

UNAMI Herald

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The 2021 Humanitarian Response Plan for Iraq will provide assistance to 1.5 million vulnerable people. A budget of US\$607.2 million is required to meet these needs.

Baghdad, 10 March 2021 - Today, the Minister of Planning H.E. Dr. Khalid Batal Najim Abdullah, and the Humanitarian Coordinator Ms. Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano, released the 2021 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) to assist 1.5 million vulnerable people in Iraq.

“The HRP will complement the Government of Iraq’s own initiatives to help the people of Iraq recover from the setbacks they have experienced in recent years,” said H.E. Dr. Abdullah. “The Government of Iraq and the United Nations will continue to work in partnership to help all Iraqis achieve and maintain a dignified standard of living.”

“The people of Iraq should be commended for their resilience in the face of relentless hardships,” said Ms. Vojáčková-Sollorano. “COVID-19 added extra challenges for all of us in 2020. We are happy through the 2021 HRP to renew our commitment to assisting the most vulnerable Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and returnees in Iraq.”

Iraq continues to face a complex humanitarian situation, despite the ongoing joint efforts of humanitarian partners, the Government of Iraq, and local authorities and



communities to improve circumstances. The post-conflict humanitarian situation in Iraq remains fragile, with approximately 1.3 million IDPs, and deepening socio-economic vulnerabilities brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The 2021 Humanitarian Needs Overview found that 4.1 million Iraqis are in need of humanitarian assistance. The 2021 HRP focuses on 1.5 million of the most vulnerable IDPs living in camps and in out-of-camp locations, as well as returnees, who continue to face significant

humanitarian and protection needs. This unified appeal represents the activities of 166 operational partners – national NGOs, international NGOs and UN agencies – involved in the humanitarian response in Iraq, in coordination with the efforts of the Government of Iraq. It seeks \$607.2 million to carry out humanitarian programming across nine sectors.

In 2020, the humanitarian community was able to assist approximately 1.4 million people thanks to the efforts of partners and the generosity of donors.



In this edition ...

Iraq's electoral preparations and processes | Report No. 6

Baghdad, 9 March 2021 - Since September 2020, the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) has been issuing monthly reports on electoral preparations in Iraq, in conformity with its mandate under Security Council Resolution 2522 (2020) to provide electoral assistance and advice to the Government of Iraq and the Independent High Electoral Commission. The sixth report is available on the UNIraq website (www.uniraq.org) through the following link <https://bit.ly/2Z63RBc> *More on page 4.*

International Women's Day celebrated in Iraq under the theme "Participation of Women as a Guarantee for Peace and Stability"

Baghdad, 8 March 2021 – The United Nations family in Iraq joined the Women's Empowerment Directorate under the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers in marking International Women's Day. The virtual event was held under the national theme "Participation of Women as a Guarantee for Peace and Stability". *More on page 15.*

Dribbling on in a COVID-19 world; Zhima, an Iraqi female basketball academy, grooms players and female role models

Erbil, 8 March 2021 – A civic organization geared towards developing sports in the Kurdistan Region is using basketball as a tool to groom young girls for leadership roles, and not even the Coronavirus pandemic is stopping them. *More on page 22.*

UNDP Development Dialogues: Preventing atrocity crimes – the role of countering and addressing hate speech

Baghdad, 5 March 2021 - Ms. Danielle Bell, Chief of UNAMI Human Rights Office participated at the UNDP Development Dialogues where she shared an update on UNAMI work on hate speech in Iraq.

"Iraq is a diverse but highly polarized society where incidents of hate speech have often contributed to escalating cycles of violent extremism. However, Iraq's weak legislative framework to combat hate speech, combined with a widespread lack of political will, largely prevents peddlers of hatred from being held to account." *More on page 24.*

UN Calls for increased efforts to achieve durable solutions for vulnerable Iraqis in areas of return

Baghdad, 17 March 2021 - Following a kick-off meeting in February, the United Nations Network for Migration was formally launched today in Iraq. The Network supports the international community's efforts towards the implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM), which is the first inter-governmentally negotiated agreement covering all dimensions of international migration in a holistic and comprehensive manner. *More on page 35*

Steering Committee of EU-funded local development programme prioritizes decentralization and donor coordination

Baghdad, 08 March 2021- The Steering Committee of the programme Supporting Recovery and Stability in Iraq through Local Development held its second meeting on 08 March 2021, online, to discuss the way forward. The programme is funded by the European Union (EU) and implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in partnership with the UN Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat). *More on page 45.*

Iraq receives the first delivery of COVID-19 vaccines through the COVAX facility

Baghdad, 25 March 2021 – Amid a global shortage of COVID-19 vaccines, Iraq has finally received 336,000 doses of AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine through the COVAX Facility, a partnership co-led by Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), Gavi-The Vaccine Alliance and the World Health Organization, alongside key delivery partner UNICEF. *More on page 65.*

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PIO Director: Samir Ghattas
Editor-in-Chief: Ivan Djordjevic

Editorial Board: Samir Ghattas, Khalid Dahab, Ivan Djordjevic, Laila Shamji, Celia Thompson, Sarmad Al-Safy.

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

Coinciding with the successful conclusion of the historic Papal visit to Iraq: USG Nderitu and Special Adviser Khan announce the launch of the “Interfaith Dialogue Series” in Iraq

Baghdad, 7 March 2021 - Under-Secretary-General Alice Wairimu Nderitu and Special Adviser Karim Asad Ahmad Khan Q.C today welcomed the successful completion of the visit of His Holiness Pope Francis to Iraq and announced the launch of the “Interfaith Dialogue Series”, which is planned to start in May 2021, in a number of cities in Iraq. The Series will commence through a high-level Interfaith Meeting in Baghdad of the leaders of the Chaldean Catholic, Kaka’i, Shia, Sunni and Yazidi faiths.

Building on the historic “Interfaith Statement on the Victims and Survivors of ISIL crimes”, endorsed by Iraqi religious leaders in March 2020, the Interfaith Dialogue Series will provide a forum for Iraqi religious communities to come together and identify ways in which the collective response to the legacy of sectarian violence and ISIL crimes in Iraq may be strengthened.

Reflecting the core principles of the Interfaith Statement, the Dialogue Series will focus in particular on: (i) the barriers faced by members of religious communities to participating in accountability processes; (ii) the challenges faced by survivors in receiving the necessary support to retake their lives within their communities; (iii) how further dialogue can assist in re-building trust and understanding between religious communities in Iraq, in areas most impacted by ISIL crimes; and (iv) how collective messaging from Iraqi religious communities can address and counter hate speech and prevent incitement to discrimination, hostility and violence.

At the conclusion of the Series, a



Protocol of Action will be adopted, drawing on the input from members of all participating communities and providing a framework for concrete steps to be taken by religious authorities in the realization of the principles of the Interfaith Statement. Following his meeting with His Holiness the Pope at the Presidential Palace in Baghdad, Special Adviser Khan, Head of the UN Investigative Team to promote accountability for crimes committed by Da’esh / ISIL (UNITAD), underlined that “the visit of His Holiness Pope Francis provides a profound moment of reflection and hope for all those seeking to build a future of common understanding and peace in Iraq, built on the foundations of justice. The Interfaith Dialogue Series hopes to use this moment as a catalyst for strengthening the collective action of all faiths towards this goal. All religious communities in Iraq were

subjected to the crimes of Da’esh and they must all be empowered to participate in efforts to hold those responsible to account”.

Under-Secretary-General Nderitu noted that “religious leaders have a key role to play in fostering a peaceful, inclusive and just society, ensuring effective support to victims of religious violence, countering mistrust, fear and violent ideology, and in bringing people together on the common ground of humanity. His Holiness Pope Francis’ visit to Iraq reminds us that building peace constitutes a collective endeavor that remains essential not only to address the legacy of the past but also to prevent further violence. In this task, there is no force that can be more powerful than inclusion, respect and appreciation of diversity, and commitment to build a common and prosperous future free from hatred and discrimination in all its forms.”

Training on peacebuilding and coexistence to encourage awareness campaigns started in Baghdad

Baghdad, 16 March 2021 - Today the Baghdad Women Association and religious leaders trained by UNDP in Iraq began workshops for 40 university students on peacebuilding and coexistence to encourage awareness campaigns in their communities thanks to support from Denmark.



Iraq's electoral preparations and processes | Report No. 6



Baghdad, 9 March 2021 - Since September 2020, the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) has been issuing monthly reports on electoral preparations in Iraq, in conformity with its mandate under Security Council Resolution 2522 (2020) to provide electoral assistance and advice to the Government of Iraq and the Independent High Electoral Commission. The sixth report is available on the UNIraq website (www.uniraq.org) through the following link <https://bit.ly/2Z63RBc>

Among the highlights for February 2021 are:

On 25 February, IHEC decided to extend for the second time the period

for the submission of candidacies and the registration of political coalition. The new deadlines are 17 April for candidate nomination and 1 May for the registration of political coalitions. The decision was taken during the IHEC Board of Commissioners meeting, in which UNAMI provided advice on the timeline for the finalization of candidate lists and the design and printing of ballot papers. In deciding to extend, IHEC also took note of the low rate of candidate registration to date.

On 21 February, UNAMI shared an advisory with IHEC containing recommendations for the processing of election-related complaints and

appeals. Work is also ongoing to analyse incidences of complaints, particularly in governorates that have historically had a higher number of complaints lodged on election day. This is for IHEC to anticipate and proactively address various scenarios that may arise during the electoral process.

On 10 and 11 February respectively, UNAMI provided IHEC two advisories on IDP registration and on the regulation of candidate registration. IHEC considered the recommendations and adopted the decision enabling IDPs to register for biometrics in their current location of displacement, as well as the decision to reduce candidate deposit requirements.

The issue of quota-based distribution (muhasasa) continues to come up in the appointment of officials and staff in IHEC. UNAMI continues to raise the issue with IHEC, emphasizing the importance of professional and merit-based appointments for its officials and staff across all departments and levels, in line with efforts to rebuild not just its capabilities but also, equally importantly, to restore trust in IHEC as an electoral institution.

Iraq's electoral preparations and processes | Report No. 7

Baghdad, 10 April 2021 - In UNAMI's monthly report on electoral preparations in Iraq covering activities in March 2021, which is available on the UNIraq website (www.uniraq.org) through the following link <https://bit.ly/2Z63RBc> we recommend the following highlights:

On 22 March, the IHEC Board of Commissioners decided not to hold the out of country voting (OCV) process for the 2021 Council of Representatives elections. IHEC cited as technical reason the lack of time remaining for it to organize the biometric registration of Iraqi voters living abroad, as required by law. It also noted their inability to secure approval from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to hold the registration and voting in Iraqi embassies and consulates. Finally, IHEC mentioned the implications of the ongoing pandemic restrictions that limit the ability of IHEC staff to undertake their tasks abroad. According to IHEC, these are "obstacles to implement the Out of Country Vote and pose as a force majeure that prevents OCV from being properly conducted". UNAMI, in the past few months, provided advisories to IHEC encouraging timely preparations for conducting the OCV process.



As mentioned in the previous report, there is a pressing need for IHEC to further intensify its voter education and public outreach activities. Not only to address the low level of electoral participation and voter turnout, but also the inadequate information being shared with the public at large on the new electoral system and the overall electoral process itself.

On 30 March, UN electoral advisers met with their IHEC public outreach counterparts to discuss the plans and preparations being made by IHEC to launch its outreach and media campaigns. IHEC interlocutors advised that due to current financial constraints, the budget for public outreach is significantly reduced, although no figures have yet been shared. As a result, the media

campaign relies mostly on electronic and social media together with SMS messaging. In addition, several public outreach activities such as the production of traditional media content, printed materials and purchasing broadcast airtime are limited. In-person and direct activities and engagement of stakeholders (CSOs, political parties, media, public employees) are now also halted because of the COVID-19 pandemic. IHEC organized some 30 public outreach seminars/workshops in the recent past. While virtual arrangements could be employed to partially overcome current limitations, IHEC representatives highlighted that IT-related technical problems such as bandwidth and connectivity hinder that option. Content development, production and dissemination for traditional media have been hampered by budget limitations.

As part of the electoral support project, terms of reference and a guidance note are being prepared to launch the small grants facility for civil society organizations (CSOs) engagement in civic and voter education, capacity building for candidates and specialized training on how to counter hate speech.

UN signs financing agreement with the European Union to support UN electoral assistance to Iraq

Baghdad, 12 April 2021 - The United Nations in Iraq welcomes the contribution of EUR 5.51 million from the European Union to a UN-led project to support capacity-building within the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC). The EU funding will also support deployment of UN electoral advisers as IHEC prepares for the October 2021 national elections.

“High voter turnout will be key in ensuring a parliament and government that are representative of all Iraqis,” said EU Ambassador Martin Huth. “By supporting the organisation of the elections, the EU hopes to build the

confidence among the Iraqi people in their elections and help IHEC establish a free, fair and inclusive electoral process that is deserving of their trust.” The European Union’s contribution to the UN assistance project comes in addition to funding from Germany, the Netherlands and France, bringing total contributions from the EU and its member states to USD 18.6 million.

On behalf of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) signed an agreement with the EU on 8 April to manage the financing and

administration of the project. The United Nations thanks the European Union for its contribution, which strengthens Iraq’s ability to hold free, fair and transparent elections in Iraq.



Papal visit to Iraq

Papal visit carries a message of healing for communities affected by ISIL, underscores Special Adviser Khan

Baghdad, 5 March 2021 – Special Adviser and Head of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da’esh/ISIL (UNITAD) Karim A. A. Khan QC welcomed the historic visit of His Holiness Pope Francis to Iraq, and the message it carries to all communities in Iraq who have severely suffered from the atrocities perpetrated by ISIL.

“The Pope’s visit to Iraq, his meetings with Iraqi religious leaders and the religious sites he is visiting carry a unifying message of peace and coexistence among all communities in Iraq, especially those who have suffered at the hands of ISIL from all faiths, including the Christian community,” said the Special Adviser. He added that “the fact that the Christians of Iraq will receive communion from the Holy Father in Iraq is a huge and momentous event. In particular, His Holiness’ visits to Mosul and Qaraqosh, and his prayer of suffrage for the victims of war at the Church square of Hosh al-Bieaa; one place that was ravaged by ISIL crimes, will obviously be a deeply personal moment for many of the Christian flock in Iraq. It will also underline that Iraq is enriched by people of all faiths - and from all ethnic groups - and that every life matters.”

The Special Adviser added that the pursuit of accountability in fair trials is crucial to achieving the healing and reconciliation that the Pope will call for. “Like the Yazidi, Shia, Sunni, Kaka’i, Shabak and Turkmen



communities, the Christians of Iraq suffered enormously during the period of Da’esh / ISIL. Justice is a right for all - and evidence based accountability is essential to guard against the danger of such crimes being repeated in the future.

Exactly one year ago, in March 2020, the religious leaders of the main faiths in Iraq came together and adopted an historic “ Interfaith Statement on Victims of ISIL”. This statement was facilitated by UNITAD together with the Office of the Special Adviser of the Secretary – General for the Prevention of Genocide. In it, leaders of the main faiths in Iraq underlined their full support to victims, survivors and families, and reiterated the importance of ensuring that those responsible for the crimes committed by Da’esh/ISIL

are held accountable.

In his recent Encyclical letter, “Fratelli Tutti, on Fraternity and Social Friendship“ the Holy Father underlined that “If a criminal has harmed me or a loved one, no one can forbid me from demanding justice and ensuring that this person – or anyone else – will not harm me, or others, again. This is entirely just; forgiveness does not forbid it but actually demands it.” Special Adviser Khan concluded that “People of all faiths, or of none, can unite behind these wise words as we collectively strive to foster a spirit of unity among various religions and communities in Iraq. Our joint commitment to promote justice, tolerance, and reconciliation is the most eloquent and effective way to combatting the legacy of ISIL.”

UNAMI considers the Pope's visit to be historic and of great importance for the country

New York, 5 March 2021 – At the Noon briefing the UN Spokesperson said: “Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, was present at the reception for Pope Francis this morning and will attend a Mass this weekend. The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) considers the Pope's visit to be historic and of great importance for the country. Karim Khan, the Head of the UN Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed

by Da'esh/ISIL (UNITAD), also welcomed the Pope's visit and the message it carries to all communities in Iraq who have suffered at the hands of Da'esh and other groups. Meanwhile, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) said the Pope's forthcoming visit to the city of Mosul carries an important message of support and hope for people who had suffered through a violent and oppressive occupation by violent extremists.



In Iraq, Pope spreads message of peace, religious tolerance and humanity's resilience



Baghdad, 7 March 2021 - Pope Francis' historic visit to northern Iraq to hold prayers at an ancient church destroyed by ISIL “sends a clear message to the world that harmony and cohesion between the followers of all religions is the only way for the advancement and progress of humanity,” the top UN culture official has said.

After arriving in Iraq on Friday, Pope Francis travelled over the weekend to Mosul and holy sites within the country's Christian heartland. On Sunday, according to media reports, the pontiff called for peace and prayed among ruined churches for the victims of the conflict with the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), which left thousands of civilians dead.

Audrey Azoulay, Director-General of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and Noura Al Kaabi, Minister of Culture and Youth of the United Arab

Emirates, welcomed the historic papal visit to Al Tahera Church, one of the sites of the UNESCO-led Revive the Spirit of Mosul initiative.

Iconic symbol at the crossroads of cultures

Al-Tahera, built in 1859 and opened in 1862, is an iconic symbol woven into the history of Mosul. The Church is in the heart of the old city, formerly defined by the Ottoman city walls on the west bank of the Tigris River, opposite ancient Nineveh. Its multiple altars, dining room and two sacristy rooms set it aside from other churches of the same period.

This past December, when the restoration project got under way in earnest, UNESCO Representative to Iraq, Paolo Fontani, said that “the rehabilitation of this church is important not only because of its value as cultural heritage, but also as a testimony to the diversity of the city, a proud crossroads of cultures and a

peaceful haven for different religious communities over the centuries.”

At that time, Minister Al Kaabi added that through the UAE's restorative efforts with UNESCO, the aim was not only to rebuild various places of worship, but “also to empower Moslawi youth by creating job opportunities, providing vocational and technical training, and enhancing the capabilities of craftsmen in the field of preservation of cultural heritage.”

Harmony and cohesion between religions

In the joint statement issued on Saturday, Minister Al Kaabi and Ms. Azoulay described the Pope's visit to Al-Tahera Church as sending a clear message to the world that harmony and cohesion between the followers of all religions is the only way for the advancement and progress of humanity, and the most effective means by which to address the increasing challenges facing the world.

The Minister and Director-General stressed the importance of the Pope's visit to the site of the project in spreading the message of peace and fraternity and highlighted the strength and resilience of humanity in countering the divisive message spread by the group responsible for destroying the Al Nouri Mosque, the Al Saa'a and Al Tahera Churches.

“The Pope's visit to the project site was a source of inspiration to those engaged in the rehabilitation efforts and provides strong impetus to efforts aimed at establishing peace and harmony in Iraq, the region and the world,” they stated.

By UN News.



Muscat, Oman, 1 March 2021 – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, was received today by the Foreign Minister of the Sultanate of Oman, Mr. Badr Albusaidi. They discussed the political and security situation in the region.

Photo courtesy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sultanate of Oman.

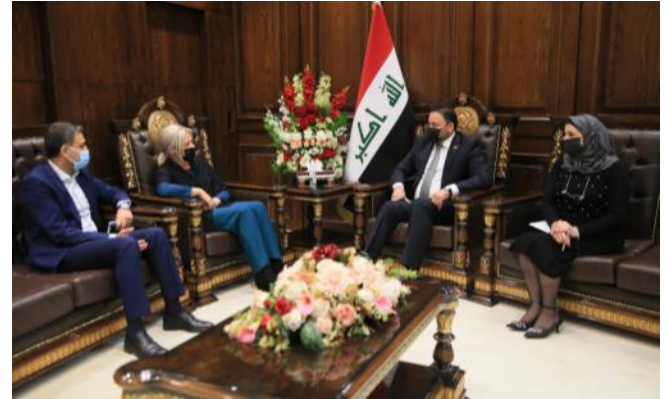


Muscat, Oman, 1 March 2021 – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, visited today The National Defence College (NDC) of Oman and gave a lecture within the framework of the general curricula for the eighth batch of the NDC. In her lecture, the SRSG highlighted the key regional and international issues and reviewed United Nations role in maintaining international peace and security. Photo courtesy of the National Defence College (NDC) of the Sultanate of Oman.



Baghdad, 10 March 2021 – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met today with the National Security Adviser, Mr. Qassem Al-Araji. They discussed current political and security situation in the country and region.

Photos courtesy of the Office of the National Security Adviser.



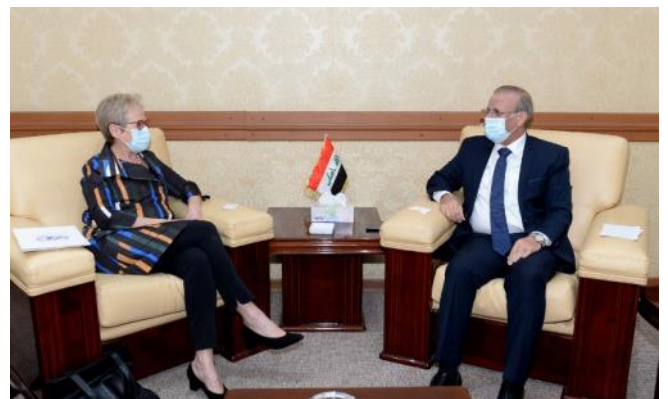
Baghdad, 11 March 2021 – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met today with the First Deputy Speaker of the Iraqi Council of Representatives, Mr. Hassan Karim Al-Kaabi. They discussed the political situation in the country, with special emphasis on the legislative preparations for the forthcoming early general elections.

Photo courtesy of Iraqi Council of Representatives.



Baghdad, 17 March 2021 – The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, Ms. Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir, met today with the Chairman of the Board of Commissioners of the Independent High Electoral Commission, Judge Jalil Adnan Khalaf. They discussed preparations for the forthcoming early national elections, including ways to secure timely voter registration, greater female participation and capacity building of IHEC staff.

Photo courtesy of IHEC.



Baghdad, 18 March 2021 – The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, Ms. Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir, met with the Undersecretary for Multilateral and Legal Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Qahtan Al Janabi. They discussed issues related to the work of UNAMI, cooperation between the two sides, outstanding issues in the bilateral relationship between Iraq and Kuwait and the upcoming elections.

Photo courtesy of Ministry of Foreign Affairs.



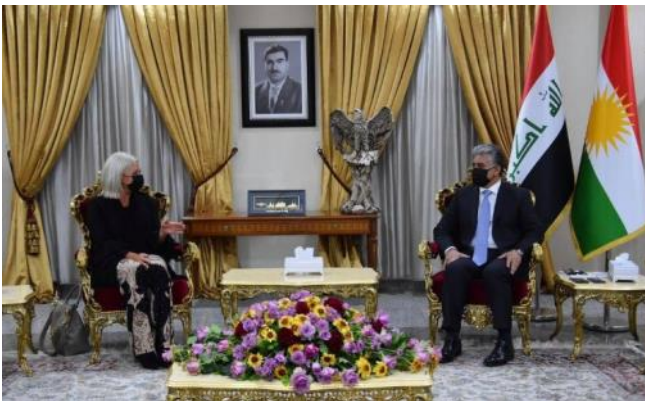
Baghdad, 28 March 2021 – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, attended today the meeting of the President of the Republic of Iraq, His Excellency Dr. Barham Salih, with the Chairmen and members of the Board of Commissioners of the Independent High Electoral Commission. Preparations for the forthcoming early general elections were discussed.

Photo courtesy of the Media Office of the Presidency.



Erbil, 4 April 2021 – Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met today with the Head of Foreign Affairs and Diplomacy Office of the Kurdistan Region President, Mr. Niyaz Barzani. They discussed the current political situation in the Region and Baghdad-Erbil relations.

Photo courtesy of the Office of the Kurdistan Region Presidency.



Erbil, 4 April 2021 – Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met with the Minister of Interior in the Kurdistan Regional Government, Mr. Réber Ahmed. They discussed the current political and security situation in the Region, Baghdad-Erbil relations and a dignified, voluntary return of IDPs.

Photo courtesy of the Ministry of Interior, KRG.



Erbil, 4 April 2021 – The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, Ms. Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir, met with the Head of Kurdistan Region Government’s Department of Foreign Relations, Minister Safeen Dizayee. They discussed the political situation in the Region.

Photo courtesy of DFR KRG.



Baghdad, 6 April 2021 - Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met today with the Governor of the Central Bank of Iraq, Mr. Mustafa Ghaleb. They discussed the current financial and economic situation in the country.

Photo courtesy of the Central Bank of Iraq.



Baghdad, 10 April 2021 – The Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Iraq, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met with the President of the Kurdistan Region, Mr. Nechirvan Barzani. During the meeting, which took place in the Iraqi capital, they discussed the latest political developments in Iraq, in particular the situation in the Kurdistan Region as well as Baghdad-Erbil relations.



Baghdad, 12 April 2021 – The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, Ingibjorg Solrun Gisladdottir, met today with a delegation from the “Iktidar Watan” political group led by former Youth and Sports Minister Abdul-Hussein Abtan. The meeting is part of UNAMI’s engagement with various interlocutors to explain the UN electoral support to the Iraqi Independent High Election Commission (IHEC).



Baghdad, 15 April 2021 – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met today with the National Security Advisor, Mr. Qassem Al Araj. They discussed the current security situation in the country, including the implementation of the Sinjar Agreement.

Photo courtesy of the Office of the National Security Advisor.



Baghdad, 16 April 2021 - The Speaker of the Council of Representatives, Mr. Mohammed al-Halboosi, received today the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, and the Special Adviser and the head of the Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da’esh/ISIL (UNITAD), Mr. Karim Khan.

They discussed developments in the work of the Investigation team into ISIS crimes and support for the Iraqi parliament to enact laws necessary to hold ISIS accountable for mass crimes and crimes against humanity.

Mr. Khan praised the efforts of the Iraqi Parliament to redress the victims and achieve justice through legislation, most recently by passing the Women Survivors Law .



Security

UNAMI on Twitter

Baghdad, 15 April 2021 - We strongly condemn bombing at crowded Baghdad market. Our sympathy goes to the

families of those affected, and we wish the injured speedy recovery. We call for the perpetrators to be identified and

brought to justice, and stress the need for unity in facing the violence.

UNAMI on Twitter

Baghdad, 15 April 2021 - Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert: "Last night's

events in the Kurdistan Region are another example of reckless attempts to inflame tensions and threaten Iraq's stability. We condemn these acts of

violence and urge the Federal and Kurdistan governments to act swiftly and in unison to prevent further escalation".

Participation of women in reconstruction and peacebuilding is a key element to reconciliation

Baghdad/Naples, 22 March 2021 - The Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General for Iraq and Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq (DSRSG/RC/HC), Ms. Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano, and Head of the Human Rights Office of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), Ms. Danielle Bell, participated today at a virtual workshop entitled “Gender and Protection of Civilians Perspectives in a Human Security Environment” organized by the Allied Joint Force

Command Naples of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). “Participation of women in reconstruction and peacebuilding is a key element to reconciliation and to the national action plan on 1325. The United Nations in Iraq is supporting the Government in implementing the commitments under the Women, Peace, and Security agenda which is intimately connected to Sustainable Development Goal 5 on women and girls’ empowerment”, said DSRSG/RC/HC Vojáčková-Sollorano.



Promoting women's economic empowerment through gender equality at the core of UN Women activities

Baghdad, 22 March 2021 – Baghdad Women Association (BWA), under the project “Women’s Leadership, Empowerment, Access & Protection (LEAP)” funded by the government of Japan and supported by UN Women, has provided psychosocial and legal services to IDP’s, refugees and the host community. BWA implemented “Cash for Work” activities targeting 40 women and girl for two months through their legal and counselling centers in Ramadi (Anbar). Women were divided into groups including sewing, cooking, teaching, rehabilitation and COVID-19 awareness raising. Women were happy with the training and added that the activities implemented enabled them to meet new people and improve their income and living conditions.

The Iraqi Women and the Future Organization (IOWF), UN Women’s partners under project “Promoting women's economic empowerment through gender equality” funded by the Women’s Peace and Humanitarian Fund held a virtual training workshop

in February 2021 for women, girls and unemployed graduates to enhance their skills in identifying and assessing risk and the mechanism of losses, emergencies, calamities, and violence. 120 Women and girls from Baghdad and Anbar participated.

Woman Leadership Institution (WLI), in partnership with UN Women, empowered women in Kirkuk and supported them in establishing their own businesses through Cash for Work

grants provided under the LEAP project funded by the Government of Japan. An electronic scope card payment system was used for the first time and facilitated providing Cash for work grants. The grants were distributed among 40 women who participated in a 60-day training aimed at developing the capacities and skills for women in managing small businesses. The activity was done jointly with WFP.



Empowering women and building their capacities in peace negotiations, peace building, conflict prevention highlighted at a conference in Baghdad

Baghdad, 4 April 2021 - Iraqi Minorities Council (IMC) today organized a conference under project “Women’s Voices for Peace and Conflict Prevention” funded by the Women’s Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF) in partnership with UN Women and the Department of Women Empowerment- the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers. The conference aimed at highlighting IMC’s work and achievements towards

empowering women and building their capacities in peace negotiations, peacebuilding, conflict prevention and knowledge of UNSCR 1325 as well as their efforts in supporting local women organizations to monitor early warning signals and respond to crises.

The conference was held in cooperation with Awan Organization for Human’s Rights and was attended by members from the civil society, Department of Women Empowerment, Ministry of

Interior, Iraqi parliament, Representatives from the Department of Local Women Empowerment, the Office of the Anbar, Basra and Nineveh Governorates, the Human Rights Commission, the Trustees of the Iraqi Media Network and the Ministry of Culture, journalists and UN Women.



Baghdad and Babylon Governorate ready to implement activities that support women's issues

Baghdad, 7 April 2021 - Babylon Coordination Center for Sawtuha organization held a meeting funded by the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF) in partnership with UN Women with the Women's Empowerment Department in Babylon Governorate, to discuss issues related to gender equality and women's participation in peace building process and the observations recorded by the working groups about the achievements of the Network in different regions of Babylon, which also covered women of different specialties.

In this regard, the governor's advisor for legal affairs, Khaled Al-Faihan, affirmed the governorate's readiness, through the Women's Empowerment Department and in cooperation with the Babylon Coordination for its Sawtuha, to implement activities that support women's issues, especially with regard to the health and economic side, which has a clear impact on the volume and quality of community participation and the important role played by the woman in promoting societal peace.

The meeting was closed with an agreement to hold an expanded symposium that deals with the health



situation and mechanisms to improve this sector to ensure a safe healthy environment for women.

Dr. Jaber al-Hamdani, director of performance evaluation in the governorate, Hussein al-Husseini, secretary of Babylon governor, Muhammad al-Awadi, director of the Babylon organizations office, Haydar Ibrahim, director of provincial media, Zainab al-Nu'mani, director of the Hein Al-Hayat Museum, and a group of female and male employees and employees in the governorate's office participated in the meeting.

Sawtuha organization held a meeting with the Women's Empowerment

Department in Baghdad Governorate to discuss issues related to gender equality and women's participation in peace building processes, with the support of UN Women in Iraq and the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund.

The Deputy Governor of Baghdad, Ali Ahmed Al-Ithawi, affirmed the willingness of the Women's Empowerment Department, in cooperation with Sawtuha, to implement activities that support women's issues, especially with regard to education, as it has a clear impact on the volume and quality of political participation, and the important role played by the woman in promoting societal peace.

Both parties discussed the observations, which are recorded by the working groups, about the achievements of the Network in different regions of Baghdad, which also covered women of different specialties.

Both parties also agreed to carry out joint activities that would deter gender-based violence and empower women to play an active role in peace building process.

Australia provides AUD 2 million to UNFPA-women and girls interventions in Iraq



Baghdad, 14 April 2021 - The Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) renewed its commitment to reproductive health and rights of women and girls, and prevention and response to gender-based violence in humanitarian settings. The project will support the work carried out by UNFPA with a AUD 2 million contribution.

Women and girls, including individuals with disabilities and survivors of

gender-based violence; and men and boys, as allies of the prevention and response to gender-based issues, will benefit from awareness and integrated gender-based violence and sexual and reproductive health services.

"Australia is pleased to continue our important partnership with UNFPA Iraq" said Ms Paula Ganly, the Australian Ambassador to Iraq. "Providing assistance for reproductive health needs and rights of women and girls and protection from gender-based

violence is essential to ensuring their full and equal participation in society." Acknowledging the new funding, Dr Rita Columbia, UNFPA Representative to Iraq, said: "I extend our sincere gratitude to the longstanding partnership with DFAT. This generous contribution will help women and girls to have easier access to quality gender-based violence and sexual and reproductive health services, especially to women and girls with disabilities."

"Today, due to the uncertainty environment caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, it is more important than ever to work hand-in-hand to help the most vulnerable people stay healthy and live in a violence-free environment," she reiterated.

Australia is a strong advocate for women and girls' protection and reproductive rights. Since 2014, Australia has contributed AUD 18.2 million to UNFPA programming in Iraq, helping refugees, internally displaced people, people with disabilities, host communities and returnees.



Baghdad, 13 April 2021 - The United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Ms. Irena Vojackova-Sollorano, and UNFPA Representative to Iraq, Dr Rita Columbia, met today the Ambassador of Finland in Iraq, H.E. Vesa Häkkinen.

Discussions focused on women and girls, especially those survivors of gender-based violence, and how to best provide much-needed support and assistance, in particular, that related to mental health and psychosocial support.

Furthermore, they discussed the situation of persons with disabilities, with a focus on the needs of women of reproductive age with disabilities and the importance of scaling up the interventions targeting them.



Baghdad, 15 April 2021 - UNFPA Representative, Dr Rita Columbia, met with the Japanese Ambassador to Iraq, HE Suzuki Kotaro, at the Embassy of Japan in Iraq.

Dr Columbia thanked HE Kotaro for the recent top-up from Japan to UNFPA's life-saving, survivor-centred, multi-sectoral gender-based violence and sexual reproductive health services in Baghdad, Salahuddin, Anbar, and Nineveh governorates of Iraq.

The discussions also focused on the best means to reach the most vulnerable across Iraq with GBV prevention programming.

A unique message of tolerance was spread by religious leaders announcing that customs and traditions should support women and not suppress them

Baghdad, 14 April 2021 - Iraqi Al-Firdaws Society (IFS) held celebrations this year with tribal sheikhs and religious people in rural areas urging them to support gender equality and to combat gender based violence. A unique message of tolerance was spread by religious leaders announcing that customs and traditions should support women and not suppress them. IFS also celebrated with women and girls in "Ahwar" north of Basra empowering them to overcome the challenges they face such as child marriage and dropping out of school. Youth were also involved in the celebrations where a football game was held which aimed at reflecting the role of youth in peacebuilding and peaceful coexistence. Youth wore orange as a symbol to

support International Women's day and combat violence. Children participated in the celebrations by drawing images

that aimed at breaking the stereotypes of women. These activities were supported by UN Women.



Training on guiding principles of gender-based violence case management held in Baghdad

Baghdad, 15 April 2021 - UNFPA conducted last week a workshop for 10 judges specialized in domestic violence and 15 officers from the Family Protection Unit at the Ministry of Interior on the guiding principles of gender-based violence case management, the existing referral mechanism, as well as the gaps and needs of the current mechanism.

The attendees had the opportunity to exchange expertise and discuss suggestions for strengthening the legal and protection system for GBV survivors and its gaps.

The workshop was funded by the Embassy of Sweden in Baghdad (Sida - Styrelsen för Internationellt Utvecklingssamarbete) and Embassy of Japan in Iraq.



Ahlam: “This delivery room brings peace of mind for expectant women”

Baghdad, 19 April 2021 - “A couple of weeks ago, I delivered my baby girl at the Qaim delivery room. I couldn’t be more thankful that this delivery room was opened: the closest hospital is more than 300 km away. The distance and checkpoints mean that my baby and myself could be faced with all kinds of risks on the way,” said Ahlam, 36. “This delivery room brings peace of mind for expectant women and takes

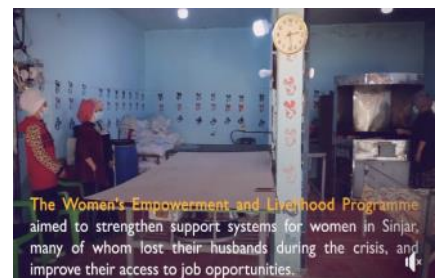
some of the delivery-related worries,” she added. The UNFPA delivery room in Al-Qaim, in Anbar is supported by the EU Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid - ECHO. ECHO supports four delivery rooms, four reproductive health clinics and three mobile clinics across Iraq in partnership with UNFPA Iraq.



Empowering women to establish their own businesses

Sinjar, 20 April 2021 - As part of efforts to support the Yazidi population, IOM Iraq, Nadia’s Initiative and Mission East, introduced a unique program to address the livelihood and protection concerns of women in Sinjar. The program successfully empowered nearly 60 women to establish their own businesses through the provision of trainings, cash grants and a range of

psychosocial support services. The project also provided regular mentoring and coaching sessions to enhance confidence, contribute to community building, and foster economic independence. Supported by Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan and implemented by Nadia's Initiative and Mission Øst.



Raising awareness on the importance of staying motivated during difficult times and having a positive attitude towards conflict prevention and peacebuilding

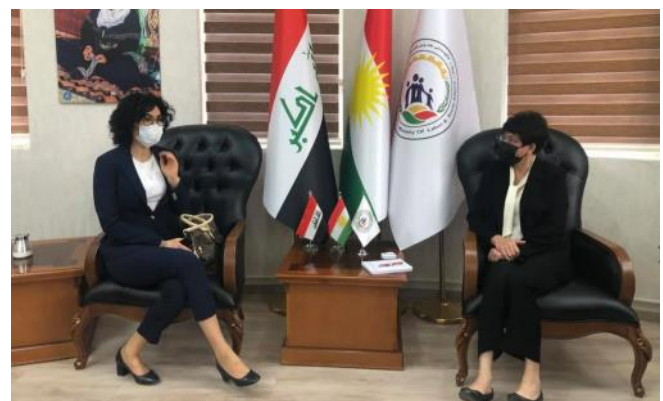
Duhok, 20 April 2021 - Women’s Empowerment for Peacebuilding Organization (WEPO) conducted 2 public seminars for women and girls in Duhok aimed at raising awareness on the importance of staying motivated during difficult times and having a positive attitude towards conflict prevention and peacebuilding. 31 women and girls attended. This activity was done under project “Women’s

meaningful participation in conflict prevention through formation of women coalition of women’s CSOs and NGOs” funded by WPHF and in partnership with UN Women. Under the same project, WEPO also conducted 6 discussion sessions in Duhok, Ninawa, for humanitarian aid workers, teachers, government employees and community leaders to raise awareness on the challenges faced

by women in politics and support women’s political participation and engagement in decision making processes.



Erbil, 25 April 2021 - UNFPA Representative in Iraq, Dr Rita Columbia and the Director-General of the General Directorate of Combatting Violence against Women (GDCVAW), Kurdo Omer, discussed the Kurdistan response to gender-based violence and the establishment of a unified database to ensure evidence and data-based interventions to end Gender Based Violence (GBV). The 119 helpline, supported by UNFPA with funds from Canada in Iraq and the European Regional Development and Protection Programme (RDPP II) for Lebanon, Jordan, and Iraq responded to 8,000 cases of GBV in 2020.



Erbil, 26 April 2021 - UNFPA representative to Iraq, Dr Rita Columbia met today with Minister of labour and social affairs, Kwestan Mohammed, where they discussed the situation of the women shelters in Kurdistan Region and the ways to improve their conditions and the services provided to women seeking a safe haven in the shelter in Erbil. Prior to the meeting at Ministry of labour and social affairs, Dr Columbia visited the women shelter in Erbil.



Erbil, 27 April 2021 - UNFPA representative to Iraq, Dr Rita Columbia, toured the Erbil youth centre with the Director General and Deputy Director General of the youth directorate!

With the DG, Dr Columbia discussed the potential of youth in the Kurdistan Region, the partnership with the Ministry of Culture and Youth and how to best put it in the service and empowerment of young people.



Duhok, 27 April 2021 - UNFPA Representative, Dr Rita Columbia, visited today the survivor centre for Yazidi women in Duhok governorate, where she met with the centre managers, social workers and survivors. During her visit, Dr Columbia discussed in details the needs of Yazidi survivors and GBV survivors and how to improve the services they receive at the centre. The exchanges focused on a more family-inclusive and reintegration approach to ensure no one is left behind. The survivor centre is supported by UNFPA with funding from Canada in Iraq, Sida - Styrelsen for Internationellt Utvecklingssamarbete, and The European Regional Development and Protection Programme for Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq (RDPP II).

International Women’s Day

The UN Special Representative in Iraq Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert on International Women’s Day 2021: “Strong women make a strong society”

Baghdad, 8 March 2021 - In celebrating International Women’s Day every year, we recognize that peace, social progress, and the full enjoyment of fundamental rights and freedoms can only be achieved with the active participation, empowerment and equality of women. This year’s theme “Women in leadership: Achieving an equal future in a COVID-19 world,” highlights the tremendous efforts by women and girls around the world in shaping a more equal future and recovery from the pandemic while bringing attention to the gaps that remain. In Iraq, women are increasingly at the forefront of important struggles, from COVID-19 to equal rights, justice and accountability. Strong women make a strong society. Greater political participation, including in elections, empowers women to reach their full potential,

leading their communities to peace and prosperity. All of us – each from his or her position as leaders, activists or citizens, women and men - have the responsibility to eliminate disparities and achieve an equal future for all. A solid, post-

pandemic recovery requires the concerted efforts of all, with the free voices of women and girls heard loud and clear. On behalf of the United Nations family in Iraq I wish you a happy International Women’s Day!



UNITAD salutes brave women

Baghdad, 8 March 2021 - On International Women’s Day, Special Adviser Karim A. A. Khan QC and

UNITAD salute the brave women who have played a crucial role in uncovering ISIL crimes, as well as women

everywhere who work tirelessly in the pursuit of justice and accountability.

International Women's Day celebrated in Iraq under the theme "Participation of Women as a Guarantee for Peace and Stability"

Baghdad, 8 March 2021 – The United Nations family in Iraq joined the Women's Empowerment Directorate under the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers in marking International Women's Day. The virtual event was held under the national theme "Participation of Women as a Guarantee for Peace and Stability".

Among the speakers were Dr. Hamid al-Ghazi, Secretary-General of the Council of Ministers; Dr. Yossra Mohsen, Director-General of the Women Empowerment Directorate; Dr. Khazand Ahmed, Secretary-General of the High Council for Women Affairs in the Kurdistan Regional Government; Ms. Maysoun al-Saidi, Head of the Women, Family and Children parliamentary committee; and Ms. Hana Edwar and Dr. Nebras al-Mamouri representing civil society. Participation also included representatives of civil society organizations from different governorates, the international community and UN entities in Iraq. Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator, Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano, delivered a speech on behalf of the United Nations in Iraq, outlining the efforts and activities undertaken by the various UN entities in support of women issues in Iraq.

The DSRSG/RC/HC for Iraq saluted the women in Iraq for their vital role in fighting the COVID-19 pandemic, as frontline healthcare workers and on the homefront. She welcomed the Iraqi parliament's adoption on 1 March of the Yazidi female survivors law and the government's endorsement of the second National Action Plan on 1325 last December. Ms. Vojáčková-Sollorano pledged continued UN support to the women of Iraq and the government in implementing the commitments under the women, peace, and security agenda as well as issues that relate to the Sustainable Development Goal 5 on women and girls' empowerment. Here is the text of the remarks by the DSRSG Vojáčková-Sollorano Irena at this event:

Dr. Hamid al- Ghizly, Secretary-General, General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers
Distinguished Civil Society Representatives,



Distinguished Guests and Panellists, Colleagues in the United Nations family,

I thank you for extending an invitation to the United Nations to be part of this year's International Women's Day commemoration under the national theme 'Women's Participation is a Guarantee for Peace and Stability.

At this point, I wish to welcome the Iraqi Parliament's adoption of the Yazidi Female Survivors Law on 1 March. This is a major step in addressing the needs of survivors of atrocities that include reparations and proof of Iraq's commitment to address the crimes they endured under the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). The enactment of this law will contribute to sustainable peace and security for the communities ravaged by the conflict and especially by related sexual violence.

This year's commemoration of International Women's Day is overshadowed by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has, in every aspect, taken a toll on families and communities in Iraq as well as globally. Among other negative effects, the pandemic has also impacted women's ability to access much needed services and specifically needed support in case of gender-based violence and its documentation. Gender-based violence impacts women and men, and results in isolation.

Today we honor the women in Iraq for their vital role in fighting the COVID-19 pandemic and its gendered effects in the healthcare

sector, public sphere, and at home. In doing so, their vision and leadership has not gone unnoticed. We stand in solidarity with all women and girls in Iraq and celebrate their many achievements in the advancement of women's human rights and gender equality, whilst recognizing that a lot still remains to be done.

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in Iraq, the UN has collaborated with female Iraqi artists, graphic designers, rappers and leaders of youth groups to disseminate vital health protection messages across Iraq about preventing transmission of COVID-19, as well as highlighting human rights dimensions of COVID-19, including gender-based violence and access to education. UN engagement has furthermore focused on developing responsive measures addressing the rights of women and girls in crises and recovery. To this end, a platform consisting of a body of eleven women activists and participants from public institutions has been formed to develop innovative solutions in addressing crises from a gender perspective.

Various commemorative activities supported by the UN will be held in Baghdad, Erbil, Basra, Dohuk, Anbar and Sulaymaniyah with government partners, civil society organizations and religious leaders. As the national theme today states, the participation of Iraqi women is a key factor in contributing towards sustainable peace and stability. Women, alongside men, shall make their voices heard and access opportunities in all spheres of life- in politics, in

IWD celebrated in Iraq under the theme “Participation of Women as a Guarantee for Peace and Stability” (continued)

employment, in rebuilding societies and in the economy.

As the UN, we are pleased that the second National Action Plan on 1325 was launched last December. Supported by the UN, key emphasis has been on supporting national efforts to promote women's engagement in decision making. Some efforts have been undertaken to promote women's participation, particularly at the community level. The UN, for example, has established women peace committees in governorates previously under ISIL control and three “Women for Peace” groups in Anbar, Diyala, and Ninewa governorates were formed with a total of 72 members. They were introduced to social innovation and entrepreneurship models and engaged in a participant-led process using conflict analysis and innovation principles to design solutions within their communities. Initiatives in 2020 included a release of a high-profile web series on communal peace and social cohesion, launch of a Women's Book Club, and various campaigns combating gender-based violence and hate speech. In 2021, the UN launched the Iraqi Coalition on Youth, Peace, and Security where young women are offered a platform to engage in decision-making for peace and reconciliation process.

In addition, in Ninewa, the UN continues to operate with mixed-sex mine clearance teams to normalize women participation in the traditional male dominated peace and security sector. One of the core pillars of the UN in the peace and security sector, is its work within the Ministry of Interior and the goal of promoting women participation and providing equal employment opportunities for women. In so doing, the UN took the approach of delivering technical trainings for



Iraqi female police officers from various governorates in first response to explosive hazards. Furthermore, a detailed gender assessment conducted for 28 local police stations across Anbar, Baghdad, Basra, and Ninewa was completed in 2020 focusing on access to local police stations and their services for women, girls, and youth from minority groups. The data from this assessment will be used to improve conditions on the ground.

The achievement of women's full participation in all areas of life is only possible when women's rights and freedoms are protected and promoted from the family level to the public sphere. To this end, the UN family has collectively undertaken and continues to undertake efforts to urge the passing of the anti-domestic violence bill including as part of an integrated response to address domestic violence cases which spiked during the COVID-19 pandemic. Addressing this worrying trend, the UN supports 70 women safe spaces where they offer cases management, recreational activities, awareness sessions as well as psychosocial support. In Dohuk, the UN expanded the works of the Women and Girls Health and Treatment Centre, under the management of the Duhok Directorate of Health. The centre provides much-needed medical and psychosocial assistance to survivors of

sexual violence, especially to Yazidi women and focuses on their reintegration in their communities.

Iraqi women have expressed their desires to be better represented in governance and have voiced their demands as seen in public protests across the country. As the UN, we will continue to support the Government of Iraq and relevant entities to advance women's political and electoral participation. Last year, the UN, in collaboration with the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia and the Iraq Foundation, a local NGO, conducted research on the needs and challenges of Iraqi women entering politics. The findings of the research confirm that Iraqi women entering politics and those already in public office at the national and subnational levels continue to face financial, socio-cultural, and institutional challenges, hindering their development as effective leaders. Collectively, we should all work together to remove these challenges.

Lastly, speaking on behalf of the UN family in Iraq, I reiterate our continued support to the Government of Iraq not only in implementing the commitments under the women, peace, and security agenda but also those that relate to the Sustainable Development Goal 5 on women and girls' empowerment.

IWD marked at a primary school in Baghdad

Baghdad, 10 March 2021 - For International Women's Day, children at primary school in Thi-Qar created beautiful art to thank their moms. The children all lost their dads. Their moms are single parents and widows. Though schools are closed and school feeding paused, the World Food Programme continues to support children remotely. WFP Iraq School Feeding field staff, Huda, also works to strengthen the capacity of directorates of education. Together with Al Chibaysh

headteachers, Huda organized a special art activity for children via the remote

learning group. They are proud of their moms.



Kurdistan High Council of Women Affairs, UN Women, UNFPA celebrate International Women's Day

Erbil, 14 March 2021 – The High Council of Women Affairs in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, in partnership with UN Women and UNFPA, renewed its commitment to the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda during the International Women's Day celebration in Erbil.

Under the theme "Women in leadership: Achieving an equal future in a COVID-19 world", the High Council, UNWomen and UNFPA rewarded successful women activists and female leaders from the health, social, education and cultural sectors for their outstanding achievements in supporting communities during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The event was attended by Dr Khanzad Ahmed, Secretary-General of the High Council of Women Affairs and Mr Omeed Khoshnaw, the Governor of Erbil with representatives from UN Women and UNFPA and members of the civil society.

In her opening speech, Dr Khanzad shed light on the role of women, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic and in the upcoming elections. She stressed on the significant role they play in strengthening women political participation in the Kurdistan Region.



The Secretary-General thanked the United Nations Agencies, the NGO's and the civil society for their work aimed at empowering women to contribute further to advancing the Women, Peace and Security agenda in Iraq.

For this part, Mr Khoshnaw highlighted the urgent need to empower women economically and reduce violence against women, especially in the context of the pandemic that increased women's vulnerabilities. He expressed gratitude to all women who are working hard to

support their families and their community on a daily basis.

UN Women and UNFPA reaffirmed their commitment to end gender-based violence, including harmful practices that hinder women development by increasing collaboration with women-led civil society organizations across Iraq, the Federal Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government, as well as by enhancing women's political engagement and supporting their meaningful contribution in decision making at all levels and across all sectors.

Iraqi women entering politics and those already in public office continue to face socio-cultural, financial, and institutional challenges hindering them from being effective leaders



Baghdad, 15 March 2021 - To mark the International Women's Day, the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and the Free Iraq Foundation jointly hosted an interactive virtual discussion with senior Iraqi leadership, policymakers, MPs, members of the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC), civil

society and the international community to discuss the findings and recommendations of the research undertaken in 2020 on needs and challenges facing Iraqi women entering politics.

Among speakers were Mr. Hasan Al-Kaabi, First Deputy Speaker of the Council of Representatives, Ms.

Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, Ambassador Rend al-Rahim, President of the Iraq Foundation, Dr. Yossra Kareem Mohsen, Acting Director-General of the Women Empowerment Directorate, General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers, and Dr. Ahlam Adnan al-Jabiri, Commissioner, Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) (former Chief Electoral Officer).

Findings of the study confirm that Iraqi women entering politics and those already in public office at national and sub-national levels continue to face socio-cultural, financial, and institutional challenges hindering them from being effective leaders. On a positive note, the findings demonstrate that women on their own are capable of winning elections through various strategies and provide

Iraqi women entering politics and those already in public office continue to face socio-cultural... (continued)

recommendations for key actors on how to increase women's participation. A policy paper on strengthening women's participation in politics was issued following the study findings.

Attendees agreed that to have fair and democratic elections, the multiple challenges hindering Iraqi women's full and active participation require joint action by key actors- government, civil society, political parties through various strategies including a change of negative stereotypes and promoting an environment free of violence against female candidates. Attendees welcomed the recent establishment of a Supreme Committee on Promoting Women's Participation in the upcoming elections. Here is the text of the remarks made by DSRSG Sólrún Gísladóttir at this event: His Excellency, Hassan al- Ka'abi, First Deputy Speaker, Council of Representatives

Commissioner Ahlam al- Jabiri, Independent High Electoral Commission,

Dr. Yossra Kareem Mohsen, Acting Director-General, Women Empowerment Directorate

Ambassador Rend al-Rahim, President of the Iraq Foundation,

Honourable Members of Parliament, Civil society representatives,

Colleagues from the UN family and members of the international community,

Distinguished guests, ladies, and gentlemen,

It gives me a great pleasure to have the honor, as my first official duty as a Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General, to welcome you to this webinar to mark International Women's Day. Even more so as I was a politician in my home country for a quarter of a century and witnessed and contributed to a big leap in women's political participation during that time. The global theme for this year is 'Women in Leadership: Achieving an Equal Future in a COVID-19 World' but at the same time as we look towards women's role in the future, we also honor Iraqi women in the past and present and recognize their achievements in different spheres of society. We honor their continued efforts towards improving the lives of their families, promoting community reconciliation, advocating for a more equal and just society and for their vital role in fighting the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the context of Iraq, this year's global theme is very relevant given that early elections are planned to take place on



10 October. Women's participation in these elections is expected to be affected by two different factors as on one hand side the COVID-19 pandemic will have an impact and on the other side women's increased activism will influence their participation. Younger women drawn from civil society activism -including the protest movement - are expected to participate and run for public office for the first time under new political parties and alliances and others as independent candidates.

The upcoming national elections offer an important opportunity to promote women's participation in public life through collective efforts and targeted actions. The research study conducted by UNAMI in cooperation with the Economic and Social Commission of Western Asia (ESCWA) and the Free Iraq Foundation will be the main reference in our discussion today, but it provides a compelling picture of the challenge's women encounter when entering the political stage.

The findings of our research study confirm that violence against women with aspirations to enter politics is a serious problem and comes in various forms. Defamation on social media platforms remains a major obstacle to enabling women's participation and therefore is also a major hurdle on the road that leads to genuine democracy and effective governance.

On a positive note, the findings demonstrate that women are more than capable of winning in genuine competitive politics and all they need is to be afforded more opportunities on an equal and level-playing field.

We therefore welcome the recent establishment of the supreme committee on monitoring women's participation in the elections. The committee's functions include examining issues of violence against

female candidates as a key element which limits Iraqi women's full and equal participation in the electoral process.

The old political motto "Nothing about us without us" applies to women's political participation. Consultations with Iraqi women from all walks of life is paramount, including greater engagement with women with disabilities. In this context, it is important to understand their expectations and needs ahead of the elections with the aim to remove obstacles that could prevent their participation in the electoral process.

UNAMI's Electoral Assistance Office, in the run-up to the elections, will be engaging with Iraqis civil society groups along with the Independent High Electoral Commission to promote a gender-responsive electoral process including by providing targeted civic and voter education for female voters. It will also be providing a specialized training for media and political parties on how to counter hate speech and raise awareness on discriminatory customs and practices against female political activists and candidates.

Additionally, we further support the supreme committee's capacity-building programmes on promoting women's electoral participation and we – the UN family, stand ready to provide assistance in line with our mandate.

Finally, I hope that the discussion on the findings of the research study and proposed recommendations to advance women's participation will compel us all to work together and do more to promote women's representation and participation in public life. Without women's empowerment and full participation in decision making a society is like a bird with a broken wing – it will not fly. Let's join forces and do our utmost to ensure that Iraq will fly. I wish you a fruitful discussion.

OHCHR MENA and UNAMI HRO host virtual event to mark International Women's Day



Arab Region, 23-24 March 2021 – The role of women human rights defenders, and female leadership in the fight against COVID-19 was at the centre of discussions at a virtual event to mark International Women's Day, organized by the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Regional Office for the Middle East and North Africa, with

participation of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq's Human Rights Office (UNAMI HRO). The two-day event brought together 29 participants from across the Arab region who shared their experiences and perspectives on the impact of COVID-19 on the protection and promotion of women's rights, the work of women human rights defenders, and

women across the region. UNAMI HRO highlighted both the vital role of Iraqi women in the fight against COVID-19 as members of the health care sector, public sphere and at home, and also the need to criminalize domestic violence. Throughout the pandemic, in collaboration with young female Iraqi artists and volunteers, UNAMI HRO conducted a campaign using graphic illustrations, murals, posters and postcards disseminated in person and on social media to highlight the adverse human rights impact of COVID-19 and the need to follow instructions of health authorities. COVID-19 and its consequences, including increased isolation and marginalization, has focused attention on the pandemic of domestic violence in Iraq and the need for survivors to be protected by law. In 2020, more domestic violence cases were reported to the Family Protection Unit of the Iraqi Police than in 2019. In order to encourage the ongoing debate in Iraq on criminalizing domestic violence, formalising an effective support system for survivors, and holding perpetrators accountable for crimes committed inside the home, UNAMI HRO launched the short film *Breaking the Silence*.

IWD celebrated in Basra and Kirkuk



Basra/Kirkuk, 23 March 2021 - IOM Iraq was proud to support the community forums in Al-Zubair and Shatt Al-Arab districts, Basra Governorate, with continued celebrations in honor of International Women's Day. The events were attended by

community forum members and local NGO representatives, and covered by local media channels. Poems and success stories were recited by performers who are also female heads of household; they highlighted the resilience of women in Basra and the challenges they face, especially during

the COVID-19 health crisis. These activities are supported by the European Union in Iraq.

IOM also ran an International Woman's Day event in Zab, Kirkuk, with community members, focused on raising awareness and strengthening the role of women in their communities as they continue peacebuilding efforts to rebuild from and address the legacy of ISIL crimes.

The event was held in coordination with the Directorate of Youth in Kirkuk and the Iraq Ministry of Youth and Sport and was funded by New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

As a part of ongoing social cohesion and peacebuilding programming in Kirkuk center, IOM held an International Women's Day in March to highlight the role of women with disabilities in their communities by sharing success stories and providing life skills trainings to bolster participants' abilities to overcome obstacles and increase their resilience to conflict and stress.

This activity is funded by USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance

Women of Habbaniyah come together to celebrate their resilience



Habbaniyah, Anbar, 25 March 2021

Women from all walks of life, including those who were recently employed at a cash for work project, members of the Women for Peace Group and key government representatives were present at the event to mark International Women's Day.

"I am confident that I can earn an

income to support my family. I look forward to finding long term income solutions for my family," says Salima Waid, former cash for work employee. She was supported through the UNDP's Funding Facility for Stabilization.

"Women can be great advocates of peace. We need to make sure that women are represented in all

departments," said Entisar Ali al-Jubouri, Head of women's empowerment department in Anbar province. She spoke at the IWD2021 event hosted by UNDP.

"IWD2021 is especially important for Iraqi women who have faced pressure and violence due to their suffering during conflict. We all need to motivate women to support rebuilding the country," said Kawthar Almohammed, Anbar youth for peace group.

Today's celebration of International Women's Day in Habbaniyah, Anbar, was attended by the Anbar Women for Peace Group supported by UNDP Iraq thanks to support from Denmark. The women shared words of hope and their local initiatives to build peace.

The venue of today's event is 1 of 4 pilot areas for UNDP Iraq's Community-based Reconciliation & Reintegration Project. The recent peace agreement signed in Habbaniyah Anbar allows the return of 524 families perceived as being affiliated with ISIL, encouraging unity and cohesion in Iraq.

Ahwari women, the beating heart of the Iraqi marshes

Baghdad, 8 March 2021 - Against increasingly difficult challenges the Iraqi marshland population is facing, including poverty, shortage of essential services like drinking water and electricity, and the need for health and educational facilities, climate change in the region constitutes a threat and an additional burden on the population and their livelihoods.

Like men, marshland women go about their daily work to cut and collect reeds as fodder for their buffalos, prepare milk and dairy products, herd the cattle, and look after their children and family needs. The daily activities of marshland women are made more difficult under the extreme weather conditions in Iraq. Iraqi women in the marshland region are the first to suffer from water shortage caused by climatic changes and temperature rises, as the dry weather impacts buffalo herding, causing the animals to look for water sources farther afield.

"Our livelihood depends on buffalo breeding from which we sell milk and dairy products," Says Um Qasim, mother of 11 children from the Hawizeh Marshes. "Our livestock drink from the marshland water, and in drought conditions we are compelled to provide water from other sources further afield." Um Issa, who lives with her ten children in a modest house built of mud and reed in the Hawizeh Marshes, paints a bleak description of the negative impact of



drought and climate change. "When the marshland dries up, we nearly starve because droughts affect humans and animals alike. Men leave the marshland for the cities and seek other jobs in the police force or the army, leaving their families in sordid poverty and hunger, which forces us to shoulder greater responsibilities to support our families."

As part of efforts to address the effects of climate change in Iraq, UNDP in partnership with the Iraqi Ministry of Health and Environment and in cooperation with the Maysan Governorate, is engaged in SDG Climate Facility project: Climate Action for Human Security project in Al Hwaizeh Marshlands with the support of the Regional Bureau for Arab States (RBAS) and funded by the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA).

This national project aims to support the

marshland communities against threats caused by climate change such as recurrent droughts. These dangers are considered a threat multiplier to the local population and a source of escalating poverty rates and cause of migration due to water scarcity and deterioration of the ecological system, which adversely affects livelihoods.

The project has provided innovative solutions to supply drinking water to the most vulnerable areas of the Hawizeh Marshes through installation of solar-powered water treatment plants. It also aims to diversify sources of livelihood through eco-tourism development projects that provide employment opportunities for men and women. Eco-tourism contributes to diversifying household income and provides additional sources of livelihood for the local communities to increase their resilience and reduce migration.

“Daesh killed my dreams and my family's plan - ‘FAO-EU’ revived them!”



Baghdad, 8 March 2021 - “Everyone in Iraq loves Al-Qimar, Iraq’s signature soft cheese cream and other local traditional dairy products, like butter, ghee (dohn Horr), laban, guishwa and varieties of white cheeses.

Yet few realize that the dairy farmers who produce the milk and such products are mainly rural women, considered the most vulnerable segment in Iraqi society and who received little attention in the past. In addition, female dairy producers in Nineveh Governorate in Iraq still suffer from the physical and moral impacts of conflict.

Within the framework of post-crisis development efforts for rebuilding agricultural livelihoods, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) is empowering rural women and reviving hope to returnees in Iraq through an EU-funded project with targeted interventions to improve value chains and revitalize Iraq’s high value crop/livestock systems and agri-food based micro-industries.

Women dairy producers in the Governorate of Nineveh, the “breadbasket” of Iraq, struggle to recover from conflict. “They gave us hours to leave,” said Dhuhaa Najm Shit, one of the many women dairy producers forced to leave their homes, farms and dreams due to conflict caused by ISIL between 2014 and 2017 in Iraq.

The Nineveh Governorate produces most of the country’s grain, including 20-30% of Iraq’s wheat, and is the major reservoir of livestock in Iraq, mainly of Awassi sheep production for dairy as well as lamb production. Between 2014 and 2017, the ISIL occupation of Mosul and large swathes

of Nineveh territory between 2014 and 2017 displaced over one million people, mainly from rural areas, and severely damaged the agriculture sector.

“They came back and threatened us with weapons if we didn’t go out. My husband’s justifications did not help them, and after their insistence, we went out of the house, heading me, my children, and my husband’s parents to (his brother’s) house, which is not far from our home, and my husband stayed near the buffalo shed watching what happened. Then they broke the barn door to enter a large cannon, and set it up near the forage shed,” recalls Dhuhaa Najm Shit in a severe tone of sadness and tears nearly bursting from her eyes.

Dhuhaa Najm Shit and her family, are just one of many rural households relying on milk production as their main source of income and must now rebuild all that they have lost due to conflict. She smiles as she describes how life was before, “My life...between housework and raising buffaloes in the barn, it had a taste of sweetness.”

Milk production, mainly from Awassi sheep and buffalo, is one of the main rural activity in the area. Women play a key role in processing home-traditional dairy products, like butter, ghee (dohn Horr), laban, Al-Qimar (Iraqi cream), guishwa and varieties of white cheeses. There is high demand for traditional dairy products made from local fresh milk and the processing and marketing of traditional dairy products is often main source of income for vulnerable dairy producers, in particular rural women.

To overcome these challenges, FAO and the EU working with rural dairy producers to unlock the opportunities

that the livestock and traditional home-processing dairy products represent to both empower women and restore livelihoods, while revitalizing dairy production in the agri-food sector.

When asked about her experience working with FAO and Iraq’s Ministry of Agriculture, Dhuhaa Najm Shit says, “The hope came that revived our dream that had haunted us for many years, hope came one morning knocking on our door. These people learned about our story. They learned about what happened to us in those old days, so they decided to help us, and to revive our dream by supporting the buffaloes with green fodder grown on land near the city of Mosul. Because buffaloes eat green fodder, more milk is produced. The project is supporting us with needed dairy equipment to help us convert all milk into a product Al-Qimar and yoghurt instead of selling raw milk. They surprised us by achieving my dream by starting rehabilitation of our modest kitchen into a dairy production plant inside my house, which will shorten the time, and the production will be healthier and more productive than before.”

Dhuhaa Najm Shit is just one of 2000 women will benefit from interventions to support improved traditional processed dairy / Agro-Food products with stainless steel dairy equipment for milk handling, storage, processing and marketing. Other activities include the rehabilitation of 35 small / medium milk collection, processing and marketing units. Capacity building and technical assistance will go side-by-side with the provision of appropriate inputs and supplies. The potential for meaningful results is not only in the improved production of traditional dairy, but also in creating job opportunities at village level and providing better quality products to consumers

At the conclusion of the conversation Dhuhaa Najm Shit told us that ISIL, “stole our dreams by seizing the house and the barn, while FAO-EU and Nineveh MoA extension staff have revived our dreams, which has become a tangible reality that will correct the march of reality for the march of livestock in our cities in particular, and Iraq in general.”

Narrated by: Bahjet Warsoun Rahou (Media services MOA Nineveh Directorate) and Dr. Chedly Kayouli, FAO International Livestock Expert

Dribbling on in a COVID-19 world; Zhima, an Iraqi female basketball academy, grooms players and female role models

Erbil, 8 March 2021 – A civic organization geared towards developing sports in the Kurdistan Region is using basketball as a tool to groom young girls for leadership roles, and not even the Coronavirus pandemic is stopping them.

– Building an equal community through sport –

This kind of project is befitting for the theme of International Women's Day 2021, "Women in leadership: Achieving an equal future in a COVID-19 world."

"Coronavirus cannot stop us because the pitch is ready." 10-year-old Kama Khalil said in an interview. So, on Friday, 6 March, the team masked up and headed to Derbandexan, in the outskirts of Sulaimani, northern Iraq, to compete with their male counterparts in a friendly match.

"To get the girls back to the pitch, we sterilized the whole gym and the equipment. The girls use masks and gloves, and they wash and sterilize their hands before and after the games. Not one girl has contracted the disease," explained Dr. Rizgar Mohammed Ra'uf, director of the Dream sports academy (DSA), which operates under the Zhima club.

Female basketball is not new in the Kurdistan Region as there exists other thriving female teams in Erbil, Halabja and Duhok. However, the establishment of the Zhima female basketball club and DSA in Sulaimaniyah, in 2016, reinforces the hope to develop the culture of women sports against the narrative that the woman's place is at home.

"We train role models. Through basketball, we improve them psychologically, physically and socially. We also nurture their charisma to



make strong female leaders for the future of Iraq," Dr. Rizgar said. "We play sports; not religion or politics, and our goal is to promote peace and love in our community," he added.

– Love for the game –

Fifteen-year-old Niza Khalil captains the under-14-team and has been with the academy for four years. She expressed her love for the game. "I love basketball and have been playing it since I was a kid. When we couldn't come to the gym, we practiced at home."

Eight-year-old Naz Jihad Omer, a second grader, started playing basketball six months ago. She says, "I feel excited when I play, and I want to be a good player. It's fun."

– challenges –

With over one hundred girls between the ages of 5 and 17 at the academy, the institution is not without its challenges. In addition to cultural barriers, lack of funds is one of the academy's biggest concerns which can

create hurdles for girls like Niza and Naz to develop their talents in the sport.

– hopes for the future –

But irrespective of those challenges, these girls have no intention to stop dribbling the ball. "Our plan for 2021 is to build our bodies so that we become tough on the pitch," Niza said in a determined tone.

With such enthusiasm, the girls are hopeful to participate in Regional and international championships and win more trophies.

Outside the court, these young role models also invest in the environment to make it cleaner and greener. When they are not looping the ball in the net, they are either cleaning the streets or planting a tree. Under the banner of 'each one, teach one', after planting a tree with the team, 13-year-old Mina Amanj encouraged her father to plant one.

By Celia Thompson/UNAMI PIO

Superhero midwife: meet Hawrin

Baghdad, 10 April 2021 - Hawrin is 27-year-old. Five years ago, she decided to become a midwife.

We had a chat with Hawrin about her work as a midwife at the UNFPA-supported reproductive health facility in Khazir camp.

Why did you become a midwife?

"Being a midwife is my calling. I always knew I wanted to help women and girls understand their reproductive rights and help them receive proper reproductive health care, starting with menstruation, pregnancy and reaching menopause," she said.

Tell us about your favourite memory on the job?

"In 2020, a 35-year old pregnant woman comes to our clinic with abdominal pain. After conducting a medical check-up, I understood that she was going through early labour for the last 5 hours and urgently needed to be taken to the maternity hospital in Erbil for an emergency delivery", she explained.

Hawrin accompanied the mother while she was being transported in the ambulance. On the way, the pain got worse and to save the mother and child's lives, she needed to conduct a natural delivery inside the ambulance.

"My heart was beating fast. I knew that these lives were at risk and I had no

option but to save them. I was working against the clock, so I used the equipment available with me and I conducted the delivery," she continued.

"The mother was so scared and she kept begging me to bring her baby to life safely: Don't let him die - don't let my baby die, please. This could have gone wrong but I knew that woman was counting on me and I could not disappoint her," she added.

Hawrin safely delivered the newborn baby and the ambulance continued its way to the Erbil maternity hospital where mother and son received proper health care.

"I was thrilled and overwhelmed by the

Superhero midwife: meet Hawrin *(continued)*

feeling of accomplishment. I saved two lives who were in critical condition that day... A day I will forever remember," she concluded.

Hawrin created many good and inspiring memories during her service as a midwife, but her journey witnessed sad and unfortunate stories too. Once, Hawrin received a pregnant woman with pain, after examination, they realised that the baby had died inside the mother's womb. After delivery, she accompanied the mother to Erbil Maternal Hospital for further examination and treatment.

Hawrin was relieved that the mother was safe and alive, but for her not being able to see the child born alive was a tragedy. It was a turning point in Hawrin's perception of her job. She accepted that her job could bring happy moments and also break her heart on the same day. Harwin has continued her passion to save the lives of mothers and newborns.

What is the biggest challenge you faced



during COVID-19?

"The biggest challenge was to convince women and girls to wear masks and comply with the COVID-19 preventative measures. We were determined to help them stay safe and healthy. My colleagues and I went door-to-door visiting families and explaining to them why it was necessary to abide

by the preventive measures. We showed families how to wash hands properly and how to wear masks that cover both nose and mouth."

The reproductive health facility in Khazir camp is funded by Canada as well as Sweden, through Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency.

Human Rights

UNAMI on Twitter

Baghdad, 1 March 2021 - UNAMI welcomes the Iraqi parliament's adoption of the Yazidi Female

Survivors Law: a major step in addressing the needs of survivors of atrocities that include reparations and

proof of Iraq's commitment to address the crimes they endured.

UNITAD on Twitter

Baghdad, 2 March 2021 - UNITAD welcomes Iraqi Parliament's adoption of the Yazidi Survivors Law as a cornerstone in acknowledging the impact of ISIL crimes against the Yazidi and other Iraqi communities.

This will help provide tangible redress to many survivors. Victims also deserve justice.

There is an urgent need for Iraq to adopt the necessary legal framework that enables it to prosecute acts of ISIL

members as war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. It is hoped the current draft law before Iraqi Parliament can proceed and be enacted as soon as possible.

IOM commends Government of Iraq's adoption of momentous law on Yazidi female survivors

Baghdad, 2 March 2021 - On 1 March, the Iraqi Council of Representatives adopted the Law on Yazidi Female Survivors. The passage of the law represents a watershed moment in efforts to address the legacy of ISIL crimes against Yazidis and other minority groups, as it officially recognizes acts of genocide against them and establishes a framework for the provision of financial support and other forms of redress to survivors. Notably, in focusing institutional

attention on female survivors of conflict related sexual violence (CRSV), the law places Iraq among the first countries in the Middle East and North Africa region to recognize CRSV survivors and take steps to redress their grievances in line with international standards. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) and partners have been supporting Iraqi institutions and other stakeholders in the process of designing the reparations framework since 2019. In December 2020, IOM

Iraq facilitated the final legislative deliberations which led to the ultimate revisions and adoption of the law. Based on global experience and expertise in supporting governments with mass reparations programs, IOM Iraq and partners will now support the Government of Iraq with the challenging task of implementing the law in an efficient and survivor-centric manner.

Launch of 'Breaking the Silence'

Baghdad, 3 March 2021 – Identifying joint advocacy opportunities to encourage efforts to criminalize domestic violence in Iraq, formalize an effective support system for survivors and hold perpetrators accountable for crimes committed inside the home was at the centre of the virtual launching event of the short film 'Breaking the Silence'. The film illustrates the plight of survivors of domestic violence, who are often silenced by societal gendered norms and behaviour, reluctant to come forward and seek support.

The joint virtual event organized by the Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights (IHCHR) and the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq's Human Rights Office (UNAMI HRO) brought together 32 participants who included Government representatives, members of the Council of Representatives and civil society organisations. The showing of the film prompted a detailed discussion on the current state of the draft anti-domestic violence law and what initiatives are needed to support the ongoing debate.

"Iraqi law must protect the most vulnerable, especially at home. Without this law, the most brutal violence – acts that outside the home would be considered criminal – will continue to be treated as mere 'family disputes' or 'private matters'," Danielle Bell, Chief of UNAMI HRO and Representative of the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Iraq, said in opening remarks.

Participants identified several obstacles stalling progress in the debate about the draft anti-domestic violence law, including gendered misconceptions and reluctance to address societal norms and behaviour to criminalise violence in the family. To address some of these challenges, participants recommended the formation of a committee to be dedicated to identifying practical solutions to unblock the debate on the draft anti-domestic violence law and to involve civil society organisations in the process.

Watch the film here - <https://bit.ly/3sEvA84> - and you, too, can be part of this advocacy initiative by sharing it on your social media platforms.



UNDP Development Dialogues: Preventing atrocity crimes – the role of countering and addressing hate speech

Baghdad, 5 March 2021 - Here is the text of the briefing by Ms. Danielle Bell, Chief of UNAMI Human Rights Office at the UNDP Development Dialogues:

Thank you, Mr. Fernand de Varennes, UN Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues.

Many thanks also to UNDP and the Office of the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide for organizing today's event and for providing the opportunity to share an update on our work on hate speech in Iraq.

Iraq is a diverse but highly polarized society where incidents of hate speech have often contributed to escalating cycles of violent extremism. However, Iraq's weak legislative framework to combat hate speech, combined with a widespread lack of political will, largely prevents peddlers of hatred from being held to account.

These concerns were reflected in the 2018 Concluding Observations on Iraq by the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, where the committee expressed its concern at the use of hate speech by public figures, including politicians, and stated that Iraq's legislation "does not sufficiently cover the

prohibition of hate crime and hate speech".

Unfortunately, the use of hate speech against members of ethnic and religious minorities in Iraq goes largely unchecked. Impunity for hate speech exacerbates existing feelings of marginalization, makes these groups more vulnerable to extremist messaging based on identity politics, and risks perpetuating a cycle of fear resentment and violence.

The use of hate speech in Iraq reflects long-standing discriminatory attitudes which are variously exhibited through derogatory designations of certain communities in public and private conversations; in teaching curricula and textbooks; and through hateful political or religious statements on social media or TV. Such actions, when tolerated by the authorities, risks "normalizing" discriminatory practices and increases the perception of targeted groups that the government is unable or unwilling to protect them.

In March 2020 UNAMI Human Rights Office hosted a "Dialogue on Hate Speech", co-chaired by the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, Adama Dieng, and used this occasion to launch

UNAMI's own 'Action Plan on Hate Speech.'

In line with its commitment under the Action Plan to address the root causes of hate speech, UNAMI Human Rights Office is currently engaging with the Government of Iraq, civil society and the Iraq Independent Human Rights Commission, and representatives of minority and majority communities to support efforts to counter all forms of discrimination.

The following examples illustrate some of the initiatives already carried out – or planned to be carried out by UNAMI Human Rights Office in this context.

- After the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination issued its Concluding Observations on Iraq in 2019, UNAMI Human Rights Office facilitated the establishment of Minority Rights Working Groups in both Federal Iraq and Kurdistan Region. The working groups meet regularly and include representatives from the Federal Government, the Kurdistan Regional Authorities, the Iraq High Commission for Human Rights, the Kurdish Human Rights Commission, and representatives of minority communities and civil society.

UNDP Development Dialogues: Preventing atrocity crimes – the role of countering and addressing hate speech *(continued)*

The Working Group members engage in constructive dialogue to agree concrete steps to implement the CERD recommendations and develop joint projects to raise awareness on the protection of minority communities across the country.

- UNAMI Human Rights Office also conducts multiple workshops to promote minority rights. In December 2020, for example, UNAMI HRO facilitated two workshops focused on the protection of Iraq's diversity, including preservation of minority languages. The workshops resulted in concrete and practical recommendations on strengthening the protection and promotion of minority rights and languages which were shared with Government Authorities and Kurdish Regional Authorities.

- In 2019, UNAMI Human Rights Office conducted a minority and human rights film festival during which young filmmakers were invited to submit short films on minority-specific human rights themes. The films were shown to audiences at 33 screenings in 17 of Iraq's 18 governorates reaching over 4,000 viewers from diverse communities.

- UNAMI HRO is currently working on a public report highlighting Youth Peace Narratives on cross-community cooperation. The report will document initiatives led by young people from across all ethnic and religious communities to address common human rights concerns. Stories of cross-community projects have been shared by members of Yazedi, Kakai, African Descent, Turkmen, Christian, and other minority communities as well as by members of majority communities. The public report will be accompanied by the launch of an interactive online platform

which will provide a public space to continue the dialogue and encourage activists from all communities to share their experiences as an awareness raising and information-sharing tool.

- UNAMI HRO is closely monitoring acts of hate speech during various phases of the elections scheduled for October 2021. UNAMI's work is particularly focused on monitoring and analysis of acts of hate speech, specifically targeting potential women candidates and political aspirants belonging to religious minorities. The Mission remains engaged in promoting efforts for the development of a code of ethics to combat hate speech during the elections.

- In addition, UNAMI HRO is strengthening its monitoring of online hate speech targeting minorities at risk of violence, including hate speech directed against the LGBTQ community, and directly reporting hate speech to social media channels for removal of content, in parallel to engagement with Iraqi civil society organisations carrying out similar

human rights monitoring in the online space.

Ideally, a discriminatory environment permissive of hate speech is never permitted to deteriorate into a situation where incitement and commission of genocide and other atrocity crimes takes place.

Where this has happened, as in Iraq, support for survivors, and legal recognition of the nature of such crimes and the trauma they inflicted upon persecuted minorities can contribute to creating an environment where the rights of those minorities can be better protected and better respected, including prohibitions on hate speech. In this regard, UNAMI HRO contributed to the development of the Yazidi Women Survivors law, enacted this week, a major step forward for victims.

Thank you to all again for the opportunity to speak on the important panel. Our collaborative efforts will hopefully contribute to the prevention of hate speech.



Erbil, 15 March 2021 – The Head of the UNAMI Human Rights Office and Representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms Danielle Bell, met today with Dr Dindar Zebari, Kurdistan Regional Government International Advocacy Coordinator. They discussed human rights in the Kurdistan Region including freedom of expression, women's rights and Universal Periodic Review.



Erbil, 16 March 2021 – Ms. Danielle Bell, Chief of UNAMI's Human Rights Office and the Iraq Representative of the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), and Mr. Ricardo Rodriguez, UNAMI's Head of Office for Kurdistan Region met with Mr. Niyaz Salih Barzani, Head of Foreign Policy and Diplomacy, Office of President Kurdistan Region at UNAMI's office in Erbil. The discussion focused upon human rights issues including: freedom of expression, protection of minority communities, non-discrimination and human rights in the administration of justice.

UNESCO Iraq trains female police officers to respond to the dangers and threats facing Iraqi women journalists

Baghdad, 18 March 2021 - Within the multi-donor program MDP grant, UNESCO Iraq Office, CI, organized a three-day training course targeting 18 police officers from the Crimes Against Journalists Investigation Unit. This session comes as part of UNESCO's efforts to strengthen the national safety mechanism for journalists, through which it focuses on the issues of female journalists. The results of the pre-training surveys that targeted a group of female journalists revealed that there are many reasons behind the reluctance of female journalists to report the risks they are exposed to, perhaps the most prominent of which is that the police community is dominated by males, in addition to the social stigma that prevents women from going to police stations.

Ibtisam Muzal said: "This session revealed to us the vast amount of online and offline threats that Iraqi women journalists face while working. Now, as police officers it is clear which steps we should undertake to reduce the risks and protect Iraqi journalists." With the high level of risks and threats facing the journalistic community, UNESCO seeks to enhance the confidence of journalists in the security and legal institutions in Iraq through



the system of prevention, protection and prosecution through official channels and civil society organizations.

In the training course, UNESCO experts reviewed mechanisms for optimal response to risks facing women journalists, and how the Ministry of Interior, through its cadres and police stations, can facilitate the process of reporting these risks, collecting information on them, and carrying out criminal investigations in order to reach the perpetrators. In this context,

Brigadier General Ahmed Thani, the officer in charge of moral guidance at the Ministry of Interior, said: "Raising awareness among female officers and building their capabilities in facing the risks facing female journalists is an important and positive step to enhance freedom of expression in Iraq.

This initiative aims to create a communication channel between female journalists and police officers to encourage female journalists to report and expose the violations they are exposed to in the field.

UNAMI, IHCHR and Office of the Prime Minister co-facilitate event marking International Day on Elimination of Racial Discrimination

Baghdad, 21 March 2021 - UNAMI Human Rights, the Component Adviser from the Prime Minister's Office and the Racial Discrimination Commissioner from the Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights co-facilitated today a virtual event to mark the International Day on Elimination of Racial Discrimination. In keeping with this year's theme 'Youth standing up against racism and discrimination', the event featured four short films by young Iraqi film makers, made for the human rights and minorities section of the 3x3 Film festival in Baghdad in 2019 and screened by UNAMI HRO in 17 governorates:

1. The Secret of Existence, (directed by Jassem Al Ansaeri), highlights harassment based on religious or ethnic difference
2. Give Me My Chance, (directed by Omar Yassein), depicts poverty-based discrimination in access to education
3. Colours (directed by Alaa Zaieyd)

shows how racial discrimination isn't the natural order of things: it is learned. 4. Identity, (directed by Shahab Alarkwazi) reveals barriers that marginalized women can face obtaining identity documents and accessing basic services.

Screening of the films elicited a strong reaction from the 21 male and 8 female participants, including representatives from nine minorities. During a vibrant discussion of ways in which racism and racial discrimination can be challenged, including through media and the arts, participants emphasized the simplicity and power of the films in demonstrating how discrimination occurs and can be challenged, the need for TV networks to broadcast such content, and the importance of a state sponsored awareness raising campaign. Other proposals included curriculum-based awareness raising about Iraq's minorities, a definition of discrimination under Iraqi law, legislation to prohibit hate speech and

punish incitement of racial hatred, and promotion Iraq's antiquities and cultural heritage to build internal tourism and foster national pride in Iraq's diversity and cultural heritage, including its minorities.

UNAMI Human Rights Office will work with civil society, the Prime Minister's Office and the Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights to promote greater use of the media to counter hate speech, including through a powerful anti-discrimination campaign that resonates with the public, just like these short films have.





Baghdad, 23 March 2021 – The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights Iraq and the Council of Representatives' Human Rights Committee discussed the promotion of fair justice in Iraq, including the need to adopt an Anti-Torture Law. Prevention of torture is a key factor for peace and stability.



Baghdad, 23 March 2021 – The Head of the UNAMI Human Rights Office and Representative of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms Danielle Bell, met today the Minister of Justice, Judge Salar Abdul Sattar Mohamed, to discuss cooperation in promoting human rights in the administration of justice and conditions of detention, including in the Nasiriyah Central Prison. Photo courtesy of the Ministry of Justice.

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

Baghdad, 28 March 2021 - At a workshop providing psychological support to victims of terrorism, Narin (not her real name) pictured herself as a body without a face. “I was abducted by ISIL at the age of 17 and was sold and raped by a dozen men”, she says. “To this day, I still do not know what the fate of my abducted mother is, I still don’t know if she is dead or alive”, she adds. To help victims like Narin through legal and psychological support, UNODC, together with the Lebanese Association for Victims of Terrorism (AVT-L) is implementing a new project funded by the Dutch government.

At the launch event of the initiative, which brought together 21 Iraqi policymakers and senior criminal justice officials, Masood Karimipour, Chief of UNODC’s Terrorism Prevention Branch emphasized “That

reconciliation and healing must start with mending the wounds of violence and cruelty.” We can do that, he said, “By supporting those affected in their recovery process and in safeguarding their rights in criminal proceedings.” This view was echoed by Iraqi law enforcement authorities, on behalf of whom an officer said, “Iraq is home to more than 70,000 victims [of terrorism]. If we want to help communities affected by ISIL, law enforcement and criminal justice need to join forces to support displaced individuals and families who lost everything.”

Narin’s depiction of herself is typical for many female victims. This way they can dissociate themselves from their bodies to survive sexual assault. Following psychological counseling, Narin managed to reconnect with her feelings and emotions from before the abduction, an important first step

towards her psychological recovery. “I was able to picture my mother sitting down next to me and stroking my hair so gently,” she said.

Terrorism continues to harm, injure, kill and change the lives of innocent victims every year. Victims have too often been forgotten by society and the criminal justice systems. In recent years, however, there has been greater recognition of their rights, and the roles that victims can play in criminal proceedings.

Through this new project, UNODC, together with the Lebanese Association for Victims of Terrorism (AVT-L), are working on enhancing national capacity to guarantee victim’s rights during criminal proceedings and to promote the rehabilitation process and empowerment of victims of terrorism within their communities through psychological support. AVT-L has more than 10 years of experience in providing support to victims of terrorism in the Middle East, especially in remote locations of Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon.

Victims of terrorism have the potential to become messengers for peace, if provided with the necessary protection, assistance, and tools, to support countering terrorist narratives and the justifications used to incite violence. This project is honouring the strength and resilience of these victims and their families and supporting them to recollect the pieces of a life that got shattered while ensuring their needs and rights are safeguarded in the judicial system.



The centrality of human rights in countering terrorism was highlighted by the UNAMI HR Office at a conference in Baghdad

Baghdad, 10 April 2021 – The centrality of human rights in countering terrorism was the focus of a presentation today by the UNAMI Human Rights Office at a conference organized by the Iraqi Counter Terrorism Service. The two-day event to discuss challenges in the fight against terrorism was opened by H.E. Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhimi.

Ms. Katrin Tiroch, of UNAMI Human Rights Office, highlighted in a speech delivered at the first panel of the conference that protection of human rights provides the framework for creating a climate of trust between the State and those under its jurisdiction, and for supporting the resilience of communities to threats of violent radicalism.



UNAMI HRO and KRG official discuss human rights issues

Erbil, 21 April 2021 - Mr. Noel Kututwa, head of the UNAMI Human Rights Office in Erbil, met today with Dr. Dindar Zebari, Director of International Advocacy - Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). Discussion focused on human rights issues and ongoing support to the KRG. Photo courtesy of the media office of Dr. Zebari.



HRO visit to Nasiriyah

Nasiriyah, 27 April 2021 - Today, a delegation led by Ms. Danielle Bell, the Chief of the UNAMI's Human Rights Office, visited Nasiriyah in Thi Qar Governorate. During the visit Ms Bell met with the newly appointed Governor, Dr Ahmad Ghani Al-Khafaji, and held separate meetings with the Commander of Sumer Operations Command, the Thi Qar Chief of Police, the Chief Judge of the Nasiriyah Court of Appeal, the head of the IHCHR-Thi

Qar, as well as with a group of activists and human rights defenders. During these meetings Ms Bell discussed the current human rights situation in Nasiriyah, focusing on the measures being taken by the authorities to provide accountability and redress for demonstrations-related human rights violations and to ensure the right to freedom of assembly and expression is fully protected.



Living with Disabilities

Capacity of community-based organizations in Sinjar developed by IOM and partners

Sinjar, 5 March 2021 - IOM Iraq has partnered with Enabling Peace in Iraq Center - EPIC , a non-profit organization dedicated to the advancement of peace and development in Iraq, to promote public dialogue on critical issues related to stabilization and conflict resolution in Sinjar, Ninewa Governorate.

Throughout the project, IOM Iraq and EPIC have worked to build the capacity of community-based organizations in Sinjar —including local organizations for persons with disabilities. Through training, coaching and mentoring, young men and women have developed the skills to run their own community projects.

Sahar and her father started painting a school in one of the villages of Sinjar to encourage and enhance the educational process for both students and teachers. They also requested new doors and windows for the school to make it more comfortable for all.

Kheder will organize a parade to highlight the importance of sports and encourage the members of Sinjar's sports teams to return to their clubs. Kheder will also arrange a sporting event between different clubs in the village to highlight why sporting activities are necessary in Sinjar sub-district and surrounding villages, including its importance for education, physical activity, as well as mental



health.

Talie K. painted public murals and a crosswalk as part of a campaign for disability awareness. She will also paint signs on the walls of a Sinjar school to support students with disabilities.

These activities are supported by USAID - US Agency for International Development.

A disability inclusion discussed in Erbil



Erbil, 25 March 2021 - As part of the support that IOM is providing to promote disability inclusion in Iraq,

IOM with the support of Mitsubishi Corporation (MC) organized today a disability inclusion conference with five

Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs).

The conference aimed at supporting OPDs to advocate and raise key challenges and recommendations to decision-makers within KRG. The event was attended by the governor of Erbil Omed khoshnaw, the consul general of Japan to Erbil Yoshioko Nagayama, MC representative, Members of the Parliament of Kurdistan Region, representatives from key ministries and universities of Kurdistan, and international organizations.

Challenges and priorities for persons with disabilities in Iraq outlined in new IOM report



Persons with disabilities face many obstacles in their daily lives,

Baghdad, 30 March 2021 - Persons with disabilities have enormous potential to contribute to economies and societies, and can bring determination, innovation, and energy, among other qualities, to their workplaces and communities. In Iraq however, people with disabilities have been disproportionately impacted by armed conflict and economic hardship and continue to face significant barriers to their full and equal inclusion. Moreover, despite Iraq having one of the largest populations of persons with disabilities in the world, there has been little consultation with persons with disabilities and their representative groups by government and humanitarian and development agencies.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) has prepared a new report, *Persons with disabilities and their representative organisations in Iraq: Barriers, challenges and priorities*, to shed light on the perspectives of persons with disabilities in Iraq. The report draws upon interviews conducted with 81 representatives of 53 Organizations of Persons with Disabilities across 18 governorates and identifies concrete actions that stakeholders such as the

Government of Iraq, United Nations agencies, national and international Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and local Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) must take to address the barriers experienced by persons with disabilities, including responses to the key challenges and priorities of their representative organisations.

“We are glad that persons with disabilities from different regions of Iraq contributed to this report, which clearly recognizes the international slogan ‘Nothing about us without us’. We look forward to having the findings of this report considered by decision-makers, the government of Iraq, donors, international organization, civil society, lawmakers in order to empower and better include persons with disabilities.” Said Mwafaq Al-Khafaji – Head of Iraqi Alliance Of Disability (IADO).

“This report and the consultations that informed it aim to improve our understanding of the barriers experienced by persons with disabilities, including the key challenges and priorities of their representative organizations, in order to inform our programming,” said IOM Iraq Chief of Mission Gerard Waite. “It

centres their unique perspectives, since there is no one better qualified to provide information on the barriers they experience than persons with disabilities themselves and the organizations that represent them.”

IOM Iraq has also launched a Directory: Organization of persons with disabilities (OPD) in Iraq which lists the contact details of representative organisations of persons with disabilities across 18 governorates.

“We all have a role to play in promoting a rights-based approach in the delivery of humanitarian and development assistance. This will ensure that people with disabilities can participate in decision-making processes that affect them and they can benefit on an equal basis with others” said Australian Ambassador, Ms Paula Ganly. “Importantly, this report gives voice to people with disabilities and their representative organisations in Iraq and is an important step towards our commitment to the 2030 agenda to leave no-one behind.”

Globally, IOM is committed to reducing and addressing barriers facing people with disabilities. In December 2019, IOM Iraq launched the IOM Iraq Disability Inclusion Strategy 2019—2021, which proposed recommendations for mapping and collaborating with Organisations of Persons with Disabilities; working towards making IOM community centres accessible; and developing contextualised guidance for staff to implement disability inclusive programming.

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

The promotion, protection and respect of rights of persons with disabilities in Iraq

Baghdad, 16 April 2021 – Ensuring equal access and full inclusion of persons with disabilities into Iraqi society was the focus of discussion at a Disability Inclusion Conference organized by Al Meezan Centre for the Rule of Law, with the support and participation of UNAMI HRO and the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Thirty-eight participants, including representatives from civil society, the National Institute of Deaf and Blind Persons, and the Advisor to the President on Persons with Disabilities, Ms Amany Aljaazry, met virtually to discuss measures to strengthen the protection and full inclusion of all persons with disabilities in Iraq. Participants shared their experiences of promoting inclusion, discussed the applicable legal and policy framework, and identified challenges and solutions to ensuring inclusion and access for

persons with disabilities. Mr Gerard Quinn, Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, also briefed participants on his Office’s mandate, its thematic priorities and opportunities for collaboration with civil society and NGOs.

The discussion highlighted the importance of an inclusive rights-based approach to disability, ensuring that persons with disabilities can fully participate in all aspects of political, social, economic, educational, and cultural life. Participants agreed that it is essential for government institutions to proactively involve civil society organizations in the formulation of laws and policies, in order to ensure that the needs of persons with disabilities are fully addressed, including during policy implementation. At the conclusion of the event, participants committed to engage with government bodies across

Iraq to improve the inclusion of persons with disabilities, and to support the development of a human rights-based national disability inclusion strategy. The event took place virtually in accordance with COVID-19 health protection measures.



UNFPA supports the sexual and reproductive health services for women and girls with disabilities

Baghdad, 2 April 2021 - Seeing the ability not the disability is the most dignified approach when looking at persons with disabilities.

UNFPA, with support of Sida - Styrelsen för Internationellt Utvecklingssamarbete and Australian Embassy, Iraq works to promote the rights of persons with disabilities in Iraq, especially the sexual and reproductive health services of women and girls with disabilities.



UNITAD



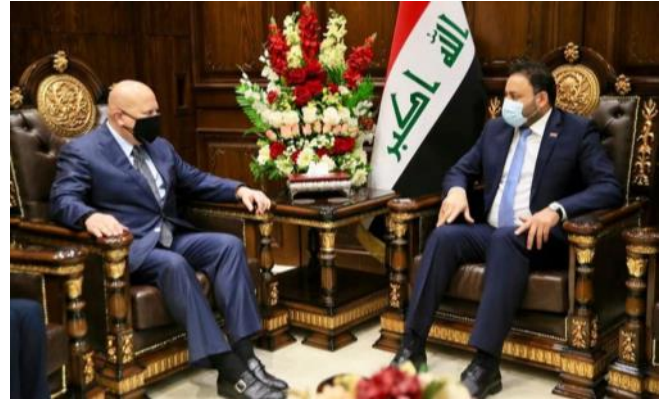
Baghdad, 1 March 2021 - H.E. Matthew Tueller, United States Ambassador to Iraq - in the presence of Special Adviser Karim A. A. Khan QC - inaugurates UNITAD’s state-of-the-art forensic laboratory, made possible through the generous support of the US Government.



Baghdad, 1 March 2021 - H.E. Stephen Hickey, United Kingdom Ambassador to Iraq, and Special Adviser Karim A. A. Khan QC, unveiled a plaque acknowledging the generous support of the UK Government for the construction and refurbishment of UNITAD’s Headquarters in Baghdad.



Baghdad, 2 March 2021 - Special Adviser Karim Khan was pleased to welcome Major General Faez Al-Maamouri from the Directorate of Military Intelligence (DMI) today. They agreed to scale up ongoing cooperation in the area of document digitization & digital forensics, including the need to add more trainees. DMI remains a long-standing partner of UNITAD, and leader in the efforts to collect and preserve evidence of crimes committed by ISIL. DMI's commitment to supporting UNITAD continues to make an invaluable contribution to the Team's investigative efforts.



Baghdad, 2 March 2021 - Special Adviser Karim A. A. Khan QC held fruitful discussions today in Baghdad with the Deputy Speaker of the Parliament of Iraq, Mr. Hassan Al-Kaabi, Head of the Parliament's Legal Committee, MP Rebwah Hadi, as well as the committee's Deputy, MP Mohamed Al-Ghazzi. The importance of moving forward with pending legislation authorizing the prosecution of ISIL members for war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide in Iraqi courts was recognized by all.



Baghdad, 4 March 2021 - Pivotal meeting between Special Adviser Karim A. A. Khan QC and Iraqi Parliament Speaker Mr. Mohamed Al Halboosi, today to discuss the importance of moving forward with the necessary legislative steps to authorize the prosecution of ISIL members for war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide in Iraqi courts.



New York, 18 March 2021 - Special Adviser Karim A. A. Khan QC met Director General Kathryn Bomberger at the International Commission on Missing Persons - ICMP's headquarters today. They discussed ongoing cooperation and support to the Government of Iraq regarding excavations and investigations into ISIL mass graves in Iraq. These efforts are crucial to ensure accountability for ISIL crimes.



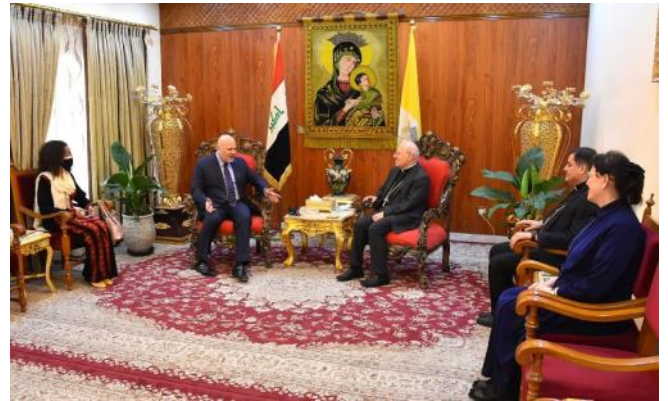
New York, 28 March 2021 - Special Adviser Karim A. A. Khan QC was delighted to meet Ambassador Bahr Al Uloom, Permanent Representative of Iraq to the United Nations, to discuss UNITAD progress and future priorities. Special Adviser Khan highlighted the increasing strength and breadth of partnerships with Iraqi authorities in the collection of evidence of ISIL crimes.



New York, 28 March 2021 - Special Adviser Karim A. A. Khan QC was delighted to meet Ambassador Barbara Woodward, Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom to the United Nations, to discuss progress in UNITAD's work and expressed continued thanks for the United Kingdom's strong support and partnership in pursuit of ISIL accountability.



Baghdad, 14 April 2021 - Special Adviser Karim Khan QC visited today His Eminence Sheikh Dr. Ahmed Hasan Al-Taha, Chairman of the Iraqi Jurisprudence Council, and members of the Council, at Abu Hanifa Al Nu'mman's Mosque. Special Adviser Khan wished Sheikh Al-Taha a blessed Ramadan, and briefed him on UNITAD's work, including investigating crimes committed by Daesh against the Sunni community. He stressed that the non-hierarchy of victim is a core principle of UNITAD.



Baghdad, 14 April 2021 - Special Adviser Karim A. A. Khan QC met with His Beatitude Louis Raphael Sako in Baghdad today. Both reaffirmed the need for interfaith unity across Iraq in condemning Da'esh, and supporting victims of their crimes. UNITAD is committed to working with all religious leaders to build on the Interfaith Statement on the Victims and Survivors of Da'esh, adopted by leaders of Christian, Kakai, Shia, Sunni and Yazidi communities in Iraq, and to help implement the principles of the Statement at the community level.



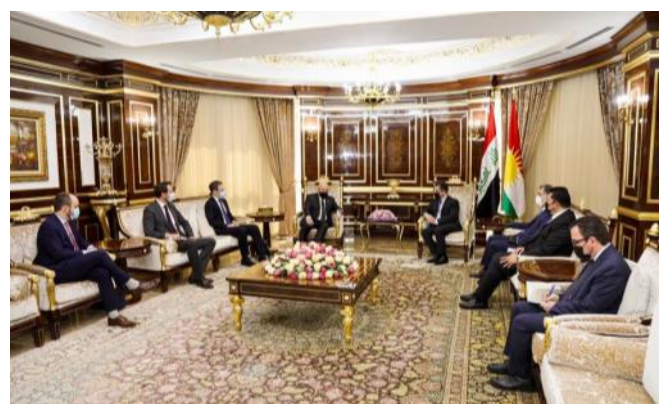
Erbil, 18 April 2021 - UNITAD's team was pleased to welcome Deputy Consul General of the British Consulate General in Erbil, Melanie Smart, to its Duhok office today. The UK delegation met with UNITAD investigators to learn about their engagement and outreach to communities impacted by Daesh Crimes.



Duhok, 18 April 2021 - Special Adviser Karim A. A. Khan QC met today with Dr. Mosleh Mohammed Saeed, President of the University of Duhok - UoD, and joined by Dr. Nashwan Shukri Abdullah, Head of the Besikci Centre; Dr. Salim Jassim Haji, Head of the Genocide Centre and Mr. Dawd Murad Khatari. Special Adviser Khan commended the contributions of the University of Duhok, particularly Mr. Khatari's research to UNITAD's investigations into ISIL crimes, especially those committed against the Yazidi community. Special Adviser Khan also reaffirmed that UNITAD remains happy to collaborate with the University on Yazidi-related research, and on exploring opportunities for joint platforms with other international entities.



Erbil, 19 April 2021 - Special Adviser Karim A. A. Khan QC met today with H.E. Kurdistan Region President, Mr. Nechirvan Barzani, to reflect on ongoing collaboration between UNITAD and the Kurdistan Regional Government in their common endeavor to hold ISIL accountable for international crimes in Iraq. Special Adviser Khan updated the President on specific UNITAD projects, including digitization of ISIL related documents funded by the European Union. The Special Adviser also underlined the project's importance in support of the establishment of the full scale and nature of ISIL's crimes.



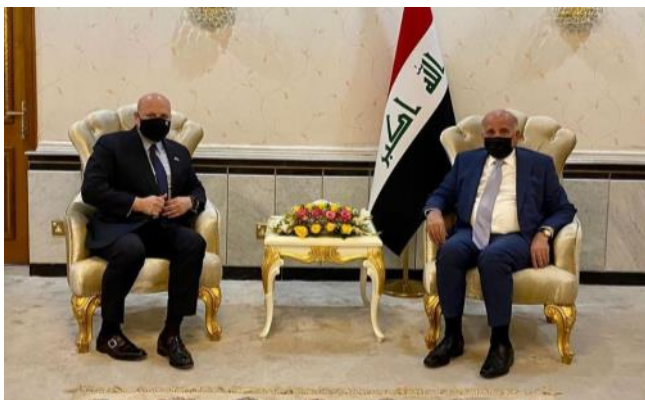
Erbil, 19 April 2021 - Special Adviser Karim A. A. Khan QC met with H.E. Kurdistan Regional Government Prime Minister, Masrour Barzani, today to take stock of ongoing work towards making sure that ISIL members are held accountable for war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. Amongst other subjects, they discussed the importance of a legislation to ensure that ISIL members can be held accountable for international crimes in Iraqi courts, and judicial training in international criminal law to be offered by UNITAD. Special Adviser Khan thanked Prime Minister Barzani for his genuine concern to ensure judicial accountability for ISIL's crimes, and his outstanding support of UNITAD.



Erbil, 19 April 2021 - Special Adviser Karim A. A. Khan QC met with Vala Fareed Ibrahim, Kurdistan Regional Government's Minister for Parliamentary Affairs, and Dr. Sardar Yaseen Ameen, President of the KRG Shura Council, to discuss the path forward for holding ISIL accountable for its international crimes in Iraq.



Erbil, 21 April 2021 - Special Adviser Karim A. A. Khan QC was delighted to officially open the new UNITAD office in Erbil, underlining that the premises will strengthen the Team's ability to engage with local communities in the area in support of efforts to hold ISIL accountable for their crimes.



Baghdad, 28 April 2021 - Special Adviser Karim A. A. Khan QC met today with H.E. Fuad Hussein, Minister of Foreign Affairs, to discuss latest progress in UNITAD's activities prior to the Special Adviser's upcoming briefing to the United Nations Security Council.

Special Adviser Khan thanked the Minister for his continued support to the work of the Team.



Baghdad, 28 April 2021 - Special Adviser Karim A. A. Khan QC and members from UNITAD held an official meeting with the National Coordination Committee today. They discussed ongoing cooperation between UNITAD and the Government of Iraq and provision of assistance by the Team in investigation of ISIL crimes.

Special Adviser Khan thanked Ambassador Lukman Faily for hosting the meeting at the Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Productive discussions held on various issues of mutual cooperation including further collaboration on excavation of mass grave sites connected to ISIL crimes.

Religious actors should be mainstreamed in UN work to promote peace

New York, 20 March 2021 - In the United Nations Security Council Arrria-Formula on Religion Belief and Conflict, Special Adviser Karim A. A. Khan QC underlined the role of religious leaders as essential partners in prevention of conflict and holding perpetrators of atrocity crimes to account. "Religious actors should be mainstreamed in UN work to promote peace."

Briefing UNSC members, Special Adviser Khan stressed that: "respect of freedom of religion is not only a human

right but an essential pillar of national security. When this principle is left unprotected, attacks on religious minorities can move quickly to hatred, violence and societal instability".

He also added: "I have had the honour and responsibility with my team to speak to survivors from religious communities across Iraq that have suffered but courageously continue to live and worship today, despite the best efforts of this un-Islamic state to suffocate their freedom of religion".



UNITAD continues national capacity building efforts: donates specialized vehicles for mass grave excavations



Baghdad, 20 April 2021 – As a part of its efforts to building and enhancing the capacities of Iraqi authorities, UNITAD donated today two specialized four-wheel drive, all terrain drive vehicles to the Iraqi Mass Grave Directorate (MGD). “UNITAD therefore remains committed to supporting Iraq authorities who have been critical in the excavations of

remains, the DNA identification process and the return of these identified remains to their families” said Special Adviser Karim A. A. Khan QC.

He added that the “MGD and Medico-Legal Directorate (MLD) have been critical in UNITAD’s efforts to unveil the atrocities ISIL committed from various mass grave sites across Iraq.”

The delivered vehicles are expected to support field deployments in mass grave excavation operations, as well as complementing the provision of technical expert support provided to national experts under UNITAD’s strategy to support national authorities in mass grave excavations.

In addition to the donation of the vehicles, UNITAD’s recent support initiatives included providing training and mentoring to MGD professionals in

the application of 3D laser scanning technology to survey and map complex crime scenes, such as mass graves. UNITAD has also donated approximately 1 million dollars, thus far, in specialized high-tech equipment that are essential to the operations of the MGD and MLD.

The support that UNITAD provides to the national teams working on mass grave excavations, is part of the agreed upon national mass graves excavation strategy. They set UNITAD on the path towards implementing its mandate pursuant to UN Security Council resolution 2379 (2017) in supporting Iraqi authorities to hold ISIL members accountable for war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide that were committed by collecting, preserving, and storing evidence in line with international standards.

UNITAD psychosocial training sessions for Emma Organization for Human Development



Baghdad, 29 March 2021 - Through a series of five training sessions, WPSU psychology team actively contributes to strengthening the technical capacity of

Emma’s psychosocial workers to provide psychosocial support to survivors experiencing mild and moderate mental health related

concerns and disorders. The training modules that are delivered online focus on a range of essential knowledge and skills that support the setting up of interventions.

The sessions are specifically tailored to the needs of survivors, staff and organization in line with international best practices and the ‘no-harm principle’.

Some of the topics covered are: trauma related symptoms; identification and management; anger management for youth; suicide prevention and intervention; ambiguous loss and unresolved grief.

UNITAD WPSU psychologists provided a training session for the Eyzidi Organization for Documentation



Baghdad, 13 April 2021 - UNITAD’s Witness Protection and Support Unit’s psychologists provided a training session today for the Eyzidi Organization for Documentation on

trauma informed approach to working with children in documentation. This training module addresses the detrimental psychological impact of crimes committed against children, as

well as the challenges that participants may face when interviewing traumatized children to build trust and communicate effectively. The session examined how to identify trauma, what a trauma-informed approach is and why it is important when interviewing children. It, also, demonstrated effective interviewing techniques to avoid, minimize and address further traumatization of children while maximizing information gathering.

UNITAD psychologists continuously provide trainings to different organizations that provide support to ISIL/ Da’esh victims and survivors.

UN Network launches in support of Government of Iraq's migration governance efforts

Baghdad, 17 March 2021 - Following a kick-off meeting in February, the United Nations Network for Migration was formally launched today in Iraq. The Network supports the international community's efforts towards the implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM), which is the first inter-governmentally negotiated agreement covering all dimensions of international migration in a holistic and comprehensive manner.

During the conflict with Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) the government's capacity to provide services, and co-ordinate critical functions of migration management and security at the central and local levels, were severely diminished. It is expected that Iraq will continue to experience complex migratory flows, including return migration of Iraqis from Europe and other regions, which will increase pressure on the government to effectively manage migration.

"Migration management requires a 'whole of Government' approach to ensure that social, economic, and security aspects are considered," said Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General for Iraq, and Resident Coordinator. "The UN Network on Migration in Iraq will coordinate the UN support to the Government of Iraq to improve migration governance in alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals."



During a conference to review the implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) in the Arab Region, Iraq became a GCM "Champion", thus demonstrating an ongoing commitment to strengthening migration management for the socioeconomic benefit of all.

The Network will be coordinated by the International Organization for Migration (IOM); and counts the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR); the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO); United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO); the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA); the International Labour Organization (ILO); the World Food Programme (WFP); the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC); the UN Population Fund (UNFPA); the UN

Office for Project Services (UNOPS); the UN International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF); and the UN Development Programme (UNDP) as members. It will meet regularly with representatives from the Government of Iraq.

In recent years the Government of Iraq has made important strides towards improving its migration policy framework, notably through the development of a National Migration Strategy. The Strategy sets out recommendations to address areas of migration policy and governance that are lacking, for example policies dealing with displacement impacts of crisis; engaging with the civil society in agenda setting; or collecting demographic data on migrants in Iraq or Iraqis abroad. The Network will work alongside the Government to complement and expand on these efforts.

UNHCR continues to provide legal support to refugees and IDPs

Baghdad, 26 February 2021 - Zahra is a mother of four, she lives with her husband and children in Debaga, a camp for displaced Iraqis in Nineveh.

A recent agreement between UNHCR and the government of Iraq has allowed for mobile teams from the ministry of Interior visiting camps to receive the applications of people who have lost important documents. Such documents can include nationality cards, ID cards, birth certificates. The protection provided to displaced people through this form of legal assistance cannot be underestimated.

Zahra is happy all her children will now have national identification cards and can feel like normal citizens. "When you don't have any document at all, you are nobody, you are without status. I am grateful to UNHCR, the



European Union Civil Protection & Humanitarian Aid - ECHO and SWEDO - The Swedish Development Aid Organization, for making this possible."

The Residency Office in Bardarash Camp continues to issue residency

cards for refugees. This enhances their self-reliance, providing them the chance to move freely across Kurdistan Region and to seek employment opportunities.

UNHCR constructed the Residency Office in Bardarash in January 2021.

IOM Iraq: Home Again? Categorizing obstacles to returnees

Baghdad, 2 March 2021 - IOM Iraq, the Returns Working Group, and Social Inquiry strive to build upon and complement previous assessments on durable solutions, mainly with regards to obstacles to return as well as progress toward local integration for IDPs. Home Again? Categorizing Obstacles to Returnee Reintegration in

Iraq examines the prevalence of key obstacles for reintegration that returnee households face. It specifically focuses on the challenges faced by returnees towards their sustainable reintegration back home.

Report is available at <https://bit.ly/3b5uxIF>



As part of efforts to contribute to community stabilization, IOM Iraq is delivering training courses on blacksmithing, hairdressing and electricity installations

Basra, 9 March 2021 - "I have learned a lot since I joined the blacksmithing course in January. I hope that one day, after I finish this course, I can open my own workshop, perhaps in partnership with a colleague. My father and older brother were always responsible for taking care of the family, but after they sacrificed their lives for Iraq during the fight against ISIL, I had to support my mother and younger brothers." Ahmed Mekki, a 23-year-old from Basra.

As part of efforts to contribute to community stabilization, IOM Iraq is delivering training courses on blacksmithing, hairdressing and electricity installations to 41 men, and a sewing skills training to 6 women — in collaboration with the Department of Labor and Social Affairs in Basra. These three-month training courses, which started in mid-January, were organized with the generous support of the European Union.



AICS and UNOPS partner to rehabilitate the basic services for returnees in Sinjar, Iraq

Baghdad, 11 March 2021 – The Italian Cooperation and UNOPS launched a new project to support the Government of Iraq in rehabilitating basic services to returnees in Sinjar. The project will support the Government of Iraq in rehabilitating the basic water services for returnees in Sinjar district in Iraq, through a partnership with the Government of Italy. The project will contribute to achieving the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) for Iraq: Post-conflict transition towards durable solutions by supporting access to basic services to increase the resilience of returnees in target locations.

Since 2018, the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS) office in Amman has also been responsible for implementing international cooperation initiatives in Iraq. "Our support has focused on the Kurdish Region of Iraq (KRI) and neighbouring areas such as the Ninewa plains, which experienced high rates of return after the massive displacement of the resident population," said the Head of AICS Amman office Mr. Michele Morana. "This project comes in line with the Italian Cooperation's aid priorities targeting the health and protection sectors in the Country, as it addresses immediate recovery and aims to

improve accessibility, inclusiveness and quality of basic services for minorities and local communities".

"The Government of Italy fully supports the urgent need to rebuild Sinjar, through the restoration of basic services as key to incentivizing the return of still displaced people. Every effort should also be taken to reintegrate returnees within their communities and provide them with tangible support to rebuild their lives" said the Ambassador of Italy to Iraq Bruno Antonio Pasquino.

"Thanks to the support from the Italian Cooperation, UNOPS is able to lend a hand to the people returning to Sinjar District in Iraq. Access to water supplies is one of the many challenges faced by returnees and their families. The rehabilitation of basic services in the district will contribute to improving Sinjar water infrastructure and eventually improving people's lives." said Mr. Muhammad Usman Akram, the Director of UNOPS Operational Hub in Amman.

Through this project, the targeted populations will benefit from improved and rehabilitated basic water facilities. UNOPS will focus on the improvement of water services in Sinjar district. The main focus would be to rehabilitate damaged water facilities, such as

potable and/or storm water pumps, generators, parts of water treatment units. The intervention will also include innovative technologies, such as renewable and hybrid systems, where applicable, in target locations. It is envisaged that this project will support the Government in its efforts towards the realization of Agenda 2030 and more specifically contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG); specifically, SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being and SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation.

Sinjar is one of the four districts in Ninewa that presents a higher severity of needs, whereby the well-being, living standards, and ultimately resilience and recovery capacity of the local communities, as well as their social cohesion and safety, are all severely impacted as a result of unmet needs.



Ten years on, Syrian refugees' lives in Iraq are growing tougher, and past gains might be lost.

Baghdad, 15 March 2021 - Ten years on, since the advent of the Syrian crisis, life for Syrian refugee women, men, girls, and boys doesn't get easier. In fact, with every passing year, it gets more difficult. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) renew their commitment to support the refugee and host communities in Iraq and urge the international community to do the same.

By renewing our commitment, we pledge to continue to support refugees in Iraq to have a meaningful and dignified future through access to education, formal employment, and medical care.

Almost a quarter of a million Syrian refugees and asylum-seekers are still living in Iraq under tough living conditions since the beginning of the Syrian humanitarian crisis.

Protection risks, including child labour and early marriage, are becoming more acute, especially with the devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Past gains in building self-reliance of refugees are at risk of being lost.

Meanwhile, the resources available to support them have been stretched past the breaking point.

In Iraq, 60 percent of refugee households said they have reduced their overall food consumption and have taken on debt. Nearly a third of households rely on humanitarian cash assistance.

Access to primary health care has decreased, especially reproductive health care for women and girls, while food insecurity is on the rise. The risk of children not receiving a proper



education is particularly high. Distance learning has been challenging for refugee children. Less than half of refugee boys and girls in Iraq enrolled in formal primary and secondary school prior to COVID-19 continued schooling at home after physical school closures. Despite challenges and limitations faced in 2020, we, at UNHCR, WFP, UNICEF, and UNFPA with our partners, continue to provide humanitarian support to the most vulnerable refugees and asylum-seekers in Iraq. We ensured the continuity of critical services and assistance, including registration and protection services, reproductive health services, water and health services, access to learning for children, and awareness-raising activities to help safeguard the well-being of refugees, in addition to vital cash assistance for food, emergency protection and access basic hygiene items.

Our agencies continue to work closely

with our Federal and Kurdistan Regional Government's counterparts to support the COVID-19 pandemic response plan, benefitting the refugees and host communities alike. The assistance to the Government includes help to set up isolation areas or hospital extensions, in addition to providing medical equipment, masks, PPEs, and medical plasticware to be used in camp-based primary healthcare clinics and hospitals.

The future of a whole generation of Syrians, as well as Syria and the region, is at stake if the Syria crisis continues, and the world does not remain engaged and committed to supporting refugees and host communities. Until the situation in Syria allows Syrian refugees to return in voluntary, safe, dignified, and well-informed manners, the international community must continue to support Syrian refugees in Iraq and worldwide to move ahead with their lives and have a better future.

Funding remains critical to address rising humanitarian and development needs, including education for children and youth, food and cash assistance, access to healthcare and clean water, livelihood support, and protection services, including protection against gender-based violence and child protection. With the support of the international community, we can help create a better future for Syrian refugees in Iraq.

UNHCR Representative to Iraq, Ms Philippa Candler

WFP Representative to Iraq, Mr Abdirahman Meygag

UNICEF OiC Representative to Iraq, Mr Paul Edwards

UNFPA Representative to Iraq, Dr Rita Columbia

Conference “Displaced Women in Liberated Areas (Challenges and Solutions)” held in Baghdad

Baghdad, 18 March 2021 - Under the auspices of the Secretary General of the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers in Baghdad, a conference was held under the title “Displaced Women in Liberated Areas (Challenges and Solutions)”. In the presence of the Minister of Migrations and Displacement (MoMD) and with the participation of a number of international organizations, UN Agencies, Funds and Programmes and

various ministries' representatives attendees discussed ways of support to displaced women to return to their areas of origin by setting up their own programs in line with MoMD's plan.

The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq/Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, Ms. Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano, sent a video message to the participants of the conference.



DSRSG/RC/HC Vojáčková-Sollorano visited Diyala



Diyala, 18 March 2021 – The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq / Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator, Ms. Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano, visited Diyala with OCHA, UNDP, IOM, and representatives from the UNAMI Development Support Office. She met with the Governor, and traveled to Muqyadiya to meet with local authorities, IDPs and returnees to discuss durable solutions. UN and NGO presence in the area significantly increased in 2020. According to the latest governorate profile for Diyala, there are 211,000 people in need. Humanitarian partners working in the region targeted 74,000 people for assistance in 2020, and reached 59,000 overall. In 2021, the Humanitarian Response Plan will target 87,000 people. UNDP has carried out over 100 stabilization projects in Diyala; the agency seeks \$40.5 million for further stabilization and development activities in the region in 2021.

While in Hembes village, the DSRSG/RC/HC met with a returnee who lives with his five daughters in a home without a roof. Hembes is considered a high severity location by IOM-DTM. Several households have recently returned to the village after the closures of Al-Wand and Qaratoo IDP camps.

During the visit to Diyala, Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano, met with returnees living in Hembes village in Muqyadiya. About 250 households have returned to Hembes villages since 2015. Several households arrived from Al-Wand and Qaratoo IDP camps after camp closures took place at the end of 2020.

Samahir Muhammed Attiya (47) is one of them. She and her three sons lived in Qaratoo IDP camp for six years, before returning to Hembes village in August

2020. There they live with Samahir's parents, in a house that has been severely damaged and partly burnt during the war. UNHCR and Mercy Hands have provided some support to winterize the damaged home. The family received 370,000 IQD (USD\$250) per month from the Government's social security programme, but this is not sufficient to meet needs, so sometimes they sometimes receive additional help from the community. Samahir used to support her family by sewing, but she had to sell her sewing machine during a medical emergency, to pay for the medical treatment of her 9-year old son. He has limited vision and cannot attend school. His older brother has a disability and cannot attend school either. Samahir would like to find a way to become financially independent again. She contends that if she could just resume her sewing business and know her sons would be cared for, she would be able to sustain herself and her family and repair the damaged home.

Essa Dhahir Muhammed (49) used to be a farmer, with successful farm for citrus fruit and dates. In 2014, he was displaced from Hembes by the conflict, leaving his house and farm behind. He lived in Al-Wand IDP camp with his

wife and five daughters. In August 2020, when the camps closed, they returned to Hembes, where they found their home demolished, and missing its roof. His lemon trees and date palms had died because of the drought and lack of irrigation. Essa's brother accommodated the family in his house, which is also partly damaged, but this has led to a crowded living situation which is not sustainable in the long term. Essa hopes to restore his farm and rebuild his house. His younger daughters were born in an IDP camp and have never had a home of their own.

Muqyadiya district in Diyala governorate had 155,000 inhabitants in 2014, almost half of whom were displaced during the conflict with ISIL. As of December 2020, according to the IOM-DTM Return Index, almost 60,000 individuals returned to Muqyadiya, while around 20,000 are still displaced in other districts of Diyala and Sulaymaniyah. Over half of those who returned live in locations lacking basic services, livelihoods or security, and about 9,000 in critical shelter.

Since September 2020, about 1,000 new families have returned to the villages north of Muqyadiya; many took the trip because the camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs) they were living in had closed. Humanitarian partners (Oxfam, DRC, IOM, Save the Children, UNHCR and Mercy Hands) distributed urgently needed core relief items for winterization, hygiene kits, and cash for food and basic needs. Initial rehabilitation of water plants and networks by UNHCR and Oxfam have improved access to drinking water. However, humanitarian needs remain, and families require additional support if they are going to reach durable solutions.



ILO and the Cash Consortium for Iraq sign MoU to advance the humanitarian-development nexus and improve economic opportunities for vulnerable populations

Erbil, 29 March 2021 - The ILO and the Cash Consortium for Iraq (CCI) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) as part of the agencies' strategic partnership to strengthen collaboration in advancing economic growth and self-reliance for vulnerable populations in Iraq. The CCI is a successful partnership of five of the largest INGOs operational in Iraq, inclusive of the Danish Refugee Council (DRC), the International Rescue Committee (IRC), the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), Oxfam, and Mercy Corps as the lead agency.

The agreement was signed by Maha Kattaa, the ILO Country Coordinator in Iraq and members of the CCI Steering Committee inclusive of Lilu Thapa (DRC Country Director), Christine Petrie (IRC Country Director), Sahar Alnouri (Mercy Corps Acting Country Director), Rishana Haniffa (NRC Country Director), and Andres Gonzalez Rodriguez (Oxfam Country Director) on Monday (March 29) in Erbil.

"This is a major milestone for humanitarian and development actors in Iraq. We expect this partnership will generate impact through high-quality content, scalable programmatic

approaches and an evidence base that can be taken up both by the Government of Iraq as well as by international actors supporting the expansion of economic opportunities and private sector growth," said CCI Director Gabrielle Fox.

"This agreement is based on efforts to increase collaboration between humanitarian and development actors and to leverage our comparative advantages, expertise and outreach to find sustainable opportunities for vulnerable populations in crisis-affected areas," added ILO Country Coordinator Maha Kattaa.

The agreement sets out priority areas for collaboration around evidence-informed and market-based approaches to facilitate economic growth, such as enhancing training curricula for greater quality and scale, and establishing standards for enterprise development support initiatives. An overarching theme for the partnership is the transition from the informal to the formal economy and promoting the principles of Decent Work, inclusive of various activities on the technical and policy level.

The collaboration will leverage the ILO's Employment-Intensive Investment Programme (EIIP) as an

entry point for formalization and decent work in Iraq. Through this programme, workers, in addition to accessing short-term employment, can progress towards longer-term employability through other interventions such as skills training and entrepreneurship and their inclusion in social protection schemes.

These areas of collaboration stem from findings and recommendations from a rapid assessment conducted jointly by the ILO and CCI, which examined the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on vulnerable households and businesses in Iraq. This assessment highlighted the devastating impact of the crisis on employment and income, particularly among women, youth and those in informal employment.

The CCI is a successful and mature partnership comprised of five of the largest International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs) operational in Iraq: the Danish Refugee Council, the International Rescue Committee, the Norwegian Refugee Council, Oxfam, and Mercy Corps as the lead agency. The CCI has delivered harmonized programming across 13 governorates in Iraq since its formation in 2015.

United Nations chief urge donors to support record appeals for Syrians and the region

New York/Geneva, 29 March 2021 - On the eve of the fifth Brussels conference for Syria, the United Nations humanitarian, refugee and development chiefs have urged international donors to step up and stand with the millions of people in Syria and the region who depend on life-saving humanitarian aid and livelihood support after a decade of war.

With the added impact of COVID-19, there is no respite for civilians in Syria. They face increasing hunger and poverty, continued displacement and ongoing attacks. The neighbouring countries host four out of five Syrian refugees worldwide, in what remains the world's largest refugee crisis, while also trying to address increasing socio-economic challenges for their own nationals.

Today 24 million people need humanitarian or other forms of assistance in Syria and the region.

That is four million more than in 2020, and more than at any other time since the conflict began.

Sustained donor financing for the UN's response plans will fund food, water and sanitation, health services, education, child vaccinations and shelter for millions of people living on the brink in Syria. It will also provide cash assistance, job or training

opportunities, and other services such as access to primary and secondary education, in conjunction with national systems, to millions in Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq, and Egypt.

In 2021, over US\$10 billion is needed to fully support Syrians and refugee-hosting communities in need. This includes at least \$4.2 billion for the humanitarian response inside Syria and \$5.8 billion to support refugees and host communities in the region.

UN humanitarian chief Mark Lowcock said: "It has been ten years of despair and disaster for Syrians. Now plummeting living conditions, economic decline and COVID-19 result in more hunger, malnutrition, and disease. There is less fighting, but no peace dividend. More people need more help than at any point during the war, and children must return to learning. An investment in kindness and humanity is always good but sustaining the basic living standards for people in Syria is also an essential ingredient of sustainable peace. That is in everybody's interest."

UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi said: "After a decade of exile, refugees' hardship has been compounded by the crushing impact of the pandemic, lost livelihoods and education, deepening hunger

and desperation. The hard-earned gains we've collectively achieved over years are already at risk. The international community cannot turn their backs on the refugees or their hosts. Refugees and their hosts must get nothing less than our unfaltering commitment, solidarity and support. A failure to do so will be catastrophic for the people and the region."

UNDP Administrator Achim Steiner said: "It has been 12 months like no other for people across the world. Yet, for refugees from Syria and their host communities in the region, the COVID-19 pandemic hit during a decade-long crisis - stretching them to breaking point. At present, poverty and inequality are skyrocketing as hundreds of thousands of people have lost their jobs and livelihoods. And countries that host refugees are struggling to provide basic services like healthcare and water. Now, more than ever, the support of the international community is needed to meet life-saving humanitarian needs - and to tackle the acute development emergency that the region now faces."

At last year's conference in Brussels, the international community pledged \$5.5 billion in funding to support humanitarian, resilience and development activities in 2020.

UN-Habitat completed the rehabilitation of two secondary schools in Sinjar

Sinjar, 30 March 2021 - At the end of March, UN-Habitat completed the rehabilitation of Dokry Secondary School and Rawabi Secondary School for Boys in Dokry village in Sinjar with funding from the Government of Japan, under the project titled “Support to Reconstruction and Peacebuilding of Liberated Cities in Iraq – Phase III”. Works have included debris removal, installation/rehabilitation of ceiling, doors and windows, installation of water tank and pipes, and the electrical network. The project created jobs for 135 community members. The school is due to reopen in mid-April, for the new academic year. The total number of the students are 880.



New housing and community support to survivors of the Kocho massacre



Erbil, 1 April 2021 - Nadia’s Initiative (NI), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) are working together to scale up support to Yazidi survivors of genocide. USAID, IOM and NI will assist members of the community who survived the genocide in accessing durable solutions through the construction of new housing units in close proximity to the old town, alongside other tailored measures to help families feel safe, heard, and supported in their recovery. IOM Iraq and NI will also support the community’s memorialization efforts, through the conversion of select sites into memorials, and measures to protect the cemetery where the remains of individuals exhumed from Kocho’s mass graves are now being reburied. “My community of Kocho has

experienced some of the worst atrocities known to mankind. Those who survived the genocide have been waiting almost seven years to return home. Thousands of women and children are still missing in captivity. Hundreds of men and women who were killed have yet to be identified. Survivors of sexual violence and single mothers are struggling to find shelter and adequate support,” said Nadia Murad, Yazidi activist and President of Nadia’s Initiative. “I am grateful to the US government’s support of the Yazidi community. This project is a critical step toward enabling the dignified return of displaced Kocho community members and facilitating the rebuilding of a dignified life.”

“The atrocities faced by survivors of genocide make it incredibly painful to return to the exact location where these horrendous acts took place. Meaningful and inclusive consultation and participation with both survivors and the broader community are essential to ensuring the success and sustainability of this initiative. We are proud to be partnering with IOM and Nadia’s Initiative to help survivors of genocide safely heal and rebuild their lives,” said John Cardenas, USAID Mission Director in Iraq.

In the early hours of August 3, 2014, ISIS converged on Sinjar, the ancestral homelands of the Yazidis in northwest Iraq. ISIS launched a genocidal campaign against the minority group, causing over 90 percent of Sinjar’s residents to flee, including thousands who were forced to ascend the nearby mountain range on foot. Over the

following hours and days, thousands of Yazidis were killed, and over 6,400 others were abducted.

Kocho, a Yazidi village in South Sinjar that was home to approximately 1,700 people, witnessed some of ISIS’s worst atrocities when armed militants placed the population under siege. Faced with an initial demand to either convert to Islam or face execution, community leaders entered into frantic negotiations to identify a way to enable villagers to leave safely. But on August 15, 2014, after 12 terror-stricken days, ISIS rounded up and massacred the town’s men, boys, and older women; the remaining women and girls were abducted and sold into sexual slavery. Although Iraqi forces re-established control of Kocho in 2017, the village remains derelict, with the majority of the community still residing in difficult conditions in IDP camps in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI). Many survivors express a desire to return to their land and traditional livelihoods, but state that they cannot go back to the exact scene of the atrocities.

“Destruction of housing, loss of livelihoods, and a lack of vital services are clear obstacles to return for displaced populations across Iraq. For survivors of ISIS’s crimes in Kocho, the trauma presents an additional barrier,” said IOM Iraq Chief of Mission Gerard Waite. “Measures to support Yazidi survivors of genocide in achieving durable solutions, in order to begin to rebuild their lives, are greatly overdue. We are glad to be working with USAID, Nadia’s Initiative, and the greater community to accelerate these efforts.”

Release of the 2021-2022 Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP)

Erbil, 06 April 2021 - UNHCR would like to inform you about the release of the 2021-2022 Iraq 3RP (Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan) for Syrian refugees. Entering its tenth year, the Syria situation remains one of the largest refugee crises in the world, with millions of Syrian refugees in the region, including around 245,000 in Iraq. In 2015, recognizing the unique challenges facing host countries and communities in so generously hosting Syrian refugees, the international community instituted a comprehensive approach called the 3RP. Going beyond emergency assistance, the new approach combined humanitarian and development responses to the Syria crisis into a single coherent plan in line with national plans and priorities in Iraq, in close collaboration with the KRG (Kurdistan Regional Government) Ministry of Planning.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated already existing vulnerabilities of refugees residing in Iraq. Movement restrictions, combined with the temporary closure of shops and non-essential businesses, had a negative effect on food security and the ability to meet basic needs, resulting in an increased need for food and cash assistance, and livelihoods

interventions. Assistance delivery modalities had to be modified in 2020 due to the pandemic, with many activities being performed remotely. With the pandemic still ongoing, remote modalities are likely to continue, with activities transitioning into in-person modality, when possible and keeping health precautions in place. Additional programming will be put in place to address exacerbated needs caused by the COVID-19 situation.

In 2021-2022 Iraq 3RP partners will continue to advocate for an effective legal refugee protection framework in Iraq and provide humanitarian and basic needs assistance, targeting the most vulnerable households and new arrivals without any community support. However, given the protracted displacement of the majority of Syrian refugees, the 3RP response will continue to focus on a gradual transition from an emergency humanitarian response to a longer-term solutions-oriented approach, including the graduation of refugees from dependency on humanitarian assistance to self-reliance and the inclusion of refugees in public services and national systems, strongly aligned with the overarching objectives of the

Global Compact on Refugees.

This gradual transition complements humanitarian activities with programmes that aim to strengthen the resilience of the refugee community and the host community alike, empower host authorities through capacity building in service delivery and coordination, enhance income-generating programming and engage stronger with development actors. By actively bridging the divide between humanitarian and development programming, the 3RP response will highlight the sustainability and cost-efficiency of its interventions. The decrease in humanitarian actors and funding opportunities in Iraq will remain a risk in 2021-2022 and could jeopardize a full transition to self-reliance and national ownership in the absence of sustainable alternatives. This risk needs to be mitigated by 3RP partners by aiming at responsible disengagement, in which transitioning to national ownership is gradual and based on available capacities at government side, and not on lack of funding solely.

Multilateral briefings to relevant stakeholders will be organized during the next months.

Japan supports internally displaced persons, returnees, and Syrian refugees in Iraq

Baghdad, 7 April 2021 - The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) welcomes the generous contribution of over USD 12 million from the government and people of Japan. This contribution will help UNHCR work on solutions for displaced populations in Iraq as well as support ongoing assistance programmes.

The contribution highlights the longstanding engagement and importance the Government of Japan has placed in addressing the humanitarian needs of internally displaced and conflict-affected communities as well as refugees in Iraq, thereby alleviating suffering and working together towards long-term solutions.

In 2021, UNHCR Iraq's priorities will be ensuring continued access to free health services through support to camp-based primary health care centers (PHCC), the supply of medications, referral of suspected COVID-19 cases for care, and the integration of camp PHCCs within the public health system.

Access to documentation, residency permits, security clearance, birth, and marriage registration. Providing support to community-based child protection structures and to government ministries to strengthen child protection systems. Ensuring refugee protection and rights through the provision of legal counselling and assistance.

H.E. Mr. SUZUKI Kotaro, Ambassador of Japan to the Republic of Iraq, stated: "Japan had provided over USD 500 million as humanitarian assistance to the people affected by the crisis since 2014. Additionally, Japan has decided to provide a new assistance package for Iraq amounting to USD 50 million, including this project by UNHCR." "I praise UNHCR for its work and determination to engage the extended and complicated humanitarian situation, even exacerbated by COVID-19." "Japan is happy to assist their endeavour in Iraq, and I hope that the assistance will alleviate suffering of displaced persons, returnees and Syrian refugees in Iraq, including referral of

suspected COVID-19 cases for care."

"Although considerable efforts have been made with regard to solutions for displaced populations, further intervention is required to support the Government of Iraq's efforts in reconciliation, reconstruction, and resumption of services. In areas of return, resilience-building, peaceful coexistence, and social cohesion programmes are required. With contributions from donors, including Japan, we can support those in need who may be experiencing difficulties accessing essential services and finding lasting solutions to their displacement," said Philippa Candler, Representative of UNHCR in Iraq.

The Government of Japan is one of UNHCR's most important contributors. Thanks to the generous contributions of Japan, thousands of IDPs, returnees and Syrian refugees in Iraq have benefited from enhanced assistance in past years.



Humanitarian actors in Iraq will in 2021 concentrate on meeting the needs of both returnees and vulnerable IDPs living out of camps

Baghdad, 11 April 2021 - Several members of the UN Humanitarian Country Team attended today a conference hosted in Baghdad by the Ministry of Migration and Displacement. The conference focused on addressing the continued challenges of protracted displacement in Iraq and taking stock of achievements to date. Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General for Iraq and Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq (DSRSG/RC/HC), Ms. Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano, gave remarks on what the United Nations and its partners have done so far to help the Iraqi people, and outlined planned assistance for returns, stabilization and development in 2021. Here are Ms. Vojáčková-Sollorano's remarks in full:

Your Excellency President Saleh,
Minister of Migration and Displacement Faeg,

Esteemed Dignitaries, ladies and gentlemen,

It is my honour to be invited here today to attend this conference on addressing the challenges of ending displacement in Iraq.

The problem facing us today is well-known, and has been eloquently described by the previous speakers. So I will not spend time outlining the issues – the Iraqi population know better than anyone the consequences of armed conflict and repeated displacement as a consequence. Instead, I would like to lay out what role the UN can play in supporting Iraq and in finding durable solutions for displaced persons, which means even returning to their own homes, settle safely elsewhere or to make it possible to remain in current settlements.

It is important at the outset, however, to acknowledge the achievements which have been made to date. Almost five million people have returned home since the height of displacement in 2016. Millions of people have managed to resume their lives, their businesses, their family connections. And the UN has been working side by side with the Ministry of Migration and Displacement in assisting in managing IDP camps as well as helping these families return and re-build their lives.

The humanitarian context facing Iraq in 2021 has significantly changed from just few years ago. While needs in Iraq continue to be primarily driven by the effects of the past conflict and rapid camp closures, COVID-19 and the



decline in state budget presented an additional shock in 2020 and have driven additional parts of the Iraqi population into vulnerable situation. As a consequence, we have, to the extent possible, adjusted our humanitarian and development support to the current challenges by expanding and refocusing its geographic coverage.

From this point forward, humanitarian actors in Iraq will in 2021 no longer primarily focus on servicing the needs of IDPs living in camps, but instead will concentrate on meeting the needs of both returnees and vulnerable IDPs living out of camps who don't have the means to lead a stable and self-sufficient life. The needs of these populations can be less visible, but are often more severe as those who still live in camps.

The United Nations and its partners will need to continue to scale-up in areas where we weren't previously present, and where access may previously have been limited. We will need to provide additional populations with specialized support, such as : host communities, families who have perceived affiliations to ISIL, female-headed households, and children who have never been registered for school. Those who live on the margins of society and cannot rebuild their lives without additional assistance.

However, we also have to acknowledge that not everyone will be able to return home—either because their homes no longer exist, or because their communities are not able to accept them. For this population, alternative solutions will have to be found, whether it is integration with local communities in their areas of displacement, or resettlement elsewhere, all of which

will need specialized support.

While the geographic focus of our work is shifting, the needs remain much the same. Iraqis seek the repair and reconstruction of war-damaged homes; the clearance of explosive ordnance; social cohesion; enforcement of social housing, land and property rights; improvements to the security situation; creation of employment and livelihoods opportunities; restoration of basic services; and improvements in access to quality health care and education. All these challenges are substantial and will continue to require an all of government effort as well as all assistance efforts complement each other's work. The challenges for out-of-camp IDPs and returnees cannot be addressed by international support alone.

Ending the protracted displacement will require sustained engagement of and with government counterparts, at the national, regional and local levels. The 2021 Humanitarian Response Plan outlines the humanitarian community's detailed plans for the year ahead based on an evidence-based analysis of the needs of IDPs and their communities, and presents the financial requirements needed to achieve its purely humanitarian aims.

As Humanitarian Coordinator, it is my honor to oversee the work of humanitarian partners. As Resident Coordinator, I have to ensure that all UN development work is assisting the government to reach the 2030 agenda. In this context, I pledge that the UN will support the government in addressing the needs of Iraq's most vulnerable.

Thank you, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen.

IOM Iraq trained community mobilizers and help desk staff to improve their ability to communicate with the IDPs in the camp

Baghdad, 18 April 2021 - Internally displaced persons are among the most vulnerable in the world; those living in camps face even more challenges.

It is important to listen to their needs

and concerns, in order to improve camp management and the provision of services.

IOM Iraq trained community mobilizers and help desk staff in

Jeddah Camp, Ninewa Governorate, on Communication with Communities - Accountability to Affected Populations (CwC-AAP) techniques, to improve their ability to communicate with the IDPs in the camp, and to discuss feedback mechanisms and COVID-19 precautions while conducting any field activities. The trainings sessions were conducted in small groups so that participants could maintain appropriate distance as a COVID-19 precaution.

These trainings are supported by USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance.



WASHing back hope for the people of southern Iraq

Muthanna, 18 April 2021 - Muthanna is Iraq's second largest governorate in terms of geographical area. Located in the southern part of the country and made up mostly of desert and dry land, Muthanna has faced chronic water scarcity for years. For a governorate that depends largely on agriculture, this scarcity has pushed almost half of its population below the national poverty line.

In addition to the lack of water, the quality of Muthanna's water networks is very poor as a result of chronic underdevelopment and lack of maintenance. With the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, the need for quality water and hygiene infrastructure on site in home and healthcare facilities became all the more urgent especially among Muthanna's more remote rural

communities.

UNICEF went to work. With the support of Australian Aid, UNICEF install 82 handwashing facilities in almost 50 health care centers, including centers dedicated to the treatment of COVID-19, cardiac patients, and pulmonological cases within two months.

The impact on the community was immediate.

"Most of the children and parents here didn't know how to wash their hands properly and how important it is to do so, especially during a pandemic. I am washing my hands when I enter the health care center and after I leave it, and whenever I can. We haven't had something like this before. I feel safer now", explained Hadiya Abd Ugap, a resident of Muthanna.

20,500 people in Muthanna have



benefited from the newly installed hand washing facilities so far. Building on the impact of its intervention in Muthanna, UNICEF decided to assess the capacity of all health care facilities across Iraq, including access to safe water, safe sanitation, safe management of solid waste, to see how it can replicate the success in Muthanna.

Addressing fire safety issues in the camps

Baghdad, 25 April 2021 - Heating or cooking appliances in tents, electrical hazards and a lack of awareness around safety techniques can lead to fire safety issues in any camp.

With support from the Government of Germany, IOM Iraq provided training sessions on fire prevention awareness and preparedness for 105 IDPs residing in Jeddah Camp, Ninewa Governorate. The trainings were led by IOM Iraq Technical Teams and Community Mobilizers, and a certified fire safety trainer from Civil Defense/Qayyarah. Participants were taught how to identify and reduce fire risks caused from electrical hazards, as well as how to be prepared and respond during a fire incident.



From skills and learning to decent jobs: ILO holds its first face-to-face SIYB training of trainers in Iraq



Erbil, 3 March 2021 - Trainers from a wide spectrum of financial institutions and NGOs in Iraq have completed a two-week training of trainers workshop in February 2021 on the ILO's Start and Improve Your Business (SIYB) programme, to support young refugees, internally displaced people, and vulnerable host community members who are interested in setting up their own small business or improving existing ones.

The training, organised in partnership with the Iraqi Company for Banking Guarantees, brought together 20 potential trainers from 12 different organizations including banks and microfinance institutions that the ILO is working with, in addition to trainers from UNICEF-supported youth centres and partner NGOs, as well as local NGOs supporting Small and Medium Enterprises.

The trainers will go on to deliver the training package to youth being supported by different interventions implemented by the ILO. The package covers everything from generating a business idea and setting-up a business to improving existing businesses.

"The SIYB programme is very important for us because it provides a very solid resource that we can use to develop the capacities of our beneficiaries so they are able to start or improve their businesses," said Noha Andrios, one of the participants, who works for Zakho Small Village Projects (ZSVP), a local NGO which focuses on supporting livelihoods projects for vulnerable communities.

The face-to-face training covered

theoretical and practical topics on three inter-related packages: Generate Your Business (GYB), Start Your Business (SYB) and Improve Your Business (IYB), which are designed to respond to the progressive stages of business development.

During the workshop, participants reviewed SIYB modules and practiced their training skills in preparation for delivery. Towards the end of the workshop, participants developed a SIYB training plan outlining next steps and a strategy to train on SIYB in a systematic and sustainable way.

The training of trainers was also an opportunity to play the SIYB Business Game, a practical simulation tool to help participants understand the realities of starting and running a business, which participants can use during their training of entrepreneurs.

"It is not enough to simply finance entrepreneurs and small business owners. It is important to train them on the administrative and financial aspects of having a business, so they become more capable in managing their business, and we hope that through this training of trainers will be able to transfer this knowledge to them," said Bilal Qasim from the Central Bank of Iraq, during the training.

The workshop was a joint collaboration under two ILO projects, under the framework of Partnership for improving prospects for forcibly displaced persons and host communities (PROSPECTS), a multi-agency programme supported by the Government of the Netherlands, and the project 'Improved BDS and

entrepreneurship education targeting MSMEs and youth for decent work creation in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq' supported by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), and implemented in partnership with the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ), which seeks to promote decent work opportunities in small and medium sized enterprises.

Under PROSPECTS, the ILO and UNICEF are working together to help young people transition from learning to decent work, using an inclusive approach through a range of comprehensive and complementary self-employment and wage employment interventions. The trainers will be able to reach 350 young people and business owners during the first year with the aim of institutionalizing Business Development Services (BDS) within their organization's work plan for the future. This training of trainers is the first practical step in linking the trained youth through UNICEF's partners with access to affordable financial services that will help them start up their businesses and establish a decent livelihood.

"There are many young graduates with high potentials and some have business ideas but they don't have the right opportunities to execute them, whether financially or technically. This training will ensure that they receive the proper knowledge which they can then adapt to their own business ideas," said Ahmad Hajo, works with ACTED's team, who attended the training.

Under the BMZ-supported interventions, the training builds the capacity of BDS providers to deliver the training to potential entrepreneurs, start-ups and existing businesses. This activity is the second of two training of trainers through which the project seeks to support at least 50 BDS providers, which, in turn, will provide quality services to approximately 1,250 potential and existing entrepreneurs in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. For this purpose, the project facilitated the SIYB programme adaptation to the regional and national context, and is now available in Arabic, Kurdish Sorani and Badini, thus making the program more inclusive.

The certification process will take around 6 months to ensure that trainers have assimilated the core material and are capable to continue delivery to more clients as part of their institutional BDS support.

Steering Committee of EU-funded local development programme prioritizes decentralization and donor coordination

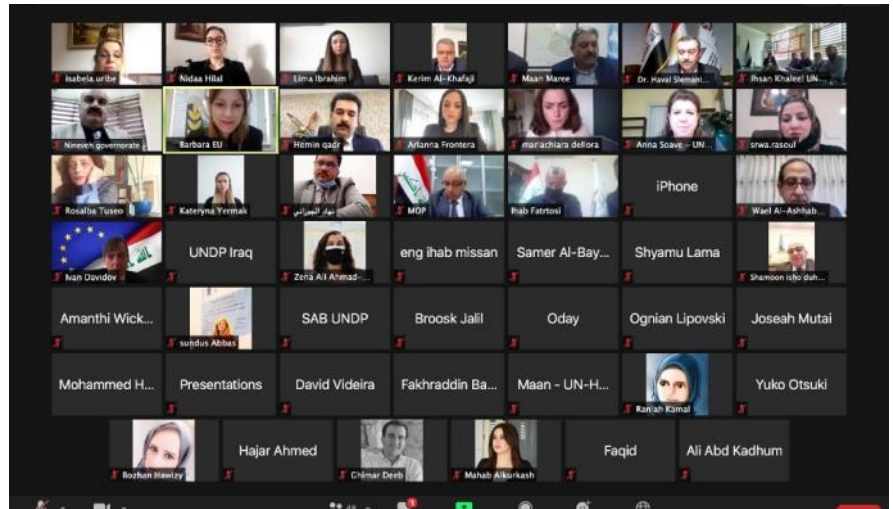
Baghdad, 08 March 2021- The Steering Committee of the programme Supporting Recovery and Stability in Iraq through Local Development held its second meeting on 08 March 2021, online, to discuss the way forward. The programme is funded by the European Union (EU) and implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in partnership with the UN Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat).

The Steering Committee endorsed the programme's annual workplan and prioritized the acceleration of decentralization activities and the establishment of a donor coordination mechanism, while continuing to implement local development projects in nine Governorates: Anbar, Basra, Duhok, Erbil, Missan, Ninewah, Salah al-Din, Sulaimaniyah, and Thi Qar.

The activities revolve around supporting the decentralization of powers from central to local authorities, including through the development of institutional capacities, the optimization of revenue generation systems, peer-to-peer partnerships with EU municipalities, and the empowerment of civil society to advocate for local development causes. Furthermore, they focus on promoting eco-tourism, the restoration of cultural heritage, green energy solutions, creation of innovative public spaces, and improving access to jobs for local communities. The projects derived from the Provincial Development Plans and the Sustainable Energy Action Plans, developed under the flagship EU-funded Local Area Development Programme (LADP II) that concluded in mid 2018.

Deputy Minister of Planning at the Federal Government of Iraq, Dr. Maher Johan, said: "This programme brought promising development projects that respond to the local economic needs of the Governorates, from job creation to tourism and cultural heritage preservation. Peering with European municipalities is also important to improve the development path at the local level. The Ministry of Planning is grateful for the EU, UNDP and UN-Habitat, and is ready to fully support and facilitate donor coordination while doing the utmost to assist with the decentralization of powers."

In turn, Deputy Minister of Planning at the Kurdistan Regional Government, Mr. Zagros Fattah, noted: "Sustainable energy solutions are among the top priorities of the Kurdistan Regional



Government under the Vision 2030, as well as the Provincial Development Plans and Sustainable Energy Action Plans. We express appreciation to the EU and our partners for supporting and implementing green energy projects and public spaces that will contribute to the environmental transformation initiatives in the Region. We are also looking forward to the results brought by peering with the EU local authorities on decentralization and COVID-19 response in the near future."

Head of Cooperation at the EU Delegation to the Republic of Iraq, Ms. Barbara Egger, said: "Our joint programme with UNDP and UN-Habitat for 'Supporting Recovery and Stability in Iraq through Local Development', is crucially important to the European Union's engagement in Iraq. We believe it is a good example of the strong commitment the European Union has in assisting the Government of Iraq in its efforts to shape a more inclusive and accountable local development, supporting local authorities in implementing their decentralized functions and ensuring better services and livelihood opportunities for the Iraqi population. The past year, with citizens' protests and the hardship effect of the COVID-19 pandemic, has confirmed the continued relevance of this programme. Today, it is ever more important that we are jointly able to demonstrate our real commitment to people and assist them, delivering better services and jobs while supporting the broad reform agenda of the country, notably on decentralization."

Resident Representative of UNDP Iraq, Ms. Zena Ali-Ahmad, reaffirmed "UNDP's commitment to support local

development efforts in Iraq." She Added: "We have an excellent partnership with the European Union that will contribute to enhanced good governance at the local level, strengthened capacity and powers of local authorities, and improved living conditions through job creation and economic growth. We strongly believe that combining socio-economic development with environmental preservation is the only way to serve local communities and empower Governorates with the right instruments for local development."

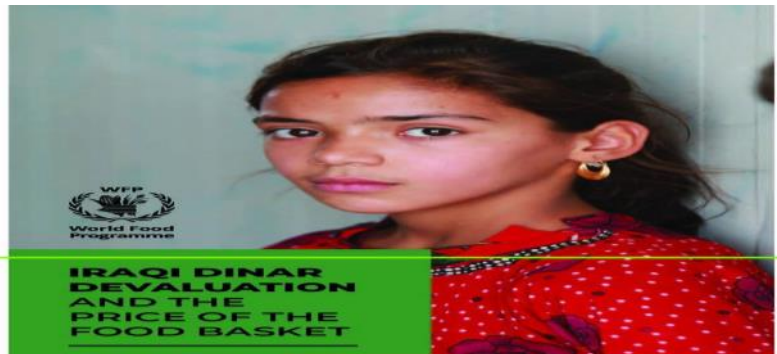
Head of UN-Habitat Iraq programme, Mr. Wael Al-Ashhab, said: "This ambitious programme is testimony to the longstanding partnership and trust that exists between the EU, UNDP and UN-Habitat, working together towards the common goal of supporting the government of Iraq to deliver better services to its citizens and deliver local development agendas. In the coming year, we count on being able to build upon the successful collaboration with the Directorates' and Municipal staff in our target cities to further widen the impact of our area-based urban recovery interventions by enhancing data-based decision-making and revenue generation strategies."

The programme Supporting Recovery and Stability in Iraq through Local Development aims at contributing to the stability and socio-economic development of Iraq through enhancing good governance at the local level. It is working to improve the ability of selected governorates to efficiently manage local government and public services. Economic growth and job creation are prioritized, with a focus on green projects and the inclusion of youth and women.

WFP report: Iraqi Dinar devaluation & the price of the food basket

Baghdad, 12 March 2021 - Significant decline in oil revenues, a history of expansion of the state's role in the economy and competitive currency exchange rates from neighboring countries pushed the Iraqi Government into a budget deficit by the end of 2020. This led to the Government taking a firm measure for policy reform to mitigate risks and restore the economy.

The report is available at <https://bit.ly/2NMZXux>



From conflict to recovery: promoting decent employment in Iraq



Baghdad, 16 March 2021 - The ILO established its first country coordination office in Baghdad a year ago. Ms. Maha Kattaa, ILO Iraq Country Coordinator, reflects on her first year in Iraq as country coordinator, and sheds light on how the ILO is working with its partners to promote employment opportunities and decent work in the country.

What are the main challenges and opportunities you've encountered since arriving in Baghdad?

I arrived in Baghdad as the ILO country coordinator a year ago, when our office was established. The main challenges were related to issues of security and mobility, which quickly worsened with the outbreak of COVID-19.

But despite the challenges, there were many opportunities to build our country team, to establish new relations with partners, constituents and other UN agencies, to mobilise resources and build new projects, and to leverage our experience from the region to address the labour market needs of Iraq and its people.

Iraq is one of the biggest Arab States countries the ILO is operating in, with a population of nearly 40 million. It is vast, known for its ancient civilisation and heritage, its natural resources and

endless potential.

Yet, due to decades of conflict and the mass displacement of people, Iraq's need for humanitarian assistance has outweighed that of development for many years. But now, there is an urgent need to work on recovery and development as part of the country's post-conflict reconstruction.

And this is where the ILO comes in.

Our Decent Work Country Programme focuses on three main areas of support; ensuring that private sector development supports the creation of new jobs; extending and strengthening social protection and addressing child labour; and improving social dialogue to promote rights at work.

How is the ILO working with partners to help promote decent work opportunities for vulnerable communities in Iraq?

Job creation is a key priority, especially in the context of forced displacement, to help vulnerable communities become more self-reliant. Employment is dignity, and people want to be self-sufficient and self-reliant and they want to provide for their families.

Part of the government's plan to respond to economic shocks, is to create jobs through public works. The ILO is implementing Employment-Intensive Investment Programme (EIIP)

interventions to create much needed employment for vulnerable groups and to support local infrastructure development.

Through these interventions, we are building an integrated approach to EIIP, whereby workers are able to develop demand-driven skills and access private sector jobs in the longer-term through employment services such as job-matching and e-counselling. We are developing Standard Operating Procedures to provide an integrated employment intensive investment system that will aid a shift from emergency cash-based activities towards more productive and sustainable job creation.

We also want to encourage youth and women entrepreneurs to set up their own small businesses. We will help train them on how to establish and manage these businesses, using some of the ILO's advanced entrepreneurship and financial literacy training programmes, while also linking them with financial services.

Job creation is a key entry point to important issues, such as skills development, social protection, and private sector development.

How has COVID-19 impacted the ILO's priorities and implementation in Iraq?

The COVID-19 crisis has shown us that all our priorities need to be interlinked through an integrated approach, in order to address current labour market and employment needs, as well as the longer-term decent work priorities of the country.

Despite all the physical restrictions preventing us from carrying out our work in traditional ways, we've learned that the sky is still our limit. We must continue to keep our hearts and minds open to innovative ideas that can help us achieve our goals in supporting workers and the institutions that employ them.

Leave no one behind: land tenure in post-conflict Iraq

Baghdad, 16 March 2021 - Minorities, women, and persons internally displaced face severe land tenure issues in post-conflict Iraq. In this acute analysis, UN-Habitat Iraq presents ways forward for conflict-affected areas.

Iraq has experienced several waves of mass displacement over the last 40 years, which have contributed to tenure issues, including the loss of property,

forced deportation and prolonged displacement. Addressing housing, land and property rights in Iraq is thus critical for its reconstruction and peacebuilding process.

UN-Habitat is the focal point within the United Nations system for all urbanisation and human settlements matters and is mandated to promote sustainable urban development. In Iraq, UN-Habitat chairs the Housing,

Land and Protection Sub-cluster under the Protection Cluster. Based on the strong technical expertise on urban and housing, land and property rights issues, UN-Habitat has been addressing tenure issues in post-conflict Iraq since 2016, implementing several projects that specifically focus on Yazidi minority in Sinjar, IDPs and returnees to conflict-affected areas, and vulnerable women.

FAOR in Iraq with the Minister of Planning and the Permanent Representative of Iraq to FAO in Rome, discussed strengthening the cooperation framework for the development of the agricultural sector

Baghdad, 15 March 2021 – H.E. Minister of Planning, Dr. Khaled Battal Al-Najm received Dr. Salah El Hajj Hassan, Representative of the Food Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in Iraq and H.E. Ambassador Safia Al-Suhail, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Iraq to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

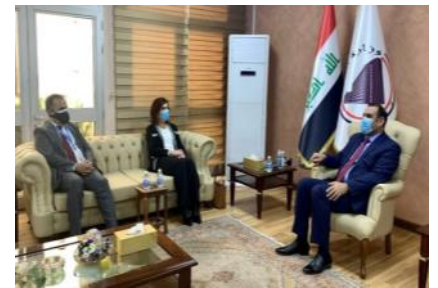
The meeting aimed to strengthen cooperation between FAO Iraq and the ministry of planning. The discussions focused on enhancing the joint framework's implementation for the development of the agricultural sector in Iraq and the collaboration mechanism between the relevant ministries. The joint framework was identified as the appropriate road map for setting each ministry's priorities in detail and align the plan with each ministry's strategic objectives.

In his welcoming notes, Dr. Khaled

Battal Al-Najm emphasized the importance of reviving the agricultural sector to be a leader in Iraq's economy and maximize its contribution to national production; he also commended the effectiveness of FAO Iraq in supporting the agricultural sector.

Ambassador Safia Al-Suhail discussed best practices in promoting and activating the cooperation framework, stressing the Iraq's need for the FAO support in programs that target the agricultural sector and farmers, improve the environment, and build or strengthen capacities through programs that provide institutional and individual support.

Dr. ElHajj Hassan stressed the importance of the joint framework as an effective, innovative, and sustainable mechanism for coordinating Iraq's agricultural sector development. This framework will



guarantee the best investment of resources in supporting sustainable agriculture growth to achieve food security, employment generation, and climate change resilience. He added that FAO will provide the necessary support to improve Iraq's agriculture sector. At the end of the meeting, the Minister thanked FAO's delegation and highlighted the importance of cooperation and coordination with the FAO to develop Iraq's agricultural sector.

FAO Representative in Iraq and Ambassador Safia Al-Suhail discussed ways to enhance and strengthen cooperation with Baghdad Governorate

Baghdad, 17 March 2021 – Dr. Salah El Hajj Hassan, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Representative in Iraq, accompanied by H.E. Ambassador Safia Al-Suhail, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Iraq to FAO, met with the Governor of Baghdad, Mr. Mohammed Jaber al-Atta. The discussion focused on FAO's intervention and programs in Iraq and the agriculture sector's challenges in Iraq.

Mr. Al-Atta discussed ways to enhance and strengthen cooperation and coordination with FAO in Iraq. He expressed hope that, through increased collaboration, the organization would rehabilitate the agricultural sector in Baghdad's rural areas to achieve food security and sustainable agriculture and

rural development. Noting that these rural areas around Baghdad city have suffered from crises and climate changes. Ambassador Al-Suhail praised the important role played by FAO in supporting the agricultural sector, achieving food security and sustainable agricultural development, and stressed the need to support the agricultural sector in rural areas of the Baghdad Governorate.

Dr. Elhajj Hassan presented FAO's projects to the Governor in Iraq that support agricultural livelihoods' by revitalizing food production, value chains, and income generation and aim to secure water systems by rehabilitating the irrigation in Iraq. Dr. El Hajj Hassan thanked the Governor for his willingness

to support the agriculture sector in Baghdad's rural areas. Elhajj Hassan also stated, "Through FAO projects, FAO will provide the necessary support to improve the agriculture sector that will positively impact all of Iraq and to achieve rural and pre-urban development. At the end of the meeting, the Governor thanked the FAO delegation. He also praised FAO's efforts in Iraq to revitalize the agriculture sector and reduce poverty through its support to food production development and sustainability. He expressed his office's readiness to fully cooperate in developing the agricultural sector in Baghdad's governorate. Dr. El Hajj Hassan assured that FAO will be providing the necessary support to the farmers in Baghdad's rural areas.

ILO holds workshop on Strategic Compliance Planning for labor inspection and occupational safety and health in Iraq

Baghdad, 23 March 2021 - The ILO held a workshop for government, employer, and worker representatives in Iraq introducing its “Approach to Strategic Compliance Planning for Labour Inspectorates” tool, as part of efforts to support and strengthen the labour inspection system in the country and develop a national labour inspection policy and action plan, in line with international labour standards.

The training, which was held in Baghdad on the 22-23 March, brought together senior labour inspectors from the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, including representatives of the National Center for Occupational Health and Safety. It also included representatives from the General Federation of Iraq Workers, the General Federation of Iraq Trade Unions, the Conference of Iraqi Workers Federations and Unions as well as the Iraqi Federation of Industries working in the field of labour inspection and Occupational Safety and Health (OSH).

“We are happy to launch activities with our partners aimed at improving the labour inspection system in Iraq so that it can better respond to the evolving and changing needs of the world of work, particularly in light of the COVID-19 pandemic,” said Dr Maha Kattaa, ILO Country Coordinator in Iraq. “Supporting progress towards a strategic compliance model for labour inspection in Iraq is a key priority for the ILO in enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of the labour inspection system and promoting decent work in the country.”

The workshop introduced participants to the ILO’s strategic compliance model, which has been developed by the ILO’s Labour Administration, Labour Inspection and Occupational Safety and Health Branch (LABADMIN/OSH) in



Geneva to support labour inspectorates to promote compliance at the workplace. It is based on a six-step exercise to formulate, sequence and operationalize broader thinking and action that will help labour inspectorates attain the goal of sustained compliance.

“This tool is very comprehensive and provides us with useful information that will help us develop targeted and tailored interventions,” said Mr Raed Jabbar Bahedh Director General of the Department of Labour and Vocational Training at the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. “We look forward to working closely with the ILO to develop and align our labour inspection system with international labour standards, to promote the rights of workers in the private sector, execute Labour Law No 37 of 2015, as well as the retirement and social security law for workers, and improve the management of foreign workers, while providing opportunities for young Iraqis who wish to work in the private sector. The ministry seeks to support the inspection system with logistical measures in order to facilitate the work of inspectors.”

Through a series of workshops on Strategic Compliance Planning, the ILO will provide technical assistance to the labour inspectorate to develop a strategic compliance plan based on the

ILO’s strategic compliance intervention model and build their capacity to implement the plan through pilot interventions in selected sectors.

ILO’s efforts to strengthen the labour inspection and OSH systems in Iraq falls under the framework of a project entitled “Enhancing labour governance, inspection and working conditions in response to COVID-19” which is supported by the European Union.

“Increasing employment and ensuring decent work for all are essential aspects of sustainable development. As European Union, we sustain that quality employment and decent work conditions help reduce inequalities and poverty, and empower people, especially women, young people and the most vulnerable such as people with disabilities. We therefore support Iraq in creating and promoting jobs in the agriculture sector and beyond that provide decent earnings, ensuring safe working conditions, providing social protection, and safeguarding workers’ rights,” said Ms Barbara Egger, Head of Cooperation for the EU in Iraq. “This workshop on Strategic Compliance Planning for labour inspection and occupational safety and health is only the start of our EU engagement on the decent work agenda in Iraq and we are looking forward to continuing our engagement with the Iraqi authorities and ILO.”

The programme places emphasis on compliance with decent work in the agricultural sector, where pilot interventions will be implemented to support up to 2,000 workers, including women. This will include interventions to improve working conditions and compliance with national legislation and International Labour Standards, as well as interventions to promote workers’ skills development and improve the quality and availability of employment services to workers.

Canadian Ambassador visits Mosul

Mosul, 23 March 2021 – Today UNDP hosted Canadian Ambassador to Iraq, Ulric Shannon in Mosul, during his visit to some projects implemented by UNDP and supported by Canada.

Ambassador Shannon inaugurated the newly rehabilitated Women's Dormitory in Northern Technical University, which will support 250 students.

Ambassador Shannon and his team visited also Mosul University's Central

Library and Theater Hall currently being rehabilitated by UNDP. During the visit they launched the 'Canadian Friends of Mosul Library' initiative.

Ambassador Shannon also engaged with students at the Students Centre and discussed with them on their plans for the future.

To date, UNDP in Iraq has supported 50 projects at Mosul University where 53,800 students have enrolled this year.



UNESCO, Japan and the EU strengthen links between public and private sectors in Mosul

Mosul, 31 March 2021 - UNESCO works to strengthen links between the public and private sectors under the "Job creation for youth in Mosul" project funded by the Japanese Government and within the "Reviving Mosul and Basra Old Cities" project, funded by European Union. They are both part of the Initiative to Revive the Spirit of Mosul. UNESCO aims at facilitating Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) mechanisms between local authorities and the private sector for

improvement of small-scale infrastructures and services in the old city and the management of rehabilitated sites, to facilitate the establishment of a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) mechanism/platform. Two days of workshops were conducted at the Vocational Training Centre in Mosul with the participation of more than 40 Companies/Employers from the construction sector in Mosul. These workshops helped provide a clear

understanding of the areas of cooperation between the two sectors.



New FAO and WFP study reveals opportunities to strengthen food value chains in Iraq

Baghdad, 31 March 2021 - The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in Iraq (FAO) and the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) released today 'Agricultural value chain study in Iraq: dates, grapes, tomatoes and wheat.' This important review covering 2019-20 was conducted with the aim of identifying priority needs and interventions associated with the rehabilitation and long-term competitiveness of Iraq's agricultural sector through an analysis of market linkages and bottlenecks in key value chains.

"We have produced a comprehensive study for the sector that provides a lot of insights into a number of prospective value chains for investments. We have come to realize that we need to have a holistic approach if we want to be successful. This requires us to consider weaknesses across the whole value chain and form partnerships to address the various needs. This would for sure provide us with the best chances for success, and create many sustainable jobs," said Dr. Salah El Hajj Hassan,



FAO Representative in Iraq. FAO and WFP together with the REACH Initiative conducted a cross-national market and gender-sensitive value chain analysis in Iraq, using desk reviews and analysis of secondary data, supported by individual interviews, focus group discussions with farmers, and key informant interviews with actors and experts along each value chain. The findings include the need to improve services required for the agriculture sector, identify the requirements at different stages of the production cycle, unlocking investments to improve agricultural practices in order to increase the

revenue for farmers and traders, in addition to highlighting the importance of strengthened cooperation and collective action in marketing, branding, packaging and procurement. "This analysis identifies the opportunities to better market and add value to these key foods in Iraq – dates, grapes, tomatoes and wheat," said WFP Representative in Iraq Abdirahman Meygag. "Together with the government, partners and communities, FAO and WFP are supporting the long-term market competitiveness of these four foods, which will have positive effects throughout the food sector."

The study also recommends identifying new opportunities for public-private partnerships to more strategically facilitate the acquisition and use of fit-to-purpose resources to advance the agricultural sector in Iraq.

Agricultural value chain study in Iraq is available at <http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/CB2132EN>

Validation workshop: Assessment of animal health services, disease surveillance and legislation

Baghdad, 31 March 2021 - The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in Iraq (FAO), in coordination with the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) and the Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources (MoAWR), is implementing the Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) funded project "Improving Delivery of Animal Health Services and Disease Surveillance in Iraq" to strengthen veterinary services in Iraq.

Today marks an important milestone in the context of the project. As a result of the virtual workshop, which saw the

participation of more than 40 government officials from Baghdad, Erbil, Anbar, Ninawa, Duhok, Basrah, Muthanna and Wasit Governorates, including representatives from the MoA, MoAWR, veterinary Directorates, veterinary syndicate, and veterinary hospitals, the Assessment of Veterinary Services, Electronic Disease Reporting System and Veterinary Legislation was unanimously validated.

The agreed roadmap will help Iraq to build capacity in laboratory diagnostics, surveillance and data collection, analysis and reporting, as well as to

develop strategies and policies that can support sustained veterinary services within the targeted provinces. The impact of this work will be a reduction of the threat posed by transboundary and endemic animal and zoonotic diseases to livestock production, food security and human health said Dr. Salah El Hajj Hassan, FAO Representative in Iraq. He also underlined the importance of this project under the umbrella of the One Health integrated approach for preventing and mitigating health threats through improved coordination,

Validation workshop: Assessment of animal health services, disease surveillance and legislation *(continued)*

communication and collaborative actions across disciplines.

Mr Ryan Callanan, Regional Manager, Biological Threat Reduction Program (BTRP) Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) said BTRP is happy to partner with FAO and MoA on this important validation workshop. It is critical to validate the FAO assessment findings since they will guide our future work together to improve veterinary services and transboundary disease surveillance in Iraq

With appropriate support, the veterinary services can be strengthened and the risk for the spread of high-threat animal diseases in the country reduced, said Dr. Ghazi Hajji, Director General in the MoAWR/KRG. He emphasized the key role of the agriculture and livestock sectors and the opportunity this project represents to improve the Animal Health System.

Dr Methaq Abd Al Hussain, Technical Deputy Minister, MoA, congratulated FAO and DTRA for the great efforts to advance the project. He confirmed the full commitment to cooperate for the successful implementation of the project



despite the difficulties caused by the pandemic. The Deputy Minister also thanked Dr. Salah El Hajj Hassan, FAO Representative in Iraq, for the continuous support provided to the agriculture sector in Iraq.

Overall, the three assessments provide specific recommendations to address the identified gaps on veterinary laboratories, surveillance and reporting systems, and the regulatory framework governing animal health and highlight opportunities for a robust veterinary

service that has improved communications between regional and central Iraqi authorities, as well as with the herding community.

Dr. Salah El Hajj Hassan, FAO Representative in Iraq concluded the workshop by thanking DTRA for their continued support and cooperation to jointly strengthening the animal health system in Iraq, as well as the MoA and MoAWR/KRG and all other stakeholders for facilitating and contributing to the assessment results.

Japan invests additional US\$ 607,500 for life-saving maternal and protection services

Baghdad, 1 April 2021 - The Government of Japan approved an additional US\$607,500 to support the continuation of reproductive health and gender-based violence-related services provided by UNFPA.

In 2020, Japan contributed US\$ 1.3 Million to increase the utilisation, access, and continuation of life-saving, survivor-centred, multi-sectoral gender-based violence and sexual reproductive health (SRH) services in Baghdad, Salahuddin, Anbar, and Nineveh governorates of Iraq.

The new funding will ensure that people in need, particularly returnees in the targeted areas, receive comprehensive reproductive health and gender-based violence services while supporting the prevention of COVID-19 through raising awareness of the most vulnerable communities including the people with disabilities and through the provision of Personal Protection Equipment to services providers.

His Excellency Mr SUZUKI Kotaro, Ambassador of Japan to Iraq, stated: "Japan has recently decided to provide a new assistance package for Iraq amounting over US\$50 million including this project as assistance for

women and girls."

"With this package, the total amount of Japan's assistance to the people affected by the crisis reaches US\$590 million since 2014. I hope that the assistance from the Government and people of Japan will help ensure the protection of women and girls among internally displaced persons, returnee and host community", he added.

"The complexity of challenges faced by the people of Iraq, particularly women and girls, has grown due to COVID-19. The pandemic is deepening pre-existing inequalities and exposing gaps in social systems. UNFPA strives to ensure that

vulnerable women and girls receive a comprehensive package of services, a continuum of care, as well as timely referrals," said Dr Rita Columbia, UNFPA Representative to Iraq.

Japan has been a UNFPA strategic partner with contributions amounting to a total of US\$12,459,585 over the last six years ensuring most vulnerable women and girls affected by the crisis across Iraq have access to health and protection services.

UNFPA is thankful for the Government of Japan for their commitment to the reproductive rights of women and girls and ending gender-based violence.



Building a peaceful Iraq: New MoU between UNDP Iraq and swisspeace signed

Baghdad, 5 April 2021 – A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has been signed between the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Iraq and swisspeace, to strengthen efforts for peacebuilding and social cohesion in Iraq. The MoU provides a framework for collaboration and secures a two-year partnership between UNDP Iraq and swisspeace.

A peacebuilding organization based in Basel, Switzerland, swisspeace is dedicated to reducing violence and promoting peace in areas affected by conflict. These values are aligned with the UNDP Iraq Country Programme (2020-2024) that aims at strengthening the enabling environment for stability and peace in Iraq through mainstreaming conflict sensitivity in programming and strengthening community peace structures, including local peace committees, religious leaders, youth, women, and Community-Based Organizations for local peace processes. Local peace



structures established by UNDP Iraq support the return and reintegration of Internally Displaced Populations, including families perceived to be affiliated with ISIL, into their communities, and rebuilding the social fabric.

UNDP Iraq Resident Representative Zena Ali-Ahmad emphasizes, “With thanks to the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs for their

generous contribution, this collaboration with swisspeace will further strengthen our efforts for peacebuilding in Iraq through building capacities in the country for conflict mediation and peace building at the grassroots level.”

According to Matthias Boss, swisspeace Chief Operating Officer, “This partnership between UNDP Iraq and swisspeace will ensure that many peacebuilders at both local and national levels in Iraq will have access to the tools and techniques to help them serve their communities and stakeholders with the necessary confidence and skill. Working with peace actors in Iraq will add great value to swisspeace’s core work and expand its knowledge to achieve greater impact in local peacebuilding.”

UNDP Iraq has launched in 2020 a dedicated 5-year Social Cohesion Programme to promote stronger, peaceful, and more cohesive communities in all areas of Iraq.

Japan provides an additional \$3.5 million for UN-Habitat to support returnees while preventing the spread of COVID-19

Baghdad, 6 April 2021 - The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) welcomes an additional contribution of USD 3.5 million from the Government of Japan to support peacebuilding in Iraq through rehabilitation or reconstruction of houses damaged or destroyed by the conflict, rehabilitation of water, sanitation and hygiene facilities, and provision of vocational training and cash-for-work opportunities to unemployed young men and women in conflict-affected areas and facilitation of their employment and livelihood rebuilding. The project will be implemented in Sinjar, Ninewa Governorate.

After the outbreak of COVID-19, an increasing number of internally displaced persons indicated their willingness to return to their areas of origin, mostly because of their fear for infection of COVID-19 in camps where people live in a congested environment without adequate access to water, sanitation, hygiene and health facilities. Urgent assistance for shelter, basic services and livelihood opportunities is needed to encourage return of more IDPs, and more importantly, to prevent the secondary displacement where returnees are not being able to stay in the areas of return

due to harsh living conditions and being displaced again or to go back to camps.

His Excellency Mr. SUZUKI Kotaro, Ambassador of Japan to the Republic of Iraq, stated: “Japan had provided over USD 500 million as humanitarian assistance to the people affected by the crisis since 2014. Additionally, Japan has decided to provide a new assistance package for Iraq, amounting to USD 50 million, including this project by HABITAT”. “I hope that the assistance from the Government and people of Japan will help rebuild livelihood of returnees through rehabilitation and/or reconstruction of houses as well as basic services in conflict-affected areas.” “This virus is posing great difficulties upon people all over the world, and the challenge is especially enormous in these areas.” “I trust UN-

Habitat’s expertise and I hail the courage of people in Sinjar to rise and re-establish their lives”, he added. Wael Al-Ashhab, Head of UN-Habitat Iraq, expressed his sincere gratitude to the people and the Government of Japan, stating “this project builds on UN-Habitat’s comprehensive urban recovery approach, which simultaneously addresses multiple challenges faced by vulnerable returnees. UN-Habitat is committed to promote adequate housing, access to basic services and decent job opportunities for conflict-affected persons in urban settings.”

With a contribution of approximately \$58.5 million since 2015, the Government of Japan has been a vital partner to UN-Habitat’s Iraq Programme.



France supports WFP'S agricultural resilience-building projects in the south of Iraq

Baghdad, 8 April 2021 - The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) welcomed a 250,000 Euro contribution from France towards agricultural resilience-building activities in Basra governorate – in the south of Iraq, that will support 7,500 people and their families.

This is the first time France supports WFP's work in southern Iraq, enhancing the long-term self-reliance of tens of thousands of people indirectly in food-insecure, vulnerable communities. Such initiatives are even more vital during the pandemic.

The project is also funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and implemented in collaboration with the municipality in Basra, local communities and NGO partner Action Against Hunger.

"Iraq is particularly affected by climate change through droughts and salinization of irrigation water, including the South of the country,"



said Bruno Aubert, French Ambassador to Iraq. "There is an urgent need for action. Against this backdrop, France is deeply committed to support Iraqi agriculture through the World Food Programme. Planting date palm trees contributes to combatting desertification and supporting revenues of Iraqi farmers."

More than half of the participants are women, and the project is providing business grants to 50 women trainees, to support them in setting up small businesses. This includes advice on food

production, marketing and selling to local markets, enhancing linkages and helping create sustainable incomes.

"WFP welcomes this generous support from France, which will help create new job opportunities and mitigate the impact of climate change on natural resources," said WFP Representative in Iraq Abdirahman Meygag. "WFP's strong partnership with France on development assistance has a positive effect on local communities, improving agricultural productivity and people's access to water. The participants are also able to build small businesses and value chains for the food they produce in the southern Iraq."

Solar water pumps for irrigation are another innovative solution introduced in the project, along with agro-ecology training to participants, covering practices with low environmental impact. In this way, the initiatives help improve livelihoods in an environmentally and economically sustainable manner.

New contribution from Japan supports UNDP's Programme on Community-based Reconciliation and Reintegration in Iraq

Baghdad, 09 April 2021 – The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Iraq has welcomed a US\$8.2 million (JPY 883,636,344) contribution from the Government of Japan to support community-based reconciliation and reintegration in Iraq with a focus on families perceived as affiliated with ISIL in Anbar, Ninewa and Salah al-Din governorates and those affected by increased gender-based violence and harsh economic conditions due to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The contribution will be instrumental in supporting UNDP Iraq's Community-based Reconciliation and Reintegration Project which supports the community readiness, return, and reintegration of families perceived to be affiliated with ISIL, who are often the most marginalized and vulnerable.

The project's phased approach includes area-based conflict sensitive assessments, facilitation of dialogue, mediation and reconciliation processes relating to the development of local peace covenants, and a full-scale socio-economic reintegration support package in communities of return, including shelter rehabilitation and psychosocial and livelihood programming. The project contributes to the durable solutions strategy and works in

partnership with national and local government partners, to facilitate the return of Internally Displaced Persons and ease the negative impacts of COVID-19 on them and on the receiving communities. More than 3,200 perceived ISIL-affiliated families have been supported to facilitate their return and reintegration through local peace agreements under this project to date, and 4,000 beneficiaries will be reached by the socio-economic reintegration support with this new contribution.

UNDP Iraq Resident Representative Zena Ali-Ahmad states, "We are extremely grateful to one of our longstanding partners, the Government of Japan, for this important contribution. Their support is vital in ensuring we leave no one behind. We are focused on creating durable solution by providing support not only to IDPs and returnees, but also to host

communities. By including all members of society in Iraq's social fabric, we promote unity and prevent vulnerable individuals from turning to violence and extremism."

According to the Japanese Ambassador to Iraq, His Excellency Mr. SUZUKI Kotaro, "Japan had provided over USD 500 million as humanitarian assistance to the people affected by the crisis since 2014. Additionally, Japan decided this year to provide a new assistance package for Iraq, amounting to USD 50 million, including this project by UNDP." "UNDP has been Japan's excellent partner all over the world, in both humanitarian and development cooperation, and especially so here in Iraq." "The Government of Japan wishes this project help people cope with common and multiple challenges they face, and show the way toward reconciliation and welfare in peace."

The Community-based Reconciliation and Reintegration Project is anchored on the UN Iraq Joint Approach for Community-based Reconciliation and Reintegration of persons perceived to be affiliated with ISIL in Iraq. It is part of UNDP Iraq's five-year Social Cohesion Programme launched in January 2020 to promote stronger, peaceful, and more cohesive communities in all areas of Iraq.



UNIDO entrepreneurial training gives IDPs hope for future



Duhok, 9 April 2021 - Hadi Naif Sado left school at the age of 12 because he had to work to help support his family. Two years later, the Islamic State group (ISIS) invaded his family's village near Sinjar and they had to flee. The 22-year-old is now living in a tent in Shekhan camp in Duhok province. This month, he is receiving some training that is finally allowing him to imagine a future for himself.

Hadi is one of 20 residents of Shekhan camp taking part in an entrepreneurial

training course put on by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) project funded by the Japanese Government. "There were things I missed because I didn't go to school," he said, halfway through the training that is giving him ambition for his future. "Now I've learned that if I fail once, I can try and rise up again." The 15-day training program, funded by the Japanese government, teaches entrepreneurial and business management skills. Participants learn to evaluate market needs and how they can create a business model that meets those needs. At the end of the training program, they will receive equipment and supplies towards establishing their own businesses.

Hadi has worked odd jobs for years - on construction sites, as a driver, in factories - but his dream is to have his own shop. His brother owns a photocopy shop and Hadi would like to follow in his footsteps.

In the UNIDO training, his vision of what is possible is expanding and he is incorporating innovations into his business model such as mobile services. And he's learning the business and communication skills needed to make his vision a reality.

"I have confidence in myself now," he said. "I'm confident in myself that I can manage my business very well."

Rizgar Taha is the UNIDO trainer teaching Hadi and his classmates. Taha has been offering training courses over many years, but said this group in Shekhan camp is one of the most difficult in his career. The trainees are all from the Sinjar area of Iraq's northern Nineveh province. They suffered horrible atrocities under ISIS. Taha hopes the training will not just help them get a job or be self-employed, but think about building a better life, one where they feel secure and safe. "I just want them to come out of this training with some hope."

UN-Habitat and Ministry of Justice in Iraq sign Memorandum of Understanding

Baghdad, 12 April 2021 - After 3 years of fruitful collaboration between UN-Habitat Iraq and the Ministry of Justice of Iraq, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed with the support of the Prime Minister of Iraq, and under the patronage of Mr. Salar Abdul Sattar Muhammad, Minister of Justice.

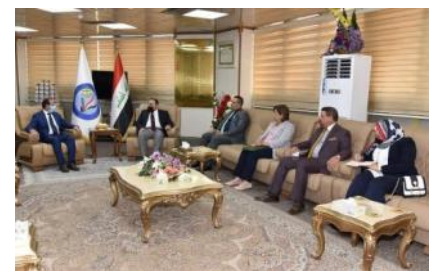
The MOU aims to strengthen the cooperation between UN-Habitat and Ministry of Justice through joint efforts to secure and protect land tenure rights, and to facilitate the registration of ownership rights as one of the most critical durable solutions for Yazidis in Sinjar district. Additionally, the MOU strives to seek and explore potential solutions and legal approaches with respect to ownership rights and documentation, and remedy the effects resulting from the destruction of documents in the city of Mosul.

Yazidis in Sinjar area face major challenges in proving their ownership or occupancy land rights, particularly where official documents are missing, damaged, destroyed, or in the absence of cadastral and registry information and maps delineating land and property to prove ownership or occupancy rights. Addressing and resolving Yazidi land rights would mark a major step towards respecting human rights and reconciliation. UN-Habitat has been addressing land

rights of Yazidi minorities in Sinjar area since 2016, immediately after the area was liberated from ISIL. The agency is implementing a programme titled "Support to Housing, Land and Property Rights for IDPs in Nineveh" which aims to facilitate the sustainable return and focuses on vulnerable IDPs from minorities (Yazidis) whose access to Housing, Land and Property (HLP) rights has been denied for decades by a legacy of discriminatory policies and practices against Yazidis, as well as by recent violent conflict.

UN-Habitat is registering and mapping land claims by Yazidi returnees, supporting the verification of their claim among themselves, and issuing "Occupancy Certificates" that are endorsed by local authorities and community representatives. The issuance of occupancy certificates by UN-Habitat is a first step toward the final registration of Yazidis land rights in Iraq.

More than 7,600 Occupancy Certificates have been distributed to Yazidis returnees so far, recognizing their occupancy rights for the first time in modern history. UN-Habitat is also liaising closely with the Prime Minister's Office and the Iraqi Ministry of Justice to endorse a legal decree to formalize the recognition of land rights and upgrade the occupancy certificates to full "Land Ownership Titles".



Mr. Ahmed Luebi, Director General of the Department for Justice Affairs in the Ministry of Justice, stated that the signing of the MOU with UN-Habitat is necessary to ensure the sustainable return of the displaced people and the right of Yazidis to own land in Sinjar, which is considered one of the most important areas in Iraq. Further, he outlined that the MOU was drafted with the support of Prime Minister and the efforts of the Minister of Justice, Judge Salar Abdul Sattar Muhammed. Wael Al-Ashhab, Head of UN-Habitat Iraq, emphasized that the signing of MOU is as result of great collaboration with Ministry of Justice which is our main counterpart in our journey to facilitate the registration of Yazidis land rights. UN-Habitat will continue to support MOJ to finalize the registration of Yazidis land rights and additional support will be provided to Real Estate Registration Office in Mosul by building capacity on housing, land and property related issues.

Japan, IOM extend partnership in support of vulnerable communities in Iraq

Baghdad, 15 April 2021 - Iraq continues to grapple with the cumulative effects of past conflicts on its development, which has left the country vulnerable to renewed conflict. The socioeconomic shock caused by the COVID-19 pandemic is a compounding factor that is threatening peace, security, and development in the country as it recovers from the 2014-17 battle against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

Despite the military defeat of ISIL in 2017 Iraq remains at a critical juncture, with a significant risk of backsliding into conflict. At the same time, the Iraqi authorities are still struggling to manage the fallout of the mass mobilization which took place to retake large swathes of the country's territory from ISIL. Vast numbers of former combatants who voluntarily disengaged in order to resume civilian life are experiencing challenges due to the limited economic opportunities and limited access to essential services in their areas of origin.

The Government of Japan (GoJ) will extend its support to the International Organization for Migration's efforts to assist vulnerable populations, though a USD 4.2 million grant. With this funding from the GoJ, IOM Iraq will promote

stabilization and work to reduce the risk of renewed violence through measures to promote security, socio-economic inclusion, and social cohesion in complex post-conflict situations and fragile communities in Ninewa and Anbar Governorates.

IOM Iraq activities will target individuals who are unable to access durable solutions due to perceived or former association to ISIL, former combatants, and broader communities. In line with the Government of Iraq's own priorities, a special focus will be placed on youth. Under the project, IOM plans to work closely with the Government of Iraq in support of the National Strategy to Prevent Violent Extremism, as well as with local authorities, community, religious and tribal leaders, the private sector, and other relevant stakeholders.

IOM will also provide assistance to address the socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19 that have compounded ongoing vulnerabilities across the country, and analyse and respond to resulting instances of increased criminal activity.

"Dedicated efforts are necessary to promote stabilization, reduce the risk of renewed violence and address post-conflict dynamics in fragile communities,"

said IOM Iraq Chief of Mission Gerard Waite. "IOM will continue to be grateful for the GoJ's continued support and partnership in this regard."

H.E. Mr. SUZUKI Kotaro, Ambassador of Japan to the Republic of Iraq, stated: "Japan has provided over USD 500 million as humanitarian assistance to the people affected by the crisis since 2014. Additionally, Japan has decided to provide a new assistance package for Iraq amounting to USD 50 million, including this project by IOM.

"I hope that the assistance from the Government and people of Japan will help to promote stabilization and reduce the risk of renewed violence in complex post-conflict and fragile communities in Ninewa and Anbar.

"I trust IOM's expertise and I firmly believe people in Ninewa and Anbar will realize social cohesion and continue to reject renewed violence."

The project, "Promoting Location-Specific Inclusion in Iraq" will build upon lessons learned and good practices gathered under the 2020-21 Government of Japan-supported project "Leveraging the Security Development Nexus in Iraq: Support for Community Stabilization in Conflict Affected Communities."

Support to agricultural livelihoods of rural and peri-urban returnees and communities in Nineveh Governorate, Iraq

Baghdad, 15 April 2021 – Today, the EU/FAO agricultural livelihoods project for returnee farmers in Nineveh Governorate distributed twenty "handy scythes" (mechanical mowers for cutting fodder forage) to twenty women's associations in Al-Hamdaniya, Bashiqa, Tikif, Mosul, Al-Nimrud, Hamidat, Hammam Al-Alil, Wana, Al-Muhallabiah and Al-Qosh.

A ceremony was held in the presence of a large number of women beneficiaries as well as with extension workers from the Directorate of Agriculture. The use of the mechanical mowers should encourage livestock keepers to produce fodder crops locally in order to improve milk productivity up to 50% when feeding their dairy animals with newly introduced nutritious green fodder. It also alleviates the daily chores for women farmers who normally harvest manually.

On the day, the FAO team and extension workers trained the beneficiaries to use mechanical mowers to cut fodder. After an explanation on how to use it, the beneficiaries were invited to a practical demonstration at farmer Suhail Khudaydah Senju's field from the village of Bahzani in a ryegrass field.

Agricultural extension staff answered questions and inquiries raised by the beneficiaries about the functioning of mechanical mowers, and then distributed to them to the women groups.

One beneficiary, Mrs Intisar Ephrem Boutros (1981) from Al-Hamdaniya / Qaraqosh said: "I am very happy with the training and support for planting green fodder crops received during several field visits. It has clearly given us a better economic return. The mowers will also help us to reduce time spent on cutting grass, so I will have more time for other activities such as milking and processing." Intisar extended her sincere gratitude to everyone who helped especially FAO staff and the Nineveh Directorate of Agriculture Team.

Another beneficiary Mr. Suhail Khadidah Senju (1984) said: "My joy and the joy of my father were unspeakable today, because FAO chose our field in order to test and distribute the mechanical mowers and explain their mechanism of work, and a large number of beneficiaries were meeting to learn how to operate it.

Dr. Duraid Hekmat Tobbya, Director of Nineveh Agriculture Directorate stated that the collaboration with FAO

presents relief to a large number of formerly displaced farmers who were affected by terrorist operations. He was also pleased that the equipment would ease women's time spent on cutting green forage.

FAO/Iraq representative, Dr. Salah Al-Hajj Hassan, thanked the European Union for financing the project and the Ministry of Agriculture for all efforts, facilities and partnerships that contributed to improving the conditions of returnee farmers and introducing appropriate and successful technologies. He emphasized the importance of introducing innovative technologies and new scientific information through FAO's so-called "Farmer Field School" approach. He specifically thanked Dr. Chedly Kayouli, Senior Livestock Officer heading the team in Nineveh and support provided by René Verduijn, FAO Senior Resilience Team Leader.



Photo: FAO/Iraq

COVID-19 dealt heavy blows to Iraqi labor market

Erbil, 20 April 2021- In early April, Iraq surpassed 900,000 COVID-19 cases. Necessary efforts to contain the spread of the virus throughout 2020 led to a reduction in economic activity; compounded by pre-existing economic challenges, drops in oil prices and the public health COVID-19 crisis, it is estimated that Iraq's economy contracted by 9.5 per cent in 2020.

To measure losses and investigate how small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Iraq are coping with the economic impact of COVID-19, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and the International Trade Center (ITC) conducted a panel study in 2020 on 893 SMEs representing 16 sectors in 15 governorates in Iraq. The study focused on the food and agriculture sector in order to determine variance in outcomes and effects on these firms when compared to non-agricultural businesses. The primary data used in this study was collected using ITC's COVID-19 corporate survey.

The new report Panel Study: Impact of COVID-19 on Small- and Medium-Sized Enterprises in Iraq showcases the main

findings from three rounds of data collection, covering the effect of border closures and lockdowns on revenue, production, and employment; accessibility of resources or ability to sell products; and mechanisms adopted to cope with the crisis.

Almost all firms in the study reported a decline in production or sales between February 2020, the pre-COVID-19 period, and the end of the year. Firms suffered large losses in revenue early on (an average decline of 67% by June). Although revenue partially recovered between July and October, it did not reach pre-pandemic levels (firms reported a revenue drop on average of 23% between February and November). SMEs also reported incurring new debt over the year due to the pandemic, primarily through informal means such as borrowing from friends and family.

The labour market also suffered due to COVID-19. On average the number of employees in SMEs reduced by 27 per cent between February and June. By August, employment numbers began to recover but remained below pre-pandemic levels by the end of 2020, with the number of male and female employees, including full- and part-time,

decreasing on average by seven per cent between February and November. Furthermore, the reduction in employment temporarily widened the gender gap in the labour market. In February, there was 1 woman for every 15 men working in the surveyed SMEs. The gap reached 1 woman for every 19 men by August, but then decreased to 1 for 13 in November 2020.

Over the course of the study period, the mechanisms SMEs adopted to cope with the financial difficulties of the pandemic changed. Initially, SMEs laid off employees. Later, requesting leniency in repaying financial responsibilities and increasing marketing efforts emerged as the dominant strategies. In June, more than half of SMEs' reported being at risk of shutting down permanently (65%). By December, those reporting this risk reduced to less than a third (31%).

The same 893 SMEs were surveyed three times in 2020: 22 June to 7 July, 9 to 18 September, and 29 November to 15 December.

The study was funded by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) and the European Union.

FAO field visits to villages of Al-Gosh (Telkif district)



Baghdad, 22 April 2021 - FAO Representative in Iraq, Dr. Salah Hajj Hassan, and the FAO expert, Dr. Chedly Kayouli, accompanied by the Director of Nineveh Agriculture, Dr. Duraid Hikmat Tobiya, have undertaken field visits to villages in Al-Qosh sub-district, to meet some of the beneficiaries of the FAO-EU funded project "Support to agricultural livelihoods of rural and peri-urban returnees and communities in Nineveh Governorate, Iraq."

In the morning, the mission met with a cattle dairy producer "Ashur Yoel Khio" in the village of Berozawa. He received green fodder seeds (ryegrass) while his mother is processing and marketing traditional dairy products such as butter, yoghurt and varieties of cheese. The family pointed out that

lactating cows fed with green fodder are producing more milk with higher fat content.

Then, the FAO mission visited farmer "Khallat Kret Ramo" from Sheikhka complex, who is also benefiting from the cultivation of green fodder, and his wife and daughters are processing and marketing traditional dairy products (cheese and yoghurt). The attendees visited the farmer's ryegrass field and discussed how the farmer is benefiting from it. The farmer "Khallat Kret Ramo" presented the different steps of cultivating the forage from receiving seeds until its cutting and benefits of distribution ryegrass to sheep with increased quantity and quality of milk. The FAO Representative in Iraq, Dr. Salah Hajj Hassan said of the mission: It is a great pleasure to join Dr. Duraid

Hekmat Tobiya, Director of the Directorate of Agriculture in Nineveh, and engage with beneficiaries in the field and see how much they welcome our support. It is very evident that agriculture is an important income generator in the rural and peri-urban areas, and we are happy to introduce new and innovative technology, management practices and equipment. FAO expert Dr. Chedly Kayouli said he was pleased to show progress made by the team. In particular he thanked the extension staff from Nineveh Directorate of Agriculture, as they are an important pillar of capacity development for the project, namely through their engagement in field farmers schools, farmer field days workshops and other training sessions. Dr. Duraid Hekmat Toby (DoA Director) said he was impressed by the project's success and he wished to thank FAO and the EU, as donor of the project. He said he was particularly pleased with the size of the project that allowed benefits to be spread across all districts and sub-districts of Nineveh Governorate, including Bashiqa, Hamdania, Bartella, Hammam Al-Alil, Al-Mahlabiya, Tilkiif, Alqosh, Zammam, Rabiaa and other agricultural locations in the governorate.

UNIDO: Japan supports resilience and livelihood amid COVID-19

Baghdad, 23 April 2021 - The United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and the Government of Iraq are welcoming the critical and timely support from the Government of Japan to help mitigate the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 and promote stabilization, community security, and livelihood activities in the country. A UNIDO project funded by Japan, will provide a boost to Iraq's fragile economy and to a society plagued by high unemployment rates. The project will support internally displaced people (IDPs) living in displacement camps across the Nineveh Governorate, as well as host communities, by providing them with economic and livelihood opportunities. Activities and recovery strategies will help develop self-reliance among beneficiaries, which is essential to maintaining peace and stability. The project will build the beneficiaries' capacities to start, manage and sustain a micro enterprise of their choice

through entrepreneurship and skills training, as well as providing them with physical capital in terms of the equipment and asset transfer required. Furthermore, to ensure food security, the project will introduce the concept of "kitchen gardening," in line with UNIDO's agri-business and agri-processing interventions and provide related training.

Building on UNIDO's human security approach, the project will attend to the immediate and critical needs of forcibly displaced people, thereby addressing chronic vulnerabilities, structural challenges, and potential risks to sustained peace.

According to the Japanese Ambassador to Iraq, H.E. Mr. SUZUKI Kotaro, "Japan had provided over USD 500 million in humanitarian assistance to the people affected by the crisis since 2014. Additionally, Japan decided this year to provide a new assistance package for Iraq, amounting to USD 50 million, including this project by



UNIDO." He also said "I praise UNIDO's unique approach to build capacities of beneficiaries to start, manage and sustain a micro enterprise of their choice through entrepreneurship and skills training, which leads to develop self-reliance. Such an approach shows us a way to capitalize on both the agricultural potential of Iraq and the resourcefulness of its people. The Government of Japan hopes that this project helps mitigate the socioeconomic impact of COVID-19."

Japan supports WFP food assistance in Iraq as COVID-19 pandemic



Baghdad, 25 April 2021 - The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) received a US\$6.4 million contribution from the Government of Japan to support nearly 40,000 internally displaced people in camps for five months with monthly food assistance, and a further 15,000 people in urban communities with work projects over a 10-month period.

Japan's contribution is helping displaced families in Iraq, as well as Urban Livelihoods resilience-building projects, supporting vulnerable people to return to work during the COVID-19 crisis.

"Japan has provided over US\$500 million as humanitarian assistance to people affected by the crisis in Iraq since 2014. Additionally, Japan decided this year to provide a new assistance package for Iraq, amounting

to US\$50 million including this project by WFP," said Japanese Ambassador to the Republic of Iraq Kotaro Suzuki. "I praise WFP's continuous and tireless efforts to help the internally displaced, and vulnerable people through its Urban Livelihoods initiatives. The Government and people of Japan wish that these projects mitigate sufferings of internally displaced and vulnerable people, especially under the serious impact of COVID-19, and pave a way for peace and a bright future."

Japan was one of the first donors to contribute to both WFP's life-saving humanitarian work alongside its development projects in Iraq, helping families rebuild their lives as they returned home from camps. Now, by supporting the Urban Livelihoods initiatives – introduced in response to the COVID-19 pandemic – Japan and

WFP are able to help cushion the loss of income suffered by workers dependent on day or seasonal employment as a result of the pandemic and assist them to meet their immediate food needs.

"Japan's generous support is helping sustain families in camps who are relying on WFP's humanitarian assistance, alongside vulnerable households in urban areas who need such development projects in their neighbourhoods," said WFP Representative in Iraq Abdirahman Meygag. "The Urban Livelihoods initiatives mean that thousands of participants can earn an income and cover their food needs. In a changing environment, and as COVID-19 cases rise in Iraq, the support from the government and people of Japan is making a real difference to families' lives in Iraq."

Last year, the Urban Livelihoods projects across the country provided nearly 43,000 people with temporary income, and supported and improved community surroundings through planting trees and clearing public parks, cleaning and renovating schools, health centres, orphanages, a centre for the deaf, mute and blind, a central library, and road cleaning and re-painting. Similar initiatives are being planned in 2021.

FAO and EU support to Ninawa farmers to mitigate drought

Baghdad, 28 April 2021 - The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, in collaboration with the Iraqi Ministry of Agriculture, today distributed quantities of feed and summer sorghum seeds to livestock breeders in Nineveh Governorate, supporting 400 beneficiaries.

FAO Representative in Iraq, Salah Hajj Hassan, expressed his appreciation to the Government of Iraq for its support and participation in the implementation of agricultural developmental projects.

"Investing in agricultural assistance today will provide food for tomorrow; and can ensure people have a source to have a sustainable future of food," said Abdul Hakeem ElWaer, FAO Assistant Director General and Regional Representative for the Near East and North Africa.

Deputy Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Coordinator of Humanitarian Affairs for Iraq, Ms. Irena Vojackova-Sollorano, has indicated the importance of supporting and aiding farmers, especially the returnees, who lost their property and livelihoods. She also mentioned the efforts of the United Nations Agencies. Ms. Barbara Egger, the EU Head of Cooperation in Iraq, said: "I am pleased to see that, thanks to the strong partnership between FAO and the authorities, the distribution of feed and



seeds to approximately four hundred households, including returnees, in the sub-district of Baashiqa in Nineveh under this EU funded initiative". "During a time where the country has been badly affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as drought, it is important to restore livelihoods in order to increase the resilience of rural communities".

Dr. Duraid Hekmat Tobbya, Director of Nineveh Agriculture Directorate, stated: "FAO projects and activities in Iraq work towards developing the agricultural sector with its both crop and animal components not only in Nineveh governorate in particular but

all over Iraq".

FAO Livestock Expert, Dr. Chedly Kayouli, confirmed that "the dependence of livestock breeders in Iraq in general and Nineveh Governorate in particular on giving excessive quantities of cereal grains (wheat and barley) to their animals is considered as poor feeding system not sustainable. Therefore, we wanted livestock breeders to use green fodder in raising livestock in order to improve milk production as well as for the purpose of fattening (meat production), and I believe that we succeeded in that, in cooperation with Nineveh agricultural extension staff".

Technical session on job creation through public works in Iraq was held



Baghdad, 28 April 2021 - A technical session on job creation through public works in Iraq was held, bringing together UN Deputy Special

Representative and Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq Ms. Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano, ILO Deputy

Regional Director for Arab States Mr. Frank Hagemann, representatives of the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the donor community and UN agencies.

The session focused on the importance of job creation in Iraq and a shift from cash-for-work schemes to a more efficient and organised public employment approach, not only providing workers with short-term jobs, but also upgrading their skills and establishing or rehabilitating vital infrastructure.

Discussions highlighted experiences from the region and opportunities to promote decent work, social protection, skills development and the employment of women through public employment programmes in line with the Government's vision for job creation, to tackle unemployment and contribute to local economic recovery and growth.

Iraq: International cooperation a mean to halt transnational drug trafficking and criminal networks



Paris and Marseille, France, 18 February 2021 - Every nation is affected by the problems of organized crime. Its destructive effects can detrimentally impact the daily lives of citizens, the economic growth, and the efforts made by governments to contain it. According to the World Drug Report 2020, drug trafficking in and through Iraq has been increasing steadily since 2003. UNODC supports the Government of Iraq with two study visits to France to enhance its efforts to counter cross-border drug trafficking. UNODC, through the U.S. State Department's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) funded project "Strengthening the capacities of Iraqi law enforcement and criminal investigation services", has been delivering technical assistance to support the Iraqi law

enforcement agencies in addressing organized crime and terrorism challenges, with a special focus on combatting drug trafficking. UNODC and the French Ministry for Interior jointly organized two study visits to Paris and Marseille in France in collaboration with the Iraqi Ministry of Interior for the benefit of a high-level delegation from the Iraqi Anti-Narcotics Directorate, including the General Director.

Within the first visit, the Iraqi delegation visited the French agency responsible for combatting drug trafficking "Office Anti-Stupéfiants" (OFAST), the Anti-Narcotics Agency "Brigade de Stupéfiants de Paris (BSP)," and the OFAST airport platform unit based at Charles de Gaulle Airport. The Iraqi delegation was introduced to OFAST's structure,

mandate, the standard operating procedures (SOPs), intelligence information-sharing mechanisms, information collection, and analysis methodology as well as how to manage informants.

The visit to the BSP was notable as the Iraqi Anti-Narcotics Department in Baghdad and the BSP face similar local urban drug trafficking challenges. The exchanges aimed at informing the Iraqi delegation of the BSP operational mandates, structures, and different drug smuggling techniques. Furthermore, the Iraqi delegation visited the investigation rooms and detention cells, including a cabin for a judge/prosecutor who monitors the procedures virtually.

During the visit of the OFAST airport branch, the delegation was introduced to types of drug seizures, concealing techniques, drug trafficking routes, and drug market prices.

The visit to the OFAST regional Office in Marseille included operational insight, where the French and Iraqi representatives shared best practices and experiences as well as operational information on drug-related crimes and expertise methods deployed by the OFAST to respond.

These tripartite meetings led by UNODC resulted in drafting a timetable action plan where the technical and operational capacity building needs were identified. The study visits constitute a great success and paved the way for multilateral cooperation on counter-narcotics.

Community Policing Forums' achievements during the COVID-19 pandemic



Najaf, 2 March 2021 - "There are many important things that make me very proud of our Community Policing Forum's recent achievements,

especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. We have dealt with many sensitive issues, including extortion and blackmail, and have also led many campaigns to keep people safe during the pandemic. When I see that community problems are solved in a friendly manner, I feel proud and I have a stronger resolve to serve the Najafi community.

Once, we dealt with a case involving electronic blackmail. We communicated with the concerned parties and held a session to discuss the problem; we solved it amicably and in complete confidentiality without resorting to the courts.

Community Policing Forums (CPF) are closer to society and are

characterized by flexibility and confidentiality in dealing with all family and social issues; their role is very important to reduce many undesirable phenomena in society. The community police in Najaf Governorate, through the CPFs, contributed to solving many problems and sensitive issues — such as cases of domestic violence. They also led awareness campaigns and discussion sessions with influential people in Najaf society," says Saleh Hani, member of the Community Police Forum in Al-Askari neighbourhood, Najaf Governorate.

IOM activities related to the Community Policing Forums are supported by the Embassy of Japan in Iraq.

Minister of Justice receives the Head of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in Iraq (UNODC)

Baghdad, 3 March 2021 - His Excellency the Minister of Justice, Judge Salar Abdul Sattar Mohammed, on Wednesday received the Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in Iraq (UNODC), Mr. Ali Farouk El-Bereir. They discussed strengthening cooperation to combat drugs and organized crime and the continued cooperation in the improvement of the prison system within the Iraqi reform department, and the institutions under the juvenile reform departments, in addition to collaboration in various fields of

criminal justice.

The ongoing preparations for Iraq's participation in the 14th United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice to be held in Kyoto, Japan, this month was also discussed.

The Head of UNODC Iraq expressed readiness to enhance the cooperation, including by providing training and capacity-building in accordance with international human rights standards. Photos courtesy of the Ministry of Justice.



Preparations for the new National Security Strategy ongoing

Baghdad, 16 March 2021 - Earlier this month UNDP in Iraq's Security Sector Reform Programme supported the National Security Advisor at a 4-day seminar to discuss the new National Security Strategy for Iraq. This program is supported by Denmark.



The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the Border Ports Commission enhance partnership

Baghdad, 17 March 2021 - UNODC met with Major General Doctor Omar Al-Waeli, Head of the Border Ports Commission in Iraq. Both parties discussed enhancing common collaboration, noted the implementation of their signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), and reflected on the upcoming needs and aims to address drugs and increase usage of the modern methods of detection and prevention of drug. Furthermore, the meeting covered the plans to tackle cases of document fraud

and manipulation of imported goods through a set of advance and evidence-

based procedures.

Photo courtesy of UNODC.



Improving the skills of Iraqi police officers

Baghdad, 8 April 2021 - During his observation tour, Senior Deputy Minister of Interior, Mr. Hussein Al-Awadi, visited the mid-level police management training focused on strengthening local police and leadership development. The training is delivered by UNDP Iraq and Danish Police in collaboration with

the MoI Training and Qualification Directorate.

Deputy Minister Al-Awadi extended his gratitude to UNDP in Iraq and international partners Canada, Netherlands, and Denmark for their ongoing support to improve the skills of Iraqi local police.



UNDP supports Iraqi Government to strengthen internal security

Baghdad, 31 March 2021 - The Iraqi Ministry of Interior (MoI) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Iraq delivered a strategic planning training course to senior officers and specialists to strengthen MoI institutional capacities to implement its multiyear strategic plan (2019 -2023).

The Strategic Plan is aimed at strengthening internal security, maintain public order, develop law enforcement and anti-corruption mechanisms, improve, and develop high-quality security services for citizens, and build a professional security institution.

The nine-day training programme, supported by UNDP's Security Sector Reform/ Rule of Law Programme, was held in Erbil from 09 to 17 March and attended by senior officers and specialists from various MOI departments, including the Planning and Follow up Directorate, Administrative and Financial Agency, Police Affairs Agency, Intelligence Agency, Federal Security Affairs Agency/ Civil Defence Directorate,

Border Forces Command, Directorate of Civil Status, and Passports and Residence.

"We would like to extend our sincere thanks and high appreciation to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and our colleagues working in UNDP Iraq for the great efforts and support to the MoI, Planning and Follow-up Directorate. The capacity building efforts were of great benefit as it contributed greatly to raising the capacities and enhancing the skills of our staff". Said Major General, Faris Fahih Abid, Director General of Planning and Follow up Directorate of MoI

"It also contributed to further develop the MoI approved mechanisms in planning, follow-up and evaluation of the MoI strategic plan 2019-2023". Mr. Abid Added.

The participants received first-hand knowledge linking theoretical, academic concepts with the tangible implementation of a strategy within the Iraqi context to promote a security and a stable Iraq. During the course, they were equipped with skills related to



strategic planning including goalsetting, targets, indicators and results, monitoring and evaluation, and developing work plans and progress reporting. The course covered topics including, strategic planning, strategic analysis related to risks and threats, and scenario planning and policy development.

UNDP and the MoI delivered this important training thanks to the generous contribution from the Government of Denmark.

EU supports IOM and UNODC partnership to strengthen border security in Iraq, on the road to economic recovery and development

Baghdad, 22 April 2021 - With support from the European Union, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) have partnered to support the Government of Iraq in developing its border management capacity. The joint project, "Enhancing the Capacity of the Government of Iraq at Trebil Border Crossing Point" will focus on improving security and the cross-border movement of people and goods, while revitalising cross-border trade and the local economy.

"The Government of Iraq has identified the stability of border crossing points as a priority to create the conditions for lasting security, following the defeat of ISIL in 2017," said EU Ambassador to Iraq Martin Huth. "The EU is proud to support these efforts; in addition to the security component, strengthened borders and streamlined border processes can also promote economic growth."

Years of conflict have affected the oil sector, the main pillar of Iraq's economy, leading to the closure of land routes into Jordan and Syria and a drop in regional exports. The subsequent economic decline and loss of

financial opportunities have become major sources of frustration and tension between communities and, in particular, among youth — who are more at-risk of being recruited by armed groups or taking part in criminal activities, including transnational organized crime, to meet their financial needs.

Fluid trade and movement across borders can boost the economy and expand job opportunities by diversifying national revenue streams — through this project IOM Iraq and UNODC will also rehabilitate the Trebil Border Crossing Point (BCP), the only official entry point with Jordan and a strategic port of entry for Jordan's exports to Iraq. Trebil BCP was closed by Iraqi authorities in July 2015 to prevent militants from imposing taxes on passing cargo trucks. Oil exports from Iraq, a major source of energy supply for the Jordanian

market, were severely impacted, which led to the closure of hundreds of Jordanian factories and companies and caused unemployment rates to increase in both countries.

Since 2018, the EU has been supporting IOM Iraq and UNODC's efforts to strengthen the Karamah BCP on the Jordanian side. To increase the flow of goods and traffic, and support the agreements made between the two countries, investments must also be made on the Iraqi side of the border. Strengthening the Trebil border point is timely, as Iraq is making plans to reconstruct a dry channel to connect with the Red Sea and Europe, opening the country to more opportunities and sources of economic growth.

In accordance with the needs of the Government, IOM Iraq and UNODC will implement key actions at the Trebil border point including infrastructure rehabilitation, provision of specialised technical equipment and software, tailored training and facilitating cross border discussions towards supporting the GoI to better manage and promote safe, orderly and regular migration of people and movement of goods between Iraq and Jordan.



Ministry of Interior and UNODC join forces to tackle transnational drug trafficking and criminal networks



Cairo, Egypt - 19 April 2021 - Drug trafficking is a transnational crime that challenges countries across the world. UNODC, in collaboration with the Government of Iraq and the French Embassy in Iraq, organized a 3-day roundtable discussions meeting within the framework of the project “Strengthening the Capacities of Iraqi law enforcement and criminal investigation services” which is funded by the US Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL).

The project aims to initiate a comprehensive capacity-building

approach for Iraqi law enforcement agencies and forensic entities to enable the country to counter the growing challenges posed by organized criminal groups, illicit trafficking, and the links between organized crime and the financing of terrorism.

This aim will be fulfilled by:

Developing a joint strategy on enhancing the capacities of the relevant Iraqi law enforcement agencies to counter illicit cross-border drug trafficking;

Providing tailored-made capacity building activities and tactical and operational equipment to the Iraqi authorities to conduct complex investigations and “go beyond seizures”; and

Strengthening the international and regional cooperation mechanisms tackling security threats related to cross-border drug trafficking.

The meeting was attended by the Heads of the Iraqi Anti-Narcotic Directorate, Anti-Crime Directorate and Forensics Directorate, the Iraqi International Cooperation Directorate

representing different regions across Iraq as well as the Police Attaché from the French Embassy in Iraq and the Regional Representative of the Drugs Enforcement Administration (DEA) of the United States Embassy in Cyprus. During the discussions, Heads of Iraqi Directorates provided presentations on the organizational structure of the concerned directorates, mandates, roles and responsibilities, human resources as well as the critical needs required to enhance the Iraqi authorities' abilities to counter transnational trafficking, notably drug trafficking.

These discussions among many between UNODC and each respective Directorate resulted in the drafting, review and agreement on a joint capacity-building work plan. UNODC and the Head of the Iraqi Delegation signed minutes of meeting with the enclosed work plans which will be paving the way for the implementation of different project components starting June 2021 including joint operational trainings as well as the identification of tactical and operational equipment.

Mine Action

France provides additional USD 617,000 for UNMAS activities in Iraq



Baghdad, 4 March 2021 – The United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) in Iraq welcomes an additional contribution of EUR 505,000 (approximately USD 617,000) from the Government of France renewing its commitment in supporting the Government of Iraq to protect the populations threatened by the deadly explosive ordnance left behind by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

For the third consecutive year, the Government of France, through its generous contribution to UNMAS in Iraq, will support stabilization and humanitarian efforts through the clearance of improvised explosive

devices and explosive remnants of war that threaten the lives of communities in Ninewa province, and impede the safe return of internally displaced persons.

UNMAS promotes gender mainstreaming and equal opportunity through all its activities in Iraq including clearance. UNMAS encourages the hiring and training of women and men from the local community, and currently operates with three mixed-sex search and clearance teams.

In Sinjar and Tel Afar, the Government of France will continue supporting UNMAS in bringing women and men from the local communities at the frontline of the stabilization and recovery efforts of their city and surrounding areas to free the communities from the explosive ordnance that continue haunting populations long after ISIL had left.

On the occasion, Bruno Aubert, Ambassador of France stated, “Demining is an essential part of our stabilization efforts in Iraq to support a

safe, voluntary and dignified return of displaced persons, as it is the first step for people to rebuild their homes and get back to their lives. France is strongly committed to the protection and awareness of all, especially children who are the first victims of mines in the country. We actively support the training and employment of Iraqi staff, including women, within UNMAS as demining is a shared concern”.

Mr. Pehr Lodhammar, UNMAS Iraq Senior Programme Manager, added: “Clearance work is slow and often dangerous as ISIL left significant numbers of deadly explosive devices behind, but this work has a direct effect on people’s lives. Families can safely return to their homes, children can step outside to play out of harm’s way, and communities can freely use farmlands. I am proud that UNMAS offers equal opportunities to women and men, enabling both men and women to become actors in rebuilding their communities through their work and engagement in mine action.”

Danish, French, and German diplomats visited UNMAS mine action activities in Ninewa

Baghdad, 7 March 2021 - Denmark, France, and Germany will continue to support mine action activities in Iraq. During their visit to UNMAS operations in Ninewa governorate, the Ambassadors saw firsthand the devastating consequences of explosive ordnance, and witnessed the women and men working to free the city and its populations from the improvised explosive devices left by ISIL. The Ambassadors stressed the importance of mine action efforts to allow for the safe, dignified and voluntary return of displaced people to their homes.



Canadian Ambassador visits UNMAS mine action sites in Mosul

Mosul, 23 March 2021 - Mr. Ulric Shannon, Canadian Ambassador to Iraq, visited today Mosul. "I was delighted today to finally visit Ninewah province and the city of Mosul, where much of Canada's stabilization assistance to Iraq is focused. I started the day visiting the important work of UNMAS, demining one of the most heavily landmine contaminated places on earth. I was struck by the dedication of the Iraqi men and women doing this dangerous and essential work, and leading efforts at risk education and community outreach, especially with children", said Ambassador Shannon.



UNMAS field visit to Ninewa

Ninewa, 25 March 2021 - UNMAS Iraq Senior Programme Manager, Mr. Pehr Lodhammar and the Director General of Directorate for Mine Action conducted a field visit to the Explosive Ordnance clearance of Al-Hamdaniya District in Ninewa Province, northern Iraq. UNMAS implementing partner Global Clearance Solutions is currently conducting clearance of an improvised explosive device belt in Al-Hamdaniya, in addition to gender mainstreaming in the sector of mine action. "We are present here in al-Hamdaniya District to clear from the deadly legacy left by ISIL, the, for the land to be released and used again by the communities for agriculture and cattle farming" said Lodhammar. "The



clearance efforts contribute to the conditions for Durable Solutions of internal displaced persons as it will

render safe lands essential for the recovery of livelihood activities" he added.

UNMAS Iraq results presented at the country representatives meeting

Baghdad/New York, 26 March 2021

- During a virtual meeting with 13 country representatives, Mr. Pehr Lodhammar, UNMAS Iraq Senior Programme Manager, presented updates on UNMAS operations in retaken areas and adjustments to adapt to the pandemic and continue delivering lifesaving clearance and risk education.

Mr. Lodhammar also presented a new UNMAS grant model that encourages partnerships between international and national NGOs - this will enhance the skills of national operators and contribute to a sustainable national mine action response.

As the COVID-19 pandemic remains a

reality, UNMAS Iraq stands committed to the Government and people of Iraq through its innovative solutions and

continued collaboration with the national authorities to save lives and limbs.



National Mine Action Standards reviewed and updated

Baghdad, 28 March 2021 - UNMAS Iraq supported the Directorate of Mine Action (DMA) in the organization of the three-day workshop in northern Iraq, which reviewed and updated the National Mine Action Standards.

The workshop was the result of a collaboration between the DMA and UNMAS that started early 2020 to update technical aspects.

Relevancy of the standards is key to the safe, efficient and quality mine action interventions in Iraq.



The Government of Iraq has formed its first Mine Action Gender Task Force

Baghdad, 30 March 2021 - The Government of Iraq has formed its first Mine Action Gender Task Force, supported by and co-chaired by UNMAS. The task force is providing technical support regarding gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment to the national mine action authorities in Iraq.

The Gender Task Force advisory body, consisting of a number of gender experts from different entities, held its first meeting in March, this time chaired by UNMAS. The task force aims to create a space for sharing of expertise and knowledge, to develop capacity and to coordinate gender-related matters amongst the various Iraqi peace and security sector stakeholders.



Directorate for Mine Action celebrates the International Day for Mine Awareness



Baghdad, 4 April 2021 - The Directorate for Mine Action, one of the directorates of the Ministry of Health and Environment, celebrated today the International Day for Mine Awareness in Baghdad.

The Director General of DMA, Eng.Dhafir Mahmood, said that the

celebration was held under the patronage of the Minister of Health and Environment, Dr.Hassan Mohammed Abbas Al-Temimi, with support by UNMAS, and in the presence of representatives of the ministries, departments and other authorities that supported the national mine action

program in Iraq in addition to the representatives of the embassies of donor countries and organizations and companies that accredited to work within the activities of the national program.

Mahmood added "the celebration included many activities, where the Administrative Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Environment, Dr. Kamran Ali Hassan, presented the speech on behalf of the Minister of Health and Environment, in which he explained the humanitarian national and international effort made at the level of awareness, which was one of the tremendous respectable efforts as it did not leave an affected local community unless communicated with it by providing all the necessary information and humanitarian and logistical requirements.

Directorate for Mine Action had a technical meeting with UNMAS

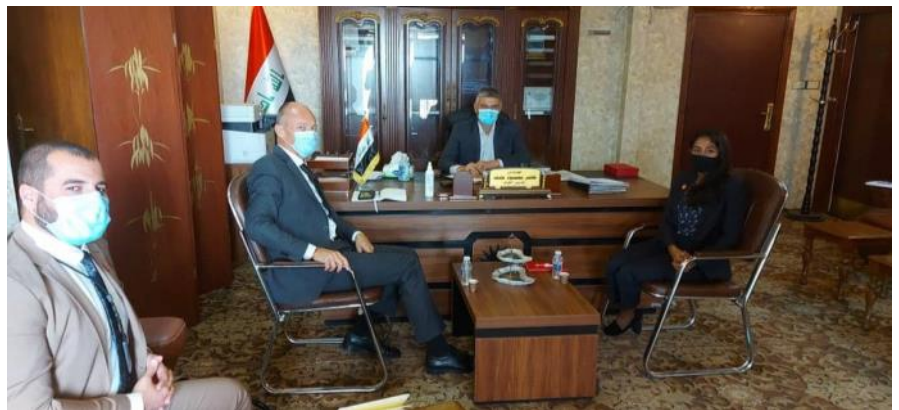
Baghdad, 21 April 2021 - The Directorate for Mine Action held a technical meeting with UNMAS at the headquarters of DMA in Baghdad.

The Director General of DMA, Eng.Dhafir Mahmood, said that the meeting which attended by the Director of UNMAS (Mr.Pehr Lodhammer) as well as the projects officer in UNMAS, Mrs. Sharmeela, who started her work in project management of mine action in Iraq, included a review of the joint technical efforts between DMA, UNMAS and French Government on providing the support regarding the preparation of the national mine action standard of underwater demining.

Mahmood added that the meeting also included extensive technical discussions on developing the International Mosul Airport by the

French companies after completing the works of mine action in addition to discussing the work to update the mechanism for issuing the task orders that issued by DMA to the implemented authorities as well as

discussing the technical plans to visit Al-Najaf province and another similar visit to the embassies of donor countries for mine action in Nineveh province within the activities of the national mine action program in Iraq.



UNMAS Iraq facilitated an explosive ordnance risk education workshop

Baghdad, 21 April 2021 - UNMAS Iraq recently facilitated an explosive ordnance risk education (EORE) workshop in partnership with the Directorate of Mine Action and the Ministry of Education in Baghdad to update life-saving messages and risk education for school children.

The workshop aims to modify the current messages in educational material and school curricula and adapt to the risks from new types of

contamination, other than landmines and cluster munitions.

EORE plays a vital role in the work of UNMAS. In the first quarter of 2021 alone, UNMAS delivered life-saving messages to over 31,000 people, 58% of whom were children. These messages promote safe behaviors.



UN in Iraq and DMA discuss implementation of the national mine action programme



Baghdad, 22 April 2021 - The Deputy Nations Secretary-General and Special Representative of the United Resident and Humanitarian

Coordinator for Iraq, Ms. Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano, accompanied by UNMAS Senior Programme Manager, Mr. Pehr Lodhammar, met today with the Director General of the Directorate for Mine Action (DMA), Eng. Dhafir Mahmood. During the meeting, they discussed the accomplishments and the challenges and the required support to execute the national mine action programme that includes clearing mines in areas liberated from Da'esh enabling displaced persons to return home safely and stability to take root. Photo courtesy of Directorate for Mine Action.

COVID-19 Pandemic

Workshop held in Baghdad in preparation for the COVID-19 vaccination campaign

Baghdad, 25 March 2021 - Dr Ahmed Zouiten, World Health Organization (WHO) Representative in Iraq: "Ahead of the arrival of COVID-19 vaccines in Iraq, WHO Iraq together with the Iraq Ministry of Health convened a national workshop with all directors of health and EPI managers from all governorates in Iraq to harmonize the preparations for a successful COVID-19 vaccination campaign.



Iraq receives the first delivery of COVID-19 vaccines through the COVAX facility

Baghdad, 25 March 2021 – Amid a global shortage of COVID-19 vaccines, Iraq has finally received 336,000 doses of AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine through the COVAX Facility, a partnership co-led by Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), Gavi-The Vaccine Alliance and the World Health Organization, alongside key delivery partner UNICEF.

The AstraZeneca vaccines manufactured by SK-Bio Institute of South Korea, arrived on Thursday, 25 March 2021, and were received at Baghdad International Airport by the Minister of Health, Iraq, His Excellency Dr Hassam Mohammed Al-Tamimi, accompanied by the teams of the MOH, WHO and UNICEF. This is a historic



step towards the global goal to ensure equitable distribution of COVID-19 vaccines around the world and is part of a first allocation of vaccines to Iraq. Further consignments of 1.1 Million COVAX vaccine doses are planned for Iraq in the coming weeks and will

continue to cover 20 per cent of the population before the end of 2021. The COVID-19 pandemic still has a long way to run in Iraq and around the world, as intense transmission is ongoing and is putting enormous pressure on hospitals, intensive care

Iraq receives the first delivery of COVID-19 vaccines through the COVAX facility *(continued)*

units and health workers. While the preventive measures can be effective in reducing transmission of the virus, their effectiveness depends on strict application by all citizens. The arrival of the vaccines and the launch of a nationwide vaccination campaign will be a game changer in the battle against COVID-19. However only when more than 80% of the eligible population are reached, will a significant reduction in transmission be achieved.

“Today, vaccines that were expected in the country since the last week of February have finally arrived. Although Iraq finalized all the requirements for the COVAX facility in time, delays in the global production and shortages of vaccines within the COVAX Facility delayed this shipment. The vaccines received today have recently received the Emergency Use Listing from the World Health Organization and will be a game changer in the response to COVID-19 Pandemic in Iraq”, said His Excellency Dr Hassam Mohammed Al-Tamimi, Minister of Health, Iraq.

The Ministry of Health will

immediately dispatch these vaccines to all departments of health in Baghdad, in all governorates and Kurdistan to be used for protecting people within the priority groups according to the national vaccine deployment plan and framework”, continued His Excellency the Minister of Health

“This is a historical landmark in the response to COVID-19 in Iraq, receiving and utilizing these vaccines is a step in the right direction in controlling the pandemic in Iraq. Indeed, these vaccines have proven to be very safe and effective in preventing COVID-19 infections, with its associated risk of hospitalization and death”, said Dr Ahmed Zouiten, WHO Representative, Iraq.

“We wish to congratulate the Ministry of Health and the Government of Iraq for all the efforts deployed for the response to COVID-19 in general, and for securing the arrival of these life-saving vaccines in the country. As more vaccines are receiving the WHO Emergency Use listing, and more doses of vaccines are manufactured globally, we will be looking forward to receiving

more allocations and more vaccines from the COVAX facility in the coming weeks and months”, added Dr Ahmed.

“UNICEF and WHO have been working with the Ministry of Health around the clock to make sure that Iraq has enough syringes, vaccination cards, and state-of-the-art cold chain facilities to store the vaccines safely, in anticipation of this day. We have also trained thousands of health workers in vaccination centers across Iraq. We have been waiting for this day for months. Vaccines are among the greatest advances of modern medicine. They are a protective shield, keeping families and communities safe”, explained Mr. Paul Edwards, UNICEF's acting Representative to Iraq.

While these vaccines are being rolled out, the Ministry of Health, WHO and UNICEF urge all people in Iraq to continue observing public health measures that are in place, such as wearing masks at all times, physical distancing, air ventilation, proper hand hygiene and avoiding congested gatherings and settings.

IOM led a series of stress management and empowerment sessions in Kirkuk

Kirkuk, 28 March 2021 - Youth in Kirkuk have expressed increased levels of stress, anxiety, and depression as COVID-19 has continued to spread throughout the governorate and disrupt individuals' livelihoods and day-to-day lives. IOM led a series of stress management and empowerment sessions for 13 young men and women in Kirkuk to provide the youth with the tools to overcome stress.

This activity is funded by USAID - US Agency for International Development.



Harnessing partnership to fight the COVID-19 Pandemic

Baghdad, 30 March 2021 - WHO and the Iraq Ministry of Health held the first workshop for media managers working in Iraq to harness partnership to fight the COVID-19 pandemic and promote the uptake of the COVID-19 vaccines.



IOM delivered Personal Protective Equipment and IPC supplies to Gulan General Hospital in Dohuk

Dohuk, 1 April 2021 - IOM delivered Personal Protective Equipment and IPC supplies to Gulan General Hospital in Dohuk governorate as part of the efforts to enhance the capacity of health care facilities in Iraq to identify and manage suspected COVID-19 cases as well as continue providing essential services to patients during the outbreak.

This activity was supported by Qatar Charity.



WHO supports Kurdistan Region COVID-19 testing capacity

Erbil, 26 March 2021 - The World Health Organization (WHO) in Iraq supported the Ministry of Health in Kurdistan Region with 9,050 PCR test kits and 9,050 viral transport media, worth over USD \$100,000. This will increase COVID-19 testing capacity amid increasing reported cases in Iraq and the Kurdistan Region. WHO thanks the State of Kuwait for supporting the purchase of this consignment.



WHO confirms the safety and efficacy of COVID-19 vaccines and urges Iraqis to register and vaccinate to help defeat the pandemic

Baghdad, 11 April 2021 - The World Health Organization (WHO) in Iraq refutes the fabricated statement recently circulated in an unofficial social media platform to undermine the citizens' confidence in the safety and efficacy of the COVID 19 vaccines.

The Organization confirms that it does not use unofficial channels to release information on health issues including the COVID 19 prevention and vaccination measures.

The World Health Organization would like to reiterate that COVID 19 vaccines are a game-changer in the fight against the pandemic, and confirms that the benefits of these vaccines outweigh any rare side effects. The World Health Organization calls upon citizens to continue registering for the vaccine and get vaccinated as soon as possible. We will stop this pandemic only when the majority of people in Iraq have taken the vaccine.

The recent alarming surge in COVID 19 cases in Iraq is quite concerning, but the control of the epidemic is possible through the rigorous application of the precautionary measures and through the success of the vaccination campaign that the Ministry of Health is running in close collaboration with the World Health Organization and other partners.

IOM held a stress and anger management and self-care courses

Kirkuk, 19 April 2021 - Many Iraqi communities have faced extreme pressure during the COVID-19 pandemic. IOM held a stress and anger management and self-care course for 10 caregivers at Panja Ali Primary Healthcare Centre in Kirkuk Governorate. During the course, five children also took part in painting and drawing activities as a way to positively release stress.

IOM Iraq also provided psychological first aid training for 12 healthcare staff at al-Nasir Hospital in Kirkuk Center, in coordination with the Kirkuk Department of Health. Participants

learned how to respond to the stressors that patients and colleagues face as they continue combatting COVID-19.

After completing a musical training course organized by IOM Iraq, 7 young people in Wahed Huzairan, Kirkuk Governorate, put on a small concert for community members and demonstrated the skills they honed. The concert took place in a garden that IOM and 15 young men and women from Wahed Huzairan developed in February 2021. These activities are part of a wider campaign led by IOM to support the Iraqi government's COVID-19 response efforts across the country and is

supported by USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance.



The United Kingdom's GBP 3 million contribution supports Iraq's fight against COVID-19

Baghdad, 19 April 2021 –The United Kingdom has committed GBP 3 million (approximately US\$ 4.1 million) to support the Government of Iraq's response to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

With this contribution, the United Kingdom joins 12 international partners in supporting UNDP's COVID-19 rapid health emergency response in Iraq. UNDP's response aims to strengthen Iraq's health sector in response to the pandemic, improve access to isolation wards and medical equipment, increase public awareness of COVID-19 symptoms and prevention measures, and provide personal protective equipment to healthcare workers.

Since launching its response in March 2020, UNDP has established 13 purpose-built COVID-19 isolation wards in Anbar (Fallujah and Ramadi), Babil, Basra, Dhi Qar, Diyala, Dohuk, Karbala, Kirkuk, Missan, Najaf, Ninewa and Salah al-Din governorates. Additional wards are being built in Diwaniya, Erbil, Muthanna and Wasit, bringing the total number of supported medical facilities to 17.

“Containing the coronavirus outbreak



is the Government of Iraq's top priority, particularly with the second wave of infections country-wide. UNDP is on the front line, supporting Iraq's national healthcare system to tackle the outbreak,” says UNDP Resident Representative Zena Ali Ahmad. “The United Kingdom's generous contribution enables us to boost our support even further as we collectively fight this pandemic.”

“The United Kingdom supports the Government of Iraq in its fight against COVID-19, which continues to cause

such challenges in both of our countries. We are pleased to make available this funding through UNDP to strengthen Iraq's national health response and help manage the ongoing outbreak,” says Her Majesty's Ambassador Stephen Hickey.

The United Kingdom joins Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Japan, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United States of America in supporting UNDP's response to the COVID-19 pandemic in Iraq.

UNHCR provides Intensive Care Unit supplies to COVID-19 treatment hospitals

Baghdad, 18 April 2021 - The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) announces today that, in coordination with national health authorities, and in solidarity with the people of Iraq, it is providing Intensive Care Unit (ICU) sets to COVID-19 treatment hospitals in 7 Governorates, complementing efforts undertaken by other partners.

As part of ongoing efforts to enhance COVID-19 treatment responses, UNHCR delivered and supported the installation of 23 Intensive Care Unit (ICU) equipment sets in 7 Governorates including Erbil, Duhok, Suleymania, Kirkuk, Anbar, Diyala, and Salahaldeen. The ICU sets consist of ventilators, electric ICU beds, monitors, nebulizers, syringe pumps, infusion and suction pumps, and oxygen regulators. The ICU equipment will serve many of the host community, refugee and internally displaced (IDP) families living in the 7 Governorates.

Since the beginning of the COVID-19

pandemic, UNHCR has directly supported the health sector throughout Iraq which generously includes IDPs and refugees in national health plans and responses. UNHCR also thanks the public health authorities in the KRI and the Central Government of Iraq for including refugees in the national vaccination plan and for providing access for them to PCR testing and COVID-19 hospitals.

On 18 April 2021, in Dohuk, UNHCR handed over ICU equipment to the Lalav COVID-19 hospital that has a capacity of over 100 beds.

The ceremony was attended by Dr. Ali Tatar, Governor of Duhok, Dr. Afrasiab Musa, Director General of Health in Duhok Governorate, and representing UNHCR was Mr. Peter Trotter Head of UNHCR Sub Office Duhok.



UN-Habitat is upgrading water and sanitation infrastructure in health facilities in Heet

Heet, 24 April 2021 -At the end of March, the UN-Habitat team met with Mr. Ahmed Mishaan, the Head of the Heet Health Sector, who had this to say: "The Heet Health Directorate has one goal – to provide secure health, life and standard of living for all people." In partnership with Alwaleed Philanthropies, UN-Habitat is upgrading water and sanitation infrastructure in health facilities in Heet to mitigate the transmission of COVID-19. Works include: infrared sensor sink taps for hand washing,

sensor doors, upgrades to WCs/toilet areas, water and sewage systems,

installation of items to make the facility disability friendly.



Healthcare

WHO and Ministry of Health, Iraq train representatives of MoH on QualityRights initiative



Baghdad, 2 March 2021 - In collaboration with the Ministry of Health, the World Health Organization conducted the first WHO QualityRights initiative training for 8 Ministry of Health officials at Ibn Rushd psychiatric hospital, in Baghdad. The training was conducted to strengthen the quality of mental health services and human rights conditions in health facilities providing mental health services in Iraq and provide recommendations for the full national implementation of the WHO QualityRights initiative. The training also offered an opportunity to empower

representatives of MoH by acquiring tools related to the QualityRights initiative.

"We expect participants to use these tools at the health facility level and generate and share reports of the outcomes with MoH and WHO," said Dr Bruni Andrea, Technical Officer for Mental Health, Iraq. "The Quality rights initiative offers a fundamental approach to mental health care which is rights-based and recovery-oriented," added Dr Bruni.

QualityRights is a WHO global initiative to improve the quality of care provided by mental health services and

promote people's human rights with psychosocial, intellectual, and cognitive disabilities. It offers a new approach to mental health care that is rights-based and recovery-oriented. In Iraq, WHO will use the QualityRights to change mindsets and practices sustainably and empower all stakeholders to promote rights and recovery to improve people's lives with psychosocial, intellectual, or cognitive disabilities everywhere.

Over the past years, the Iraqi people have witnessed un-suitable conditions such as conflicts, violence, and recently the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic that negatively impacted mental health. With these challenges, mental health becomes one of the top health priorities in Iraq. WHO and MoH continue to work closely to strengthen mental health through capacity-building and the provision of mental health supplies like medicines. Several efforts have also been put in place to decentralize mental health services, integrate mental health into primary health care, and ensure that international standards of quality and human rights are met.

A blood drive to help patients in need led by a religious leader

Ninewa, 21 March 2021 - Yesterday in Ninewa, a local religious leader and participant in UNDP Iraq's project to enhance the role of religious leaders in community coexistence supported by Denmark led a blood drive to help patients in need at local hospitals.



A training on Disease Surveillance documentation and reporting held in Erbil

Erbil, 31 March 2021 - IOM Iraq's Migration Health Unit collaborated with KRG's Ministry of Health to train 41 staff from the Departments of Health of Erbil, Sulaymaniyah, Duhok and Halabja, in Disease Surveillance documentation and reporting.

Upon completion of the training, each of the four DoHs received IT equipment – including computers, tablets, and phones – to improve ongoing disease surveillance.

"The importance of this training is learning how to coordinate and unify data in a regular and timely manner from all the Departments of Health which will enable us to analyze the data and act accordingly," said Bina Ahmed, a CDC officer from the Ministry of Health.

This initiative was funded by DFID - UK Department for International Development.



CERF contributes US\$ 1.6 M to UNFPA integrated interventions in Iraq

Baghdad, 12 April 2021 - The Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) contributed US\$ 1.6 million to UNFPA for two years to provide integrated sexual reproductive health (SRH) and gender-based violence (GBV) interventions in Iraq.

The funding will strengthen the capacity of national actors, in particular women empowerment



organisations, in their response to gender-based violence following a survivor-centred approach and will ensure that women and girls have access to quality mental health and psychosocial support services, supported with livelihood opportunities.

The CERF grant will allow a scale-up of the mobile teams and deployment of community mobilisers to deliver integrated GBV and SRH services for internally displaced persons and returnees among the host community.

Dr. Rita Columbia, UNFPA Representative, thanked CERF for their support. "We are extremely grateful to CERF for supporting our programmes that put women and girls' needs first," she said. "Women and girls

are more determined than ever to have a dignified life, free of violence despite the humanitarian crisis in Iraq exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The funding will allow us to continue to reach the most vulnerable." The new contribution will bring Iraq one step closer to achieving transformative results for 2030: ending gender-based violence and harmful practices, ending unmet need for family planning, and ending preventable maternal death, thus ensuring women and girls are protected and empowered to make informed choices and reach their full potential.

This funding is part of CERF's first-ever allocation of \$25 million specifically to support GBV programming in 11 countries globally.

The Government of Japan and UNOPS restore access to urgent healthcare in Anbar, Iraq

Baghdad, 21 April 2021 – The Government of Japan and UNOPS launched a new project to restore access to urgent primary health services in Anbar, Iraq. The project aims at enhancing access to health services to support the COVID-19 response in the targeted areas through the rehabilitation of primary healthcare centers, and the provision of equipment and furniture, to improve the living conditions of the people including vulnerable populations, returnees, and internally displaced persons (IDPs). The project will directly benefit the public health system supporting more than 1.4 million individuals in Anbar governorate.

H.E. Mr. SUZUKI Kotaro, Ambassador of Japan to Iraq said "Japan had provided over USD 500 million as humanitarian assistance to the people affected by the crisis since 2014.

Additionally, Japan has decided to provide a new assistance package for Iraq amounting to USD 50 million, including this project to be implemented by UNOPS." "I praise UNOPS services in several fields which are crucial to improving capacities, boosting cost-effectiveness and increasing the quality of any project. I hope the assistance from the Government and people of Japan will help the people in Anbar Governorate, including IDPs, to realize better life through restoring access to urgent primary health services.

Dr. Khair Khalaf Shalal, Director of General Office in the Directorate of Health in Anbar Governorate said "The Directorate of Health in Anbar Governorate appreciates the continued support from the Government and the People of Japan and UNOPS to the Iraqi people in restoring access to some

health centers in the governorate and improving the services that are urgently needed especially during this period of the spread of COVID-19 pandemic."

Appreciating the continued support from the Government of Japan in Iraq, Mr. Muhammad Usman Akram, Director of UNOPS Operational Hub in Amman, said: "UNOPS support in the rehabilitation of the centers will be critical to increasing access to public health services to the vulnerable people and those returning to their home after the years of conflict, and enhancing the Iraq Ministry of Health and Environment's operational capacities across the country. The strategic support from the Government of Japan is a living example of how international partners can work hand in hand to improve access to urgently needed humanitarian services."

Baghdad hospital fire: UN expresses shock, calls for stronger protection measures to prevent disasters

Baghdad hospital fire: UN expresses shock, calls for stronger protection measures to prevent disasters

Baghdad, 25 April 2021 – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, expresses shock and pain at the enormity of the tragic

incident that befell COVID-19 patients at the Ibn Khatib hospital in Baghdad Saturday night. She offers her deepest condolences to the families of those who lost their lives and wishes the injured a full and speedy recovery.

The Special Representative calls for stronger protection measures to ensure

that such a disaster cannot reoccur.

The UN continues to provide critical support to Iraq's health sector amid the pandemic and surging infections, and stands ready to further assist the health authorities in combating the disease.

WHO is extremely saddened by the loss of lives in a fire that blazed through in Ibn Al-Khatib hospital in Baghdad

Baghdad, 26 April 2021 - WHO Iraq shares the feelings of pain and sorrow over the recent fatal fire in Ibn Khatib Hospital, where dozens of people lost their lives and others were injured in the huge fire that blazed through Ibn Khatib Hospital in the Diyala Bridge area in Baghdad on Saturday evening.

Dr Ahmed Zouiten, WHO Iraq Representative and Head of Mission Said "in my own name and behalf of the

members of WHO we extend our deepest condolences and consolation to the families of the victims, and to the people and the Government of Iraq. And we wish a speedy and full recovery to those who were injured."

"WHO stands ready to assist Iraq Government efforts to respond to this incident" added Dr Zouiten.

The Government of Iraq declared three days of national mourning. The Iraqi

Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi ordered an investigation into the incident in the early hours of Sunday.

This accident constitutes an additional burden on Iraq's fragile health system which has faced over the past years, many challenges, including internal conflict and successive displacement crises, and has been stretched even further by the COVID19 Pandemic.

World Immunization Week - vaccines bring us closer

Baghdad, 28 April 2021 – Every year from 24 to 30 April, WHO, UNICEF, and all health partners in Iraq join the global community to celebrate World Immunization Week. This year, under the theme "vaccines bring us closer," the World Immunization Week urges greater engagement around immunization globally and at the country level to promote the importance of vaccination, and to improve health and well-being, for all. The World Immunization Week aims to promote vaccines to protect people of all ages against vaccine-preventable diseases. Immunization saves millions of lives every year and is widely recognized as one of the world's most successful health interventions. Vaccines are safe and effective and can positively impact the population's health when immunization rates are high. Yet, there are still many children in Iraq today not getting the vaccines they need, and many people missing vital vaccines during adolescence, adulthood, and old age.

For over 200 years, vaccines have protected us against diseases that threaten lives, livelihoods and prohibit our development. With their help, we have progressed without the burden of diseases like smallpox and polio, which cost humanity hundreds of millions of lives and cripples millions of children worldwide. Vaccines themselves continue the advance to a world free from hepatitis B and cervical cancer.

In 2021, the World Immunization Week comes as COVID-19 vaccines are being rolled out worldwide, including in Iraq. There has never been a better time than now for vaccines to bring communities and loved ones closer. Many families and friends have not physically met and seen each other because of the COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-19 vaccines are the best option for ensuring families will be able to meet their loved ones again.

As part of the 2021 campaign, WHO, UNICEF, health partners, and individuals worldwide are uniting to increase trust and confidence in vaccines, maintain and increase vaccine acceptance, and increase investment in vaccines, including routine immunization, to remove barriers to access. While the world focuses on critically important new vaccines to protect against COVID-19, there remains a need to ensure routine vaccinations are not missed. Many children have not received vaccination doses during the global pandemic, leaving them at risk of serious diseases like measles and polio. For example, in the first half of 2020 alone this resulted in over 160,000 children in Iraq not getting vaccinated against measles.

WHO, UNICEF, and the Iraq Health Authorities invite more partners to join us and support a lifesaving cause as we build solidarity and trust in vaccination as a public good that saves lives and protects health. Investments and new

research are enabling ground-breaking approaches to vaccine development, which are changing the science of immunization forever.

In Iraq, WHO and UNICEF reaffirm their commitment to continue working with and supporting the Ministry of Health to ensure that all people in need of vaccines in the country, especially children and the vulnerable groups like women, the elderly, people with chronic conditions, internally displaced populations and refugees continue to receive all required vaccines, including COVID-19 vaccines. The overarching aim is to reach all people, including in hard-to-reach areas of the country. WHO and UNICEF reiterate that vaccines are safe and effective and the best and only way to keep all people protected against vaccine-preventable diseases and urge everyone eligible to get the COVID-19 vaccine as soon as possible.

Dr Ahmed Zouiten, WHO Country Representative, Iraq
Dr Paula Bulancea, UNICEF Country Representative, Iraq



Best quality reproductive health care available is what every woman deserves

Baghdad, 30 April 2021 - Emily from Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade visited the UNFPA supported reproductive health clinic at Domiz camp to get information on the services offered to women; especially pregnant women. For girls to have a healthy reproductive

life and adolescence, having a mother's support is imperative.

With the funding from Denmark, UNFPA established reproductive health clinics across the country to make it easier for women and girls to access quality services and information to make informed decisions.



Mental Health

Netherlands Ambassador to Iraq visited IOM's team in Hassan Sham IDP Camp

Baghdad, 1 March 2021 - Netherlands Ambassador to Iraq H.E. Michel Rentenaar visited IOM's team in Hassan Sham IDP Camp last week. Through two community centres in the camp, IOM delivers Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) and

protection services to camp residents. Ambassador Rentenaar met with several camp residents and discussed barriers to durable solutions, gaps in services in the camp, and the psychosocial impact of protracted displacement.



Water

Baghdad Water Conference: UN calls for action to improve water resources management, critical to Iraq's future prosperity and to global food security



Baghdad Water Conference: UN calls for action to improve water resources management, critical to Iraq's future prosperity and to global food security

Baghdad, 13 March 2021 - Growing water scarcity requires immediate action to improve local and national resource management as well as enhance regional cooperation, the UN warned at the 1st Baghdad International Water Conference. Modern technology, public awareness on conservation and improved resource management can help overcome the

increasing challenges in the future.

The two-day conference, organized by the Iraqi Ministry of Water Resources, brings together senior officials from the Government of Iraq, representatives from international organizations including the UN, as well as international experts and diplomats. It aims to find ways to overcome future challenges relating to water availability, exchange scientific and policy expertise on water resource management, promote exchange of modern technologies, and raise awareness on conservation. Discussions

will also focus on Iraq's water situation and cooperation with neighboring countries, as well as capacity building in Iraq for improved management of water resources, the role of international organizations in implementing Sustainable Development Goal 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), and planning and investment in the sector.

Speaking at the opening session today, Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Iraq/Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator Irena Vojackova-Sollorano emphasized that water is not only a critical source of livelihood for Iraq but also an important driver of peace, sustainable development and future prosperity.

"This international conference is important for Iraq and the region. Water must be shared at all levels: globally; regionally; between countries; and between men and women at the community level. It must be a source of cooperation rather than conflict," she said.

Known in ancient times as Mesopotamia, the land between the Rivers Tigris and Euphrates, Iraq's

Baghdad Water Conference: UN calls for action to improve water resources management ... (continued)

history and civilizations were built around water. This heritage is being imperiled today by population growth, increased consumption, decrease in availability of fresh surface water and other factors, including conflicts.

Addressing the conference via a video link, the Director-General of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Dr. QU Dongyu, stated that the transformation of agri-food systems is at the heart of FAO's mandate to provide safer, more affordable and healthier diets for the world's rapidly growing population. Noting that "Water is the essence of life and at the core of the agri-food systems," he highlighted three related concepts of paramount importance: Water Governance Frameworks, Innovation and Capacity Development.

Stating that FAO strongly advocates for the adoption of science-based natural resource management practices that harness the power of innovation and digital technologies, he noted "Innovation is not only about new technologies, it is also about financing, networking and new business models to accelerate the transformation process. It combines human creativity, technology, science and entrepreneurship by engaging all stakeholders, from national and regional authorities, civil society, academia and the private sectors."

In her remarks, Ms. Vojackova-Sollorano outlined UN engagement with the Government of Iraq on several strands of work covering water, sanitation, hygiene, water resources management, water quality and management of water-related disasters. The UN is further responding to the humanitarian needs of refugees, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and returnees and other vulnerable citizens as well as helping the government address structural problems and facilitate regional cooperation.

Dwindling water reserves call for immediate action, Ms. Vojackova-Sollorano said, adding: The UN family in Iraq stands ready to provide advice and technical support to help improve water management for all Iraqis.

Here is the text of DSRSG/RC/HC Vojáčková-Sollorano's speech: Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a privilege to be here, at the invitation of the organisers of the 1st Baghdad International Water

Conference on behalf of SRSJ Jeanine Plasschaert, who unfortunately can't be here today. This is an important conference because water and the potential lack of it is so intimately connected to Iraq's future prosperity.

Water sustains life, impacts on food sustainability, the environment, the economy and even human security.

The territory of Iraq is famous for its history and civilizations, which were built and thrived on the banks of the Euphrates and the Tigris. Plentiful water resources and the use of extensive waterways and intricate irrigation systems have supported agricultural livelihoods, communities, and large cities for thousands of years.

However, the situation has changed and there is growing evidence of water scarcity across the entire country, such as:

- Decreases in the availability of fresh surface water;
- Increase in country population and individual water consumption;
- Evaporation in dams, water bodies, open irrigation canals, and soils;
- Increase in salinity, desertification and soil erosion;
- and environmental pollution.

The most important drivers of water scarcity are climate change and its effects, namely:

- reduced levels of precipitation on the territory of Iraq and the upstream riparian countries,
- increase in the frequency of droughts, as well as in the occurrences of sand and dust storms.

While direct human interference, such as:

- decades of inconsistent water management,
- a lack of investments within a conducive policy and legislative framework,
- the building of large dams for irrigation and electricity generation,
- and a lack of water safety awareness of the population are having an additional impact.

This worsening situation has not been helped by the extensive destruction caused by past conflicts and most recently by Daesh that damaged or threatened so much public infrastructure – such as pumping stations, canals, dams and reservoirs.

Against this difficult context, the UN is engaged with the Government on several strands of work covering water, sanitation, hygiene, water resources management, water quality and management of water related disasters.



The UN is further responding to humanitarian needs of refugees, IDPs and returnees and other vulnerable citizens as well as helping the government to address structural problems and to facilitate regional dialogue and cooperation on both water and the environment.

In concrete terms, this means improving access to safe drinking water in cities such as Basra; rebuilding irrigation infrastructure; promoting Climate Smart Agriculture with extension offices in the field, and facilitating capacity building within the Ministry of Water Resources and other ministries just to mention a few.

This week, I was present at a Coordination Group for donors and international partners on Agriculture and Water and heard about plans for the formulation of an Agricultural and Water Action and Investment Plan based on the National Development Plan and other recent sectoral and multi-sectoral strategies and the White Paper outlining the main economic reforms necessary. I support such initiatives and anticipate that together we can prioritize the most necessary actions.

I furthermore see much scope for the adoption of modern technology and data collection methods, as any action on water management requires a solid baseline and frequent situational updates.

This international conference is important for Iraq and the region. Water is a shared resource and must be shared at all levels: globally; regionally; between countries; and between men and women at the community level. It must not be a source of conflict but an area of cooperation.

I am pleased to see that Iraq takes a global approach to water and the environment – recognizing the need for

Baghdad Water Conference: UN calls for action to improve water resources management ... (continued)

sharing and cooperation at the global level to allow resources to be used and shared at the lowest levels. The President's approval of Iraq's accession to the Paris Agreement to climate change is an important statement of Iraq's intent to do more to support renewable energies, to reduce carbon emission and other sources of pollution. This is critical in the context of water as global warming clearly impacts on its future availability. Similarly, I understand that there is an effort to prompt Iraq's accession to the

Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention). This provides opportunities for advancing transboundary water cooperation, and to foster sustainable development and peace. I commend Iraq's accession to this and other global conventions.

Water is a fundamental basic need for human survival, such as drinking water and as an input to produce the food we consume. Without water, there would be no life on earth. Water is

crucial in order to achieve the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals, not just SDG 6 – ensuring access to water and sanitation for all – but as one of the foundations that connects many, if not all of the SDGs.

As such, reports on water scarcity call for immediate action and I can assure you that the UN family in Iraq – UNAMI and the UN agencies - stand ready to support initiatives that lead to improved water management in Iraq. Thank you.

At 1st Baghdad International Water Conference FAO Representative in Iraq stresses the importance of water as critical source of livelihood for Iraq and for sustainable agriculture and food security

Baghdad, 14 March 2021 – The Representative of the Food and Agriculture of the United Nations for Iraq, Dr. Salah El Hajj Hassan, attended the second day of the 1st Baghdad International Water Conference.

FAO contributed to the conference technically at three levels, HQ, RNE, and FAO-Iraq. The FAO technical session, held on the second day of the conference, was opened by the DDR of RNE, included technical presentations and input from FAO staff from HQ, RNE, and FAO-Iraq. Besides the Iraqi minister of water resources, a representative of the prime minister office as well as the Syrian, South Sudan and Somali water ministers also attended the technical session. Despite the fact that virtual participation was only by invitation, around 65 participants attended virtually, besides a nearly full conference room at the venue.

Speaking at the closing session today, Dr. Elhajj Hassan emphasized that water is a critical source of livelihood for Iraq and important for sustainable



agriculture and food security. El hajj Hassan said, "Before concluding my remarks, I would like to, echo the FAO Director General opening remarks and extend FAO's sincere thanks to the Ministry of Water Resources for this effective successful, and productive conference, and I wish to thank all the speakers and experts for their contributions." He also thanked the donor partners especially the European Union and Japan, for funding FAO irrigation projects in Iraq as well the Netherlands for the efforts in co leading with FAO the donor group on agriculture and water.

At the end of FAO's session a video was

presented about FAO activities of Al-Jazeera Irrigation system in northern Iraq, which include footages for rehabilitating irrigation canals and gates, reconstructing 11 bridges, repairing a pumping station, demining the project area, and replacing the damaged parts of 150 linear irrigation system.

At the conclusion of the ceremony, the Minister of Water Resources presented the shield of the first Baghdad International Water Conference to FAO Representative in Iraq in recognition of FAO role in the development and revitalization of the water sector in Iraq.

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World Water Day 2021: UN stresses awareness and the need for collective action to safeguard water resources in Iraq

Baghdad, 22 March 2021 - On the World Water Day on 22 March, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) is raising awareness about the global water crisis. We support any action to achieve Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6: water and sanitation for all by 2030. Water sustains life, impacts on food sustainability, the environment, the economy, and even human security. As such, it is vital that we collectively safeguard this critical resource for the benefit of everyone.

On this day, we emphasize the need for collective action bringing together governments, businesses, NGOs, media and local communities. "Water is a fundamental basic need for human survival. Without water, there would be no life on earth. I can assure you that the UN family in Iraq is supporting initiatives that lead to improved water management in accordance with the Paris Agreement on climate change," said the UN Resident Coordinator for Iraq, Irena Vojáčkova-Sollorano.

The theme in 2021 is "Valuing Water." In Iraq, we raise awareness of increased water scarcity in agriculture as the main user of all water



withdrawals (70 percent) due to: i) decrease in the availability of fresh surface water; ii) increase in-country population and individual water consumption; iii) evaporation in dams, water bodies, open irrigation canals, and soils; iv) increase in salinity, desertification and soil erosion; and v) environmental pollution.

The Government of Iraq, FAO, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands (as the donor) are working together to support Iraq in its participation in the second phase of FAO's inter-regional project on Monitoring Water Productivity using Remote Sensing (WaPOR). The five-year programme monitors water productivity through open-access of

remotely sensed derived data, assists countries in monitoring water productivity, identifying water productivity gaps, proposing solutions to reduce these gaps and contributing to a sustainable increase of agricultural production. At the same time, it takes into account ecosystems and the equitable use of water resources, which eventually leads to an overall reduction of water stress.

Dr. Salah ElHajj Hassan, FAO Representative for Iraq, said that solid evidence is required to inform policy decisions towards achieving SDG 6. "Let us celebrate World Water Day together and give greater care to water utilization inside and outside of our homes," he added.

UN-Habitat marks World Water Day by water network rehabilitation in five cities across Iraq



Erbil, 22 March 2021 – Ismail Faris and his wife Um Medyan smile each time they turn their tap, and a steady stream of clean and cool water rushes out. For many across the globe, this a routine act but to this Iraqi couple, it is simply a miracle, following years of destruction and displacement. Their family is one of over 2,300 households who have benefited from UN-Habitat's rehabilitation of water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) infrastructure through a European Union funded project in Ninewa Governorate.

The area has been deeply affected by the conflict with the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), and in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, which hosted internally displaced persons (IDP) who fled Ninewa Governorate following ISIL's occupation of Mosul and Sinjar cities.

"I am unable to thank UN-Habitat enough," Ismail said. "First they saved my house, and then they brought potable water after a long deprivation." The Faris family experienced the trauma of war, not once, but twice. Ismail himself was hit on both occasions, first by heavy shrapnel, and then by bullets in his arm while fleeing during the Mosul liberation. Tragically, their 10-year old son was killed by a shell that landed in their home. Both the house structure and the water network supplying their street in the Al-Shifaa neighbourhood of West Mosul suffered damage in these conflicts.

The Faris family now has a new start in their old home, with fresh water to help cleanse the vestiges of war, or simply to quench one's thirst on a hot day.

Their house is one of the 430 in Mosul connected by almost 5,000m of rehabilitated water pipes delivering potable water with high efficiency to beneficiaries affected by the conflicts.

The urban recovery initiative is part of the Headway Programme "Strengthening the Long-Term Resilience of Subnational Authorities in Countries Affected by the Syrian and Iraqi Crisis," funded by the EU and managed by UN-Habitat in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Since the outset of the initiative, UN-Habitat has worked closely with the local municipalities and water directorates to identify priority infrastructure, develop the WASH projects, and build local capacity. Beneficiaries like Faris and Medyan were engaged through focus group discussions at the beginning of the projects.

Throughout the year 2020, almost 20,000m of water pipe was rehabilitated in the 5 target cities of Erbil, Duhok, Sumel, Mosul, and Sinjar, and collectively, the WASH projects granted 11,058 people equitable access to a safe and

sustainable water supply. With these outputs, the WASH projects directly support the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by providing access to basic services (SDG 11) and by ensuring equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water (SDG 6).

The benefits go beyond brick and water. As the breadwinner for his household, Faris worried about being able to support his family as they rebuilt both their home and their lives within. He now works part time pouring concrete casting for houses, an opportunity he attributes to the UN.

"If not for the efforts of the UN-Habitat, I would not be able to do anything for my home and family," he said.

Supporting local economies and providing opportunities to build capacity of beneficiaries formed a key component of UN-Habitat's rehabilitation work in Iraq. A total of 6,565 working days have been created to date, with locals employed in the design, construction, management, and implementation of the mentioned WASH projects. To ensure the long-term viability of the infrastructure, UN-Habitat targets the training of 25 technical municipal staff on the effective maintenance of water networks. Once completed, WASH projects are handed over to the respective municipalities and water directorates for ongoing management, a smooth transition that will continue sustaining the Faris family and many other beneficiaries.



UNEP Iraq marks World Wildlife Day

Baghdad, 3 March 2021 - On World Wildlife Day [3 March] UNEP is highlighting five threatened species native to Iraq. These species share the land, water and bounties of Mesopotamia with us. They, and their natural habitats, are highly vulnerable to climate change and water scarcity.

Key facts:

The Basra Reed Warbler is a key bird species in Iraq's southern marshlands.

The Euphrates Soft-Shelled Turtle is

found only in the Tigris and Euphrates basins.

Fish species Binni is found in the Tigris-Euphrates Basin, mostly in marshes and lakes of Iraq.

The Smooth-Coated Otter disappeared in the '90s after marshes drained and reemerged in 2003 after flooding.

The Kurdistan Newt, a unique species to Kurdistan Mountains and remarkable bioindicator for excellent water quality.

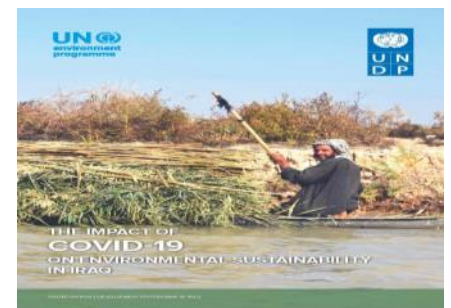


New report from UNDP Iraq: Impact of COVID-19 on environmental sustainability in Iraq

Baghdad, 15 March 2021 - Impact of COVID-19 on environmental sustainability in Iraq is the fifth in a series released by UNDP on the impact of COVID-19 in Iraq. It emphasizes how the pandemic has exacerbated Iraq's environmental fragility, which was already affected by legacies of conflict, lack of significant public sector and governance reforms, loss of development gains and illicit activity such as illegal hunting, fishing and

logging, amongst other factors. It outlines how the virus has led to some negative environmental impacts, such as increased quantities of medical waste, but also positive impacts, such as temporary improvements in air quality and ecosystems. It also proposes how key drivers of fragility can be addressed over time.

The report is available at <https://bit.ly/3kCf5GP>



Culture

UNESCO supports Iraq National Museum to protect and preserve its collection

Baghdad, 23 March 2021 - As part of the efforts to support museums in Iraq, UNESCO has donated equipment, conservation and storage materials to the Iraq National Museum in Baghdad, based on the priority needs identified by the Museum and the Ministry of Culture. The donated equipment and materials will contribute to the Museum's efforts to safeguard and promote its invaluable collection. Moreover, it will help Museum staff to conduct inventory and update database of the museum collection, and thus improve collection documentation and storage management.

The National Museum is dedicated to the collection and interpretation of the history of Iraq and its environs. The collections consist of mainly man-made objects covering the past 7,000 years. The types of objects in the collection represent Sumerian, Akkadian, Assyrian, Babylonian and Islamic cultures and include objects made of glass, pottery, metal, ivory, and parchment, among others.



With the armed conflict in March 2003, the National Museum suffered significant damage, leading to the loss of many of its objects through looting. Although the total number of looted items is debated, the Museum management staff has estimated that about 15,000 items, including 5,000 valuable cylinder seals, were stolen. After the destruction and pillaging that occurred in 2003, UNESCO has worked hand in hand with Iraqi professionals for its rehabilitation. According to the National Museum of Iraq, 4,300 objects (28.6%) out of the 15,000 looted from the Museum have been returned. The

Iraqi government officially reopened the National Museum in Baghdad in February 2015.

Moreover, museums around the world have been particularly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, with nearly 90% of them, or more than 85,000 institutions worldwide, having closed their doors during the crisis, including the Iraq National Museum. The donated equipment and materials will strengthen the Museum capacities to preserve its collection and reopen when circumstances improve in order to keep bringing enrichment and knowledge to as many people as possible.

UNESCO, IOM and the European Union partner to boost livelihoods opportunities with focus on Iraq's cultural heritage

Baghdad, 22 March 2021 — Iraq's economy continues to face many challenges, created by the conflict against ISIL, COVID-19 and other factors. These challenges have made it more difficult for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to access financial services and for SMEs to hire new workers. This is especially true in the case of traditional and cultural industries, as demand for non-essential goods declines in a post-conflict economy, and expenditures on essential goods rise.

With a grant from the European Union, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) have launched a new partnership that will support employment opportunities that directly contribute to the restoration of Iraq's cultural heritage. Targeted activities in the old cities of Mosul and Basra will reach SMEs that have the capacity to create or support jobs and are scalable in the long-term. The project will support Internally Displaced Persons, returnees and members of the host communities.

The partnership will focus on urban reconstruction, and the promotion of culture-related goods and traditional industries, primarily through IOM Iraq's innovative financing mechanism



— the Enterprise Development Fund (EDF). The EDF aims to restore essential economic infrastructure by providing financial capital to SMEs in primary and secondary economic sectors with high demand for labour to re-start or expand their operations. By targeting key sectors and providing necessary funding, the EDF encourages rapid restoration and/or creation of job opportunities needed for the recovery of local economies.

The EDF programme was developed by IOM in 2018 as an innovative livelihoods approach to contribute to economic recovery and private sector revitalization in Iraq. The programme typically provides tailored support to SMEs in primary and secondary

economic sectors with high demand for labour force and, thus, great potential for labour-intensive expansion. More than 120 SMEs will be directly supported through EDF grants, with a view to creating and retaining 850 jobs as a direct result of EDF grant support provided through this programme.

The project, "Reviving Mosul and Basra Old Cities" will build on the ongoing activities implemented by UNESCO in Mosul and Basra, to respond to the economic shock caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and boost local economies. The overall objectives of the project are to contribute to economic recovery and social cohesion through the creation of decent jobs; reconstruct historical urban centres; and support SMEs.

UNESCO announces winning architectural design of competition to rebuild Al-Nouri Mosque complex in Mosul

Paris/Baghdad, 15 April 2021 - An international jury today announced that an entry by eight Egyptian architects won the international competition for the reconstruction of the historic Al-Nouri Mosque complex in Mosul, Iraq, a major component of UNESCO's ambitious project for the rehabilitation of the ancient city, Revive the Spirit of Mosul.

Selected from among 123 entries, the winning design for a "Courtyards Dialogue," as the winning project is called, was presented by a team of four partners Salah El Din Samir Hareedy, Head of Team, Khaled Farid El-Deeb, Sherif Farag Ebrahim, and Tarek Ali Mohamed, and four designer architects Noha Mansour Ryan, Hager Abdel Ghani Gad, Mahmoud Saad Gamal, and Yousra Muhamed El-Baha.

"The reconstruction of Al-Nouri Mosque complex, a historical site that is part of Mosul's fabric and history, will be a

landmark in the process of advancing the war-torn city's reconciliation and social cohesion. Heritage sites and historical monuments are powerful catalysts for people's sense of belonging, of community, and identity.

They are key to reviving the spirit of Mosul and of Iraq as a whole," said Audrey Azoulay, UNESCO Director-General

"The selection of the winning design under the international competition for



UNESCO announces winning architectural design of competition to rebuild Al-Nouri Mosque complex in Mosul (Continued)

the reconstruction and rehabilitation of the Al-Nouri Mosque complex is a significant milestone under the 'Revive the Spirit of Mosul' initiative. In 2018, the UAE took the lead and joined UNESCO on this historic endeavor, inspired by the history and legacy of Mosul and the resilience and strength of its people. Reaching this important milestone has brought us closer to the realization of a shared commitment to restore social cohesion and a spirit of fraternity and tolerance in Mosul once again," said Noura bint Mohammed Al Kaabi, United Arab Emirates Minister of Culture and Youth.

The winners, seasoned architects with a notable track record in heritage rehabilitation, urban planning and climate-based architecture, will now produce a more detailed design for the reconstruction of Al-Nouri complex, with a view to starting its building in late autumn 2021.

The project foresees the reconstruction of Al-Nouri's historic prayer hall and the organic integration of the complex, the largest public space in the Old City of Mosul, in its urban surrounding through open public spaces with five entry points from surrounding streets. While the prayer hall will look as it did before the 2017 destruction of Al-Nouri Mosque, it will feature notable

improvements in the use of natural light and expanded spaces for women and dignitaries, that will connect to the main hall through a semi covered open structure which could also serve as an open space for prayer.

The winning project further foresees the creation of enclosed gardens evocative of the historic houses and gardens that were located around the prayer hall prior to its remodelling in 1944. Upon notification of their winning, the team issued a statement welcoming the results of the competition saying "Our team worked with high passion to submit a project that primarily addresses the need for social cohesion and revival of souls. We are looking forward to completing the design and to helping the revival of the Old City of Mosul."

The winning design will receive a \$50,000 prize and will be awarded the contract for the detailed design of the complex. The runners-up will be awarded prizes in recognition of their work, \$30,000 will be given to a team from India, followed by \$20,000 to an entry from Spain, \$15,000 to a team in the USA, and \$10,000 to a team of architects from the United Arab Emirates, France, Turkey and Lebanon.

The international design competition

for the Reconstruction and Rehabilitation of Al-Nouri complex in Mosul was launched in November 2020 by UNESCO. The competition was prepared in close coordination with the Iraqi Ministry of Culture and the Iraqi Sunni Endowment, with the support of the United Arab Emirates, all of them members of the Joint Steering Committee of the project. This reconstruction of the Al-Nouri Complex is part of UNESCO's flagship initiative Revive the Spirit of Mosul, which was launched in 2018 and concerns the rehabilitation of the historical fabric of the Old city of Mosul, the revival of the city's cultural life, and the strengthening of its educational system to ensure quality education for all.

The Joint Steering Committee of the project and international architectural competition for the Al-Nouri complex, required entrants to conserve the parts of the prayer hall that survived the 2017 destruction and integrate them into new buildings. It also called for the rehabilitation of historical edifices as part of the new landscaped site. By creating new spaces dedicated to the community – for education, social and cultural activities – the project will serve the inhabitants of Mosul in ways that go beyond its principal religious function.

Education

The Government of Japan and UNESCO sign agreement to support the Ministry of Education's TV channel

Baghdad, 4 March 2021 – Today, the agreement to commence the project "Mitigating the impact of COVID-19 on Education through distance learning in Iraq" (about 600,000 USD) was exchanged between Mr. NAKAGAWA Shu, Deputy Chief of Mission, Embassy of Japan in Iraq, and UNESCO Senior Project Officer, Sae Osawa.

The project is for UNESCO to continue its support to the Ministry of Education (MoE) in delivering distance learning through its Education TV channel that aims to reach more than 6.3 million primary school children and other children who do not have access to education throughout the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, and beyond.

In response to the COVID-19 crisis and the closure of schools since the end of February 2020, UNESCO is building

upon its previous assistance to the MoE's TV channel, by supporting the production of television-based lectures for all subjects for grades 1-6 and the Accelerated Learning Programme (ALP) through this project.

Japan has long been a valued donor to UNESCO in Iraq. In 2019, the Government of Japan supported the

project "Voices of the children of Old Mosul: the rehabilitation and management of primary schools in historic urban context emerging from conflict", and in 2020 the project "Job creation for youth in Mosul - a centre of vocational excellence in construction skills supporting labour market outcomes".



On International School Meals Day, WFP and the Ministry of Education commit to expanding support to all schoolchildren



Baghdad, 11 March 2021 – On International School Meals Day, the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) renews its commitment to support the learning and nutrition needs of children in Iraq. Under the National School Feeding Programme, WFP in partnership with the Iraqi Ministry of Education is developing a new universal School Feeding policy to support all primary school children in the country.

“As a student who formerly benefited from the national school feeding programme, I still recall my happiness when receiving the meals and how we eagerly waited for this part of the school day. I look forward to all Iraqi

students enjoying the same great feeling as we look to expand the National School Feeding Programme to all schoolchildren,” said Iraqi Minister of Education Ali Hameed Mikhliif Muhsin. “We appreciate the support provided by WFP and assure our full commitment to a comprehensive, sustainable school feeding project which we consider an important step to ensure healthy and educated students who would serve the country and society in the future.”

WFP and the Ministry of Education resumed the National School Feeding Programme in January 2021 to provide support to 255,000 vulnerable children and families in 11 governorates across

Iraq. Mohammed Nasir Jiyad in Anbar reported that over half the students who had dropped out of Al Rayhana School rejoined classes following the resumption of the school feeding programme. Said 12-year old school girl Tadhî: “I look forward to attending school to learn and eat with my friends, sharing happy moments together.”

“WFP remains committed to supporting the Government of Iraq on strengthening national programmes, including the development of this universal school feeding policy investing in the future of the children of Iraq, in particular girls,” said WFP Representative in Iraq Abdirahman Meygag. “On International School Meals Day, WFP stands ready to recommence the National School Feeding Programme with the Ministry of Education as soon as schools are safe to open and attend.”

The impact of COVID-19 is anticipated to go beyond the immediate learning, health and nutrition status of children with consequences for their socialization and mental wellbeing. WFP and UNICEF’s joint survey found in November 2020 that over 90 percent of parents support sending their children back to school, as long as safety measures were in place to help protect everyone, such as mandatory masks and distancing.

UNESCO completed successfully the third and last phase of the Quality Assurance and Leadership Programme for Mosul Vocational Training Centre (VTC) staff

Mosul, 17 March 2021 - UNESCO completed successfully the third and last phase of the Quality Assurance and Leadership Programme for Mosul Vocational Training Centre (VTC) Staff. This activity is one of the main components of the project on job creation for youth in Mosul through the setting up of a Centre of Vocational Excellence funded by the Japanese Government.

The workshop was closed by Mr. Raed Jabar, the Director General of Work and Vocational Training at the Ministry of Labour, Ms. Mithaq Talib, the Director of the VTC in Mosul, and Mr. Santosh Khatri, the Head of Education at UNESCO Iraq Office. All three speakers emphasized the importance of strengthening capacity and capability of staff by equipping them with the knowledge and skills to help raise the quality of education and

learning in the VTC.

Drawing on national and international good practice, 17 professionals from Mosul VTC have completed all three phases of the programme, delivered from January to March 2021. All 17 participants said they had gained the necessary knowledge and skills to enhance approaches to quality assurance and continuous quality

improvement and to improve their professional practice. Participants completed a self-evaluation online, as a first step to future accreditation process. They developed action plans for the improvement of their VTC, stating that they would be using lessons learned from this training to drive improvements within the VTC.



Committed to learning despite all odds

Erbil, 21 March 2021 - Sima is a ten year old girl in Grade 4 at Qamishli Basic School in Qushtapa refugee camp in Erbil, northern Iraq. Her brother, Ahmed, also studies in the same school. Sima and Ahmed have now returned to their school. Almost an year ago the COVID-19 pandemic led to an abrupt suspension of school, leaving Sima's education in danger. For many months, Sima and Ahmed's return to school was fraught with uncertainty, putting them and many other children's education at risk.

By the end of May, 2020, the Ministry of Education in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI), with support from UNICEF and other partners, began broadcasting lessons on education television and through online learning portals, with the hope that learning could continue. This was a novel way of learning for children, who now found themselves having to learn on their own.

UNICEF stepped in to provide much needed support by producing and distributing self-learning materials that based on the school curriculum. A set of self-learning materials comprises of one textbook that consists of four main subjects; Arabic, math, English, and science, and is available for children from grades 1 to 6. The materials include worksheets and exercises that children use them for learning at home on their own or with support from their parents. This is how Sima and Ahmed were able to continue learning, with the help of their mother, even when their schools were closed.

When schools finally reopened in November 2020 in Iraq, students continued using the blended learning approach, which children required to attend school in person one day of the week and to continue learning through the educational TV and online portals the rest of the days. Learning

facilitators continue to support the children by following-up on their progress in schools and helping them to work through the self-learning materials.

Blended learning in Iraq has bridged the gap caused by school closures and allowed children like Sima to continue learning and gain skills to better the lives in future. Under this programme, over 7300 Syrian refugee children in Darashakran, Qushtapa, Kawergoosk, Basirma refugee camps in Erbil and Arbat refugee camp in Sulaimaniyah have been able to continue their learning.

This work was made possible by generous support from the Governments of Germany, Norway, Kuwait, the US Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration.

By Narmin Ezzet, UNICEF Education Officer

Successful implementation of the UNESCO Qualifications Passport: ensuring access to higher education and employment for refugees under Covid-19 pandemic

Baghdad, 31 March 2021 - Following the launch of the UNESCO Qualifications Passport (UQP) in Iraq on the 1st February 2021, the implementation of this pilot project has made significant progress, thanks to the major contribution of the Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (NOKUT) in capacity building, the extraordinary commitment and dedication from the recently trained Iraqi credential evaluators from the Iraqi Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MoHESR), and support from the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) in collaboration with refugee community-based outreach.

After approximately two months of workshops, the training of Iraqi Credential Evaluators was successfully completed on the 24th March 2021. The workshops were interactive and involved very interesting exchanges among the credential evaluators from NOKUT and MoHESR. These workshops laid the foundations for the success of the UQP Pilot project by strengthening the cadre's knowledge of advanced methodologies in the field of qualifications recognition.

Through the excellent facilitation provided by the UNHCR in coordination with the refugee

community, on the 25th March 2021, 18 UQP credential evaluation interviews took place simultaneously in Baghdad, Mosul, and Basra at the Community Support Centres run by UNHCR. Due to the challenges imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic this was done virtually. This is the first time that UQP interviews have taken place virtually anywhere in the world as well as being the first time they have been carried out in the Middle East, showing the robustness of the methodology.

The main focus for refugees and vulnerable migrants' education has until now been on basic education. UNESCO is now mandated to invoke projects such as the UQP in the domain of higher education. It is vitally important to create educational pathways for refugees through the education system to assist them to complete their studies and apply their knowledge in a transition to peace, reconstruction and stability.

In the broader mandate of UNESCO as the lead agency for SDG 4 to ensure inclusive quality education and promoting lifelong learning, the UQP will contribute to several targets such as ensuring "equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for vulnerable persons" (SDG 4.5) and to ensure "equal access for all women and



men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university" (SDG 4.3).

Finally, UNESCO would like to thank the financial contribution provided by Norway and Dubai Cares for this project and invite other actors for collaboration in creating an overall inclusive environment in Education in Iraq and around the globe. Thanks to the tremendous effort provided by the credential evaluators, the result of this round of UQP interviews will be soon communicated and UNESCO is working on the organisation of an award ceremony and an international workshop among all credential evaluators, to reinforce further multilateral international cooperation.

WFP and UNICEF continue support to schoolchildren in Iraq in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic

Baghdad, 11 April 2021 - In a new joint initiative, UNICEF and the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) are providing a cash stipend to the families of 2,400 primary school girls in Basra, to support their transition to lower secondary education.

The pilot project will help adolescent girls in the Shatt Al-Arab district continue learning whether they are in school or forced to study at home because of COVID-related closures.

The stipends, which are paid in Iraqi dinars at the equivalent of USD 80, will help impoverished and vulnerable families provide for their children. Three installments will be paid to the families during this academic year, amounting to a total of USD 240 per student who stays in education.

“All too often, mothers and fathers who find themselves unable to put food on the table and keep a roof over their children’s heads or provide them an education are tempted to send their daughters into early marriage or into the labour force,” said Paul Edwards, UNICEF’s Representative. “With the support that we are providing, we are working with our partner WFP to help parents close the financial gap and not

have to pull their children out of learning as they desperately try to make ends meet.”

With the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic and related restrictions including the closure of schools, the ability of children to learn in-person, socialize and play with their friends in the safety of their schools – and in many cases have assured access to a meal – have all been threatened. Hard-won gains in human capital may be set back, affecting the long-term future opportunities and earning potential of students, said a World Bank study in 2020. A joint survey by UNICEF and WFP in late 2020 revealed that over 90 percent of parents prefer their children to return to school, so long as mitigation measures are in place, such as limiting the number of children in classrooms and school yard, a full-time health worker at school, staying home for 14 days if exposed to the virus, and mandatory masks.

“Through this initiative, WFP and UNICEF are focusing on the most vulnerable schoolgirls and their families, at a crucial time when they risk leaving education forever,” said WFP Iraq Representative Abdirahman Meygag. “As soon as it is possible, WFP



and the Ministry of Education are ready to resume the National School Feeding Programme to support vulnerable students and families through the provision of nutritious school meals, which also attracts and helps keep children in school.”

In addition to the stipends to the girls from UNICEF and WFP, the package of support, provided in partnership with NGO Mercy Hands, includes teacher training on gender responsive approaches to teaching and learning methods, now done remotely while schools remain closed.

This initiative was made possible thanks to the support of Germany and Canada, without which some girls in Basra may need to leave school prematurely.

A UNHCR scholarship changes the life of a Palestinian refugee in Iraq

Baghdad, 16 April 2021 - It was a hot summer day in Baghdad in June 2018, Abdallah was coming home from school, he had high school final exams. When he reached home, he felt that something was wrong. From that day onward, nothing would be the same again, his grandfather had died.

Abdallah was devastated and was unable to finish the school year.

“He was not just my grandfather, he was much more, he was a friend, a counselor, a source of inspiration, a role model for me, he was my last living connection to my homeland, Palestine.” Abdallah is a Palestinian refugee that lives in Baghdad. He lives with his parents and 4 siblings. Because of his hard work, persistence, and high scores in high school, he was awarded a DAFI scholarship by UNHCR. The scholarship is awarded by the Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative.

Abdallah studies hard and despite lockdowns and remote learning, he does his best to stay focused on his subject

matters. The only thing that he misses is the practical side which he hopes to go back to in full, by next school year.

The DAFI (Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative) scholarship programme offers qualified refugee students the possibility to earn an undergraduate degree in their country of asylum. Through the dedicated support of the German Government, UNHCR and private donors, the programme has supported over 18,000 young refugees to undertake tertiary studies since 1992.

In Iraq, DAFI programme was piloted in Baghdad – Federal Iraq for the first time in 2019 with the support and close coordination with the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MoHESR) and relevant universities. The programme benefited 10 Palestinian refugee students, one of whom is Abdallah. The programme covers the annual tuition fees paid to the universities as well as monthly allowances to help the students make ends meet”.



The scholarship allowed Abdallah to study in the medical field, something he always wanted to do, so he is now studying Anesthesia Techniques. In two years, he will be assisting physicians in operation rooms in hospitals in anesthesia, surgery, and revival, just like what his grandfather wanted.

Abdallah misses going out with his friends, but he keeps in touch with them through virtual meetings. He is very hopeful about his future, he can’t wait to graduate, so he can help people in need and apply state of the art knowledge in the medical field.

IOM and Toyota Iraq work together to improve employability for young people in Iraq



Baghdad, 3 March 2020 - "Training was tough, but professional at the same time. We learned about the Kaizen concept, which refers to activities that are continuously improving, and how to

deal with this concept in work. As long one has a "continually improving" approach, this might help us improve our societies."

Mustafa is part of the first group to receive training through an initiative led by IOM and Toyota Iraq to improve employability for young people in Iraq. Through this program, the trainees will gain technical knowledge and professional skills related to the auto industry and sales. They will learn transferrable skills for the automotive industry and be better equipped to access job opportunities that will lead to sustainable income.

"The certificate that I obtained during

this training is an international certificate; now I can apply to work with international companies in Iraq. Toyota company has opened a new branch in my city, my ambition is to get a job there."

"It was a very good experience. No matter how tough the training could be, the end the result was excellent," said Husain, another participant.

"The experience was valuable to me. My ambition is to get a job in the Toyota company, using the knowledge I have learned through this course, and get a high-ranking position."

This activity is supported by the Government of Japan.

Q and A with a frontline caseworker on children issues



Baghdad, 15 March 2021 - Al Anbar province is one of the largest provinces in Iraq and is located in the west of Baghdad. This province in the past ten years was a war zone and faced many security issues that affect families and their children. UNICEF Iraq and its partners were one of the first agencies which support rehabilitation schools, water factories, and others.

UNICEF counties supporting in the social workers & frontline worker who works with children on psychosocial support and GBV response and below we have the Q&A of two people who work in Human Appeal organization which is one of UNICEF partners that operate in Al Anbar.

Farah Uday, GPV caseworker, 26 years old, graduated as a chemist from education sciences college. She had been working with Human Appeal for the last six months and she answers us on:

Tell us about yourself and how / how did you got involved in this line work?

Farah Uday: The GPV post opened first in Haditha city, I wanted t that time to know more about GPV because I didn't know anything about it before, but I

asked my friends and relatives and I did research and study on GPV on the internet than I apply for this post, and I get the job and I love my job so much. Before that I worked as a data entry in ICRC and then IMC I worked as a social worker and now a caseworker with the human appeal.

What does this work mean to you?

It makes me happy to support and help to reduce the violence against women and it's a positive motivation for me. This work adds many things to my life ... there were many things we didn't know about people's life but when we go to the field and talk to them. I've learned a lot.

I wasn't satisfied with my life in general and I was shy and don't communicate with other people and I didn't care about other people's issues. But when I knew how the other women live through my work...I became humbler and more started to love my life. And that even change in me how to deal better with my family and with other people. And because these changes helped to communicate and support my nearby neighbor, which I didn't have any kind of relationship with them, I was encouraged to reach out to them and started with the relationship and started to visit them, and help them with their problems.

It must be difficult to listen to some of the experiences and difficulties that children go through. Is there a story in particular that has stayed with you / a child in particular whom you supported who affected you more than others?

After the return of the families (they were IDP's) to Ramadi, Anah City,

many young girls drop the schooling because they didn't go back to the same area they used to be before, they went to other areas which far from any school they might know. And, the poverty level is a factor that makes the families force their girls to drop schooling because they don't have money for their transportation and educations.

Khalifa Hamoud Kahlifa, 35 years old, married and have three children, graduated from the college of art in 2008, answers us on the below questions:

Tell us about yourself and how / how did you got involved in this line of work?

I entered this field of organizations & NGO' after the libations of the west of Anbar 2017-2018, I started with Afkar association in protection program, after that with TDH on mix program education and protection program, that I worked as monitor assessment with Islamic CV NGO. Nowadays in the last six months, I work west of Anbar in Anah & Rawah cities and the villages around it as a caseworker with a human appeal organization. Frankly after the armed operations in Anbar and liberation from the terrorist groups ... we as a community witnessed many horrible things it will take me hours to talk about it. These bad security situations resulted from many children faced violence, joined armed groups and they are 10 years old or less which their future finished because of the temptations of these armed group, all of that generated a weak and fragile generation that need help and support. By Zaid Fahmi, UNICEF

Ministry of Youth and Sports, UNFPA, ILO launch results of Youth Employability Survey: shows increased frustration among youth, need for private sector investments

Baghdad, 24 March 2021 - The Ministry of Youth and Sports launched today the results of youth the employability survey, conducted in collaboration with the Central Statistical Organization (CSO) and support from UNFPA and ILO with funding from the Swedish Government. Building on the National Adolescents and Youth Survey 2019, the employability survey, sampling the three governorates of Qadisiyah, Muthanna, and Thi Qar, emphasises the challenges young people in Iraq face trying to enter the labour market. Using the data to tailor to young peoples' needs and aspirations, allows the work towards more youth-centred policies and approaches.

The survey shows youth frustration with the lack of livelihood and employment opportunities, lack of cohesion in offer and demand for employment, lack of women participation in the labour market and lack of private-sector job opportunities. The event was attended by the Deputy Minister of Youth and Sports, Mr Abdul Rahman Al-Louwizi, the UN Deputy Special Representative and Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Ms Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano, ILO Country Representative to Iraq, Dr Maha Kattaa and UNFPA Representative to Iraq, Dr Rita Columbia as well as representatives from line ministries, donors countries, the private sector and civil society.

The launch included presentations of the results and the ways forward, highlighting the need to establish a system that provides a link between education and employment and takes into consideration country-specific job market needs and youth demographics. Launching the event, Mr Al-Luizi, said: "What we would like to highlight through this study is the reality of



youth participation in the labour market in order to monitor their involvement in economic activity and help us identify the required interventions at the policy level to enable them to contribute actively and effectively in the labour market."

"The work undertaken included focus group discussions for more than 300 young men and women surveyed through qualitative and quantitative analysis to identify the different point of views regarding employability and required support," he added.

Speaking at the event, Ms Vojáčková-Sollorano emphasised that "If we are to reach the ambitious goals that we have set for future generations, especially SDG 8 on decent work and economic growth, boys and girls need to be part of the discussions at all stages." She further stated that "In collaboration with young people across Iraq, the Government, especially the Ministry of Youth and Sports, the international community and the civil society can collectively make sure that youth's voices are heard and that they are an integral part of the discussions about Iraq's future."

"Getting a job as a young man or woman is a key entry ticket into society and to earn a living. Likewise, the well-

being of a nation's economy is also closely linked to the degree of employment in society. Today's workshop brought home to me two important messages. First, that a private sector, separated from the state, brings dynamics into society and create jobs. Second, that equal rights and opportunities between men and women are an integral part of any policy which aims to achieve high employment and thus make full use of a nation's potential," said Mr Lars Ronnas, Swedish ambassador to Iraq.

"We need to promote decent work for young men and women, whether through self-employment or wage employment. This includes supporting the development of the private sector to promote more and better quality jobs that encourage young people, including women to enter and remain in the formal labour market. We must also encourage and support young entrepreneurs to set up their own businesses through financial education and inclusion, helping create jobs for themselves and other young people," said Dr Kattaa.

Dr Columbia also commented on the results saying: "Young people are the main asset and resource for Iraq's prosperous development. We shouldn't overlook this wealth. We must put all our efforts into creating opportunities for girls and boys, young women and men to empower them and build their self-esteem and skills to thrive and lead their country forward".

The UN family in Iraq will continue to work with the Government of Iraq, the international community, the private sector, the civil society to advocate for a comprehensive approach for the development of young people through the creation of opportunities for youth employment, better education, youth-friendly services and building life-skills and social skills.



ILO and the Central Bank of Iraq launch new financial initiative supporting youth and small and medium enterprises from host communities and displaced populations in Iraq

Erbil, 31 March 2021 - The International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Central Bank of Iraq (CBI), with support from the Government of the Netherlands, have launched a new financial inclusion initiative to support host communities and displaced persons in Iraq. The initiative will target young Iraqis and forcibly displaced entrepreneurs as well as existing businesses to access much-needed financial services that will help them start and develop their own businesses, while addressing other barriers in the business environment hindering access to decent self-employment.

The initiative is part of efforts under the PROSPECTS Partnership for improving prospects for forcibly displaced persons and host communities, which seeks to improve access to employment, education and protection.

An event introducing the new initiative to partners was held in Erbil and virtually under the Patronage of the Governor of the Central Bank of Iraq, Mr. Mustafa Ghaleb Moukhif represented by the Deputy Governor, Dr. Ammar Hamad Khalaf. It was attended by the Minister of Labour and Social Affairs in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI), Ms. Kwestan Mohamad and representatives of the Ministries of Labour, Planning, and Youth and Sports, ILO's social partners as well as the Consul General of the Netherlands in Erbil, Mr. Hans Akerboom. It also brought together a broad spectrum of ILO's development partners and key stakeholders from the banking and finance sector.

"This is the first initiative in Iraq to provide beneficiaries with training, funding and financial guarantee, all of which are prerequisites to the success of any enterprise. The Central Bank of Iraq will provide financing through the One Trillion Dinar initiative which is made available to all Iraqis who wish to

finance their projects through participating banks, while the financial guarantees will be provided by the ILO and the Iraqi Company for Banking Guarantees. Training will be provided by the ILO, which is training trainers to support beneficiaries of this initiative" said the Deputy Governor of CBI, Dr. Ammar Hamad Khalaf.

During the event, a new financial inclusion strategy, developed by the ILO was introduced. The strategy is based on three levels of intervention that support the expansion of access to finance.

First, youth and existing businesses will be trained on business management and financial literacy to allow them to better handle their finances and relations with banks and financial institutions; and refer them to partner banks to access the needed financial services.

Secondly, it will build the capacity of financial institutions by training their staff on credit assessment and analysis, exposure to international experiences in financial inclusion, and Business Development Service (BDS) providers through various business development and financial education courses using ILO's training methodology.

Third, the initiative will leverage CBI's One Trillion funds to provide loans to referred entrepreneurs, while providing

support to CBI for an overall conducive environment for enhancing financial inclusion in Iraq.

"This initiative empowers youth from vulnerable communities to use their talents and support their ambitions. Together with interventions by the other PROSPECTS partners, this initiative promotes not only employability, but actual access to decent employment through the development of the private sector," said Mr. Hans Akerboom, Consul General of the Netherlands in Erbil.

"We have developed this initiative to tackle the issue of youth unemployment by giving young women and men the tools and means to create jobs for themselves and other youth in line with the Decent Work Country Programme priorities," said Dr. Maha Kattaa, ILO Country Coordinator in Iraq. "In addition to providing them with the means to access much-needed financial services, it is important to provide them with the necessary training, so they are better equipped to manage and grow their businesses."

PROSPECTS is a global partnership, which brings together the ILO, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Finance Corporation (IFC), and the World Bank (WB).



A garden within which community members would be able to relax and de-stress

Kirkuk, 29 March 2021 - Following an IOM-led training on leading community initiatives, 15 youth came together in Wahid Huzairan, Kirkuk to develop a garden within which community members would be able to relax and de-stress. The youth group plans to

continue their initiatives and newly-honed gardening skills to create more relaxing green spaces for the community throughout Wahid Huzairan.

This activity is funded by USAID - US Agency for International Development.



Meet the Youth Start Up winners in Iraq

Baghdad, 19 April 2021 – With support from the Government of Germany, UNICEF and partner AVSI supported the Youth Innovation Challenge in Iraq for young people in the internally displaced, refugee and host communities. The winners received seed funding to further develop their innovations and start ups ranging from \$7000 to \$1000. And the winners are:



First Prize

Name: Jihad Yousif Baqi

Age: 22

Gender: Male

Legal Status: Host community

Academic background: Software Engineer

Business Name: Freemium

"Youth Incubator was one of the greatest programs I've participated in, I have learned everything I need about business to start my own business. If you have an idea and you need guidance, Incubator is where you start".

Jihad is a 22-year-old entrepreneur and a software engineer. He is the founder of Freemium, a communication, management, and service providing software for landlords, tenants, and more.

Jihad believes in innovative, new, and creative problem-solving ideas that can improve our society's quality of living. He gets his inspiration from reading about the latest technology revolutions and how they affect other communities. Once Jihad was visiting a friend of his who lives in a residential compound. He noticed the struggles and miscommunication his friend had with the compound management. So, he decided to develop "Freemium" because he saw an opportunity, a problem to be solved, and a missing value that could be given to his community. Freemium provides the connection between tenants and landlords that is so often missing.

Jihad needed to have the necessary business skills and guidance on how to

do a market and user research in order to take the first steps of launching "Freemium". Therefore, he joined Five One Labs Youth Incubator Program, in partnership with AVSI and the General Directorate of Youth and Sports and funded by UNICEF. During the incubator, he built his prototype which is an early version of his application. Also, he started testing it through user interviews. In addition, he worked on a complete financial model for three years, a product development and a marketing and branding strategy. He also got inspired to add more innovative features to his application as a result.

Now, after winning 7,000 USD as seed funding funded by UNICEF, Jihad can turn his idea into a real business. He plans to use the seed funding on developing the application for Freemium and on his marketing strategy.

His advice to future entrepreneurs is to always do market research before they start any business, make sure their solution is needed, and listen to the feedback they get during their research.

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Second Prize:

Name: Yaseen Abdullah Yaseen

Age: 20

Gender: Male

Legal Status: Host community

Academic background: Software Engineering Student

Business Name: Paryas

"For me the incubator was a door to learn the principles of business and to meet successful business around me to understand that I am not alone in the boat."

Yaseen is a 20-year-old software engineering student and the founder and CEO of Paryas, an online bookstore application providing books in three different languages. He is passionate about UX/UI design as an effective way to solve problems and make a change in

his community.

Yaseen enjoys solving old problems with new technology, which is why he started his own business, "Paryas." He promises that Paryas will be the start of solving many more issues in the future.

Yaseen believes "Paryas" is not only about making it easy to get books but also creating remarkable experiences for his users. Through Paryas, readers can order hard-to-find books and communicate with other readers to discuss the books they enjoy and exchange knowledge. Besides, Paryas users can make their own libraries.

Although Yaseen is a UX/UI designer, he needed to learn more about his customers and their needs in addition to business and leadership skills. For this reason, he decided to join the Five One Labs Youth Incubator program, in partnership with AVSI and the General Directorate of Youth and Sports funded by UNICEF.

Through this program, he learned how to implement outstanding business strategies, customer research, and financial model creation for the next three years. He could also prototype a complete User Interfaces of his application with the prototype budget he received.

Yaseen won \$5000 as seed funding which is funded by UNICEF, and he will benefit from it by using it on marketing, branding his business, and developing his application with the highest standards.

His advice to future entrepreneurs is to surround themselves with hard-working people who keep motivating them. He believes starting a business is exciting and stressful, so he wants to guide others to stay around people who give off positive vibes.

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Name: Ahmed Mohammed Barjas

Age: 23

Gender: Male

Legal Status: IDP

Academic background: Medical Analyst

Meet the Youth Start Up winners in Iraq

Business Name: IraqTM esport
 "Youth Incubator was one of the best and the most beautiful experiences I have ever had".

Ahmed is a 23-year-old medical analyst and entrepreneur from Shingal. He is the founder of IraqTM Esport, a platform for electronic sports in Iraq.

Because of his interest in technology and video games, Ahmed came up with the idea of creating e-sports to spread the culture of electronic sports in Iraq so that the youth can use it to show their skills. IraqTm E-sport provides several gaming services, including organizing e-sport competitions, recruiting and training gamers to become gaming professionals, operating e-sports viewers' channels, and providing gaming products.

Since joining Five One Labs' Youth Incubator program in partnership with AVSI and the General Directorate of Youth and Sports and funded by UNICEF, Ahmed has learned more about his customers. He has developed his service and financial model for the upcoming three years.

Ahmed is a creative leader and doesn't enjoy daily routines. That is why he decided to start his own business in his favorite field, video games.

Besides, he acquired management skills and business ethics. With the prototype budget he received during the Incubator, he could improve the platform and work on the application.

After winning a seed funding of \$5000 from Five One Labs, funded by UNICEF, Ahmed will launch his application, register his business, and start marketing campaigns to reach more customers.

Ahmed's advice to future entrepreneurs is to believe in their ideas. Keep an eye on the market and do market research. He wants them not to give up, organize their time and keep going.

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Name: Dania Abbas
 Age: 22
 Gender: Female
 Legal Status: Host community
 Academic background: English major

teacher/translator
 Business Name: Reborn with Gluten-Free

My dreams were stuck in the clouds but this opportunity helped plant them in the ground.

Dania is 22 years old. She was born and raised in Erbil. She is the founder and CEO of "Reborn with Gluten-Free", a service that provides gluten-free products to gluten-sensitive people and helps them live healthier lives.

Dania is allergic to gluten and struggles to find her desired products because no market or restaurant offers gluten-free food in Kurdistan. After conducting market research, she realized many other people are suffering from the same issue. Therefore, she had the idea to start this business as a solution to gluten-sensitive people's problems.

Dania's dream is to be an independent leader and a boss. She had a business idea and had no clue how to make it a reality. She joined Five One Labs Youth Incubator Program in partnership with AVSI and the General Directorate of Youth and funded by UNICEF, where she learned to build, design, and lead a business. Through the training and advisory sessions, she was able to turn the idea into a real business and start developing herself as a leader.

After winning 5,000 USD as seed funding awarded by Five One Labs, and funded by UNICEF, Dania will launch her business and develop her website. Also, she will have her products available at affordable prices so that everyone from her market segment benefits. Besides, she will work on her marketing strategy and start promoting her business.

Her advice to future entrepreneurs is not to give up because she was studying and working on her business simultaneously; lack of time was a barrier for her; many advised her to quit. However, she decided to manage her time and continue, and that is what made her successful.

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Name: Mohammed Noor Jabas
 Age: 23
 Gender: Male
 Legal Status: Syrian Refugee
 Academic background: Electrical and Electronics Engineering from Aleppo University
 Business Name: KurDictionary
 "You see things; you say, 'Why?' But I



dream things that never were, and I say 'Why not?' "

"It was a life-changing experience, and they encouraged me to take the dictionary to a real-life" Mohammed Noor is 23 years old from Aleppo, Syria, an entrepreneur and electrical and electronics engineer. He is the founder of Kur Dictionary, the first dictionary that provides pronunciation features for the Kurdish language.

When Mohammed Noor first arrived in Kurdistan, he faced a big problem: communication in Kurdish. The available dictionaries were just providing the meanings of the words, not the pronunciation. Therefore, he had a plan to solve this problem for himself and other foreigners and came up with Kur Dictionary to make other people's lives easier. Kur Dictionary includes words and phrases sorted into categories to help non-Kurds in their daily lives; the home interface contains more than 40,000 words that users can browse between and search for a specific one.

Mohammed Noor needed to have the necessary skills to conduct the market research to know if "KurDictionary" is a feasible idea. Therefore, Mohammed joined Five One Labs Youth Incubator Program in partnership with AVSI and the General Directorate of Youth and funded by UNICEF. He completed the Android application (beta version) during the Youth Incubator and has included more than 1000 words and phrases for now. The moment Mohammed released the beta version of his dictionary app, it had many users. Besides that, he learned to start a business as a whole.

After winning 1,000 USD as an honorable award and extra prototype stipend funded by UNICEF, Mohammed Noor can develop an iOS version to target more users, get better equipment to record the audios.

His advice to future entrepreneurs is not to not rush. They should think wisely, focus on the target, and always believe that they can achieve anything with hard work.

UN Iraq Representative Hennis-Plasschaert on Nowruz: After a bleak year, hope

Baghdad, 20 March 2021 - Nowruz, the celebration of renewal of life and harmony, arrives with the advent of Spring, bringing new hope after a bleak year.

While COVID-19 continues to ravage countries across the globe, a worldwide campaign of vaccination is underway. And earlier this month, Pope Francis concluded a historic visit to Iraq in which he delivered a message of peace, hope, tolerance and co-existence to a country rich in cultural and religious diversity but long buffeted by conflict and violence.

This renewed hope is to be embraced as we strive towards a better future. With sufficient political will, a spirit of national unity and genuine determination, solutions can and must be reached.

It is time to celebrate while continuing to adhere to the instructions of the health authorities on COVID-19: wearing masks in public, social distancing and practicing good hygiene by regularly washing hands.

In 2010, the International Day of Nowruz was proclaimed by the UN General Assembly. Of course, for those

who celebrate it, Nowruz is as ancient as time. I extend my best wishes to the Kurdish people and all those celebrating this year.

Nowruztan Piroz Bet.



UN Iraq Special Representative Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert extends her best wishes for a peaceful, healthy Ramadan

Baghdad, 13 April 2021 – Once again, Ramadan is being observed amid restrictions due to COVID-19 and economic hardship compounded by the pandemic. While these difficulties test our resolve, we must all remain mindful of the need to protect ourselves and our loved ones and not allow the challenging circumstances to dampen the occasion.

The holy month remains a time for

peace and reflection, one for prayer, fasting, and giving. This shared experience can bring people closer even if not physically, as Ramadan is observed by Muslims worldwide in the spirit of solidarity, while remaining safe and healthy.

As we speak, vaccines are being administered. And together with the ongoing preventive measures, they hold the promise for a better tomorrow, for

the day when we all return to normality and can shift our focus to the many other issues facing Iraq, including enhancing economic performance, working to resolve political differences and improving security, social and environmental conditions.

As we remember our loved ones lost, those who remain away from their homes and families as well as the many families in need who will mark this occasion amid a rising cost of living, all of us must take this opportunity to reflect, forgive and give back where we can. We are all sisters and brothers in humanity with a common destiny, facing the same problems that demand collective solutions.

We extend our best wishes for a harmonious, serene and healthy Ramadan.

Ramadan Kareem



Ramadan message from Philippa Candler, UNHCR Representative in Iraq

Baghdad, 13 April 2021 - Greetings and Ramadan Mubarak to all of you.

I know that this past year has been a difficult one for all of us, and especially so for vulnerable displaced families who may have lost their work or suffered from a reduction in income. The pandemic has affected the whole world at large negatively.

As we enter into a critical stage of the COVID-19 pandemic, UNHCR and through its partners and staff are working all over Iraq to ensure that all of you are included in the vaccination

scheme and that every family is protected. We urge you to take the vaccine when it is offered to you. It will protect you and your family members.

We will continue to support the medical sector to combat the disease and will continue to support the most vulnerable families with cash assistance and other means. At the same time our response in all other areas will continue.

Let us all try to stay safe and protect our loved ones by wearing a mask in public places, avoiding mass

gatherings, and keeping social distance. I would like to wish you and your loved ones all the blessings of Ramadan, may you have peace at home, and a happy Eid.

