

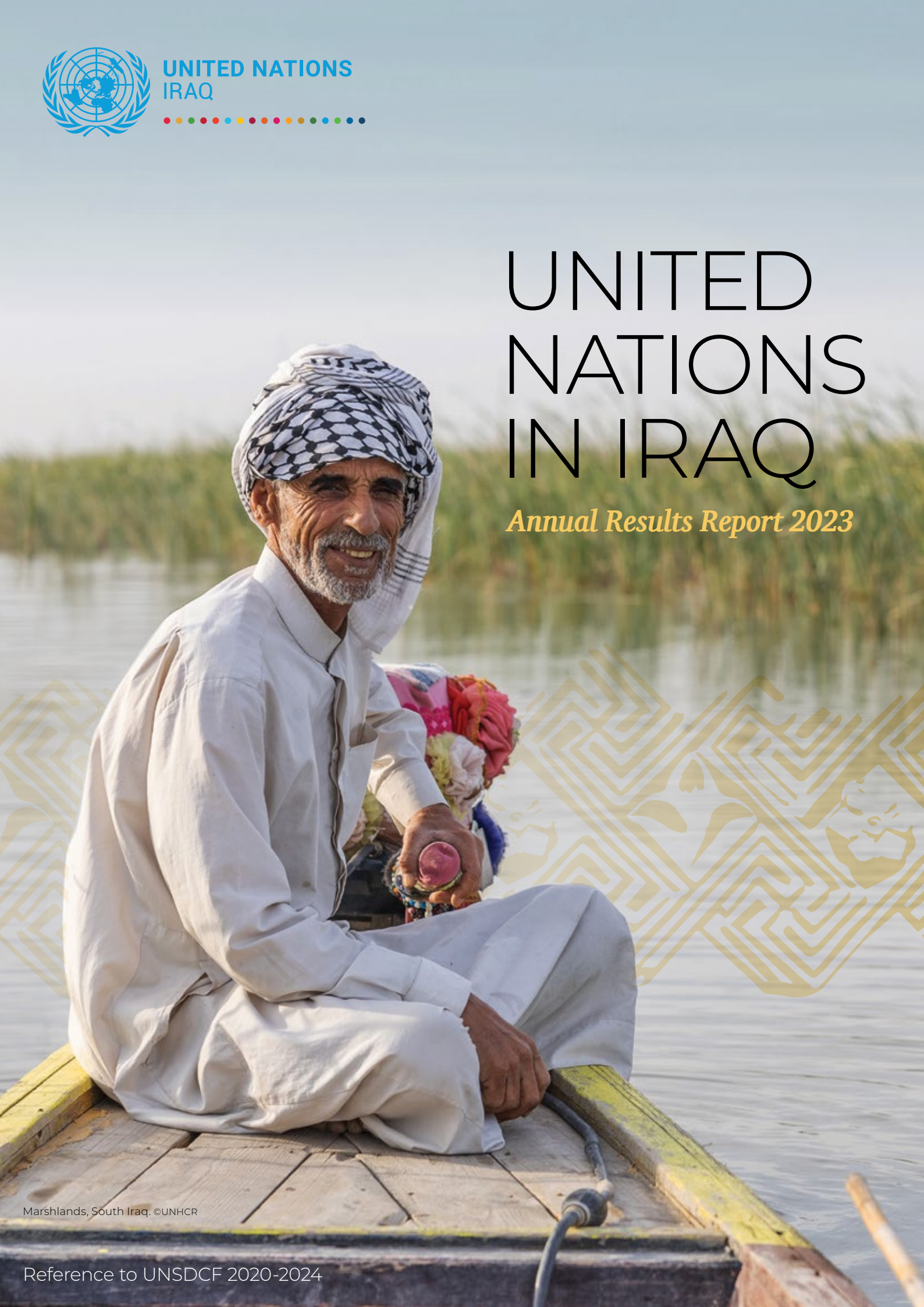


UNITED NATIONS  
IRAQ



# UNITED NATIONS IN IRAQ

*Annual Results Report 2023*



Marshlands, South Iraq. ©UNHCR

Reference to UNSDCF 2020-2024



# UNITED NATIONS IN IRAQ

*Annual Results Report 2023*

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# foreword

by the UN Resident Coordinator



Ghulam Mohammad Isaczai

As Resident Coordinator of the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) in Iraq, I am privileged to introduce the 2023 UN Annual Results Report. This document reflects the collective achievements of 22 UN entities in Iraq that are signatories to the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2020–2024. As we approach the final year of the Framework's timeframe, this report underscores our commitment to Iraq's journey towards peace, development and prosperity, and highlights our unified approach to sustainable development, humanitarian and peacebuilding efforts.

The year 2023 represented a crucial juncture in terms of promoting social cohesion, economic prosperity, institutional efficacy, resource management and the humanitarian–development transition, with the aim of providing lasting solutions for displaced populations across Iraq. Our efforts have led to significant legislative reforms and policy advancements, particularly in addressing violence against women and girls; enhancing healthcare; promoting agriculture; creating employment opportunities; and bolstering the nation's resilience to environmental challenges and its reconstruction of infrastructure in conflict-affected areas. We have also prioritized renewable energy, dignified solutions for internally displaced persons (IDPs), equality and sustainable development. Key legislative reforms spearheaded by the UNCT include pioneering social security legislation and the ratification of crucial international conventions. Initiatives like the Employment-Intensive Investment Programme have generated thousands of jobs, including for IDPs. The Iraqi National Education Strategy has been launched to address challenges in the education sector.

Environmental strides have been made through the revision of Iraq's Renewable Energy Law and the establishment of an Energy Transition Framework. These highlight Iraq's leadership in climate action at COP28. Collaboration with the Government of Iraq and development partners led to impactful conferences in Basra and Baghdad on climate change and water management, and culminated in Iraq joining the UN Water Convention. These

efforts, in partnership with the Government, have significantly improved living conditions for displaced and conflict-affected communities. They have ensured better access to services, facilitated safe returns and laid the groundwork for long-term recovery and development. Additionally, during the 2023 Summit on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the UN supported the Government in establishing the Iraq SDG Insight. It also organized a side-event titled 'Sustainable Reconstruction: A Policy Framework for Accelerating an Inclusive and Sustainable Recovery in the Arab States,' with the aim of enhancing awareness and fostering collaboration on sustainable reconstruction.

Looking ahead to 2024, our resolve to fast-track the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda is stronger than ever. The UNCT will actively advocate for use of the UN's Six Transitions Investment Pathways to deliver the SDGs. Aligning its efforts with the priorities set forth in the UN's Summit of the Future, the team will also work pragmatically to leverage strategic partnerships with government entities, civil society organizations and other stakeholders. Moreover, the UNCT will remain dedicated to supporting the general population census, tackling climate change, stimulating economic development and ensuring the safe and sustainable return of displaced Iraqis, among other priorities. Our strategic alliance with the Government of Iraq and our development partners is crucial for our continued success.

I extend my deepest gratitude, on behalf of the entire UNCT in Iraq, first and foremost to the Government of Iraq for its unwavering support and collaboration. Our appreciation also goes out to all our development partners for their invaluable contributions and solidarity. The path ahead underscores the necessity of multilateralism as we endeavour to rebuild for a more equitable, resilient and sustainable world. It is this spirit of shared responsibility and cooperation that fills us with hope for a more peaceful and prosperous Iraq in 2024 and beyond. Together, committed to advancing the SDGs for the benefit of all Iraqi people, we are paving the way towards a brighter future for Iraq.

# UNITED NATIONS COUNTRY TEAM IN IRAQ

The United Nations Country Team (UNCT) in Iraq, composed of 23 UN Agencies, Funds and Specialized Programmes, is dedicated to supporting Iraq's journey towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Guided by the principle of Leaving No One Behind, the UNCT, under the leadership of the Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General and Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, employs evidence-based actions and specialized expertise to enhance the lives and livelihoods of all Iraqis, with a particular focus on the most vulnerable and marginalized communities.

The operational blueprint of the UNCT is encapsulated in the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2020–2024, which lays out the shared development objectives of the UN in Iraq. This framework is

pivotal, outlining five strategic priorities ranging from achieving social cohesion, protection and inclusion to promoting natural resource management and climate change resilience. The overall aim is to achieve inclusive and sustainable economic growth and efficient institutional services.

Integrating the humanitarian, development and peace nexus within its collective work, the UNCT is aligned with Iraq's Vision 2030, the Kurdistan Regional Government's Vision for the Future and the National Development Plan, among other strategic documents. This synergy ensures that the UN's efforts are harmonized with national priorities and strategies, marking a transition from humanitarian assistance to sustainable development and peacebuilding, firmly rooted in the commitment to leave no one behind.



# KEY DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS

Partnership lies at the very core of the UN's pursuit of achievement of the SDGs in Iraq. In recognition of the pivotal role of coordination and collaboration among development partners, the UNCT in Iraq champions a unified approach to realizing the ambitious objectives outlined in the 2030 Agenda.

Alongside the support of our donors and the collaborative efforts of Iraq's government counterparts, partnerships with the private sector, civil society, international financial institutions and academia stand as pillars of our collective endeavour towards building a brighter future for the people of Iraq.

Key development partners include government, civil society, and private sector.



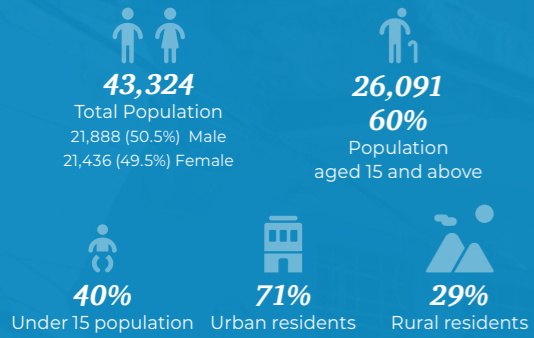
200 women graduate from a business training program in the agricultural food industry. ©UNDP

## FUNDING PARTNERS



# IRAQ AT GLANCE

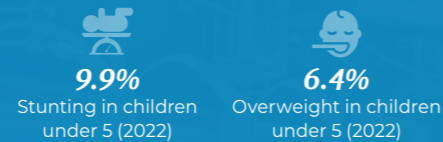
## Demographic Indicators



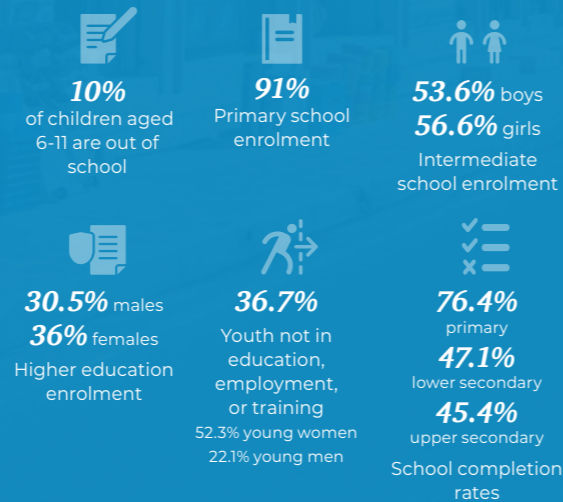
## Gender-Based Violence (GBV)



## Nutrition



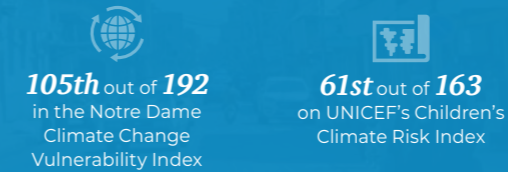
## Education



## Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH)



## Climate Change



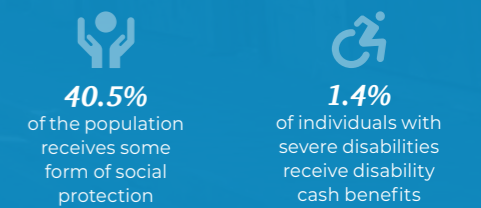
## Employment



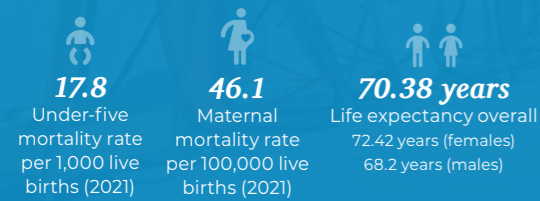
## Development and Governance Indicators



## Social Protection



## Health Indicators





## Chapter 1.

# COUNTRY CONTEXT

Iraq is at a pivotal point in its development journey, as it embarks on a path marked by significant opportunities and challenges. With its population projected to increase from 43 million in 2023 to an estimated 74.5 million by 2050, the nation faces the dual challenge of harnessing its demographic dividend while ensuring sustainable management of resources and equitable access to social services. This demographic shift, characterized by a youth-dominated population, underscores the urgency of creating robust economic and social frameworks that can accommodate and leverage this growth.

The governance landscape of Iraq has seen considerable strides towards reform and stability, especially in the wake of the October 2021 elections and the subsequent formation of a new government. This era has been marked by initiatives aimed at economic reform, enhancing social protection and investing in infrastructure, demonstrating a commitment to socioeconomic development. Yet further efforts to strengthen governance and enhance public trust are needed, as evidenced by the 43 per cent voter turnout in the 2021 elections, which underscored the need for a more transparent and inclusive political process.

Iraq's economy is dependent on the oil sector, which accounted for 61 per cent of real gross domestic product (GDP) in 2022. This illustrates the nation's economic strengths and vulnerabilities. The fluctuation of global oil prices and the challenges of economic diversification remain pressing issues. However, the Government's focus on fiscal management, as evidenced by government revenues reaching 46.4 per cent of GDP in 2022, and its efforts to stimulate private

sector growth underscore a strategic direction towards economic resilience and diversification. In the labour market, the unemployment rate was at 16.5 per cent in 2021 and youth unemployment was at 35.8 per cent. This further underlines the critical need to create employment opportunities, particularly for young Iraqis and women, whose labour force participation was reported at 10.6 per cent, compared with 68 per cent for men.

Socially, Iraq is working to overcome challenges in human rights, healthcare and education, areas essential to its sustainable development. Multidimensional poverty affects 47 per cent of children (8.7 million). This highlights the imperative of broadening social protection and access to quality services. Efforts to improve healthcare and education outcomes are evident, yet the need for continued investment and reform is highlighted by a 'learning crisis': a child born in Iraq today reaches only 41 per cent of their potential productivity. Environmental concerns and the impacts of climate change further complicate Iraq's development landscape. Iraq is highly susceptible to climate change, which increases the urgency of sustainable environmental management.

In navigating these complex challenges, Iraq's focus on economic diversification, social inclusion, participatory governance and environmental sustainability forms the cornerstone of its development strategy. By leveraging its human and natural resources, fostering resilience and promoting inclusive growth, Iraq aims to build a prosperous future that benefits all its citizens, with the support of the international community in achieving these ambitious goals.

<sup>1</sup> UNFPA - Based on the government population projections for 2023, the total population is estimated at 43 million.

<sup>2</sup> Projections of the population in 2050 come from UN DESA, Population Estimation Report 2022 (Link 1 and Link 2).

<sup>3</sup> Data from the Independent High Electoral Commission.

<sup>4</sup> ILO, Iraq Labour Force Survey 2021, July 2022.

<sup>5</sup> UNICEF, Climate Landscape Analysis for Children and Young People in Iraq, August 2023.

<sup>6</sup> World Bank, Building Forward Better to Ensure Learning for All Children in Iraq: An Education Reform Path, July 2021.

<sup>7</sup> As measured by the World Bank's Human Capital Index.



## Chapter 2.

# UN COOPERATION FRAMEWORK RESULTS

## OVERVIEW OF THE UN COOPERATION FRAMEWORK RESULTS

In 2023, the UNCT in Iraq, in close partnership with the Government of Iraq, made significant strides under the UNSDCF 2020–2024, aiming to support Iraq's national priorities in line with its development plans and the SDGs.

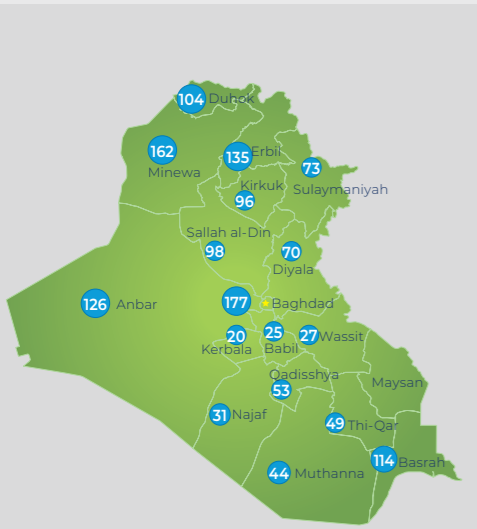
Through the collective efforts of 23 UN entities, the UNCT has substantially advanced across five strategic priorities, focusing on social cohesion, economic growth, efficient institutions and services, natural resource management and solutions to displacement. These efforts have facilitated crucial legislative reforms and policy advice in areas such as violence against women and girls, health, agriculture, and job creation. They have also bolstered the country's capacity in managing environmental challenges and rehabilitating infrastructure in conflict-affected regions. Efforts in promoting renewable energy and providing dignified solutions for displaced populations underscore the UNCT's commitment to catalysing transformative change, ensuring equality for all and promoting sustainable development.

These concerted efforts underscore a holistic and resilient strategy towards nurturing a thriving, equitable society in Iraq, setting a solid foundation for fulfilling the UNSDCF's goals and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The achievements documented in this report for 2023, the penultimate year of the current UNSDCF cycle, testify to the UNCT's impactful contribution to Iraq's sustainable progress and its enduring partnership with the Iraqi Government.



# UN COOPERATION FRAMEWORK RESULTS

# AND THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE SDGs



**UN PRESENCE IN IRAQ**  
(number of UNSDCF sub-outputs implemented in 2023)



### Strategic Priority 1

#### ACHIEVING SOCIAL COHESION, PROTECTION, AND INCLUSION

Legislative reforms were introduced, extending social security benefits to all workers, marking a first with regard to the provision of maternity and unemployment benefits. The year also saw over 16,000 cases of violence against women and girls addressed and significant advancements in civil documentation and asylum policies, reflecting a transformative approach towards an inclusive society.



### Strategic Priority 2

#### GROWING ECONOMY FOR ALL

The UNCT played a critical role in economic diversification through initiatives like the Employment-Intensive Investment Programme (EIIP), which created thousands of jobs across various sectors, including for internally displaced persons (IDPs) and Syrian refugees. Entrepreneurial programmes and financial inclusion initiatives were scaled up, empowering a wide array of Iraqi citizens with the skills and opportunities needed for economic advancement.



### Strategic Priority 3

#### PROMOTING EFFECTIVE, INCLUSIVE, AND EFFICIENT INSTITUTIONS AND SERVICES

The UNCT's efforts in streamlining service delivery mechanisms led to upgraded health information systems, enhancement of the Public Distribution System for food security and the implementation of the Educational Management Information System across several governorates. Legislative reforms and digital governance strategies were pivotal in establishing transparent, accountable governance and responsive public services.



### Strategic Priority 4

#### PROMOTING NATURAL RESOURCE AND DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT, AND CLIMATE CHANGE RESILIENCE

The UNCT's environmental initiatives culminated in the revision of Iraq's Renewable Energy Law and establishment of the Energy Transition Framework, fostering a conducive environment for renewable energy investment and positioning Iraq as a regional leader in climate action. These actions, highlighted at COP28, demonstrated a commitment to environmental stewardship and community empowerment.



### Strategic Priority 5

#### ACHIEVING DIGNIFIED, SAFE AND VOLUNTARY DURABLE SOLUTIONS TO DISPLACEMENT IN IRAQ

2023 was a landmark year in enhancing quality of life for displaced populations, with initiatives significantly improving access to essential services and facilitating safe returns. Key successes included the provision of safe drinking water to 960,000 people and extensive training in sustainable land management, aligning efforts with the broader SDGs.

COOPERATION FRAMEWORK  
PRIORITIES, OUTCOMES,  
AND OUTPUTS

Young girl from Sheikhan, at the youth center planting a seedling. ©UNICEF



# 1

## Strategic Priority 1

# ACHIEVING SOCIAL COHESION, PROTECTION AND INCLUSION

### Highlights of UN key results



**800,000**  
vulnerable children able  
to access continued  
learning



**45,600**  
individuals  
secured  
civil documents



**2,000**  
Land Occupancy  
Certificates  
distributed to Yazidis

### UNCT Allocated Resources for SDGs Linked to SP1



UN entities implementing Strategic Priority 1





Young IDP playing with kite. ©UNHCR

## 1.1 STRENGTHENED AND EFFECTIVE POLICIES AND SOCIAL SYSTEMS

- ✔ Improved the technical capacity of Iraq's tripartite constituents, including the Social Security Departments in Federal Iraq and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, through support to the development of the National Social Protection Strategy, informed by new evidence and governance mechanisms, marking a critical step towards a more inclusive social protection framework.
- ✔ Ratified the ILO Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention 1952 (No. 102), aligning Iraq with international labour standards and enhancing the social security framework for all workers.
- ✔ Enacted the new Social Security and Pension Law (No. 18 of 2023), extending social security coverage to all private sector workers, including informal workers, and introduced maternity, work injury and unemployment benefits for formal workers – a significant milestone in social protection policy.
- ✔ Launched the Iraq National Education Strategy 2022–2031, setting a decade-long roadmap for overcoming challenges in education and aligning the country with SDG 4.
- ✔ Developed the National School Feeding Policy to ensure sustainable child nutrition programmes under government management, enhancing student health and educational outcomes.
- ✔ Implemented the Male Engagement Strategy 2023–2026 to challenge norms and promote active male support for equality between women and men.
- ✔ Introduced the Child Marriage Strategy to combat early and forced marriages, focusing on legal reforms and community education to empower girls and protect their rights.

*The UN in Iraq has strengthened social systems and policies, accelerating the formulation of a comprehensive social protection strategy and the integration of international labour standards, laying the groundwork for equitable growth and resilience.*

- ✔ Facilitated the endorsement of the Shelter Standard Operating Procedure with comprehensive services, ensuring a standardized approach to providing shelter and support.
- ✔ Launched the National Strategy for Iraqi Women 2023–2030, focusing on women's political participation, protection of women and girls, economic empowerment and climate change initiatives.
- ✔ Guided the successful ratification of the Maritime Labour Convention 2006, set to come into force in March 2024.
- ✔ Enacted the new Social Security Law for Private Sector Workers, marking significant legislative reform that expanded legal coverage to include all workers, and introduced maternity and unemployment benefits for the first time.
- ✔ Developed the 'Iraq national strategy to prevent and reduce inequalities in the world of work for the years 2024–2028,' set for government endorsement, to address workplace discrimination and inequalities.



PDS Digitization. ©UNV

### *UN Volunteers: Driving social protection and digital innovation in Iraq*

In Iraq's Duhok governorate, a transformative journey led by 40 UN Volunteers is underway to digitize the Public Distribution System, improving the nation's social protection system for 97% of its populace. Spearheaded by the WFP and the Iraqi Ministry of Trade, the project is essential for advancing social support mechanisms. Volunteer Mohammed Bayar, using digital tools, registered up to 100 families daily for three months, focusing on more than data entry by connecting deeply with the community.

Prior to deployment, the volunteers received two days of training from the WFP to equip them with technical and interpersonal skills necessary for handling Iraq's diverse society. Volunteers like Dleen Sulaiman and Basma Taha gained invaluable insights into communication and understanding through interactions across various social groups, including those with disabilities. Their outreach extended to remote areas, enriching their perspectives and commitment.

This initiative exemplifies the power of community involvement in social change, showing the significant impacts of empathy, collaboration, and local participation in strengthening social protection systems and policies in Iraq.

## 1.2 EQUITABLE AND SUSTAINABLE ACCESS TO QUALITY PROTECTION AND SOCIAL PROTECTION SYSTEMS AND SERVICES

- ✓ Deployed and scaled a social safety net information system in Dohuk and the Kurdistan Region, enhancing social service case management and referrals.
- ✓ Trained 324 social workers on child-focused protections, strengthening the social workforce across 12 locations for vulnerable children and families.
- ✓ Ensured continued learning for over 800,000 vulnerable children, extended refugee education policies and established a nationwide Childcare Directorate with 44 protection units.
- ✓ Initiated the Violence Against Women and Girls Information Management System Task Force for data protection and analysis, alongside capacity development in juvenile rehabilitation and civil documentation facilitation, significantly reducing statelessness.
- ✓ Enhanced freedom of expression and safety for journalists, notably female journalists, through training on safety and security protocols, digital tools and platforms.
- ✓ Supported 16,000 cases reported to government authorities for violence against women and girls case management services and established multidimensional packages for survivors in Duhok, Kirkuk and Ninewa.
- ✓ Facilitated the inclusion of refugees in the National Financial Inclusion Strategy by the Central Bank of Iraq, improving economic inclusion.
- ✓ Established a single registry to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of social protection schemes by creating interoperability, linkages, data validation, unique identification processes and data protection, while addressing issues related to inclusion/exclusion errors, weak targeting, delayed processing and resource constraints.

*The UN has expanded social safety nets, trained social workers and established child protection units, fostering fair and resilient development.*



Back-to-Learning Campaign-Basra. ©UNICEF

*The UN in Iraq advances conflict prevention and social cohesion, assisting thousands with civil documents, Prevention of Violent Extremism plans and journalist support, while also championing land rights recognition and advocating for refugee frameworks to enhance protection and inclusion.*



IDP applying for civil documentations for him and his family. ©UNHCR

## 1.3 EFFECTIVE MECHANISMS THAT PREVENT, MITIGATE AND MANAGE CONFLICT, AND CONTRIBUTE TO SOCIAL COHESION AND PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE

- ✓ Secured civil documents for 45,600 individuals, facilitating access to crucial public services and reducing the known stateless population from 8,000 individuals to 233, significantly impacting protection and inclusion efforts.
- ✓ Through community-based protection efforts, reached over 36,000 individuals in large-scale consultations (50 per cent women), promoting empowerment and meaningful engagement in decision-making processes.
- ✓ Supported seven Prevention of Violent Extremism (PVE) sub-committees at the governorate level to develop action plans in line with the Iraq PVE Strategy, engaging 70 civil society organizations and 31 journalists on social cohesion, ethical reporting and peacebuilding.
- ✓ Developed platforms and training programmes to enhance online freedom of expression and the safety of journalists, particularly female journalists, with over 400 journalists, 280 judges and more trained on safety, security protocols and digital tools.
- ✓ Approved a legal decree recognizing the Yazidi minority land rights, a pivotal step towards acknowledging and protecting minority land rights in Iraq, with over 2,000 Land Occupancy Certificates issued to Yazidi community members in Ninewa governorate.
- ✓ Advocated and provided technical support to develop a robust asylum framework, introducing two new Administrative Instructions and a federal refugee bill, encompassing principles such as non-refoulement and comprehensive refugee definitions.
- ✓ Trained 25,601 people on explosive ordinance risk in affected areas in Ninewa and Basra, while safety messages are now included in primary and secondary school curricula.
- ✓ As a result of localization efforts to build the national capacity, enabled and accredited two national organizations to lead mine action response autonomously and clear complex explosive devices.



# 2

## Strategic Priority 2

# GROWING ECONOMY FOR ALL

### Highlights of UN key results

  
**38,510**  
 worker days generated, benefiting 1,108 job seekers

  
**31,832**  
 people trained in farming and agribusiness

  
**2,538**  
 entrepreneurs trained in business and financial literacy

  
**6,940**  
 individuals accessed micro loans

  
**3,989**  
 young women and men with improved digital skills

The UN collectively created **32,914 jobs**

FAO	<b>3,180</b>	UNMAS	<b>216</b>
ILO	<b>1,108</b>	WFP	<b>1,605</b>
ITC	<b>4,033</b>	UNESCO	<b>4,744</b>
UNDP	<b>2,679</b>	IOM	<b>14,914</b>
UNFPA	<b>435</b>		

### UNCT Allocated Resources for SDGs Linked to SP2



#### UN entities implementing Strategic Priority 2





Farmer using smart agricultural techniques introduced-Basra. ©FAO

## 2.1 IMPROVED ECONOMIC POLICIES AND LEGISLATION

- ✔ Supported the development of a national strategy to prevent and reduce inequality in the work environment, set for endorsement in Q1 2024 by the Government of Iraq and social partners, addressing workplace inequalities.
- ✔ Undertook a comprehensive study on Enabling Environment for Sustainable Enterprises to underscore the importance of a supportive environment for micro, small and medium enterprises, enhancing the entrepreneurial ecosystem.
- ✔ Established a specialized committee, including the Ministry of Trade, the Ministry of Industry, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the Ministry of Planning, the Iraqi Federation of Industries and the Union of Chambers of Commerce, to devise a formalization guide for small and medium enterprises in Iraq.
- ✔ With support from the Food Systems Coordination Hub, developed Iraq's National Pathway for Agrifood Systems Transformation, culminating in the submission of its Voluntary Progress Report in 2023, detailing strategies for food security and agricultural productivity.
- ✔ Supported the enhancement of technical and vocational education and training and higher education, broadening skills acquisition opportunities for youth.
- ✔ Facilitated the Ministry of Agriculture's development of a market-led sector strategy for the potato sector, resulting in the endorsement of Iraq's Potato Sector Strategy, aimed at sector growth and competitiveness.

*In Iraq, the UN drives economic advancement with initiatives to address workplace inequality, formulate national employment policies and support small and medium enterprises, fostering a conducive environment for growth and competitiveness.*

## 2.2 INCLUSIVE ACCESS TO AND ENGAGEMENT IN ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES

- ✔ Operationalized the Employment-Intensive Investment Programme (EIIP) in Federal Iraq and the Kurdistan Region, generating 38,510 worker days and aiding 1,108 job seekers, including IDPs, Syrian refugees and (24 per cent) women, enhancing job creation through public projects.
- ✔ Supported 27 private companies to enhance job creation and local market capacities.
- ✔ Supported 20 Vocational Training Centres across 14 governorates in Iraq. 5,350 individuals (44 per cent women) were trained and provided with in-kind productive assets and market support to improve incomes and employment opportunities. At household level, these efforts benefited over 33,100 people (50 per cent women).



Female entrepreneurship, Marshlands. ©UNHCR

### *Empowerment and innovation: Pioneering female entrepreneurship in Iraq*

Samar, a mother of five from Mosul, launched a sweets and pastries business with help from the UN financial inclusion initiative, which offers training and loans to entrepreneurs. She participated in a Financial Education program that covered financial management skills like setting goals, budgeting, and choosing savings products. With a loan from the National Bank of Iraq, Samar expanded her business, moving to a larger space and purchasing new machinery, enhancing her capacity to fulfill orders.

Her business not only boosted her personal growth but also created jobs for three more women, aiding local economy and empowerment. Recognized by her community for her resilience and progress, Samar encourages other women to pursue their entrepreneurial dreams, emphasizing the value of their creativity and innovation. She aims to continue growing her business in the future.

- ✔ Established the Start and Improve Your Business, Financial Literacy and Know Your Business programmes, reaching 2,538 entrepreneurs, notably empowering women and 700 youth from vulnerable communities, with 20 Ministry of Local Social Affairs officials and other stakeholders trained to further these efforts.
- ✔ Developed a financial inclusion initiative with the Central Bank of Iraq and Al Thiqa Microfinance Institution, providing access to loans for Iraqi entrepreneurs and Syrian refugees, resulting in over 1,380 direct jobs and aiding more than 6,940 individuals.
- ✔ Established three Satellite Employment Service Centres in Basra, registering 846 job seekers (28 per cent women), enhancing employment service accessibility.
- ✔ Empowered dairy farmer groups, particularly women, to engage in climate-smart, efficient, competitive and profitable livestock activities through the provision of EU-funded training on local climate-smart fodder cultivation and the use of feed supplements.
- ✔ Iraq participated in FAO's Global Action on One Country One Priority Product to diversify and develop the date palm sector, identifying value chain enhancement opportunities.
- ✔ Launched a programme with the Iraqi Engineers Syndicate to support agricultural sector microenterprises for young graduates, promoting entrepreneurship.
- ✔ Trained 4,033 young individuals in entrepreneurship and agribusiness, providing grants and mentoring for new ventures, fostering economic development.

*The UN in Iraq has driven inclusive economic participation, generating 38,510 worker days through the EIIP, training 5,350 individuals (44 per cent women) in Vocational Training Centres and empowering 2,538 entrepreneurs. Initiatives such as financial inclusion with the Central Bank have aided over 6,940 individuals, fostering sustainable livelihoods and economic resilience.*



Farmers from the Greenland Alliance. ©ITC

Supporting farmers with grants and smart farming solutions, Southern Iraq. ©IOM



- ✔ Established 20 new partnerships with private sector entities. Facilitated 23 transactions between buyers and farmer alliances, representing 40 tons of fresh produce equivalent to IQD 30 million, to promote local economic development and market linkages.
- ✔ Continued the Jousour programme, training vulnerable youth in digital and English skills, successfully integrating the programme into the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research and supporting 3,989 youth to enhance their employability.
- ✔ Delivered skills training to 825 adolescents and youth, including 390 individuals with disabilities, at governmental youth centres, thereby providing essential vocational training and enhancing employment prospects.
- ✔ Assisted 1,057 Iraqi farmers in Ninewa and Basra to form 10 agribusiness alliances, supporting their development and investment plans through block grants, fostering climate-smart agriculture.
- ✔ Provided training to 1,567 farmers in areas such as good agricultural practices and business operations, significantly improving farming practices and sustainability.
- ✔ Contributed to the Riyada initiative, facilitating financial literacy capacity-building for supporting unemployed Iraqi youth.
- ✔ Advocated for SDG 5 mainstreaming in mine action; women now take up 28 per cent of the technical roles within operational teams on UNMAS Iraq projects.
- ✔ Employed 216 individuals (104 women) from communities in Ninewa and Basra affected by explosive ordinance, integrating them into mine action operations.






Epi team train DOHs staff on proper sewage sample collection, Sulaymaniyah. ©WHO



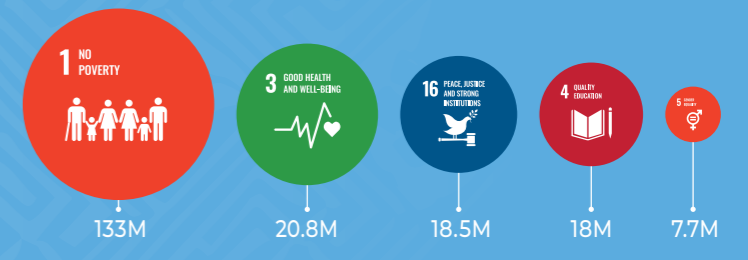
# Strategic Priority 3

## PROMOTING EFFECTIVE, INCLUSIVE, AND EFFICIENT INSTITUTIONS AND SERVICES

### Highlights of UN key results

-  **9.5 million** people's data on the reform of PDS
-  **1.3 million** students registered in the Educational Management Information System
-  **4** pieces of anti-corruption legislation reviewed to improve transparency and accountability
-  **2** digital health solutions (HeRAMS and DHIS2) established, streamlining service delivery
-  **Trachoma** eradicated nationwide

### UNCT Allocated Resources for SDGs Linked to SP3



UN entities implementing Strategic Priority 3







New-born with a birth defect and diagnosed with diaphragmatic hernia under observation in an incubator. ©UNICEF

### 3.1 INSTITUTIONS AND SYSTEMS TO DELIVER SERVICES

- ✔ In partnership with the Ministry of Health, enhanced the Health Resources and Services Availability Monitoring System (HeRAMS), leading to the establishment of a comprehensive baseline for resource allocation and health service planning.
- ✔ Implemented the District Health Information System 2 (DHIS-2) nationwide, enabling the collection, analysis and reporting of health data in real time to support decision-making process in health service provision.
- ✔ Supported strengthening the capacity of the National Centre for Occupational Health and Safety and bolstered preventative services by providing inspection equipment and portable tools.
- ✔ Established the National Training Centre at Iraq's Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs to enhance the capacities of labour and social security inspectors on labour inspection principles, occupational health and safety, and social security.
- ✔ Developed and launched the Electronic Case Management System to automate and modernize labour and social security inspection system.
- ✔ Supported reform of Iraq's Public Distribution System, with data on 2,031,438 households (9,490,851 individuals), making up about 23 per cent of the population, digitally updated, enhancing food security efficiency. Simultaneously, 171,336 individuals, either deceased or abroad, were removed from the system, streamlining resource use and advancing digitalization of Iraq's social assistance system.
- ✔ Facilitated the development and implementation of the Educational Management Information System in 10 governorates, covering 4,520 schools. This system now hosts detailed information on 1,290,233 students and 125,759 employees, significantly improving educational planning and resource allocation.

*In Iraq, the UN significantly strengthens institutions and systems to deliver services, ensuring efficient health resource allocation, effective educational management and robust anti-corruption measures, driving tangible progress in service delivery.*



Female searcher undertaking clearance drills demonstration, Ninewa. ©UNMAS

#### **Breaking barriers: A woman's journey in mine action**

'Nothing is more challenging than working to remove explosive ordnance, except perhaps challenging societal norms as a woman in a male-dominated field,' reflects Noor Munther, a pioneering figure in Iraq's mine action sector. Armed with a law degree, Noor embarked on a journey not just to clear mines but also to navigate and dismantle the societal expectations placed upon women in her field.

After joining an explosive ordnance risk education team nine years ago, Noor set out to educate communities on the dangers of explosive remnants, moving later to a clearance team where she engaged in non-technical surveys and hands-on clearance activities. Her dedication to professional growth led her to achieve Level 1 and 2 certifications in explosive ordnance disposal through UNMAS Iraq, as she edged closer to becoming a certified team leader.

By 2023, Noor's leadership and expertise had earned her the position of team leader with UNMAS Iraq's implementing partner in Sinjar, managing four deminers and a medical specialist. Despite the professional challenges in the mine action sector, Noor faced additional obstacles related to societal acceptance. Initially met with resistance, her perseverance and the visible impact of her work gradually shifted community attitudes, showcasing the vital role women play in mine action.

As Noor aims for Level 4 certification, her journey transcends the personal, highlighting the broader challenges and achievements of women striving to make a difference in traditionally male-dominated fields. Through her story, Noor illuminates the path for future women leaders.

- ✔ Promoted the Digital Government Vision and Foundation, enhancing digital capacities and ensuring the sustainability of public digital services.
- ✔ Conducted joint evaluations for implementation of the International Health Regulations 2005, facilitating workshops to assess and improve the national emergency care system.
- ✔ Offered technical support to the Ministry of Planning for more effective resource allocation for food security monitoring, supporting the Iraqi Household Socio-Economic Survey III.
- ✔ Supported the Central Statistical Organization and the Kurdistan Region Statistics Office to establish an inclusive Food Security Monitoring System by deploying an in-premises data collection system utilizing tablets and smartphones (MODA), providing hardware and software and conducting capacity-building on food security monitoring for officials.
- ✔ Collaborated with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and national partners to enhance the skills and livelihoods of marginalized populations, focusing on SDG 5-inclusive approaches within the Graduation Pathway project.
- ✔ Initiatives like the Big Catch-Up plan and specialized care programmes for diseases such as Crimean-Congo Haemorrhagic Fever, along with the establishment of the Oncology Care Centre at Duhok Emergency Hospital, significantly reversed setbacks in immunization programmes and addressed critical healthcare needs.
- ✔ Collaborated with the Ministry of Education to transition the school feeding programme to national ownership, ensuring sustainability and autonomy in addressing students' nutritional needs.
- ✔ Assisted the Ministry of Water Resource Management in analysing drought impacts on sustainable water resource management to revise the Strategy for Water and Land Resources in Iraq.

*In Iraq, the UN significantly strengthens institutions and systems to deliver services, ensuring efficient health resource allocation, effective educational management and robust anti-corruption measures, driving tangible progress in service delivery.*



Two-month-old baby girl is receiving her vaccine at Al Shuaibi Primary Health Care Center. ©UNICEF

### 3.2 IMPROVED CAPACITY TO LEAD, PARTICIPATE IN AND CONTRIBUTE TO THE DELIVERY OF EQUITABLE AND RESPONSIVE SERVICES

- ✔ Developed and implemented comprehensive referral guidelines on violence against women and girls and updated Iraq's National Mental Health Strategy, focusing on evidence-based, SDG 5-sensitive approaches to enhance care and support for survivors.
- ✔ Conducted extensive capacity development and training for hundreds of healthcare providers and law enforcement officers on suicide prevention, risk assessment and SDG 5-sensitive practices, directly improving the skills necessary for effective and compassionate service delivery.
- ✔ Achieved the eradication of trachoma in Iraq, a landmark success in public health, through rigorous evaluation and sustained health intervention efforts, marking a significant milestone towards eliminating neglected tropical diseases in the region.
- ✔ Collaborated with over 60 stakeholders to develop a national school feeding policy and supported the Ministry of Education in finalizing an implementation plan for Social Behaviour Communication Change activities, promoting nutrition education in schools.
- ✔ Partnered with national government entities to bolster school feeding management, providing technical assistance, policy support and training. This enhanced efficiency, fostered local ownership and aligned with Iraq's goals of self-reliant service delivery.
- ✔ Provided technical support to the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government through detailed Land Use Land Coverage analysis, essential for mapping land usage, quantifying changes over time and identifying drivers of these changes to support sustainable ecosystem services planning.
- ✔ Strengthened the Ministry of Agriculture's capacity in mapping crop types through the use of innovative solutions for informed resource allocation and sustainable agriculture.
- ✔ Addressing societal barriers to female involvement in mine action, UNMAS advocated for enhanced female participation in technical training. Dedicated women-only Explosive Hazard First Response courses saw increased enrolment, marking progress towards inclusivity. Mixed training courses welcomed 37 women, who all successfully completed their training.



Mangrove samplings nursery, Basra. ©WFP




# 4

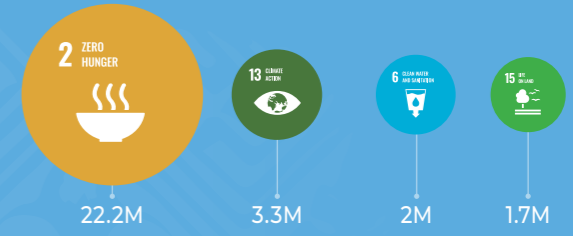
## Strategic Priority 4

# PROMOTING NATURAL RESOURCE AND DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT, AND CLIMATE CHANGE RESILIENCE

### Highlights of UN key results

 <b>960,000</b> people gained access to safe drinking water in Southern Iraq	 Iraq's <b>Renewable Energy Law</b> revised and adopted in 2023	 Over <b>300</b> national stakeholders trained in sustainable land management
 Nationwide "green spirit" campaign reached <b>15 million</b> individuals	 Trained <b>150</b> youth to support solar systems	 <b>700</b> families supported with solar kits in the Marshlands

### UNCT Allocated Resources for SDGs Linked to SP4



UN entities implementing Strategic Priority 4



Local communities navigate the serene waters of the Iraqi marshes. ©UNDP



## 4.1 STRENGTHENED POLICIES AND FRAMEWORKS FOR MANAGING NATURAL RESOURCES, DEVELOPING RENEWABLE RESOURCES AND INCREASING RESILIENCE

- ✔ Pioneered the Kurdistan Region's climate action pathway by developing the Nationally Determined Contribution roadmap, Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions and the Local Adaptation Plan, directly contributing to the national climate change strategy.
- ✔ Successfully collaborated with the Parliamentary Committee on Electricity and Energy to revise and adopt Iraq's Renewable Energy Law in 2023, a pioneering legislative framework promoting renewable energy investment and development.
- ✔ Spearheaded the review and updating of the national strategic framework for drought risk management through the pillars of enhancing drought monitoring and early warning systems, drought vulnerability and risk assessment, and drought preparedness mitigation and response within the water sector.
- ✔ Spearheaded the submission of the Renewable Energy Incentive Framework, catalysing renewable energy investments through strategic public and private sector engagements at both federal and regional levels.
- ✔ Jointly crafted the Energy Transition Framework with the Government, establishing a ground-breaking multi-stakeholder platform that introduced a robust de-risking mechanism to elevate renewable energy financing.
- ✔ Amplified Iraq's climate advocacy at COP28 by setting up its inaugural Pavilion, empowering Iraqi negotiators and 16 youth delegates with targeted workshops and producing the 'Handbook for Iraq's Delegation to COP,' a critical resource for ongoing and future climate negotiations.

*In Iraq, the UN strengthens natural resource management with pioneering climate action, legislative advancements in renewable energy and strategic frameworks for drought risk and sustainable land management, fostering resilience and renewable energy partnerships.*

- ✔ Released the Climate Landscape Analysis for Children, pinpointing four key areas – climate evidence generation, youth empowerment, addressing water scarcity and promoting renewable energy partnerships – setting a strategic direction for child rights.
- ✔ Led legislative advancements in natural resource management, evidenced by the adoption of the Environmental Strategy and the National Sustainable Land Management (SLM) Strategy and Action Plan, crucial for agriculture and marshland conservation.
- ✔ Deployed SLM training, enhancing the capacity of national decision-makers to champion and implement SLM policies, while introducing innovative practices in conservation agriculture and marshland conservation to over 300 national stakeholders.



Water recycling project. ©UNICEF

### *Iraq's youth-led journey towards environmental sustainability*

My message to the young individuals and my fellow female colleagues driven to address water crises and climate change is to persist and never surrender", declares Shayma Faramarz, a pioneering 26-year-old engineer from the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, highlighting the crucial role of youth in environmental sustainability.

Shayma is a key figure in youth-driven environmental efforts, particularly through her work on a UNICEF-supported water recycling project. Her story exemplifies the active role of Iraqi youth in combating climate change, highlighted during International Youth Day with the launch of a campaign promoting 'Green Skills for Youth.' This campaign, supported by various entities, aims to empower Iraqi youth to lead eco-friendly initiatives.

Activities spearheaded by these young activists include a plastic collection drive in Baghdad and a photography competition in Mosul, showcasing the impacts of climate change. Additionally, a national tree-planting campaign and the 'Less Plastic' online campaign are furthering Iraq's sustainable development goals.

These grassroots efforts, along with UN-supported climate information groups and water taskforces, are pivotal in Iraq's journey towards sustainability and highlight the significant contributions of women like Shayma in environmental stewardship.

## 4.2 ENHANCED THE ENGAGEMENT OF PEOPLE, SUBNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS, CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND THE ENVIRONMENT

- ✔ Launched the Inter-Ministerial Climate Information Working Group, integrating efforts from the Ministry of Environment, the Ministry of Planning and other relevant ministries, to produce actionable climate outlooks, enhancing the nation's disaster preparedness and early warning capabilities.
- ✔ Bolstered collaboration among national institutions via the Green Growth Committee, involving the Ministries of Environment and Planning, to drive sustainable development and green growth policies, impacting cross-sectoral environmental governance.
- ✔ Facilitated transboundary water dialogues, enhancing water diplomacy efforts with

academia and non-governmental organizations from Türkiye and Iran, strengthening regional cooperation and fostering sustainable water management strategies.

- ✔ Conducted a pivotal financial analysis for the Central Bank of Iraq, unlocking a significant US\$ 750 million renewable energy financing initiative, marking a transformative step in the country's sustainable energy finance landscape.
- ✔ Empowered civil society through targeted capacity-building and joint programming, notably enhancing climate literacy among journalists and promoting active engagement of youth and the private sector in sustainable agricultural innovations.



Sustainable farm that uses hydroponic agriculture. ©UNDP

### *In Iraq, the UN strengthens natural resource management with pioneering climate action, legislative advancements in renewable energy and strategic frameworks for drought risk and sustainable land management, fostering resilience and renewable energy partnerships.*



Sustainable agricultural practices with solar-powered wells. ©UNDP

- ✔ Advocated for and achieved the Government of Iraq's endorsement of the Declaration on Children, Youth and Climate Action, emphasizing the vital role of young people in shaping a sustainable and resilient future for Iraq.
- ✔ Initiated a comprehensive transboundary strategy with Kuwait to address challenges related to sand and dust storms, ecosystem restoration and desertification, reinforcing Iraq's commitment to environmental diplomacy and regional cooperation, underscored by Iraq's accession to the 1992 UN Transboundary Water Convention.
- ✔ Launched a nationwide 'green spirit' communication campaign, achieving an estimated outreach through six TV channels and two radio channels of 15 million individuals, significantly raising public awareness on climate change and environmental sustainability.
- ✔ Supported 700 indigenous people in the Marshlands by providing solar kits, reinforcing inclusive support and energy access for all communities.
- ✔ Achieved significant water security advancements in Southern Iraq, with 960,000 residents in Basra gaining access to safe drinking water, through strategic implementation of the water security project.
- ✔ Provided comprehensive support to over 300 farmers in drought-prone areas, through the distribution of drought-resilient seeds and modern irrigation tools, including solar systems for irrigation, enhancing the climate resilience of rural communities and supporting sustainable agriculture practices.
- ✔ Established a network of 150 trained youth to support solar energy system operation in the Marshlands, while 700 families with poor energy access received solar kits.
- ✔ Advanced wastewater treatment and non-revenue water management in Baghdad and Ninewa, with the establishment of eight wastewater treatment units in Baghdad, significantly enhancing public health and environmental sustainability for 3.5 million residents.
- ✔ Restored ecosystems in Southern Iraq, directly addressing the sources of two major hotspots responsible for up to 40 per cent of the sand and dust storms affecting Arabian Gulf countries.
- ✔ Strengthened government capacity on the UNFCCC Paris Agreement framework around Article 6 on carbon markets and exploring the feasibility of nature-based solutions to enhance social economic opportunities and food security.

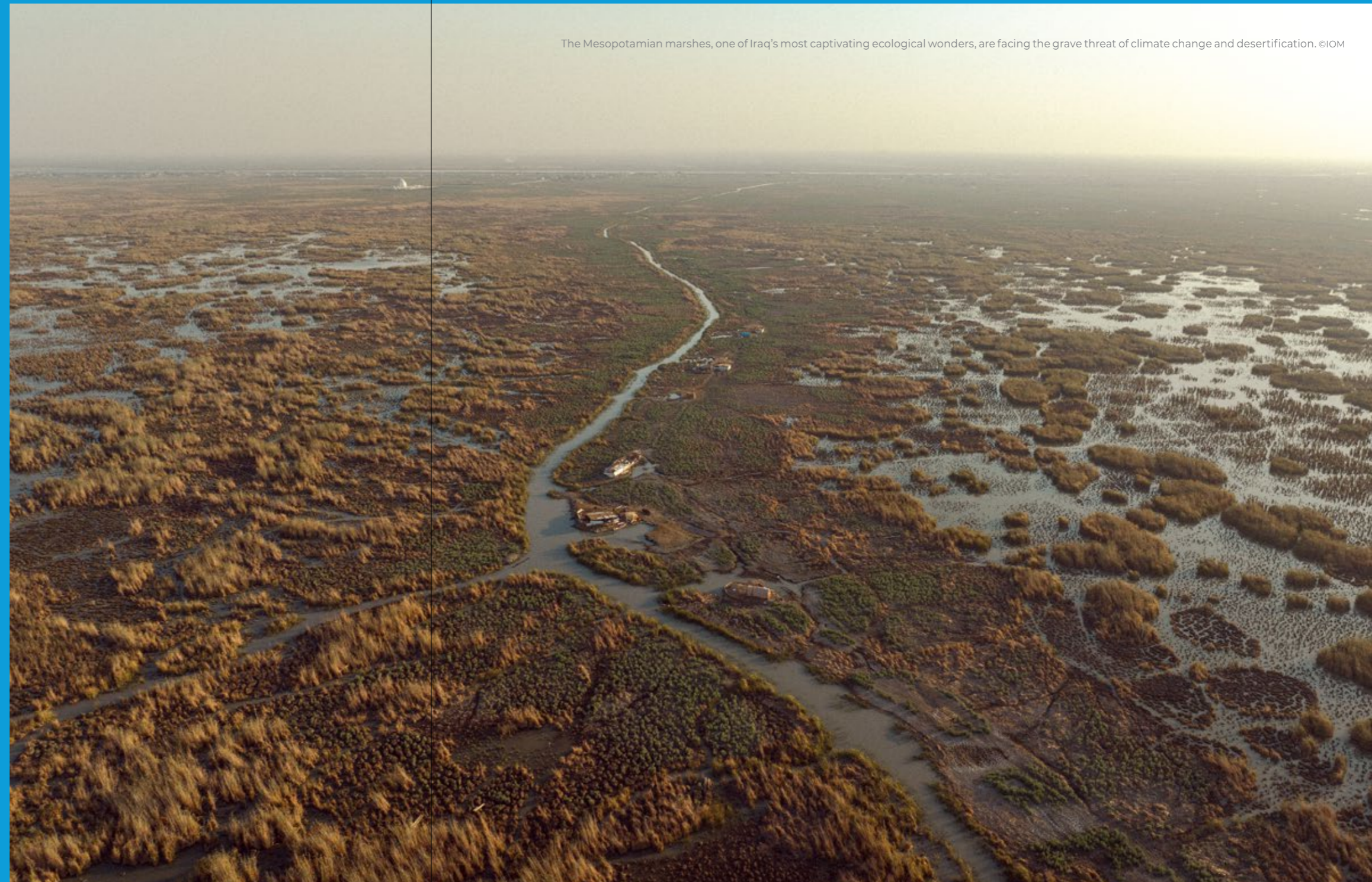
### *2023, a year of impact: UN in Iraq spearheading climate resilience and water diplomacy*

In a year marked by profound environmental and developmental challenges, the UNCT in Iraq, under the leadership of Resident Coordinator (RC) Ghulam Isaczai, has catalysed significant advancements in Iraq's response to climate change and water crises. The following highlight the key achievements and strategic initiatives jointly driven by the UNCT that have shaped policy and forged pathways for sustainable development and regional cooperation.

At COP28, Iraq reinforced its global climate commitments through strategic actions led by the Resident Coordinator and the United Nations Country Team. These actions included integrating water, food, and energy security into national policies, focusing on reducing gas flaring, and promoting renewable energy. This engagement demonstrated Iraq's dedication to meaningful environmental stewardship.

The UN is actively advancing policy, notably in renewable energy, and supporting Iraq's shift from an oil-based to a green economy. This includes helping Iraq develop its National Adaptation Plan and prepare for its 2025 Nationally Determined Contribution submission. Additionally, the UN was instrumental in the 2023 revision and adoption of Iraq's Renewable Energy Law, a crucial step for increasing renewable energy investment.

The UN's efforts have set Iraq on a path towards greater climate sustainability and resilience. These initiatives reflect a commitment to tackling pressing environmental issues and underscore the UN's critical role in fostering sustainable development in Iraq.



The Mesopotamian marshes, one of Iraq's most captivating ecological wonders, are facing the grave threat of climate change and desertification. ©IOM



# 5

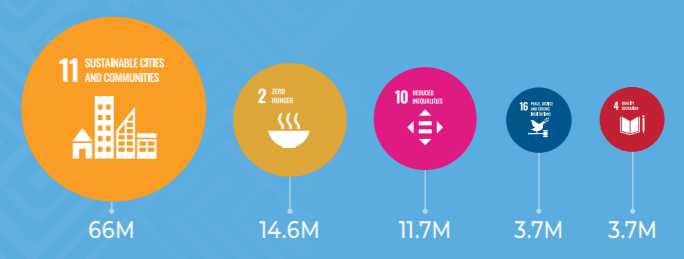
## Strategic Priority 5

# ACHIEVING DIGNIFIED, SAFE AND VOLUNTARY DURABLE SOLUTIONS TO DISPLACEMENT IN IRAQ

### Highlights of UN key results



### UNCT Allocated Resources for SDGs Linked to SP5



UN entities implementing Strategic Priority 5





Participants engage in Farmer Field School training on Date Palm cultivation, Basra. ©FAO

## 5.1 STABILIZATION, DEVELOPMENT AND PEACEBUILDING INITIATIVES

- ✔ Transformed living conditions for over 3,000 individuals in Ninewa governorate, facilitating their return from displacement and significantly improving their quality of life.
- ✔ Restored essential WASH infrastructure, benefiting nearly 43,000 people, thereby ensuring their access to clean water and sanitation facilities, foundational to public health and dignity.
- ✔ Revitalized local economies and supported livelihoods by constructing three marketplaces with almost 40 shops, directly benefiting nearly 18,000 individuals and fostering a sustainable ecosystem for vulnerable farmers and entrepreneurs.
- ✔ More than 300 core units constructed, directly addressing the critical housing shortage and laying the groundwork for community revival.
- ✔ Enhanced educational opportunities for nearly 1,000 students through the rehabilitation of five schools, laying a foundation for future generations to contribute to Iraq's growth and stability.
- ✔ Installed 600 solar street poles across 10.4 km in Anbar, illuminating essential roads and enhancing night-time safety and mobility for an estimated 39,000 residents (48.7 per cent women).
- ✔ Achieved significant milestones in water security by completing six water treatment plants in Anbar, directly benefiting 49,657 individuals (48.7 per cent women) with clean drinking water and substantially reducing the risk of water-borne diseases.

### *UN-led initiatives in Ninewa and Anbar stabilize communities, providing essential infrastructure, revitalizing economies, enhancing education and preserving cultural heritage, fostering stability and peacebuilding.*

- ✔ Contributed to socioeconomic development and cultural preservation by rehabilitating historical houses, reconstructing of the first child friendly school and nearly completing the reconstruction of key historical landmarks in Mosul, as well as upgrading of public urban infrastructures and heritage buildings in Basra and Mosul, and enhancing of heritage sites for tourism development in KRI, thus creating over 4,619 jobs and providing specialized training for 137 individuals in heritage rehabilitation skills.
- ✔ Assisted 400 women and men from forcibly displaced and host communities to complete Work-Based Learning programmes, covering 18 occupations, to equip youth with market-relevant skills.
- ✔ Fostered social cohesion and cultural identity by establishing a Community Information and Cultural Centre in Mosul, attracting over 67,122 visitors, reinforcing the community's engagement in preserving its rich heritage.



Rehabilitating water facilities. ©UNOPS

### *Renewing hope in Sinjar: Solar-powered solutions for Iraq's water crisis*

'After the project, we felt relieved. Now, we have clean and sterilized water,' shares Mohammed Sayir from Hardan Sagheer village in Sinjar, Ninewa governorate. This change came about through a UNOPS project, funded by the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation, aimed at rehabilitating water facilities in areas severely impacted by conflict. The initiative brought significant improvements to the remote and mountainous district, where the lack of surface water had left communities reliant on contaminated groundwater.

The project entailed drilling two new wells up to 200 metres deep, reaching potable water aquifers and refurbishing distribution tanks, benefiting over 1,000 households in Nia'ainia'a, Gulat, Garshabak and Hardan Sagheer villages. 'The water was undrinkable, causing diseases. We used to buy a 1,000-litre water tank for IQD 10,000 [about US\$ 8], barely lasting a few days,' Sayir recalls, highlighting the dire pre-project water situation and the financial strain on families.

To ensure the sustainability of the water stations, UNOPS integrated renewable energy solutions by installing solar systems for the wells and providing training for local operators. This approach not only addressed immediate needs but also laid the foundation for long-term water security in Sinjar.

Sayir expresses gratitude towards the organizations involved, emphasizing the project's role in encouraging the return of displaced people to their communities by ensuring access to essential resources like water and electricity. This initiative underscores the importance of sustainable infrastructure in post-conflict recovery and community resilience in Iraq.



- ✔ Completely rehabilitated 343 shelters across Anbar and Ninewa, providing homes for 2,074 individuals (996 women), allowing families displaced by conflict to rebuild their lives with dignity and stability.
- ✔ Provided resilience-building and livelihood support to 11,835 people in conflict-affected regions, including training and asset rehabilitation. Over 49 per cent of households, including 45 per cent women-headed households, benefited from environmental improvements, notably in Anbar, Salah Al-Din and Ninawa governorates.
- ✔ Provided Multipurpose Cash Assistance to 7,970 people in seven governorates to access civil documentation, supported by protection actors, facilitating integration into national social protection mechanisms.
- ✔ Provided mental health and psychosocial support services to 21,050 individuals (12,558 women).
- ✔ Supported the development and launch of seven plans of action to localize Iraq's national PVE strategy to seven districts.
- ✔ Supported 1,270 survivors of genocide to apply for compensation and strengthened the capacity of survivors' networks.
- ✔ Assistance with flights and departures was provided for 3,506 resettlement beneficiaries traveling to 11 countries, with the highest number of refugees going to Australia, Canada, Norway, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America.
- ✔ Enabled safe access to more than 2,502,240 square metres of agricultural lands and houses and removed 5,196 explosive items.

**UN initiatives in Iraq promote durable solutions through capacity development on sustainable urban practices, distribution of land certificates to vulnerable populations and strategic support for IDP return.**



A Syrian refugee baker-Erbil. ©UNHCR



Syrian refugee working as a tourist guide at the Erbil Citadel. ©UNESCO

**5.2 POLICIES, STRATEGIES AND PLANS TO ACHIEVE DURABLE SOLUTIONS**

- ✔ With the Government of Iraq, established Joint Coordination Forums (JCFs) in all five conflict-affected governorates, co-chaired by local authorities to resolve protracted displacement. Serving as governorate-level coordination mechanisms, these forums ensure effective communications and a transition towards sustainable solutions to internal displacement that aligns with national priorities and brings together humanitarian, stabilization, development and peacebuilding actors with governorate authorities.
- ✔ The Sinjar Area-based Coordination group actively operates in Sinjar and Ba'aj districts, fostering collaboration between local authorities and the international community to develop durable solutions for IDPs and returnees.
- ✔ Developed capacity of 300 decision-makers and community members on housing, land and property rights, integrating sustainable practices in construction and urban management that incorporate renewable energy, efficient water use and waste management.
- ✔ The Durable Solutions architecture in Iraq is transitioning towards a more government-led approach, with adjustments to increase the involvement of government authorities in forums and taskforces. A new Durable Solutions Road Map is being developed as a strategy for ending protracted displacement, in alignment with the National Plan. Co-created by the Ministry of Migration and Displacement, the Road Map seeks to enhance political engagement at federal, governorate and municipal levels, while promoting local ownership and coordination through governorate-level JCFs and collaborative efforts between national authorities and co-chairs. The framework is set for launch in early 2024.



# ONE UN IRAQ

## COHERENCE, EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCIES



### BUSINESS EFFICIENCIES

The Operations Management Team in Iraq embarked on the Business Operations Strategy (BOS) Annual Review, aligned with the efficiency agenda. A significant development this year is the integration of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) into the BOS framework as a primary service provider for other UN agencies in Iraq, notably in Baghdad and Erbil.

Progress against the annual objectives outlined in the BOS has been significant, showcasing enhanced economies of scale, diminished transaction costs, increased agility and fortified contractor relationships. This progress is attributable to concerted procurement efforts, such as joint solicitations that leverage collective buying power, thus ensuring greater value for money. Notably, the collaborative preparation of several tenders by the Procurement, Administration, Finance and ICT Working Groups for services has led to Long-Term Agreements, accruing a total cost avoidance of US\$ 6,531,969.

The discrepancy between the anticipated 2023 cost savings of US\$ 389,297 and the actual cost avoidance of US\$ 6,698,716 highlights the substantial impact of incorporating UNAMI services into the BOS activities later in the year. This strategic inclusion is anticipated to further enhance the coherence, quality and efficiency of UNCT operations in Iraq.



### COMMUNICATING AS ONE UN

Throughout 2023, under the Joint Communications Strategy 2020–2024, the UN in Iraq elevated the visibility of its UNSDCF through diverse advocacy efforts, including conferences, media appearances and opinion pieces, led by the RC and UNCT. Collaborative commemorations of key UN observances, such as International Women's Day and International Youth Day, bolstered awareness of the UN's role in supporting Iraq's sustainable development and the achievement of the SDGs. A notable social media campaign during the SDG Summit further amplified this message.

In alignment with the decision to scale down international humanitarian responses in Iraq by 2022, OCHA spearheaded the UN in Iraq Joint Communications Strategy on the Humanitarian–Development Transition for 2023, crafted with the Humanitarian Country Team and the Iraq Strategic Communications Group. This strategy, highlighted by the #BeyondHumanitarianAid digital campaign from 6 August to 5 September 2023, successfully communicated the shift towards development efforts, garnering around 900,000 views and exemplifying the UN's unified approach to facilitating Iraq's transition.



## DISABILITY INCLUSION

The UNCT in Iraq advanced disability inclusion across its operations, policies and frameworks in 2023, demonstrating a steadfast commitment to fostering an inclusive environment for persons with disabilities. The UNCT established a coordination group co-chaired by ILO and UNICEF, which, alongside the UNCT Disability Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan, reviewed and consulted extensively to ensure disability inclusion permeated all levels of operation and planning. A National Disability Inclusion Strategy is also in the pipeline, poised to enhance collaboration with disability organizations for consultations and capacity development purposes. The inclusion efforts also extended to the development of the CCA and the implementation of the UNSDCF.

Moreover, the UNCT demonstrated proactive engagement and collaboration with organizations of persons with disabilities, enhancing the inclusivity and accessibility of UN premises and services for persons with disabilities. Such efforts were aimed at not only creating a more accessible physical environment but also ensuring that disability inclusion is promoted through UNCT coordination mechanisms, joint programmes and humanitarian planning and response. Through consultations, workshops and capacity development initiatives, the UNCT has laid a strong foundation for continued progress in disability inclusion, underpinned by a commitment to meaningful engagement with governmental and non-governmental actors and the integration of disability considerations into its human resources practices and capacity development strategies.



## PREVENTION OF SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE

In 2023, the UNCT completed a comprehensive risk assessment relating to sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA). This led to the establishment of a targeted strategy for risk management and mitigation. Enhanced leadership dialogues fortified the UN's standards of conduct and advocacy for a speak-up culture. Protective measures were amplified through the reinforcement of whistleblower policies, and internal and external support networks for SEA victims were strengthened. Additionally, a robust referral system was implemented to streamline victim assistance and collect feedback on service efficacy. Continuing education on SEA prevention was prioritized, and reporting mechanisms, including a new hotline, were established to facilitate prompt and transparent handling of allegations.



## HUMAN RIGHTS

The UNCT in Iraq demonstrated a strong commitment to human rights through the establishment of dedicated capacity and the implementation of a human rights engagement strategy, which led to strategic discussions and corresponding actions to enhance stakeholders' capacity for human rights protection. The UNCT engaged in joint advocacy initiatives aimed at enhancing respect for and protection of human rights, aligning domestic laws with international standards and supporting national institutions and civil society to promote human rights. Engagements with UN human rights mechanisms, including the Universal Periodic Review, treaty bodies and special procedures, were utilized to inform UN programming and advocacy. Recommendations from these mechanisms were integrated into the CCA, to embed human rights firmly within the UNCT's strategic and operational framework.



## YOUTH 2030

In 2023, the UNCT in Iraq underscored its commitment to youth empowerment and inclusion within its strategic framework, demonstrating significant progress in integrating youth-focused initiatives. A youth situational analysis was incorporated within the Common Country Analysis (CCA) 2023, identifying critical gaps in policies, programme coverage, quality and equity, thereby laying a foundational understanding for targeted interventions. This strategic inclusion evidences a deliberate effort to foreground youth considerations, enhancing the responsiveness of programming to the unique needs and challenges facing the youth demographic. The year also saw robust engagement and participation initiatives, with the UNSDCF Joint Annual Work Plan featuring a comprehensive array of activities across the Youth 2030 areas. The appointment of a full-time youth focal point within the UNCT further underscored a dedicated commitment to streamlining and enhancing youth programming, ensuring focused oversight and coordination of youth-centric initiatives.

The UNCT also made substantial strides in supporting the Government to strengthen capacities for youth engagement and development, particularly in the design and delivery of data-driven Leave No One Behind strategies within national sectoral plans. This effort was complemented by initiatives to enhance policy coherence across youth-relevant sectors, underpinned by comprehensive analytical reports and policy recommendations. Capacity development support extended to national institutional structures further facilitated multisectoral and multistakeholder coordination of youth programmes, emphasizing governance, planning, budgeting and reporting mechanisms.

An exemplary demonstration of UNCT support towards enhancing the capacity of Iraqi youth was evident in the inaugural Iraqi youth delegation's participation in COP28. This participation stands as a testament to the collaborative efforts between the Iraqi Government and various UN agencies. Together, they successfully selected, trained and provided comprehensive support to 16 exceptional young individuals from across the nation, empowering them to effectively represent Iraq on a global platform. These concerted efforts not only elevated the profile of youth within national development strategies but also ensured a structured and effective approach to addressing youth-specific challenges and opportunities, contributing meaningfully to the realization of the Youth 2030 objectives.



# PARTNERSHIPS AND FINANCING THE 2030 AGENDA

In Iraq, the UNCT collaborates with a multitude of partners across various sectors to advance the development agenda, showcasing a shared commitment to promoting the SDGs and enhancing the prospects for all Iraqis.

Central to the UN's efforts is its robust partnership with the Government of Iraq, which serves as a cornerstone for driving policy-making, capacity-building and service delivery initiatives. The UN collaborates closely with government entities at all levels, from the Prime Minister's Office to local governorate institutions. This ensures alignment with national priorities and maximizes resources for SDG attainment. In 2023, renewed efforts to ensure a smooth transition from humanitarian action to development assistance led to the establishment of JCFs in conflict-affected governorates. These represent platforms for dialogue and coordination between government officials, international stakeholders and local actors to address humanitarian, stabilization, development and peacebuilding challenges.

Furthermore, the UN has leveraged partnerships with the private sector to drive economic growth and job creation. For example, collaborations with business development service providers have facilitated the implementation of business management tools, nurturing entrepreneurship among women and youth from displaced and host communities. Through alliances with market actors like PepsiCo, Carrefour and other supermarkets,

the UN has enabled smallholder farmers to access lucrative markets, fostering sustainable agricultural practices and bolstering economic resilience. To date, the UN has established 10 functional agribusiness alliances, bringing together over 1,500 horticulture and poultry farmers and forming sustainable partnerships with various private sector buyers. This approach has resulted in farmers benefiting from prices that are over 90 per cent higher than standard rates, ensuring a mutually advantageous outcome for all stakeholders involved.

Moreover, the UN in Iraq has forged impactful partnerships with universities across Iraq and international academic institutions to facilitate skill development programmes, research endeavours and strategic planning to address critical societal challenges. For instance, the UN has partnered with Erbil Polytechnic University and Basra University to empower workers with specialized skills in cultural heritage preservation and entrepreneurship, contributing to job creation and economic empowerment. Another example is a partnership forged with the International Center for Biosaline Agriculture, the International Union for Conservation of Nature and the Stockholm Environment Institute to collaborate on joint existing and upcoming programmes to support decision-making and change towards sustainable development by providing integrative knowledge that bridges science, policy and practice in the field of environment and development.

Collaboration with academia has also focused on research and dialogue on policies aimed at creating a more inclusive social security environment in Iraq. The UN's partnership with the American University of Baghdad in Iraq is one example in this regard, contributing significantly to research and policy discussions on fostering social security inclusivity. These partnerships underscore the UN's dedication to equipping individuals with the skills and resources necessary to succeed in the job market and actively contribute to sustainable development efforts.

Central to the UN's work in Iraq has been its partnerships with national and international civil society organizations. These enable work across a wide range of sectors, such as basic service delivery for people in need, the promotion of human rights and social cohesion, the creation of job opportunities and the promotion of culture and education. For instance, through partnerships with organizations like the Norwegian Refugee Council and key support organizations, including the Baghdad Chamber of Commerce and the Agriculture Extension Directorate, over 4,000 young entrepreneurs graduated in 2023, equipped with the knowledge and skills to revolutionize Iraq's agri-food landscape through the SAAVI Tadreeb platform.

In essence, the UN in Iraq's engagement with diverse partners underscores a commitment to collective action and inclusive development. By harnessing the strengths of Government, civil society, academia, and the private sector, the UNCT catalyses transformative change that produces a durable impact on communities across Iraq.



16 young delegates in the official Iraqi delegation to COP28-Dubai. ©UNICEF

### Collaborative pathways: Fostering development through UN partnerships in Iraq

*Through strategic partnerships spanning the private sector and civil society organizations, the UN has significantly bolstered advocacy for the SDGs. A prime example is the Basics of Journalism project, crafted to uplift aspiring female journalists and enhance journalistic standards, particularly in reporting on women's issues. This initiative has thrived on collaboration with civil society entities such as the SEED Foundation and private sector participants such as Rudaw Media Network and Google News Initiative, supported financially by the Iraqi Private Banks League.*

*In a similar vein, the UN has been instrumental in forging international collaborations that align organizations towards common developmental goals for Iraq. The Revive the Spirit of Mosul initiative is a testament to such efforts, linking the Iraqi Sacred Abbasid Shrine Library with various European libraries. This partnership focuses on cataloguing, offering open resources and digitizing Mosul University Library's collections, benefiting over 60,000 students. These examples underscore the UN's commitment to leveraging partnerships across diverse sectors to advance sustainable development and rebuild Iraq's social and cultural fabric.*

# FINANCIAL OVERVIEW AND

# RESOURCE MOBILIZATION

In 2023, the UN in Iraq strategically implemented the UNSDCF, focusing on addressing pivotal sustainable development challenges with a total required financial commitment of **US\$ 845 million**.

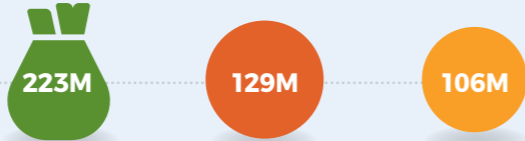
The UNCT effectively mobilized **US\$ 583 million** in available resources and judiciously expended **US\$ 495 million** across five strategic priorities, achieving substantial outcomes and driving forward the national development agenda and the SDGs.

## FINANCIAL OVERVIEW OF UNSDCF

## RESOURCES IN 2023 (US\$)



### Strategic Priority 1

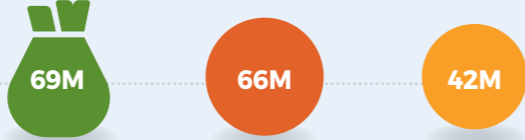


#### 1 ACHIEVING SOCIAL COHESION, PROTECTION, AND INCLUSION

This priority channelled US\$ 129 million in resources towards significant legislative reforms, including the extension of social security benefits to all workers, introducing crucial protections like maternity and unemployment benefits for the first time. Moreover, significant efforts were made in combatting violence against women and girls, alongside advances in civil documentation and asylum policies, to foster a more inclusive society.



### Strategic Priority 2



#### 2 GROWING ECONOMY FOR ALL

The allocation of US\$ 66 million towards economic diversification and job creation represented a foundational commitment to economic empowerment, particularly for vulnerable populations. The scaling-up of entrepreneurial and financial inclusion programmes empowered a wide array of people, laying the foundations for sustained economic growth.



### Strategic Priority 3

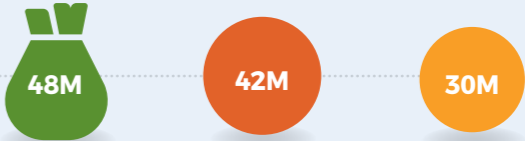


#### 3 PROMOTING EFFECTIVE, INCLUSIVE, AND EFFICIENT INSTITUTIONS AND SERVICES

Receiving the highest funding of US\$ 220 million, this Strategic Priority showcased exemplary efficiency, driving forward improvements in governance and service delivery. These efforts underscored the UNCT's dedication to enhancing public service accessibility and institutional accountability, setting a benchmark for operational excellence.



### Strategic Priority 4

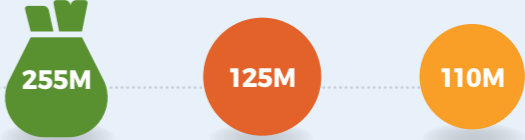


#### 4 PROMOTING NATURAL RESOURCE AND DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT, AND CLIMATE CHANGE RESILIENCE

With US\$ 41.7 million allocated, this priority saw significant legislative and policy strides with the revision of Iraq's Renewable Energy Law and the launch of the Energy Transition Framework. These measures not only promoted environmental sustainability but also positioned Iraq as a regional exemplar in climate action.

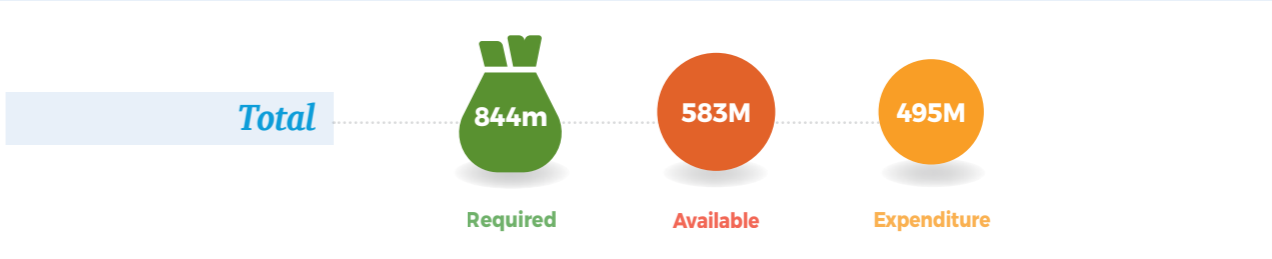


### Strategic Priority 5



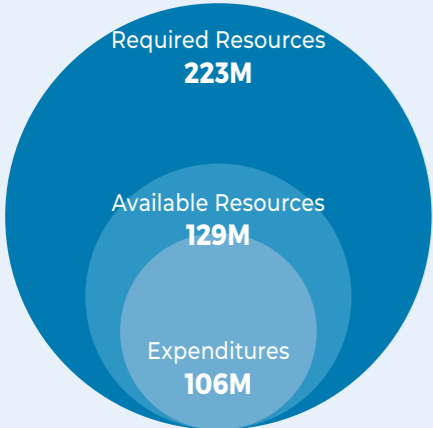
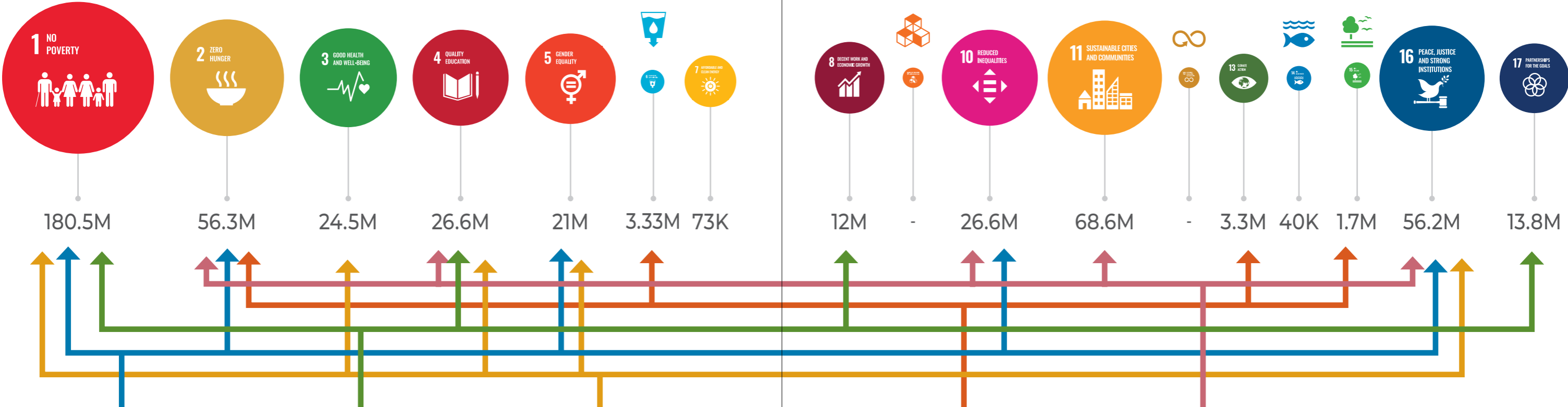
#### 5 ACHIEVING DIGNIFIED, SAFE AND VOLUNTARY DURABLE SOLUTIONS TO DISPLACEMENT IN IRAQ

An efficient utilization of US\$ 125 million demonstrated the UNCT's capability in addressing displacement challenges. This Strategic Priority's focus on ensuring access to essential services and facilitating safe returns for displaced populations exemplified a high-impact approach to humanitarian assistance. The strategic deployment of funds in 2023 reflects the UNCT's focused and effective approach towards addressing Iraq's development challenges and priorities. The careful management of financial resources, alongside targeted programmatic interventions, has yielded substantial results, setting a robust foundation for continued progress in sustainable development and resilience in Iraq.

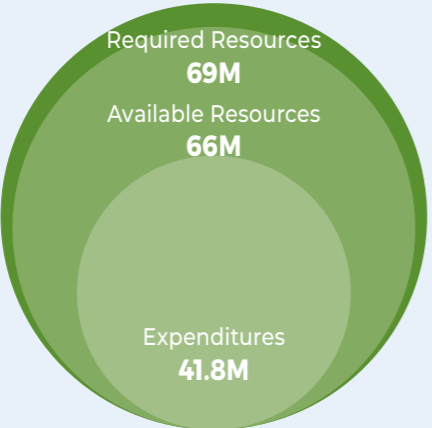


# UNLOCKING PROGRESS

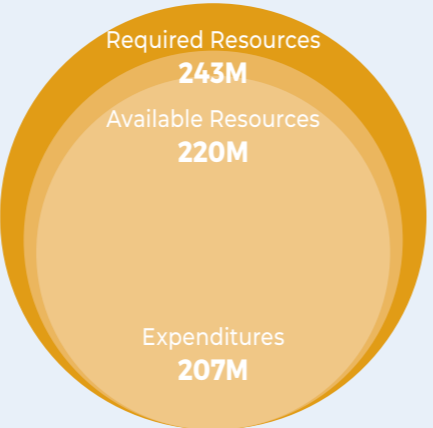
THE UNCT CHANNELLED **US\$495 million** INTO IRAQ'S SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN 2023



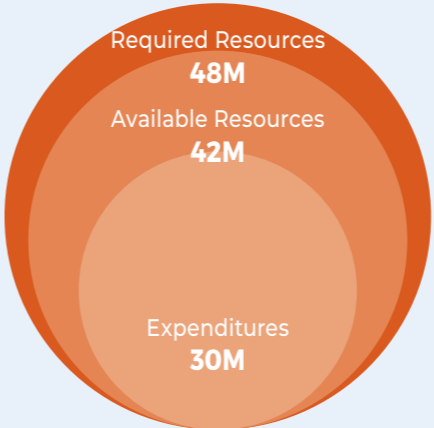
**Strategic Priority 1**  
 ACHIEVING SOCIAL COHESION, PROTECTION, AND INCLUSION



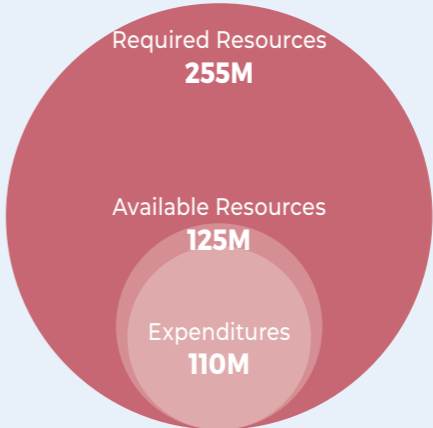
**Strategic Priority 2**  
 GROWING ECONOMY FOR ALL



**Strategic Priority 3**  
 PROMOTING EFFECTIVE, INCLUSIVE, AND EFFICIENT INSTITUTIONS AND SERVICES



**Strategic Priority 4**  
 PROMOTING NATURAL RESOURCE AND DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT, AND CLIMATE CHANGE RESILIENCE



**Strategic Priority 5**  
 ACHIEVING DIGNIFIED, SAFE AND VOLUNTARY DURABLE SOLUTIONS TO DISPLACEMENT IN IRAQ

2023

## Chapter 3.

# UNCT KEY FOCUS FOR 2024

As we navigate the critical final year of the UNSDCF 2020–2024, our collective focus will be on fulfilling its objectives, leveraging this moment as both a culmination of our efforts and a bridge to future initiatives. In this critical phase, we are committed to enhancing our impact, closely aligning with Iraq's development priorities and the SDGs, while laying robust foundations for sustainable growth. Lessons learned from on-going evaluation will shape the strategic thrust of the next UNSDCF cycle (2025–2029), ensuring continuity and amplification of our successes.

Looking ahead to 2024, the UNCT in Iraq, under the guidance of the RC, is set to redefine its strategic direction to support Iraq's journey towards the 2030 Agenda. This entails transcending traditional approaches through the adoption of the Six Transitions framework – focusing on equality, investment, urbanization, energy consumption, food systems and digital technology – and the Quintet of Change methodology. These innovations are designed to catalyse societal and environmental shifts in line with the SDGs, drawing on a wealth of expertise both within and beyond the UN system. Moreover, aligning its efforts with the priorities set forth in the Summit of the Future, the UNCT will also work pragmatically to leverage strategic partnerships with government entities, civil society organizations and other stakeholders.

In developing the new UNSDCF for 2025–2029, in collaboration with the Iraqi Government, the Kurdistan Regional Government and other stakeholders, the UNCT aims to further the transition from humanitarian assistance to development, emphasizing Durable Solutions for IDPs, refugees and returnees. Moreover, the UNCT will continue working closely with UNAMI to strengthen the humanitarian, peace and development nexus, with the joint work reflected in the forthcoming UNSDCF, which will serve as an integrated planning document for the UNCT and UNAMI. The UN in Iraq's strategy will seek to enhance advocacy, coordination and support, integrating sustainable development, climate action and humanitarian efforts to maximize our impact. Furthermore, the UNCT will strive to provide optimal support to the Iraqi Government by employing advanced global methodologies for conducting the general population census and mobilizing additional support for Iraq.

As we advance, our endeavour is to position the UN as a strategic contributor to Iraq's sustainable development, leveraging innovative strategies and partnerships to further the 2030 Agenda, ensuring a prosperous future for all Iraqis. This integrated, forward-looking approach underscores our commitment to not only achieve immediate goals but also lay down the groundwork for long-term, sustainable progress in Iraq.



# ANNEX: PARTNERS AND DONORS

Adaptation Fund

Al Waleed Foundation

Australian Agency for International Development

Austria Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research

Belgium Federal Public Service Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation

Barbados Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration

Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Canadian International Development Agency

Child Protection Fund

Embassy of France

Embassy of Japan

Embassy of the Netherlands

Embassy of the USA

European Commission

European Commission Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations

European Commission Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development

EU

EU's Instrument Contributing to Stability and Peace

EU Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian Crisis

Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance

German Corporation for International Cooperation

German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development

German Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs

German Federal Ministry of the Interior

German Federal Foreign Office





- German National Committee for UNICEF
- German Development Bank
- Global Affairs Canada
- Global Environment Facility
- Government of Australia
- Government of Belgium
- Government of Canada
- Government of Czech Republic
- Government of Denmark
- Government of Estonia
- Government of Finland
- Government of Germany
- Government of Ireland
- Government of Italy
- Government of Japan
- Government of New Zealand
- Government of Norway
- Government of Qatar
- Government of Sweden
- Government of the Netherlands
- Government of the Republic of Korea
- Government of Slovakia
- Government of the UK
- Government of the USA
- Government of the UAE
- Green Climate Fund
- International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
- Iraq UNDAF Trust Fund
- Italian Agency for Development Cooperation

- Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation
- Japan Funds
- Japan International Cooperation Agency
- Joint Inspection Unit of the UN System
- Korea International Cooperation Agency
- Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development
- Multi-Partner Trust Fund
- New Zealand Committee for UNICEF
- New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade Aid Programme
- Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
- Nutrition International
- OCHA Emergency Fund
- St Jude Children Research hospital
- Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
- UAE Red Crescent
- UK Committee for UNICEF
- UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO)
- US Agency for International Development
- US Agency for International Development Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance
- US Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration
- US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- US Defense Threat Reduction Agency
- US Department of State
- US Department of State Bureau of Counterterrorism
- US Department of State's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs
- US Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance
- Women's Peace & Humanitarian Trust Fund





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