serve is, and remains, essential.

Now, I invite my colleagues to join me in this campaign against corruption!”

Here is the message by the Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq/Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Mr. Ghulam Mohammed Isaczai:

“Corruption poses a significant threat to Iraq. It jeopardizes the nation's progress and hinders the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals. It affects every Iraqi citizen.

It hampers progress, chokes investment, and deprives the country of its valuable resources.

Every year, the United Nations observes the 9th of December as the International Anti-Corruption Day.



In collaboration with Iraq's Federal Commission of Integrity, the Commission of Integrity of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, and the European Union Delegation, the UN system led by UNDP launches the #PasstheBaton campaign this year, aiming to raise awareness about the detrimental effects of corruption in Iraq.

All of us - the United Nations, the Government of Iraq, civil society organizations, academia and youth, as well as the international community, are partners in the fight against corruption.

And we stand united to build a future in which every Iraqi enjoys access to services, equal rights and opportunities.

When we #PasstheBaton, we pass on and share the accountability and responsibility with each other.

Each step taken and each baton passed is a pledge.

A pledge to end corruption and foster transparency.

I invite everyone to join the challenge and become the change. “



Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to Iraq visits an explosive ordnance clearance site in Tel Kaif, Ninewa Governorate

Mosul, 03 November 2023 - Last week, UNMAS Iraq organized a field visit for the Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to Iraq, His Excellency Hans Sandee, to an explosive ordnance clearance site in Tel Kaif, Ninewa Governorate. UNMAS Iraq team and its implementing partners (IPs), Health and Social Care Organization in Iraq (IHSCO), in partnership with DanChurchAid (DCA), delivered a briefing on the explosive ordnance clearance operation undertaken at the site.

During the visit, Mr. Sandee interacted with the local operators to better understand the work on the ground and to discuss the main achievements and challenges. At the end of the visit, the



operation teams took the delegation to a location close to the contaminated area to observe the remaining need for clearance.

The Government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands has been a consistent donor of UNMAS Iraq since 2016,

during the initiation of the UNMAS programme in Iraq.

UNMAS Iraq would like to thank the Netherlands for their generous support in facilitating mine action activities in Iraq and looks forward to further collaboration.

The UNMAS Iraq Programme Report 2021 has won an award in the #DesigningForGood category

Baghdad, 22 November 2023 - The UNMAS Iraq Programme Report 2021 has won an award in the #DesigningForGood category from the 60th American Graphic Design Awards, out of 8,000 entries! A big thank you to

the Graphic Design USA (GDUSA) magazine for this esteemed award and UN Iraq for the great work!

You can read the report at: <https://iraq.un.org/en/186841-iraq-programme-report-2021>



Belgium contribution enables UNMAS Iraq to continue supporting the Government and the national mine action operators

Baghdad, 27 November 2023 – The United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) in Iraq welcomes a renewed contribution of EUR 750,000 (approximately USD 802,000) from the Government of Belgium, in support of life-saving mine action activities in Iraq. Activities will include delivering sustainable and efficient explosive hazard management, support as well as providing technical and advisory support for the national mine action authorities. This is the fifth consecutive annual contribution from Belgium with a total amount of EUR 6,250,000 million (approximately USD 6,000,000). Explosive ordnance contamination across Iraq, including improvised explosive devices (IEDs) in the areas liberated from the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), continues to threaten the lives of civilians in many governorates of Iraq. As of July 2023, there are approximately 2.942 square kilometers of recorded contaminated areas across Iraq (federal Iraq and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq). Since 2014, millions of Iraqis have been displaced and nearly 1.1 million of them remain

internally displaced.

The generous contribution from the Government of Belgium will support the clearance of explosive ordnance in the areas liberated from ISIL to enable the safe and dignified return of internally displaced people, and will also allow for reconstruction efforts to go forward. In furtherance, this contribution will support explosive ordnance risk education efforts to protect civilians, with messages and means tailored to reach women, girls, boys and men, and vulnerable communities.

Furthermore, the additional funding from the Government of Belgium will reinforce UNMAS advisory and technical support to the national mine action authorities. Through continued technical support, the ability of the national authorities to autonomously lead, manage, and implement the mine action response in Iraq will be strengthened. In addition, UNMAS will also be able to further extend its support towards national mine action Non-Governmental Organisations in order to enable them to independently



lead and manage humanitarian mine action response.

Remarking on the contribution, Mr. Serge Dickschen, Ambassador of Belgium, stated “Belgium is pleased to continue its long-standing support to the crucial mine action of UNMAS in Iraq. Despite significant progress, contamination by explosive ordnance remains a significant obstacle to the safe and dignified return of Iraqis displaced by the successive conflicts, as well as a hindrance to socio-economic opportunities and sustainable development efforts undertaken by the Iraqi authorities with the support of the international community. Belgium particularly welcomes the increased emphasis placed by UNMAS on

Belgium contribution enables UNMAS Iraq to continue... *(continued)*

strengthening the national capacities, at the level of both the government and non-government organizations, as well as on enhancing the local coordination between the various stakeholders in mine action. Belgium values the encouraging progress made in gender-

mainstreaming and women's empowerment through mine action." Mr. Pehr Lodhammar, UNMAS Iraq Chief Mine Action Programme, added: "The generous contribution from the government of Belgium will enable UNMAS Iraq to continue the necessary

support to the Government of Iraq and national operators. With continued assistance from Belgium, UNMAS will continue to facilitate a safe environment for Iraqis to live their lives dignified, unimpeded, and without fear of explosive hazards."

UNMAS Iraq conducted a one-day gender workshop for implementing partners



Erbil, 28 November 2023 - UNMAS Iraq conducted a one-day gender

workshop for implementing partners, including, DanChurchAid (DCA) with Health and Social Care Organization in Iraq (IHSCO); The Fondation Suisse de Déminage (FSD) and Shareteah Humanitarian Organisation (SHO). The gender workshop, which was held in Erbil, aimed to raise the awareness of conflict analysis and communication skills in eliminating conflict escalation and violence.

The 15 attendees proudly shared their experience as young women working in

the mine action sector, and their expertise in overcoming obstacles. "Women's persistence is key to potential development and quality of life in the family and the community," said Diana, a female deminer with SHO.

Through the generous contributions from several donors, UNMAS Iraq is committed to ensuring justice between women and men throughout operations and promoting women's participation and empowerment in mine action.

UNMAS Iraq gender and diversity mainstreaming initiatives

Baghdad, 01 December 2023 - UNMAS Iraq is committed to ensure gender equality in all mine action activities. Equality between women and men in mine action cannot be achieved without preventing and eliminating violence against women and girls. UNMAS Iraq marks the #16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence through demonstrating the achievements of justice between women and men.

In alignment with UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, UNMAS Iraq is continuously committed to mainstreaming gender into mine action activities. The aim is to respond to country specific needs in line with the United Nations Gender in Mine Action Guidelines. UNMAS Iraq has prioritized gender mainstreaming since inception, integrating it into both internal and external activities. The mainstreaming expanded beyond project-level integration, incorporating gender responsive practices into core systems and processes like recruitment, procurement, communications, grants and capacity building.

- Technical Support to the Government of Iraq (GoI)

Since 2018, UNMAS has trained 530 women from the Ministry of Interior (MoI), and Directorate for Mine Action (DMA) in a range of mine action topics, such as explosive hazard first responder (EHFR), EHFR Train The



Trainers (T3), explosive ordnance disposal (EOD)/improvised explosive device disposal (IEDD), IED awareness and Device Scene Investigation Management (DSIM) and DSIM T3.

- Explosive Hazard Management (EHM)

Mine action is traditionally a male-dominated sector. UNMAS Iraq is challenging gender norms by creating mixed-gender clearance teams and by September 2023 has achieved 28% women within UNMAS Iraq's implementing partners. It is important to know that there were a few women staff within the clearance teams before UNMAS Iraq's initiative model of partnership.

In 2020, UNMAS Iraq presented the partnership model, which aims to create sustainable national non-governmental organizations (NNGOs) that can effectively and independently engage in needs-based EHM. Gender mainstreaming initiatives and efforts

are being implemented against eight different capacities within the EHM partnership grants, including Management, Programmatic, Operational, Support, Quality Management, Leadership, Risk Management, and Resource Mobilization. UNMAS Iraq's efforts in advancing women's empowerment through the partnership model has resulted in several women staff members obtaining managerial positions, operational, and support functional roles. One woman reached the level of team leader within a technical team with one of the NNGOs. She now has all the required knowledge, skills, and experience to fill the post as team leader. Prior to engaging the national NNGOs in the partnership model, women were occupying limited roles like educators in EORE teams or as admin staff. Thus, UNMAS Iraq through the partnership model set a condition to

UNMAS Iraq gender and diversity mainstreaming initiatives *(continued)*

increase the percentage of women in NNGOs to 25% in all functions with a focus on increasing the women's capacity and skills to enable them to compete in new roles.

- Explosive Ordnance Risk Education (EORE)

Since 2016, UNMAS Iraq Explosive Ordnance Risk Education (EORE) teams have targeted 1,542,774 beneficiaries including 208,805 women, 528,946 girls, 600,394 boys, and 208,212 men. The EORE activities, approaches and tools ensure that the appropriate messages are tailored to the needs of the different age and sex groups, taking into consideration the social norms and values of the communities.

- Gender and Diversity toolkits: UNMAS Iraq developed a toolkit that provides practical tools to assist its implementing partners to effectively mainstream gender and diversity into mine action programs as appropriate and necessary.

- Women in Mine Action Products:

- o UNMAS Iraq published the book, "My Sinjar Reflections", which contains personal stories told by the former members of the mixed-gender clearance teams in Sinjar, Iraq. In the book, there are many stories of women, thoughts, struggles, and challenges they face as they work to clear their former villages from explosive ordnance.

- o Gender Drama – Safe Home: An online, six-episode TV series about a young Iraqi woman working with a demining company as a searcher, as she navigates the challenges she faces from her friends, family, and society. [Link](#)
- o Recovering from Da'esh: Women at the Front Lines: A documentary featuring the journey of two women deminers working with UNMAS Iraq implementing partners in Sinjar and Mosul. The film complemented a Netherlands-sponsored socio-economic survey conducted by UNMAS Iraq.

- o The Socio-Economic Impact Survey conducted by UNMAS Iraq in Ninewa Governorate in 2021 assessed the effects of women's employment in non-traditional mine action roles, focusing on empowerment. The study included 176 participants, with 41 women in the mine action sector. The results showed increased family support (from 34% to 66%), high community acceptance (88%), and improved self-perception, confidence, decision-making, and economic empowerment (93%) among women working in mine action. [Link](#)
- o UNMAS Iraq consistently showcases how promotion of women in mine action breaks barriers and gender stereotypes through case studies and sharing stories on the various social media platforms.

Gender Mainstreaming Events

- o UNMAS Iraq conducted several events and workshops to advocate for women's participation in mine action and to discuss challenges, with GoI, international NGOs, and UN entities.

- o UNMAS Iraq promotes gender equality in mine action and believes that it cannot be achieved without ending violence against women. For this, in 2022, UNMAS Iraq participated in the event of 16 days of activism against gender-based violence by inviting a woman searcher working with UNMAS Iraq's implementing partner to talk about her experience after joining the mine action sector.

- o UNMAS Iraq took part in the organization of the International Woman's Day event in 2023 alongside other UN agencies. During the event, the Government of Iraq launched its National Strategy for Iraqi Women 2023-2030, with special focus on the importance of women's political participation, protection of women and girls, economic empowerment, and climate change.

- o UNMAS Iraq delivered a one-day gender workshop in Baghdad for 18 women officers from the Iraqi Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Defence, and the Directorate for Mine Action. The workshop aimed to increase awareness of the importance of gender mainstreaming in mine action.

The Government of Denmark provides additional contribution to UNMAS in support of the mine action sector in Iraq



Baghdad, 28 December 2023 – The United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) in Iraq welcomes an additional contribution of DKK 22,000,000 (approximately USD 3,168,659) from the Government of Denmark, which will contribute to support the Government of Iraq (GoI) to protect civilians from the threat of explosive ordnance (EO) and will enable humanitarian, socio-economic,

and reconstruction efforts. Since 2015, the Government of Denmark has contributed over USD 35,000,000 to the UNMAS Iraq programme.

Iraq is one of the most EO-contaminated countries in the world. The national mine action authorities estimate that there are more than 2,800 square kilometers of EO contamination, including conventional landmines and victim-operated improvised explosive devices, cluster munitions, and other types of explosive remnants of war in Iraq. EO threatens public safety, hinders the safe return of displaced communities, and prevents access to infrastructure and livelihood activities.

The generous contribution from the Government of Denmark will assist UNMAS Iraq in continuing to support national mine action operators. After the three-year implementation of the

'partnership model,' UNMAS Iraq will proceed to the next step of localization of mine action responses - introducing the 'direct grant model' in 2024, which will further strengthen national mine action capacity and ownership. Through this model National Non-Governmental Organisations will become fully autonomous and with the knowledge and best practices gained through the partnership model, implement survey and clearance operations, as well as explosive ordnance risk education activities in the most devastated and vulnerable locations in Iraq.

Furthermore, through this contribution, UNMAS Iraq will continue to support GoI national authorities in strengthening the federal response to EO contamination. UNMAS Iraq will deliver technical and advisory support for several government

The Government of Denmark provides additional contribution to UNMAS in support of the mine action sector in Iraq *(continued)*

entities, which will include training, workshops as well as gender mainstreaming initiatives aiming to increase the Iraqi national clearance capacity in line with national and international mine action standards.

On the occasion of Denmark's contribution, Mr. Christian Thorning, the Danish Ambassador to Iraq, explained:

"I am very pleased that Denmark once again has contributed to the important work of UNMAS. In Iraq, UNMAS

plays a critical role to protect civilians from the threat of explosive ordnance and to ensure the safe return of displaced communities. I am happy to see that the Danish contribution will allow for new initiatives in 2024 strengthening national mine action capacity and ownership. For Denmark, contributing to peace and stability in Iraq remains a high priority."

"UNMAS Iraq greatly appreciate the additional generous contribution from the Government of Denmark. This new

contribution will allow us to continue to support the Iraqi Government and national operators to prevent indiscriminate casualties and reduce the profound impact from explosive ordnance amongst the most vulnerable populations. In furtherance, it will allow UNMAS to facilitate a safe environment for Iraqis to live their lives dignified, unimpeded, and without fear of explosive hazards," said Pehr Lodhammar, UNMAS Chief Mine Action Programme.

Healthcare

A healing touch - a journey of compassion and transformation

Basra, 26 October 2023 - For five impactful years, Maha Ghazi worked as a nurse. She is driven by her unwavering dream of providing life-saving support for those in need. In 2021, amid the challenging times of the pandemic, she joined Al-Shuaiba Health Care Center workforce, fully prepared to embrace the unpredictable journey that lay ahead.

"My work during the pandemic was heavy, where I had mixed emotions of joy and sorrow, hope and despair," said Maha. Her role entailed she was entrusted with newborn healthcare, a noble duty that touched her heart deeply.

"As a nurse working on child immunization, I had to deal with newborn babies every day," said Maha. "They require extra care and attention."

As she navigated the challenges of the healthcare setting, she found herself in a unique situation—pregnant and committed to her vocation, even when

the conditions were far from ideal. The lack of space, absence of air conditioning, and overflowing patient numbers cast shadows on the facility's capacity to provide adequate and quality care.

With funding from the Republic of Korea, UNICEF supported the rehabilitation of Al-Shuaiba Healthcare Center. This enables patients, especially children to access quality healthcare and contributes to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 3, which aims to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all.

Quality care ensured

As UNICEF's rehabilitation interventions took shape, Maha noticed a remarkable transformation in the center's environment. Maha and her co-workers are enabled to deliver quality healthcare to patients, speeding up their recovery and easing their suffering.

"The interventions not only improved the quality of healthcare, but also



uplifted the spirits of the healthcare center workforce," said Maha with a smile. "We found a renewed sense of purpose and passion in our work, knowing that we are making a tangible difference in people's lives."

The combined efforts of UNICEF and the Korean government are making a significant impact in improving the quality of care for people in Shuaiba. With thanks to the dedication of nurses like Maha and the support of UNICEF, lives continue to be transformed.

By Arwa Akram, UNICEF

Health Care Centre expanded to better assist the people of Ramadi, in Anbar Governorate

Ramadi, 07 November 2023 - After concluding the expansion of the Adel Health Centre in Ramadi, with the construction of an entire floor with an area of 350 square meters, the facility now has a practical training room, a theoretical training room, two doctors' rooms, a storeroom, a kitchen, and two restrooms for male and female.

The structure will accommodate approximately 170 doctors and medical staff specialized in family medicine, dedicated to the health and well-being of the population.

The expansion is part of a plan to establish excellence centres for family health medical personnel throughout Iraq, prepared by UNFPA Iraq in partnership with the Iraqi Ministry of Health and supported by the British

Embassy in Iraq.

UN-Habitat Iraq takes pride in sharing construction expertise, undertaking this expansion, and contributing to enhance the quality of medical assistance available to the Iraqi people.



WHO and Ministry of Health join forces to combat neglected tropical diseases in Iraq

Baghdad, 19 November 2023 – In the remote district of Qaem, in western Iraq near the Syrian border, a family faced the challenge of leprosy – a neglected tropical disease that often goes unnoticed.

Malik (aged 42 years), his wife Huda (aged 39 years) and their 12-year-old daughter Sana* began to experience flat, red skin sores on their arms and legs. Over the course of a few months, the sores made their skin stiff and dry, leading to loss of sensation in the affected areas, which put the family at risk of injury.

As their condition worsened, the family realized the urgent need to seek medical attention, and visited the primary health care centre in Qaem city. After examining the family, the facility doctor decided to refer them to a tertiary-level hospital for proper diagnosis and management. But the family's ordeal was far from over: the hospital had no stock of leprosy treatment available. This reflects leprosy's status as a neglected tropical disease that is often overlooked.

Knowing the importance of quickly obtaining effective treatment for the family, the hospital management contacted the higher health authorities to explore options to acquire the treatment drugs. Given WHO's commitment to global health, the Ministry of Health requested the assistance of the WHO Country

Office in Iraq to procure the required leprosy medications for the patients.

In line with the existing cooperation policy between WHO and the Ministry, and their impactful partnership in addressing public health challenges, WHO Iraq initiated a swift and well-coordinated response effort. The collaboration spanned all 3 levels of WHO: country, regional and global.

This 3-tiered approach succeeded in securing urgent medical intervention and the treatment was effectively procured. After being transported from WHO headquarters to the WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean, the medications were ultimately delivered to Iraq to support the family's recovery. Following the extensive treatment, which demanded patience and diligent care, Malik, Huda and their adolescent daughter have fully recovered.

"We faced leprosy together, and with

hope and treatment, we fought it as one. Our heartfelt gratitude extends to the Ministry of Health, WHO and the compassionate doctors who guided us on our path to recovery," said Malik.

Dr Wael Hatahit, Acting WHO Representative in Iraq, said: "This story highlights the compelling impact of collaborative efforts between WHO and the Ministry of Health in Iraq. It exemplifies the effectiveness of seamless cooperation and the robust connections established between WHO and the Ministry of Health."

Stressing the profound impact of such success stories, Dr Hatahit added: "This achievement resonates in the corridors of WHO and the Ministry of Health, reminding us of the remarkable strength that emerges from working hand in hand. Together, we can overcome health challenges and pave the way for healthier futures for those in need."



WHO Iraq's Supply Chain team shines in warehouse management system implementation

Baghdad, 20 November 2023 – WHO Iraq has achieved a remarkable feat by being the first WHO country office globally to go live with WHO's new warehouse management system. This Supply Chain team success story serves as a model of excellence and a source of pride.

"This accomplishment highlights the exceptional supply chain infrastructure and the dedication of the qualified staff who made it possible," said Dr Wael Hatahit, Acting WHO Representative in Iraq, hailing the team's efforts and sharing their victory joy.

Dr Rick Brennan, Regional Emergency Director for the WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean, joined in the team's celebration. He expressed his sincere appreciation for the efforts and said that he looks forward to more

WHO Supply Chain team successes in the future.

The launch of the warehouse management system marks an important milestone in enhancing WHO's supply chain operations to meet international best practices. The system has revolutionized inventory management and has streamlined processes for large warehouses such as the one in Iraq, where every square metre is crucial.

"With this new system, transparency is enhanced and the risk of losses is reduced. It enables better planning and quicker responses to emergencies, making the delivery of essential supplies more efficient, especially during times of crisis," said Mr Amgad G. Gaafar, Acting Operations Officer, WHO Iraq.

WHO will continue to roll out further supply chain solutions in the coming months as part of its commitment to promote health, ensure safety and serve the vulnerable.

"I congratulate my team and extend my gratitude to all our dedicated Supply Chain team members who made this achievement possible. We all look forward to more exciting developments in the coming years," concluded Dr Hatahit.



New Excellence Centre for Family Health ready to accept the people from Mosul

Mosul, 25 November 2023 - The Al-Arabi Primary Health Care Centre, located in Mosul, Ninewa Governorate, has recently undergone rehabilitation and expansion, transforming into a New Excellence Centre for Family Health.

This enhancement was part of a comprehensive initiative, orchestrated by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in partnership with the Iraqi Ministry of Health and supported by the British Embassy in Iraq. The goal was to establish centres of excellence for family health professionals across Iraq.

The project involved the renovation of the health facility's second floor and the addition of a storage area on the same level. The new area will serve as a



training hub for doctors and medical personnel specializing in family health in the Nineveh Governorate. It is estimated that the new family health professionals will provide care for approximately 2,000 people annually.

UN-Habitat recognizes that accessible health assistance plays a crucial role in fostering a sustainable and secure return for the people of Mosul, ultimately enhancing the overall quality of life for countless families.

Environmental surveillance network training: WHO Iraq and federal ministries collaborate to ensure a polio-free Iraq

Baghdad, 27 November 2023 – WHO in Iraq, in close collaboration with Iraq's Ministry of Health (MOH) and Ministry of Environment (MOE), has concluded a successful 4-day training programme on the environmental surveillance network for poliovirus monitoring and detection. This initiative plays a crucial role in the ongoing commitment to maintain a polio-free Iraq.

The training programme centred on environmental sampling, involving the monthly collection of wastewater samples from designated sites in high-risk areas. These samples will be routinely sent to the Central Public Health Laboratory (CPHL) to be tested for poliovirus, with the aim of complementing and enhancing the country's acute flaccid paralysis surveillance system.

The training also emphasized the early detection of the poliovirus in Ninewa, in northwest Iraq, and Sulaymaniyah,

in the Kurdistan region of Iraq. These high-risk areas were identified as priority governorates among other pre-established environmental surveillance locations in Baghdad, Basra, Erbil, Karbala and Najaf.

"In collaboration with our national counterparts in MOH and MOE, and guided by surveillance results, we identified 11 strategic sites across 8 governorates, with plans for a comprehensive expansion in the near future," explained Dr Firas Al Khafaji, Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI)/Polio Officer, WHO Country Office in Iraq.

Comprehensive orientation sessions in Ninewa and Sulaymaniyah engaged national counterparts, partners, and stakeholders from the public health departments, environment department and municipal authority. These sessions were enriched by the remote participation of polio eradication experts from the WHO Regional Office

for the Eastern Mediterranean and national counterparts from the National Polio Laboratory in CPHL and the Communicable Disease Control Center.

Continued orientation and on-site training are in progress for personnel responsible for proper sample collection, packaging and transportation at the designated sites. The Al-Yarmouk collection site in Mosul serves 50 000 people, while the Darwaza site in Sulaymaniya caters to over a quarter of the governorate's population of 1 million. This ongoing training is a collaborative effort involving key stakeholders such as WHO's EPI/Polio team, the National Polio Laboratory (in CPHL), the Communicable Disease Control Center and relevant MOE departments.

"Together, we stand at the forefront, safeguarding communities and advancing towards a future where the crippling disease of polio is but a distant memory," said Dr Wael Hatahit, Acting WHO Representative in Iraq, emphasizing the collaborative commitment to achieving public health goals.

This initiative aligns with WHO's "Global polio surveillance action plan 2022–2024", a crucial component to monitor poliovirus transmission, and integrates with the "Polio eradication strategy 2022–2026" of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative. These combined efforts in Iraq signify remarkable progress in the journey toward a polio-free world.



WHO Iraq delivers 1.5 tons of pharmaceutical supplies to support the health and well-being of 50,000 Syrian refugees in 3 camps in Dohuk

Dohuk, 07 December 2023 - WHO Iraq delivered 1.5 tons of pharmaceutical supplies to support the health and well-being of 50,000 Syrian refugees in 3 camps in Dohuk. Thanks to the generous funding from U.S. Department of State: Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration.



The newly appointed World Health Organization Representative to Iraq, Dr. Georges Alfred Ki-Zerbo, meets with Dr. Saleh Al-Hasnawi, Minister of Health

Baghdad, 17 December 2023 - The newly appointed World Health Organization (WHO) Representative to Iraq, Dr. Georges Alfred Ki-Zerbo met today with Dr. Saleh Al-Hasnawi, Minister of Health, to discuss bilateral collaboration between the World Health Organization and the Iraqi Ministry of Health. They discussed the strategies to strengthen Iraq's health system.

Dr. Saleh Al-Hasnawi welcomed Dr. Georges Alfred Ki-Zerbo and thanked the World Health Organization, WHO Iraq, and WHO EMRO, for their support to the people of Iraq. During the meeting it was also agreed on further preparations to support Iraq Government Digital Health Initiative.

Dr. Georges Alfred Ki-Zerbo noted: "Great meeting with Dr. Saleh Al-Hasnawi, Minister of Health, Iraq Ministry of Health. We discussed health transformation in Iraq. Grateful

for his appreciation of the World Health Organization, WHO Iraq and WHO EMRO, collaboration. Together, we can make a difference for the health and well-being of the Iraqi people".



WHO tackles low immunization challenges in Iraq

Erbil, 19 December 2023 - Iraq has seen routine immunization coverage fluctuate in 2023, and there has also been a very low uptake of COVID-19 vaccination. To assess the immunization landscape in Iraq, the WHO Country Office in Iraq ran a 4-day Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI) bottleneck analysis workshop.

The workshop sought to explore how well immunization targets had been achieved at various administrative levels, from service points to central level. The event was organized in partnership with the federal Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Health in the Kurdistan region of Iraq and in collaboration with EPI partners.

Some of Iraq's provinces and districts have reached - and even exceeded - the EPI targets. Indeed, Iraq was among the first 9 countries globally to successfully attain one of the targets of



the Immunization Agenda 2030. But other areas have shown suboptimal coverage, falling below the threshold needed to protect children from vaccine-preventable diseases. This leaves a large number of children at risk of potentially fatal diseases.

It is worth noting, however, that current efforts must go beyond the usual routine immunization for children to also encompass COVID-19 vaccination for all ages.

The main aim of the workshop was to chart a road map to identify such disparities across the country and put forward solutions, including the resources required and responsible parties. It is crucial to both understand how to achieve the best vaccination coverage at the level of the lowest administrative unit and also take swift and effective action. When it comes to addressing the threat of vaccine-preventable diseases, no child should

WHO tackles low immunization challenges in Iraq *(continued)*

be left behind.

WHO spearheads this initiative and is committed to using every available resource to overcome challenges and seize opportunities in this area. Using the workshop's analysis of the current immunization landscape, the goal is to now implement concrete strategies to boost vaccination coverage and disease prevention across Iraq.

"We acknowledge the challenges inherent in the EPI area, but we are

optimistic about the opportunities that lie ahead," said Dr Wael Hatahit, Acting WHO Representative in Iraq. "It is vital to harness the potential of existing resources, including skills and tools, to efficiently address these challenges and prevent morbidity and mortality from vaccine-preventable diseases among children in Iraq."

Dr Firas Al Khafaji, WHO EPI-Polio Officer, added: "The workshop's intentional inclusion of the term 'EPI

bottleneck' emphasizes that it goes beyond routine vaccinations for children. It covers a broader perspective, including the critical aspect of COVID-19 vaccination. This holistic approach aims to tackle all aspects of immunization to create a robust and resilient health system that safeguards the health of Iraq's children."



Together with the national health authorities (Federal Ministry of Health and Ministry of Health of Kurdistan Iraq), WHO is charting a roadmap to protect every child and build a resilient health system



Baghdad, 25 December 2023 - WHO celebrated a milestone in Iraq's Health Journey when WHO Iraq recently concluded a groundbreaking 4-day EPI bottleneck analysis workshop to identify areas of improvement in routine immunization including COVID-19 vaccination. Together with

the national health authorities (Federal Ministry of Health and Ministry of Health of Kurdistan Iraq), we are charting a roadmap to protect every child and build a resilient health system.

The WHO-led EPI bottleneck analysis workshop has unveiled successes and

challenges in Iraq's immunization landscape. From surpassing EPI targets to addressing disparities, WHO confirmed its commitment to a holistic strategy that includes COVID-19 vaccination for all ages. It is a call for all involved parties to join efforts to ensure no child is left behind!

The EPI bottleneck analysis workshop signals a new era in disease prevention by turning challenges into opportunities for Iraq's Children. Both Dr. Wael Hatahit, WHE team lead, and Dr. Firas Al Khafaji, EPI-Polio Officer in WHO Iraq highlighted that with optimism and dedication, concrete strategies can be implemented to boost vaccination coverage and support the Federal Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Health of KR-I to create a robust health system capable of safeguarding the health of Iraq's children. For more details: <https://rb.gy/k4z8fe>

Family Planning

Empowering women's health, one informed choice at a time

Baghdad, 09 November 2023 - Access to quality reproductive healthcare is a fundamental human right, and UNFPA Iraq, along with the British Embassy and Japan Embassy in Baghdad, is expanding access for women and girls in Iraq's most underserved communities.

From maternal care to family planning education, access to contraception, and support for sexual and reproductive health rights, we're ensuring that every woman has the knowledge and resources to make informed decisions about her health and well-being.



Better parenting skills transform lives

Erbil, 05 December 2023 – Ghadeer[i] is a 45-year-old Syrian woman who fled from Syria to Iraq in 2013. She first arrived in the Kawargosk refugee camp then moved to the Darashakran refugee camp in Erbil where she currently resides. She has been married for 21 years and has three children, a 19-year-old boy and two girls aged 12 and 15.

"When we initially got displaced, I was so scared that my children would be left alone, considering the risk of our tent going up in flames at any second," Ghadeer recalls.

Settling in a new environment was not easy for Ghadeer and her family, especially since her new community members had different social norms and traditions. She isolated herself and her family and opted to stay in the tent most of the time.

Ghadeer's psychological well-being was heavily affected. Oftentimes, she would become frustrated and angry and take it out on her children. She even started believing that her daughters should be married off at the age of 12.

"I was angry most of the time, and my children also began to show signs of aggression," Ghadeer adds.

[Unicef-supported child-friendly center offers respite](#)

At the camp, in cooperation with the Erbil Directorate of Social Affairs, a UNICEF-supported Child-Friendly Center provides psychosocial support to children in need. At the center, parents like Ghadeer also acquire better parenting skills.

The social workers visited Ghadeer and encouraged her to enroll her children at the Child-Friendly Center to help them gain new skills. The children quickly settled into the center and felt very comfortable with the new environment. They made

new friends, and they enjoyed their classes and their teachers.

One day, Ghadeer visited the center to see how it transformed her children's lives.

"I learned about the center from my children and my neighbours who encouraged me to enroll," Ghadeer recalls. "I really wanted to get rid of my anger and stress and be a better parent for my children."

Ghadeer has been attending the parenting programme for a year now. She has participated in awareness-raising sessions on parenting skills, including improved communication, anger and stress management, and how to interact with her community. Through these sessions, Ghadeer learned how to better express her feelings and better manage her anger.

"I realized that the world was evolving, and I wanted my children to be a part of this evolution," Ghadeer says.

Ghadeer sent her daughters back to school, as they had dropped out temporarily.

"I wanted them to live their childhood, study, and get an education instead of getting married at a young age," Ghadeer says. "Now, my daughters are happily continuing their education inside the camp, and they have made many friends."

Ghadeer and her peers have seen many positive changes in themselves and their families since their enrolment in the center. She no longer beats her children, displaying empathy and kindness. Ghadeer's relationship with her husband and neighbours also improved.

With funding from the Isle of Man Government and support from UNICEF, the Directorate of Social Affairs in Erbil has been



implementing the better parenting programme in Darashakran camp since the beginning of 2023. The programme focuses on enhancing and strengthening parental skills through providing psychosocial support, in addition to awareness sessions on coping and healing strategies, empathy, positive relationships, communication skills, understanding children's psychosocial needs, understanding adolescents' brain development, and respecting adolescents and their changes.

To ensure the sustainability of the parenting programme, UNICEF and DoSA engage parents like Ghadeer in community structure activities, referral mechanisms and capacity-building sessions on child protection. With these skills, community members are able to identify vulnerable cases among children and women and refer them to CP partners for further support and may become professional CP service providers in their own community.

"For the first time ever, I feel that I have done something good for my children and I'm proud of myself," Ghadeer concludes with a smile.

[i] Names were changed to protect identity.

By Shang Salam Mosa, UNICEF

A parenting programme as a sanctuary for Rasmia's family - a mother's story of survival and strength

Ninewa, 26 December 2023 - In Mosul's Al-Karama neighborhood, Rasmia, a 55-year-old grandmother, and her daughters Rahma and Aseel faced the harsh realities of life under ISIS rule in 2017. Looking for an escape, they went to Al-Jada'a-1 Rehabilitation Center in Ninewa where they spent seven months.

"Life at the camp was tough, but it was still better than what we endured under ISIS in the city," Rasmia says, looking back on their life in Al-Jada'a 1

Rehabilitation Center. After the complete liberation of Ninewa, Rasmia and her family returned to their hometown, facing the challenge of rebuilding their lives. They found empowerment through the skills and psychosocial training provided at Al-Karama Center as part of the child protection programme supported by UNICEF with funding from the Government of Japan.

The programme provides crucial assistance to families like Rasmia's to

understand child development and be more supportive of their children as they navigate the complexities of rebuilding their lives.

Rasmia, having endured the hardships of selling cigarettes for survival, faced numerous challenges and difficulties. "When ISIS were in control, we had no freedom, no opportunities to travel, no work, no money, and our lives were in constant jeopardy," she says. Her husband's absence made her the head of the family, adding to her challenges,

A parenting programme as a sanctuary for Rasmia's family ... (continued)



but she takes pride in raising her son and three daughters.

"This has been transformative for me, as I've gained valuable insights and better control over my emotions. I used to get frustrated at home from unimportant things, sometimes I even left the house. Now, things are better, thanks to what I've learned at the

center," she says.

Echoes of displacement: Rasmia's family's fight for normalcy
Rahma, Rasmia's 20-year-old daughter, equally struggled during the occupation. "The streets were littered with dead bodies, and we faced hunger, and there was no freedom at all," she says. "When we sought refuge in Al-

Jada'a 1 Rehabilitation Center, life became safer, but it also came with its own challenges, particularly when it rained, as living in tents was far from easy," she adds.

Rahma is actively participating in the parenting programme alongside her mother and sister to improve her parenting skills for her 8-month-old daughter, Ghazal.

The parenting programme helped the family through their struggles and transformations, in the pursuit of their dreams. Al-Karama Center became their second home and a learning place as they navigated the complexities of rebuilding their lives after the trauma of displacement and conflict.

By Shahad Butrus Bulbul, UNICEF Iraq

Environment

UNICEF Lattouf: "This climate crisis is a child rights crisis!"

Basra, 15 November 2023 - "This climate crisis is a child rights crisis. #ClimateChange, including water scarcity, is a direct threat to a child's ability to survive, grow, and thrive," said Sandra Lattouf, UNICEF Representative in Iraq, during her joint field visit to Basra, with His Excellency Mr. Choi Sung-soo, the Ambassador of the Republic of Korea to Iraq yesterday.



The silent enemy: how climate change is wreaking havoc in Iraq

Baghdad, 16 November 2023 - In recent years, a silent enemy has been making its way into southern Iraq. Low levels of water flow from the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, which converge in the lowlands of Basra, have failed to push back the tidal wave of salty seawater inching northward. This creeping saltwater is destroying countless palm groves, citrus trees, and other agricultural crops in its path, that have flourished for millennia, thanks to the shade provided by the palm trees, protecting them from the scorching sunlight.

Adnan Khdheir Al-Sinafi, from Al-Bihar district in Iraq's southernmost governorate, Basra, has worked on this palm grove his entire life, as his ancestors did for generations. Adnan



and many others like him have found themselves faced with two choices: to stay and persist – which has often resulted in big losses for the farmers – or to leave in search of livelihoods elsewhere.

Adnan has tried both. And if action is not taken now, this will most likely be

the inevitable destiny of many more in the coming years as conditions become increasingly volatile in Iraq due to climate change.

"This land was paradise. Sunlight did not reach the ground because of how densely packed the palm trees were. I planted citrus fruit trees in their shade,

The silent enemy ... (continued)

and we had more than 60 varieties of the highest quality dates, such as Al-Barhi, Sayer, Gintar and Balyani,” Adnan recalls.

“With increasing salinity, I saw how my trees died and the land degraded gradually. I kept trying, and I kept farming every year, but all my efforts failed. I lost about 45 million Iraqi dinars (USD30,000).”

This story of loss and heartbreak is not unique. Countless farmers like Adnan share the same fate, with very few options left.

“All that is left now are dead trunks and stumps,” he adds.

Further north, in Thi-Qar Governorate, the marshes are drying up due to low levels of water in the Tigris and Euphrates rivers due to decreased rainfall; the construction of dams in neighbouring Türkiye and Iran on the rivers or their tributaries; and an absence of sustainable management of water resources locally. These marshes were famous for their biodiversity, sustained communities and their livestock and fishing practices, dating back to ancient Mesopotamia.

“The water scarcity and salinity has caused degradation of the ecosystem and biodiversity of the fauna and flora in this area,” says Dr. Wisam Kadhim Sankour Al-Asadi. Born and raised in the Chebayesh marshes, he now works with the Iraqi Green Climate Organization, a local NGO dedicated to preserving the marshes, on building

resilience in marshland communities in the face of climate change.

“The number of buffalo and fish has decreased dramatically in recent years, which has caused many people to lose their livelihoods,” he adds. “In 10 years, the landscape of the marshlands will change forever. We already see it unfolding before our eyes ...the marshes are gradually going extinct”.

But the impact of climate change runs deeper. Rural-urban migration in response to environmental degradation and natural hazards is rising at an alarming rate as families seek employment in urban areas or are forced to send their children to work in cities to cope with the loss of income.

“Climate change in Iraq is not just an environmental problem. It has the potential to become humanitarian crisis. It fuels exploitation and contributes to forced mobility. We must act now to avert, minimize and address the impacts of climate change. The consequences of inaction are dire for countless people,” says IOM Iraq’s Chief of Mission, Giorgi Gigauri.

IOM’s Climate Emergency Tracking in Iraq has recorded displacement of more than 130,000 people between 2016 and September 2023 due to the adverse effects of climate change in their areas of origin. Ten locations assessed in Thi-Qar for a new IOM Climate Vulnerability Assessment – published in November 2023 – have been completely abandoned. Most of these

abandoned locations are in Thi-Qar, particularly in Nassriya and Suq Al-Shoyokh districts.

IOM in Iraq has been working closely with national and local partners to address the adverse impact of climate change since 2018. IOM’s water infrastructure projects have connected over one million people to safe and accessible water for drinking and agriculture. IOM support to sustainability-oriented small and medium agricultural enterprises has created over 1,600 jobs; and business start-up funds and development packages have helped 2,200 small-holder farmers better adapt to climate change.

The scale of the impact is much greater than any one organization can reverse. As the Government of Iraq implements its strategy for climate action, collaboration between the international community, government partners, civil society, private sector, and the country’s diversity of communities is imperative.

Investments in climate-smart infrastructure; equitable land and water management systems and policies; sustainable and diversified livelihood opportunities; as well as early warning systems and disaster preparedness are crucial for reducing vulnerabilities and building resilience at both the local and national levels.

While the reality may seem grim for Iraq, this is not a story of loss. The fight is not over just yet, and it is not too late to mitigate the impact of climate change in Iraq – together. Ahead of COP28, this is a rallying cry for broader and more concerted efforts at the national and regional levels. For this is not a local crisis, but a global one, and demands immediate action.

By Raber Aziz, Media and Communications Officer, IOM



World Food Programme in Iraq expands its efforts against desertification to Salah al-Din

Baiji, 18 November 2023 - With the Directorate of Forestry and Desertification in Baiji, the World Food Programme (WFP) in Iraq expanded its efforts against desertification to Salah al-Din with:

- greenhouses and tree nursery,
- medicinal plant cultivation and afforestation,
- support to schools and municipalities with seedlings.



Climate change, pollution threaten Iraq's ancient marshes



Baghdad, 24 November 2023 - Jassim Al-Asadi was born in a boat in the marshes of southern Iraq. Sixty-six years later, his life still revolves around the marshes, now as an environmental activist and a water-resources engineer fighting to save them from extinction. "This used to be green pastures and reeds, but the place has dried up," said Al-Asadi as he walked in blistering heat in a landscape of barren, cracked earth. "Over there is a house where a buffalo rancher used to live, but he abandoned it and moved near the Euphrates River. There are no more buffalo pastures."

The Marsh Arabs, the wetlands' indigenous population of Iraq, have fished and cultivated crops here for 5,000 years, raising water buffaloes and building houses from reedbeds on floating reed islands at the place where the Tigris and the Euphrates rivers meet before flowing into the Gulf. But climate change, water pollution, oil exploration and the construction of upstream dams are threatening the survival of this delicate ecosystem and its ancient Mesopotamian culture, which some trace back to the Sumerians.

Al-Asadi, head of the leading conservation group Nature Iraq, said a drought now in its fourth year is turning vast areas of once flourishing wetlands and agricultural land into

desert. Salinity is rising in the shrinking channels and waterways, killing fish and making buffaloes sick. "There is a change operating in the environment," said Al-Asadi, who worked for more than 30 years as an engineer in Iraq's Ministry of Water Resources. "One of the reasons is climate change and the effect of climate change on water levels in the Euphrates and Tigris in Iraq."

As a child in the marshes, Al-Asadi watched fishermen row canoes between reeds as buffaloes bathed amid lush vegetation, but that image is now rare. According to a report from the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization and Iraq's Ministry of Agriculture released in July, the current drought is the worst in 40 years. The area's rich wildlife, including many migratory birds, is under threat, and buffalo breeders and farmers are being forced to migrate in precarious conditions to urban areas like Basra, Najaf or Baghdad.

Haider Mohammed's life depends on his herd. Despite living by a waterway near Chibayish in the central marshes, he must bring fresh water from other places to feed his buffaloes, which produce milk, meat and dung for fuel. "The water here is salty and polluted," said Mohammed, who is in his 20s. "We once had 70 buffaloes, but only 20 survived. The rest died or were sold

off." Beyond the line of green reeds that surround his house, the change becomes dramatic: no longer marshland, but scarred and salty dry land.

"Our life depends on water"

Sheikh Lebnan Abdul Al-Khayoun warned that a millennia-old lifestyle based on breeding, fishing and harvesting could disappear unless something is done.

"Our life here depends primarily on water. If these marshes dry up, we will have a big living problem," he said as he fingered a string of beads and sipped tea inside a mudhif, a traditional reed structure that serves as a meeting centre for the Marsh Arabs, or Ma'adan as they are known in Arabic.

"We are not traders or employees and we do not have other professions to provide us with incomes. The marshes are the profession of our fathers and forefathers," he said, estimating that the livelihoods of three to four million people depended on the ecosystem of the marshes.

A UNESCO World Heritage Site because of its biodiversity and cultural value, the marshes have had a troubled modern history. Saddam Hussein drained the area by building ditches to evict rebels in the 1990s, reducing water levels by 90 percent. Tens of thousands migrated to the U.S. and Europe, but after the regime fell, the ditches were removed and water and the Ma'adan returned.

Pollution and oil

The U.N. Environment Programme has identified Iraq as one of the countries most vulnerable to the impact of climate change due to a combination of high temperatures, lack of rain, drought and water scarcity, and frequent sand and dust storms.

Besides recurrent droughts, pollution is contributing to the collapse of the area's environment, as millions of cubic metres of industrial waste are dumped into the rivers and waterways that feed the marshes, environmentalists say.

Activists say pollution caused by fossil fuel projects in Basra province, which boasts most of Iraq's vast oil and gas reserves, has reached alarming levels and are a significant source of cancerous diseases, kidney failure and other ailments.

"Basra is witnessing severe pollution in terms of water, soil, air and also food contamination," said Fadwa Tu'ma, of the local NGO Ozon, adding that extreme heat and desertification were contributing to a climate disaster in the



Climate change, pollution threaten Iraq's ancient marshes *(continued)*

area.

"Basra used to have 30 million palm trees and now there are less than 1 million. Previously, there was a green cover in the desert, but now there isn't any shield against wind and dust."

During a visit to southern Iraq last August, Human Rights Chief Volker Türk said the country was living a climate emergency and the world must confront this era of boiling climate. In 50-degree heat, Türk visited an area that was once lush with date palms but is now a dry, barren field.

"What is happening here is a window into a future that is now coming for other parts of the world if we continue to fail in our responsibility to take preventive and mitigating action against climate change." - UN Human Rights Chief, Volker Türk.

In an open letter ahead of COP28 in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates, Türk urged negotiators to steer away from short-sighted decisions and put human rights at the centre of climate action.

Regional cooperation

Al-Asadi, who has been involved in many water management projects to balance the environment and agriculture and restore the marshlands, said the problem of water scarcity goes beyond Iraq and called for a regional solution.

He blamed neighbouring Turkey and Iran for building upstream dams with little regard to international treaties. As climate change worsens the water crisis, countries of the Tigris-Euphrates basin must cooperate to fulfil the human rights to water and development and put aside rivalries,

Al-Asadi said.

In Iraq, the Office is supporting efforts by civil society groups and human rights defenders for safe access to water for all people and for the sustainable and equitable use of water.

Al-Asadi said fighting for human rights and the marshes is worth it despite the dangers. Environmental activists in Iraq regularly face threats, harassment and arbitrary detention. Earlier this year, Al-Asadi was abducted and beaten up by an unidentified armed group before being released two weeks later.

"The marshes are not only an environment and an economy, but also a unique culture."

Text and photos by OHCHR.

Green Future for Iraq - a nationwide tree planting campaign

Baghdad, 29 November 2023 – In alignment with Iraq's Prime Minister's vision to foster environmental sustainability, a new nationwide tree-planting campaign is set to be launched by the United Nations agencies in Iraq in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Agriculture, the Mayorality of Baghdad, the Department of Media and Information in Kurdistan Region of Iraq, and other partners. This ambitious endeavor aims to plant more than 500,000 trees across the country.

The campaign is a collaborative effort among UN agencies, young volunteers, and the private sector. It aims to tackle climate change challenges, enhance biodiversity, and improve community well-being throughout Iraq.

The tree planting campaign will be implemented in various regions of Iraq, emphasizing local community engagement, including schools and

youth organizations. This multi-stakeholder approach highlights the importance of collective action in achieving the national target of planting five million trees set by Iraq's Prime Minister, Mohammed Shia' Al Sudani.

The initiative aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 13: Climate Action and Goal 15: Life on Land, reflecting the UN's and its partners' commitment to these objectives.

Mr. Ghulam Isaczai, the Resident Coordinator of the United Nations in Iraq, emphasized the significance of this collaborative effort, stating: "This tree planting campaign exemplifies the unity and collective action in mitigating the impacts of climate change and tackling pressing environmental challenges. By bringing together UN agencies, government ministries, the private sector, and the vibrant energy

of Iraqi youth, we move steadfastly towards a more sustainable and greener future for Iraq. The Prime Minister's vision catalyses positive change, and we are proud to be part of this transformative journey."



WFP Iraq and the Government of Iraq launch #LandUseLandCover Project

Baghdad/Erbil, 06 December 2023 - The World Food Programme (WFP) Iraq and the Government of Iraq and Kurdistan Regional Government launched #LandUseLandCover Project in Baghdad and Erbil, a vital step against climate change. Thanks to the Central Statistics Organization of Iraq and Kurdistan Regional Statistical

Office, the joint project supports evidence-based Land Use-Land Cover policies. WFP Iraq would like to thank the Federal Republic of Germany and CultiVision for making this possible. Together, we can safeguard the environment in Iraq and sustain resources for generations to come.



IOM raises awareness on climate change

Mosul, 04 December 2023 - We need increased awareness and action on climate change in Iraq. And what better place to start with than greenhouses?

Why use greenhouses?

A greenhouse can provide the right humidity and temperature throughout the year that allows you to grow crops all year round under all temperatures. This ensures food security and helps farmers adapt to rising temperatures induced by climate change in Iraq.

In Sinuni, IOM Iraq supported a farm with 10 new greenhouses, opening 30 new jobs to people from the community who have recently returned to Sinjar, 27 of whom are women. In just 3 months, the farm has produced 10 tons of cucumbers.

Made possible through IOM partners at

House of Coexistence HOC, who provided the land, and with the generous support from the Embassy of the Netherlands in Iraq.

IOM Iraq recently conducted a comprehensive session on the intersection of climate change, health,

and migration for the Ministry of Health!

Climate change is a global challenge & Iraq's Ministry of Health is crucial in addressing its health-related impacts on public health and migration patterns.



55,000 mangrove seedlings are ready for a new home in Khor Al-Zubair next spring

Basra, 17 December 2023 - 55,000 mangrove seedlings are ready for a new home in Khor Al-Zubair next spring. Thanks to the World Food Programme (WFP) Iraq, the local Government of Basra, the University of Basrah and funding from Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (BMZ) for making it possible. Together, we're growing a greener future for Iraq!



Treated wastewater, a local resource viable for fighting climate change!



Erbil, 18 December 2023 – If wastewater is treated and reused for

irrigation rather than being released into the environment, communities

could be able to conserve fresh water and better manage such a precious resource to irrigate crops as well as address issues of water pollution.

Earlier this year, the Hasar Organization implemented a wastewater treatment project for recycling domestic and sewage waste through a treatment unit capable of producing over 300 cubic meters of water a day that currently irrigates 300,000 Oak trees in Erbil. Shayma Faramarz, the Water Resources and Irrigation Manager at Hasar, explains.

This community action jointly initiated by UNICEF, the Kurdistan Regional Government and Hasar comes at a time when Iraq is taking climate action to overcome its challenge in achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6: "Clean water and sanitation for all

Treated wastewater, a local resource viable for fighting climate change! *(continued)*

by 2030", as it already ranks the 5th most impacted in the world by climate and water challenges.

Considering water to be pivotal to its development and moreover a fundamental human right for all people, Ms. Faramarz explained in an interview that local and cost-effective methods that communities can adapt for sustainable water irrigation and conservation are some of the strategies needed in Iraq to address its water challenges.

For a sustainable end, one of the

actions to take could be to invest in cost-effective and low maintenance projects that are doable for communities which will reduce the water stress, and reverse desertification and deforestation for a healthy living now and for the generations to come.

Learn more at <https://tinyurl.com/5n8duwkz>
 Story by Celia Thompson Dadson /
 Video by Salar Brifkani (UNAMI SCPIO)



160 irrigation kits were distributed to smallholder farmers in Sinjar and Al-Ba'aj

Sinjar, 19 December 2023 - 160 irrigation kits were distributed to smallholder farmers in Sinjar and Al-Ba'aj! Thanks to the training provided by the World Food Programme (WFP) and Directorate of Agriculture, farmers are equipped with tools to manage water efficiently, boost harvests, and enhance food security. These farmers were impacted by conflict, and now their livelihood is threatened by climate change. The World Food Programme supports them to adapt via assets, technology and know-how to help them maintain and improve their lives.



WFP Iraq successfully launches an afforestation project in Duhok Governorate

Duhok, 20 December 2023 - The World Food Programme (WFP) Iraq successfully launches an afforestation project in Duhok Governorate of Iraq as part of a pioneering green initiative - planting 50 hectares with trees to improve:

- Ecological balance
- Food security
- livelihoods of communities

WFP Iraq's Deputy Country Director, Ms. Ekram El-Huni, said: "Through climate-resilient solutions, WFP is committed to increase the Kurdistan's and Iraq's green cover, combatting climate change and creating a sustainable food systems."

This initiative was enabled by Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (BMZ) funding.



ILO's groundbreaking afforestation project in Kurdistan Region of Iraq boosts sustainable development and decent work



Dohuk, 24 November 2023 - Kurdistan Region of Iraq (ILO News) - The International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Directorate of Environment in Duhok launched the largest afforestation project ever carried out in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, at a site just outside the city of Duhok—an area that has witnessed consistent deforestation, leading to rocky landscapes and sparse shrub cover.

Governmental and international partners, including the Governor of Duhok, Dutch embassy officials, the Directors of Technical Directorates, the Director of Duhok Municipality, and representatives from local Trade Unions, attended the event, highlighting the collaborative efforts to tackle climate change and promote sustainable development and Decent Work principles across the region.

“I am delighted to announce the continued progress of the forestation intervention in Duhok. Our initiative aims to plant thousands of trees,

covering an impressive 250,000 square meters in Duhok,” said Governor of Duhok Ali Tatar. “I extend my gratitude to the Government of the Netherlands, the International Labour Organization, and the Presidency of the

directorates and all other dedicated partners involved for their collective commitment and collaboration in this crucial endeavour.”

The initiative, funded by the Government of the Netherlands under the PROSPECTS Partnership, sets out to address climate challenges while simultaneously generating over 700 short-term jobs for local Iraqis, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and Syrian refugees residing in the area. Thirty percent of these employment opportunities will be specifically directed towards female workers. The project is part of the implementation of a series of green work activities integrated into the ILO’s Employment Intensive Investment Programme (EIIP). Functioning as an entry point, it aims to improve local infrastructure through Local Resource-Based methods and to create decent jobs.

“This project is exemplary for the PROSPECTS approach in Iraq,” said



Municipality of Dohuk, along with the invaluable support from the Environment and Irrigation

Jacob Wiersema, Chargé d'affaires, Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Iraq. “ILO supports forcibly displaced people to generate a livelihood, while at the same time targeting the issue of climate change through greening and working with trade unions on decent work principles. We aim to continue this work with ILO, PROSPECTS partners and authorities in Dohuk in the future.”

The ILO will support the Directorate of Environment in Duhok to implement afforestation interventions covering an area of 100 donums (equivalent to 0.25 sq.km), planting and irrigating 12,000 trees over a period of six months. Building upon the success of the ILO’s established model for creating decent jobs for host communities and displaced persons, the agency is set to expand its



ILO's groundbreaking afforestation project in Kurdistan Region of Iraq boosts sustainable development and decent work *(continued)*

green works interventions spanning the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) and the broader Iraqi landscape. This comprehensive approach includes targeted efforts to tackle climate change challenges, enhance irrigation systems for local farmers, and devise lasting solutions for solid waste management.

"We are extremely proud of launching this historic initiative with our local partners in Duhok," said Maha Kattaa, ILO Country Coordinator in Iraq. "This project aligns with various crucial aspects for the ILO in the region and in Iraq: sustainable development, economic empowerment, environmental conservation, and the creation of decent jobs. Climate change and environmental degradation are already disrupting millions of jobs and livelihoods. Focusing on the creation of green jobs can change

this. Countless opportunities are on the horizon to stimulate the economy and enhance the quality of working lives in the KRI, Iraq, and beyond through employment intensive investment programme that incorporate climate action."

The Trade Unions in Duhok are also set to play a vital role in integrating decent work principles, fostering awareness among workers, and empowering them through unionization processes.

"This marks our inaugural engagement with international agencies in workplace settings," said Sadeeq Hassan, Kurdistan Workers Unions Coordinator in Duhok. "Since 2021, we have been incorporating principles of decent work into ILO infrastructural projects in KRI. Our responsibilities encompass offering expertise on labor laws and rights, as well as enhancing working conditions

at construction sites."

The project is anticipated to have a positive impact on the environment, addressing the alarming rise in pollutants such as Nitrogen dioxide (NOx) and contributing to the broader goal of tackling climate change in the region.

According to the World Bank, Iraq stands as one of the most vulnerable countries to climate change shocks, facing challenges both in financial and physical terms, including rising temperatures and water scarcity. Over the last decade alone, its carbon emissions have more than doubled. The nation grapples with one of the highest levels of carbon intensity (emissions per GDP) compared to its regional and income peers. Almost three-quarters of the country's emissions are linked to the electricity, oil and gas operations, and transport sectors.



COP28

World Food Programme (WFP) Iraq attends COP28 session to advocate for Climate Action

Dubai, 03 December 2023 - Sand and dust storms affect food systems, enhance climate migration and exacerbate social conflicts. To discuss the need for regional cooperation to promote nature-based solutions, the World Food Programme (WFP) Iraq attends COP28 session to advocate for Climate Action.

Today at COP28, the World Food Programme (WFP) Iraq facilitated discussion on empowering vulnerable communities through Climate Finance and Green Growth to building resilience and sustainable livelihoods and prioritizing inclusive, eco-friendly solutions that uplift those most affected

by climate change. Key is collaboration with partners on strengthening vulnerable communities' resilience in climate-fragile countries through financial inclusion. Prioritize Iraq's climate goals: Emission reduction, rural inclusivity, and a balanced approach to top-down and community-driven initiatives, such as the International Trade Centre's EU-funded SAAVI supporting farmers with sustainable plans for integrated climate action.

Martin Frick, Director WFP Global Office Berlin, said: "Fragile and conflict-affected countries like Iraq receive less climate adaptation funding

compared to developed countries. We need to unlock climate finance for nature-based solutions and resilience for the poorest to achieve Climate Justice. We're on it at COP".



Iraq takes center stage and makes its mark at the UN Climate Change Conference



Dubai, UAE, 03 December 2023 – Yesterday, the President of the Republic of Iraq, H.E. Abdul Latif Rashid, inaugurated Iraq's first ever pavilion at this year's global climate event, COP 28. The inauguration was attended by Dr. Abdallah Al Dardari, the United Nations Development Programme Regional Director for Arab States. This opening marks the start of a high-level discussion entitled "Climate Security for Sustainable Development in Iraq". The discussion highlighted comprehensive strategies for addressing climate security in Iraq, emphasizing the integration of water, food and energy security. The pavilion is set to host over 30 sessions, organized by various Iraqi ministries and UN agencies.

Ghulam Isaczi, the United Nations Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator (DSRSG/RC/HC) in Iraq, will lead pivotal discussions at the summit, focusing on youth involvement in climate action and other vital environmental discussions. "Iraq stands at the forefront of global efforts to tackle climate change, which has severely impacted the Mesopotamia marshlands, threatening biodiversity

and ecosystems," he emphasized.

Iraqi Negotiators, Trained and Ready for Action

A delegation of over 300 Iraqis, comprising civil society members, government officials, and youth are participating in the 28th United Nations Conference on Climate Change in Dubai, UAE. A significant number of the delegation are negotiators, underscoring Iraq's commitment to tackling issues such as gas flaring, and emissions reduction, and investing in infrastructure to utilize associated gas. The delegation will engage in negotiations and side events, with support from UN agencies.

During the inauguration, Dr. Abdallah Al Dardari highlighted, "By raising awareness, offering economic incentives, and collaborating with international partners, Iraq can create a culture of environmental responsibility and sustainability. We need to access funding, receive technical assistance, and learn from best practices."

Iraq's willingness to take a leadership role in advocating for comprehensive solutions for the water-food-energy-security nexus is evidenced by their commitment to this year's UN climate summit. A delegation of over 300 Iraqis

comprised of civil society, government and youth are currently in Dubai at the 28th annual United Nations Conference on Climate Change, organized by the United Nations at Dubai's Expo City in the United Arab Emirates (U.A.E.).

A majority of those in the delegation are negotiators, as the country recognizes the importance of taking significant steps to address the pressing issue of gas flaring and reduce emissions, investing in the necessary infrastructure to capture and utilize associated gas and working with partners to make use of advanced technologies and expertise – all of which will be discussed during negotiations as well as the planned side events, supported by UN agencies in Iraq.

"By raising awareness, offering economic incentives, and collaborating with international partners, Iraq can create a culture of environmental responsibility and sustainability. We need to access funding, receive technical assistance, and learn from best practices," said Dr. Abdallah Dardari, Regional Director for Arab States of the UNDP, during the inauguration.

The U.N. continues to work in partnership with the Government of Iraq (GoI), ensuring that their climate commitment remains action-oriented, resulting in tangible solutions. UN agencies in Iraq are currently laser-focused on implementing environmentally friendly and sustainable programmes, that serve the most vulnerable communities, including women, persons with disabilities, children and young people.

UN agencies' support to Iraq

UNICEF commended the GoI for signing the Declaration on Children, Youth and Climate Action on 19 November, ahead of COP28. The declaration demonstrates Iraq's commitment to placing children at the heart of climate action, protecting them from the effects of climate change, reiterating the call to operationalize the declaration to ensure transformative efforts for children's rights and progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals. This year, UNICEF with the GoI developed two sessions centered on Youth Inclusive Climate Activism and Climate Change Mainstreaming in the Education Sector.

UNDP together with the GoI



Iraq takes center stage and makes its mark at the UN Climate Change Conference *(continued)*

collaborated in developing its first pavilion, and along with the Ministry of Environment (MoEN) trained Iraqi negotiators through a series of intensive workshops led by national and international experts, supporting the development of 3 major documents, NAMA, National Environmental Strategy (NES) and the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC). UNDP and the GoI through a team of volunteers, also created the "Handbook for Iraq's Delegation to COP", a standing resource for delegates for this and future COPs.

The UN Environment Programme (UNEP) is assisting Iraq in developing and implementing the National Adaptation Plan (NAP) to address climate change challenges effectively. The planning process includes analyzing institutional capacities, consulting stakeholders, and identifying prioritized adaptation actions. It also focuses on enhancing national capacities at individual and institutional levels to meet reporting requirements of the UNFCCC and Paris Agreement in a sustainable and systematic manner. Iraq prioritizes climate change adaptation due to vulnerabilities in key sectors like water, agriculture, health, and natural resources. Adequate planning is crucial for achieving climate resilience.

The FAO is taking a central role in addressing climate change and environmental degradation in southern Iraq. Through initiatives like Climate-Wise-Women, FAO empowers women as agents of change in climate adaptation. FAO promotes

climate resilience in vulnerable agricultural households through smart water management and good agricultural practices. They strengthen rural development by enhancing solar energy applications and introducing resilient fodder crops and smart irrigation. FAO also provides remote sensing data, addresses food loss and waste, and supports sustainable agricultural practices for responsible resource use in the face of climate challenges.

The WHO in Iraq supports resilient health systems with a climate change focus. They collaborate with the Ministry of Health to join the Alliance for Transformative Action on Climate Change and Health (ATACH). Adopting the One Health approach, WHO coordinates human, animal, and environmental health for improved preparedness and response. They also assist in establishing climate change units within health directorates to integrate resilience measures into policies and programs. WFP collaborates with the Government of Iraq to combat climate change effects. Their projects enhance agro-met capacity, water irrigation systems, desertification countermeasures, and water regulator rehabilitation. They introduce nature-based solutions like wetlands, hydroponics, aquaponics, and beekeeping. WFP funds reforestation, mangrove planting, and marshland conservation for climate change mitigation and adaptation. These projects support smallholder farmers and empower vulnerable communities through sustainable agricultural practices.

As the global climate emergency intensifies and climate financing continues to fall short of protecting sexual and reproductive health and rights, UNFPA continues to bring to bear the rights of women and girls, and has advocated publicly that upcoming climate talks in Dubai prioritize the needs of women and girls, supporting this significant financing to strengthen health systems and ensure that the sexual and reproductive health and rights of women and girls are met during the global climate emergency.

To support climate change action in Iraq, IOM implements initiatives such as addressing climate-induced displacement and mobility, providing assistance to affected individuals, collaborating on resilience and adaptation strategies, promoting sustainability in vulnerable communities, and facilitating capacity-building on climate change and migration for local stakeholders.

Through these concerted efforts, the UN alongside the Government of Iraq at this year's COP will underscore its commitment to the COP28 process, in collaboration with international partners, to craft practical solutions for a sustainable and resilient future for Iraq. The UN will support the implementation of Iraq's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC), Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions (NAMA), National Adaptation Plan (NAP), Environmental Strategy, and Green Growth Strategy, all of which are guides that will steer Iraq towards robust adaptation, mitigation, and sustainable development.

The impacts of Climate Changes on human health discussed at COP28

Dubai, UAE, 05 December 2023 - As part of COP28 events, the first-ever day dedicated to health was held today to discuss the impacts of Climate Changes on human health and incorporate health issues on the global climate agenda, with Iraq participating in a dedicated pavilion for the first time in COP history.

Dr. Wael Hatahit, Acting WHO Representative to Iraq: "Pleased to be in Dubai to participate in COP28 and address the conference's first-ever Health Day along with the Iraq Ministry of Health and World Health

Organization (WHO) colleagues. Now, more than ever, it is vital to incorporate

public health priorities into climate discussions".



Project “Promotion of Integrated Biodiversity Conservation and Land Degradation Neutrality in Highly Degraded Landscapes of Iraq” was launched today at COP28

Dubai, UAE, 04 December 2023 - The Global Environment Facility (GEF)-7 Project “Promotion of Integrated Biodiversity Conservation and Land Degradation Neutrality in Highly Degraded Landscapes of Iraq” was launched today at COP28 by the Iraq Minister of Environment. The project will be executed by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) West Asia office and the Iraq Ministry of Environment by 2027.



FAO, UN-Habitat and UNESCWA convened a session on regional dialogue on transboundary sand and dust storms in the Arab Region

Dubai, UAE, 07 December 2023 - At COP28, FAO, UN-Habitat and UNESCWA convened a session on Regional Dialogue on Transboundary Sand and Dust Storms in the Arab Region. The session highlighted efforts made by Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Arab States, and the United Nations Coalition on Combating Sand and Dust Storms.



Dubai, UAE, 08 December 2023 - In their meeting during COP28, Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq/Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, **Mr. Ghulam Mohammed Isaczai**, and **Iraq's Environmental officials** discussed Iraq's progress in the global climate arena. They emphasized strategic planning for Iraq's climate goals and issued an urgent call for cross-sector collaboration for effective policy.



Dubai, 08 December 2023 – The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq/Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, **Mr. Ghulam Mohammed Isaczai**, addressed COP28 UNICEF Iraq Session on Iraqi Youth and Climate Activism. He highlighted empowering Iraq's youth to tackle environmental challenges, addressing water scarcity, combatting air pollution and confronting urgent climate issues. Partnerships are key for sustainable future.

At COP28 the Iraq Pavilion hosts a side event "Empowering Women: Catalysts for Climate Resilience and Sustainability."

Dubai, UAE, 08 December 2023 - Exciting news from COP28! The Iraq Pavilion hosted a remarkable side event titled "Empowering Women: Catalysts for Climate Resilience and Sustainability." We were honored to witness passionate discussions about the pivotal role of women in tackling climate change head-on. The event

emphasized the power of women as catalysts for climate resilience and sustainable practices. Key takeaways from the event:

- Recognizing the tremendous potential of women as agents of change in climate action.
- Highlighting success stories of women leaders who have made

significant contributions to climate resilience.

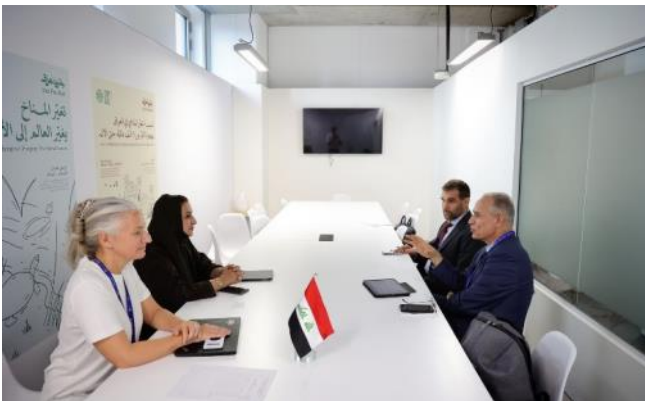
- Discussing strategies to enhance women's participation in decision-making processes related to climate change.
- Exploring ways to provide support and resources for women-led initiatives that promote sustainable practices.



Dubai, UAE, 09 December 2023 - At COP28, Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq/Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, **Mr. Ghulam Mohammed Isaczai**, met with **Anwar Gargash Diplomatic Academy on MENA Climate Adaptation**. He highlighted the United Nation in Iraq's role in facilitating dialogues and addressing climate risks. Discussion stressed on regional cooperation and shared climate solutions.



Dubai, UAE, 09 December 2023 - At today's COP28 session on Climate Change and Forestry in Iraq with the World Food Programme (WFP) Iraq, Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq/Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, **Mr. Ghulam Mohammed Isaczai**, underlined the urgency to unite for afforestation, reforestation, and forest conservation. Iraq's nature legacy is at stake and its forest cover is significantly diminishing. It is crucial to protect Iraq's biodiversity, and combat climate crisis. Time for global collaboration and sustainable action!



Dubai, UAE, 9 December 2023 - Today, Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq/Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, **Mr. Ghulam Mohammed Isaczai**, had a productive meeting with **H.E. Dr Nawal Al Hosani**, Assistant Undersecretary of Green Development and Climate Change Sector of the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Discussion focused on strengthening South-South Cooperation on joint-climate action.



Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Dubai, UAE, 09 December 2023 - The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations representative for Iraq, **Dr Salah El Hajj Hassan**, and **Deputy Ministry of Water Resources (MoWR)** are signing a crucial agreement, solidifying FAO-MoWR partnership, in the presence of Deputy Minister of Environment and their respective teams.



Dubai, 10 December 2023 - At COP28, the Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq/Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, **Mr. Ghulam Mohammed Isaczai**, participated in UNDP Iraq session on water scarcity at the Iraqi Pavilion, discussing UNIraq's role in advancing Iraq's sustainable development path. The session highlighted regional success stories to enhance the nation's adaptation plans in the water sector and emphasized the value of cooperation for a sustainable and greener future.





Dubai, 09 December 2023 – The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq/Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Mr. **Ghulam Mohammed Isaczai**, commended youth empowerment and climate leadership in Iraq's during COP28 Intergenerational Justice and Today's Youth Session.

Highlights:

- Iraq sets a regional standard with its youth survey.
- Prioritizing education, employment, and housing for the youth.
- Tackling 36% youth unemployment with urgency.
- Emphasizing green skills and international cooperation for climate resilience.



Dubai, UAE, 10 December 2023 - Exploring the link between water-energy-food is vital to find eco-friendly solutions, boost agriculture and enhance productivity. The World Food Programme (WFP) Iraq's session at COP28 discusses sustainable food systems in Iraq with UNDP Iraq. The Water-Energy-Food nexus session delved into potential avenues for investment to foster actionable strategies that contribute to water security and agricultural resilience in Iraq; and emphasized partnership for climate action for food security.

FAO Iraq aims to mitigate climate change impacts and promote smart agricultural practices for sustainable agrifood systems

Dubai, UAE, 10 December 2023 – Today at COP28, Dr. Salah El Hajj Hassan, FAO Country Representative for Iraq, shed light on how the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations is bolstering the Government of Iraq's push for sustainable agriculture through impactful projects across the country. Dr. Salah El Hajj Hassan put emphasis on the importance of partnership and adopting a holistic approach on the ground, supporting and advancing the Government of Iraq efforts to tackle climate change and water scarcity impacts. "As a proud member of the United Nations family, FAO Iraq commits to continuous support", he said.

Dr. Hassan reveals the harsh reality in Southern Iraq:

- Acute water scarcity
- High salinity levels
- 59% of farmers affected by drought
- 21,798 families, 130,788 individuals displaced

Thanks to funding from the European Union and collaboration with the Iraq Ministry of Agriculture, 5,000 farmers in the south were supported. The Government of Iraq has also allocated 5 billion IQD to scale up those activities under the FAO - Ministry of Agriculture teams' supervision promoting sustainable agriculture and livelihoods.

Dr. Hassan called for global cooperation to tackle climate change and water



scarcity impacts on livelihoods and mobility. It is time for holistic solutions, partnerships, and swift action. Together, we can build resilience and create a sustainable future.

At FAO session at COP28 on sustainable food systems, Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq/Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Mr. Ghulam Mohammed Isaczai, emphasized Iraq's urgent need to combat climate change impact on agriculture. Mr. Isaczai highlighted adopting climate-resilient practices, leveraging modern tech, ensuring food security and fostering sustainable farming. He urged policymakers to focus on sustainable

food systems, resilient agricultural practices and community involvement. DSRSG/RC/HC Isaczai, added: "Discussing climate change impacts on Iraq over the last days has been alarming. Urgent action is needed to ensure food sustainability and resilience. Prioritizing agriculture and food security is crucial, and the United Nations is committed to providing support. As we develop our next cooperation framework, food security must be positioned as a top priority." Advocating a participative and holistic approach, FAO Iraq aims to mitigate climate change impacts and promote smart agricultural practices for sustainable agrifood systems, creating opportunities for rural communities and households.

An exhibition on UNESCO's initiative "Revive the Spirit of Mosul" presented at UNESCO HQ

Paris, France, 14 November 2023 - The 42nd session of the UNESCO General Conference [7-22 November 2023] is hosting an exhibition on UNESCO's initiative "Revive The Spirit of Mosul". It highlights the city's tremendous heritage and honours the resilience and creativity of the Moslawis.



UNAMI on X

Baghdad, 15 November 2023 – The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq/Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, **Mr. Ghulam Mohammed Isaczai**: "Sincere congratulations to Iraq for its election to the UNESCO Executive Board. With Iraq being a cradle of civilizations, its membership will immensely contribute to the work of UNESCO globally. In Iraq, UNESCO is a close partner of the Government of Iraq".



Reviving Mosul and Basra's old cities – Phase III starts

Baghdad, 30 November 2023 - Excellent news as we kick off Phase III of the project, Reviving Mosul and Basra's Old Cities, made possible by generous funding from the European Union. This phase will concentrate on supporting two key areas: youth employment and enhancing the capacity of institutions and stakeholders, both public and private, engaged in the rehabilitation and protection of cultural heritage assets. UNESCO is dedicated to empowering Iraqi partners to spearhead the restoration of the heritage in Mosul and Basra's old cities and beyond!



UNESCO in partnership with ILO, the Directorate of Antiquities and Heritage in Dohuk and Wadi Association, continues to improve the Charsteen Cave site

Dohuk, 03 December 2023 - The diligent work of UNESCO in partnership with ILO, the Directorate of Antiquities and Heritage in Dohuk and Wadi Association, continues to improve the Charsteen Cave site within the project "Supporting Livelihoods through Cultural Heritage Development", thanks to European Union generous fund.

The following works were carried out:

- Setup an iron frame for the wooden walkway.
- Excavation work for the base of the main water tank with a capacity of 10 cubic meters.
- Transported a quantity of limestone separators from one site to another to

create a free space to receive incoming materials.

- set of limestone samples for the stone walkway.
- Excavation work for a 2-inch pipe

from the min water tank to the main office for the purpose of watering and to supply the water tank of main office.

- Worked with the on-site survey team to project the master plan.



UNESCO and ILO complete development work on the historic Erbil Citadel site as part of implementing robust plans for employment in cultural heritage sites in Iraq



Erbil, 05 December 2023 - UNESCO and the International Labour Organization, in cooperation with the High Commission for Erbil Citadel Revival (HCECR), are completing

development work on the historic Erbil Citadel site as part of the “Supporting Livelihoods through Cultural Heritage Development” project in partnership with the European Union, as part of

implementing robust plans for employment in cultural heritage sites in Iraq.

The technical team appointed to implement this project achieved the following activities:

- Concrete pouring works for sewer paths and water pipes for the site.
- Continuing the work of leveling the main road, fixing the measurements of the roads.

The work is carried out entirely by Iraqi and Syrian workers, with more than 670 workers employed on a daily basis and the total number of working days achieved reaching 50,540 days.

Traditional craft skills and arts of Al-Mudhif building inscribed in 2023 (18.COM) on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity

Paris/Baghdad, 06 December 2023 – UNESCO Iraq congratulates to Iraq on new inscription on the UNESCO #IntangibleHeritage List: traditional craft skills and arts of Al-Mudhif building, Iraq

Al-Mudhif is a large arched building made of reed and papyrus, both of which grow naturally in the marshes of southern Iraq. The building serves as a gathering place where members of the community can exchange, address conflicts, share experiences, tell stories and practise cultural activities and social rituals such as weddings, circumcisions, religious ceremonies and national celebrations.

Al-Mudhif is also viewed as a space for transmitting traditional knowledge, values, handicraft skills, norms and customs to children and youth. It is a place to welcome visitors and guests



from within and outside of Iraq. The structures are built by skilled workers and managed by tribal sheiks, but the entire community plays a part in the creation and maintenance of the space, such as by collecting the reeds and weaving the mats and rugs that are used as mattresses inside the building. The traditional customs and handicraft skills related to constructing Al-Mudhif

are transmitted informally through hands-on practice and participation in cultural activities. The practice is also transmitted through stories and legends, as well as through publications and the media. Moreover, some NGOs organise workshops and activities in Al-Mudhif to raise awareness about their significance among the communities concerned.

EU Ambassador to Iraq visits UNESCO’s worksites in Basra

Basra, 12 December 2023 - UNESCO welcomed the visit of EU Ambassador to Iraq, Thomas Seiler, to its worksites in Basra, witnessing firsthand the remarkable progress that is taking place within the Reviving Mosul and Basra Old Cities Project, implemented by UNESCO in partnership with the Government of Iraq and funded by the EU.



UNESCO is building the new foundations for the Al Hadba Minaret

Mosul, 24 December 2023 - UNESCO is building the new foundations for the Al Hadba Minaret, a complex task requiring specialized equipment and expertise. These foundations will ensure stability and allow the Minaret to be rebuilt with its characteristic leaning shape.

Do you want to see what's happening on the site?

Visit the Al Nouri Visitors Center and view the construction site while savoring Iraqi Tea! Location: <https://maps.app.goo.gl/TejdtteVumHJx69nR6>



Education

Four hundred women and men from forcibly displaced and host communities in Iraq complete Work-Based Learning programmes



Duhok and Mosul, 25 October 2023 - (ILO News) Graduation ceremonies were held for 400 women and men who have completed Work-Based Learning programmes in Duhok and Mosul, equipping them with skills that support their transition to decent work.

Work-Based Learning is learning that occurs when people do real work that leads to the production of real goods and services.

The ILO has joined forces with tripartite constituents to promote Work-Based Learning programmes for host communities, Syrian refugees, and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Duhok and Ninewa.

This includes partnerships with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, the Department of Labour and Social Affairs in Ninewa, governmental Vocational Training Centres in Duhok and Ninewa, the Chamber of Industry in Ninewa, the Youth Directorates and centres in Duhok and Ninewa, the Trade Union in Duhok, and the Chamber of Commerce in Duhok.

Implemented in close collaboration

with Caritas Czech Republic, these programmes are part of broader efforts under the PROSPECTS Partnership, funded by the Government of the Netherlands, which supports education, employment and protection in the context of forced displacement.

“The collaboration between the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the International Labour Organization and the Caritas Czech Republic is an important one, covering all areas of vocational training. The Work-Based Learning programme is among these areas. This programme has a significant impact on engaging and integrating job seekers into the labour market,” said Mohammed Zuhair, Deputy Director of the Department of Labour and Vocational Training in Ninewa. “Through this collaboration, we built the capacities and qualifications of the trainers and mentors, with the aim to improve their level of training and develop Work-Based Learning programmes, based on the needs of the labour market.”

“One of the most important aspects of the programme was that the trainings

took place in the real workplace, where the employers and crafts people turned into trainers for the trainees, in addition to our vocational trainers who designed the learning programme with the employers and ensured intensive monitoring of the learning process,” said Nebar Abdulstar, Director of the Vocational Training Centre in Duhok. “For the implementation of future programmes, we will come up with suggestions and address any challenges to ensure even better services are provided for our youth.”

Eighteen occupations related to agriculture, food production, sales, tourism, green works, digital, crafts and related trades were covered under the programmes, involving 60 enterprises and enterprise owners, as well as technical working groups consisting of in-company trainers (crafts people), vocational trainers, mentors, and coordinators, tasked with designing the programmes, training plans and evaluation tools, and ensuring close follow-up and monitoring of the trainees during the implementation process.

“These Work-Based Learning programmes create greater linkages for our trainees with the labour market and the private sector, which improve the training quality and relevance to the needs of the labour market, and enhance trainees’ employability,” said Yasser Ali, Skills Technical Officer at the ILO. “Each one of our partners has had a specific role to play in this programme, and we hope that through these partnerships we will be able to implement more such programmes, where trainees are not only trained in

Four hundred women and men from forcibly displaced and host communities in Iraq... (continued)

vocational training centres but in real work environments allowing them to gain real skills which are relevant in today's labour market."

Half of the trainees involved in the programme were women. Farah Ismail, who completed her one-month training at a dairy enterprise in Ninewa, was one of them. "I have learnt how to make cheese and dairy products. I have also gained skills in accounting management and how to calculate profits and losses," said Farah. "This programme has increased my self-confidence, taught me how to better manage my time, and provided me with an income."

Syrian Jowan Sheikh Mous Mahmo,

who completed his training at a solar panel enterprise, said: "The training was one of best training programmes I have been involved with, because there was follow-up. There was intensive monitoring of our learning process. When my financial situation allows, I will start my own business in this field."

Moving forward, the ILO aims to expand the WBL programmes through additional pilots, informing the development of a national framework for Work-Based Learning and apprenticeships, based on the new recommendation on quality apprenticeships adopted by The International Labour Conference.

The PROSPECTS Partnership operates in eight countries across the East and the Horn of Africa and the Middle East. In Iraq, ILO's focus under the Partnership, is on supporting thousands of forcibly displaced persons and host community members to access more and better livelihoods and decent job opportunities. It is doing so through an integrated approach that supports market-driven skills training; improves public employment services; promotes financial inclusion; and supports business start-ups and micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs).

UNESCO's "Back to School Campaigns" in cooperation with the General Directorate of Education implemented in Baghdad



Baghdad, 25 October 2023 - Under the framework of the project "Improving Access to Quality and Inclusive Education with Gender Equality for Out of School Children in

Babil and Baghdad Governorates, Iraq" funded by the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation, UNESCO and the General Directorate of Education of Kargh-3 in Baghdad are conducting door-to-door campaigns to reach the children who have dropped out of school or are at the risk of dropping out, with the goal of reintegrating them into the education system.

The Campaign has already met several families in the Al-Hurriya area and will continue to reach out to other areas in coming days to encourage out-of-school children to return back to school. The

records of the enrolled children will be maintained in a database, which will facilitate provision of ongoing assistance to them throughout the academic year.

Within the project, UNESCO conducted a counselling session in Al-Imam Al-Muntadhar school with the participation of DoEs employees, supervisors, school teachers and principles and community members.

The session objectives was to raise the awareness of the community to send their children to schools and discussing the main reasons for dropout and how to mitigate these challenges.

Dreaming big in Darashakran camp: Noori's path to success

Erbil, 13 November 2023 - In a world of toys and games, Noori, at the age of 10, is choosing to spend his summer with textbooks in remedial classes, all in pursuit of his dream to become a surgeon. He is currently in Grade 5 at Parwar Primary School, in Darashakran Camp, Iraq. This camp serves as a haven for Syrian refugee families, where Noori and many others have found comfort and a chance to begin anew. At such an age, Noori is filled with unwavering determination as he works towards achieving his dreams.

Summer remedial classes program at Parwar school

UNICEF through General Directorates of Education provided summer remedial classes for 7,500 Syrian refugee and internally displaced children in camps around Erbil. These



classes aimed at improving the quality of education and preparing the children for the upcoming academic year, while also contributing to implementing the Kurdistan Regional Government's Refugee Education Integration policy. One of the schools where these classes took place is Parwar School, located

within Darashakran camp, in Erbil. These summer remedial classes, designed to enhance children's skills in subjects like science, mathematics, and the Kurdish language, took place for a month over the summer, thanks to financial support from the US Government. At this very school,

Dreaming big in Darashakran camp ... (continued)

around 700 eager young minds have enthusiastically joined these special classes, with most of them originally from Al-Hasakah Governorate, Syria.

This initiative is not just about education; it's about nurturing dreams and building a brighter future for children like Noori by providing them with the knowledge and skills they need to reach their full potential and pursue their aspirations.

A big dream in a little heart: a glimpse into Noori's world

Noori, the oldest of a brother and two sisters, and his family were forced to flee Syria's conflicts. They sought refuge in Erbil Governorate. Despite facing countless uncertainties and challenges within the camp, Noori's parents understood the significance of education in shaping their children's

future.

Noori was excited to be a part of the summer remedial classes. He jumped into the subjects with enthusiasm. To him, these classes are like steppingstones to reach his dream of becoming a surgeon. They will help him secure higher marks when the regular school year starts. Plus, he's loving the chance to catch up with his friends during the summer. It's not just about books; it's about having fun and learning together.

"My favorite subject in school is the Kurdish language, specifically the Sorani dialect. I'm really happy that it's included in the summer course because my Kurdish dialect is different; I speak Kurmanji," says Noori happily.

Kurdish is a language with different dialects. The main ones are Kurmanji,

spoken in Northern KRI, and Sorani, mostly spoken in central KRI. They are different in pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar rules. Kurmanji is spoken in Syria, Turkey, Northern Iraq, and Iran, while Sorani is mainly spoken in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and Western Iran.

UNICEF's Summer Remedial Classes at Parwar Primary School have played a pivotal role in Noori's learning journey. Noori's hopeful and excited about his future, and that's a big win for this initiative.

Noori's story is not solely about one boy's dreams; it reflects the determination of the entire community to overcome adversity through education.

By Shahad Butrus Bulbul, UNICEF

UNESCO in liaison with the Ministry of Education and the EU Delegation to Iraq holds an opening ceremony for the rehabilitated Karbala Vocational School for Hospitality and Tourism

Karbala, 16 November 2023 - UNESCO in cooperation with the Ministries of Education, and funded by the EU, is working to increase the effectiveness of Vocational training in the Ministry's Vocational schools. The overall aim is to enhance the employability of Iraqi Youth. A central focus is to shift Vocational education away from theory to competency based practical training. To achieve this, new curricula have been developed in Agriculture, Hospitality and Tourism,

Construction and IT. The Ministry has formally approved these curricula to be used in the Vocational schools from this academic year 2023/24. Workshops have been renovated and practical training equipment required by the new curricula supplied. Links with the Private Sector have been enhanced to ensure that all graduates leave the schools with the practical skills.

UNESCO in liaison with the Ministry of Education and the EU Delegation to Iraq held an opening ceremony for the

rehabilitated Karbala Vocational School for Hospitality and Tourism today. This is the fourth school to be renovated as part of the TVET 2 Project. Erbil, Mosul and Baghdad have been completed and Basra Girsl Vocational school is nearing completion.

The opening ceremony was attended by the Governor of Karbala HE Nesaef Jassim. In addition representatives from the Ministry of Education's Vocational Education Directorate and the Department of Education, as well as the Management, teachers and students of the school. The Governor thanked UNSECO and the EU for their dedication to bring about this transformation in the school and looked forward to further cooperation in the future and an improvement in the employability outcomes for all students at the school.

UNSECO congratulates the staff and students at Karbala Vocational school for Tourism and Hospitality and looks forward to their continuing development into a genuine Centre of Vocational Excellence.



IOM refurbishes Badoush Middle school

Badoush, 21 November 2023 - IOM attended last week Badoush middle school's opening ceremony. A school that was overcrowded to the point where students had to study in caravans.

To accommodate the high number of students, IOM expanded the school and built 6 new classrooms!

Approximately 730 students will now have a better learning environment!

This project was made possible with

support from U.S. Department of State: Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration.

UNESCO working with the MoHESR to build international cooperation on higher education



Bucharest, Romania, 21 November 2023 - UNESCO, under the TVET 2 Reform project funded by the EU Delegation to Iraq, has been working with the Technical Universities and the two Ministries of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MoHESR) to enhance Higher Education and the employability of graduates. In line with HE the Minister's directions,

this has involved the piloting of the Bologna Process within the Technical Universities. One important aspect of this Process is to improve the international linkages and cooperation agreements of the Technical Universities. Currently, the Internationalization Working Groups from the Technical Universities in federal Iraq and the KRG are visiting the department of

UNESCO chair in "Engineering for society" at the National University of Science and Technology Politehnica Bucharest (NUSTPB). Prof. Sorin Zaharia, Director of the UNESCO chair, presented the Objectives of the chair and actions taken to achieve those objectives, as well as the international programs they offer and Erasmus+ projects ongoing. After exploring potential areas of cooperation with Iraqi technical universities, concrete action was taken to enhance future cooperation through the signing of Memorandums of Understanding between Dohuk Polytechnic University, Northern Technical University, Al Furat Al Aswat Technical University and NUSTPB.

We congratulate DPU, NTU, ATU, and NUSTPB for taking this important step towards deeper international cooperation through signing these MoUs and look forward to further developments during this important mission.

From graduation to employment: celebrating the graduates of WFP's Jousour programme in Iraq

Baghdad, 22 November 2023 - The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) congratulates 753 graduates of the WFP Jousour programme which aims to enhance the employability of internally displaced and vulnerable Iraqis as well as Syrian refugees by providing them with digital and English language skills.

The programme is a joint initiative between WFP and the University of Sulaymaniyah, the Erbil Polytechnic University, the Dohuk Polytechnic University, and Mercy Hands in Anbar. The trainees completed a comprehensive training that covered IT and English language skills, as well as

life skills, entrepreneurship, and financial inclusion.

They also participated in job fairs where they interacted with local employers and non-profit organizations and explored career opportunities in various sectors.

The Jousour programme has already helped 20 graduates become freelancers and secured 135 job and internship opportunities for others through its partners. The programme also received official recognition from the Iraqi Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MoHESR) and was approved for national rollout through universities across Iraq.

"WFP is proud to support these talented young men and women who have demonstrated remarkable commitment and resilience throughout the programme," said WFP Country Director and Representative in Iraq Ally-Raza Qureshi. "WFP believes that empowering youth is essential for building a brighter future for Iraq."

The Jousour programme, formerly known as EMPACT, was launched in 2019 with generous support from the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). Since then, it has trained over 9,700 people across Iraq.



Sulaymaniyah, Iraq



Young volunteers for a brighter future

Sinjar, 23 November 2023 - More than 300 students from 10 different schools across Sinjar volunteered to paint positive messages on their schools and plant 300 trees collectively.

This activity was made possible by the generous support from Embassy of the Netherlands in Iraq, and implemented by IOM partners from Sinjar Youth Bridge Organization.



ILO is glad to build sustainable model to improve local resources under EIIP



Baghdad, 24 November 2023 - Coming to the end of MADAD program supported by the EU, International Labour Organization (ILO) is proud of the achieved results together with its partners in UNESCO, as well as the strategic collaboration with local partners in Erbil and Duhok.

The certification of skilled workers for conservation of historical sites is very important in achieving the long term goals of this project, especially towards creating enabling environment for tourism in Iraq, and giving those workers better training and recognition of their skills through Erbil Polytechnic

university.

ILO is glad to build sustainable model to improve local resources under EIIP together with the directorate of antiquities and the Erbil Polytechnic university, which can be upscaled and improved further to reach other areas in KRI and federal government of Iraq.

Iraq and Kurdistan region have a great potential to develop the tourist sector, and skills development through the EIIP approaches have proven its effectiveness to empower women and men to engage in the available economic opportunities, including Syrian refugees.

Congratulations to our graduates who completed the certification program requirements and we are so impressed that those skills which were taught in the previous days were unique and innovative in the region, especially the production of environmental friendly buildings material.

Iraq: UNESCO and the European Union extend their partnership for training and job creation in the cultural heritage sector

Baghdad, 30 November 2023 - UNESCO, the European Union and the Iraqi Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Antiquities announce the launch of a new phase of the project Reviving Mosul and Basra Old Cities, for an amount of 9 million euros. It will result in socio-economic development actions through safeguarding and rehabilitation of cultural heritage from 2023 to 2027.

This new phase, funded by the European Union, will concentrate on supporting two key areas: youth employment and enhancing the capacity of institutions and stakeholders, both public and private, engaged in the rehabilitation and protection of cultural heritage assets.

Three hundred fifty Technical and Vocational Education and Training



(TEVT) participants will receive training with a focus on construction trades. Additionally, technicians from government entities will undergo mentoring in architectural conservation and restoration disciplines,

encompassing both project design and works supervision.

This intensive series of courses will involve hands-on experience in pilot projects within selected historic districts, under the supervision of

Iraq: UNESCO and the European Union extend their partnership for training and job creation in the cultural heritage sector

UNESCO: the rehabilitation of a significant number of heritage houses in Mosul and Basra.

Strengthen the academic heritage sector

UNESCO will also intervene in the academic field, to support the training of new generations of heritage professionals. To this end, the organization will facilitate the establishment of a new program focused on conservation and preservation, through a collaborative effort between the Northern Technical University (NTU) in Mosul, the Southern Technical University (STU) in Basra, and an external international university specializing in heritage conservation.

Comprehensive training for local faculty and students will include workshops conducted by external university experts. These sessions will cover advanced techniques in heritage building reconstruction, spanning architectural design, structural analysis, material conservation, and the preservation of traditional craftsmanship. They will be directed

projects led by the organization in Mosul and Basra during the previous phases of their partnership.

Iraqi institutions and professionals will thus have all the keys in hand to directly plan and lead the next stages of urban reconstruction, as well as the long-term conservation, management, and restoration of heritage.

During an event held at the Iraqi National Museum on November 29, 2023, Dr. Laith Hussein, the Head of the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage in Iraq, conveyed his appreciation, remarking, "The bilateral collaboration with partners such as UNESCO, the European Union, and the Ministry of Culture has yielded tangible positive results. These results represent an opportunity for the revival of ancient cities through the reconstruction and rehabilitation of historic buildings, the revitalization of cultural life. This is seen as a genuine opportunity for youth employment and the capacity-building of institutions to preserve the cultural heritage in two historic cities like Mosul and Basra."



towards the restoration and reconstruction of heritage buildings in Mosul and Basra.

Furthermore, the initiative will encompass, the implementation of 10 events focused on social cohesion, awareness raising, and culture, as well as the support of 8 cooperatives, businesses, startups, or social enterprises to support Iraqi culture and creative industries as part of the project's broader objectives.

Give Iraqi institutions and professionals the keys to lead future reconstructions

Through all these actions, UNESCO will transmit to Iraqi institutions and professionals the experience and good practices acquired from the numerous

H.E. Thomas Seiler, the Ambassador of the European Union to Iraq, emphasized the significance of the "Reviving Mosul and Basra Old Cities project," stating, "This project holds great importance for the EU's support in Iraq. Its unique concept, blending infrastructure restructuring, job creation, and cultural preservation, sets it apart."

Mr. Paolo Fontani, the Representative and Director of UNESCO Iraq Office, expressed gratitude to the EU and the Ministry of Culture for their support. He underscored the successful achievements resulting from the collaborative efforts of all partners during the previous phases of the project.

"UNESCO takes great pride in this partnership and is fully committed to ensuring the successful implementation of Phase III over the coming years for the benefit of the people of Iraq," he affirmed.

UNESCO thanks all its local, national, and international partners, whose support was very useful in implementing these actions, mainly the Ministry of Culture, the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage, the Governorates of Nineveh and Basra, city municipalities, Sunni and Christian Waqfs, and CSOs, as well as IOM, UN Habitat and ICCROM. UNESCO also thanks the many inhabitants of Mosul and Basra involved in these projects.

Achievement of the first two phases of the project so far: 4,800 jobs created, 1,500 people graduated

During the Phase I and II of the project (2019-23) remarkable achievements were made by UNESCO and its partners in the Old City of Mosul, as the reconstruction and rehabilitation of 124 heritage houses, including 2 palatial houses, the reconstruction of the primary El Ekhlas School, and the infrastructure upgrading of streets and alleys (electrical, sewage, water networks and surfacing). In partnership with UN Habitat, a Recovery Plan for Mosul was also drafted and Technical Assistance on Housing, Land and Property issues to house owners of the Old City provided.

In the Old City of Basra, UNESCO rehabilitated 11 Shanasheel style heritage houses that are owned by the Governorate of Basra, three of them are large palatial houses used by official entities: the Culture Palace, the Writers Association, and the Association of Plastic Artists. In addition, the project included the reconstruction of a section of the Al Ashar Canal located in the Old City and the rehabilitation of 8 bridges.

These actions in Mosul and Basra have resulted in the creation of more than 4,900 jobs and 1568 persons received diploma training ensuring them long-term professional opportunities. In addition, 79 craftsmen in Mosul benefited from specialised training on traditional construction techniques with support from ICCROM, so that traditional Iraqi skills and knowledge continue to be transmitted to new generations.

Support also provided for the revival of

Iraq: UNESCO and the European Union extend their partnership for training and job creation in the cultural heritage sector *(continued)*

cultural life

Thanks to the EU support during the Phase I and II of the project, UNESCO and its partners have also engaged in a comprehensive plan to revive cultural life and cultural institutions. To support the revival of traditional music in Mosul, UNESCO implemented tailored programmes: 24 musicians were trained, and 4 music ensembles were formed and received grant for touring in Iraq. A new milestone was

marked in March 2022 through "Mosul Traditional Music Festival", the first event of its kind since the Liberation. Given its success a second edition of the festival was organized in September 2023 in partnership with Goethe Institute.

A Creative Space was created to provide space for exhibition, training, and cultural activities. A Film Lab was established at the Institute of Fine Arts of Mosul and 20 students were trained

and got hands-on experience on the fundamental aspects of a cinema production and produced short movies that were shown to the public, including in national and international festivals. In addition, in partnership with IOM in phase II of the project 197 SME businesses in the field of culture and creative industries received grants through the EDF-Culture program in Mosul, Basra and Thi-Qar.

In support of the Gharnata school, UNICEF installed solar system, while Al Diwaniya Governorate rehabilitated the school

Baghdad, 04 December 2023 - "I commend the Governor of Al Diwaniya and Gharnata school for their efforts in improving the school's learning environment," said Sandra Lattouf, UNICEF Representative in Iraq, during a field visit to Al Diwaniya today.

In support of the school, UNICEF installed solar system, while Al Diwaniya Governorate rehabilitated the school, including its water, sanitation and hygiene facilities. This effective cooperation needs to be scaled up to benefit at least 50 schools.



Strengthening Vocational Education: UNESCO's TVET 2 Reform project fosters collaboration with the private sector

Karbala, 06 December 2023 - UNESCO's TVET 2 Reform project, generously funded by the EU, is actively collaborating with the Ministry of Education in Iraq and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) to elevate the employability of graduates from Vocational Schools. A pivotal aspect of this initiative involves cultivating close, mutually beneficial relationships between the schools and the vibrant Private Sector within their respective governorates.

To fortify these crucial connections, UNESCO conducted a three-day workshop titled "Activation of Sectoral Councils" for members in Karbala. The primary objective of the workshop was to revitalize and reinforce the Sectoral Councils associated with each of the five schools. These councils comprise representatives from the Vocational schools, the Department of Education, and actively engaged private sector companies. The workshop established a viable 12-month timeline for sectoral council activities, outlining detailed



monthly events. Additionally, it explored opportunities to leverage the "Mihan" platform for identifying job vacancies and registering graduates seeking employment.

A significant emphasis during the workshop was placed on ensuring the sustainability of sectoral councils as independent entities. This included the creation of a simplified internal system for the councils' operations. The event also highlighted the support of professional Career Development

Centers (CDCs) through contributions from sectoral councils (SCs). Success stories and notable achievements were showcased, lessons learned from experiences over the past year were discussed, and challenges and solutions for the effective operation of sectoral councils were identified.

UNESCO eagerly anticipates the increased employment of Vocational School graduates through the collaborative efforts with the Private Sector.

The Al-Til Co-educational School in Al-Til village, Solagh, Sinjar, has been rehabilitated by UN-Habitat

Sinjar, 06 December 2023 - The Al-Til Co-educational School in Al-Til village, Solagh, Sinjar, has been rehabilitated by UN-Habitat, providing a welcoming space for students from the zone.

UN-Habitat, in partnership with the Directorate of Education, has contributed to creating a quality learning environment and improving access to education for future generations. Through these efforts, the youth from the zone will be better equipped to contribute to the area's recovery and development.

This effort is part of the 'Recovery Support to Returnees in Iraq to Strengthen Socio-Economic

Stabilization, including Improved Food Security' project, funded by the Government of Japan.



Building cooperation between Iraqi and International universities

Baghdad, 06 December 2023 - The delegation of eight academics from the Technical Universities of Iraq and the KRI returned home on Sunday the 3rd December. The mission was organized by UNESCO Iraq Office to enable opportunities for international collaboration for the Technical Universities. The delegates were all members of their internationalization working groups and held detailed discussion with the internationalization departments of Ghent and Hogent University in Belgium. The meetings explored areas for mutual cooperation including postgraduate programmes, joint research projects, joint supervision of programmes, the development of new programmes and the sharing of laboratories and instruments for research.

The meetings also looked at ideas to help reinforce the implementation of the Bologna Process in Iraqi Universities. The delegation was

joined by UNESCO Senior Consultant for Bologna Implementation, Dr. Ann Katherine Isaacs. Dr Katherine has been assisting MoHESR in Iraq and the KRI in their implementation of the Bologna process over the last 5 years. She is the Co-Chair of both the Coordination Group on Global Policy Dialogue and the Bologna Implementation Coordination Group and Bologna Follow Up Groups for the

European Higher Education Area.

UNESCO congratulates the Delegation for their commitment and active participation: Dr. Faris FTU, Dr. Abdullah NTU, Dr. Naseer MTU, Dr. Narjis STU, Dr. Ary SPU, Dr. Fairoz DPU, and Dr. Karwan DPU.

This working mission was carried out under the umbrella of the TVET 2 Reform Project, funded by the European Union Delegation in Iraq.



UNESCO is collaborating with the Ministries of Higher Education to implement the Bologna process in Iraqi and Kurdish Technical Universities

Burgenland, Austria, 07 December 2023 - UNESCO is collaborating with the Ministries of Higher Education to implement the Bologna process in Iraqi and Kurdish Technical Universities. The Bologna process, aimed at harmonizing higher education systems, involves crucial components, including the establishment of international collaborations with Overseas Universities. As part of this effort, the UNESCO Iraq Office is facilitating a delegation from the Technical Universities of Iraq and the Kurdish

Regional Government (KRI). This working mission falls under the TVET 2 project, focusing on Technical and Vocational Education and Training, and is funded by the European Union.

A significant milestone in this initiative was achieved during an ongoing visit to the University of Applied Sciences (UAS FH Burgenland) on December 7, 2023.

Meetings took place with key representatives, including the Vice President of the University for International Affairs, the Head of the

Department of International Relations, and leadership from doctoral programs, alongside esteemed university professors. The discussions covered critical aspects of internationalization, faculty and student exchange programs, Erasmus+, and collaborative research initiatives.

Building on the positive interactions, both parties have agreed to reconvene in the coming days for a follow-up meeting. This next session aims to crystallize specific areas of collaboration between the universities.

UNESCO is collaborating with the Ministries of Higher Education to implement the Bologna process ... (continued)



The delegation also visited FH Campus Wien in Vienna.

During the visit, the delegation engaged in substantive discussions

with the International Relations department at FH Campus Wien, thoroughly exploring the institution's comprehensive internationalization strategy. The primary objective was to identify promising avenues for collaboration and establish a foundation for future partnerships. The exchange has set the stage for mutually beneficial collaborations in the future. Special thanks are extended to the representatives of UAS FH Campus Wien for their proactive efforts in seeking opportunities to strengthen academic connections and cultivate a global learning community.

WFP and the Iraq Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research sign an agreement to extend digital literacy Jousour programme

Baghdad, 08 December 2023 - The World Food Programme (WFP) Iraq and the Iraq Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MoHESR) have signed an agreement to extend digital literacy Jousour programme in a joint effort to continue empowering youth in Iraq through education and preparing them to enter the workplace with digital, soft and English language skills.



Elevating Vocational Education - UNESCO steps in to support innovative education approaches beyond the original five schools

Baghdad, 11 December 2023 - UNESCO's TVET programme, implemented in partnership with the Ministry of Education and generously funded by the EU, is boosting employability in Iraqi vocational schools. Five "Pilot" schools in Erbil, Mosul, Baghdad, Karbala, and Basra are making strides toward becoming Centers of Vocational Excellence.

In response to the Directorate of Vocational Education's call, UNESCO stepped in to support innovative education approaches beyond the original five schools.

This inclusive workshop brought together educators from various Iraqi locations for five days of exploring effective trainer competences, competency-based learning methods, and integrating Artificial Intelligence tools into curriculum development. The workshop used a mix of group discussions, microteaching sessions, and real-world applications to keep participants engaged. Pre- and post-tests



showed a notable improvement in participants' knowledge and skills,

confirming the workshop's success in meeting its objectives.

UNHCR: Iraq's Refugee Education Integration Policy enables the inclusion of refugee children in the public education system

Erbil, 13 December 2023 - Iraq's Refugee Education Integration Policy is making waves in reimagining education.

Launched by the Kurdistan Regional Government's Ministry of Education, the policy enables the inclusion of refugee children in the public education system.

In a visionary step, the policy also

allows qualified refugee teachers to teach in public schools, alongside national teachers, and provides them with access to a livelihood opportunity.

At the world's largest gathering in support of refugees, let us advocate to advance the inclusion of refugees in existing public services as well as open more doors to employment for them.



Youth

UNICEF commends the Government of Iraq for signing the Declaration on Children, Youth and Climate Action

Baghdad, 19 November 2023 – UNICEF commends the Government of Iraq for signing the Declaration on Children, Youth, and Climate Action. It demonstrates the strong commitment of the Government to the Convention on the Rights of the Child as it comes on the eve of World Children's Day and ahead of COP28.

The Declaration on Children, Youth and Climate Action was signed by the Minister of Environment, His Excellency Mr. Nizar Amidi, in the presence of line ministries, children and young people. It is a major step forward in Iraq's efforts to respond to

the impact of the global climate crisis., and in upholding priorities identified by children and youth across the world. "UNICEF commends the Government of Iraq for taking meaningful measures to realize the rights of children and young people on the eve of World Children's Day," says Sandra Lattouf, UNICEF in Iraq Representative. "The climate crisis is a child rights crisis as rising temperatures, water scarcity, and extreme weather events hamper the realization of children's basic rights."

The Government of Iraq signed up to the Convention on the Rights of the

Child in June 1994. Since then, the Government has taken several steps to realize the rights of children in Iraq. This includes the establishment of the Child Welfare Commission and the National Child Data Portal, as well as the reforms of child rights and child protection Laws to align with international standards.

"I call on all actors to scale up investment in child- and youth-responsive adaptation, disaster risk reduction and mitigation measures while focusing on the most marginalized," adds Lattouf. "On World Children's Day and every day, UNICEF remains committed to supporting the Government of Iraq to realize the rights of children and young people and accelerate progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals."

World Children's Day (WCD) has been UNICEF's global day of action for children, by children. 20 November marks the anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It is a day that highlights critical issues affecting children's lives and supports the engagement of children and young people as advocates for their own rights.



UNESCO launches a project to enhance employability for youth in Nineveh

Baghdad, 04 December 2023 - UNESCO launched the project 'Enhancing Employability for Youth in Nineveh,' funded by the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA). The project aims to enhance the employability of graduates in key economic sectors, aligning with the labor market needs in Nineveh Governorate, Iraq.

Implemented in partnership with the Ministry of Education (MoE), the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MoLSA), the Department of Education (DoE) and the Department of Labor and Social Affairs (DoLSA) of Nineveh, the project will support the Nineveh Agricultural Vocational School, Intissar Commercial School, and Vocational Training Center in Mosul to become

Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVE). The primary objectives include:

1. Enhancing the quality of vocational training trainers and teachers.
2. Improving vocational training infrastructure and curriculum based on sectors identified in the Labor Market Skill Survey in Mosul.
3. Strengthening labor market

UNESCO launches a project to enhance employability... (continued)



linkages through Career Development Centres and Sectoral Councils.

The Project Launch Event witnessed the participation of representatives from the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Nineveh Governorates, and KOICA.

In his opening remarks, Mr. Paolo Fontani, UNESCO Representative to Iraq, highlighted UNESCO's commitment to Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), emphasizing the organization's support for an open, stable, and sustainable society. Mr. Fontani

expressed confidence in UNESCO's ability to contribute significantly to enhancing TVET quality in Iraq, citing the organization's extensive experience. During the congratulatory remarks, Mr. Majeed Kamel Abdullah, Head of the National Committee in the Ministry of Education, underscored the importance of collaboration between the Ministry of Education and UNESCO, thanking the organization for its support to TVET in Iraq. He emphasized the significance of provincial-level TVET support and expressed eagerness to expand

cooperation and partnership in Iraq. Ms. Meethaq Taleb, Head of the Directorate of Labour and Social Affairs, extended her appreciation for the strong cooperation between DOLSA and UNESCO. She acknowledged UNESCO's support for the ongoing vocational training programs in Nineveh.

Mr. Ko Hee-Seok, Representative of KOICA Erbil Office, expressed gratitude for the commitments and support from stakeholders. He affirmed KOICA's dedication to playing an active role in TVET alongside the Government of Iraq, UNESCO, and other TVET-related stakeholders to enhance job opportunities in Nineveh and Iraq.

Mr. Ali Omar, Deputy Governor of Nineveh Governorate, expressed gratitude while requesting continued support and cooperation for Nineveh Governorate.

This project aligns directly with Sustainable Development Goals 4 (Quality Education), 5 (Gender Equality), and 9 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), and contributes to the implementation of the TVET priorities identified by the Iraq National Education Strategy 2022 - 2031.

World Children's Day

SRSB Hennis-Plasschaert: "The UN will remain engaged to ensure that children today are enabled to pursue their dreams."

Baghdad, 20 November 2023 – On the occasion of the World Children's Day, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), gave the following statement:

"Every child has rights: to be protected from harm, to have access to education and healthcare, to be treated equally. Just to name a few.

But sadly, the realization of these rights is not a given.

And, certainly not in times of conflict.

Iraq's past cycles of violence were indiscriminate.

Children and young people were not spared.

Now, collectively, we have one objective: a stable future in which all children can prosper.

On World Children's Day, we recommit to protecting and promoting the rights of children and young people.



Not just for children in peacetime, but also for those still reeling from the effects of conflict.

And, when it comes to Iraq's agenda, these rights must be front and centre.

I commend recent commitments from

the Government in this respect.

And as action to bring such goals to life ramps up, the UN will remain engaged. Only in this way can we ensure children today may pursue their dreams tomorrow."

Iraq and UNICEF mark World Children’s Day



Baghdad, 21 November 2023 – The Ministry of Interior carried out today a World Children’s Day event, with the participation of the First Lady of Iraq, the Prime Minister’s Advisor, Parliament Members, the UN, civil society, and children. “As we mark World Children’s Day, I would like to commend the Government of Iraq for placing children at the heart of the national agenda,” said Sandra Lattouf, UNICEF Representative in Iraq.

“On World Children’s Day, the Ministry of Interior renews its commitment to

the Convention on the Rights of the Child because we strongly believe that the children of today will secure a brighter future for Iraq,” said H.E. Mr Abdul Amir Al-Shammari, Minister of Interior.

“When given the opportunity, the Iraqi child can overcome all challenges to drive change in the society,” said Al-Khattab Omar, 13, during the event. In 2023, Omar won first place in the World Association of Mental Arithmetic Schools Championship, inspiring his peers to continue to learn and reach their full potential.

World Children’s Day is UNICEF’s Global Day of Action for children, by children, marking the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) on 20 November 1989.



UNICEF on X

Baghdad, 20 November 2023 - “Each year, we are working to ensure that this day all governments, all partners, all communities, parents, children, and youth get together to advance child rights,” said Sandra Lattouf, UNICEF Representative in Iraq, on this #WorldChildrensDay.



Timeline

UN offices around the world mourn and honour the 101 UNRWA colleagues who have been killed in Gaza

New York/Baghdad, 13 November 2023 - UN flags were lowered to half-mast at UN offices around the world on Monday to mourn and honour the 101 UNRWA colleagues who have been killed in Gaza in recent weeks. Civilians and humanitarians are #NotATarget.

The United Nations flag at the UN offices in Iraq was also lowered. UN personnel observed a minute of silence as a mark of respect.

Baghdad | Erbil | Mosul | Kirkuk | Basra



Tales from Iraq - Mosul's art revival

Mosul, 26 November 2023 – UNAMI Strategic Communications and Public Information Office's team recently visited Mosul. In a short video they bring us two stories from Mosul's old city, which was rebuilt from the devastation of conflict. Meet Haneen and Ahmed who chose art to illustrate city's revival.

Access the video, a cooperation between UNAMI SCPIO and Bytna for Culture, Mosul, at

<https://www.facebook.com/UnitedNationsIraq/videos/369479035531442>



A world with eight billion volunteers



Baghdad, 5 December 2023 – 5 December is International Volunteer Day and this year's theme is "If everyone did..."

More than a billion volunteers around the world act for solidarity and humanity for people and planet. IVD is a day to pay tribute to volunteers worldwide and to recognize the value of volunteerism in peace and development.

The theme of IVD this year centers on the power of everyone – collective action – if everyone did. If everyone volunteered the world would be a better place. As Iraq marches on its way to development, it is volunteers' time to shine. Volunteers bring hope. Volunteers dream not of lofty ambitions but of solutions to improve the lives of people around them.

In Iraq, IVD was commemorated through a series of activities under the theme "If everyone did." In Baghdad, a high-level event – bringing together government officials, civil society and the United Nations – addressed how

volunteering can help address Iraq's development challenges.

In his opening remarks; HE Mr. Ahmed Al-Mubaraqaa, Minister of Youth and Sports; emphasized "Volunteering is a rooted trait among Iraqis since ancient times, symbolizing the generosity that characterizes all Iraqis". He added, "just last week, more than 60 permits for volunteering groups were issued by the Ministry of Youth and Sports." Dr. Al-Mubaraqaa praised the role of the United Nations in transferring global experiences to Iraq for the benefit of the youth, especially in the last two decades.

Ghulam Isaczai, the UN Resident Coordinator for Iraq, stated that the United Nations is very proud to celebrate International Volunteer Day jointly with the Iraqi Government. He continued, "We underscore our commitment, to mainstreaming volunteerism and civic engagement, into national development plans and by extension, into the programs of the UN Country team."

The event also showcased winning ideas from UNV Iraq's first hackathon, organized jointly by UNV, UNDP and UNAMI Iraq. The hackathon had young people competing to develop best ideas about "digitalization for better delivery of social services." This highlighted a commitment to using technology for practical benefits. The winners were given the stage to present their ideas to the attending decision makers.

The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme was represented by Ms. Kyoko Yokosuka, the Deputy Executive Coordinator, who said "As peace gives impetus for Iraq to move from crisis context to development". Adding that "UNV looks forward to work with the Government of Iraq and integrate volunteers into the country's sustainable development agenda.

A photo exhibition featuring UN Volunteers in action added a visual aspect to the event.

The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme provides global citizens with an opportunity to volunteer across the three pillars of the United Nations system: development; peace and security; and human rights.

Administered by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNV advocates for the recognition of volunteers, works with partners to integrate volunteerism into development programming, and helps to mobilize volunteers throughout the world.

UNV is active in some 160 countries worldwide and represents over 170 nationalities.

International Volunteer Day (IVD), on 5 December, was designated by the UN in 1985 as an international observance to celebrate the power and potential of volunteerism.

A world with eight billion volunteers *(continued)*



Here is the full text of the speech of DSRSG/RC/HC Isaczai at this event:

“H.E. Mr. Ahmed Al-Mubaraqaa, Minister of Youth and Sport, H.E. Dr. Mahir Johan, Deputy Minister of Planning,

H.E. Dr. Fadhil Al-Raheem, Head of International Organizations and Conferences Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs,

H.E. Dr. Yaseen Abbas, Head of the Iraqi Red Crescent Society,

H.E. Ms. Kyoko Yokosuka, Deputy Executive Coordinator of the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme, Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to thank you all for your presence with us today to mark the International Volunteers Day. My flight landed in Baghdad only few hours ago, but I could not miss the opportunity of being with you on this day, to express respect and appreciation to the millions of volunteers across the world.

This day means a lot to me, not only because I had worked with this magnificent organization, called (the United Nations Volunteers Programme) where I meet thousands of them across the globe, engaged in humanitarian operations activities, charity work, or simply by practicing their citizenship through participating in meetings and other societal activities; but also because I came from a background and family in which volunteerism was deep-rooted since early age. I would like also, in this context, to pay tribute to my wife, who accompanied me throughout the past 25 years of my professional career, as she was only doing volunteering work then at every duty station we worked at; actually, she was with me here in Iraq in 1997, acting as volunteer at a center for children with disabilities, one of whom, named Ahmed, is currently a champion at the Paralympics.

Please allow me to continue my remarks in English.

International Volunteer Day, globally observed on December 5th, serves as a

powerful platform to promote and acknowledge volunteer efforts, encourage public participation, and raise awareness about the profound impact of volunteer activities on social, economic, and environmental development.

This year's theme, "If everyone did...", emphasizes collective action, person-to-person interaction, working together, sharing, and giving – values that resonate deeply with the principles of volunteerism.

We are very proud of our 123 UN Volunteers, both National and International, currently deployed in Iraq, 48 per cent of whom are females.

They are supporting UN activities in across various governorates in Iraq providing expertise and support in Human Rights, Climate Change and Environment, Health, Community Engagement, Communication, and Operational Support.

As we gather here, it is essential to recognize the tremendous growth Iraq has experienced, with its population now estimated at 43 million, making it one of the world's fastest-growing populations.

This demographic surge presents significant opportunities, particularly in harnessing the talents of our youth for sustainable development.

Nevertheless, as you well know, the job

market in Iraq is not responding actively to the demand, especially for college graduates and other young people eager to start their own households and support their families.

Against this backdrop, in Iraq, volunteer opportunities become a critical pathway for young people to learn new skills and apply what they have learned in school.

In Iraq, we are proud to celebrate International Volunteer Day jointly with the Iraqi Government to underscore our commitment to mainstreaming volunteerism and civic engagement into National Development plans and, by extension, into the programs of the UN Country team.

Following the National Youth Dialogue Conference held in August 2023, the Iraqi Government has adopted significant decisions emphasizing the encouragement of volunteerism through appointments, contracts, and educational opportunities.

This momentum presents a unique opportunity for us to explore how UN Volunteers can support the UN Country Team and the Government in fulfilling this commitment to building a more prosperous and inclusive future for Iraq's young population.

On International Volunteer Day, we join hands to recognize the spirit of volunteerism, and the invaluable contributions of volunteers in shaping positive change in our communities and societies.

Let us embrace the spirit of volunteerism and the power of "If everyone did..."

Together, we can overcome the challenges that hinder progress on the 2030 Agenda. Let us stand united, work hand in hand, and build a future that is prosperous, inclusive, and sustainable for all.

Thank you, and I wish you all a productive event.”





Baghdad, 05 December 2023 – In 2023, UNDP deployed 56 UN Volunteers (UNV) who supported implementation of projects across Iraq. “UNV continues to support the UN in its efforts to drive sustainable development forward in Iraq and worldwide, through engaging highly qualified and dedicated volunteers,” Ms. Kyoko Yokosuka, UNV Deputy Executive Coordinator, said while meeting recently with Mr. Auke Lootsma, Resident Representative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Iraq.



Baghdad, 06 December 2023 - 180 UN Volunteers with 11 UN entities served in Iraq in 2023, compared to 120 in 2020. “This remarkable growth of UN Volunteers in Iraq is a testament to their valuable contribution to the UN’s mission,” Mr. Ghulam Mohammed Isaczai, Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq/Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, said while meeting in Baghdad with Ms. Kyoko Yokosuka, UN Volunteers Deputy Executive Coordinator.

UN Volunteers support food security reform in Iraq



Baghdad, 04 December 2023 - The World Food Programme (WFP) collaborates with the Ministry of Trade in Iraq to support the digitalization of the Public Distribution System (PDS). This is vital to the country's social protection system. Extending services across the population, the system also ensures inclusive distribution of in-kind food assistance.

A group of 40 UN Volunteers belonging to local communities was deployed by WFP in Iraq's Duhok Governorate, which is located in the Kurdistan Region.

In line with the Public Distribution System reform agenda, this group served alongside field enumerators to register Duhok residents.

Serving tirelessly for three months, volunteers supported the registration of the newly issued PDS cards and also updated the residents' demographic information in the system - between 50 to 100 family registrations were carried out daily. Volunteers did so by using digital tablets.

Mohammed Bayar was one of the volunteers updating the information. He says, "This task was beyond just data entry. We interacted with a

diverse range of families. We learned how to register on the new digital system while ensuring accuracy and reliability of the data we entered."

Before their assignments began, UN Volunteers received an intensive two-day training from WFP on necessary skills. Once trained, the volunteers started touring different registration stations across Duhok.

"We learned how to communicate with people of all ages and with different needs, including persons with disabilities. Traveling to distant locations allowed us to learn first-hand about the living conditions in less-privileged localities." -- Dleen Sulaiman and Basma Taha, UN Community Volunteers with WFP in Iraq.

The sense of camaraderie is what Dleen and Basma treasure most about the project. "Together we faced many challenges and were able to overcome them. We formed new friendships and

experienced a sense of equality. We had a family-like feeling," they add.

Qutaiba Al-Ibadi, Programme Policy Officer at WFP Iraq raves about the positive attitude of UN Community Volunteers, "Their commitment towards PDS reform in Duhok ensured registrations were completed in record time and with the highest accuracy standards."

"Collaborating with UN Volunteers creates a mutually beneficial situation. WFP provided training and volunteers brought invaluable social and digital experiences while also having the chance to attain new proficiencies and further hone their skills." Yasser Al-Mimar, Project Manager with WFP in Iraq.

As the UN Volunteers conclude their assignment, WFP notes that over 93 per cent of beneficiaries in Duhok are registered. UN Volunteers contributed to 32 per cent of the overall results.



International Volunteer Day commemorated in Erbil



Erbil, 07 December 2023 - Marking International Volunteer Day in Erbil, Kurdistan Region, UN Volunteers

serving in Iraq were joined by UN Volunteer's Deputy Executive Coordinator, Ms. Kyoko Yokosuka,

and KRI representatives to commemorate #IVD2023. A collective volunteer effort for climate action with UNFPA Iraq, Department of Media and Information of the Kurdistan Regional Government, Erbil Governorate, and Green House Project to plant 500 trees. At the UNV Townhall, UN Volunteers in Iraq shared inspiring stories testifying to their diversity and wealth of experience, from admin assistants to legal officers and field engineers. Ms. Kyoko Yokosuka applauded their outstanding work for peace and development.



Arabic Language Day celebrated in Iraq



Baghdad, 18 December 2023 – On the occasion of the World Arabic Language Day, UNAMI's Strategic Communications and Public Information Office, produced a short video. Arabic is spoken by more than 400 million people worldwide, from

Arabic Language Day.

While it is one language, Arabic is spoken with varying dialects. Sometimes, too different.

Classical Arabic is the base, the language of Islam's holy book the Quran and in which it continues to be recited. This is followed by Modern Standard Arabic. Then there is Colloquial Arabic, with about 25 local dialects and variations, if not more. Sometimes even within the same country, different dialects of Arabic are spoken.

Over the centuries, Arabic influenced and was influenced by other languages, creating so many common words.

Many Arabic words alternate between Classical and Colloquial, and many are commonly used: e.g., *صحيفة* (formal) and *جريدة* (colloquial) are equally mean "newspaper".

Sometimes the same item has different



names in different dialects: "cupboard" in Egyptian is *دولاب* but in Lebanese it is *مكتنور* and in Iraqi it is *مكتنور* for a table. In Egypt it is called *تارابزا*, and in the Levant it is *تاولاه*, as in Classical Arabic. And occasionally the same Arabic word refers to different items, depending on the local dialect: the *دولاب* - cupboard in Egyptian, it means in the Levant a car



Mauritania on the Atlantic Ocean to Oman on the Arabian Sea, and from Lebanon on the Mediterranean Coast to Somalia on the Indian Ocean. It is one of the six official languages of the United Nations, and it is celebrated annually on 18 December as World



Arabic Language Day celebrated in Iraq (continued)

fire. فيراند in Syria and Lebanon is a fridge but in Egypt is a teapot. And a fridge in Iraq and other countries is a ثلاجة, while in Lebanon ثلاجة means a freezer.

All these different dialects can be confusing, not only to the non-Arabic speakers, but also to the natives. They



can cause funny and even embarrassing situations. Like, try to greet a Moroccan with Ya'tik el Afieh ('I wish you well' in the Levant). In Moroccan dialect it is a wish to burn.

The heavy use of local dialects today, abbreviations and social media language, with its own informal terminology and spellings based on foreign languages, are causing concern among Arabic linguists who fear the young generation may be losing command of Arabic. Despite the differences and pressures, what binds the Arabic-speaking world together remains that Classical form which everyone from sea to sea learns in school and is the universal one that foreigners, academics in particular, generally study and focus on.

Arabic-speaking people proudly celebrate the Arabic language every day

for its richness.

We wish you a happy World Arabic Language Day!

You can see the video at <https://youtu.be/3-5PZwhVptY?si=6lmg59dxIJVLtWUr>



UNAMI Year in Review 2023



Baghdad, 31 December 2023 – UNAMI’s Strategic Communications and Public Information Office recently summarized mission’s 2023 activities in a short video, entitled “UNAMI partnership with Iraq”.

2023 was an eventful year for the United Nations and its engagement with Iraq. From high-level visits to trainings and advice, UNAMI’s partnership with Iraq is enduring. Some 2023 highlights:

On his first visit to Iraq in six years, Secretary-General António Guterres expressed solidarity with Iraqis and recommitted the UN to supporting Iraq in its progress.

He emphasised that the “United Nations is totally committed to support the consolidation of the institutions in this country” and expressed his “confidence that Iraqis will be able to

overcome the difficulties and challenges they still face through an open and inclusive dialogue”.

The Secretary-General also visited the Jeddah Rehabilitation Centre in Iraq

where he met with returnees - mostly women and children - from the Al-Hol camp in northeast Syria – sending a clear message to all countries that also have nationals there: “they must step up their efforts to facilitate the safe and dignified repatriation of their citizens”.

Prior to the Secretary-General’s visit, the year started off with United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, Ms. Rosemary DiCarlo, making her inaugural visit to Iraq in January.

She met with officials in Baghdad and Erbil, and stressed in her meetings with civil society, women and youth representatives, the importance of greater inclusion of Iraqi women and youth as key decision-makers and valuable stakeholders in political, electoral and sustainable development processes for continued prosperity and



UNAMI Year in Review 2023 (continued)



stability in the country. Defending and protecting human rights for all, a core principle of the United Nations, was vocally manifested by UN High Commissioner for Human Rights



Volker Türk during the first such visit to Iraq in August 2023 during which he met a wide array of Iraqis.

Subjects of discussion included addressing the adverse effects of hate speech, misinformation and disinformation, advocating for empowerment of women and youth, tackling climate change and proposing solutions.

“Human rights must not be instrumentalized to divide us – human rights are what unites us, what brings us together as humanity, in dignity. Do not allow populist rhetoric to create more fractures in a society that has already experienced fragmentation. Disinformation campaigns, hate speech and incitement to violence must not be given free rein”.

Iraq is among the most climate-vulnerable countries in the world. Rising temperatures exacerbate the shrinking flow of the Rivers Tigris and Euphrates.

At the 2023 COP28, the UNIraq delegation stressed the urgency to support and empower Iraq's youth to tackle environmental challenges, address water scarcity, combat air pollution, and confront urgent climate

issues. Walking the talk, the United Nations in Iraq is reducing its own environmental footprint in Iraq by embracing modern efficient watering methods, optimizing the use of treated wastewater in the UN compounds. We aim soon to rely on renewable energy sources through a solar photovoltaic system for half of our operational needs.



2023 marked the 20th anniversary of the terrorist attack which targeted UN headquarters at the Canal Hotel in Baghdad, killing 22 colleagues and injuring over 100 others.



The tragic event on 19 August 2003 profoundly changed the way in which humanitarians operate – from being respected, to being targeted – and led to the adoption of World Humanitarian Day. Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert: “the past 20 years have brought about change in Iraq. Few would deny that it has been a very rough road. But throughout these years, the United Nations has not given up on its efforts to contribute to peace and stability throughout the country”.



“We acknowledge the people across the world who are working – sometimes in the most challenging of circumstances, and at great personal risk – we acknowledge the people who are working to assist those in dire need”.

UNAMI looks forward to the new year with a profound and clear sense of solidarity and confidence for increased progress and sustainable development for Iraq and its people.

As we leave 2023 behind, we leave you with inspiring stories from two talented youth from Mosul's old city – illustrating hope and triumph, demonstrating determination and dedication, to rise from the devastation of conflict to progress and stability.

See the video at <https://youtu.be/gS0quMsgW2Y?si=1boMVWiejkJaYIU>