

UNAMI Herald

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Political will 'fundamental' to realizing a more just and prosperous Iraq: UN envoy

New York, 12 May 2020 - Despite compounding crises that include the COVID-19 pandemic and plummeting oil revenues, a more prosperous and inclusive Iraq can be achieved provided the political will is there, the top UN official in the country told the Security Council during a virtual meeting held on Tuesday.

Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert briefed ambassadors on latest developments, including the appointment last week of new Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi, and the majority of his 22-member cabinet, following months of political infighting and stalemate.

Although the pandemic has quieted months of corresponding protests, which saw Iraqis taking to the streets to call for an end to corruption, unemployment and poor public services, the UN envoy hoped that the new government will be guided by their demands and aspirations, for the good of the country.

"I remain convinced that a more just, prosperous and resilient Iraq can emerge from the current compounded crises. But for that to happen, political will is fundamental", said Ms. Hennis-Plasschaert, who also heads the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI).

End climate of 'destructive petty politics'

"Iraq must move away from endless crisis management towards a more productive approach, building resilience at both the state and society level. Short-term political and private calculations do not serve Iraq's long-term interests, on the contrary. And yes, the challenges are many; but so are the opportunities."

The UN envoy noted that the new Prime Minister's priorities include tackling the pandemic, reforming the security sector, strengthening the economy, and fighting corruption, which she characterized as "perhaps the greatest source of dysfunction" in Iraq.

"These worthy aspirations must be



turned into action urgently," she said. "And let me emphasize: Iraq does not have the luxury of time. Nor can it afford destructive petty politics".

Economic woes worsen

Iraq has long battled political turmoil but also social, economic and security crises. COVID-19 has added to these challenges by bringing commercial activity to a standstill and putting the livelihoods of millions in peril.

Oil-dependent Iraq has also seen monthly revenues from this commodity drop from \$6 billion to \$1.4 billion between February and April. Additionally, the economy is projected to contract by nearly 10 per cent this year, with poverty rates rising to around 40 per cent.

As Ms. Hennis-Plasschaert pointed out, these developments are occurring at a time when it will become even harder for Iraq to access international funding. The need to broaden its revenue base could not be more apparent.

"Time and again, it has been made clear that Iraq should reduce its oil dependency; repair and upgrade critical infrastructure; temper its ballooning, inefficient public service; build viable and responsive state institutions; combat patronage and

clientelism; fight corruption, and incentivize the domestic private sector while attracting foreign investment," she stated.

Insecurity a constant threat

Meanwhile, Iraq continues to bear the impact of domestic, regional and international security developments.

Ms. Hennis-Plasschaert reported that although "inflammatory rhetoric" and a "pattern" of attacks and counter-attacks have tapered off in recent weeks, they remain a constant threat. "And I can only emphasize: the way armed elements, armed entities, with differing ties to the State, choose to act in this moment will determine how Iraqis – and, indeed, many others -- will perceive them," she added.

"Once again, Iraq cannot afford to be used as a theatre for different power competitions and/or proxy conflicts". The UN official also warned against the resurgence of violent extremism, stating that the best way for the Government to counter ISIL and other groups is to provide for citizens by addressing the root causes of their grievances.

By UN News.

In this edition ...

Security Council deliberated situation concerning Iraq on its videoteleconference

New York, 12 May 2020 – On its videoteleconference convened on 12 May 2020, the United Nations Security Council deliberated on the situation concerning Iraq. The text of the briefing (as delivered) by the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert on this meeting starts on page 3.

United Nations Security Council Resolution 2522 (2020) extends UNAMI mandate for another year

New York, 29 May 2020 - Today, the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 2522 (2020), extending the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) until 31 May 2021. Full text of the resolution is on *page 5*.

Mr. Richard W. Dictus to serve as Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and United Nations Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator, a.i.

Baghdad, 15 May 2020 — MESSAGE ON BEHALF OF THE SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UN SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR IRAQ



We are pleased to announce the arrival of Mr. Richard W. Dictus to serve as Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and United Nations Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator, a.i.

Mr. Dictus succeeds Ms. Marta Ruedas who served in Iraq from May 2018 – May 2020.

Mr. Dictus brings more than 30 years of experience to this position. From January 2019 to May 2020 Mr. Dictus was the United Nations Resident Coordinator (UNRC) in Egypt, a continuation of the assignment he held from January 2017. Under his leadership, the UN Egypt delivered on the new UN Partnership Framework. As Executive Coordinator of United Nations Volunteers (UNV) from 2013-2016, Mr. Dictus stabilized and managed programmatic, operational and financial issues during the UN budget crisis. In this role, Mr. Dictus engaged with the corporate sector, global civil society to drive innovation for new products and services and a build a robust civic engagement agenda.

In Fiji, Mr. Dictus was the UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative where he coordinated the UN System across 16 Asia Pacific Countries with 15 UN Agencies. In Malawi, Mr. Dictus served as the UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative directing the one of the first "Delivering as One" efforts, included creating a "One UN Fund" that garnered more than \$200M in funding.

Mr. Dictus began his UN career in 1987 with UNIDO and has subsequently served in various UNDP roles in the Arab States, Africa, Asia and the Pacific. Mr. Dictus' vast portfolio includes climate change and natural resource management, disaster risk reduction, poverty reduction, private sector development, employment generation, youth development, and child labour. Mr. Dictus has extensive management and operational expertise, including as Deputy Director for UNDP Human Resources, New York, focusing on change management, accountability and organizational dynamics.

Mr. Dictus holds degrees from the Technical University of Twente (Master's Degree in Public Administration and Development Studies), Harvard University, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Cornell University and the United Nations Staff College.

UNAMI: individual responsibility essential to confront COVID-19, all Iraqis urged to follow official health instructions

Baghdad, 27 May 2020 – The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) applauds the Iraqi government's leadership and decisive response to the COVID-19 outbreak at a time when it is also confronting separate crises, including social unrest and an unprecedented economic downturn. The UN commends the determination shown by local, regional and national authorities to contain the virus, as well as the success of the early and sustained measures that were adopted with strong support from communities... *More on page 19*

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

Security Council deliberated situation concerning Iraq on its 12th May videoteleconference

New York, 12 May 2020 – On its videoteleconference convened on 12 May 2020, the United Nations Security Council deliberated on the situation concerning Iraq. Here is the text of the briefing (as delivered) by the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert on this meeting:

Mister President,
Distinguished members of the Security Council,
I think, one can hardly overstate the magnitude of the challenges facing Iraq at this moment: deep existing political, social, economic, and security crises have now been compounded by the global COVID-19 pandemic and a dramatic drop in oil prices.

As the Iraqi health system was already near breaking point before the coronavirus outbreak, priority number one was (and remains) to prevent a rapid spread of the virus. And within this context, I wish to reaffirm our support to the Iraqi authorities, and to reiterate that no amount of government response can succeed without the active involvement of the entire population.

Mister President,
I recently joined my voice to those of my fellow Special Representatives in the Middle East in echoing the Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire. A ceasefire in the broadest sense: militarily but also politically. Surely at this time of acute crises, partisanship and narrow interests must yield to the greater national cause and the good of the Iraqi people.

Unfortunately, as Iraq's economic situation worsens daily, we witnessed continued political infighting and saw three Prime Ministers-designate in just 10 weeks.

But at long last: a new government was formed last week. The Council of Representatives confirmed Mustafa al-Kadhimi as the new Prime Minister, approved his government programme as well as 15 out of 22 ministers. A long-overdue but very welcome development. Swift completion of the remaining vacant positions, including the appointment of more women and minority representatives, is now necessary. The new Prime Minister's stated priorities include:



- addressing the COVID-19 health crisis,
- developing and reforming the security sector,
- limiting the control of arms to the State,
- strengthening the economy,
- fighting corruption,
- advancing accountability and justice,
- holding a national dialogue,
- balancing external relations,
- safeguarding Iraqi sovereignty,
- promoting the return of IDPs to their places of origin,
- and working towards the conduct of early elections.

These worthy aspirations must be turned into action urgently. And let me emphasize: Iraq does not have the luxury of time, nor can it afford destructive petty politics.

While the new government entered office just a few days ago, its first decisions are promising, I have to say. But one does not need a crystal ball to understand that the road ahead will be fraught with many complex challenges. And as I have stated and shared with the Council many times: Iraq's challenges did not arise overnight. Moreover, they are larger than any single government.

It is therefore most important to manage public expectations. There will be no sudden miracles. Equally important is a broad-based response. A response involving the entire political class and all communities, acting with a clear sense of unity and urgency, focussed on building domestic strength, prioritizing the

national interest.

Mister President,
The COVID-19 pandemic forced the streets to calm down, but with public trust at an all-time low, the Iraqi people, calling for a more prosperous and inclusive Iraq, will not just let go. Iraq is facing a long list of urgent unfinished domestic business, and to regain public trust, the government must prove itself able to carry out such essential functions as law and order and public service delivery. On the issue of early elections: although they are a top priority for many, Parliament has not yet completed its work on the electoral framework - in particular, the contentious issues of constituency delineation and seat apportionment. I also wish to reiterate the pressing need for accountability and justice for the many, many deaths and injuries of innocent protesters.

Allow me to say that we are encouraged by the early actions taken by the new Prime Minister which demonstrate his eagerness to move these important files forward.

Mister President,
The economy, the current economic situation has, once again, laid bare Iraq's vulnerability due to the grave lack of economic diversification. Iraq's monthly oil revenues dropped from 6 to 1.4 billion USD between February and April. And at a time when the global financial system is being drained from all sides, it will be harder than ever to access

Security Council deliberated situation concerning Iraq on its 12th May videoteleconference *(continued)*



international funds.

On top of this, necessary curfews (necessary to contain the COVID-19 pandemic), they have brought commercial activity to a near standstill, imperilling the already problematic livelihoods of many Iraqis who rely on daily earnings to feed themselves and their families.

The need to broaden Iraq's revenue base could not be more apparent. Time and again, it has been made clear that Iraq should:

- Reduce its oil dependency,
- Repair and upgrade critical infrastructure.
- Tackle its ballooning, inefficient public service,
- Build viable and responsive state institutions,
- Combat patronage and clientelism,
- Fight corruption,
- And incentivize the domestic private sector while attracting foreign investment.

Iraq clearly and repeatedly has been encouraged to build a healthy environment that is conducive to broad-based, fairly distributed growth and employment generation, not in isolation, but with the assistance of the World Bank, the IMF, the United Nations and other partners. But without adequate follow-up, the country will sadly remain ill-prepared to manage these acute shocks.

The economy is projected to contract by 9.7 percent in 2020, with poverty rates increasing to approximately 40%. Considerable losses in labour income are foreseen, as well as a decrease in economic opportunities.

Now, it is essential to restate that corruption is perhaps the greatest source of dysfunction in Iraq. It works

against the everyday Iraqi woman and man, and it also puts off donors and potential investors who are increasingly fed up with fighting "the system" for a chance to help the country.

Mister President, turning to security: domestic, regional and international security developments continue to take their toll on the country.

Inflammatory rhetoric, and a pattern of attacks and counterattacks on Iraqi soil, are obviously unproductive and most regrettable. Although these, fortunately, appeared to have tapered off in recent weeks, they do remain a constant threat to the stability of the country.

And I can only emphasize: the way armed elements, armed entities, with differing ties to the state, choose to act in this moment, will determine how Iraqis, and indeed many others, will perceive them. Once again: Iraq cannot afford to be used as a theatre for different power competitions and/or proxy conflicts.

Also critical is the prevention of any attempted resurgence of violent extremism. ISIL must not be given room to step up its activities. And we all know that the best form of counter-terrorism is for the government to provide for its citizens, addressing the root causes that continue to allow groups like ISIL to exist.

I am now turning, Mr. President, to humanitarian concerns:

We cautiously welcome ongoing efforts to improve access authorization for humanitarian workers, especially non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Iraq who provide life-saving services.

Humanitarian partners need access letters to pass through the multiple security checkpoints in their areas of

operation. Unfortunately, so far, many access requests remain unapproved.

Currently, access is even more constrained due to COVID-19-related movement restrictions, adding another layer of complexity.

A practical, long-term solution is urgently required, with an empowered focal point to regularly engage with humanitarian partners on access matters. I sincerely hope that Iraqi authorities will now act without any further delay.

Mr. President, with regards to Baghdad-Erbil relations, we still cannot point to a final, fully agreed and implemented deal on such critical issues as the federal budget as well as oil and revenue sharing.

On the contrary, I have to say, we recently witnessed movement in the opposite direction, as the previous federal government announced it would halt payments to the Kurdistan Region, affecting civil servant salaries. Now, regardless of what one thinks of this decision, the timing was most inopportune.

Negotiations between Baghdad and Erbil are ongoing. And I can only emphasize that a long-term sustainable approach is urgently needed. And of course, for any sustainable solution, it takes two to tango.

On Sinjar: many promises, but so far: no signatures - let alone implementation, with the Yezidis notably paying the price.

In the Kurdistan region as elsewhere in Iraq: transparency, freedom of expression, fundamental reforms, fighting corruption are of critical importance, as is political unity. Recent internal tensions do not serve the interest of the Kurdish people, far from it.

Turning to the issue of missing Kuwaiti, third-country nationals and missing Kuwaiti property, including the national archives:

Notwithstanding significant advances of late, most recently the discovery of human remains in a third grave in Samawah site in January, COVID-19 has also impacted this file. The meeting of the Technical Sub-Committee planned for 20 April - as well as other activities - had to be postponed.

Kuwaiti authorities were nevertheless able to carry out excavations on burial sites in Kuwait, as planned during the last Technical Subcommittee in February.

I would like to encourage all members

Security Council deliberated situation concerning Iraq on its 12th May videoteleconference (continued)

of the Tripartite committee to follow this example, working together to identify other innovative ways to overcome current constraints and adapt to the new reality.
 Mr. President, in closing, I would like to return to the courageous conviction expressed by countless Iraqis in recent months. Their hopes and demands remain burning issues and I very much hope they will guide the new government.

I sincerely hope that no party, person or entity will be allowed to hijack the legitimate demands of the Iraqi people. And with this in mind, I wish to salute Grand Ayatollah Sistani, whose calm wisdom serves as an example to us all. I remain convinced that a more just, prosperous and resilient Iraq can emerge from the current compounded crises. But for that to happen, political will is fundamental.
 As I said last time: Iraq must move

away from endless crisis management towards a more productive approach, building resilience at both the state and societal level. Short-term political and private calculations do not serve Iraq's long-term interests. On the contrary. And yes, the challenges are many, but so are the opportunities. And I would like to reaffirm the continued support of the United Nations, our support to the people of Iraq and to Iraq's new government..

United Nations Security Council Resolution 2522 (2020) extends UNAMI mandate for another year

New York, 29 May 2020 - Today, the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 2522 (2020), extending the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) until 31 May 2021. Here is the text of the resolution:

The Security Council,
Recalling all its previous relevant resolutions on Iraq, in particular 1500 (2003), 1546 (2004), 1557 (2004), 1619 (2005), 1700 (2006), 1770 (2007), 1830 (2008), 1883 (2009), 1936 (2010), 2001 (2011), 2061 (2012), 2110 (2013), 2169 (2014), 2233 (2015), 2299 (2016), 2379 (2017), 2421 (2018), 2470 (2019), and reiterating resolution 2107 (2013) on the situation between Iraq and Kuwait, and the values set forth in 2367 (2017),

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

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

Welcoming efforts by the Government

of Iraq to urgently deliver meaningful reforms aimed at meeting the Iraqi people's legitimate demands to address corruption, deliver essential and basic services, diversify its economy, create jobs, improve governance, and strengthen viable and responsive state institutions,

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

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

1. Decides to extend the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) until 31 May 2021;
2. Decides further that the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and UNAMI, at the request of the Government of Iraq, and taking into account the letter from the Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs of Iraq to the Secretary-General (S/2020/448), shall
 - (a) prioritize the provision of advice, support, and assistance to the Government and people of Iraq on advancing inclusive, political dialogue and national and community-level reconciliation;
 - (b) further advise, support, and assist:
 - (i) the Government of Iraq and the Independent High Electoral Commission with efforts to plan and execute genuinely free and fair Iraqi-led, Iraqi-owned elections and referenda, including through regular technical reviews and detailed reporting on electoral preparations and processes, as part of the Secretary-General's regular reporting cycle;



United Nations Security Council Resolution 2522 (2020) extends UNAMI mandate for another year *(continued)*

(ii) the Government of Iraq and the Council of Representatives on constitutional review, the implementation of constitutional provisions, as well as on the development of processes acceptable to the Government of Iraq to resolve disputed internal boundaries;

(iii) the Government of Iraq with progress on security sector reform, including by prioritizing the planning, funding, and implementation of efforts to strengthen state control and reintegration programmes for former members of armed groups, where and as appropriate, in coordination with other multinational entities;

(iv) the Government of Iraq on facilitating regional dialogue and cooperation, including on issues of border security, energy, trade, environment, water, infrastructure, public health, and refugees;

(c) promote, support, and facilitate, in coordination with the Government of Iraq:

(i) the coordination and delivery of humanitarian assistance and the safe, orderly, and voluntary return or local integration, as appropriate, of refugees and displaced persons, including through the efforts of the UN Country Team;

(ii) the coordination and implementation of programmes to

improve Iraq's capacity to provide effective essential civil and social services, including health care and education, for its people and continue to support Iraq's active regional and international donor coordination of critical reconstruction and assistance programmes, including through effective follow-up of international pledges;

(iii) Iraqi, World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and other efforts on economic reform, capacity-building and setting conditions for sustainable development and recovery and reconstruction including in areas affected by terrorism, including through coordination with national and regional organizations and, as appropriate, civil society, donors, and other international institutions;

(iv) the contributions of UN agencies, funds, and programmes to the objectives outlined in this resolution under the unified leadership of the Secretary-General through the Special Representative for Iraq, supported by their designated Deputy;

(d) promote accountability and the protection of human rights, and judicial and legal reform, with full respect for the sovereignty of Iraq, in order to strengthen the rule of law and improve governance in Iraq, in addition to supporting the work of the UN

Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ISIL (UNITAD) established in resolution 2379 (2017);

(e) approach gender mainstreaming as a crosscutting issue throughout its mandate and to advise and assist the Government of Iraq in ensuring the full, equal and meaningful participation, involvement and representation of women at all levels;

(f) and assist Government of Iraq and UN Country Team efforts to strengthen child protection, including the rehabilitation and reintegration of children;

3. Recognizes that the security of UN personnel is essential for UNAMI to carry out its work for the benefit of the people of Iraq and calls upon the Government of Iraq to continue to provide security and logistical support to the UN presence in Iraq;

4. Expresses its intention to review the mandate and reporting cycle of UNAMI by 31 May 2021, or sooner, if requested by the Government of Iraq;

5. Requests the Secretary-General to report to the Council every three months on the progress made towards the fulfilment of all UNAMI's responsibilities;

6. Decides to remain seized of the matter.

Political Affairs

Guterres welcomes new Prime Minister, calls for 'meaningful' reforms

New York, 7 May 2020 - The Secretary-General welcomes the formation of the new Government of Iraq led by Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhimi.

The Secretary-General expresses his support to the new Government and calls for the implementation of meaningful reforms that make tangible improvements in people's lives and

strengthen Iraq's democratic institutions. He reiterates the importance of acting in the interest of all Iraqis through a political process in which women, youth and all of Iraq's diverse communities, including ethnic and religious minorities, can participate actively.

The Secretary-General encourages the swift completion of the formation of the

government, including by appointing women to cabinet positions yet to be filled. He reaffirms the commitment of the United Nations to support the people and Government of Iraq in their efforts to address the COVID-19 pandemic and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

Special Adviser Karim Khan welcomes Parliament's confirmation of Prime Minister Mustafa Al Kadhimi and members of his cabinet

Baghdad, 7 May 2020 - Special Adviser Karim Khan welcomes Parliament's confirmation of Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhimi and

members of his cabinet. He wishes them every success in discharging their new responsibilities & in tackling the paramount issues facing Iraq, including

justice and accountability for ISIL crimes.

Welcoming confirmation of Iraqi Prime Minister, UN Iraq urges complete formation of Cabinet to swiftly tackle mounting challenges

Baghdad, 07 May 2020 – Welcoming the confirmation by the Council of Representatives of Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhimi and a majority of his ministers, the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, urges the complete formation of the Cabinet so that the new administration can swiftly move to address mounting security, social, political, economic and health challenges.

“The government faces an uphill battle, and there is no time to spare. Confronting the economic crisis, further compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic and falling oil prices, is a top priority. But other long-standing challenges must also be tackled without delay. These include adequate public service delivery, fighting corruption, strengthening governance as well as justice and accountability.”

Ms. Hennis-Plasschaert reaffirmed continued UN support to the Iraqi

government in addressing these challenges.

“The new Iraqi government must move forward to enact meaningful change. The challenges are many, as are the opportunities. The United Nations stands ready to assist in identifying the opportunities and tackling the challenges, working in partnership with Iraqis to build a prosperous and stable future for their country.”

The members of the Security Council welcomed the formation of a new Government of Iraq led by Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi

New York, 13 May 2020 - The members of the Security Council welcomed the formation of a new Government of Iraq led by Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhimi. The members of the Security Council further welcomed the Government of Iraq's pledge to address COVID-19 and urgently deliver meaningful reforms aimed at meeting the Iraqi people's legitimate demands over economic opportunity, good governance, political

participation, and electoral legislation. The members of the Security Council welcomed the Government of Iraq's commitment to conduct transparent investigations into violence against demonstrators.

The members of the Security Council reaffirmed their full support for efforts led by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and Special Representative of the Secretary-General Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, in

accordance with resolution 2470 (2019), to support and assist the Government of Iraq and the Iraqi people with inclusive political dialogue, national- and community-level reconciliation, economic reform, capacity building, sustainable development, recovery and reconstruction, justice and accountability, and electoral assistance to the Government of Iraq and Independent High Electoral Commission.

UNAMI on Twitter

Baghdad, 6 June 2020 - UN Iraq SRSG Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert: We welcome the confirmation of candidates

to remaining posts in PM Al-Kadhimi's Cabinet. The UN reaffirms its support to Iraq in facing ongoing health,

economic, social, political and security challenges.

Political Consultations



Erbil, 9 May 2020 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met today with the Speaker of the Kurdistan Region Parliament, Dr. Rewas Faiqa Hussein. They discussed the general situation in the Kurdistan Region.

Photo courtesy of the KR Parliament.



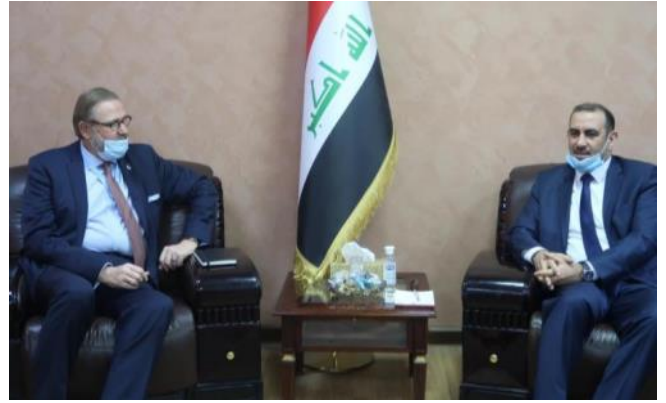
Sulaymaniyah, 9 May 2020 – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met today with the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) Co-leader, Lahur Sheikh Jangi. They discussed the fight against corona virus pandemic as well as the current political situation in the country and the region, including the Baghdad-Erbil relations.

Photos courtesy of PUK.



Baghdad, 11 May 2020 – Iraqi Prime Minister, Mustafa Al-Kadhimi, received the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert. They discussed the current political, economic and health situation in the country. SRSR Hennis-Plasschaert congratulated Prime Minister Al-Kadhimi on the formation of his government, expressed hope for the speedy completion of the remaining posts, and underlined UNAMI's support and readiness to work closely with the new government for the benefit of Iraq and its people.

Photo courtesy of the Office of the Prime Minister.



Baghdad, 7 June 2020 – The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq a.i./Humanitarian Coordinator/Resident Coordinator, Mr. Richard Dictus, met with the Minister of Planning, Professor Dr. Khaled Battal. They discussed the cooperation of the Government of Iraq and the United Nations in combating the coronavirus pandemic, humanitarian operations, reconstruction and stabilization of the liberated areas, as well as the preparations for the general census. Mr. Oluremi Sogunro, UNFPA Representative in Iraq, Ms. Zena Ali Ahmad, UNDP Resident Representative, and the National Census Advisor, Mr. Mahdi Allaq, also attended the meeting.

Photos courtesy of the Ministry of Planning.

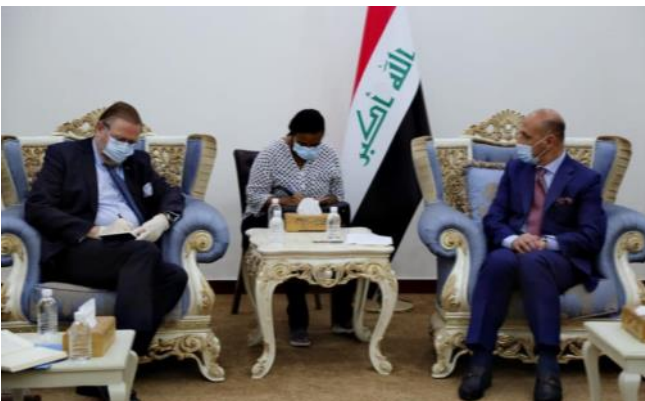


Ramadi, 14 June 2020 – The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq a.i./Humanitarian Coordinator/Resident Coordinator, Mr. Richard Dictus, met with the Governor of Anbar, Ali Farhan Al-Dulaimi to discuss the humanitarian situation in the Governorate, including issues of camp closures, voluntary return and durable solutions for internally displaced persons, the reconstruction of the liberated areas and combat against the coronavirus pandemic.

Photo by OCHA Iraq.

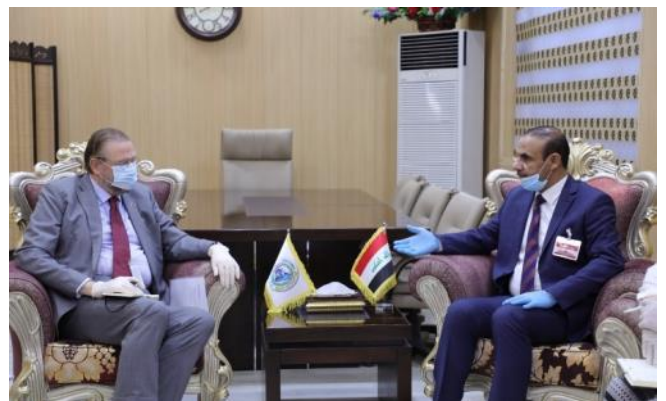


Baghdad, 17 June 2020 – The Minister of construction, housing, municipalities and public works, Ms. Nazneen Mohammad, met with Mr. Wael Al-Ashhab, Head of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) Iraq. In the meeting, an overview of UN-Habitat's portfolio and role in Iraq was presented with a focus on the partnership between the Government of Iraq and UN-Habitat on reconstruction of liberated areas in Iraq as well as on sustainable urban development. Discussions were also made on the capacity development support and operationalization of the Housing Reconstruction Strategy that was endorsed by the Council of Ministers in June 2019. Minister Mohammad reiterated the importance of UN-Habitat's role towards the reconstruction of liberated areas in Iraq and expressed her willingness to strengthen the coordination between the Ministry and UN-Habitat.



Baghdad, 17 June 2020 – The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq a.i./Humanitarian Coordinator/Resident Coordinator, Mr. Richard Dictus, accompanied by Dr Oluremi Sogunro, UNFPA Representative to Iraq, and a representative from UNICEF, met with the Minister of Youth and Sport, Mr. Adnan Drajal Jassem. They discussed future cooperation in enhancing the role and engagement of Iraqi youth in the reconstruction, stabilization and development of the country.

Photo courtesy of the Ministry of Youth and Sport.



Baghdad, 18 June 2020 - The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq a.i./Humanitarian Coordinator/Resident Coordinator, Mr. Richard Dictus, accompanied by the World Food Programme (WFP) Deputy Country Director, Ms. Marianne Ward, and the International Labour Organization (ILO) Country Coordinator, Ms. Maha Kattaa, met in Baghdad with the Minister of Labour and Social Affairs, Dr. Adel Al-Rikabi. They discussed future cooperation in enhancing the assistance to the most vulnerable groups in the country in particular in the field of social protection, people with disabilities and internally displaced. The meeting further discussed employment, the private sector and future opportunities for young people.

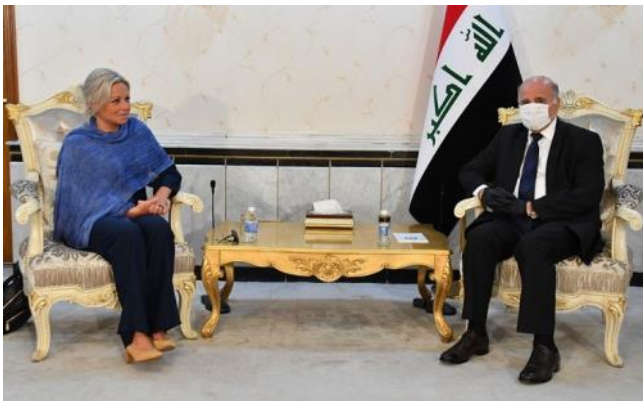
Photo courtesy of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.



Baghdad, 20 June 2020 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met in Baghdad with the President of the Kurdistan Region, Nechirvan Barzani, who was visiting the Iraqi capital. They discussed the political developments, including Erbil-Baghdad relations, and the ongoing efforts to combat COVID-19 and the pandemic's economic impact on the country.



Baghdad, 22 June 2020 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, was received today by the Prime Minister, Mustafa Al-Kadhimi. They discussed the political and economic developments in Iraq, including outstanding Baghdad-Erbil issues. Photo courtesy of the Media Office of the Prime Minister.



Baghdad, 23 June 2020 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met today in Baghdad with the Iraqi Minister of Foreign Affairs, Fuad Hussein. They discussed the work of the United Nations in Iraq in support of the Iraqi people as well as ways to maintain domestic and regional stability.

Photo courtesy of the Iraq Ministry of Foreign Affairs.



Baghdad, 24 June 2020 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met today in Baghdad with the Speaker of the Council of Representatives, Mohammed Al-Halboosi. They discussed political developments in the country, in particular the need to deliver on electoral reforms in pursuit of free, fair and credible elections. Photo courtesy of the media office of the CoR Speaker.

COVID-19 Pandemic

From symptoms to solutions – new local innovation helps Iraqi communities manage Coronavirus concerns

Baghdad, 28 April 2020 - Tracking symptoms of Coronavirus and understanding its vast impact have been made easier for Iraqis thanks to a new local platform supported by UNDP Iraq's Accelerator Lab.

The Corona in Iraq platform was originally developed by local web developer Mustafa Alwan, a member of CS50x-Iraq Developers Union which contains a pool of computer science and programming experts from Harvard University's CS50 developers' training program. Alwan designed the platform

to support his country's mission to tackle the spread of COVID19.

When UNDP Iraq's Accelerator Lab team – whose role it is to identify and upscale locally-designed solutions that attempt to solve a country's most pressing challenges – discovered Corona in Iraq, the potential to develop it was tangible, present, and exciting. Iraq is one of 60 teams across UNDP's global network of labs sourcing local solutions to respond to global challenges.

"Absolutely take it to the next level!"

was the initial reaction of UNDP Iraq's Resident Representative, Zena Ali-Ahmad when the Accelerator Lab team pitched the idea. "In Iraq, misinformation about the virus is a huge challenge, and rumors are circulating within the community. Corona in Iraq is an innovative way to quell some of these rumors and provide people with real facts and necessary courses of actions if they feel they may have the virus," she said. Stigma associated with COVID-19 is also prevalent in Iraq, with many

From symptoms to solutions – new local innovation helps Iraqi communities manage Coronavirus concerns *(continued)*

people refraining from seeking medical advice due to a fear that, if tested positive or if perceived to have the virus, they would be shunned and discriminated against by their communities. “Through a portal that tracks symptoms, users are encouraged to speak up and consult medical professionals if they contain symptoms. This simple action is extremely important as we support the Government of Iraq in their efforts to limit the spread of the virus across the country,” adds Ms. Ali-Ahmad.

Key features of Corona in Iraq:

- Raises awareness about the symptoms and risks of COVID-19 and dispels rumors about the virus.
- Corona in Iraq draws from the most up-to-date information and data from the World Health Organization (WHO). It contains localized information including statistics on the number of reported cases and fatalities in Iraq. It also provides information on how to stay hygienic and healthy in everyday life. A partnership with UNICEF will soon allow information specific to Iraqi youth, with an opportunity for young people to submit questions about the virus. This critical feature comes at a time when many young people are feeling anxious due to the strict curfews imposed across the country, limiting their schooling and social life.
- Tracks symptoms to encourage

people to seek medical advice

- Stigma can be heightened by insufficient knowledge about how COVID-19 is transmitted and treated, and how to prevent infection. By using Corona in Iraq, users are able to track their symptoms through a multiple-choice questionnaire containing 10 simple questions. This feature fosters a testing culture, encouraging users to speak to a health professional if they are experiencing symptoms, which ultimately helps to prevent stigma associated with the virus.
- Geographical scanning of COVID-19 hotspots
- Also included on the platform is a geographical scanning feature which maps out the geographical spread of the virus across the entire country and the most affected areas that require

increased support, such as sterilization and fumigation. This information helps government agencies effectively respond to the virus.

UNDP Iraq’s response to COVID-19

The Corona in Iraq platform is part of UNDP’s US\$25 million response package which supports the Government of Iraq to manage the coronavirus pandemic by helping to provide personal protective equipment for healthcare workers, building isolation wards to effectively manage cases, boost the testing capacity of hospitals, and undertake critical assessments to inform Iraq’s post-COVID-19 recovery strategy.

Corona in Iraq’s domain name, stayhome.iq was provided by the Commission on Media and Communications under the Government of Iraq’s Ministry of Communications.



Iraqi women at the forefront: local Women’s Peace Group supports communities during COVID-19 pandemic

Baghdad, 29 April 2020 - 50-year-old Rafla is one of 35 members of a local women’s group taking the lead in raising awareness about the coronavirus in Iraq’s Salah al-Din governorate.

Formed by UNDP Iraq with support from the Government of Denmark, members of the Salah al-Din Women’s Peace Group are setting up first aid clinics, producing and distributing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), developing and distributing informational fliers and collecting and providing essential food, clothing, and sanitary items to people who need them most.

Rafla and her team also work with Local Peace Committees to distribute food baskets, clothes and sterilization equipment in Samarra, Balad, Tikrit, Tuz Khurmato and Sharqat, and in Internally Displaced Persons camps in Shahama and Dayum. The group also sews and distributes masks to police officers and other community members at a higher risk of contracting the virus.

What is your career background?

I am a primary school teacher, the head of the Kernel of Family Organization, and a member of the Salah al-Din Women’s Peace Group.

[Kernel of Family Organization is an

NGO founded by Rafla that aims to enhance the capacity for Iraqi families to influence and contribute to civil society.]

Why are you undertaking this work to mitigate the effects of COVID-19?

Our work is really important for a number of reasons. Our aim is to help vulnerable communities to deal with the pandemic, especially after the curfew was imposed and people lost their sources of income. By adopting these initiatives, we are also working hard to break down societal stereotypes about the roles of women doing such work. We want the community to know what Salah al-Din Women’s Peace

Iraqi women at the forefront: local Women's Peace Group supports communities during COVID-19 pandemic (*continued*)

Group can achieve, and the important role we play in promoting peace in the governorate.

How do you feel about protecting your community?

I feel very proud to represent Salah al-Din women in general as well as the Salah al-Din Women's Peace Group, and proud to be helping the community I belong to that has suffered immensely, from so much war and conflict.

How has being part of the Women's Peace Group affected your life?

The lesson we've learnt is the importance of teamwork, especially in the Salah al-Din Women's Peace Group, which represents all the components, sects and ethnicities of the province. If society gives us the necessary conditions, means, and real opportunity, then we can all share the responsibility and burdens to create a harmonious, robust community that lives peacefully forever.

How does your family feel about the work you are undertaking currently?

My family and all my relatives feel happy and proud of me and always encourage me to continue supporting my community.

What advice would you give to Iraqi women who would like to help their communities during this time?

My advice to every woman who has the capability is to serve her community first, and then worry about your own concerns second. And also, to be a role model and motivate all women to get involved.

About UNDP Iraq's Women Peace Committees

In 2018, UNDP Iraq's Integrated Reconciliation Programme, with generous funding from the Government of Denmark, and in partnership with the Community Coexistence & Peace Committee in Iraq, established and trained eight Women's Peace Groups in Salah al-Din, Kirkuk, Sinjar, Talefer,



Anbar, Dyala, Ninewa and the Ninewa Plains to advocate for social cohesion and peaceful coexistence in their communities. The Women's Peace Groups support and partner with the Local Peace Committees, which are also part of the programme, and implement different community initiatives.

The spirit of volunteerism: a united Iraq under COVID-19

Baghdad, 5 May 2020 - COVID-19 has disrupted our lives in unprecedented ways, demanding a new approach to activities that previously shaped our daily routine. Hearing this call to action, the volunteer network of Karbala city took to the streets.

"We need to join hands," says Mithal, 45, a Karbala local and member of the volunteer network. "In light of the spread of COVID-19, we took it upon ourselves to help how we can – distributing humanitarian aid and food baskets, sterilizing streets in the poorer neighbourhoods and raising awareness about the pandemic and maintaining personal hygiene."

Over the past two months, more than 150 men and women from the Karbala volunteer network, have provided help to the most vulnerable citizens enduring the lockdown – ensuring that they can remain safely indoors, while the fight against the pandemic continues.

At a time when social distancing is critical to curb the spread of COVID-19, many businesses remain closed across Iraq. With limited access to income, it's the spirit of volunteerism in Karbala that is enabling access to food for the most vulnerable families living in 55 neighbourhoods across Karbala.

As we enter the holy month of Ramadan, families in Karbala City and neighbouring Al-Hindia – a district characterized by its high number of

IDPs and lower levels of education, especially for women – continue to receive food packages.

Hassan Ali Jabbar, 35, a daily wage earner from the University of Karbala has been unable to generate an income since the suspension of university hours in March. Now unemployed, Hassan wasn't able to find enough food for him and his family on his own. "Thanks to the volunteers, I now receive food bags continuously," says Hassan.

In coordination with the Karbala Governorate Crisis Cell, the Karbala volunteer network has also been disseminating information flyers and talking to residents to raise awareness of the benefit of improved hygiene.

"We have been organizing campaigns to fog residential areas, major streets and important buildings, and sterilize homes in poor neighborhoods - due to overpopulation," explains volunteer Ali Hussein Al-Saadawi, 40.

In 2017, the Karbala volunteer network was formed as a result of a joint United Nations Volunteer Programme and UNDP project, training young people in project coordination and management and inspiring a strengthened sense of volunteerism through small community projects.

"Thanks to the UNDP/UNV project, we learned how to work as a team and how to set practical timelines for our activities. This helps us to speed up

implementation and ensure its accuracy," explains Mithal. "We learnt that by supporting each other through volunteerism, we spread a spirit of peace and can build the bond of community."

"The volunteer network earned the advocacy and support of the governorate through effective communication and evaluation skills acquired in our UNDP/UNV training. This professional and well-organized character of the network shows people volunteers can have great impact!" added Ali Hussein.

"For the future, we aim to increase the awareness of volunteerism among citizens and to deliver a clear message that volunteers have a major role in all crises. We want to instill a spirit of volunteerism in our youth and strengthen their skills by sharing our knowledge," explains Ali Hussein.

[UNDP Iraq's COVID-19 Response Package](#)

UNDP Iraq, through the Stabilization Programme, is continuing efforts to support the Government of Iraq's COVID-19 response. Measures to combat the virus will include increasing the testing capacity of laboratories, providing personal protective equipment to healthcare workers, increasing the number of isolation wards, and undertaking assessments to establish post-COVID-19 recovery strategies.

Finding virtual solutions: UNDP Iraq provides psychosocial support to Iraqi women during COVID-19 pandemic

Baghdad, 7 May 2020 - Nations around the world have documented an increase in domestic violence following the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. Movement restrictions and government-mandated social distancing have confined family members to their homes, limiting their connection with others. Finding ways to assist those vulnerable to domestic abuse means thinking outside of the box.

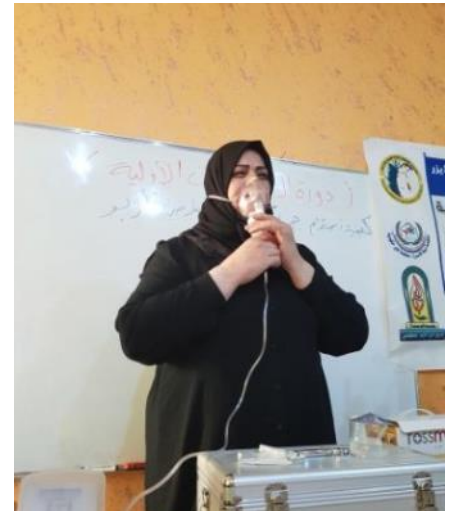
In Iraq, approximately 40,500 women in the nursing profession are more likely to be exposed to the virus, increasing their risk of infection and exhaustion. Iraqi women are often responsible for caring for family members, and the overload of domestic work, in addition to a lack of income faced by some, can increase tension and violent behavior against women, children and the elderly.

UNDP Iraq's Integrated Reconciliation Project supports victims of violence and women affected by conflict, aligning with the UN Secretary General's recent call to put women and girls at the center of efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic response. Supported by the Government of Denmark, 75 social workers from NGOs across 15 governorates were trained on providing psychosocial support for victims of violence in conflict settings. To work

around the strict curfews implemented by the Government of Iraq to curb coronavirus infections, the training was conducted between April 17 and April 19 through a web-based platform for social workers in their homes.

The training itself was developed by UNDP Iraq following an online video meeting with representatives from various local non-governmental organizations to discuss providing support during isolation due to the pandemic. Guidelines were shared with participants and the training focused on expressive writing techniques as well the methodology and tools that the social workers can use to support Iraqi women.

For many social workers, this project was their introduction to virtual capacity-building. Rawa, from the Eve Organization, says, "This was the first online session I have attended in the area of psychological support for women. The training helped me to realize that there are tools and techniques we must learn because social workers are needed in times of crisis. It taught us to be creative with communication to alleviate suffering." Under supervision of a UNDP expert and specialized NGOs to ensure successful implementation of techniques learned during the training,



each social worker began contacting ten women by phone in Iraq per day. In total, 7,500 women were reached within ten days.

Many social workers have shared touching stories about the reactions from the women they have reached over the phone. Imman, from the Institute of Women Leaders, notes, "The gratitude and appreciation I have heard from women has made me very proud. A woman told me that being connected with other women during the pandemic has directly reduced her feelings of isolation and fear."

UNHCR appreciates the generous contribution from the United States of America towards the COVID-19 response in Iraq

Baghdad, 8 May 2020 - UNHCR welcomes the new contribution of USD 6.5 Million from the United States of America towards the response to COVID-19 for internally displaced persons and returnees in Iraq.

The health, well-being, and dignity of displaced populations and their host communities are at the centre of UNHCR's COVID-19 prevention and response efforts in Iraq. UNHCR, along with other UN agencies, is working closely with the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Region Government to support the improvement health facilities and staff capacity so that all persons affected by the virus can receive adequate treatment in a timely manner.

The new funding will contribute towards UNHCR's efforts to ensuring protection interventions for persons of concern to prevent their exposure to life threatening situations and ensure their basic needs are met, including access to basic hygiene items through the

distribution of cash assistance; health promotion and awareness raising; provision of medical equipment; training of health workers; strengthening health care services in camps; improving referral systems; ensuring access to Mental Health and Psycho-social Support services; support early detection of positive cases; and enhancing disinfection activities in camps.

H. E Ambassador Mr. Matthew H. Tueller said that "The United States continues to provide humanitarian assistance, giving shelter to IDPs, demining key parts of liberated communities, and returning services to the people. This additional contribution to UNHCR will support these vulnerable populations to overcome the COVID-19 pandemic."

UNHCR's Acting Representative Philippa Candler stated that "humanitarian action to save lives and alleviate the suffering of vulnerable populations remains crucial. The

socioeconomic effects of the covid-19 pandemic on displaced people are huge, mainly because of the COVID-19 restrictions. UNHCR appreciates the support from major donor countries such as the United States of America". In response to the COVID-19 global humanitarian appeal, The United States of America has generously donated USD 64 million to urgently assist displaced communities around the world.

United States of America remains the biggest donor to UNHCR globally.



UNHCR welcomes the Government of Japan's contribution towards COVID-19 responses in Iraq

Baghdad, 11 May 2020 - UNHCR welcomes the new contribution of USD 1.5 Million from the Government of Japan towards the response to COVID-19 for internally displaced persons, returnees and refugees in Iraq.

The new funding comes at a critical time when many communities, especially the most vulnerable, have been affected due to COVID-19 restrictions. This funding is supporting timely awareness-raising campaigns on the transmission and prevention of COVID-19 in addressing the needs of vulnerable displaced families, as well as ensuring access to basic hygiene items and protective gear for medical staff in primary health centres and authorities at border points. Also, through this generous contribution UNHCR is supporting the Directorate of Health in Duhok and Erbil governorates to provide training on case definition and detection and management of suspected cases of COVID-19.

The Ambassador of Japan to Iraq, His Excellency Mr. HASHIMOTO Naofumi stated "Given that COVID-19 is raging across the world, it is crucial for the international community to make concerted efforts, and I hope that the Japan's assistance through UNHCR would help prevent further spread of COVID-19 in Iraq." He added "Under such challenging circumstances, I wish

to engage in and strengthen a close cooperation with the new Government of Iraq in a wide range of issues".

The UNHCR Acting Representative in Iraq, Ms. Philippa Candler, commented, "during this global crisis, we have been all affected. The effect on vulnerable communities is even more acute. This generous and timely contribution will assist in our efforts in the response of COVID-19. Ensuring the health of communities is part and parcel of protection."

In response to the current situation, UNHCR has established procedures to continue providing services and maintain presence in the field. Under

the current context, most basic services continue to function in camps and in areas with a high density of displaced populations. UNHCR also adapted its work modalities to ensure assistance continues to be delivered remotely including legal counselling, protection monitoring among other activities while respecting social distancing.

In response to the COVID-19 global humanitarian appeal, Japan has generously donated USD 23.9 million to urgently assist displaced communities around the world.

The Government of Japan has been one of UNHCR's largest donors and supporters of many years.



UN Women: Postponed dreams

Dohuk, 12 May 2020 - The curfew imposed in all governorates of Iraq to prevent the spread of the coronavirus constitutes a challenge for women in general. But for many displaced women it is a much bigger challenge.

For 21-year-old Maleka Dakhil Khader, who lives with her seven brothers and sisters in a tent in Sharya Camp in Duhok governorate, it meant the aggravation of the situation that she has been facing as displaced person.

"I've been working in a bakery project run by Dak Organization for Ezidi Women Development for the past 6 months," says Maleka in recounting the story of her suffering with the curfew and her business interruption.

"I dropped out from school so I can support and provide a living for my brothers and sisters. I've worked in many jobs before working in the bakery", Maleka continues.

The work in the bakery project was important for Maleka as it was one step on the road to achieving her dream of

one day being able to open her own pastry shop.

She says she was hoping to find some sort of support to help her achieve this dream.

However, her biggest challenge now and the barrier between Maleka and realizing her dream is the coronavirus

lockdown which forces her and many others to stay at home.

"My work stopped due to the total curfew imposed in Iraq recently. We can't leave the tent, and our life has become more difficult because we spend long hours in a small place without work", Maleka explains in agony.



Support for marginalized groups crucial in COVID-19 response: IOM Iraq

Baghdad, 12 May 2020 — The World Health Organization (WHO) has reported that the increase in cases of COVID-19 in the Eastern Mediterranean, including Iraq, is of particular and great concern. 2,818 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and 110 deaths had been reported in Iraq by 11 May 2020.

Socially disadvantaged and marginalized populations are disproportionately affected by ill-health. WHO states that “certain populations, such as those with disability, may be impacted more significantly by COVID-19”. When these individuals are members of the large Internally Displaced Person (IDP), refugee, returnee and migrant communities in Iraq that already face challenges accessing health care and relevant information, the impact is even more acute.

On 12 May, the Iraqi Alliance of Disability Organizations (IADO) distributed packages containing hand sanitizer, face masks, gloves and soap to members of the alliance with disabilities living in and around Baghdad. The packages were destined for individuals who have difficulties accessing these items, that are essential for protecting against and slowing the spread of COVID-19. The items were provided to IADO by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) as an in-kind donation.



“Through cycles of conflict and economic hardship in Iraq, people with disabilities have faced acute challenges,” said IOM Iraq Chief of Mission Gerard Waite. “The needs of people with disabilities must be fully considered across our projects and programming, including our COVID-19 response plan in support of vulnerable host communities, IDPs, returnees, migrants and refugees.”

“During this pandemic, the suffering of people with disabilities has multiplied due to isolation; hiatus of many service institutions; and limited transportation options,” said Mowafaq Al Khafaj, Head of IADO. “There should be a plan to respond to the challenges faced by people with disabilities, and to psychological crises. Hotlines must be set up to help people with disabilities

and awareness campaigns should be done in sign language too.”

IADO is the national umbrella organization of Disabled Peoples Organizations in Iraq. They are currently running the “Campaign against Corona”, which advocates to government and other local authorities to ensure people with disabilities are not left out of the COVID-19 response. IADO is also sharing awareness messages with its members using videos and live streaming, including videos in Iraqi sign language.

The hygiene items were funded by the Australian Government’s Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) under the project “Supporting Social Cohesion through Reintegration, Revitalization and Stabilization Support in Iraq”.

World Bank deploys US\$33.6 million in emergency response to help Iraq face the Coronavirus outbreak

Baghdad, 12 May 2020 — In response to the COVID-19 outbreak in Iraq, the World Bank has recently approved the re-allocation of US\$33.6 million under the current Emergency Operation for Development Project (EODP-US\$750 million) to support the Ministry of Health’s efforts in preventing, detecting, and responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.

This fast track emergency response comes in two phases. The World Bank initially mobilized US\$7.8 million from resources that were immediately available under the EODP to help finance the supply of essential medical equipment and supplies and strengthen intensive care unit (ICU) capacity at public hospitals for improved COVID-19 case management. Through cooperation with the United Nations

Office for Project Services (UNOPS), ventilators, ICU beds, ECG machines, mobile X-ray machines and defibrillators will be delivered to designated sites in four to eight weeks. In a follow-up step, the World Bank also approved the Government of Iraq’s request to re-allocate an additional US\$25.8 million under the project to supply additional quantities of equipment and consumables and support the training of health workers and front-line responders on their use. The expedited procurement procedures of UNOPS will ensure the timely delivery of medical supplies to the Ministry of Health.

“The pandemic is expected to particularly hit poor and vulnerable households. The World Bank stands ready to support Iraq’s efforts to

contain the rapid spread of the virus and strengthen the capacity of the Ministry of Health to address the additional strain the pandemic poses on the Iraqi health system,” said Saroj Kumar Jha, World Bank Mashreq Regional Director.

The reallocation of funds does not affect the initial scope of the Emergency Operation for Development Project which aims to support Iraq in the reconstruction of damaged infrastructure and the restoration of public services delivery in targeted municipal areas. As a matter of fact, and through the procurement of goods, works and consulting services using World Bank’s procurement and financial management regulations, over 3 million people in five governorates liberated from ISIS are already

World Bank deploys US\$33.6 million in emergency response to help Iraq face the Coronavirus outbreak *(continued)*

benefiting from improved health services through the rehabilitation of damaged clinics and the supply of 14 mobile clinics and 82 ambulances, restored electricity connectivity by 35%, improved key municipal services with the provision of purified drinking water and waste collection schemes, and restored access through the reconstruction of 400 km of roads and 25 critical bridges. The project is also contributing to promoting state/citizen trust-building and reconciliation through the training of 79 non-governmental organizations and over 1,000 young men and women on peaceful dialogue and reconciliation in their communities.

The Emergency Operation for Development Project was initially approved in July 2015 in the amount of US\$350 million. An additional financing to the project in the amount of US\$400 million was later on approved in October 2017 to allow the geographic scale-up of existing project activities to additional cities liberated

from ISIS.

World Bank Group COVID-19 Response

The World Bank Group, one of the largest sources of funding and knowledge for developing countries, is taking broad, fast action to help developing countries strengthen their pandemic response. We are increasing disease surveillance, improving public

health interventions, and helping the private sector continue to operate and sustain jobs. Over the next 15 months, we will be deploying up to \$160 billion in financial support to help countries protect the poor and vulnerable, support businesses, and bolster economic recovery, including \$50 billion of new IDA resources in grants or highly concessional terms.



WHO Iraq Representative met with the new Minister of Health

Baghdad, 13 May 2020 - WHO Iraq Representative, Dr Adham Ismail, met with the newly appointed Iraqi Minister of Health, Dr. Hassan Al-Tamimi, to discuss areas of joint collaboration. Dr. Al-Tamimi appreciated WHO Iraq support to the Ministry of Health while responding to COVID19 pandemic. WHO Iraq Representative Dr Ismail and Minister Al-Tamimi called upon all citizens to adhere to preventive instructions issued by the WHO and the Ministry of Health to assist COVID-19 disease containment efforts.



UNHCR and WFP extend assistance net to cover displaced and refugee families affected by pandemic

Baghdad, 13 May 2020 – The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) are stepping up their collaboration to help meet the essential needs of vulnerable people in Iraq. WFP has worked with UNHCR and partners to identify an additional 35,000 Syrian refugees and 10,000 people displaced by conflict who will be included in WFP food assistance programmes to help them cope with the impact of COVID-19.

Refugees and internally displaced

persons (IDPs) are among the groups most affected by the pandemic in Iraq because they frequently depend on daily and seasonal employment to put food on the table. Much of this type of work has stopped amid lockdowns and precautionary measures.

WFP will now reach 76,000 refugees who will receive food assistance and 280,000 IDPs, including households who are struggling to make ends meet. Many of these families were in a position to stop receiving assistance but are now being pushed into food

insecurity on the back of the pandemic. To help families purchase basic hygiene items to prevent the spread of COVID-19, UNHCR continues the second month of hygiene cash assistance, supporting 550,000 refugee, internally displaced, and returnee members of the community. This is part of UNHCR's package of assistance which includes strengthening health care services and disinfection activities in camps. UNHCR, WFP and partners also continue to run awareness sessions on COVID-19 precautionary measures

UNHCR and WFP extend assistance net to cover displaced and refugee families affected by pandemic *(continued)*

with people assisted, and camp shop staff.

“Throughout the pandemic, UNHCR and WFP’s joint work has prioritised reaching the most vulnerable IDPs and refugees, while taking measures to safeguard their health. We call upon the donor community for additional support as we scale up our response because many people cannot work at this time and needs have increased,” said Acting Representative of UNHCR in Iraq Philippa Candler, and WFP Representative in Iraq Abdirahman Meygag, in a joint statement.

UNHCR and WFP in Iraq are appealing for US\$26 million and US\$31.9 million respectively for their COVID-19 response. Special precautions during distributions have included maintaining safe distances as people redeem their food or cash entitlements, using masks and hand sanitiser, disinfectants to clean



frequently used items, washing hands regularly and more. Both agencies are also implementing emergency livelihoods projects, to help affected

people to earn an income again. These are to provide essential support to vulnerable families and inject cash into the local communities.

SMES report grave decline in production and sales during COVID-19 pandemic: IOM Iraq study

Erbil, 14 May 2020 - As of 13 May 3,032 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and 115 deaths had been reported in Iraq. Measures that the Government of Iraq has taken to curb the spread of COVID-19 — including curfews, school closures, and restrictions on travel into and within the country — have led to reduced operating hours or the closure of many small businesses. While the government has started relaxing restrictions in certain locations, the economic impact of COVID-19 is expected to be severe.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Iraq has completed a survey analyzing the pandemic’s impact on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The study focused on urban areas, and governorates with the highest rates of internal displacement and return.

IOM Iraq researchers contacted 456 SMEs for the study, in the areas where its Enterprise Development Fund (EDF) SME funding mechanism operates. Findings show that production declined by 52 per cent in the past month on average among the SMEs surveyed, which will result in an estimated net loss in revenue of 27 per cent if restrictions continue through June 2020.

Sales in the past month also have been

severely impacted: businesses across the four sectors included in the study — Construction and Manufacturing; Food and Agriculture; Services; Wholesale and Retail — estimate on average that sales have declined by 71 per cent. SME owners view financial support (62%) and lifting the curfew (16%) as the most important measures to help them survive during the ongoing restrictions on movement.

The pandemic has also heavily impacted businesses’ ability to retain employees. On average, businesses reduced paid employment by 40 per cent and reduced salaries by 36 per cent. In addition to salaries, rent and electricity are the most common continuing costs for businesses in all industries.

“IOM and the international community’s work in support of economic recovery and job creation in Iraq is of critical importance now. While conflict-recovery needs remain high, COVID-19 has exacerbated vulnerabilities and increased the challenges that Iraqi employers are facing,” said IOM Iraq Chief of Mission Gerard Waite. “This assessment will serve as a basis for IOM’s continued, expanded engagement in this sector, as part of broader efforts to support for migrants, internally displaced persons,



host communities and other vulnerable populations.”

To view the survey’s main findings, please visit : <http://edf.iom.int/home/covsme/en>

Displaced woman makes masks to help her community take precautions against coronavirus

Dohuk, 16 May 2020 - The coronavirus lockdown has dealt a severe blow to the dreams of many displaced women who have been taken their first steps to achieving their aspirations.

Yazidi Fayza Elias Rashu is one of these women.

Fayza lives in Sharya complex for displaced persons in Duhok Governorate, northwestern Iraq.

Fayza is originally from Sinjar, in

Nineveh governorate also in north Iraq, but had to leave her town along with her family around 10 years ago to Duhok in a bid to improve the family's living conditions.

Using her previous sewing experience, Fayza worked as a dress-maker and as a trainer with Dak organization for Ezidi Women Development.

Over the past years, Fayza trained many women and girls on sewing and was able to support her family and offer

its members better living conditions.

"I love my work very much. I've always loved sewing and with the training opportunities that I've received from many organizations, I have fulfilled my childhood dream and became a professional dress-maker. I have a small shop with an ambition to turn it into a big workshop and expand my business", Fayza recalls.

But with the coronavirus outbreak, Fayza faced many difficulties at her job that forced her to stop her business. However, it did not stop her from working and serving her community despite the difficult financial situation she is facing.

"Despite the tough situation that we are facing, I wanted to do something of value for my community and especially the ones suffering from forced displacement. This is something that I wanted to do for long.

"So I sewed more than 500 facemasks in my shop supported by Dak organization and distributed them voluntarily free of charge to my community", she proudly says.



World Food Programme implements new cashless transactions

Baghdad, 17 May 2020 - New cashless transactions have started in Salamiya camp in Ninewa, Iraq. This way, people can buy food directly from the retailer in the camp with their mobile phones. Cashless payments in-camp reduce the need for banknotes, and help mitigate against COVID19, since contact-less payments are more hygienic. People also don't need to leave the camp to redeem cash and make purchases, which also helps avoid unnecessary movement, for people to stay safe.



Strict precautionary measures implemented on UN-Habitat construction sites

Mosul, 17 May 2020 - Strict precautionary measures in construction sites plays an important role in keeping staff and workers safe during COVID19. The UN -Habitat team recently installed in Yarmouk Park in Mosul locally-produced handwashing stations operated by a foot pedal for workers to regularly wash their hands. This initiative was undertaken as part of the on-going area-based EU-funded programme 'Supporting Recovery and Stability in Iraq through Local Development', implemented by UNDP in partnership with UN-Habitat.



WHO maintains remote psychological first aid training in Iraq to address COVID-19 stigma and discriminatory behaviors

Baghdad, 19 May 2020 - Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, people have experienced varying degrees of fear, concern, anxiety, and stress which required psychological support to enable them cope better with the challenges they are facing.

In Iraq, WHO immediately identified the groups in need of psychological care, with a special focus on women, and addressed their needs through a series of online sessions on psychological first aid and on how to address stigma and discrimination.

In April this year, remote psychological first aid trainings were provided to more than 100 participants from several organizations working in the field of mental health and psychosocial support in different target areas. The trainings introduced the principles of providing psychological care using phones or social media outlets.

Participants were coached to deal with numerous examples of stigma and shame suffered by people who contracted COVID-19. They shared observations of negative behaviors and attitudes seen as directly contributing to negative health outcomes and difficult access to information on the disease in pandemic affected locations.

One of the training participants commented: "My neighbor refused to allow his 68-year-old mother to go to the isolation facility because of stigma. It is hard for a man in Iraq to allow his

mother, wife, daughter, or his sister to be taken for quarantine or isolation outside the family house; the community traditions and social norms don't allow it."

Other participants spoke about how a COVID-19 positive becomes under severe stress due to isolation from the family, neighbors, relatives, and community.

"Stigma in some areas is cultural or social beliefs around the shame of getting a communicable disease," another participant from Mosul also commented. "I think a lot of people don't understand that we all are vulnerable to COVID; so, acquiring the disease can happen to anyone and we need to focus on raising awareness and get well educated on preventive measures, on top of which social distancing and hand hygiene. There is no shame in going to quarantine or stay away from family and friends if I am sick."

Training participants were also made aware of the important role they play in convincing the populations they serve to report any suspected COVID-19 cases and encouraging them to maintain a proper and healthy lifestyle including breathing, talking, eating, and body hygiene protocols.

"People with COVID-19 have to a certain level been negatively associated with stigma and discrimination worldwide," said Dr. Adham R. Ismail,



WHO Representative in Iraq. "WHO and the Ministry of Health in Iraq jointly confirm that all people regardless of races, social status, or ethnic backgrounds are vulnerable to the disease if no protective measures are properly followed."

"WHO and health authorities recognize the importance of addressing the health needs of those in need and continue providing specialized services to help them feel calm and able to maintain normal life activities in this difficult time," concluded Dr. Ismail.

FAO Iraq hands-over aid to the Ministries of Agriculture in Baghdad and Erbil to support fighting COVID 19

Baghdad, 22 May 2020 - In response to the emerging needs in Iraq due to current COVID-19 pandemic, FAO- Iraq has delivered hygiene, disinfectants sprayers and Personal Protection Equipment (PPEs) to the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), and the KRG Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources (MoAWR) in the presence of representatives of both ministries' officials and FAO. This initiative will allow governmental staff to continue their daily work to support farmers and ensure the continuity of the food supply chain in Iraq.

FAO Iraq has initiated technical support to promoting food safety and hygiene practices by developing training material in coordination with partner agencies and stakeholders. In addition, FAO also formulates a plan to provide training for extension officers to sustain services

according to hygiene and personal safety procedures. These efforts will reduce the risk of the transmission of the virus along the food supply chain. FAO also addressed text messages to farmers to adhere with COVID19 recommendations issued by the concerned committee,

In consultation with both ministers and in coordination with the World Food Program (WFP) and the World Bank, FAO has been conducting assessments on monitoring the impact of COVID-19 on food security and will continue to monitor the situation in the country.

The Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic continues to affect the world, including Iraq. Movement restrictions and curfews remain in place to curtail transmission of the disease; however, farmers are still able to travel during lockdown to access fields in coordination with the authorities and local councils.

"FAO is giving great attention to the health of the Iraqi farmers and will continue to provide the technical and logistical support required to protect the health and safety of ministries staff as well as the farmers all over Iraq. Said Dr. Salah ElHajj Hassan FAO Representative in Iraq. He also added that FAO Iraq is working closely with MoA in Baghdad and Erbil to improve agricultural productivity and to ensure the continuity of the food supply chain to sustain further food security. Dr. ElHajj Hassan expressed his appreciation to the European Union for their continuous support to Iraq through FAO in order to enable the continuous provision of support and cooperation with the national authorities. He thanked the Iraqi authorities for their cooperation with FAO.

UNAMI: individual responsibility essential to confront COVID-19, all Iraqis urged to follow official health instructions

Baghdad, 27 May 2020 – The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) applauds the Iraqi government's leadership and decisive response to the COVID-19 outbreak at a time when it is also confronting separate crises, including social unrest and an unprecedented economic downturn. The UN commends the determination shown by local, regional and national authorities to contain the virus, as well as the success of the early and sustained measures that were adopted with strong support from communities. It nevertheless warns that each and every person plays a critical role in facing the ongoing second wave of infections observed across many governorates.

Recalling her recent statement to the UN Security Council, Special

Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert stressed that “no amount of government response can succeed without the active involvement of the entire population”. She added “Despite the high hardship imposed by these measures, we know that they represent our best hope of getting back on our feet as soon as possible”.

The entire United Nations family, with the World Health Organization (WHO) in the lead, is providing critical assistance to Iraq to face the pandemic, including lab and medical supplies, personal protective equipment, funding and technical advice. “Iraqis can continue to count on the steadfast support of the United Nations during their time of need. The ultimate responsibility lies with individuals, who



must play their part by following the instructions of the health authorities to protect themselves and their families”, the Special Representative concluded.

UN Women: A woman leading against Corona

Baghdad, 27 May 2020 - Steadfast, persistent and courageous, this is what Dr. Wesan Arif Al-Tamimi, Director of Public Health Department in the Muthanna Governorate Health Department.

Dr. Wassan works in following up and examining food in the governorate, and detecting non-consumable substances to destroy them. To carry out this mission, it manages the process of carrying out surprise inspection tours through health control teams in the province in the far south of Iraq.

In light of the state of emergency in Iraq and the world due to the Corona virus pandemic, Dr. Wesh faces many challenges during the implementation of her legal and humanitarian duty, as she continues her essential work, namely, to ensure the validity of food and destruction of those that are not valid After being tested according to the Public Health Law and the transfer of violators to legal accountability. It continues to follow the health reality throughout the governorate, including neighborhood chicken shops and red meat to ensure compliance with health instructions and apply the required conditions according to the Public Health Act, as well as participate in giving the owners of the stores the necessary health guidance and guidance to limit From the spread of Corona virus.

On the other hand, Dr. Wassan's work does not stop this far, but also acts as a



member of the government crisis cell in Muthanna Governorate, which is the second largest provinces of Iraq in terms of space, the only woman in the cell, and works with continuous effort as her colleagues say As she continues her meetings and communication with various parties as Director General of Health and Medical departments of the Health Department, Governor, the Government Crisis Cell, the Operations Room of the Crisis Cell, Health Response Teams and Medical Staff in the Lobby of Quarantine and Medical Treatment and Inspection Committees in the Health Department The public, where she participates in taking on a large portion of the responsibility to prevent the epidemic in the province.

It also participates in preparing and following up on the implementation of Corona Virus plans with the Crisis Cell, as it follows the work of health

field teams periodically, and participates in visits to residential areas to conduct the required tests, especially in areas where infections have appeared Or areas where high risk is expected.

Dr. Wassan is constantly checking and visiting the main entrances of the governorate and following up the distribution of thermal screening devices and directing to determine the screening mechanism for citizens in a way that facilitates traffic without causing any traffic bottlenecks that may occur due to the examination process.

In addition, it is working to monitor the health reality assessment, ensure that all cafes are closed and prevent youth gatherings as precautions to prevent the virus in cooperation with community police and in accordance with the decisions of the Crisis Cell.

WHO reiterates its close cooperation and coordination with Iraqi health authorities to ensure the efforts to combat COVID-19 are successful

Baghdad, 28 May 2020 - Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, The World Health Organization (WHO) focused on fighting the pandemic with every tool at disposal to save lives and support many world countries with limited COVID 19 response capacity, including Iraq.

WHO and the Iraqi health authorities have proactively coordinated a comprehensive response to the pandemic as early as January 2020. The Organization scaled up the country's readiness and response operations mechanism as well as the pandemic preparedness plan of action. Several important actions- on both the Central and Regional ministries of health- were taken in coordination with WHO before the reporting of the first case in the country on 24 February. These actions included enhancing coordination and planning amongst all stakeholders and partners at national and international levels; communicate with communities about the risks and how they can protect themselves; and find, isolate, test, trace every contact, and treat every case.

A joint technical team from WHO Regional Office and HQ arrived Iraq on 9 March to assess the capacity of the Iraqi Ministry of Health and health facilities on disease detection, identification, and case management. The team provided guidance to fill the gaps in the priority order and assisted in improving the health measures taken by the government. Designated hospitals were accordingly prepared to respond to a potential spike in cases with a focus on protecting and training health workers on a variety of associated topics like infection prevention and case management.

"The Government of Iraq, with the full support of WHO, mobilized resources at an early stage of the pandemic to contain its transmission. National, regional and local authorities implemented strong measures to reduce the number of cases and suppress the rapid spread of the virus. These early preventive actions contributed to extending and delaying the epidemiological curve, resulting in comparatively fewer documented cases compared to neighbouring countries," said Dr. Adham R. Ismail, WHO Representative in Iraq.

WHO support to the national health authorities extended to include active surveillance, situation assessment and

analysis, and awareness-raising sessions targeting first-line staff in border points and country airports.

Rapid response teams were also mobilized to carry out country-wide awareness and contact tracing and testing activities including the dissemination of hundreds of thousands of infection prevention and control messages and guidelines.

Case management and continuity of essential services in addition to logistics, procurement, and supply management, on the other hand, were among the priority areas WHO and ministries of health on both the Central and Regional level closely coordinated at an early stage of the response.

The Organization, furthermore, lead a series of activities encouraging the adherence to the lockdown and avoidance of any mass gatherings that could destabilize the numbers of cases and eventually lift the Epi Curve. In this endeavour, WHO Iraq visited the religious Supreme Seminary in Najaf and recommended to postpone the religious gatherings. "WHO commends the stance of the Supreme Seminary in support of WHO and MOH recommendations and thanks its positive response to encourage the Iraqi people to follow health preventive measures and recommendations," added Dr. Ismail.

The provision of lab services was also

promoted. Direct cooperation between WHO and the Covid-19 Crisis Cell of Basra University succeeded in April 2020 in producing urgently-needed laboratory supplies to speed up the testing of suspected cases. This significant achievement was later copied by other region countries.

On the 20th of May of this year, Heads of Government from around the world beamed into the World Health Assembly (WHA) to discuss lessons, challenges and collective next steps to tackle the pandemic. The Assembly productively concluded with a landmark resolution underlining WHO's key role in promoting access to safe and effective health technologies to fight the pandemic.

"The resolution sets out a clear roadmap of the critical activities and actions that must be taken to sustain and accelerate the response at the national and international levels," said WHO Director-General Dr. Tedros Adhanom. "The resolution assigns responsibilities for both the WHO and its member states and captures the comprehensive whole of government and whole of society approach we have been calling for since the beginning of the outbreak. If implemented, this would ensure a more coherent, coordinated, and fairer response that saves both lives and livelihoods." The DG concluded.



Food is life: Iraqi families receive support packages during COVID-19 restrictions

Baghdad, 29 May 2020 - "Ahalna" means "our people" in Arabic. It's also the name of the distribution campaign started in late April by Local Peace Committee members supported by UNDP in partnership with Kurdistan Human Rights Watch and with generous contributions from the governments of Denmark and Germany.

1,450 life support packages have been distributed in Iraq's Ninewa and Salah al-Din governorates and will continue in eleven districts in Anbar and southern Salah al-Din at the end of May.

What's in a life support package? Each package contains cooking essentials including oil, sugar, lentils, rice, beans, tomato paste, tea, salt, Vitamin C tablets, and bars of soap for handwashing.

Khaled lives with his wife and five children in Mosul. They recently received a life support package at their home, which was damaged during the ISIL conflict.

"The coronavirus has greatly affected our family. My work in a small restaurant has stopped, and our living conditions have changed. Having to remain in our home for a long time has affected us all psychologically," says Khaled.

In Iraq, and especially during the month of Ramadan, sharing meals is

what brings family and friends together.

During the coronavirus pandemic, mandated physical distancing has affected social gatherings, and communication often occurs using technology. Khaled's family does not have internet at home but communicates with family members and friends over the phone. They spend their time at home together watching television and cooking and eating meals.

Khaled emphasizes, "We are waiting for this pandemic to end so that we can resume our lives again."

Beneficiaries were selected by the local peace committees supported by UNDP Iraq. As members of their own communities, the local peace committees understand the needs of their community, and where help is

needed most.

Mohammed, a member of the East Mosul Peace Committee, explains, "Our local peace committees work to make an impact on communities through relationships they build with residents. For this distribution campaign, many community members volunteered to help, including sheikhs, elders, youth, teachers, and students. The timing for the distribution of packages is appropriate, as many people are missing their regular income due to coronavirus restrictions."

In addition to distribution of life support packages, UNDP Iraq's Integrated Reconciliation Project is working to provide grants to local Community-Based Organizations and Non-Governmental Organizations in select areas to raise awareness about coronavirus and sterilize public spaces.



Spread awareness, not fear— UNICEF reaches 14 million people in Iraq through SMS with critical information related to Covid-19

Baghdad, 31 May 2020 – Approximately 14 million people in Iraq have been reached with critical information related on Covid-19 to increase awareness and combat dangerous misinformation spreading online and offline.

"Technology is playing a key role in bringing people together as we maintain social distancing, but unfortunately it's also being used to spread misinformation and fake news, fueling anxiety and stigma at a time when we must come together in solidarity against a common enemy," said Hamida Lasseko, UNICEF's Representative in Iraq.

"Alongside our partners, we are combating misinformation and communicating on multiple channels and in multiple languages to ensure parents, young people and children have the correct and necessary information to care for themselves and

their loved one," she added.

UNICEF has partnered with telecommunication companies like Korek Telecom, Zain and Asia Cell to provide people with reliable information on prevention, as well as mental and physical health during the pandemic. Through Korek Telecom, 4 million people have been reached on the U-report chatbot, SMS and Viber.

In the south and center zones, an additional 10 million people have been reached through partnerships with Zain and Asia cell. Messages have been delivered in Arabic and Kurdish.

"We are calling on all Iraqis to be health champions and to fight misinformation in their communities. Every single of us can make a difference— please stay vigilant to keep yourselves safe from the virus and to also guard against misinformation. To learn more about Covid-19, please visit UNICEF and WHO websites,"



concluded Lasseko.

In partnership with young volunteers and other organizations, UNICEF is also conducting awareness raising campaigns to reach people in camps and non-camps settings."

Online training course for Iraqi journalists to tackle misinformation swirling around COVID-19

Baghdad, 1 June 2020 - A training course on "Safety of Journalists and fighting disinformation amid COVID-19" was held in Baghdad on 29-30 May under the auspices of UNESCO, as a result of the misinformation and fake news that accompany the COVID-19 pandemic.

The first Iraqi training course to counter the pandemic was held with the participation of 58 journalists (32 female) from all governorates of Iraq and KRI, representing different types of media: print media (newspapers, magazines), broadcast media (TV, radio), outdoor or out of home (OOH) media, internet (social media).

Participants were given a two-day intensive training course by trainers and experts from UNESCO, including several methods and techniques on online learning, and the use of interactive training platforms that simulate realistic training sessions, pre- and post-training questionnaires, and a practice on how to operate the fact-checking tools and resources before using it.

The participants formed a group that will work on tracking misinformation that addresses everything surrounding COVID-19 and the procedures that accompany the pandemic.

UNESCO Iraq Office supports this initiative in the context of the Multi Donor Programme on Freedom of



Expression and Safety of Journalists (MDP), in terms of responding to the COVID-19 crises. This was one of a series of activities that is implemented by the UNESCO Iraq Office within the framework of protecting Iraqi journalists and raising awareness of the implications of misinformation and disinformation.

About the Multi-Donor Programme for Freedom of Expression and Safety of Journalists:

The Multi-Donor Programme on Freedom of Expression and Safety of Journalists (MDP) serves to further strengthen UNESCO's work at a global,

regional, and national levels, by channeling funds towards emerging priorities and the most pressing needs to achieve its mandate on freedom of expression. It enables UNESCO's Communication and Information Sector to address complex issues through the design and implementation of holistic medium and long-term interventions at national, regional and global levels. The clear advantage of this mechanism is that it allows UNESCO and its partners to achieve greater impact and sustainability, whilst reducing fragmentation of activities in the same field.

WHO: Iraq lockdown decision necessary after rise in COVID-19 infections, stresses collaboration of all in the fight against the virus

Baghdad, 1 June 2020 - The World Health Organization (WHO) in Iraq is urging Iraqis to follow the instructions of the health authorities to contain the spread of COVID-19 after a rise in infections, stressing that the re-introduction of a complete lockdown in Iraq was a necessary measure in the fight against the virus.

WHO Representative in Iraq, Dr. Adham R. Ismail, reaffirms WHO's continued support for and cooperation with the health authorities in Baghdad and in the Kurdistan Region to ensure the success of the measures to combat COVID-19. Dr. Ismail calls upon Iraqis across the country to commit to the highest levels of preventive measures and adhere to the lockdown to help the health authorities contain the spread of the virus. He also calls upon the authorities to strictly apply the lockdown measures coupled with intense testing of suspected cases

through contact tracing and active surveillance. "These measures can only achieve the desired results with the collaboration of all."

As of 31 May 2020, Iraq reported 6,439 cases, reflecting an increase in the average daily reports which is due to

intensive active surveillance activities conducted by the health authorities to detect COVID-19 cases and ensure the citizens are following the necessary preventive measures and social distancing.



Japan prioritizes Iraq's health and recovery from COVID-19 in new contribution



Baghdad, 1 June 2020 –The Government of Japan has committed US\$2.26 million to support the Government of Iraq's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Iraq.

The funds will be used to purchase critical medical equipment such as ventilators, as well as assist with socio-economic needs and impact assessments to establish post-COVID-19 recovery strategies for Iraq.

The activities fall under UNDP Iraq's

overall COVID-19 response plan which is administered through the Funding Facility for Stabilization and also includes increasing the testing capacity of laboratories, providing personal protective equipment to healthcare workers, building isolation units for infected patients and promoting social cohesion among communities.

“The emergence of COVID-19 has added yet another layer of crisis upon Iraq's already-fragile state, crippling its healthcare system, the economy and people's livelihoods. This is deeply

concerning especially for vulnerable communities that inevitably bear the brunt of such shocks,” says UNDP Iraq's Resident Representative, Zena Ali Ahmad.

“We're extremely grateful for Japan's support which is critical to not only ensuring patients receive the necessary medical care quickly and efficiently, but also to help build Iraq's roadmap for long-term recovery post-COVID-19,” she adds.

The Ambassador of Japan to Iraq, His Excellency Mr. Naofumi Hashimoto stated,

“Given that COVID-19 is raging across the world, it is crucial for the international community to make concerted efforts, and I hope that the Japan's assistance through UNDP will help fight against COVID-19 and address socio-economic impact.”

“Under such challenging circumstances, I wish to engage in and strengthen a close cooperation with the new Government of Iraq on a wide range of issues,” he added.

Japan is one of UNDP Iraq's key partners, providing more than \$86 million since 2014 for stabilization, community security and livelihood activities.

IOM Iraq provides cash assistance to migrant workers affected by COVID-19

Erbil, 4 June 2020 — As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to threaten workforces globally, migrant workers are at particular risk of losing their livelihoods. Like in other countries, migrant workers in Iraq have been disproportionately affected by the crisis, with widespread layoffs leaving many in a precarious financial situation, unable to meet their basic needs.

On 4 June, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) delivered the first round of cash assistance to vulnerable migrants in Iraq who have lost their incomes due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on the minimum expenditure basket, each individual received USD 182 to enable them to meet essential needs such as food, rent, and utilities.

The recipients — Bangladeshi and Filipino nationals — were referred to IOM Iraq by their respective embassies. IOM Iraq commenced the screening process for over 100 individuals in late April using a vulnerability assessment tool, and

expects to receive further referrals. In the coming days a second phase of cash assistance will commence; the money will be distributed via virtual Switch cards, a Mastercard service, that can be used to make withdrawals at banks and other cash agents. There will be further distributions in the coming weeks on a rolling basis.

IOM Iraq developed the vulnerability assessment tool to determine eligibility, based on indicators of food and rent insecurity. The assessment also captures specific health vulnerabilities among migrants.

“Migrants are among those who have been especially hard hit by the COVID-19 outbreak in Iraq,” said IOM Iraq Chief of Mission Gerard Waite. “Many of them live month-to-month, sending earnings home to their families. The loss of income has left them unable to afford food and at risk of eviction.”

“Migrants face the same health threats from COVID-19 as host populations, but are often more vulnerable due to crowded living conditions and barriers to accessing health services. Measures must be taken to protect their health and wellbeing, regardless of status,” he added.

This initial round of emergency financial assistance for migrant workers took place in Erbil and was made possible with funding from the Government of Canada. The Government of Canada also supports humanitarian assistance for Internally Displaced Persons, returnees and host communities in Iraq, through the provision of relief items, as well as shelter, protection and Mental Health and Psychosocial Support.



New contribution from Denmark helps combat COVID-19 pandemic in Iraq



Baghdad, 7 June 2020 –The Government of Denmark has committed DKK 6,000,000 (approximately US\$870,000) to support the Government of Iraq's response to the global COVID-19 pandemic, in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Iraq.

The funds have been pledged under UNDP Iraq's overall COVID-19 response package which is administered under the Funding Facility for Stabilization and includes increasing the testing capacity of laboratories, providing personal protective equipment to healthcare workers, increasing the number of isolation wards, promoting social cohesion, and undertaking assessments

to establish post-COVID-19 recovery strategies.

Denmark's contribution will largely focus on supporting local peace committees – established by UNDP with Denmark's support in 2018, to promote social cohesion, peace and stability in Iraq post-ISIL – to respond to the pandemic. Funds will also be used to boost the capacity of youth and women's community groups to address social issues like stigma and discrimination among communities.

In connection with the Danish support, the Danish Foreign Minister, Jeppe Kofod, stated:

“The Danish support for Iraq's COVID-19 response is a part of our continuous support for peace and stabilization in Iraq. It is very encouraging to see how

local community groups are stepping up in response to the COVID-19 pandemic – and I applaud the tremendous work carried out by both UNDP and these community groups, which is essential in our common efforts to curb the spread of the virus”.

“The support of community groups in managing the COVID-19 pandemic has been invaluable,” says UNDP Iraq's Resident Representative, Zena Ali Ahmad. “Local peace committees, along with community youth and women's groups, have taken the initiative to protect their own communities from COVID-19 through initiatives such as sterilizing public spaces, providing food baskets for vulnerable families, and setting up mobile health clinics.

“These activities help to curb the spread of the virus but at the same time promote more cohesive communities. We're grateful to Government of Denmark for this generous contribution and their continued commitment to a peaceful Iraq,” she added.

Denmark is a key partner for UNDP Iraq, providing more than \$58 million for stabilization, social cohesion, and security sector reform activities since 2015.

WHO Iraq clarifies issue of transmission of COVID-19 by asymptomatic cases

Baghdad, 10 June 2020 - The World Health Organization (WHO) in Iraq clarifies the statement made regarding the claim that COVID asymptomatic transmission is very rare.

The claim made on 8 June was referring to a subset of studies and data shared by some Member States, on detailed cluster investigations and contact tracing activities. In those studies, where asymptomatic cases were followed, it was “very rare” to find secondary transmission.

COVID-19 is caused by a new virus and we are still learning about the disease every day. It is important to stress that transmission is driven by symptomatic patients, and most recommendations for social measures are based on transmission from symptomatic patients, including mildly symptomatic cases who are not easy to identify early on.

The current body of evidence available world wide is in support of, and testifies to the correctness and effectiveness of the response measures taken by the Ministry of Health, in

coordination with WHO and that finding, isolating, testing every case, and tracing and quarantining every contact remains the cornerstone of the containment operation in the country.

“Measures taken by the health authorities in Iraq were applied in countries around the globe and are critical to observe with the recent flareup in reported cases,” said Dr. Adham R. Ismail, WHO Representative in Iraq.

“Measures such as social distancing; suspension of mass gatherings; movement restrictions; and the closure of institutions like schools, workplaces, and restaurants are still necessary to contain the disease transmission. The pandemic can only be controlled through isolation, rapid testing, treatment, and contact tracing” Dr. Ismail added.

WHO in Iraq calls upon national health authorities to maintain early isolation of all cases and admit positive patients who have mild disease or do not require hospitalization to temporary isolation facilities with IPC measures in place.

WHO in Iraq will continue to work with national health authorities, partners, and local communities to ensure the strict adherence to infection prevention and control protocols.

“Individuals and communities must be updated regularly on the evolution of the outbreak and be given the information they need to protect themselves and their families,” Dr. Ismail concluded



SIDA funds UNFPA COVID-19 response with US\$ 1.73 M

Baghdad, 12 June 2020 - The Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) contributed SEK 16 million (approximately US\$ 1.73 million) to UNFPA response to the COVID-19 pandemic in Iraq. UNFPA launched in May its COVID-19 response plan for Iraq seeking US\$ 1.7 million to meet the needs of women and girls across Iraq.

The funds will allow UNFPA to scale up COVID-19 interventions to ensure that women and girls, especially pregnant women and survivors of gender-based violence, including those in quarantine, have timely and safe access to health and protection services.

UNFPA will also provide the Ministry of Health reproductive health supplies, including modern contraceptives and maternal health medicines as well as Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

"I am very pleased to announce the agreement signed today between the Swedish International Development Agency and UNFPA in support of its COVID-19 response plan for Iraq. This contribution of SEK 16 million aims to protect women and girls to safe access to health and protection at a much



needed time," said Mr Lars Ronnäs, Ambassador of Sweden to Iraq, during the online signature of the grant today.

"Sweden will support five strategic interventions identified by the UNFPA including to protect pregnant women and survivors of gender-based violence. To ensure equal protection and rights for women is an important part of Sweden's development cooperation," he elaborated.

"UNFPA Iraq will continue to engage the community in awareness campaigns and ensure that women and girls have access to life-saving, multi-

sectoral services. These activities will help to curb the spread of COVID-19," commented Dr Oluremi Sogunro, UNFPA Representative to Iraq.

"We are grateful for Sweden's commitment to women and girls in Iraq through their trust and partnership with UNFPA in Iraq. We have reached thousands of women thanks to this partnership," he added.

Sida has been a reliable partner to UNFPA during the humanitarian crises in Iraq since 2016 providing more than SEK 140 million to UNFPA humanitarian programmes in Iraq.

WHO airlifts over 80 tons of emergency medical supplies from Iraq to meet the increasing health needs in north east Syria

Erbil, Iraq and Damascus, Syria 13 June 2020 - The World Health Organization (WHO) today finalized the dispatch of more than 80 tons of health commodities and life-saving supplies, urgently needed in Syria.

The three-cargo consignment was part of the humanitarian response to support the health system in North-East Syria (NES). It was airlifted through Erbil International Airport, Kurdistan Region of Iraq to Damascus International airport in three consecutive shipments from 10-12 June.

"I commend the endeavor of all colleagues who worked hard to ensure the successful delivery of this lifesaving health supplies; it will certainly support the provision of health in crisis-affected areas northeast Syria and avail hundreds of thousands of in need population there a better access to essential and first line health care services," said Dr Adham R. Ismail WHO Representative in Iraq. "WHO Iraq has been active in coordinating cross-border support to Syria for more than a year now and we will continue to assist any request from our

colleagues in WHO Syria Office aimed at relieving the suffering and saving lives in neighboring Syria despite the immense challenges," Dr. Ismail added.

"I am proud to be part of WHO, the Organization that works across the globe and can bring its full force to support those in need. These shipments demonstrate the collaborative work across our offices in Iraq and Syria, guided by our Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean. I would like to thank all colleagues who contributed to the successful delivery of these shipment which will boost the provision of essential health service delivery in conflict affected areas of the northeast Syria," said Dr. Akjemal Magtymova, WHO Representative and Head of Mission in Syria. "Also immense thanks to WFP team for airlifting the shipment. This joint intercountry collaboration reflects the great teamwork and humanitarian spirit that spans across the UN system, the spirit which we all share and work hard towards maintaining," she added.

The cargo includes a variety of health kits ranging between trauma kits sufficient to manage 4,300 cases; as

well as 11 Cholera kits (IDDK), 30 non-communicable diseases (NCD) kits, 26 surgical kits and 478 inter-agency emergency health kits (IEHK) providing medicines, medical supplies and consumables enough to treat over one million cases.

The timely arrival of these supplies has provided a glimmer of hope for people in need and boosted the efforts of health facilities in NES to deliver health care services to as many patients as possible. It will satisfy the essential health needs of more than 1.6 million people there.

The consignment is part of the humanitarian response to the Syrian crisis funded through the generous contribution of the European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO).



Acting Director-General of Kirkuk Directorate of Health visited UNAMI Kirkuk Office

Kirkuk, 14 June 2020 - The challenges posed by the COVID-19 crisis and ways of cooperation in the fight against the virus were discussed by representatives of UNAMI, UNHCR and OCHA with the Acting Director-General of Kirkuk Directorate of Health, Dr. Ziyad Khalaf Medayed, at a meeting at UNAMI Kirkuk Office.



WHO on Twitter

Baghdad, 17 June 2020 - The World Health Organization (WHO) in Iraq: @WHOIraq denies what was reported on Social Media, about the way Covid19 spread through AC ventilators in the

isolation hospitals. The organization urges the Iraqi People to exercise caution when reading fake news. #COVID19 pandemic has been accompanied by a massive spread of

misinformation. Always refer to the official platforms of @WHOIraq & @MOhealth_Iraq when looking for reliable info.

Timely \$10 million USAID contribution protects more communities against COVID-19 outbreak

Baghdad, 18 June 2020 –The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has committed over US\$10 million recently to fight the COVID-19 pandemic in Iraq, allowing the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to scale-up its response to the pandemic into three additional governorates.

The funds – pledged under UNDP's Funding Facility for Stabilization for activities implemented in partnership with the Government of Iraq – will be used to rehabilitate healthcare facilities and provide medical equipment and furniture to hospitals in the originally-identified priority locations of Basra, Duhok, Karbala, Kirkuk, Najaf, and Ninewa, as well as three additional

areas: Babil, Dhi Qar and Maysan.

Funding will also be used to rehabilitate the East Mosul Medical Fluid Factory – one of the largest in Iraq, and a critical source of medical supplies to government hospitals, primary healthcare centres and pharmacies. The factory was severely damaged in the ISIL conflict.

“The steep rise in COVID-19 cases detected over the past few weeks is gravely concerning and shows that the virus has not yet reached its peak in Iraq,” says Resident Representative of UNDP Iraq, Zena Ali Ahmad.

“USAID's generous contribution comes at exactly the right time, allowing us to target even more communities by expanding our geographical scope to an

additional three underserved governorates. As our biggest donor, we're extremely grateful for USAID's continued dedication to putting vulnerable communities first, and leaving no-one behind,” she adds.

“The United States is proud to support this work to combat COVID-19 and assist the people of Iraq; this work will directly support citizens throughout the country to get the high-quality treatment they need to fight coronavirus,” said Dana Mansuri, USAID Mission Director.

USAID joins Belgium, Denmark, Japan, the Netherlands and Sweden as key partners supporting UNDP Iraq's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

UNICEF distributed COVID-19 awareness-raising leaflets

Baghdad, 18 June 2020 - In cooperation with health promotion teams, UNICEF has distributed awareness-raising leaflets, educating people about Coronavirus in Baghdad, Najaf and Karbala, and health centres in areas with high cases of COVID19.



Aid delivered in the times of COVID-19

Kirkuk, 21 June 2020 – OCHA Iraq Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) partner Mercy Corps distributed hygiene kits in Laylan 1 IDP camp in Kirkuk to all families in the camp. The kits contained: laundry detergent; household supplies; personal hygiene items; and diapers. Proper COVID-19 prevention measures were in place.



Baghdad, 22 June 2020 - In coordination with local authorities in Nineveh governorate, the International Organization for Migration in Iraq provides immediate support to hospitals. Where cases suspected of the coronavirus are brought in for testing, isolation and care. 13 beneficiaries of

the cash-for-work program are working to keep the place clean and orderly. Supported by the German Development Bank.



UN Iraq: continue following health instructions, prevention remains the best tool

Baghdad, 24 June 2020 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, and the World Health Organization (WHO) Representative in Iraq, Dr. Adham Ismail, visited today the Ministry of Health, where they met with the Minister of Health, Dr. Hassan Muhammad Al-Tamimi. The visit followed up on Iraq's ongoing efforts to combat the COVID-19 pandemic in light of the recent spike in cases. The UN reaffirmed its continued support to Iraqi health institutions. The visit was followed by a press conference.

Following are Ms. Hennis-Plasschaert's remarks:

"We are addressing you today at a critical time with a simple yet urgent message: we must remain committed to fighting the spread of COVID-19 at every level, but most fundamentally through the individual action of each and every one of us.

We salute the hard work, immense bravery and sacrifice of healthcare workers who give their all, even their lives, to help defend us from the pandemic. Our sincere condolences go out to all those who have lost loved ones to the disease.

Local, regional and national health authorities, and indeed the friends and partners of Iraq, have been warning all along that complacency would be very costly. The seriousness of the situation

cannot be overstated. However, fear and misinformation are just as dangerous. We must fight back with courage, sound information, practical advice and collective discipline.

Despite serious limitations in its healthcare capabilities, Iraq managed to withstand the first months after the outbreak of the virus that overwhelmed many countries across the world. Now, because of increased testing and surveillance, but also because of a lack of adherence to instructions, Iraq finds itself in the midst of a major health crisis.

As we still do not have a vaccine, prevention measures remain our best tool: physical distancing, proper hygiene, seeking treatment without fear or shame.

The experience of other countries shows us that it is possible to contain COVID-19 and gradually reopen economies; yet we have also seen that massive loss of life and livelihood can result when we do not heed the advice of the authorities. Governments cannot create miracles overnight, but all of us, working together for the common good, can and will defeat this disease.

With self-discipline, a willingness to remain informed by credible sources, and the concerted efforts of all, Iraq will overcome. As I have said before, we are all in this together, all nations, all peoples, each and every individual. We each have our part to play, and Iraqis can count on the continued support of the United Nations, with the World Health Organization in the lead."



Awareness is key to flatten COVID infection curve in Iraq

Baghdad, 29 June 2020 - The World Health Organization (WHO), in collaboration with the Iraqi Ministry of Health, today kicked off a major COVID-19 awareness campaign targeting high risk and affected areas in the Iraqi capital Baghdad.

The campaign is planned to cover 10 heavily populated areas for a period of 4-weeks (29 June- 28 July) and will mobilize more than 250 community male/female volunteers to ensure the delivery of critical Information, Education and Communications (IEC) messages to approximately 6 million people living in these areas.

“Health is the responsibility of all, and raising people’s awareness is instrumental to containing the aggressive spread of pandemics like COVID 19,” said Dr. Adham R. Ismail, WHO Representative in Iraq. “WHO, the ministry of health, partners, and donors are all one hand in fighting COVID, and until a vaccine is produced, we have to unite our efforts to flatten the curve and keep our communities healthy and safe,” he added.

The campaign includes using mobile screens, booths, and mobile medical clinics to display WHO educational videos and audio messages on a variety of protection and disinfection measures. State and private radio and TV channels will support the campaign with daily messages for one month, in addition to the direct distribution of personal protection packages



containing masks, hand sanitizers, campaign slogan T-shirts and caps, COVID-19 awareness flyers and other educational materials, all targeting pedestrians in public places and main streets and bazaars.

Iraq recently reported a significant increase in numbers of infected cases in Baghdad mainly after the ease of the lockdown countrywide. Iraqi health authorities reports related the scale-up in infection numbers to the increase in testing capacity and active surveillance activities in one part, and to the poor adherence of people in crowded districts to prevention and protection measures recommended by WHO and MOH, including good hand hygiene, social distancing, and mask-wearing.

The campaign includes support from key religious figures who mobilized thousands of mosques in main capital cities and districts to disseminate audio messages. “With no cure yet but prevention, we have to continue educating our people on the importance

of following the health advice of WHO and national health institutions to save our lives and protect our health workers,” a cleric attending the campaign opening in Sadir City, where the vast slums of eastern Baghdad are located, commented.

“WHO is aware of the challenging impact of the lockdown and movement restrictions on the limited and daily income-families in many areas in Baghdad. However, the organization urges all individuals to follow safety measures and wear masks in gatherings and public places, keep hands clean, and ensure social distancing to stop transmission of the virus,” Dr. Adham stressed.

WHO would like to extend its thanks to the Government of Kuwait and the European Union Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid (ECHO) for co-funding this campaign, and to WHO’s implementing partner United Iraqi Medical Society (UIMS) NGO for supporting its implementation.

UNESCO experts led young media influencers to promote COVID-19 awareness campaign for community safety and fighting Disinfodemic



Baghdad, 25 June 2020 - The community has an urgent need to raise awareness related to the pandemic. The

UNESCO Iraq office have engaged various sources of media to prevent misinformation circulating across

different social media that exist in the world today.

The CI sector led 93 young media leaders from different institutions and governorates of Iraq to work hands-on as a team. Their mission is to provide the community with important information needed for their overall health and safety related to the COVID-19 pandemic, and to show them how to use the Fact-Checking Tool (FCT) for information related to COVID-19.

“Misinformation among social media users and the public is rising as fast as the COVID-19 cases, and therefore, journalists and developers play a critical role in helping to bring evidence-based facts to light,” Ayad Khudiar, head of Media Monitoring

UNESCO experts led young media influencers to promote COVID-19 awareness campaign ... (continued)

Institution, said.

This training course developed by UNESCO aims to enhance the safety of journalists and equip them with new techniques and measures to prevent the pandemic and to find better ways of identifying misinformation.

“Through this online training, we gained better insights on pandemic basics, and learned vital information related to the fact-checking learning module. A similar strategy was quickly adapted for the second training-learning module on COVID-19

awareness,” Hathim Hasan, head of Baghdad Youth and Sport Directorate, said.

Trainees were introduced to different aspects of COVID-19, including its virology, epidemiological principles involved in its transmission, prevention, and a special focus on the disinformation around this phenomenon. Participants were required to take initiatives to help educate the community via media outlets and social media projects.

Ali Jabar, one of the young social media influencers, said, “I will share a social understanding of with what I have learned from UNESCO about the pandemic via my 60K Facebook page, so people could understand it in the best way possible.”

Mena Saad asserted that she has learned a lot about the severity of the coronavirus, and she now feels more informed and aware of what she can do to play her part as an employee in the Ministry of Sport and Youth.

Freedom of Press

UNESCO and Iraqi journalists celebrate World Press Freedom Day



Baghdad, 4 May 2020 - UNESCO Iraq Office, with the cooperation of the National Committee for the Safety of Journalists, and with participation from the Ministry of Interior and the Iraqi Press Association, organized a virtual meeting with journalists from all governorates to celebrate World Press Freedom Day.

"Journalism without fear or favour" was the theme for this international occasion, by recalling the huge sacrifices made by journalists and media workers, to defend the media from attacks on their independence and to pay tribute to journalists who have lost their lives in the exercise of their profession.

"We are standing here today, facing a huge challenge, threatening to overshadow the daily lives of people across the world during this crisis. Journalists, doctors, nurses and security officers are all facing the same threat of COVID-19. We all applaud them for the sacrifices that they have to make to provide us with the needed

information, fact-based news and analysis. With this statement, the President of the Federation of Journalists in Iraq, and the Federation of Arab Journalists, Mr Moayad Al-Lami, started his opening speech, stressing on the need for a full governmental response to cease the risks of threats in the media society.

"Celebrate World Press Freedom Day from Home", that is the statement that has been agreed on from all participants at the ceremony, due to the circumstances that are currently affecting the world from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Another year has passed and we are still counting numbers of media and press victims in Iraq: Mazen Latif and Tawfeeq Tamim are an example of journalists with their fates unknown, and more than six journalists were killed since last year. Six other journalists have been infected with COVID-19, some have recovered while the rest of the journalists remain in danger while doing their jobs in the

field. "According to Dhea Subhee, UNESCO Iraq "Free and independent press is necessary at all times, but it is particularly important during health crisis, such as the crisis we are currently experiencing. "While many are primarily searching for information online, the role of professional journalists is to assist in providing information and provide the necessary guidance.

Major General, Saad Maan, the Director of the Department of Media in the Ministry of Interior, said in his opening speech that "The Ministry of Interior seeks to complete the setting up of the investigation unit by training their officers towards achieving an optimal response to journalists, by securing their working fields and the safety of Iraqi women journalists. In a program to break the silence through its partnership with UNESCO Iraq Office to enhance the protection of journalists."

Mr. Maan also added that the ministry is seeking to reveal the mystery of the abduction and murder of journalists, and it is in the process of providing a full report to the Director of UNESCO Iraq regarding these murders in the near future.

The participants discussed the challenges and problems facing them during this crisis, and sent a request to the Iraqi Government and to the Prime Minister's Office to sign a draft of the executive order on the protection mechanism for the safety of journalists in Iraq, specifying who would be responsible for the safety of journalists, and to determine the duty of each member of the Committee.

UNAMI on Twitter

Baghdad, 15 June 2020 - On Iraqi Press Day, we salute the dedication and sacrifices of all Iraqi journalists.

By informing the public from the frontlines, they promote transparency and accountability. We must continue

to honour and protect freedom of the media.

Women leaders at the frontline in the fight against coronavirus

Baghdad, 24 June 2020 - Veteran journalist and activist Nibras Al-Mamory is a staunch supporter of media freedom and women's rights, reports UN Women.

As the Head of the Iraqi Women Journalists Forum, she is fighting for both causes.

Colleagues characterize her as courageous and persistent, saying that Dr. Al-Mamory loves to tackle thorny issues in her work.

In her capacity as the head of the forum, she is focusing efforts on building the capacity of women journalists to prepare them to assume leading roles in their workplaces. She believes Iraqi women journalists have great potentials and are entitled to be leaders in their profession. Dr. Al-Mamory also diligently works in following up, monitoring and documenting violations against women working in the media industry. Recently, she was leading a team conducting a study to document assaults against media practitioners. The study documented more than 100 assaults on media professionals, who included 35 women, in the first half of 2020.



In advocating for women's issues and human rights, Dr. Al-Mamory constantly organizes media campaigns to defend women's rights through the Iraqi Women Journalists' Forum, a partner of UN Women, with the aim of influencing public opinion to support these rights.

In view of the current coronavirus outbreak and challenges that it poses to Iraq at various levels, Dr. Al-Mamory led the forum in organising more than

40 media awareness-raising, relief and prevention campaigns since the beginning of the crisis.

In addition to helping fight the pandemic, the forum also had a role in fighting the shadow pandemic accompanying it: rising cases of violence against women.

It organized "No to Domestic Violence" campaign that had reached tens of thousands of followers on social media, officials at the forum said.

Gender

UNFPA welcomes Norway's support for women protection in Iraq

Baghdad, 10 June 2020 - The Government of Norway donated NOK 20 million (approximately US\$ 2 million) in support of the UNFPA humanitarian programme on gender-based violence across in Iraq.

This contribution is part of a wider NOK 100 million contribution from Norway to UNFPA's Global Humanitarian Action Overview aiming at mitigating, preventing and responding to gender-based violence in humanitarian crises.

In Iraq, UNFPA will utilise the funding for strengthening the capacity of service providers in case management, psychosocial support and mental health and psychosocial support targeting the vulnerable population across Iraq. The funding will contribute to supporting the current 47 women centres operating in camps and non-camps settings. UNFPA will use this grant to



procure dignity kits and the specific kits for the clinical management of rape following the roll-out of the clinic management of rape protocol later in the year.

"Norway is a long-standing contributing partner to the humanitarian crisis in Iraq", said Dr. Oluremi Sogunro, UNFPA

Representative to Iraq. "We are extremely grateful for the renewed trust in our interventions and programmes. The new contribution will be pivotal for our efforts in responding to the needs of gender-based violence survivors in camps across Iraq, focusing on their mental health and the psychosocial support they deserve."

High quality services provided to gender-based violence survivors staying at four women shelters in KRI

Erbil, 24 June 2020 - Several pastry training courses were held at two women shelters in Erbil and Suleimaniyah Governorates in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) recently. Organised by KRI's Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the courses are held as part of the project "Strengthening the resilience of Syrian women and girls and host communities," which is supported by UN Women and the European Trust Fund "Madad".

The project aims to provide high quality services to gender-based violence survivors staying at four women shelters in KRI. In addition to training activities to survivors, staff and security forces, the project supports services such as psychological counselling, legal aid and referrals.

A total of 45 women and girls staying at the shelters benefited from the

pastry-making courses, according to officials at the shelters.

The officials said the courses had a positive impact on the beneficiaries,

noting that they were intended to provide them with some skills that they can use to be able to generate their own incomes in the future.



Human Rights

Safety at home, an illusion for far too many women in Iraq



Baghdad/Geneva, 13 May 2020 - "Women in Iraq face several additional challenges right now," says Danielle Bell, Head of UN Human Rights in Iraq. "The restrictive measures adopted to fight COVID-19 in Iraq heighten the risk of domestic violence, whilst at the same time substantially reducing the ability of victims to report abuse and seek effective shelter, support and access to justice."

As COVID-19 sweeps the globe, in many countries it is often women who bear the brunt of the crisis. Taking on the lion's share of the caregiving and household responsibilities is just one aspect. Women may also face difficulty accessing healthcare due to issues of stigma around the virus, and they are

also far more vulnerable to violence in their own homes.

When the first official case of COVID-19 was declared on 24 February in Iraq, measures put in place by the authorities were swift. As case numbers grew, schools, universities, restaurants, and shopping centres were closed, and mosques and other religious venues were forbidden to host large gatherings. By the middle of March, a nationwide lockdown and curfew were implemented, as well as travel restrictions.

"While these early preventive actions were necessary to help prevent transmission, the curfew has had substantial impact on the lives of women," continues Bell. "We've received reports that some women cannot leave the house to seek medical care because of the stigma and shame it could bring to their families, but also because cultural norms do not allow women to be alone in quarantine centres in the absence of a male relative."

One of our main concerns is the exacerbation of domestic violence in the country, which we fear was highly underreported even prior to the pandemic."

When home is not a safe place

Although the Constitution of Iraq prohibits all forms of violence and abuse in the family, school, and society, the Penal Code provides that the punishment of a wife by her husband is the exercise of a legal right and as such, is not a crime. Perpetrators frequently go unpunished. However, the Iraqi Government is showing commitment to change this, with the Anti-Domestic Violence Law currently under discussion in the parliament.

These discussions are taking place amidst a worrying context for women and girls. In mid-April, the United Nations in Iraq confirmed multiple reports of horrific abuse, including the rape of a woman with special needs, spousal abuse, sexual harassment of minors, and suicide due to domestic abuse. Iraq's High Judiciary Council subsequently issued a circular calling on judges to use all legal provisions for deterrence, but this won't close the loopholes.

Confinement affects reporting

Media and social media in Iraq are also reporting an increase in acts of domestic violence. The authorities on

Safety at home, an illusion for far too many women in Iraq (continued)

the other hand have noted a decrease in official reports of domestic violence, but acknowledged in some instances that the curfew has contributed to this reduced number.

The 'humiliation' of being exposed in front of neighbours and the community has often led to under-reporting of domestic violence. Victims do not always seek support, for fear of publicly shaming their family. This is exacerbated by home confinement.

"Throughout Iraq, entire families are confined together," notes Bell. "Quite frequently, there is a pressure to resolve family disputes – including domestic violence – without any intervention from a third party due to shame and stigma associated with such violence. Resolutions are therefore fraught, and the cycle of violence just continues."

"Iraq's response plans for COVID-19 should include the adoption of the Anti-Domestic Violence Law to enable the prevention and redress of violence

against women," says Bell. "Without doubt, this is the time for the Iraqi Government to renew its efforts to finalise the law and organize the remedies offered to women including establishing enough shelters accessible without cumbersome procedures."

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the signing and implementation of this law is even more crucial. Current lockdown measures mean that only half of staff in Iraq's family protection units are coming to work. These units previously offered a place of safety and support for women who were victims of violence. Now, the few women who are able to come to report a case are often quickly dismissed, and they also have to get the report signed by a judge, clearly a challenging and complicated endeavour.

In situations where perpetrators have been brought to account, they have often simply been forced to sign a document to say they will not repeat

the offence. Another favoured 'solution' is that victims are asked to 'reconcile' with the perpetrators.

Impunity for perpetrators must end

"Since the start of the COVID-19 curfew in Iraq, the obstacles faced by women in reporting domestic violence have created an even deeper sense of impunity for the perpetrators of these crimes," notes Bell. "Violence against women and girls is a crime, and perpetrators need to be held to account."

UN Human Rights is urging the Government to take immediate steps. "Special measures need to be made available immediately to women, including secure and confidential online services to lodge complaints, or an easing of the requirements for women to report abuse and seek emergency shelter," says Bell.

Increase in cases of domestic violence under COVID-19 pandemic



Baghdad/Erbil, 19 May 2020 - The Iraqi Women's Future Organization Legal Clinic continues to provide legal advice on domestic violence and other issues of concern to women.

The legal clinic activity comes within the project to promote women's economic empowerment through gender equality, implemented with support from the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Action Fund and the United Nations Women's Organization (UN Women).

These consultations provided by the legal advisor to the organization, Lawyer Sahara Al-Janabi, included

issues that have been emerging at present, such as viewing decisions for children of separated families in the midst of the Corona crisis.

"With family courts in Iraq suspending operations due to the coronavirus pandemic, we have noticed an increase in cases of domestic violence. It may be attributed to the perception that some men have the right to harm women and practice all forms of violence against them with impunity. On the other hand, battered women may believe that they should tolerate the violence due to the suspension of the courts and concerned humanitarian institutions.

That is why we have to work hard to make these women aware of their rights and provide the legal and psychological support they need and guide them to the violence protection centers that continue to operate during this crisis", says Susan Shankali, Legal Advisor at DAK organization, Nineveh Governorate.

Kajhal Nayef Rahman, a judge at the Public Prosecution Office in Erbil, says her office is facing a big workload and many difficulties in light of the coronavirus lockdown and curfew across the country which led to the closure of government departments, reports UN Women.

She says: "The lockdown and the curfew have severely impacted the ability of women facing abuse at their homes to communicate with us to seek help in the appropriate manner. Despite the security measures available in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, it is still unfortunate that abused women do not have adequate means to communicate with the concerned authorities.

"With the closure of departments and the curfew, that the government should find ways to enable violence survivors to make complaints, seek help and get the needed assistance and protection, including having a hotline, for example."

Youth empowered: Young people in Iraq discourage domestic violence during COVID-19

Baghdad, 13 May 2020 - When UNDP Iraq consulted with Iraqi youth on how they would like to affect social change in Iraq, their priority was clear. During the COVID-19 pandemic, which has seen an international surge in reports of domestic violence, youth in Iraq's Diyala Governorate chose to discourage abuse and promote tolerance.

Part of the Social Cohesion Programme's Integrated Reconciliation Project focuses on empowering youth and strengthening their position within society by enhancing their capacity to participate in decision-making processes and building their confidence to encourage better engagement with communities and local authorities. This year, with support from the Government of Denmark, youth groups were formed in the governorates of Anbar, Salah Al-Din, Diyala and Ninewa.

Mustafa, 29, a member of the Diyala Youth Group, says, "Social cohesion is very important in Iraq, especially in the current situation. Many segments of society suffer from marginalization, including women, youth, and children. Working to enact domestic violence law is very important to help families. As youth, our priorities are building peace and coexistence, rejecting sectarianism and ethnicity, and working together to build a better Iraq."

The Diyala Youth Group is responsible for creating and launching the #tolerance_instead_of_violence campaign on 4 May, which has been shared by over sixty social media platforms in Iraq, including local news agencies, government officials, social media influencers, and non-governmental organizations. The campaign includes a video produced by youth, stories of survivors of domestic violence to raise awareness about the issue, and a live discussion on Facebook

with community police to provide advice to women.

So far, videos that echo the campaign's message have been received from Anbar, Ninawa, Kirkuk and Babil governorates in various languages, including sign language, English, Kurdish, Syriac, Arabic, and Yazidi. Members of the Diyala Youth Group hope to see the social media campaign reach a wide audience in Iraq, a country where close to half of the overall population is active on social media.

"As a young Iraqi woman, I hope that social cohesion and peace will prevail among all Iraqis," says 24-year-old Mariam, Diyala Youth Group Member. "This domestic violence campaign will encourage women to speak out and discuss their problems. This is a positive development in moving from submission to speaking with courage."

Marwan, 25, who produced the youth group's short video, says, "Working with the Diyala Youth Group will help me create change in society and prevent the spread of entrenched extremist ideas to new generations. We

want to reflect a positive image of the province and establish a culture of dialogue and acceptance."

While the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting government-mandated curfews has made it difficult for projects to be implemented on the ground, the youth groups were formed through e-mail, Whatsapp messages, and Zoom meetings. The youth groups have already identified topics for future campaigns and hope to use their creativity and communication skills to champion their causes further.

Fatima, 30, Diyala Youth Group Member, says, "Every time I join a new project or activity, I see myself changed into a better person. More tolerant and human. I believe humanity is the key to civilization and progress, and I always strive for change, even if it is small. Next, we plan to do an initiative focusing on youth empowerment, the first of its kind in Diyala."

All four youth groups have demonstrated a keen drive to effect social change and inspire social cohesion, tasks that will encourage tolerance and unity in Iraq.



Iraq: UN details ordeal of abducted protesters, welcomes Government's promise to investigate and compensate

Baghdad, 23 May 2020 – A United Nations report published today on the abduction of protesters in Iraq since last October details their ordeals from the time of abduction through interrogation to acts of torture.

In its fourth report on the protests, the UN Human Rights Office of the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) documented cases involving 123 people

who disappeared between 1 October 2019 and 21 March 2020. Of these, 98 people were located, but 25 remain missing or are in an unknown status.

Since the protests erupted at the start of October, the UN has verified 490 deaths of activists and 7,783 injured. Most of the protesters are young and unemployed, and have been demanding that their economic and social rights be

respected. The demonstrations have continued even after the outbreak of COVID-19 in the country.

The report found that the "absence of accountability for these acts continues to contribute to the pervasive environment of impunity in relation to demonstration-linked reports of violations and abuses".

"The establishment of a high-level fact-

Iraq: UN details ordeal of abducted protesters, welcomes Government's promise to investigate and compensate *(continued)*

finding committee by the new Government to investigate casualties and related harm is a crucial step toward justice and accountability," said Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq. "The Government's commitment to provide medical treatment for injured demonstrators and compensation to the families of victims is encouraging."

The report notes that the abductions and disappearances occurred amid numerous incidents involving additional violations and abuses targeting activists and protesters, including deliberate killings, shooting and knife attacks, threats and intimidation, and excessive and unlawful use of force at demonstration sites.

None of those interviewed knew the identity of those responsible for their abduction, although most speculated the involvement of 'militia'. They added that they did not believe official Iraqi Security Forces were directly

responsible, nor that ordinary criminal gangs were to blame.

The report does not speculate on who might be behind the abductions, points to "the involvement of armed actors with substantial levels of organisation and access to resources".

The report provides concrete recommendations to the Government of Iraq, including:

- Make immediate efforts to comply with its obligations under international law, including by making all efforts to locate those demonstrators and activists who remain missing.
- Take immediate action to protect protesters and activists from abduction.
- Take immediate action to investigate all alleged cases of abduction, disappearance and torture/ill-treatment, and to prosecute those responsible.
- Publicly identify the so-called unidentified force, armed group or 'militia', behind the abductions.

The report is available at the www.uniraq.org website:

English: <https://bit.ly/2A7oe75>

Arabic: <https://bit.ly/3ecuHwk>



UNFPA in Iraq: How many more women should suffer before there is a law to protect them?

Baghdad, 2 June 2020 - Every year in Iraq, too many women and children are abused and sexually assaulted by an intimate partner, a family member, a loved one.

Despite the efforts that have been made by the Government, the United Nations Agencies, and the civil society to eliminate gender-based violence, what we have seen in recent times is an escalation in number, the horrific nature of the crime and the depth of the societal wound. In all of these, the anti-domestic violence bill has yet to be enacted.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, reports continue to emerge on the increase of gender-based violence across Iraq with no possibility of sheltering all the women who are being abused due to the absence of a law that protects survivors.

The UN-led coordination group with its partners from the NGOs and the civil society organisations conducted a rapid assessment on the spread of gender-based violence during COVID-19. Data received showed that 94% of the reported incidents during the current pandemic are related to domestic violence. Forty per cent of health

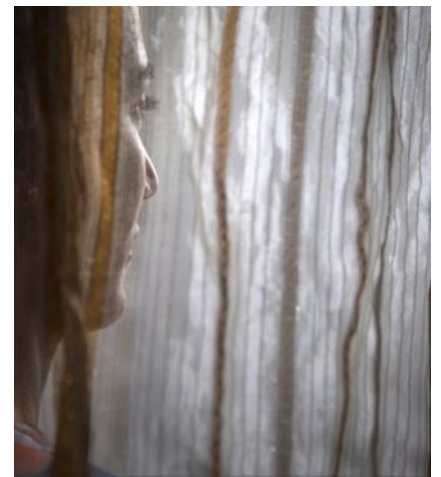
service providers indicated an increase in the number of women survivors of violence seeking assistance. Furthermore, records have shown that there were more than 123 suicide attempts due to gender-based violence in two months only.

This must stop!

Gender-based violence, and domestic violence, in particular, are unforgivable crimes and are against every human right.

Domestic violence not only harms communities but weakens the foundation of the family and banishes trust among its members. Survivors of gender-based violence, especially the ones physically abused, tend to isolate themselves from people. This isolation often leads to depression, stress, fear, low self-esteem, emotional/psychological problems and even suicide. Not to forget that children who witness domestic violence are at increased risk of anxiety, depression, low self-esteem and poor school performance, among other problems.

On the ground, UNFPA is increasing its sensitisation and awareness-raising interventions; psychosocial support;



remote case management, alternative dispute resolution efforts; and community participation to increase awareness and reduce violence.

Despite all the detrimental effects on society and all the actions taken to prevent and respond to gender-based violence, the law has not been enacted yet by the Parliament allowing perpetrators of crimes and abusers to roam free, hurting one person after another.

Enact the law, now; save lives, today.

UNAMI Human Rights Office rising awareness of domestic violence and COVID pandemic to defuse rumors and misinformation

Baghdad, 10 June 2020 - In June, UNAMI Human Rights Office, in cooperation with the al-Namaa human rights center and Al Amal Organization start publishing social media posters, against domestic violence, fight against COVID pandemic and on the importance of access to education during the pandemic. Their joint public awareness campaign made use of the drawings commissioned from Iraqi caricaturists on emerging human rights issues so as to defuse existing rumors and misinformation.

Sample messages:

* Stop domestic violence, it destroys families! Coronavirus causes illness, not violence. We share the responsibility to contain coronavirus and must follow the health authorities instructions. Say NO to domestic violence.

* Coronavirus is a disease that affects the lungs, anyone can be infected. It does not affect the reputation of a person. Seeking treatment does not bring shame.

* Preventive measures are necessary to contain the spread of CORONAVIRUS and protect you and others. Follow the

instructions issued by the health authorities: stay at home – maintain distance if you go out - wear gloves and masks.

* Together we can contain coronavirus. Health workers are at the centre of this fight, taking personal risks to protect us. UNAMI salutes the tireless courage of medical staff and urges to follow health authorities' instructions. Stay at home to help health staff do their work.

* Learning never stops. The continued preventive measures are an opportunity. Let's use them productively.



SRSg Hennis-Plasschaert: “In the necessary fight against COVID-19, our collective efforts must ensure that survivors of conflict-related sexual violence are not left behind”

Baghdad, 19 June 2020 – On the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, issued a following statement:

Today, the United Nations in Iraq commemorates the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2015.

This year's theme “The impact of COVID-19 on survivors of conflict-

related sexual violence” recognizes the additional challenges that this global pandemic has brought on this vulnerable segment of the population. In the necessary fight against COVID-19, our collective efforts must ensure that survivors of conflict-related sexual violence are not left behind; their circumstances must not be worsened by the pandemic. The United Nations acknowledges the efforts of the Government of Iraq to address concerns affecting survivors of conflict-related sexual violence. The Draft Yazidi

Survivors Law, for example, recognizes and responds to the atrocities committed against Yazidi women held in captivity by Da'esh.

As we commemorate this important day under difficult circumstances, I salute the resilience of survivors and their determination to overcome all the hardships they have endured.

I call upon all stakeholders to remain vigilant and reaffirm their commitment to addressing the needs of survivors of conflict-related sexual violence.

UNITAD stands in solidarity with survivors and restates its commitment to investigate sexual and gender-based crimes committed by Daesh against children, women and men

Baghdad, 19 June 2020 - On the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict, UNITAD stands in solidarity with survivors and restates its commitment to investigate sexual and gender-based crimes committed by Daesh against children, women and men.

UNITAD's survivor-centered approach

ensures a balance between unearthing the extent and brutality of Daesh crimes in Iraq and providing support to the survivors impacted by them.

Investigators and legal officers of the Sexual and Gender-Based Crimes and Children's Unit (SGBCCU) at UNITAD work closely with in-house clinical psychologists and outside experts to provide assistance to survivors of these

horrific crimes.

Special Adviser Karim Khan QC: “Sexual violence in conflict cannot be tolerated. It must cease immediately. Whenever and wherever it occurs, it is vital there are thorough investigations and effective prosecutions to end the culture of impunity and ensure justice and accountability. All lives matter equally.”

Supporting survivors of sexual violence in war

Baghdad/New York, 19 June 2020 -

The United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) has deployed Senior Women Protection Advisors to Iraq and Somalia, to engage survivor and advocate groups, monitor and verify acts of sexual violence, analyze trends, advise leadership on prevention and response and ensure CRSV considerations are fully integrated into mission planning, analysis, and operational activities. On International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict, marked annually on 19 June, we are taking a closer look at the issue, highlighting our work in Iraq. To help us do so, we [DPPA] spoke to Noel Kututwa, of the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI).

Noel Kututwa, is the Senior Women Protection Advisor in UNAMI. Prior to joining UNAMI, he worked with UNSOM in Mogadishu both in Women Protection and Human Rights. Noel's current work focuses on implementing the United Nations' mandate on addressing conflict-related sexual violence. Noel has worked on a wide range of human rights issues including freedom of expression, assembly and association, policing, torture, children's rights, women's rights, LGBTI, refugee and migrant rights, and economic, social and cultural rights as well as elections. Noel has worked with a wide range of actors including communities (rights holders and victims of human rights violations and survivors of conflict-related sexual violence), civil society, national human rights institutions and governments.

Politically Speaking: How much of your work or the missions' work concerns addressing CRSV? Where does that work fit in the broader peace and security agenda of the UN?

Noel Kututwa: As the Senior Women Protection Advisor, my work focuses solely on conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV). My job is to mainstream the work of conflict-related sexual violence within the mission, in my case the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). This means that the mission has to take CRSV issues into account in all its interventions. UNAMI's role is to liaise with the government, to support the government on political issues and the work on legislative and policy issues. Our main function is to provide good offices and technical support to the government in order for the government to implement its CRSV mandate.

The UN country team, and specifically

the agencies that have a mandate on supporting either women, girls, or children generally, their role is more programmatic. The agencies we work very closely with are the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) and the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR). Those are the four key agencies. And of course, UN Women has a mandate on issues that relate to women and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) is coordinating all the humanitarian assistance.

In addition to mainstreaming CRSV work within the Mission, one of my roles is to lead the UNAMI's work on supporting the Government of Iraq to implement the Joint Communiqué on the Response and Ending of Sexual Violence. On 23 September 2016, the United Nations signed a Joint Communiqué with the Government of Iraq to prevent and address conflict-related sexual violence covering among others: legislative and policy reform; accountability; services and reparations; and awareness-raising. The Joint Communiqué provided a basis for the development of an implementation plan which is being used to address key areas in the fight against CRSV.

Now, related to that is the issue of reparations. It's important to support survivors by paying reparations. As we know, conflict breaks up the fabric of society. It breaks up families, it breaks up how things function normally. Reparations are one way of supporting those communities to recover. Reparations can be at individual level, where the survivors and the victims of CRSV are paid some form of reparations. Or it can be community-

based, where whole communities are rehabilitated, taking into account the destruction that the conflict caused.

Another important piece is mental health and psychosocial support to address the trauma that conflicts create. ISIL was particularly brutal, not only related to CRSV, but also other human rights violations, public executions, which they would record, put on the internet and widely circulate. When it comes to survivors of sexual violence, most of them were abducted when they were still young girls. They are still young; some are still in their early 20s. They need a lot of support to overcome the trauma. There's a lot of healing that needs to take place. So, psychosocial support is a key component that needs to be delivered.

All this is done in the context of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) framework, which looks at the need for women to participate in peace, mediation and political processes. It's important that women and women's voices are brought to the table in all of these negotiations. Now, women cannot participate fully without their physical security, without security of mind, to know they can freely express themselves. This is why CRSV is part of the WPS agenda. Some of these issues are exacerbated by cultural issues, which can make it very difficult for women to fully realize their potential, to fully participate, have their voices heard and sit around the table with all the other actors.

Another big area of work is reporting. This refers to monitoring any new incidents of CRSV that take place. We are looking specifically at sexual violence that is perpetrated by parties to the conflict. Now, because Iraq is currently in a post-conflict situation,



Supporting survivors of sexual violence in war *(continued)*

we are no longer seeing the high numbers of CRSV crimes as we would see between 2014 and 2017, at the height of the conflict. What we see now is that some violence continues. It hasn't been eradicated completely, especially in IDP camps where most of the survivors are. There are Iraqi security forces but also remnants of ISIL, who continue to perpetrate acts of sexual violence.

Has UNAMI conducted advocacy to change attitudes and strengthen support for preventing and responding to CRSV?

Of course, UNAMI does advocacy at various levels. There's the advocacy that's done by senior mission leadership: The Special Representative (SRSG), the Deputy Special Representative (DSRSG)/ Political, as well as the DSRSG/Humanitarian Coordinator. The Chief Human Rights Officer for UNAMI also plays a critical role when it comes to advocacy on CRSV matters. They each play a specific role when it comes to advocacy. There are certain issues, depending on the sensitivity and magnitude of the issue, where we require that they be raised with either the President or the Prime Minister. The senior UNAMI leadership are the ones who will deliver those messages on our behalf. And not just to country leadership, but also to religious leadership. For example, in April last year, the SRSG had a meeting with the spiritual leader of the Yazidis, the highest official of the Yazidi religion, to raise the issue of children born of rape, the issue of supporting these mothers, and to advocate for the Yazidis to accept those children into their communities.

I mentioned the Joint Communiqué earlier. My day to day work as the Senior Women Protection Adviser is to advocate and to reach out to my counterparts in the government. But in fact, advocacy on CRSV issues is everybody's job, because CRSV is mainstreamed into all of UNAMI's work.

The country team also has an important role to play, because they are the ones who provide the programmatic support to government counterparts and also work with civil society organizations. They also advocate with their government and civil society counterparts. But to ensure that all of that advocacy is coordinated and that we're all communicating the same message, that is the role of UNAMI.

Where do you see the CRSV agenda heading in the next five to ten years?

The CRSV agenda has seen phenomenal growth. We just recently, in October 2019, celebrated its ten-year anniversary. In these short ten years, there are already seven Security Council resolutions on CRSV. Given the importance of CRSV, the acknowledgement by UN member states and the Security Council of the need to address CRSV and the unfortunate fact that CRSV continues to occur in situations of conflict, whether in full-blown conflict or in situations of civil unrest, I think the CRSV agenda will continue to grow. The latest Security Council resolution 2467 (2019) adopted on 29 April 2019, focuses on a survivor-centered approach to CRSV, calls for a more holistic understanding of justice and accountability which includes the provision of reparations for survivors as well as livelihood support to enable them to rebuild their lives and support their families, including the children born of sexual violence in conflict who are also stigmatized and suffer in silence and shame, often stateless, and acutely vulnerable to recruitment and radicalization by armed groups. So, I see the mandate becoming stronger and stronger. Using Iraq as an example, there's this big problem of children born of war. Obviously, it's not just in Iraq, it's in many other countries as well, which have gone through conflict. These countries end up with a legacy of children born as a result of women and girls who were raped. What happens to those children? Mechanisms need to be put in place in order to avoid future conflict. There's no point in ignoring the problem, because that problem will only resurface and create more problems in the future.

It is very important for the government to be committed to addressing CRSV, because ultimately, it is the responsibility of the government. As the UN, our role is to support the government to fulfill its international obligations to the population within its borders. CRSV issues must be prioritized, even as the country is addressing issues of post-conflict reconstruction. CRSV should not slip off the agenda during this difficult period, because addressing and resolving issues of vulnerable people means a more durable peace will be achieved. I commend the Government of Iraq for its commitment and the resources it has put towards the issue,

but I would also make a clarion call that they should not deprioritize the work on CRSV. They should continue, and in fact, put more resources, to ensure that this issue is addressed once and for all.

As we commemorate the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict, is there any good news to share? What are some of the interventions that have been particularly impactful?

CRSV is very slow work, it is difficult work. It's also difficult to measure the progress, because it's very incremental, but progress is there. The good news is that the survivors of CRSV are very resilient. They are very strong. I've met numerous women and girls, who were subjected to sexual violence during conflict, and I'm always inspired by their strength, their resilience, their ability to recover, the ability to even forgive the past, their willingness to help others, their compassion, and their willingness to move on with their lives. I've met young Yazidi women in Iraq who were so full of life, who accept that the past is the past. They don't harbor any ill feelings. They don't harbor any bitterness. They accept that what happened, happened, and they are looking forward. All that is partly possible because of the recognition that they receive. The world now accepts that CRSV is wrong and needs to be stopped. People accept that it was not the women's fault; they didn't ask for it. The world supports and understands them and there's compassion.

There are now many organizations that work with survivors of sexual violence, who provide for their needs on a day to day basis, and who are able to provide particularly the psychosocial support, enabling them to recover. It's a testament to the human spirit, being able to recover and to overcome very difficult circumstances. So, there are some good news stories. Most of them are human stories, where people have overcome some of the most horrendous, horrific crimes, but they still live with dignity, able to move on with their lives without any bitterness, pick up whatever pieces they're able to and reconstruct their lives.

Another good news, of course, is the fact that member states themselves, acknowledge that CRSV is a big problem and that all peacekeeping operations and special political missions have CRSV mandates. And in countries where there's no peace

Supporting survivors of sexual violence in war *(continued)*

operation, the UN country team takes care of CRSV issues.

Another thing that I want to mention is the role of men. Men are the ones who perpetrate most of these atrocities in the context of war, but when it comes to addressing and supporting survivors and victims, men have an important role to play. They are the religious and traditional leaders, they are fathers and brothers, and even the political leaders are mostly men. So it's important that they also acknowledge and speak out against conflict-related sexual violence, create room for survivors and for victims to be able to openly speak about their experiences, to acknowledge that these things should not have happened, and even to apologize on behalf of fellow men. In my work, I've come across women who've said that the fact that there are men who work in the area of CRSV, who are sympathetic and empathetic to survivors has helped them.

What is the impact of COVID-19 on your work?

COVID-19 has had a very severe impact. In Iraq, we support the survivors of CRSV. Most of those survivors are internally displaced and live in IDP camps. They are already the most vulnerable people. The closure of businesses, the closure of normal life has meant for day laborers, which most internally displaced persons are, a loss of income and very limited safety nets. If they don't work, they don't earn. And if you don't earn, you don't eat. The second thing that COVID-19 has done, is to highlight even further that those who are more vulnerable, are even more vulnerable to things such as a pandemic. They not only lost their income, but women and girls who go to a health center to access their usual medication and psychosocial services, are not able to access those services anymore due to movement restrictions. A third problem is domestic violence -

being locked up for long periods of time with a person who is the perpetrator of domestic violence in a confined space. What we saw was a spike in domestic violence cases, including for survivors. But, again, because services were closed, they were not able to report to the police, they were not able to access women's shelters, they were not able to access medical care.

It still remains to be seen what the full impact of COVID-19 is going to be. But one thing that's for sure is that there will be less jobs after COVID-19, income is likely to be reduced and because of the recession, it also means prices will go up. It will deepen poverty, which places an additional burden on the states. I think it's difficult to fully try and anticipate what will happen, but from what we've seen already, it is quite devastating.

By DPPA.

European Union renews assistance to reduce violence in conflict-affected areas across Iraq: IOM

Erbil, 22 June 2020 – Decades of conflict in Iraq have had a devastating effect on the country and led to deeper divisions along sectarian lines. As Iraq transitions towards a post-conflict environment, the government and the international community are invested in stabilization activities that are essential to maintaining community security and bolstering the recovery process.

The European Union, through its Instrument Contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP), will support the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in its efforts to reduce local sources of violence and support economic recovery.

The funding will cover an 18-month project — “Contributing to Ongoing Stabilization Efforts in Iraq by Preventing and Reducing Violence in Communities at Risk” — focused on two specific objectives: the resolution of grievances between local actors and the Iraqi Government; and addressing the multiple factors that might cause violence at the community level, including the return of youth that joined in the fight against the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant. The project's main activities will be carried out in Basra Governorate, in southern Iraq.

“In a post-conflict context, attention

quickly shifts to stabilization — it is crucial to prioritize peace and security as part of the recovery process,” said IOM Iraq Chief of Mission Gerard Waite. “Through this project communities will acquire more tools to mediate conflict at the local level, and to address social and economic factors that may lead to violence.”

“In many communities there has been a breakdown of trust between citizens and authorities, which can compromise local security,” said Martin Huth, EU Ambassador to Iraq. “This project will bring together citizens and local authorities to resolve their problems and encourage stronger cooperation on the path to stabilization and economic integration.”

The project aims to address political and economic grievances by empowering community leaders to better represent their constituents, engaging and mobilising young people, strengthening social cohesion, and improving job opportunities targeted communities. This will be done by providing mediation and peacebuilding courses, training sessions for community leaders to manage stress and tension, Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Services, as well as specialized consultations/health therapies for families in need.

To create jobs, tailored financial



support will be provided to Small and Medium Enterprises in primary and secondary economic sectors that have high demand for labour. This will be complemented by a vocational training programme, whose graduates will be referred to the businesses supported by the project for potential employment. Wherever possible, IOM Iraq will use existing office and activity spaces supported by Ministry of Youth and Sports or other government counterparts (such as the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the Ministry of Health), thus contributing to their running costs and maintenance. This will help increase project sustainability and make it easier to eventually handover operations to the relevant authorities.

UNITAD–Stanford University collaboration; promoting best practices for working with survivors of severe trauma

Baghdad, 15 May 2020 - The United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for ISIL/Da'esh Crimes (UNITAD)'s mandate is to assist in holding members of ISIL accountable for crimes against humanity, war crimes and genocide committed in Iraq through collecting, preserving, and storing evidence in line with international standards. Given the traumatic experiences that victims and witnesses of ISIL crimes have encountered, UNITAD's Witness Protection and Support Unit (WPSU) has adopted a victim-centered approach, in line with international practices and standards, in its strategy to ensure that no further harm is caused to witnesses as part of the collection of testimonial evidence.

Stanford University's Human Rights in Trauma Mental Health Program (HRTMHP) is one of the partners UNITAD is collaborating with to support its investigative work through a series of activities including training of investigators on best practices for working with survivors of severe trauma, provision of specialist assessments as needed, and gathering of mental health data. This falls in line with the victim-centered strategy UNITAD's WPSU has adopted in carrying out its activities.

"There is an overwhelming number of communities affected by the traumas of human rights abuse across the globe," said Professor David Cohen, Director of the Center for Human Rights and International Justice. "Combined with growing evidence demonstrating that such trauma is a primary contributor to major physical and mental health disorders, as well as significant negative life outcomes, the Program's mission of promoting accountability, informing justice processes, and advocating for the victims and survivors of human rights abuses is all the more important."

UNITAD, in collaboration with the faculty of Stanford University's HRTMHP, held a 7-module contextualized training course primarily for investigators, analysts and interpreters focusing on best practices for working with survivors of severe trauma. The training, held between April 30 and May 8, 2020, was led by Stanford's core faculty and UNITAD senior staff members. The training was co-facilitated by UNITAD's Lead Clinical Psychologist and mental health expert and core faculty from the HRTMHP, including Dr. Daryn Reicherter, Dr. Ryan Matlow, Dr. Lisa Brown and Dr. Beth Van Schaack. Specialist input to the training included guest lectures from UNITAD's Director of Investigations and

Head of the Sexual and Gender-Based Crimes and Crimes against Children Unit. We also had a special guest Dr. Nagham Hasan, Gynecologist and Yazidi Activist, along with the Gender Advisor and Child Rights Advisor from the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar (IIMM).

The seven training modules discussed Effects of Trauma on Human Psychology; Trauma Psychology Through the Lens of Culture and Language; The Interview – Using Trauma Informed Techniques for Interviewing Vulnerable Witnesses; Special Populations: Working with Child Witnesses; Special Populations: Working with SGBV Witnesses; Special Populations: Working with Prisoners and Perpetrators; and Secondary Trauma and Self-Care for the Investigative Team. Reading material to support these courses was provided by Stanford University and UNITAD. Each training module was set for 1hr 20 minutes, and the sessions adopted an active learning approach, part didactic and discussion based. The modules were designed to encourage contributions from investigators and analysts' own practical experiences and those gained in the field. They provided UNITAD team members with different opportunities to discuss issues of importance, sharing of knowledge and gaps relating to investigative work with survivors of traumatic events. The contributions enriched discussions and were mutually beneficial to the overall learning experience. The training was initially planned to take place in Iraq. However, due to the extraordinary circumstances around the COVID-19 pandemic, the trainings were conducted virtually.

Over the past 9 months, UNITAD's WPSU mental health experts have worked with the HRTMHP team to support the provision of specialist assessments (psychiatric and psychological screening of witnesses) and contributed to discussions on best practices for the collection and analysis of mental health data. UNITAD takes into account the needs of witnesses in a holistic manner where adequate measures are incorporated to protect the safety, physical and psychological well-being, confidentiality and dignity of victims and witnesses, respect, appropriate assistance, sensitivity to special needs, consent and right to information. UNITAD has also developed working practices and methods for interviewing victims of conflict related sexual and gender-based violence, and violence against children, and continues to update them further as investigations

progress. In collaboration with relevant Iraqi authorities, the Team explores ways and methods by which protection measures are implemented and adapted in the Iraqi context

The Team's clinical psychologists are experienced mental health specialists who work with vulnerable people and groups, such as victims of sexual violence, traumatized children and adults, within the criminal justice system. They play a crucial role in identifying and recommending measures to facilitate the testimony of witnesses to the fullest possible extent in emotionally safe and reassuring environment without suffering further harm. They also train UNITAD staff members on issues relevant to witnesses' and victims' mental health and psychosocial support, secondary victimization and trauma, especially with regard to children and adults, survivors of conflict-related sexual violence and other vulnerable groups.

The mental health outcomes and welfare of survivor communities – whether Christian, Kakai'i, Shabak, Shia, Sunni, Turkmen, or Yazidi – are at the center of UNITAD's efforts. "I have been consistently impressed with the expertise and professionalism I have seen from HRTMHP faculty and staff under the leadership of Dr. Reicherter, including in the time we spent together in Baghdad last year," said Special Adviser and Head of the Investigative Team Karim A. A. Khan QC. "Addressing trauma psychology is a critical part of UNITAD investigations given the serious implications for victims and survivors, as well as investigators themselves. UNITAD's team of psychologists bring a wealth of experience in mental health, expertise in trauma, and cross-cultural psychology. The collaboration with HRTMHP has strengthened the assistance provided to the investigations and reflects our survivor-centered approach implemented from the outset of our investigations."

The partnership with HRTMHP will continue throughout the year, including the drafting of a field guide for investigators that reflects international best practices for working with survivors of severe trauma, with a focus on children and survivors of sexual and gender – based crimes.



Special Adviser submits fourth report to Security Council; new evidence marks significant momentum in ISIL accountability efforts

Baghdad/New York, 28 May 2020 -

The fourth report of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ISIL (UNITAD) was submitted to the Security Council detailing its activities to investigate crimes committed by ISIL in Iraq pursuant to Resolution 2379 (2017).

The report highlights the key advances made by UNITAD in implementing its mandate to support accountability efforts by collecting evidence of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide committed by ISIL perpetrators in Iraq.

Central to this progress has been the identification and collection of new forms of evidence, harnessing the technological capacity of the Team and cooperation with the Government of Iraq. For example, through its collaboration with the Iraqi judiciary, UNITAD obtained call data records from Iraqi cell phone service providers relevant to its investigations. Cooperation with Iraqi authorities has also resulted in the acquisition of data from mobile phone and mass data

storage devices connected to ISIL. These developments have represented a potential paradigm shift in the prosecution of ISIL members in Iraq.

The Team has sought to adopt an innovative approach to the challenging environment presented by COVID-19, including through the establishment of an enhanced evidence management system, developed by UNITAD's own experts. This system has strengthened the Team's ability to organize, track and search the evidence it collects. The use of advanced technology has also been expanded in forensic evidence collection at mass grave sites and other major crimes scenes.

The national coordinating committee designated by the Government of Iraq has remained a crucial partner, and is working closely with UNITAD in the initial implementation of a major new project to support the digitization and archiving of evidentiary materials connected to ISIL crimes held by relevant Iraqi authorities.

During the reporting period, UNITAD expanded on its initiatives aimed at sharing knowledge and technical



assistance with Iraqi authorities, including the provision of training and equipment in the fields of digital forensics and witness protection and support.

Strengthening partnerships with communities, NGOs and religious leaders has remained central to UNITAD's work. In March 2020, the Special Adviser supported, along with Under-Secretary-General Adama Dieng, the adoption of the landmark Interfaith Statement on Victims of ISIL, through which leaders of all major faiths in Iraq underlined their collective commitment to support UNITAD in delivering accountability for ISIL crimes.

Special Adviser Karim A. A. Khan QC will brief the Council on UNITAD's fourth report in the coming weeks.

UNITAD experts provide relevant equipment and training to Iraqi authorities

Baghdad, 29 May 2020 - UNITAD experts provide relevant equipment and training to Iraqi authorities in the field and in the lab as part of cooperation to collect evidence of crimes committed by ISIS in Iraq.

The best example of a strong partnership is the cooperation of the investigation team with the forensic and mass graves services where sophisticated forensic equipment is provided - thanks to American support to support the work of the two departments in the field and in laboratories competent to exhumation of bodies from mass graves.

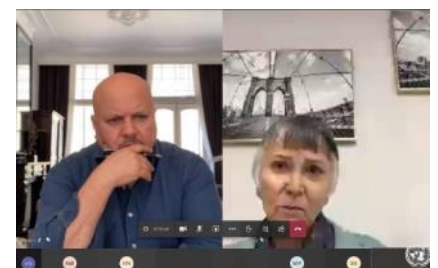


"Reflections on Investigations" – UNITAD virtual lecture

Baghdad, 31 May 2020 – Ms. Brenda Hollis, International Co-Prosecutor of the Extraordinary Chambers of the Courts of Cambodia and former Prosecutor of Special Court of Sierra Leone, participated in UNITAD's Guest Lecture series that features internationally-renowned experts and practitioners in the fields of International, Criminal, Humanitarian

and Human Rights Law.

UNITAD staff, including investigators, lawyers, analysts and translators benefited from her presentation: "Reflections on Investigations", which drew from her illustrious career in international law. They were also able to engage with her in the extensive Q&A session that followed.



UNITAD on Twitter

Baghdad, 10 June 2020 - On the 6th anniversary of the occupation of Mosul we take a moment to remember the befallen and those who continue to suffer from the systemic crimes and destruction ISIL committed.

Baghdad, 13 June 2020 - On the 6th anniversary of the Speicher massacre, we remember the victims and remain

UNITAD continues its work to assist the Iraqi in investigating ISIL crimes to hold perpetrators accountable and bring justice to victims. Through holding fair trials, the corrupt Daesh ideology can be fully and completely

committed to investigate the incident, collect evidence and build case files in line with international standards to

exposed in an irrefutable manner. Accountability and Justice are the strongest pillars to ensure these atrocities never happen again.

support courts in Iraq hold criminals accountable and bring justice to victims.

Iraq: UN probe into ISIL atrocities making ‘real progress’, Security Council hears

New York, 15 June 2020 - The special UN Investigative Team probing ISIL atrocities in Iraq is making “real progress,” its chief said on Monday, as it begins to pinpoint the perpetrators of some of the worst crimes committed by the terrorist group during its years-long occupation of large swathes of the country.

Karim Asad Ahmad Khan told the Security Council that the Team has already identified 344 alleged Da’esh perpetrators, the Arabic name for the extremist group, involved in the 2014 massacre of Yazidis in the Sinjar district of northern Iraq.

Many categories of crimes

The team has also identified at least seven categories of crimes for which Da’esh suspects could potentially be prosecuted in connection with the mass killing of unarmed cadets and military personnel at the Tikrit Air Academy six years ago.

Meanwhile, in Mosul, two mass grave excavations that got underway in March, in cooperation with Iraqi and Kurdistan Regional Government authorities, are set to form a key pillar for investigations in the months to come, he added.

“In the 20 months since our arrival in Iraq, real progress has been made”, said Mr. Khan as he presented the Council with the fourth report from the team which serves officially to “Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da’esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (UNITAD)”.

Breakthroughs in identifying and using new sources of evidence have opened the way to fulfilling international pledges of justice for the victims and survivors of the terrorist group, he said, which imposed a self-styled Islamist Caliphate on both Iraq and parts of Syria, before being militarily defeated. If fully harnessed, these new sources will have the potential to mark a paradigm shift in the prosecution of



ISIL members for the crimes they committed in Iraq, he stated.

“But we must not allow our focus to shift”, he added. “It is essential that we continue to demonstrate the same urgency of action that is being demanded by survivors in Mosul, Baghdad, Sinjar, the Nineveh Plains and elsewhere in Iraq.”

The Council, through resolution 2379 (2017), established UNITAD to support domestic efforts to hold Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da’esh) accountable by collecting, preserving, and storing evidence in Iraq of acts that may amount to war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide.

Mr. Khan, a barrister and Queen’s Counsel from the United Kingdom with more than 25 years’ experience as an international criminal law and human rights lawyer, was appointed by Secretary-General António Guterres in May 2018 to lead the effort.

‘Creativity and focus’

Briefing the Council via video-teleconference, Mr. Khan said that UNITAD – “working with creativity and focus” – is ensuring that the momentum it has created is not lost even in the face of challenges posed by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Through close cooperation with the Iraqi judiciary, the Team has obtained more than two million call data records from Iraqi mobile phone service

providers relevant to its investigation of crimes against the Yazidi community, he said.

Similar data has been gathered in connection with the Tikrit Air Academy massacre, he said, explaining how it can be used to locate where persons of interest might have been at a given point in time, retrace the movements of additional suspects and build a incontrovertible picture of events at major crime scenes.

In addition, Iraq mobile phone service providers have also agreed to preserve all call data records from 2014 that might be relevant to UNITAD’s investigations.

Forensic advances

Meanwhile, the forensic extraction of data from mobile phones, laptops and other devices seized from ISIL by the Iraqi military has revealed details – and video- about the group’s inner workings.

But creating an archive of ISIL atrocities is not enough, Mr. Khan emphasized.

“Our commitment to the communities of Iraq will only be satisfied when justice is delivered in court, when the survivors of ISIL atrocities are able to see their abusers held accountable in accordance with the rule of law, based on incontrovertible evidence collected in line with international standards.”

By UN News.



Baghdad, 25 June 2020 - Special Adviser Karim A. A. Khan met with Lt. Gen. Saad Mezher Al-Allak, director of the Directorate of Military Intelligence (DMI). During their meeting, Lt. Gen. Al-Allak expressed his steadfast support for UNITAD IRAQ's mandate and the work being done to help the Government of Iraq and the Iraqi judiciary hold Daesh perpetrators accountable for the crimes they committed in Iraq which amount to war crimes, crimes against humanity, or genocide.



Baghdad, 29 June 2020 - Special Adviser Karim Khan QC met with Commander of the Iraqi Counter Terrorism Service, Lt. Gen. Abd al-Wahab al-Saadi. They discussed ways in which both sides can cooperate to ensure accountability of ISIL perpetrators and justice for victims and survivors of these crimes. In the meeting, Special Adviser Khan highlighted UNITAD's project for digitization of evidence of ISIL crimes in Iraq. They also looked into ways to leverage relevant ICTS expertise and experiences in fighting Daesh to support the work of the Investigative Team.



Baghdad, 30 June 2020 - Special Adviser Karim A. A. Khan QC met the newly appointed Minister of Defense His Excellency Jouma Anad for the first time today. The Special Adviser provided an overview of UNITAD's work, and an update on ongoing projects pursuant to its mandate to hold Daesh perpetrators accountable. His Excellency expressed his support for UNITAD's capacity-building work within the Ministry of Defense, including the Military Intelligence. He also stressed the importance of this work in ultimately contributing to strengthening Iraq's efforts to support fair and independent investigations to achieve justice for victims and survivors of ISIL crimes.

UNITAD psychologists held a remote mental health training

Baghdad, 30 June 2020 - During the COVID19 pandemic, UNITAD's Witness Protection and Support Unit (WPSU) held two trainings for legal practitioners from Iraqi NGOs working with victims and survivors of Daesh crimes. The training in Vicarious Trauma covered the importance of implementing safeguarding strategies from an individual and organizational perspective.

UNITAD's psychosocial experts provide following five tips to combating Vicarious Trauma for professionals working with survivors and victims.

Maintaining good mental health is essential for professionals working with victims/survivors of war crimes. Due to the nature of their work with traumatized children, adults and families, they are exposed to distressing narratives that may evoke some reactions. For this reason this professional population is likely to experience Vicarious Trauma.

Vicarious Trauma results from empathetic engagement with persons who have suffered traumatic incidents. It changes the professionals' view of themselves, others, and the world, and it may cause similar symptoms as those

impacted by primary trauma.

So, what are the most important tips to help professionals working with victims/survivors maintain their mental health and prevent adverse outcomes of Vicarious Trauma?

Conduct a regular self-check to reflect on your inner feelings and emotions in relation to your work: an important activity is to become more mindful by acknowledging your feelings and inner thoughts. This reflection gives you a chance to identify early signs of emotional distress and allow for early intervention.

Identify trends in distress triggers: what are the situations, stories, or traumas that trigger your distress? Answering this question is key to knowing how to manage your distress.

Ask yourself, what are the key gratifications of working in this field? However small they are, moments of content with your work and its purpose help you in overcoming distressing times. So make it intentional to list all that makes you content about working in this field.

Seek help and resources when needed:

seeking psychological help is an option in combating vicarious trauma, and any emotional distress you experience while working with victims/survivors. However, equipping yourself with appropriate resources will be helpful such as educational material to build resilience and coping strategies, in addition to adopting a healthy work life balance.

Seek support from your organization: Vicarious Trauma can be an occupational hazard. Therefore, it is important to let your manager know if you are experiencing symptoms. This helps in pointing you to the right resources that the organization offers to manage and/or prevent an exacerbation of symptoms.

In order to assist professionals in this field, organizations are invited to take measures to promote an environment where staff care is encouraged and where there is a culture that acknowledges the potential for Vicarious Trauma. Maintaining such culture is likely to lead to a healthier environment for both workers and their traumatized clients and a higher and more consistent quality of service.

EU's contribution of USD2.8 million provided relief to Iraqi children in emergency camps

Baghdad, 21 May 2020 – A recent contribution of USD2.8 million by the European Union has provided immediate relief to 90,000 vulnerable people – half of them children – in emergency camps in Salamiya, Hamam al Alil and Jeda'a 1 and 5 IDP camps within Ninawa governorate.

Only 39 per cent of Iraq's population have access to safely managed drinking water. The situation is particularly dire for thousands of vulnerable families living in camps and who depend on humanitarian support for their survival.

“The generous contribution from the EU enabled UNICEF to continue trucking in safe water for drinking and cooking. This helped to protect the health of children and their families from dangerous diseases, including Acute Watery Diarrhea and Cholera, both which can result from the consumption of unsafe water,” said Hamida Lasseko, UNICEF Representative in Iraq.

Funds were also used to support appropriate sanitation facilities and maintaining a clean and hygienic



environment through care maintenance and waste management, water quality monitoring and distribution.

Iraqi and non-Iraqi children continue to be vulnerable to violence, abuse and exploitation and in need of protection prevention and response services in both camp and non-camp settings. In addition, many of the children in former conflict areas do not have birth certificate and other civil document, which is a legacy of conflict and upheaval in Iraq. This has restricted their ability to move out of camps and

to access to social services like health, education and social protection.

Thanks to the EU's longstanding support, UNICEF has also been able to;

- repatriate 200 foreign children back to their countries of origin;
- provide psychosocial services to 4,235 children (2125 girls);
- legal assistance to 596 children (188 girls) in contact with the law;

- A further 1,107 children (373 girls) received birth registration and civil documentation.

Switzerland supports WFP assistance to refugees and displaced people in Iraq

Baghdad, 26 May 2020 - The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) welcomes a donation of US\$522,500 from the Government of Switzerland to support the food needs of nearly 24,000 refugees and internally displaced people for one month.

The funds, coming through the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, will be used to provide cash assistance to 13,400 Iraqis displaced by the conflict and 10,400 Syrian refugees.

“During the ongoing pandemic, refugees and displaced persons remain among the most vulnerable in Iraq,” said the Ambassador of Switzerland to Iraq Lukas Gasser. “Switzerland continues its long-term partnership with WFP, working together to support displaced Iraqis and Syrian refugee families, to get through this difficult time of heightened need – especially as many affected people remain unable to work.”

Due to increased needs caused by COVID-19, WFP has scaled up its assistance in Iraq reaching a total of 76,000 refugees and 280,000 IDPs.



“WFP expresses its continued gratitude for the steadfast support of the people and Government of Switzerland particularly during this difficult time,” said WFP Representative in Iraq Abdirahman Meygag. “Many IDPs and refugee families had begun to achieve some self-sufficiency in securing their food needs before the pandemic. Now many have lost their jobs, among the worst affected are day labourers and seasonal workers.”

In ongoing efforts to mitigate COVID-

19, WFP is pioneering cashless payments in camps, so that people can purchase food in a “contactless” manner. This both reduces the need for banknotes, and helps avoid the need for people to leave the camp and move around more than necessary. Meanwhile, WFP and its partners continue awareness sessions on precautionary measures, and will begin emergency livelihoods projects as soon as it is safe, to help affected people to work again and secure their food needs.

Australia contributes AUD 866,000 to UNFPA refugee interventions in Iraq

Baghdad, 14 June 2020 - The Government of Australia has provided AUD 866,000 to support the work of UNFPA in Iraq. The funding will provide assistance to 38,000 women and girls, in Duhok and Nineveh Governorates over the next year.

The new contribution will primarily support Syrian refugees who arrived in Iraq in 2019 as a result of the military operations in north-eastern Syria. Women and girls, survivors of gender-based violence; and men, as allies of the prevention and response to gender-based issues, will benefit from prevention and response services, such as psychosocial support and case management.

The funding will also allow UNFPA to procure and pre-position 8,000 dignity kits for women and girls of reproductive age, in particular, refugee and internally displaced populations.

“Australia is pleased to continue to



work with UNFPA to ensure the reproductive health needs of women and girls affected by conflict are being met, and work towards a world where women and girls can live free from violence”, said Dr Joanne Loundes, the Ambassador of Australia to Iraq. Acknowledging the contribution, Dr Oluremi Sogunro, UNFPA Representative to Iraq, said: “Australia

has been a consistent and reliable partner for UNFPA’s work in Iraq. Australia has given UNFPA women and girls in Iraq, through UNFPA, to a total of AUD 16.8 million since October 2014. We couldn’t be more grateful for this trust in our work. With this new commitment, Iraq is a step closer to ensuring no woman or girl is left behind in Iraq”.

Stabilization and Development

IOM Iraq launches new website for the Enterprise Development Fund (EDF)

Baghdad, 30 April 2020 - IOM Iraq’s Enterprise Development Fund (EDF) takes an innovative approach to job creation, by supporting small and medium enterprises that contribute to economic recovery and private sector development.

The recently launched EDF website provides an overview of the programme and allows business owners in Iraq to

apply for cash-grants online. Additional features include:

- A live map showcasing the programme’s geographical footprint and its impact through job creation;
- Success stories of businesses supported under the EDF;
- Publications that explore market opportunities and challenges in the context of EDF programming.

By targeting key sectors and providing necessary funding, the EDF encourages rapid but also large-scale job creation. A total of 324 businesses have been supported, and 1,673 job opportunities have been created in Iraq through the EDF since September 2018.

The website can be accessed at <http://edf.iom.int/>

UN-Habitat Iraq housing rehabilitation project provides employment and protection for workers during COVID-19

Nineveh, 15 May 2020 – Construction work has resumed work on a UN-Habitat project with UNDP to rehabilitate war damaged houses in two cities in northern Iraq with precautions to minimize COVID-19 risks.

Work in Mosul and Sinjar restarted in April resulting in 46 houses being handed over to owners and tenants, providing safer and improved housing for over 270 people.

UN-Habitat’s contractors use skilled and unskilled workers from the local communities providing employment for 80 labourers to support their families,

which is particularly important during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

UN-Habitat’s field engineers ensure that contractors use safety and hygiene procedures and follow the new guidelines developed by UN-Habitat Iraq on how to manage COVID-19 risks on UN-Habitat construction and field sites, based on WHO health instructions.

The work is part of the programme “Strengthening the Long-Term Resilience of Subnational Authorities in countries affected by the Syrian and Iraqi Crises” funded by the EU Regional Trust Fund in Response to the

Syrian Crisis EU Madad Fund. It is implemented by UN-Habitat in partnership with UNDP.



Japan continues to promote social stability and economic recovery in Iraq

Vienna, 11 May 2020 – In line with ongoing efforts to promote social stabilization and accelerated economic recovery in Iraq, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and the Government of Japan have recently launched a new technical cooperation project to help build the economic resilience of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the Nineveh Governorate.

Nineveh Governorate has been severely affected by the ISIS conflict. Despite significant numbers of people returning to the areas from which they had initially been displaced, many are still facing obstacles in their attempts to return. Thirty per cent of the internally displaced families in Nineveh are still living in camps, and the protracted nature of the displacement has led to increased vulnerability.

UNIDO's project, "Promotion of social stabilization and acceleration of economic recovery in Nineveh Governorate of Iraq", will provide IDPs in the Nineveh Governorate with technical skills and entrepreneurship training, as well as equipment and tool support to establish their own livelihoods and income-generating activities. UNIDO will give particular attention to promoting livelihood



activities that provide immediate economic benefits for beneficiary families and, through that, help alleviate the hardships brought about by the COVID-19 lockdown. The Government of Iraq imposed stringent curfews and movement restrictions for several weeks.

The project will additionally support Mosul University's College of Engineering in strengthening its teaching and training capacities and, as a result, accelerate access to employment in the newly liberated areas.

Japan's Ambassador to Iraq, His Excellency Naofumi Hashimoto, stated, "Japan has recently decided to provide

a new assistance package for Iraq amounting to US\$41m including this project to assist IDPs in Nineveh Governorate. With this package, the total amount of Japan's assistance to the people affected by the crisis has reached US\$540m since 2014."

He added, "I hope that the assistance from the Government and people of Japan will help IDPs to rebuild livelihoods and economic resilience." The project is a continuation of a previous UNIDO intervention in the Nineveh Governorate which focused on training and institutional capacity-building as a means to ensure long-term and sustainable economic resilience.

The "land between two rivers" adapts to its most recent challenge

By Zena Ali Ahmad, UNDP Resident Representative

Baghdad, 19 May 2020 - Iraq, the land between the two rivers, is a bittersweet story. The country that is modern day Iraq was once the cradle of civilization, with the ancient Sumerians, Babylonians, and Assyrians creating some of the most powerful empires in the region, and indeed, the world. Growing up in nearby Lebanon, I would always hear the Arabic saying: 'Iraq reads what Egypt writes and what Beirut prints.' Thousands of young people studied at its universities, walked its streets and sat at the banks of the Tigris River to read.

In the 1980s, Iraq was on a trajectory to real and tangible human development. However sanctions, war, tyranny, corruption and most recently the emergence of ISIL managed to bring one of the most promising countries in the region to its knees. Following its liberation from ISIL, Iraq



struggled with rebuilding its governance systems, infrastructure, and social fabric. In October 2019, amidst all the challenges facing the country, Iraqi youth, who constitute more than 60 percent of the population, took to the streets with demands for governance reforms, anticorruption measures, and a simple chance at a decent standard of living; jobs and

basic services. The coronavirus COVID-19 has added yet another layer of crisis. A story of hope

But for me Iraq is also a story of hope. It has the potential to become one of the most developed nations in the world. It holds major natural resources: fertile lands, oil and gas, just to name a few. Its unique ethnic and religious diversity can be a source of its strength,

The "land between two rivers" adapts to its most recent challenge (continued)

not one of divisiveness. Iraq has young people who are productive and want to work.

Iraq is also a story where UNDP excels; a textbook example of the organization operating at its best in a post-conflict setting. It's a story where we are always a first resort and the partner of choice – for the government across all levels; for international donors; for implementing partners; and for communities. In 2015, well before ISIL was fully defeated, we launched our stabilization programme. Amidst the fighting, our teams worked around the clock to bring back functioning, basic infrastructure and services to communities. Five years later, it has become UNDP's flagship programme, responsible for thousands of infrastructure rehabilitation projects, securing tens of thousands of jobs, building government capacity and legitimacy, and launching a range of initiatives to build stronger, more cohesive communities. Without it, more than 4.6 million Iraqis would have remained internally displaced. The programme is funded by 27 donors, and enjoys excellent trust from international partners, the government, and the people of Iraq. It is an agile, responsive, adaptive, accountable, credible vehicle that sets the foundation for a more prosperous and peaceful Iraq. A place one would feel proud to work in!

Fighting COVID on the frontline

With the outbreak of COVID-19, the government required urgent support to bolster health services, especially for vulnerable populations. Yet again, we proved our responsiveness and ability to deliver what is needed - quickly, efficiently, and with ample boots on the ground. After assessing a number of health facilities, our teams are now building isolation rooms, procuring much-needed medical equipment, and providing healthcare workers across the country with personal protective equipment. Our Accelerator Lab team is exploring local, innovative solutions, helping to raise awareness and reduce stigma about the virus through the online 'Corona in Iraq' platform and through their community volunteers. Our Local Peace Committees established by our Social Cohesion pillar are working tirelessly in communities to facilitate voluntary returns, while ensuring the smooth integration in communities of origin.

Within the UN system in Iraq, we play

the primary role in integrating development agencies. Alongside the World Health Organization's preparedness plan, and the Humanitarian Country Team's Humanitarian Response Plan, UNDP Iraq is leading the UN development system in conceiving the UN Recovery Framework for COVID-19 – a roadmap for the United Nations Development System to support Iraq's recovery from yet another disaster. We commenced this critical work even before the UN Framework was launched, and anticipate that a draft will be completed shortly, informing the collective UN development response for the next two years.

Extreme challenges

Our staff face extreme challenges yet make little complaints. Some nights in Baghdad we wake up to a wailing alarm, signaling a rocket attack in the Green Zone (that's if the sound of the explosion doesn't wake you up first.) Over the loudspeaker, instructions are repeated, over and over: "Take cover, put on your PPE, move away from the windows and the doors. Other days we are forced to cancel field missions at the last minute because ISIL sleeper cells have attacked, or demonstrators flooded the streets.

Only one-tenth of international staff remain at the UN compound in Baghdad. We are serviced by a basic clinic, so getting sick in conditions like this with limited to non-existing healthcare services is a legitimate, everyday fear. For those of us who do remain, we live in total lockdown, surrounded by thick, 12-foot-high concrete steel reinforced T-walls and barbed wire, with limited movements, no restaurants or entertainment, and

unable to see family and friends. This is the reality of our everyday life, well before COVID-19, and now the world has had a glimpse of it too. Our lifestyle comes with sacrifices we have willingly made to help Iraq return to the great country it once was. But these sacrifices are made by UN staff all over the world, living and working in countries affected by conflict.

Of course, it's not always doom and gloom. In Baghdad, lifting the UN compound's dreary, beige T-walls is the occasional hand-painted mural, depicting images of Iraq in its glory days. And of course, the ear-to-ear grin of the Fijian guard unit, who are employed to keep us safe, and who never go one day without saying "Bula ma'am!" It's a place where you pick up new hobbies like gardening, planting your vegetables in a small pot. It's where you learn new recipes, make new friends, and gain second families.

What drives us to persist conditions like this is our impact on communities. Seeing a shopkeeper open up his bakery for the first time, four years after fleeing from ISIL. Students, males and females, at Mosul University, once ISIL's headquarters, back on their study benches. Drawings of children depicting themselves as future doctors, engineers and humanitarians. The unwavering hospitality of even the poorest of families when we enter their homes. And the rewarding feeling of being able to deliver these results in the face of enormous difficulties

The story of UNDP in Iraq starts with its staff, who work well beyond their call of duty. It's an inspirational story that I hope one day ends with young people reading their books by the Tigris.



Rehabilitation of war-damaged houses in Mosul and Sinjar resumed

Baghdad, 4 June 2020 - Minister of Planning, Mr. Khalid Battal Al-Najim, received today, Mr. Wael Al-Ashhab, Head of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) in Iraq.

During the meeting, a comprehensive review of the joint cooperation portfolio between Iraq and UN-Habitat in various fields, with a focus on increasing the volume of this cooperation in a manner that contributes to the rehabilitation of infrastructures, accelerating the pace of reconstruction of the liberated areas, through the implementing the construction strategy of homes destroyed by terrorism.

The two parties also discussed the plan to tackle the informal settlements in Iraq, which includes legislation to address the random housing, implementation of the social and economic survey of informal settlements for the whole country, and the endeavor to provide financing for



sustainable treatment mechanisms.

Another topic was preparations by the Ministry of Planning, to carry out the population and housing census, considering the prevailing current conditions in Iraq.

The two parties also discussed the possibility of increasing the support provided by UN-Habitat to the Iraqi Government in the administrative decentralization system, due to its

importance in improving the level of services provided by the local governments to the citizen.

The meeting concluded that a memorandum of understanding for cooperation should be signed between the Ministry of Planning and the UN-Habitat, to facilitate the implementation of projects funded or implemented by the Organisation in Iraq.

Greening reconstruction in Iraq

Baghdad, 6 June 2020 - With the support of the European Union, UN-Habitat Iraq is introducing construction materials and techniques that aim to protect the environment and respond to climate change. By introducing passive building strategies and improved weatherisation designs in the retrofitting of Al-Nejoom Primary School in Heet (Anbar governorate), classrooms will offer a more comfortable temperature range for children and teachers, thus reducing the need for energy-hungry cooling systems.

In the upcoming rehabilitation of the community hall in Yarmouk Park of Mosul, the team is working closely with KESK Green Building Consulting to consider carefully window placements and sizes, glazing type, thermal masses, shading devices and overhangs, the use of reflective paints, and the adoption of



materials that provide a better insulation of walls and roofs. UN-Habitat is also piloting the reuse of debris in the landscaping of open spaces, installing solar panels and solar water heaters where the water quality allows.

These efforts are being undertaken under the four-year-long EU-funded programme 'Supporting Recovery and Stability in Iraq through Local Development', implemented by UNDP in partnership with UN-Habitat.

Chips down: economic recovery in Mosul

Mosul 7 June 2020 - Kalthoom* established Al-Miqdad Chips Factory in 1993. For over ten years the factory, staffed by 30 employees, produced and distributed bags of chips throughout Iraq.

After the 2004 unrest, the security situation in Mosul became unstable and Kalthoom received threats, which forced her to close the factory and seek

refuge in Jordan.

In 2010, when the security situation started improving, Kalthoom asked her cousin to reopen the business for her. Jasim*, a 39-year-old father of five, restarted the chips factory and gradually expanded its workforce to 15. He was planning to purchase extra machines to increase production when ISIL attacked Mosul; factory-made

products couldn't be sent outside the city and the local market lost steam.

"The conflict with ISIL took a heavy toll on Mosul. The harm was physical, but also psychological. I try to avoid recalling the bad memories, but they will have a long-lasting effect," said Jasim.

Al-Miqdad's production ground to a halt, and most of factory's machines

Chips down: economic recovery in Mosul (continued)

were stolen during the conflict.

After the retaking of Mosul in July 2017, Jasim reopened the factory, bought the necessary equipment and recruited four employees to start the business again. Shortly afterwards, he heard about and applied for IOM's Enterprise Development Fund (EDF) which supports the rehabilitation of small and medium business to encourage returns to liberated areas; his application was successful.

"The grant came at a great time. I equipped the factory with new machines and expanded my business, I now have 20 employees," explained Jasim, Al-Miqdad's current owner.

Jasim hopes that more businesses benefit from the EDF to boost the private sector; having received a grant himself, Jasim is now paying it forward by hiring unskilled employees - like Omran and Marwan - and providing them with training so they have better chances at finding employment in the future.

Abdullatif* is another young IDP who found a job Al-Miqdad Chips Factory. He was displaced along with his 11 siblings and settled in the Qayyarah



Airstrip Camp. His father is ill, and his brother with a disability was injured; Abdullatif is his family's sole breadwinner.

"Before I started working, I felt the weight of the world on my shoulders. I'd get panic attacks every day. Life is so expensive," he said.

"But now I am hopeful. My salary is really helpful, and I feel privileged to be working. I'm grateful for this opportunity under these difficult circumstances."

By investing in the private sector and

enhancing local production capacity, IOM Iraq supports target sectors that have a high impact on the economic recovery and job creation.

Through the EDF, IOM Iraq supports the Chamber of Commerce and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA) as they help businesses comply with Iraqi labour laws and working standards relevant to the sector.

Al-Miqdad Chips Factory is supported by EDF, an initiative co-funded by KfW - German Development Bank.

Japan provides support to revitalize community services for returnee communities in Diyala Governorate



Baghdad, 10 June 2020 – The Government of Japan is continuing its support to restore and improve the living conditions and stability of returnee communities in Iraq.

In partnership with UNOPS, the \$1.8 million grant for "Restoring Access to Critical Community Services in Diyala Governorate in Iraq" will revitalize access to critical community services such as solid waste management, transport and energy. The project will benefit at least 100,000 returnees in

Diyala Governorate through the provision of equipment for garbage collection and training on waste disposal systems, access to public service facilities through rehabilitated roads, and provision of renewal energy solutions through installation of solar streetlights. Taking an integrated approach, the project will also address enhanced service delivery in the three sectors, in order to assist the local government facing an economic scale down caused by the decrease in oil

prices.

H.E. Mr. HASHIMOTO Naofumi, Ambassador of Japan to the Republic of Iraq, stated, "Japan has recently decided to provide a new assistance package for Iraq amounting to \$41 million, including this project as assistance for Diyala. With this package, the total amount of Japan's assistance to the people affected by the crisis reaches \$540 million since 2014. I hope that the assistance from the Government and people of Japan will help restore basic services critical to reconstruction efforts in Diyala."

"Following the successful implementation of the community service revitalization projects in Anbar in partnership with the Government of Japan, we are proud to continue to support vulnerable populations in Iraq. This initiative will support the return of people to Diyala Governorate and will contribute to their economic and social stability. UNOPS will maintain close engagement with all partners in undertaking this important initiative that supports Iraq's efforts to achieve peace and sustainable development," said Muhammad Usman Akram, Director of UNOPS Operational Hub in Amman.

IOM study: Impact of COVID-19 on Small and Medium Enterprises in Iraq

Baghdad, 10 June 2020 - In order to shed light on the impact of COVID-19 on Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), which were affected by closures and reduced working hours, IOM conducted a survey with 456 enterprises active in different sectors in urban areas of Iraq in April 2020. The inquiry focused on governorates with the highest rates of displacement, returns, and ex-combatants as

identified by IOM. In order to measure the effects of COVID-19 on SMEs, the research uses a stratified sampling strategy applied to a database of urban employers in the areas where IOM's Enterprise Development Fund (EDF) has been implemented.

The analysis found a significant impact on economic outcomes at the firm level. Effects on sales and production among firms have been the most pointed, with

temporary reductions in paid employment also reflected. These have been especially noticeable within the construction and manufacturing industry, followed by the food and agriculture industry.

For more details, see the IOM produced factsheets, dashboard and report at <http://edf.iom.int/home/covsme/en>

WFP and its partners resumed work in cleaning and restoring canals study: Impact of COVID-19 on Small and Medium Enterprises in Iraq

Baghdad, 15 June 2020 - After being on hold due to the COVID pandemic, WFP and its partners have now resumed work in cleaning and restoring canals in coordination with local authorities. In all projects, WFP continues to follow precautionary measures to protect peoples' health and safety.

In Anbar WFP runs livelihood projects to help people and communities get back to work such as: restoring canals, irrigation systems, and training opportunities. This helps families to meet their food requirements, grow and plant again.



IOM is supporting private sector economic growth and job creation in Iraq

Baghdad, 10 June 2020 - IOM's Enterprise Development Fund (EDF) is an innovative livelihoods approach to contribute to economic recovery and private sector revitalization in Iraq through tailored support to Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). The EDF aims to restore essential economic infrastructure by providing financial capital to SMEs (2-30 employees) in primary and secondary economic sectors that were successful prior to the conflict but suffered loss and damage and have a high demand for labour force.

By targeting key sectors and providing necessary funding, the EDF encourages rapid but also large-scale job creation. The EDF is fit-for-purpose in the context of Iraq, where 60% of jobs are in the private sector, the majority of which are in SMEs.

At the same time, most SMEs have experienced large scale destruction or loss and lack access to finance to rebuild. This is especially challenging as access to credit in Iraq is limited or non-



existent, making it very difficult for these businesses to find funds to recover. The EDF, thus, addresses the critical gap that SMEs face in accessing finance for rehabilitation and expansion. EDF goal is to support SMEs so as to enable them to recover and expand their businesses post the 2014-2017 conflict, as well as to facilitate rapid job creation

that meets decent work criteria.

"Turshi is in our DNA," said the owner of Emad Turshi Pickling Factory in Bashiqa, a town famous for its Iraqi pickling. In 2014, the owner was displaced by the ISIL conflict. The factory was damaged and most of its equipment was stolen. IOM Iraq approved an EDF grant to support the recovery of the business, which created five new job opportunities.

Al-Omarra Tahini Factory in Bashiqa, Nineveh Plains, was a leader in tahini production in the 90s but its status was shattered when ISIL entered the area in 2014. During the conflict with ISIL, the business was looted, and later the factory was destroyed during the operations to retake Bashiqa. IOM Iraq approved an EDF grant to support the recovery of the business, which created 12 new job opportunities.

EDF is supported by USAID in Iraq.

Find out more about the EDF: <http://edf.iom.int/>

Building furniture, rebuilding lives through jobs



Mosul, 14 June 2020 - Thamer* is a 34-year-old father of four, and the proud owner of Al-Khair furniture workshop.

Before ISIL took Mosul, the factory was one of the most active businesses in the city and employed almost 20 workers. It supplied the city's residents with beautiful, high-quality furniture.

When ISIL entered Mosul, Thamer closed his workshop and left with his family to Duhok. "All I could think of was my family's safety; I knew the toll that war could take, as I lost my left hand in the 2003 war" said Thamer. Five months after being displaced, however, the family had to return to Mosul because they could not afford the daily living expenses and rent away from home.

In Mosul, Thamer and his family did not have to pay for rent, but reopening the business proved impossible. Although the Al-Khair building was not damaged, all the equipment and materials were stolen or destroyed.

Thamer still has vivid memories of hardship under ISIL. Members of the group executed his cousin because they found him smoking. Thamer was deeply shocked and for a while kept his family indoors, but life had to go on and hiding was not the solution. Thamer started working as a day labourer in a carpentry workshop until Mosul was retaken. When the situation improved, he reopened his workshop and hired two employees, and then two more.

With support from IOM Iraq's Enterprise Development Fund (EDF), Thamer was able to expand his business.

"This opportunity came at the right time. I have expanded my business and hired another six employees, and now we design furniture as well. My business is developing day after day. IOM's support positively influenced more than one aspect of my life,"

explained Thamer. "Now my family and I feel much more comfortable psychologically, as we know we can make a decent living."

Mustafa*, a 39-year-old father of four, lives in east Mosul with his family and parents in an old house.

Mustafa had a small cozy house near Al-Khair furniture workshop where he worked. When ISIL occupied the city, militants barged into his house one night and asked everyone to leave – or the family would be killed. Mustafa and his family fled without being able to take anything from the house aside from the clothes their could carry. They fled to Erbil, and later heard that their house had become a military base for ISIL.

In displacement, Mustafa kept hoping that one day he would go back to live in Mosul and that life would go back to what it was. But when ISIL killed two of his cousins, he gave up on going back. He started working as a construction worker to pay rent and cover other expenses.

After Mosul was retaken, Mustafa heard that some factories in Mosul had re-opened and that the situation was improving. Al-Khair furniture workshop was looking for a carpenter and got in touch to offer him a job; he was hired shortly after that.

Full of hope, Mustafa and his family returned to Mosul and temporarily moved in with his parents, until his financial situation improved.

"I now have a job and my family is safe. This is all we need," he said.

Ahmed* had worked at Al-Khair for two years before ISIL, but when the workshop reopened Thamer wasn't able to hire all former employees. Thanks to the EDF grant, Thamer was able to employ more people and hire Ahmed again, thus providing him with a stable source of income.

Thamer was also able to bring new people into the team like Najeeb, 22, who lives with his parents in a partially destroyed house in Mosul.

Before the war Najeeb was attending high school and his father was working as a taxi driver. During the conflict, ISIL attacked the family, and members of the group set the taxi on fire. Najeeb's sister was badly injured, and all their savings were spent on her treatment. Najeeb had to leave school so he could help provide for his family.

"I'm happy with my new job, my monthly salary is 500 USD, and I'm learning new skills that will help me in the future. Thank you, IOM!" said Najeeb.

Al-Khair Furniture Workshop is supported by EDF, an initiative co-funded by U.S. Department of State: Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM).



Perceptions of police, security and governance in Iraq: IOM study

Erbil, 31 May 2020 — The International Organization for Migration (IOM) and Yale Law School's Center for Global Legal Challenges (GLC) are releasing a new report that evaluates community perceptions of police and security in three communities across Iraq.

This new study — *Perceptions of Police, Security and Governance in Iraq* — presents evidence from an assessment of IOM Iraq's 'Community Policing' Programme, implemented alongside the Government of Iraq Ministry of Interior. The study is based on data from two waves of surveys conducted in three communities where the programme was implemented in 2019: Baradiyah (Basra Governorate), Hamdaniyah (Ninewa Governorate), and Jubeil (Anbar Governorate).

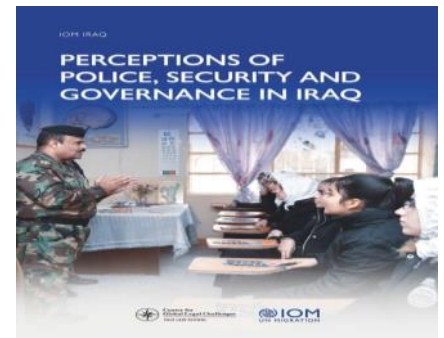
Community policing (CP) is a method of law enforcement defined by the United Nations as "a strategy for encouraging the public to act as partners with the police in preventing and managing crime as well as other aspects of security and order based on the needs of the community." Surveys were conducted in July and August 2019, before IOM Iraq implemented the CP programme in the three communities, and again in December 2019 after six

months of programming.

"In Iraq, where waves of violence over the past four decades have eroded trust between communities and security actors, there has been very little publicly available research on efforts to re-establish this trust," said IOM Iraq Chief of Mission Gerard Waite. "This study is a step toward establishing an evidence base to evaluate community policing methods in Iraq, that will help tailor the programme for diverse contexts across the country."

"In Iraq and around the world, public distrust of state institutions has driven unrest, instability, and support for violent non-state groups such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant," said Oona Hathaway, Professor of Law and Director of the Center for Global Legal Challenges at Yale Law School. "This study suggests that training police in the importance of human rights and equality under the law can strengthen both human security and national security."

The study also included surveys in two comparison communities — Khor Zubair, Basra and Saqlawiyah, Anbar — that were selected for geographical proximity and demographic similarity to the communities where the Community Policing Programme was



implemented. Conducting baseline and endline surveys in these communities provides some insight into whether other trends and events unrelated to the CP Programme might have contributed to the changes observed over the course of the study.

The key findings of the endline study are available in infographic form:

- Baradiyah, Basra Governorate
- Hamdaniyah, Ninewa Governorate
- Jubeil, Anbar Governorate

Evaluating Perceptions of Security and Police in Iraq, the baseline report analysing data from the first wave of door-to-door surveys conducted before implementation of the CP programme, was published in April 2020.

Environment

World Bee Day: The sweetest job in Iraq – beekeeping in the Ninewa plains

Baghdad, 20 May 2020 - "One teaspoon of honey each day will ensure a healthy life," says Farman as we watch a golden waterfall form a pool on the plate. As he pours honey, his wife Khame and daughter Zena hand us each a small piece of bread, gesturing to taste. "This is raw honey," he says, as we watch the impurities glisten in mid-afternoon sun.

At their home in Alqosh, in northern Iraq's Ninewa Plains, Farman, Khame and Zena tend to 22 hives. They produce enough honey to rely solely on beekeeping – or apiculture as its formally known – for income. "I also sell new colonies to fellow beekeepers," explains Farman. "We break our existing hives in to new ones each year – they just keep growing."

Beekeeping has existed in Iraq in one form or another for an estimated 8,000 years, with ancient Sumerian tablets carrying recipes that use honey for



medicinal purposes – treating skin infections, ulcers and disease.

Today, beekeeping is resurging following a stark decline throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, primarily due to recurring conflict, disease, displacement, and the increase in chemicals used for agriculture. Whilst the practice has come a long way, shifting from the use of mud and straw

hives to the modern style racks of wood and plastic, the number of local beekeepers selling commercially in Iraq, remains low.

Farman, Khame and Zena received five hives in 2017 as a part of a vocational training programme led by local NGO, Zhako Small Village Project (ZSVP), with support from UNDP Iraq and the Government of Germany. In total, 200

World Bee Day: The sweetest job in Iraq – beekeeping... *(continued)*

households across the Ninewa Plains and Dohuk were selected to receive hives, along with safety clothes and tools, and training on apiculture, business management and post-harvest marketing. Households were selected based on both a financial needs assessment and the interest and motivation of recipients; which included vulnerable host community members, returnees and IDPs that otherwise would not have access to sustainable livelihoods opportunities.

This project came at a time when the liberation against ISIL was nearing an end. Previously displaced populations began returning to their homes, often to a community with little left in the way of business and employment opportunities. Small-scale agriculture – including poultry, vegetable farming and apiculture provided opportunities to families not only to earn an income, but re-engage with neighbors, and in taking ownership of their own food production, empower individuals, whilst providing nutritional benefits!

In the sweeping grasses of the Ninewa plains, these bees continue to thrive. Unlike the higher-altitude-loving bees of Sinjar and Choman, the bees here

produce a less floral – but no less sweet - honey, feeding mostly in vegetable gardens.

For each beekeeper, the yield will differ from year to year, so it's common to see families supplement their hives with additional agricultural activities. Beekeepers face a number of challenges – not only wasps. Surrounded by agricultural land often ripe with nasty chemicals designed to expel insects, and waste piles produced from the growing peri-urban communities drawing in bees that are vulnerable to disease and predators, beekeepers become attune to their craft and creative in finding solutions.

"I started noticing my bees would disappear each afternoon. I couldn't see any flying around the fields," explains Farman. "One day I followed them, and I saw that they were feeding on waste. A small shop would dump organic waste on the street each day – drawing bees and wasps to feed," he continues. "This is bad news for bees – not only are the wasps able to kill them more easily, but the honey will not taste so good!"

Farman began returning daily to cover this waste with soil, deterring the bees

and forcing them to return to the fields to feed. "I want my honey to taste good, so that my customers come back!"

But how do they get to market? Many families find the best way to sell honey is by word-of-mouth. "In our small communities, everyone knows where to buy the best honey. I just receive calls and deliver my honey to families from nearby," explains Ameen, another beekeeper from ZSVP and UNDP's 2017 initiative. Ameen boasts 24 hives today, split from the original 5 he received almost 3 years ago. "Our honey sells because it tastes good. This is the best way to market, sell a high-quality product," he says. "We have built networks to sell our honey to people living in nearby communities."

Since 2017, the beekeepers from this project has continued to thrive. Each year, keepers are splitting hives and growing their income. Whilst many still remain small-scale and local, the yields are growing, as are the number of neighbors and friends. But, with increased interest and technical expertise, beekeeping in Iraq has a sweet future.

SRSB Hennis-Plasschaert: "It is critical for Iraq to meet its pledge to rehabilitate almost 350,000 hectares of land by 2035 and pursue a more sustainable agriculture"

Baghdad, 17 June 2020 – On the occasion of the International Desertification and Drought Day, the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, issued the following message:

As it experiences more frequent and severe droughts, sand and dust storms, soil salinization, and declining water resources, Iraq is exceptionally vulnerable to desertification and land degradation. Food shortages sparked by the COVID-19 global pandemic have sent a sobering message for Iraq to urgently protect its fragile land and biodiversity resources.

The fertile soil of ancient Mesopotamia gave birth to agriculture thousands of years ago. And agriculture remains deep rooted in modern-day Iraq despite its vast oil reserves. But desertification and land degradation deprive the country of the arable land needed to improve food security and diversify its oil-reliant economy.

Even before the pandemic, more than half of Iraqis were at risk of food



insecurity. It is therefore critical for Iraq to meet its pledge to rehabilitate almost 350,000 hectares of land by 2035 and pursue a more sustainable agriculture.

The theme for the 2020 Desertification and Drought Day is "Food.Feed.Fibre – the links between consumption and land". In Iraq as across the world, we are placing increasingly unsustainable demands on our land to produce food for humans, feed for animals, and fibre for clothing. Growing populations and

climate change are exacerbating these pressures, but through problem-solving, community involvement and strong co-operation at all levels, we can fight land degradation.

Indeed, we can begin by educating ourselves on how to reduce our personal impact. A good start is to stop wasting food. By wasting food, we waste land, water, and biodiversity. Everyone has a choice to make, and no choice is too small.

Healthy land = healthy people.

As conflict abates, Iraqi villages begin to tackle “huge” problem of rubble

Baghdad, 20 June 2020 - UNHCR's latest Global Trends report, released every year in lead up to World Refugee Day (June 20), shows that 79.5 million people – or 1 per cent of humanity – were forcibly displaced by the end of 2019. Of these, some 11 million people were newly displaced in the course of last year – fleeing wars, violence or persecution.

In Iraq – a country hard hit by the displacement crisis – the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) are working with partners to recycle rubble to rebuild homes and communities, as part of an effort to facilitate returns.

The contrast between the satellite images of Buwaiter, Iraq, from January 2015 to March 2019 is stark. Where there were once neat outlines of homes and buildings, the village, some 35 kilometers from Kirkuk, is now a messy blur of sand-coloured rubble and overgrown vegetation.

On the ground, the level of destruction seems endless. Homes, schools and shops have been reduced to piles of cement and stone, the fall-out from years of conflict.

Between 2014 and 2017, the conflict with the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) led to the displacement of millions of Iraqis. While stability has been returning to Kirkuk governate since 2017, the rubble is preventing Buwaiter's displaced residents from returning.

“The most important thing now is to clear all this debris,” says Ibrahim Khalaf, a resident of Buwaiter. “And if possible, help people reconstruct their homes.”

A collaboration between the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) is helping Buwaiter residents like Khalaf, by recycling the debris into building material, so people can rebuild their homes—and lives—again.

IOM estimated, that as of April 2020, there were still around 100,000 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in northern Iraq's Kirkuk Governorate. IDPs are people who have not crossed an international border but have moved to a different region within their own country due to conflict or disaster. At present there are two camps for displaced persons in Kirkuk Governorate, but the majority of IDPs in Kirkuk are in urban areas — either staying with relatives or renting.

The mayor of Buwaiter would like these former residents to return home, but it is impossible to attract people when there are “huge volumes of debris”, according to Ali Hamadi, Kirkuk's Assistant Governor for Technical Affairs.

UNEP's debris recycling project is the second of its kind in Iraq, following a pilot scheme launched in Mosul in 2019. These projects, implemented in partnership with IOM, have been funded by Germany's development bank (KfW) in Mosul, and by the Government of Japan in Kirkuk.

“After years of conflict, many Iraqis still face significant challenges in repairing and rebuilding their shattered communities,” says the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert. “The volume of physical destruction in areas that saw some of the fiercest fighting is daunting. This project to recycle the debris of that conflict into building materials for reconstruction will be nothing short of life-changing for those involved. It will enable them to relaunch their communities. I hope this exciting initiative will pave the way for similar projects in other parts of the country.”

After conflicts, rubble is often dumped haphazardly onto open land and in gullies. That is problematic because toxic substances like asbestos, and dangerous remnants of war like mines and unexploded ordnance, can be found among the cement and stone. Kirkuk authorities estimate that around 8 million tonnes of debris were created during the conflict – enough to rebuild the pyramids of Egypt. Around two-thirds of this debris consists of concrete, blocks and stones that can be recycled. The rest is mainly mudbrick. Research by Salah Thameel, an engineer from Anbar University, found the quality of rubble is often high.

Debris from the city of Ramadi, in central Iraq, meets local standards for use in civil engineering projects, including road building. It's also cheaper than new construction material. “The cost of crushing the debris is about one-third of buying fresh quarry materials and, if transportation costs are added, it would account for only 10 percent,” says Thameel.

Reusing crushed debris also reduces the carbon emissions that come from quarrying and transporting new stone.

“UNEP and IOM's work in Iraq would not be possible without the partnership of the local governments,” says UNEP Programme Manager, Hassan Partow. “Kirkuk authorities' interest and commitment to a governorate-wide debris recycling programme is really driving this initiative. We hope it will serve as a model for the authorities as they embark on their own debris recycling programme.”

As in Mosul, UNEP and IOM hopes the Kirkuk project, which will focus on 10 villages, will create a type of circular economy, and create much-needed job opportunities through cash-for-work programmes. “Crushing the rubble is a pragmatic and straightforward answer, offering a ray of hope in dealing with our massive challenges, including creating jobs for displaced youth,” says Hassan Nassif, the head of Multaqa sub-district, where 35 villages, including Buwaiter, were destroyed during the conflict.

World Refugee Day falls on 20 June each year. It celebrates the strength and courage of people who have been forced to flee their home country to escape conflict or persecution; including refugees, asylum seekers, Internally Displaced Persons, stateless persons and returnees. The theme of World Refugee Day 2020 is “Every action counts”.



UNESCO begins onsite works in the old city of Mosul within the EU funded project to revive Mosul old city

Mosul, 28 April 2020 – In close coordination with the Iraqi Armed Forces, UNESCO initiated the first phase of activities by clearing the rubble and UXOs from the first 34 selected houses around the Al-Nouri Mosque in Mosul, Iraq. The process of clearing the grounds is more than just the removal of old stones. In fact, amidst the rubble there are valuable pieces that could be reused during reconstruction. This is another example of UNESCO's commitment to restoring the structures with every effort taken to preserve their historic integrity. This initiative is made possible with the generous support of the European Union and coordinated work with the Government of Iraq, local partners and international experts. It is being undertaken as a major part of UNESCO's Initiative to Revive the Spirit of Mosul. This initiative includes three main strategic areas: education,

cultural life and heritage.

UNESCO has undertaken the delicate task of reconstruction from amidst the ruins, while ensuring strict adherence to the historic integrity of the structures.

The purpose of the project is to promote

livelihood opportunities for youth in Iraq and in particular among the communities of the Old City of Mosul and to contribute to the restoration of the historic urban landscape while contributing to social cohesion and inter-community reconciliation.



UNESCO, with the generous support of Germany, initiates the first phase of activities at the Al-Aghawat Mosque in Mosul

Mosul, 3 May 2020 - The restoration and rehabilitation of the Aghawat Mosque Complex in the Old City of Mosul is well underway. In close coordination with the Iraqi Armed Forces, UNESCO initiated the first phase of activities by clearing the rubble and UXOs from the complex as well as securing the project site for reconstruction.

The mosque, which dates from the 19th century, is situated beside the historic bridge over the Tigris River. With its white dome, it is one of the most striking sacred buildings in the city of Mosul. The project serves to protect cultural diversity and coexistence between the religions, as Mosul represents Iraq's religious and ethnic diversity.

The first step in the restoration will be to take an inventory of the damage and the surviving historic architectural element of the mosque complex. At the same time, local experts will be trained in restoration and conservation techniques. The project includes skills development and job creation components to provide young men and women from Mosul with a source of livelihood through the heritage rehabilitation sector, highlighting the rich cultural diversity embodied in Mosul's old city.

This initiative is made possible with



the generous support of the Government of Germany and coordinated work with the Government of Iraq, local partners and international experts. It is being undertaken as a major part of UNESCO's Initiative to Revive the Spirit of Mosul. This initiative includes three main strategic areas: education, cultural life and heritage.

The primary goal of the Aghawat Mosque project is to contribute to the safeguarding of Mosul's cultural diversity, both in terms of human fabric and surviving cultural heritage. UNESCO has undertaken the delicate task of reconstruction from amidst the ruins, while ensuring strict adherence to the historic integrity of the

structures.

In February 2018, the Director-General of UNESCO, Audrey Azoulay, launched the flagship initiative "Revive the Spirit of Mosul" as the Organization's response for the recovery of one of Iraq's iconic cities. Reviving Mosul is not only about reconstructing heritage sites, it is about empowering the population as agents of change involved in the process of rebuilding their city through culture and education. It is with a strong message of hope and resistance to Iraq and to the world, a message that an inclusive, cohesive and equitable society is the future that Iraqis deserve, that the "Revive the spirit of Mosul" Flagship Initiative was born.

Prime Minister al-Kadhimi visits UNESCO works in Mosul

Mosul, 10 June 2020 - Iraq's Prime Minister Mustafa Al Kadhimi arrived in Mosul to assess the damage left after six years of war and to voice his commitment to the city's renewal. During his visit, Al Kadhimi toured the Al-Nouri Mosque complex to witness the progress that has taken place on site, in the framework of the UNESCO project to Revive the Spirit of Mosul, supported by the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

The battle for Mosul left behind an estimated 8 million tons of rubble and destroyed prominent historical landmarks. Al-Nouri Mosque and its fabled minaret were left destroyed. Prime Minister could witness the progress made and get a first hand briefing of the challenges ahead with the lead architect and project managers. "This visit comes at an important juncture of the project, as we have just completed the first phase and

are about to launch an international competition for the architectural design and reconstruction of the mosque", said Paolo Fontani, Representative of UNESCO in Iraq.

Prime Minister was welcomed by representatives from UNESCO, the

local government, Sunni Waqf and the MoC, actively involved in the reconstruction and rehabilitation of the historic landmarks of Mosul. His Excellency thanked UNESCO and its partners for their efforts in restoring the emblematic Al-Nouri Mosque.



Representatives from the National Council for Tribes of Nineveh along with Najeeb Michael, Chaldean Archbishop of Mosul and Akra, visit UNESCO works in Mosul

Mosul, 12 June 2020 - Representatives of the National Council for Tribes of Nineveh along with Najeeb Michael, Chaldean Archbishop of Mosul and Akra, visited Al-Aghawat Mosque, Al-Nouri Mosque, Al Saa'a Church and Al-Tahera Church in Mosul. A shared heritage of Moslawis from all communities and faiths is currently being rehabilitated by UNESCO thanks to the generous contributions of the United Arab Emirates, European Union and Germany.



The Minister of Interior Al-Ghanmi visited Al-Nouri Mosque

Mosul, 14 June 2020 - The Minister of Interior, Mr. Othman Al-Ghanmi, visited Al-Nouri Mosque to witness the progress that has taken place on site, in the framework of the UNESCO project to #ReviveTheSpiritOfMosul supported by the UAE. He expressed appreciation for UNESCO's efforts to restore the emblematic mosque.



New satellite TV education channel will support 1.5 million learners in Kurdistan Region of Iraq

Baghdad, 5 May 2020 – The Kurdistan Ministry of Education with support from UNICEF has launched a satellite TV channel to support the learning needs of children and youths while schools remain closed due to Covid-19 pandemic.

An estimated 1.5 million children from grade 1 to grade 12 will be reached at home with a Kurdish curriculum that is also applicable for refugee and displaced children in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI).

“The closure of schools is having a disproportionate impact on the most vulnerable children—those living in poverty and in camps are being left behind because they may not have access to online learning opportunities,” said Hamida Lasseko, UNICEF Representative in Iraq.

“We know from experience that the longer vulnerable children stay away from school, the less likely they are to return. We must all work together to provide different ways for students to

continue learning from home and maintain a routine,” she added.

The TV channel known as Kanalli Parwadaee will broadcast daily in Arabic, Kurdish (Sorani) and Syriac



Languages for an initial period of three months. In addition to the educational content, the channel will also disseminate awareness raising messages about Covid-19, including social distancing and handwashing practices.

Note for Editors:

- Approximately 10 million children and young people across Iraq have been impacted by school closures:

- Children who are not in school are highly vulnerable to exploitation, are more likely to engage in child labor, child marriage and are more prone to be depressed about their future:

- UNICEF is supporting the Ministry of Education in preparing to reopen schools and its current efforts for home-schooling, through online platforms, TV and mobile networks:

- The Ministries of Education in KRI and Federal Iraq have digital learning platforms; the satellite TV channel in the KRI is geared towards learners with limited internet access.

Learning never stops

Erbil, 10 May 2020 - UNESCO, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education of the Kurdistan Region and the generous support of the European Union, continue to reach out to students at home to ensure that learning never stops.

The recent support to the Ministry of Education of KRI under the “Access to Inclusive Quality Primary and Secondary Education for IDPs, Returnees, Remainees and Refugees in Crises Affected Areas of Iraq” project included the upgrade and installation of servers in the Ministry with the aim to increase the capacity of the new online platform “Ewane”. The online learning platform enables students of various educational stages (Basic, Preparatory and Vocational) to catch up with their lessons in all subjects and is made available in Kurdish Sorani and Badene dialect, Arabic, English, Turkmane and Syriac.

“Due to the current school closure forced by outbreak of COVID-19 about 1,783,000 students remain at home in the Kurdistan region of Iraq,” said Mr. Paolo Fontani, UNESCO Representative in Iraq.

“UNESCO is supporting the regional government in their efforts to mitigate the immediate impact of school closures, particularly for more



vulnerable and disadvantaged communities, and to facilitate the continuity of education for all through remote learning,” Mr. Paolo Fontani added.

The new online platform “Ewane” has been connected to the e-Parwarda system of the Ministry that allows functions such as tracking student’s accessibility to the learning platform, learning content, materials and support interaction of teachers with students.

According to the official data generated by the system, more than 500,000

students have logged in to the online platform. The provided support encourages students in KRG to continue learning, keep up with their lessons, improve access with better interaction. This project is made possible with the generous support of the European Union.

UNESCO will continue providing support to the educational sector in Iraq, including in the Kurdistan Region, by developing existing sources of education and exploring new modalities.

Huawei, UNESCO IITE, UNESCO Iraq and the Ministries of Higher Education in Iraq and Kurdistan discuss educational support during COVID-19

Erbil, 15 May 2020 - Driven by its commitment to help mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on learning and education in Iraq, Huawei, in partnership with the UNESCO Institute of Information Technology in Education (IITE), UNESCO Iraq Office, and the Ministries of Higher Education in Iraq and Kurdistan, hosted the "Learning Never Stops" online education summit, which aimed to support Huawei ICT Academy partners and universities to continue offering learning possibilities to students in Iraq.

More than 60 leaders and experts from universities in Iraq were part of the online education summit, as well as academic professionals from China, to share their experiences, best practices and challenges in online education during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"UNESCO is fully committed to

supporting the Iraqi government for distance learning, open science, knowledge and culture sharing" said Mr. Paolo Fontani, UNESCO Representative in Iraq.

The summit facilitated resource

sharing on feasible solutions to ensure education continuity and online education quality as schools and universities stay closed. It also aimed at empowering and enabling Iraqi youth.



UN-HABITAT in partnership with Peace Winds Japan completed vocational training of 33 young community members in Zanjilli

Mosul, 21 May 2020 - UN-HABITAT in partnership with Peace Winds Japan completed today vocational training of 33 young community members in Zanjilli neighborhood of West Mosul. This was part of a programme to support reconstruction and peacebuilding in Iraq, generously funded by the Government of Japan.

Othman, a 23-year-old, lost his father and brother during the conflict. He worked as breadwinner of the family but lost his job due to the injury during the conflict and has been unemployed for a while. He participated in the vocational training course hosted by UN-Habitat and Peace Winds Japan to acquire new skills on plumbing, and completed the 10-day paid internship, engaging in the rehabilitation of war-



damaged houses in his own neighborhood. Equipped with new skills and experience, Othman is optimistic that he can find a new job soon.

Vocational training and rehabilitation works were implemented under precautionary measures for COVID-19 based on World Health Organization (WHO) health guidelines.

Financial stability and job creation top concerns for Iraqis, according to the newly launched national adolescent and youth survey

Baghdad, 3 May 2020 – This month the Government of Iraq with the support of UNFPA and UNICEF, unveiled the results of its National Adolescent and Youth Survey. The survey was the first of its kind in over a decade, with the last survey taking

place in 2009. Its aim is to enable the Iraq Federal Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government to develop adolescent and youth-centered policies based on what adolescents and youth see as priorities.

The launch took place online due to the

COVID-19 pandemic, with the participation of the Minister of Planning, Dr Nouri Al-Dulaimi, the Minister of Youth and Sports, Mr Ahmed Taleb, the Deputy UN Special Representative for Iraq and Humanitarian Coordinator, Ms Marta

Financial stability and job creation top concerns for Iraqis, according to the newly launched national adolescent and youth survey *(continued)*

Ruedas, along with UNFPA Representative, Dr Oluremi Sogunro and UNICEF Representative, Ms Hamida Lasseko.

“Young people are the innovators, creators, builders and leaders of the future. But they can only live out their full potential if they have skills, health and choices in life and most importantly, an adequate system that meets their inspirations,” explained Ms Marta Ruedas.

Iraqis between the ages of 10 and 30 were asked about a range of key thematic issues affecting their lives, including health, education and civic engagement. According to the survey, 39% expressed worry about their future financial security and employment prospects. With over a quarter of Iraqis between the ages of 15 and 30 jobless, Iraq is one of the countries with the highest youth unemployment rates in the region.

“The results show that young people have a clear understanding of

citizenship, political and social life and livelihoods as well as their rights and obligations. The survey will be the basis for a clear and transparent process to put together youth-based policies,” said the Minister Taleb.

For his part, Dr Nouri Al-Dulaimi elaborated further, adding that his ministry, like other ministries, “will continue to provide developmental opportunities for young people as part of the national development strategy to achieve the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals”.

The findings also brought some welcoming news on gender equality. 70% of those surveyed refused to resort to violence with their partner in comparison to only 54% in 2009, and 83% stated that decisions about child spacing and pregnancy should be jointly made between the couple.

“Young people in Iraq are embracing gender equality and are longing for policies that will meet their aspirations. With concrete data at

hand, the Government, with the support of the United Nations, has the responsibility to turn the positive trends highlighted in the survey into concrete policies and actions to protect young girls from all kinds of harmful practices and enable young people to make informed decisions about their reproductive health,” noted Dr Sogunro, UNFPA Representative.

Iraq’s population is one of the youngest in the world and has the fastest-growing population in the region. Adolescents and youth are expected to reach 16.4 million people, which will make up 31% of the total population by 2030.

If harnessed properly, this can be a historic opportunity for the government to get the most from its young people by investing in job creation.

“This population will be a powerful force for economic growth, decision-makers should listen to what young people are telling us and adopt adolescent and youth-friendly policies that create conditions for them to participate in decisions that influence their futures,” said the UNICEF Representative Hamida Lasseko.

A total of 33,000 Iraqis between the ages of 10 to 30, participated in the survey in all of Iraq’s provinces from February to April 2019. The Central Statistical Organization and the Kurdistan Regional Statistics Office conducted the survey in coordination with the Ministries of Planning, Ministry of Sport and Youth and Ministry of Culture and Youth in the Federal and the Kurdistan Region respectively and with the technical support of the UNFPA, UNICEF and with the financial support from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency – SIDA.



Why young people are a critical resource in the fight against a pandemic - Iraqi youth unite to find sustainable solutions to the most pressing issues during the COVID-19 pandemic

Baghdad, 31 May 2020 - “The current pandemic is a true opportunity for youth to contribute and share their creativity. Our response to COVID-19 will help show the world that young people in Iraq are capable of leading positive change.” said Mohamed, member of a youth-serving organization participating in UNDP

Youth Leadership Programme’s 6th edition.

In Iraq, the term ‘youthful country’ isn’t far from the truth. But even with more than 50% of the total population below 25 years old, and amongst them, a high unemployment rate of 16.6% [1], there is both an opportunity and a need to engage young people in innovative

and sustainable economic development, peace building and social cohesion.

Recognizing the untapped potential across the Arab States region, the UNDP Regional Bureau for Arab States launched the Youth Leadership Programme (YLP) in 2015 – and UNDP Iraq has been an active member since its inception.

Why young people are a critical resource in the fight against a pandemic - Iraqi youth unite to find sustainable solutions to the most pressing issues during the COVID-19 pandemic *(continued)*

Each year, the YLP engages Youth Serving Organizations (YSOs) across the region to participate in training and capacity building through workshops, hackathons and innovation camps, priming them to unleash their potential as social innovators and leaders. The aim? To equip youth with the tools necessary to develop unique and innovative solutions to real-life challenges; helping them contribute to achieving Agenda 2030 which includes the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The idea is to inspire young people to become effective change-makers, leaders, social innovators and drivers of sustainable development and social change, capable of realizing impactful ideas from conception to practice.

However, UNDP's 2020 launch came at a time when the world was facing new and unprecedented challenges. In March, as we witnessed the unfolding of a global pandemic, UNDP launched YLP-6, focusing on SDG 16 – Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions, and SDG 13 – Climate Action. YLP's initial series of webinars was hosted virtually to adapt to a new life of social distancing and a reliance on digital communications. But this wasn't the only lasting impact of COVID-19 on YLP 2020. Cognizant of the impact that fight against COVID-19 will continue to have on society, UNDP has woven the urgent response needs of the pandemic into this year's theme of Climate Action & Civic Engagement.

Why? Because we believe that young people should be at the forefront of pandemic response, enabling them to support their communities to recover.

UNDP Iraq has partnered with 17 YSOs from all over the nation to support them to design and implement sustainable solutions by strengthening the capacities of young people in key areas of political and civic engagement, climate action, and understanding pandemics in the context of COVID-19. YLP supports youth by providing the necessary trainings to enable them to become leaders and change makers in their community.

The first training sessions were hosted by Ines Cheniour, UNDP consultant and trainer on systematic and design thinking, behavioral insights and online facilitation. "The current lockdown and social distancing measures have forced us to adapt and

change our whole way of thinking. For me, I'm learning more about technology and online facilitation because our success is counting on it," she says.

Forty participants were trained on how to use a new local Design Thinking training manual that was developed in 2019 by Iraqi youth, with support from UNDP. Young people learned how they could then facilitate their own online workshops, to transfer these new skills to even more young people. UNDP is also working to provide YSOs with the virtual online tools needed to facilitate their workshops and explore innovative ways to solve internet stability - a key issue in times when internet usage is very high.

But how did we know the potential was there? A number of YSOs were already on their way to implement innovative solutions to COVID-19's myriad of obstacles.

From toy-shaped soap to incentivize hand-washing for kids, the manufacture of low-cost personal protection equipment, distribution of food and essential goods – including psychosocial support – to vulnerable populations and support to UNDP's own Accelerator Lab to develop an online detection and tracking platform for COVID-19, YSOs have led the charge in the fight against the pandemic in Iraq and its challenging knock-on effects.

As we continue to overcome the new and unique challenges of life under coronavirus, UNDP Iraq – along with the other participating Arab States in YLP 2020 – will provide further



capacity building and skills training sessions to YSOs, with a view to creating a series of changemakers and leaders that will go on to train more young people and encourage them on a new path of innovation. We want to support the next generation of effective political and civic leaders, social and climate innovators to explore unseen approaches that will accelerate youth engagement to achieve the SDGs.

In 2020, it's time for young Iraqis to innovate. Together we can make an impact and increase the focus to find innovative solutions that will help to flatten the curve, fight COVID-19 and reduce the lasting impact on economies, especially for vulnerable communities.



UN Iraq Special Representative Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert sends warmest wishes to Iraqis on Eid-ul-Fitr

Baghdad, 23 May 2020 - Eid-ul-Fitr is traditionally a joyous occasion on which families mark the end of the holy month of Ramadan with public celebrations and outings. This year it will be subdued due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the accompanying restrictions which are affecting our lives like never before. But despite the difficulties, the curfews,

the threats to public health and anxiety over the future, I sincerely hope Eid-ul-Fitr will be source of renewed hope in humanity, instilling optimism in a better future. Iraq faces multiple challenges, compounded by the pandemic, but the country can overcome with a spirit of unity and solidarity. On this blessed occasion, Eid Mubarak.



Yoga sessions held at Erbil shelter

Erbil, 15 June 2020 - The Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) organized yoga sessions for women survivors of domestic violence who are staying at the Erbil Women's Shelter. The sessions were held within the framework of the project "Strengthening the resilience of Syrian women and girls and host communities in Iraq," which is supported by UN Women and the European Trust Fund "Madad" with the aim of offering psychosocial support for survivors at the centre. The yoga sessions were held for three days, starting from 27 March 2020, according to organisers, who said 35 women took part in these sessions. Women in charge of the shelter noted that such sessions had "a positive

impact on the psychological wellbeing of the survivors, helping them relieve

stress, especially for the long-term residents of the shelter."



International Day of Yoga

Baghdad, 21 June 2020 - Yoga is an ancient physical, mental and spiritual practice that originated in India. The word 'yoga' derives from Sanskrit and means to join or to unite, symbolizing the union of body and consciousness. Today it is practiced in various forms around the world and continues to grow in popularity. Recognizing its universal appeal, on 11 December 2014, the United Nations proclaimed 21 June as the International Day of Yoga by resolution 69/131. While the social distancing measures adopted by countries to fight the COVID-19 pandemic have shut down yoga studios and other communal spaces, yoga practitioners have turned to home practice and online yoga resources. Yoga is a powerful tool to deal with the stress of uncertainty and isolation, as well as to maintain physical well-being. The World Health Organization



mentions yoga as a mean to improve health in its Global action plan on physical activity 2018–2030: more active people for a healthier world. Separated from their families and far away from their homes, while assisting people of Iraq in their fight against

COVID-19 pandemic, and providing political and humanitarian assistance by implementing their mandates, the UN family in Iraq marked the International Day of Yoga with a session on the grounds of its compound in Baghdad.