

UNAMI Herald

Volume 8, Issue 5

September - October 2021



UNAMI: “Elections are not an objective in and of themselves. They are a means to an end, and that end is improved governance.”

Baghdad, 11 October 2021 - Statement by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, on the Iraqi elections:

“The 10th of October was a day for all Iraqis. We are pleased to note that the elections proceeded smoothly and featured significant technical and procedural improvements, although the turnout was disappointing to many.

It is also important to recognize the significance of yesterday’s elections: the realization of a demand that Iraqis have consistently voiced for two years, and the fifth elections in the history of Iraq’s young democracy. The United Nations stood by all Iraqis, in advance of and on



Election Day, and will continue to do so in the days ahead.

The Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) deserves credit for working hard to organize yesterday’s elections. We also commend the great efforts of Iraq’s

security forces on polling day.

As we have repeatedly emphasized, elections are not an objective in and of themselves. They are a means to an end, and that end is improved governance. The Iraqi people deserve nothing less. Time is of the essence.”

The members of the Security Council congratulated the Iraqi people and the Government of Iraq on the occasion of their latest elections, held on 10 October 2021

New York, 22 October 2021 — The Security Council issued a Press Statement on Iraq:

The members of the Security Council congratulated the Iraqi people and the Government of Iraq on the occasion of their latest elections, held on 10 October 2021. The members of the Security Council welcomed interim reports that the elections proceeded smoothly and featured significant technical and procedural improvements from previous Iraqi elections.

The members of the Security Council commended the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) for conducting a technically sound election. They commended the Government of Iraq for its election preparations and for preventing violence on election day.

The members of the Security Council commended the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) for providing IHEC the technical assistance and international monitoring team the Government of Iraq requested to strengthen the

electoral process and promote transparency. The members of the Security Council thanked UNAMI for its assistance, and commended UNAMI for demonstrating objectivity in its efforts to support Iraq throughout the election process. They welcomed IHEC’s and UNAMI’s efforts to promote women’s political participation.

The members of the Security Council also welcomed the efforts of member states and other international organizations to observe the elections, notably the European Union long-term Election Observation Mission, the Arab League, the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation and others, as well as domestic organisations.

The members of the Security Council deplored the recent threats of violence against UNAMI, IHEC personnel, and others.

The members of the Security Council reiterated the Secretary-General’s call for all stakeholders to show patience and respect for the electoral timeline. The members of the

Security Council stressed that any electoral disputes that may arise should be resolved peacefully through established legal channels. Once the results are ratified, the members of the Security Council look forward to the peaceful formation of an inclusive government that reflects the will of the Iraqi people and their call for a stronger democracy.

The members of the Security Council reiterated their support for the Government of Iraq and their commitment to Iraq’s independence, sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity. The members of the Security Council reiterated their support for the Government of Iraq’s efforts to deliver meaningful reforms and advance inclusive political dialogue aimed at meeting the Iraqi people’s legitimate demands to address corruption, provide essential and basic services, diversify the economy, create jobs, improve governance, and strengthen viable and responsive state institutions.



In this edition ...

SRSG Hennis-Plasschaert: “While these elections are Iraqi-owned and Iraqi-led, the United Nations have been providing – and will continue to provide – advice and technical assistance.”

Baghdad, 7 September 2021 - The Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, held today a press conference in Baghdad. The text of her opening remarks starts on page 5.

UN and Government of Iraq sign the updated Cooperation Framework for Sustainable Development to support prosperity and development

Baghdad, 5 September 2021 - The Government of Iraq and the United Nations have signed the updated version of the Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2020-2024, which will guide the work of the UN system in Iraq.

The signing ceremony for the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) was held in the Ministry of Planning and signed by Dr. Khaled Battal Al-Najm, Minister of Planning on behalf of the Government of Iraq, and Ms. Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano, United Nations Resident Coordinator, on behalf of the UN in Iraq. *More on page 44.*

Christian Ritscher of the Federal Republic of Germany appointed as the Special Adviser and Head of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da’esh/ISIL (UNITAD)



New York, 7 September 2021 - United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres today announced the appointment of Christian Ritscher of the Federal Republic of Germany as the Special Adviser and Head of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da’esh/ISIL (UNITAD), which was established

pursuant to Security Council resolution 2379 (2017), to support domestic efforts to hold ISIL (Da’esh) accountable by collecting, preserving, and storing evidence in Iraq of acts that may amount to war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide committed by the terrorist group ISIL (Da’esh) in Iraq.

Mr. Ritscher will succeed Karim Asad Ahmad Khan of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, who was the first Special Adviser of UNITAD and held the position from July 2018 until his resignation, effective 15 June 2021. The Secretary-General expresses his gratitude to Mr. Khan for his contributions towards the pursuit of accountability for crimes committed by ISIL (Da’esh) and his efforts with regard to the speedy establishment and full functioning of UNITAD.

Mr. Ritscher previously served as a Federal Public Prosecutor at the German Federal Court of Justice, with more than 30 years of professional experience in international and domestic criminal law prosecutions and investigations. He was Head of the German War Crimes Unit S4, which is responsible for the prosecution and charging of individuals in Germany in relation to international crimes, that may have been committed elsewhere, including in Iraq and Syria. This included prosecutions against alleged members of ISIL (Da’esh) for genocide committed against the Yazidi community in Iraq in 2014, as well as other charges of international crimes.

UNESCO launches Iraqi Fact-Checking Platform (IFCT)

Baghdad, 22 September 2021 - Journalists and activists on social media, as well as other members of society can now utilize the Iraqi Face-Checking platform to check facts and information. UNESCO has built a smart platform based on artificial intelligence standards to address the needs of fact-checking and matching in relation to the Corona pandemic and the information surrounding it, with the generous support of the European Union. *More on page 30.*



UNAMI Herald is published bi-monthly by the Public Information Office of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq.

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Photos: UNAMI PIO, UNHCR, UNCHR, UNICEF, IOM, OCHA, UNFPA, WHO, UNESCO, UNOPS, UN Habitat, UN Photo, UN Women, UNIDO, UNMAS, UNDP, WFP and as credited.

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

Readout of the Secretary-General’s meeting with H.E. Mr. Barham Salih, President of the Republic of Iraq

New York, 22 September 2021 - The Secretary-General met with H.E. Mr. Barham Salih, President of the Republic of Iraq. They discussed the upcoming parliamentary elections and the UN’s enhanced electoral assistance role, among other issues.

The Secretary-General also welcomed Iraq’s constructive outreach to its regional neighbours and emphasized the importance of respecting Iraq’s sovereignty and territorial integrity.



Electoral

Building knowledge and skills on human rights monitoring for young activists

Baghdad, 23 August 2021 - 26 young activists from Baghdad, Karbala, Najaf and Hillah participated in a one-day workshop on human rights, organized by UNAMI Human Rights Office in co-operation with the NGO Moja and hosted at the premises of the Al-Amal Association. Participants discussed next to an introduction to human rights law, basic principles of human rights monitoring as well as election-related human rights violations and reflected on experiences from their own regions. The workshop aimed to empower activists with knowledge and skills to gain a better understanding of practical human rights work while reflecting on the relevant legal framework. Alfadhel,

a participant from Najaf commented on the workshop: “This training highlighted the importance of concrete

and documented information regarding human rights monitoring. If something is not reported then it did not happen”.

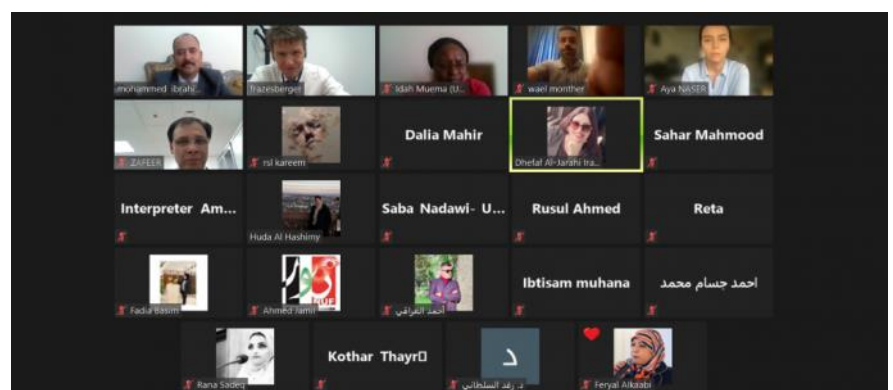


Building the capacity of civil society organizations to monitor hate speech and gender-based violence in relation to the elections

Baghdad, 26 August 2021 – UNAMI’s Human Rights Office and Gender Unit in cooperation with the Iraq Foundation facilitated an online workshop for seven civil society organizations (CSOs) from seven governorates of Iraq. The event aimed to strengthen CSO’s theoretical knowledge as well as practical skills in relation to the monitoring and reporting of hate speech and gender-based violence in the run-up to the October elections. In total, 24 participants (14 women and 10 men) discussed practical challenges faced in their work on these sensitive subject matters. Further, specific issues in relation to the concept of hate speech as

well as good practices from other countries thereto have been discussed. Finally, UNAMI’s activities on election related human rights violations have

been presented as well as possibilities to coordinate on common areas of monitoring.



Zorba and Al Ghazi discuss support for women's participation in the forthcoming parliamentary elections

Baghdad, 29 August 2021 - Hamid Al Ghazi, Secretary-General of the Council of Ministers, while receiving the United Nations Representative for Women in Iraq, Dina Zorba, affirmed the Iraqi government's support for women's participation in the parliamentary elections scheduled to be held next month, and to provide all kinds of support and security protection necessary for the success of their participation as a candidate or voter. Zorba lauded the pivotal role of the General Secretariat of the Council of

Ministers and the Iraqi Women Empowerment Department, which contributes to supporting and empowering Iraqi women in all fields, in addition to activating the recommendations issued by bilateral meetings that support women in Iraq. The meeting was attended by the Director General of the Iraqi Women Empowerment Department at the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers, Dr. Yousry Karim Mohsen and Dr. Ammar Abdel Qahar, Program Director at UN Women.



UNAMI lauds IHEC's efforts to conduct public simulation exercises ahead of elections



Baghdad, 30 August 2021 - On 23 August 2021, Iraq's Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC), with the support of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), conducted a simulation to test the process that was set up for the country's early legislative elections, scheduled for 10 October 2021. During the nationwide exercise, which was open to political parties and the media, thousands of IHEC staff played the role of voters and showed up at designated polling centers to cast their test ballots. The simulation allowed IHEC's

technical staff to run through the entire polling, counting and results transmission processes in order to identify and address any issues prior to the elections.

The Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir, observed the election simulation exercise at IHEC Headquarters in Baghdad. "This process is important, and its purpose is to avoid mistakes on Election Day," she said. Lauding the simulation's success, she told reporters that UNAMI supports IHEC in all electoral

procedures and affirmed that the UN Mission is ready to provide additional support if requested. She added, "The United Nations has more than 150 international and national personnel working with IHEC to ensure the success of the upcoming elections, and there are also 130 additional international staff who will arrive in Iraq to monitor the elections."

Many Iraqis are hopeful that this year's elections will help enhance progress in their country. "This is an important step towards the future, and I hope that the elections will be as easy as what we have experienced today during the simulation," said Noor, a young working mother who cast a test ballot in downtown Baghdad. "I really hope that the role of women will be more visible in the elections this time around, and that the people will elect good candidates." Noor said she believed in a brighter future for the people of Iraq.

The upcoming elections will be an important milestone for Iraq's future progress, and as Iraq charts its own path, the United Nations will continue to stand with it.

Consultative meeting discusses on how to increase the societal and civic understanding of gender and the role of women in political participation

Baghdad, 6 September 2021 - Department of Iraqi Women Empowerment in the General Secretariat of the Iraqi Council of Ministers, in cooperation with the UN Women, organized a consultative meeting with civil society organizations and community leaders on promoting women's political participation and supporting the efforts to encourage such participation in the upcoming elections.

The meeting discussed the fourth goal of the plan to empower women in the 2021 elections (increasing the societal and civic understanding of gender and the role of women in political participation). This goal highlights that success in motivating women to participate in elections, either as candidates or voters, will lead to a significant transformation in line with the goals' outputs related to effective participation, most

importantly, building a motivational base for male and female voters across the country.

This meeting was organized as part of the activities' framework related to the plan of the Committee on Women's Political Participation in the elections in cooperation and coordination with the UN Women.



SRSB Hennis-Plasschaert: “While these elections are Iraqi-owned and Iraqi-led, the United Nations have been providing – and will continue to provide – advice and technical assistance.”

Baghdad, 7 September 2021 - The Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, held today a press conference in Baghdad. Here is the text of her opening remarks:

“Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for attending this press conference. It’s good to see all of you.

The floor will be yours for any questions you might have in the context of the upcoming elections. But I would like to start with some opening remarks.

Not surprisingly, today’s press gathering will focus on Iraq’s all-important elections, which will be held on October 10th. The clock is ticking, with less than five weeks left until Iraq goes to the polls.

As most of you know, I recently traveled to New York to brief the UN Security Council on the situation in Iraq, devoting nearly my entire statement to the Security Council on the elections. One thing was very clear to me: the world is watching closely. Like the Iraqi people, nobody wishes to see a repetition of the events in 2018. In other words, the importance of credible Iraqi elections is widely recognized.

As you know, in October 2019, many Iraqis took to the streets. They were protesting a lack of economic, social and political prospects. And one of their central demands was the holding of early elections. Two years later, that demand is being met. Elections will be held. And there is no denying it: these elections were hard earned.

As I said in New York: the United Nations will, as ever, be a partner to Iraq and the Iraqi people.

While these elections are Iraqi-owned and Iraqi-led, we have been providing – and will continue to provide – advice and technical assistance.

Our technical advisers are supporting IHEC (the Independent High Electoral Commission) in a range of areas. From ballot paper printing to advice on COVID-19. From recruitment and training of polling staff to security planning. From developing electoral regulations and procedures to strengthening processes and systems. The UN also



assists IHEC in conducting simulation exercises. And I could go on and on. But to cut a long story short: in support of the relevant Iraqi authorities, the overall objective of our efforts is the conduct of credible elections.

I often get asked whether the October elections will be different from the elections in 2018, and in response, I point to the facts – such as:

A new electoral system has been put in place. Voters will now vote for individuals, not just for political parties.

Before, there were 18 constituencies. Now, there are 83.

Experience elsewhere in the world shows us that voting for individuals and smaller constituencies can create a stronger bond between voters and their representatives.

To boost transparency and increase trust, an independent audit firm will be keeping tabs on how the votes are counted and what happens with the results.

For the first time, and to emphasize IHEC’s independence, judges are serving as election commissioners.

This time, to help prevent fraud, provisional results will be shown in real time at Result Display Centers throughout the country.

The UN is deploying a much bigger team to support the elections. In fact, this is one of the UN’s largest electoral technical assistance projects worldwide, with five times as many UN personnel as in 2018.

In addition to that, 130 additional international experts are in the process of being deployed to monitor

in advance of – and on – Election Day. They come with around 600 additional supporting staff.

Meanwhile, new measures are in place to mitigate the misuse of electronic voter cards, or in other words: the non-biometric voter cards. For example, after voting, the cards will be confiscated and disabled for 72 hours. Old non-biometric voter cards, which voters turned in when they received their new biometric voting cards, these old cards have been collected by IHEC and will be destroyed at any moment – most likely today or tomorrow.

So, ladies and gentlemen while I am reflecting on ongoing efforts and measures in place, I can confirm that the UN does believe that the October elections have the potential to be different from the elections in 2018.

But I also have to stress that, no matter how many technical measures are being put in place, it is up to the political forces and candidates to collectively refrain from any attempt to force or distort election results. It is up to them to stop the buying of loyalties, voter suppression and/or any other intentional, illegal action. It is up to them to collectively lead by example.

Now, what does that mean, it means that there is no place for any impropriety and that includes pressuring individuals to vote for specific candidates, for instance by threatening to withhold salaries and using official positions in an illegitimate manner. It also includes the buying and selling of votes – as well as for instance, the intimidation

SRSB Hennis-Plasschaert: “While these elections are Iraqi-owned and Iraqi-led, the United Nations have been providing... (continued)



of candidates and voters by threatening to release all kinds of information about them. This is all unacceptable. And to those candidates who think they can offer – let’s say – 200 dollars per vote, and in return receive a photo proving that the voter has indeed voted for that candidate, to those candidates I would like to say: you are wasting your money. Mobile phones and cameras this time will not be allowed inside voting booths.

Now, needless to say: any and all illegal actions threaten the credibility of the October elections. Hence, the United Nations support all efforts to prevent, report and punish such actions.

Let me repeat: in the interest of Iraq’s young democracy, it is crucial to deliver an electoral process that will be recognized as credible.

Also key to establishing public trust is inclusivity. In that regard, we’ll continue to encourage the full and meaningful participation by women – both as candidates and voters.

For example, we are working with civil society organizations to monitor and report political gender-based violence and hate speech against female candidates. We also provided small grants to local NGOs to undertake civic and voter education activities targeting female voters as a key demographic group.

Other groups that need to be brought into the fold include: youth; first-time voters; socially excluded and vulnerable groups; internally displaced persons (IDPs) and returnees; minorities; and persons with disabilities. Now as an example, to make this happen, the United Nations recruited, for instance, a sign language interpreter to assist IHEC and we also support IHEC on the production of graphics and videos

aimed at women, persons with disabilities and IDPs.

And yes, I cannot over-emphasize the important role of young people in the upcoming elections. With sixty percent of Iraq’s population being 25 years old or younger, these elections offer a new generation of Iraqis the chance to make its voice heard.

Through my discussions with Iraqis across the spectrum, I (of course) have heard the calls for a boycott of the elections. And the reasons for such calls vary. From disillusionment, mistrust, anger and loss of hope... to being “not ready” and apparent political positioning.

But as I emphasized before: while the feelings of disillusionment are well understood, boycotting the elections will not solve anything. On the contrary. If you do not vote, you end up boosting those whose positions you may oppose.

Now, we also know that Iraq needs deep, structural reforms. But such reforms require unwavering determination, immense patience and

lots of time.

Meanwhile, democracy is always a work in progress. And it can be tedious. It is not easy to balance interests and opinions. But if people feel included – if they feel they can help shape their own futures – then the compromises and investments are more than worth it.

Dear members of the press,

I also have a message for you. And that is about misinformation. We continue to see that falsehoods are gaining traction and becoming accepted as truth. There are misperceptions about IHEC. About protesters. About government officials. About political rivals. And yes, also at times about the UN.

But it must be clear to all of us: fake news, conspiracies and misinformation only sow distrust. They can turn people against each other. And they can derail credible elections. So, we are counting on you as well.

We are counting on you to make sure that reporting is accurate. In other words: your role in ensuring a credible process is also essential. Stick to the facts. Deliberately feeding into all kind of misinformation or randomly spreading stories is truly risky business.

Last but not least, and before taking your questions, allow me to reiterate the following to the Iraqi people: The UN is with you. Your goal is our goal. To see Iraq emerge from uncertainty and division, as a country in which all of its citizens have the chance to be heard and to succeed.

The very first step, on the very long road to achieving that, is to cast your ballot.

This is your country. Your future. Your vote.

Thank you very much.”



Nearly 4.7 million old Electronic Voter Cards taken out of Iraq's electoral system ahead of October 10 polls

Baghdad, 9 September 2021 - The shredding and disposal of over 4,670,000 electronic voter cards, which were printed before the 2014 and 2018 elections but never picked up by registered Iraqi voters, commenced on Wednesday, September 9, at Al-Dabash warehouse in Baghdad. Staff from the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) joined officials from the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) for the exercise that will culminate in the removal of the information on those cards from the voter registration database.

IHEC's Operations Manager, Satter Hadi Mahmood, who led the old voter card disposal exercise said the number to be destroyed is likely to increase to more than 5,000,000, as registered voters hand over their old electronic voter cards in exchange for the new biometric cards being issued by IHEC for the October 10 elections. "No one is able to vote on behalf of another," he declared. "The voter must be the one whose information is stored on the card, and it has to match all the recorded 10-digit fingerprints of the individual before they can proceed. If they don't match, the person will not be allowed to vote." Mahmood encouraged registered voters to pick up their new



biometric voter cards from IHEC now, ahead of the elections. "Those people who were calling for change can only effect such change through voting, and they have the chance now."

The issue of millions of old unclaimed electronic voter cards kept by IHEC had been a major concern to many Iraqis who feared that those cards could be used for rigging the elections. It is hoped that the destruction of the cards will now put those fears to rest, and people will continue to prepare and be ready to cast their ballots on Election Day, which is barely a month away.

On Election Day, voters using electronic voter cards issued for previous elections will have to show additional photo identity documents.

Before casting their ballots, voters with electronic voter cards will have their 10 fingerprints taken and the fingerprints will be cross-checked to make sure no one is able to vote more than once. In addition, electronic voter cards will be checked by a Voter Verification Device on Election Day. If the card cannot be read, the voter won't be allowed to vote. Also, after voting, voters' electronic voter cards will be disabled for 72 hours.

The United Nations will continue to support and advise the Independent High Electoral Commission as it works towards credible and transparent elections.

By Solomon Moriba, Communication Advisor, Office of Electoral Assistance, UNAMI.

The women's quota according to the new electoral law discussed at a panel in Baghdad

Baghdad, 09 September 2021 - The Independent High Electoral Commission and the Women's Empowerment Directorate of the General Secretariat of the Iraqi Cabinet, with the support of UN Women, organized a special meeting, attended by the Parliamentary Committee of Women, Family, and Children, to discuss the women's quota in the seat distribution system according to the new electoral law.

Dr. Ahlam Al-Jabri, Head of the Committee, Member of the Board of the Independent High Electoral Commission overseeing women's participation in elections, outlined in her opening remarks the commission's procedures in raising the percentage of women's quotas according to the law, and in cooperation with the House of Representatives, through the Women's and Law Committees to define the system for arranging and increasing seats.

Dr. Ammar Abdul Qahar, Program Director at UN Women, confirmed the



role of UN Women in supporting all the commission's activities and representing all UN organizations working in the field of gender equality.

Dr. Yusra Mohsen, Director-General of the Women's Empowerment Directorate of the General Secretariat of the Iraqi Cabinet, presented a detailed report on the percentages of distribution of seats for women to electoral constituencies and by regions,

and the possibility of raising the rate from 25 to 31 percent according to the number of votes for each constituency.

Dr. Maysoon Al-Saadi, Member of the Parliament, expressed her gratitude for the efforts made by the Electoral Commission and the support of the UN Women to organize such meetings to define a system for increasing the women's quota and the number of seats allocated to all constituencies.

SRSB Hennis-Plasschaert: "Much more needs to be done in order to remove the barriers to women's full participation in political life... If the voices of half of Iraqis are muffled, the entire representative basis of democracy will be undermined."



Baghdad, 11 September 2021 - Today, the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq and head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, addressed the 13th Islamic Day for Opposing Violence against Women.

In light of Iraq's upcoming elections, she focused on the threats and challenges faced by women exercising their political and electoral rights. Here is the full text of her statement:

"Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Distinguished guests,

It is an honour to address you, and I would like to thank the Al-Hakim Foundation for having gathered us here today.

The 13th Islamic Day for Opposing Violence Against Women provides a timely opportunity for local and international stakeholders to reaffirm our shared commitment to the eradication of violence against women in all its forms.

With the elections, now less than one month away, I will - if you allow me - focus my remarks on electoral violence against women.

As we all know: violence against women is often most acutely felt in the home, and the COVID-19 pandemic has unfortunately amplified this phenomenon.

But we regrettably also find intimidation, aggression and violence against women in the political sphere. This is the case in too many countries and regions across the world. Also, in Iraq. The fact is that women face multiple challenges when they seek to exercise their political and electoral rights.

Gender-based violence in politics and elections ranges from, for instance, the escalation of harassment; intimidation; sexual, psychological and physical violence as well as gender-biased scrutiny by the public and the media.

While the numbers indicate a moderately encouraging level of Iraqi female participation in the October-elections, with women representing close to 30% of confirmed candidates, past and present experiences on the ground tell us that lots of work is ahead of us.

Not only to ensure the elimination of all existing barriers for women to realize their political rights, but also to achieve a better gender balance in decision-making positions. Let's face it: very few women make it as a mayor or governor, let alone as head of state or government.

Hence, raising awareness is of great importance. And even more important: the prevention of violence against women in politics and elections.

While using the word "violence", one often immediately thinks of the intentional use of physical force. Understandably so. But violence in fact takes many subtle forms.

Yes, certainly, all kinds of overt and explicit threats, but also implicit threats of social exclusion and rejection. All of this with the intention to degrade, demoralize or shame the woman in question. It can happen at home, in the community, in public and online.

Too often these kinds of acts are downplayed. But let it be clear: such acts deter women from considering seeking office, from voting for or against a certain candidate. And there is no denying it: threats, implicit or explicit, often precede physical or sexual violence. Having said all this, I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome recent

important steps taken by Iraqi authorities:

For instance, the Government of Iraq, through its Directorate of Women's Empowerment, the Office of the National Security Advisor and the Independent High Electoral Commission, has taken steps to raise awareness on elections-related security, and on the procedures in place for female candidates.

Last month, the Supreme Judicial Council issued new guidance on reporting violence against women in elections: Now, women voters and candidates can directly approach judicial investigators instead of having to first go through the police.

Also, the Ministry of Interior has activated two free telephone hotlines to handle complaints from women candidates who have been exposed to any kind of harassment and violence. UN Women is training and supporting the employees who staff these hotlines.

However, much more needs to be done in order to remove the barriers to women's full participation in political life.

This includes, inter alia, a clear commitment by all political stakeholders to promote and protect the full and equal rights of women voters, campaigners and candidates. And this also includes the nomination of more female ministers than the two out of 22 currently in office. Now, in our recent meetings with civil society groups and women's rights defenders, it was made clear that security concerns remain a key issue for female voters, campaigners and candidates.

I can therefore not overstate the importance of institutionalizing the work around enhancing security for women in politics and elections. And yes, of course, we strongly urge all political parties and candidates to embrace and adhere to the Elections Charter of Honour.

Ladies and gentlemen, in closing, let me emphasize: a society can never be safe unless all its citizens are safe, inside their homes as well as in the community and public sphere. If the voices of half of Iraqis are muffled, the entire representative basis of democracy will be undermined.

Let us therefore renew our commitment to the eradication of violence against women in all its forms. And let us build a political and electoral environment that welcomes and protects all, women and men alike.

Thank you."

SRSJ Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert conducts first “digital dialogue” with Iraqi voters

Baghdad, 13 September 2021 – For the first time, the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, held a live “digital dialogue” with voters across Iraq to hear about their hopes and concerns; the changes and challenges in their communities; and what they expect from the candidates ahead of Iraq’s 10 October elections.

Interacting with the participants in real time, Ms. Hennis-Plasschaert urged them to vote on 10 October. She noted that no elections anywhere would bring about immediate miracles. Nevertheless, the upcoming elections were a necessary and very first step on a very long road.

Explaining the UN’s role, she noted that it was not organizing or supervising these elections, as they were Iraqi-owned and Iraqi-led. However, the UN was monitoring, reporting on, and providing technical



assistance to these elections – with a much bigger team on the ground when compared to Iraq’s previous election in 2018. She also outlined Iraq’s new electoral system, noting differences between the upcoming elections and the previous ones.

Using cutting-edge artificial intelligence technology, the United

Nations provided a safe and secure space, in which Iraqis could anonymously share their thoughts.

This was a joint Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) Innovation Cell’s and UNAMI “Iraq Youth Project” aimed at “applying behavioral insights to increase youth voter turnout”.

Iraq’s Electoral Preparations and Processes | Report No. 11

Baghdad, 14 September 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 eleventh report, attached to this email, is also available on the UN Iraq website (<https://iraq.un.org/>) through the following link: <https://bit.ly/2Z63RBc>.

Among the highlights for August 2021 are:

IHEC started to receive, mostly ahead

of the timeline, the various electoral materials to be used on election day. These included the ballot papers, election results forms, printed final voter lists, indelible ink and election kits.

On 23 August, IHEC conducted the second of three planned polling day simulation exercises across Iraq. A total of 1,079 polling stations were involved with more than 8,600 IHEC staff mobilized to act as voters.

On 23-25 August, IHEC organized a three-day training workshop in Erbil on electoral dispute resolution and the handling of electoral complaints and appeals. UNAMI provided technical and financial support to the activity.

COVID-19 protective items, including masks, gloves and sanitation gels, are being procured for distribution and use at all polling stations on election day. The procurement is being arranged with a local supplier, with funds provided through the electoral support project handled by UNDP.

IHEC has also started to include sign language translations in its public outreach products. As of 29 August, 20 awareness videos have been translated and are ready for posting and television broadcasting. UNAMI OEA encouraged IHEC to adopt sign language translation for its video materials while OEA also supported the recruitment of the translator.

On 2 September, UNAMI Election Security Advisers met with the head of the Supreme Security Committee for the Elections. They discussed the electoral security process, security plan, coordination and communication mechanisms, and potential security challenges in the upcoming elections. The Head of the Supreme Committee reiterated the Security Committee’s readiness to support the UN in its election mandate and to provide the necessary protection and security escort to all UN monitoring teams for their movements throughout the country.



Iraq's political parties and independent candidates sign Electoral Code of Conduct as campaigns intensify



Baghdad, 20 September 2021 – Political parties and independent candidates participating in the 10 October elections today signed the Electoral Code of Conduct in all of Iraq's 18 governorates and the capital Baghdad. The signings, which took place in the presence of officials from the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC), personnel from the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and other independent observers, are part of efforts by IHEC and the United Nations to minimize intolerance, violence, and hate speech, during both campaigning and voting periods. All concerned actors and parties are expected to abide by the Electoral Code of Conduct, a moral political agreement on the rules to be followed by political parties and their supporters during the

electoral process. The goal is to maintain the legality, integrity and appropriate implementation of the process.

The Electoral Code of Conduct is intended to, among other things, help increase confidence in the electoral process, prevent conflicts and enhance popular support for the Iraqi elections. Party signatories to the Electoral Code of Conduct are expected to respect the right and freedom of all other parties to campaign and spread their political ideologies and principles without intimidation or fear from any other party.

The Electoral Code of Conduct also requires all signatories to respect the freedom of journalists and the media and to support Iraqi women and minorities participating and standing as candidates in the elections.

Signatory parties are expected to help create a safe electoral environment during the campaigning, polling, vote counting and post-election phases. All campaign activities must end 24 hours prior to the opening of the polls.

The Electoral Code of Conduct notes that strict punitive measures will be taken against violating parties, alliances or candidates, in accordance with the applicable laws, regulations and instructions.

For the 10 October elections, IHEC's Board of Commissioners approved 3,249 candidates, including 951 women, to contest 329 seats in the Iraqi Council of Representatives – 320 of which are distributed among the governorates within 83 constituencies. Those constituencies have been defined under the new electoral system. The remaining 9 seats are reserved for minorities. IHEC registered over 25 million Iraqis, 48.6% of them women, to vote in the 10 October elections.

The United Nations will continue to advise and assist IHEC on the planning and holding of free and fair Iraqi-led and Iraqi-owned elections. Compared to years past, the UN is deploying a much bigger team to support the elections. This is one of the UN's largest electoral technical assistance projects worldwide, with five times as many UN personnel as in the 2018 Iraqi elections. Meanwhile, 130 additional international experts are in the process of being deployed to Iraq to monitor in advance of – and on – Election Day. They come with around 600 supporting staff.

By Solomon Moriba, Communication Advisor, OEA, UNAMI

UN Women's contribution to the Electoral Code of Conduct aimed at enhancing women's political participation

Baghdad, 20 September 2021 - Political leaders and representatives signed the Electoral Code of Conduct to protect electoral integrity and ensure equal opportunities for candidates in the upcoming elections. The high-level ceremony took place in Baghdad, in the presence of the President of the Republic of Iraq Dr. Barham Salih, the Prime Minister Mr. Mustafa Al-Kadhimi and the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert. UN Women's

contribution to the Code aimed at enhancing women's political participation by adding special provisions on protecting women candidates and voters from different forms of violence that can be perpetuated against them during the electoral process. UN Women is very pleased by this achievement and commends the Iraqi government for taking the necessary steps to protect women's political rights and ensure a fair and equal representation of men and women during elections.



All Iraqis should have the tools they need to participate in inclusive elections

Baghdad, 20 September 2021 - Election-related information and messaging were shared at a football match for deaf Iraqis today. The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) organized this event to support the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) and the deaf community because all Iraqis should have the tools they need to participate in inclusive elections. #Vote4Iraq



DSRSG Sólrún Gísladóttir, visited the IHEC’s 3rd electoral simulation

Baghdad, 22 September 2021 - It's not just orchestras that need to rehearse. Election officials do too. Today, Deputy Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General, Ms. Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir, visited the Independent High Electoral Commission's 3rd electoral simulation. These exercises are held so that flaws can be spotted early on and Election Day can run as smoothly as possible. #Vote4Iraq



Campaign launched to encourage and enhance the participation of Iraqi women in the upcoming elections

Baghdad, 27 September 2021 – Iraqi Women Journalists Forum, in cooperation with the Department of Women Empowerment in the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers and the UN Women, launched a media campaign under the slogan "Share", which will continue until the ninth of October, the day of electoral silence. The campaign aims to encourage and enhance the participation of Iraqi women in the upcoming elections, and to make them aware of the importance

of their role at this important stage. It is worth noting that a large number of influential women from the media, intellectuals and feminist civil society organizations will support this campaign through their participation in spreading its messages. This campaign comes within the framework of the activities under the plan of the Committee on the Political Participation of Women in the Elections, in cooperation and coordination with UN Women.



Orientation sessions for the Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights in relation to the upcoming elections

Baghdad, 29 September 2021 – UNAMI’s Human Rights Office together with the Office of Electoral Assistance organized an online session for the Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights. The event aimed to inform participants on UNAMI’s election-related human rights monitoring as well as dos and don’ts of Election Day monitoring. In total, 16 participants (6 women and 10 men) joined discussions on best practices of

human rights as well as Election Day monitoring.



DSRSG Sólrún Gísladóttir visited Erbil and Mosul; discussed electoral preparations



Erbil/Mosul, 29 September 2021 - The Deputy Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General, Ms. Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir, spoke today with Erbil Governorate Electoral Office Manager, Mr. Haidar Akram, about logistics, security, voter awareness, biometric card distribution and IDP voting. With less than two weeks until Election Day,

it's important to ensure that preparations are on track. In Mosul Ninewa civil society groups shared concerns with Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir, about vote buying, voter intimidation and IDP voting. She assured them that UNAMI would

continue to encourage Iraqi authorities to address such issues ahead of the elections.

DSRSG Sólrún Gísladóttir visited the Iraq's Independent High Electoral Commission's Ninewa office and spoke with its Head, Farhan Ali, and the staff, about the status of distribution of biometric voter cards, IDPs' accessibility to polling centers, minority inclusion and voters' movements on Election Day.



UN Women organized a series of training workshops to facilitate building the capacity of women candidates



Baghdad, 1 October 2021 - In the lead up to the parliamentary elections, UN Women organized a series of training workshops to facilitate building the capacity of women candidates. Capacity gaps between men and women are one of the main barriers to women's effective political participation in Iraq.

The National Security Advisory (NSA) supported by UN Women, completed a series of trainings on "Social Engineering and Cyber Security" in Baghdad. The trainings which started in July 2021, targeted 669 female candidates out of the total 980 candidates covering all Iraqi governorates. The trainings aimed at

raising the awareness of participants on social engineering providing them with helpful tips to defend themselves against cyber-attacks. The trainings also focused on the personal physical safety of candidates through role play and other interactive modalities.

The Iraqi Media Network (IMN) in partnership with UN Women conducted several one-day trainings on "Media Appearances and Successful Election Campaign Management". The trainings were held in Baghdad at the IMN premises and focused on increasing participant's capacity in appearing and engaging with traditional media including physical appearance, communication skills and gender

sensitive messaging.

The training targeted 105 female candidates from different governorates. The Department of Women Empowerment at the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers, in partnership with the UN Women, organized a workshop to integrate gender standards in the upcoming elections.

The workshop, which discussed the basic concepts of the gender perspective, and the legal frameworks for elections in relation to gender equality, in accordance with the constitution, democratic standards, international charters and treaties, aimed at Directors of the relevant departments at the Independent High Electoral Commission.

With the support of the UN Women in Iraq and the Women's Fund for Peace and Humanitarian Action, Sawtuha Network for Women Human Rights Defenders and the Arab Union for Specialized Women organized a symposium on women's political participation in elections in Baghdad.

It included a debate between the two candidates, Dr. Nada Al-Jubouri and Mrs. Ayat Al-Mudhaffar, in addition to young women candidates applying to run in the elections for the first time.

Head of UN Mission traveled to Southern Iraq to discuss importance of 10/10 elections

Basra, 2 October 2021 – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, traveled today to Basra and Nasiriyah.

The goal of her visit was to hear voters' views on the upcoming elections and explain how the United Nations is supporting the electoral process.

The Special Representative also stress the importance of casting one's vote, as a vote not cast could in fact help those to whom one may be opposed.

SRSR for Iraq Hennis-Plasschaert met in Basra with Governor Asaad Al-Eidani. They agreed on the need for all stakeholders to respect the democratic process and protect the rights of all candidates and voters - ahead of and on 10 October.

During Iraq's October 2019 protests, early elections were a key popular demand. In that spirit, SRSR Hennis-Plasschaert emphasized the importance of ensuring accountability, exercising one's electoral rights, and helping to



shape the country's future.

SRSR also met UN personnel who recently arrived from all over the globe to monitor the elections in southern Iraq before and on Election Day. Like Iraqis, the world wants to see a stable and prosperous Iraq.

In Nasiriyah SRSR Hennis-Plasschaert met with Dhi Qar's Governor, Ahmed al-Khafaji. They spoke about the

importance of Iraq's 10 October elections and ongoing UN support to the electoral process.

In Dhi Qar, where the October protest movement started, SRSR Hennis-Plasschaert paid tribute to the courage of so many Iraqis and reiterated the UN's support on the road to stability. She underlined the value of casting one's vote.



SRSR Hennis-Plasschaert: “The October elections are an essential first step on (most likely) a very long road. A road that hopefully leads to a more prosperous, manageable and more just Iraq.”

Baghdad, 5 October 2021 - The Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, held today a press conference in Baghdad. Here is the text of her opening remarks:

Good day everyone. Many thanks for being with us this morning, only five days away from Iraq's all-important elections. I would like to start by echoing the wise words of Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, who (last week) encouraged everyone to “participate consciously and responsibly in the upcoming elections - as it remains the safest way to cross the country into a

future that is hoped to be better than the past, and through it, avoids the risk of falling into the abyss of chaos and political obstruction”.

I could not agree more.

Now, in the lead-up to the elections, the United Nations has reached out to, and engaged with, many Iraqis: Iraqis from all walks of life.

We exchanged views on the importance of voting, on their concerns, on their hopes and dreams. And yes, of course, concerns were expressed over the possibility of fraud, the role of non-state actors, and (for instance) the issue of foreign interference. And I will not surprise you if I say that many also demonstrated clear feelings of

disillusionment.

At the same time, many, many Iraqis also emphasized the need for these elections to take place in order to move from a prolonged political standstill to finally addressing the urgent challenges facing Iraq, including the desperate need for economic reforms but also (and importantly) the need for justice and accountability.

Of course, they did not refer to just any election. They referred to credible and transparent elections, noting that they do understand that this does not necessarily mean that the outcome of the elections will be precisely what they are hoping for. Now, why am I telling you this? Because I

SRSB Hennis-Plasschaert: “The October elections... (continued)”

want you to know that the United Nations is not oblivious to the concerns expressed. We are not naïve about the problems facing Iraq. On the contrary. In my briefings to, for instance, the Security Council in New York, I have been very consistent about the many challenges and problems, about the need for a sense of urgency to get things done.

Therefore, I can only repeat what you’ve heard me say before: the United Nations will, as ever, be a partner to all Iraqis.

Ladies and gentlemen,

For good reasons, our electoral assistance to Iraq focuses on what is essential for the 10 October elections: their credibility. It is essential that these elections are different from the elections in 2018.

Now, five weeks ago, I stated that technical preparations were progressing according to plan. And yes, at the time, some concerns still had to be addressed to safeguard the accuracy of the election results.

Yesterday, IHEC conducted a 4th simulation. And I am pleased to say that, on the basis of yesterday’s results, I can affirm that the 10 October elections have the potential to be different from 2018.

My colleague Ingibjörg, the UN Deputy Special Representative overseeing political and electoral matters, will brief you momentarily to expand on aspects of both yesterday’s simulation as well as our electoral assistance.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As we all know, and in countries across the globe, elections and their outcomes can provoke very strong feelings. And Iraq is no different.

In most cases, such strong feelings will spark an intense but positive debate or conversation about, for instance, the importance of voting or on which direction the country should go.

And there is nothing wrong with these kinds of debates or conversations. They are the bedrock of any democracy. It demonstrates political engagement.



In some cases, however, these strong feelings are accompanied with intimidation or even worse. Needless to say: people must feel free, at all times, to exercise their democratic and electoral rights.

Also, it must be clear, that elections do not necessarily lead to one’s preferred outcome. Any citizen of any country often must recognize that a process was sound even if its result was not what she or he hoped for.

Now, let me underline, one of the clearest signs of a strengthening democracy is the ability for parties and electors to recognize outcomes on the basis of the legitimacy of the process, no matter their individual preferences when it comes to results.

In closing, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to emphasize that that no election will lead to immediate miracles. That simply does not happen. Not here, not anywhere else in the world.

I wish there were overnight solutions. It would make all our lives a lot easier.

But the harsh reality is that democracy is always a work in progress. It can be

messy. It can be tedious. But if people feel included, if they feel they can (slowly but surely) help shape their own futures, then the compromises and investments are more than worth it.

Also, elections alone will not bring prosperity and stability to Iraq. Elections are a means to an end. In other words: what comes next is perhaps even more important: the formation of a government, one that is able (swiftly and effectively) to get serious reforms going. Tangible results must be achieved for all Iraqis; and they must be achieved with transparency, good governance and integrity.

But to get there, the first step is: credible elections. As I stated many times: the October elections are an essential first step on (most likely) a very long road. A road that hopefully leads to a more prosperous, manageable and more just Iraq.

And I sincerely hope that all Iraqis realize the great importance and value of their vote.

This is your country. Your future. Your vote.

I will now give the floor to my colleague Ingibjörg.”



Here is the text of the opening remarks by the Deputy Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General (for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance), Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir:

“I am pleased to inform you that the technical aspects of the electoral process are fully on track and our large UN electoral presence is fully deployed, covering technical assistance and monitoring as well as communications and outreach. All told, nearly 900 individuals – international and national, experts as well as support staff – are contributing to nationwide electoral efforts.

Our electoral technical advice and assistance includes such in need areas as

SRSB Hennis-Plasschaert: “The October elections... (continued)”

election operations, communications and outreach, the managing of election results, information technology, logistics, training for polling staff, gender issues, legal affairs, graphic design and security.

Furthermore, the UN facilitated signings of the Electoral Code of Conduct throughout Iraq. By signing, political parties and independent candidates pledge to reject intolerance, violence and hate speech, during the campaigning and voting periods. The Electoral Code of Conduct also requires all signatories to respect the freedom of journalists and the media and to support the participation of Iraqi women and minorities. At the United Nations, we are encouraged by such efforts and will continue to back them.

Also worth noting, the United Nations has shared millions of COVID-19 safety items with the Independent High Electoral

Commission (IHEC). These are for distribution at polling stations across the country on Election Day. Important, as a pandemic should not prevent people from casting their valuable votes.

We have also helped IHEC conduct electoral simulations. These trial runs are aimed at identifying flaws – so that Election Day can proceed smoothly.

As the SRSB just said: a fourth simulation took place yesterday. The UN has been happy to support IHEC in its simulation exercises, which are designed to run through the Election Day process – so that flaws can be identified and avoided.

Although IHEC only originally planned for three simulations, they decided to hold a fourth one yesterday. We are encouraged that IHEC took this extra step to build confidence and reassure the public.

A key feature of this election will be the real time display of provisional results at Result Display Centers throughout the country, to help prevent tampering with vote counting.

And we have also published key information online. For instance, information on how voters can file complaints if they see problems on Election Day, or to inform them about what precise actions are being taken to prevent fraud.

The technical assistance that the UN is providing to Iraq’s electoral authorities is aimed at promoting transparency and the integrity of the elections and by doing that we hope it can contribute to rebuilding trust in Iraq’s electoral institutions and processes.

We will now be happy to answer any election-related questions you may have.”

Participation of youth in elections enhances representation, contributes to change

Baghdad, 5 October 2021 – Participation of youth in elections enhances their representation and contributes to much-needed change, the Chief of UNAMI’s Human Rights Office said, urging the youth to partake in the upcoming national elections on 10 October.

Ms. Danielle Bell also highlighted the central role of human rights as an indispensable requirement for transparent and fair elections.

“Effective political systems require representation from all parts of society. The engagement of Iraqi youth in the electoral processes is crucial to make a difference in the longer term, and your work to encourage youth to participate in the upcoming elections is vital,” she said in opening remarks at a seminar in Baghdad organized by the Jssor Youth Organization on supporting transparent and fair elections.

Participants discussed the concerns of youth about voting in the elections, procedural standards guaranteeing the transparency of the electoral process as well as the role of the media.

“Participation in the electoral process

cannot be effective unless a wide range of rights are respected, including freedom of expression, freedom of peaceful assembly, freedom from discrimination, and freedom from fear and intimidation among others,”

Ms. Bell said.



The Secretary-General commends the women and men of Iraq for their determination to make their voices heard through the ballot box on 10 October

New York, 11 October 2021 - Statement attributable to the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General on Iraq’s parliamentary elections:

“The Secretary-General commends the women and men of Iraq for their determination to make their voices heard through the ballot box on 10 October. He notes the extensive efforts made by the relevant electoral and security bodies to ensure the largely

peaceful conduct of the early parliamentary elections, called for by the people of Iraq in their quest for reform, accountability and a better future.

The Secretary-General urges all stakeholders to show patience and respect for the electoral timeline while the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) tabulates the results, to resolve any electoral

disputes that may arise through established legal channels, and to complete the electoral process by forming a government as soon as possible.

The Secretary-General reaffirms that the United Nations remains fully committed to supporting the Government and people of Iraq.”



UNAMI on Twitter/Elections 2021

Baghdad, 14 September 2021 - Iraq's election will be more credible if it involves as many Iraqi voters as possible. And that includes the deaf

community. That's why the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) recruited a sign language interpreter to help Iraq's Independent

High Electoral Commission (IHEC) broaden its reach. All Iraqis should have the information they need to #Vote4Iraq.

Baghdad, 15 September 2021 - Murals are popping up around Baghdad and will soon spread to other

parts of the country, reminding Iraqis about the importance of voting on 10 October. If you see one, post a selfie

with the hashtag #Vote4Iraq - to inspire your compatriots to cast their ballots!

Baghdad, 21 September 2021 - Sport is a great way to bring people together. Today UNAMI staff played in a football match organized by the Governorate Electoral Office in Karkh to raise awareness about #Iraq's upcoming elections and the importance of voting. #Vote4Iraq



Baghdad, 23 September 2021 - All 19 electoral provincial offices have now received Covid-19 prevention materials

purchased by the United Nations. There are now 75 k boxes of masks, 20 k boxes of gloves, and 120 k bottles of

sanitizing to use at polling stations on Election Day - because your safety is important. #We_elect_to_Iraq

Baghdad, 25 September 2021 - Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq

Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert to Iraqi voters: "At the ballot box, you have an opportunity to make your voice heard...

This is your country. Your future. Your vote. Make it count."#Vote4Iraq

Baghdad, 27 September 2021 - Murals aimed at encouraging Iraqis to vote have now gone up in the governorates of Anbar, Baghdad, Basrah, Dhi Qar, Karbala, Maysan, Muthanna, Najaf, Ninewa, Qadisiyah and Wasit.



Baghdad, 1 October 2021 - On 2nd anniversary of Iraqi protests, we recall the sacrifices of youth who demanded

early elections and reform. We honour their memory by living up to their hopes and ideals. Make your voices

heard and your votes count on 10 October.

Baghdad, 1 October 2021 - Iraq's early elections are in 10 days. And the Special Representative of the United

Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, wants people to know that their votes matter.

#Vote4Iraq

Diyala, 4 October 2021 - In Diyala today, Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir, met Iraq's Independent High Electoral Commission's governorate-level director, Ali Kareem Said. They discussed UNAMI's electoral support, biometric voter cards, IDP voting, women's participation and the overall security environment for Iraq's 10 October elections. #Vote4Iraq



UNAMI on Twitter/Elections 2021

Diyala, 4 October 2021 - Iraqi civil society is a crucial partner when it comes to educating and inspiring voters ahead of the 10 October elections - and

Baghdad, 5 October 2021 - UNAMI is conducting induction training for

Karbala, 6 October 2021 - Today in Karbala, Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, Ms. Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir, held separate meetings with Governor Nusaif al-Khattabi, Iraq's Independent High Electoral Commission's governorate-level director, and civil society. Views were exchanged on election preparations and local dynamics ahead of the 10 October polls. #Vote4Iraq

Erbil, 7 October 2021 - Here in Erbil, the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert met with United Nations observers who came from around the world to support the electoral process in Iraq before and during Election Day. The international community is here as a partner for all Iraqis.



Baghdad, 8 October 2021 - We have seen media reports that a UN monitor complained to the Iraq Independent

Baghdad, 8 October 2021 - On Election Day, Iraqis should have the confidence to vote as they please, in an

Baghdad, 10/10/2021



SRSR for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert visited a polling station in the Karada area of Baghdad #we_elect_Iraq



SRSR for Iraq, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, visits a polling station in Adhamiyah in Baghdad. #Vote4Iraq

observing the elections as well. In that spirit, Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral

international monitors as they continue to fly in from around the world to



High Electoral Commission (IHEC) about electoral irregularities today. That is categorically false. If UN

environment free of pressure, intimidation and threats. We once again call on all parties to respect the



SRSR for Iraq, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, stopping by a polling station in Baghdad's Mansour neighbourhood #Vote4Iraq



UNDP Resident Representative in Iraq, Ms. Zena Ali Ahmad, visited polling stations in Baghdad's Mansour neighbourhood today. #Vote4Iraq

Assistance, Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir, met groups in Diyala today to discuss election-related hopes and concerns. #Vote4Iraq

monitor Iraq's 10 October elections. #Vote4Iraq

monitors see anything of concern, they will report that to the UN.

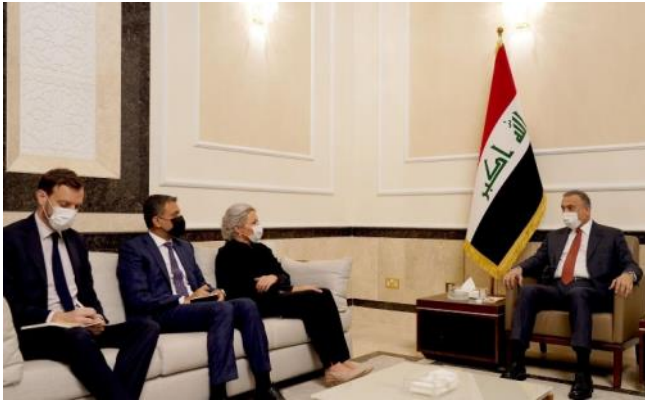
freedom of any Iraqi to cast their ballot for candidates of their own choice. #Vote4Iraq



SRSR for Iraq, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, at a polling station in Baghdad's Allawi area. #Vote4Iraq



DSRSR for Iraq, Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir, and UN monitors in Kirkuk. #Vote4Iraq



Baghdad, 13 October 2021 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met today with Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhimi. They discussed the electoral process, including Election Day and the ongoing tabulation of the results. Urging patience as the results are still coming in, Ms. Hennis-Plasschaert reiterated the UN's technical advice to IHEC and stressed the importance of ensuring a transparent and credible count that reflects the will of the Iraqi voters.



Erbil, 14 October 2021 - The Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General, Ms. Jenin Henness-Blaskhart, met today in Erbil with the President of the Kurdistan Region, Mr. Nechirvan Barzani. The two sides discussed the political situation in Iraq after the early elections held on 10 October 2021.



Erbil, 14 October 2021 - The special representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met in Erbil today with the Prime Minister of Kurdistan Regional Government, Mr. Masrour Barzani. The two sides discussed the political situation in Iraq after the early elections held on 10 October 2021.

Social Cohesion

The first governorate-level committee meeting on PVE was held in Diyala

Diyala, 22 August 2021 - Sustainable solutions to violent extremism require engagement with a wide range of stakeholders in Iraq, including local government. As part of UNDP Iraq's support to the National Security Advisory / the National Committee on the implementation of the Strategy for Combating and Preventing Violent Extremism in Iraq, the first governorate-level committee meeting on PVE was held in Diyala on 22 August in partnership with GIZ. Governorate committees will implement the strategy and develop action plans at the local level. UNDP in Iraq is targeting national and local partners including civil society, governorate teams, youth and religious leaders to enhance their role in the implementation of the national strategy to combat violent extremism.

Support to Prevention of Violent Extremism (PVE) in Iraq is part of UNDP's Social Cohesion Programme to

promote stronger, peaceful, and more cohesive communities in all areas of Iraq.



More than 40 tribal, community and governmental leaders from Ninewa governorate signed a communal pact



Baghdad, 25 August 2021 - More than 40 tribal, community and governmental leaders from Ninewa governorate signed a communal pact in a ceremony held by IOM Iraq, GIZ, and Peace Paradigms in partnership with the Ministry of Migration and Displacement (MoMD) and the Ministry of Interior's Directorate of Tribal Affairs. The pact contained a community-driven declaration supporting stability and peaceful

coexistence in the villages of Haj Ali, Imam Gharbi and Jmisa in the Qayyarah sub-district, south Mosul. The signature of the pact followed an extensive series of consultations targeting youth, women, families of victims, and tribal and community representatives of the three villages, through which community needs were identified, and communities were encouraged to consider the return and reintegration of families with perceived

affiliation to ISIL.

"A full victory over ISIL can only be achieved through the return of the displaced families to their homes. Iraq cannot be an arena for IDP camps," said Mr. Karim Noori, Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Migration and Displacement. "Home is not a tent and a caravan, but rather an address for a person, and a place of safety. We hope that everyone will work together to end displacement in Iraq."

The pact was drafted by members of the three communities and will guide further efforts to support stabilization and peaceful coexistence, setting out the role of the community itself, the government, and UN and INGOs in addressing needs going forward.

"Today we signed this document to support peaceful coexistence, renounce violence, and support the rule of law in all aspects of life," said Al Sheikh Hassan Fattah Hassan, one of the tribal leaders in south Mosul.

This project is supported by the governments of Australia and Germany.

IOM Iraq supported Basra Peace Marathon

Basra, 08 September 2021 - To mark the World Youth Day, IOM Iraq cooperated with the Basra Governorate Office and the Directorate of Youth and Sports to hold the Basra Peace Marathon. More than 100 young people from the area set out from inside the Sports City complex in support of the 25th Arabian Gulf Football Championship that will be held in

Basra Governorate.

Several young women participants voiced the importance of creating peace as a step towards societal stability, stating that such activities contribute to breaking stereotypes and enhancing cohesion among Basra's population.

The Basra Marathon for Peace was funded by the European Union.



Under the program "Instrument Contributing to Stability and Peace in Basra" two workshops held in Basra

Basra, 09 September 2021 - IOM Iraq, under the program "Instrument Contributing to Stability and Peace in Basra," recently held a workshop on peace building attended by representatives of government

ministries, members of the Iraqi parliament and tribal leaders. They explored the meanings of peace and other related concepts; identified obstacles to achieving peace and stability; and discussed positive ways to

overcome those challenges, with a focus on diplomatic methods in the context of the stages of the conflict resolution process.

In a related activity, IOM Iraq recently held a capacity-building workshop for tribal leaders in Basra Governorate the first workshop of its kind.

Over the course of two days, participants discussed the concept of community participation and communication, particularly in local decision-making, as well as mediation techniques, negotiation strategies and methods for conducting open dialogues and countering violent extremism in post-conflict societies. These workshops were supported by the European Union.



UNDP Iraq supports interfaith dialogue

Anbar, 9 September 2021 - UNDP conference gathered 84 religious leaders from Anbar Governorate to discuss on moderate religious discourse in support of societal peace and how religious diversity positively affects communities.

UNDP Iraq's Social Cohesion Programme's work with interfaith religious leaders in Iraq is supported by the governments of Denmark and Germany.



Dialogue is key in peacebuilding and building healthy societies!

Baghdad, 12 September 2021 - Last week, through the "Inclusive Dialogue Processes in Peacebuilding", young peacebuilders from Baghdad, Anbar, Salah al-Din, Nineveh, Duhok, Sulaymaniah, Kirkuk, Diwaniyah and Dhi Qar discussed over four days how to strengthen dialogue among peers, focusing on inclusivity and gender equality in rebuilding their

communities.

The IDPP is supported by UNFPA, FBA and Sida - Styrelsen för Internationellt Utvecklingssamarbete. The initiative offers young peacebuilders in Iraq a platform to share experiences, strengthen their capacities and discuss challenges and visions for their future.



IOM Iraq is implementing a series of workshops on debate, advocacy, and peace building skills

Baghdad, 26 September 2021 - IOM Iraq is implementing a series of workshops on debate, advocacy, and peace building skills in the districts of Saadiya, Jalawla and Khanaqin, Diyala Governorate.

On 5 Sep 2021, IOM Iraq launched the fourth workshop for government representatives. It run for four days and brought together officials from

different parts of north and central Diyala to exchange experiences, cultivate a culture of dialogue and work towards addressing social and cultural challenges.

On 12 September, IOM Iraq launched the series' fifth workshop, attended by 20 young people in Khanaqin for a period of 6 days. It brought together participants from different areas of

north and central Diyala to exchange experiences, build a culture of dialogue and work to take unified steps to confront societal and cultural challenges.

On 26 September 2021 IOM Iraq brought together teams from three areas in northern Diyala Governorate for a youth debate competition.

All of the participants – 20 of whom came from Khanaqin, 20 from Jalawla and 20 from Saddiya – had previously completed IOM-led Debate, Advocacy and Peacebuilding Skills workshops, arriving at Jalawla Community Center to put their skills into practice. There, three judges scored the tournament, awarding first place to the team that demonstrated the best execution of debate concepts and practices.

IOM Iraq's Debate, Advocacy and Peacebuilding Skills workshops are supported by Agenzia Italiana per la Cooperazione allo Sviluppo (AICS).



UNFPA supports Youth Advisory Boards

Baghdad, 30 September 2021 - UNFPA and the Ministry of Youth and Sports, with support from Sweden, organised a five-day training for the youth advisory boards from Nineveh, Kirkuk, Anbar, Diwaniyah and Basra to strengthen their capacities in decision-making, leadership, social

cohesion and participation as well as community engagement.

Youth Advisory Boards are expected to assist policymakers in the development and implementation of youth-oriented strategies and policies to achieve the SDGs by 2030.



Empowering Community Based Organizations in Iraq towards peace

Baghdad, 27 September 2021 - In Iraq, Community Based Organizations (CBOs) are important contributors to long-lasting peace and social cohesion in their communities. With support from the Government of Germany, UNDP Iraq has launched a project to provide 300 CBOs in five Iraqi governorates with four days of skills training on community outreach, proposal writing, and the design of local peace initiatives. This training is part of a series of training sessions that will cover other topics such as networking and project and financial management. Following these training sessions, 50 CBOs, evenly distributed among the governorates, will be supported with grants to implement community initiatives that contribute to societal peace and improving social cohesion in their areas.

The first group of training sessions occurred from 28 August to 23 September in Anbar, Diyala, Ninewa, Kirkuk, and Salah al-Din governorates, bringing together CBOs with a wide variety of specialties from community health to livelihoods and peacebuilding. "This workshop will have a positive impact in our communities by helping us to better communicate the peace-building process to others. Lack of trust between groups is an issue in our society right now, and with this training to develop peace initiatives we



can contribute to building trust," says Raneen, 26, Volunteer Messages Organization, Anbar Governorate.

"Diyala has experienced many sectarian and tribal conflicts. This training enhances the ability of community organizations to implement projects that serve to build peace and harmony among society. We have a great desire to implement our projects to reduce violence in our community," says Osama, 29, MENA Organization, Diyala Governorate.

"Community organizations play a key role in enhancing societal cohesion through the implementation of initiatives, and this training is an opportunity for women to participate in spreading peace in society," says Duha,

50, Director of the Ashtar Organization for the Development of Women, Ninewa Governorate.

"With this training, I learned that through livelihood assistance we can fight unemployment and poverty, improve quality of life for people, and restore their self-esteem," says Aya, 25, AlNada center for Ceramists, Kirkuk Governorate.

In 2020, UNDP Iraq launched a dedicated five-year Social Cohesion Programme to promote stronger, peaceful, and more cohesive communities in all areas of Iraq. Empowering Community Based Organizations is part of the programme's extensive work with local peace mechanisms in Iraq.

90 IOM Iraq staff members underwent training on sports and arts for social cohesion

Baghdad, 30 September 2021 - IOM is dedicated to the responsible provision of assistance to vulnerable populations across Iraq and committed to the humanitarian principle of "Do No Harm." This means working to understand the potential unintended consequences of IOM activities and acting to minimize harm and achieve the greatest positive outcomes.

Building social cohesion is one of the core elements of IOM's community stabilization programming in many areas of Iraq where decades of conflict have created deep divisions. This summer, approximately 90 IOM Iraq staff members underwent training on sports and arts for social cohesion. Sports and arts are seen as some of the most consistent and powerful areas where connections can be built between divided communities.

Some of the key practices discussed

include creating safe spaces for people from different groups to come together; listening to community priorities for activities; building long-term relationships; and exploring noncompetitive sports and cooperative games.

In a related activity, IOM Iraq staff members underwent training in the theory and practice of conflict sensitivity – a tool to better understand



and avoid unintended negative consequences of field activities and improve positive outcomes.

The trainings aimed to strengthen staff's ability to identify and analyze conflict dynamics; understand and improve the ways in which IOM activities relate to divided communities; and act to achieve the greatest benefit to those communities with an eye to long-term, positive change.

New materials were also developed in order to ensure that new staff members are equipped to implement projects that minimize harm and maximize benefits for vulnerable communities. IOM Iraq will continue to conduct conflict sensitivity training for newly joined staff.

These trainings were made possible with support from the Government of Australia.

Young musicians and filmmakers undergo training with the aim to revive cultural life and social cohesion in Mosul

Mosul, 10 October 2021 - 26 young musicians from Mosul are involved in a comprehensive training programme that will result in establishment of four new music ensembles! The training is being held as part of the EU funded project "Reviving Mosul and Basra Old Cities" and in collaboration with Action for Hope.

The programme aims to support musicians from Mosul, promote diverse musical traditions including those that are less known (such as the Syriac, Turkmen and rural traditions), and contribute to revival of cultural life and social cohesion.

Under the same project, UNESCO has started collaboration with the theatre



house NTGent in order to support young filmmakers from Mosul. The collaboration will involve an extensive training programme in all stages in

filmmaking, a final production of the film as well as support to the Institute of Fine Arts in Mosul for establishment of the Film Department.

Capacity building to prevent violent extremism in Iraq

Baghdad, 13 October 2021 - Today, UNDP Iraq and the NGO Directorate at the Council of Ministers Secretariat (COMSEC) launch a capacity building programme for 60 representatives of local non-government organizations (NGOs) to support them in the design and implementation of programmes and initiatives to Prevent Violent Extremism in Iraq.

The programme starts with a series of workshops from 13-18 October.

In 2020, UNDP Iraq launched a dedicated five-year Social Cohesion Programme to promote stronger, peaceful, and more cohesive communities in all areas of Iraq, supported by the governments of Denmark, Germany, Japan, and the Netherlands.



Fostering gender inclusive peacebuilding in Iraq

Baghdad, 17 October 2021 - Integrating a gender perspective into peacebuilding must begin from the ground-up. Accordingly, from 05 to 06 October, UNDP Iraq in partnership with Folke Bernadotte Academy (FBA) held a two-day workshop on gender mainstreaming in the design of social cohesion activities. The workshop was attended by 21 members of the Peace and Reconciliation Working Group in Ninewa Governorate, which brings together local and international peacebuilding organizations, government entities, as well as UN agencies and donors.

Led by FBA, Swedish agency for peace, security, and development, the

workshop introduces gender concepts and societal and institutional structures, the Iraqi policy framework and national action plan, and integration of gender perspectives into activities the participants will implement on the ground in Iraq.

"My organization's goal is rehabilitation for women, so this training is very relevant to the work I perform. We support women involvement in mediation, reconciliation, social cohesion, and peacebuilding. We work on challenges and how to solve them, especially in conservative areas," says Sheeren Shukri Ahmed, Senior Program Officer, Women Rehabilitation Organization.

"This training was a tool to improve my skills so I can help myself to help others. Following this training, I can put the principles I learn into practice to serve my community and people. I believe no project is complete without considering gender; it affects everything in our daily lives," says Jwan Azad Sliwa, Social Worker, Blumont Organization.

"Gender mainstreaming is one of the important topics that was somehow neglected over the past years. After liberation, we were focused on livelihoods, food, cash, and rehabilitating buildings, but then we realized that we need gender mainstreaming for sustainability," says Rifaat Jumaah, Community Engagement Associate, International Organization for Migration.

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. In May 2021, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between UNDP Iraq and FBA to enhance local capacities for peacebuilding in Iraq with concentration on gender mainstreaming in peacebuilding.



KOICA Representative visits UNFPA-supported Women Community Centre in Baghdad

Baghdad, 18 August 2021 - The Deputy Country Director of the Korean International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), Mr Jong Jun Young, met on 18 August, with women and girls, and survivors of gender-based violence, at the UNFPA-supported Al-Ataa Women Community Centre in Baghdad.

The KOICA delegation observed the ongoing trainings and sessions and spoke to women and girls about the services offered at the centre and the life skills training they need to help become more independent and self-reliant and contribute financially to their families.

Earlier this month, KOICA granted UNFPA US\$ 3 million towards assisting survivors of gender-based violence in both Kirkuk and Nineveh Governorates, especially women and girls affected by conflict-related sexual violence. The new contribution will



increase access to comprehensive mental health and psychosocial support

and other gender-based violence related services.

RDPP and UNFPA support the enhancement of the capacity of gender-based violence service providers



Duhok, 29 August 2021 - The European Regional Development and

Protection Programme for Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq (RDPP II) visited the

UNFPA supported Nawa Women Shelter and Women and Girls Support and Treatment Centre and the Gender-Based Violence Hotline (119), in addition to meeting with multiple government departments in Duhok.

The meeting with government entities constituted an opportunity for RDPP and UNFPA to reiterate their support to enhancing the capacity of gender-based violence service providers in the area. Also, the RDPP team observed the multiple activities and services being offered in the UNFPA-supported facilities.

UNFPA Iraq and Swedish diplomats discuss future cooperation

Baghdad, 13 September 2021 - Gender-based violence, gender equality, census, youth initiatives and reproductive rights were at the centre of the discussions today between UNFPA Representative, Dr Rita Columbia, and the new Swedish Ambassador Embassy in Baghdad, Jonas Loven, and the new Sida - Styrelsen för Internationellt Utvecklingssamarbete officer in Iraq.

"Today, we had the opportunity to reiterate our gratitude to Sweden's commitment to women and girls in Iraq. We talked about the partnership and support from Sweden, and discussed the impact of their support

on women, girls and young people as part of the unearmarked multi-year contribution to UNFPA Country

Programme," said the UNFPA Representative at the end of the meeting.



UNFPA, Diwaniyah Governorate sign agreement to support women in the Governorate

Baghdad, 14 September 2021 - UNFPA & Diwaniyah Governorate signed a cooperation agreement today to scale up the support to girls and women in the governorate.

The agreement signed by Dr Rita Columbia, UNFPA Representative, and Mr Zuhair Ali Al-Shaalan, the Governor of Diwaniyah will ensure that women and girls have access to protection and proper services to respond to gender-based violence. In addition, it will provide the Directorates of Health, Labour and Social Affairs, and Interior (Family Protection Unit) with the opportunity to strengthen their expertise on service delivery to survivors to deal with gender-based violence.

Speaking during the ceremony, Mr Al-Shaalan emphasised the governorate's full support to work with UNFPA to ensure the success of the project to provide quality service to women and girls. He also reiterated the governorate's efforts to enhance the



role of women and girls, increase equality in leadership roles and become a unique model for active communities to contribute to the development process.

Dr Columbia thanked the Governor for supporting the needs and rights of women and girls in Diwaniyah: "On behalf of UNFPA Iraq, I welcome this initiative and look forward to our joint

actions to protect women and girls from violence and provide them with so much needed services."

The cooperation agreement between UNFPA and the Governorate is within the UNFPA 2020-2024 Country Programme Document and the Memorandum of Understanding between UNFPA & the Government of Iraq, through the Ministry of Planning.

UNFPA supported a training on gender-based violence



Erbil, 18 September 2021 - To increase knowledge on gender-based

violence, its types and the prevention and response methods, UNFPA, with funding from the European Regional Development and Protection Programme for Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq (RDPP II), supported an awareness training for religious, security, social, educational and health professionals from across the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

The training enabled participants to identify cases of violence, assist a survivor relying on the survivor-approach method and refer survivors for relevant services.

A training on the principles of protection and on how to address GBV cases organized for hotline staff

Duhok, 19 September 2021 - The 119 hotline is the free line to call to report

any kind of gender-based violence. Phone operators should follow a

survivor-centred approach and provide adequate assistance to those reaching out for help.

With funding from the European Regional Development and Protection Programme for Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq (RDPP II), UNFPA and ABAAD organized a three-day training on the principles of protection and on how to address cases.

Through the role-play exercises, phone operators and hotline staff in Duhok are now more familiar with the referral methods, cases identification and the challenges survivors might face when seeking help.



UNFPA community dialogue on the prevention, response and elimination of gender-based violence, honor killing, and child marriage held in Erbil

Erbil, 21 September 2021 - "People commit honour killing under the pretext of religion or religious duties. I reiterate: religion is completely against this harmful practice," said Mulla Raad, member of the Union of Religious Scholars in Kurdistan Region of Iraq, speaking yesterday at the "UNFPA Community Dialogue on the Prevention, Response and Elimination of Gender-Based Violence, Honor Killing and Child Marriage".

Religious leaders and representatives of local governments, civil society, the judiciary branch and the Parliament, members of the General Directorate of Combatting Violence against Women discussed the best approaches for ending harmful practices in the



country. Media, men and boys engagement in the dialogue about women rights, access to reproductive health and GBV

services were mentioned as the effective ways to change attitudes and practices in the communities for eliminating any form of GBV.

The first training on Protection against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA), child protection, and community engagement held in Baghdad

Baghdad, 22 September 2021 - Thanks to the Government of Germany (Auswärtiges Amt), Mercy Hands for Humanitarian Aid and UNICEF facilitated the first training on Protection against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA), child protection, and community engagement for 100 community police members in Ministry of Interior office in Baghdad. 200 community police members are expected to be reached with this series of training this month.



Secretary-General of the Council of Ministers highly praised UN Women's work and its active role and achievements in supporting the Iraqi Women's Empowerment Department

Baghdad, 28 September 2021 - Hamid Al-Ghazi, Secretary-General of the Council of Ministers, in a letter of thanks and appreciation sent to the representative of UN Women, Dina Zorba, highly praised UN Women's work and their active role and achievements in supporting the Iraqi women's empowerment department, describing it as an essential partner in building the Iraqi society, which is based on social justice and human rights principles in harmony with international conventions and treaties and decisions of the International Security Council.



KRI Board Committee for the implementation of the Second Iraqi National Action Plan for the Implementation of UNSCR 1325 established

Erbil 28 September 2021 - In collaboration with UN Women, the High Council of Women Affairs (HCWA) in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) organized a meeting in Erbil, to announce the establishment KRI Board Committee for the implementation of the Second Iraqi National Action Plan for the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325.

HCWA Secretary-General Dr. Khanzad Ahmed delivered the opening speech at the meeting, she stressed the important role of the KRI board to supervise the implementation of the 1325 KRI plan (2021-2024) within the UN Security Council Resolution on Women, Peace, and Security. Dr. Ahmad focused in her speech on the CSOs role to support the government during the implementation and monitoring period of the plan as well as this meeting is considered as the first step to work on laws and legislation amendment that deals with women's rights and protection in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

Kurdistan Region Minister of Interior Mr. Reber Ahmed expressed the Kurdish government's readiness to support implementing the KRI 1325 action plan to empower and protect women in all fields, especially women



affected by war and violence. He also highlighted the importance of law enforcement and legislation to ensure gender equality all over Iraq to support justice and equality for women and protect Iraqi women from all kinds of violence and discrimination. He further stated that this could be achieved through a participatory process involving governmental and legislative entities, civil societies organizations, and international agencies.

UN Women Representative in Iraq and Yemen Ms. Dina Zorba underlined the importance of the women, peace, and security agenda under UNSCR 1325 as

an essential key pillar of development and stability towards achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Additionally, she emphasized the vital role carried out by KRI government entities and women's civil society organizations in implementing the National Action Plan II (2021-2024) to implement Resolution 1325. Furthermore, she highlighted the UN Women's readiness to support establishing KRI 1325 board and provide the technical and financial support to develop the implementation mechanism for KRI NAP II (2021-2024).

Awareness session for women and girls about facing violence inside the family held in Baghdad

Baghdad, 29 September 2021 - Baghdad Women Association implemented an awareness session for women and girls about facing violence inside the family and to increase their level of awareness of the laws that protect their rights.

The session was divided into main topics important to family and society, as gender-based violence, represented in the aspects of the differences between sex and gender, the social roles of males and females, the most important causes and types of violence and its impact on the family and society, in addition, the ways to reduce and eliminate violence.

The activity was done under project "Women, Peace and Security in the Arab states- Phase II" funded by the government of Finland and in

partnership with UN Women, at Kabarto 1 camp for IDPs in presence of 13 women and girls, by coordinating with the Social Welfare Department.



Awareness session on UNSCR 1325 held in Erbil

Erbil, 30 September 2021 - Accepting Others Organization (AOO) increased the knowledge and capacities of women activists on UNSCR 1325 and how to advocate for its implementation

through advocacy campaigns and activities. 22 participants including women activists, NGO workers, DCVAW members and lawyers attended the workshop organized in

Erbil and worked together in groups to identify and discuss challenges hindering women's political participation.

The implementation mechanism and priority activities implementation for the National Action Plan under UNSCR 1325, 2021-2024 discussed at the workshop in Erbil

Erbil, 3 October 2021 - The High Council of Women Affairs in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, in partnership with UN Women in Iraq organized a workshop in Erbil on 3 October 2021 involved participants from KRI ministries and government entities to present and discuss the implementation mechanism and priorities activities implementation for the National Action Plan under UNSCR 1325, 2021-2024. The workshop discussion's focused on KRI NAP II and designing a plan of action for ministries and governmental institution in line with UNSCR1325. This workshop is part of series of



events that will be conducted under Women, Peace and Security project

phase II funded by Government of Finland and Government of Sweden.

10 dialogue sessions on UNSCR 1325 held in Basra



Basra, 05 October 2021 - Al-Taqwa association for women and children

rights increased the knowledge and capacities of women in Qādisiyyah and

Basra governorates on UNSCR 1325, national action plans, interventions for addressing inequalities and issues related to women, peace and security. 10 dialogue sessions were conducted entitled "Expanding local areas in the integration of women's needs into the Women, Peace and Security agenda" and highlighted the role of women in creating sustainable peace and development within their communities. These activities were done under WPHF funded project in partnership with UN Women.

Human Rights

IOM Iraq organized a panel discussion on the challenges facing the Yazidi community today

Erbil, 24 August 2021 -IOM Iraq organized a panel discussion in Erbil on the challenges facing the Yazidi community today, as well as efforts to deliver justice and prevent future atrocities. Panelists also explored the role of art and new technology in changing perceptions and inspire positive change. During the panel, Lina Biscaia, Head of UNITAD's Gender and Children Unit, reiterated that the crimes committed against the Yazidi people have been officially recognized as constituting genocide. After the discussion, the "Nobody's Listening" exhibition was presented, enabling participants' exposure to a VR film that aims to amplify the voices of

Yazidi survivors and affected communities. The "Nobody's Listening" VR film was previously presented in 5 cities across Iraq, as documented a report which investigated the impact of the VR exhibition and VR technology as a tool to change perceptions. The report can be found here: <https://iraq.iom.int/.../nobody%E2%80%99s-listening...>

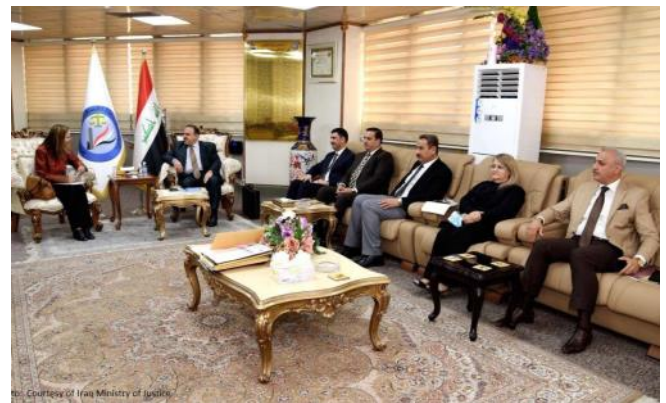
The exhibition of the "Nobody's Listening" VR film were organized by IOM Iraq and Yazda, with support from USAID Iraq. Field Ready co-organized the panel discussion and provided the venue for the exhibition at Erbil Innovation House.





Baghdad, 30 August 2021 – 650 posters, developed jointly by UN Human Rights and the High Judicial Council (HJC), have been distributed today to courts and police stations in 15 governorates of Iraq. They aim to explain the main procedures and rights of suspects during criminal investigations in accordance with Iraqi law.

Photos by UNAMI PIO and HJC.



Baghdad, 30 August 2021 – UNAMI Human Rights Chief, Ms Danielle Bell, met today with a delegation of department heads of the Ministry of Interior, led by Maj. Gen. Hassan Khamat. The discussion focused on cooperation on advancing human rights in areas of mutual concern, including implementation of Iraq’s commitments under the Convention of Torture.

Baghdad, 31 August 2021 – United Nations Human Rights Chief for Iraq, Ms. Danielle Bell, met with Judge Salar Abdul Satar Mohammed Hussein, Minister of Justice (MoJ), and ministry officials on issues related to human rights in detention. Photo courtesy of the Ministry of Justice.

Living with Disability

The Disability Inclusion conference addresses the suffering of people with disabilities

Baghdad, 23 August 2021 - “This Disability Inclusion Conference was useful and fruitful. It dealt with many important topics that have been overlooked by the government ministries. Those in attendance came from different ministries, and all the gaps affecting the lives of persons with disabilities were discussed,” said Alaa

Haseeb, 2021 Disability Ambassador, who took part in the Disability Inclusion Conference on 23 August in Baghdad.

“The suffering of people with disabilities is great and complex. Each type of disability faces its own barriers, for example mobility issues where schools and educational places are

difficult to access. There are also those with hearing disabilities, for whom nothing is facilitated – neither printed and dedicated curricula for them, nor access to institutes that teach sign language. We hope that the Iraqi government will pay attention to persons with disabilities because we are an integral part of Iraqi society. We hope that it will properly include us in all the opportunities available to society, including education, job and health opportunities, among others,” Alaa continued.

The conference was organized by the Iraqi Alliance of Disability Organizations (IADO) and IOM, with support from the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.



“My disability is not a burden. In fact, it is a source of strength”

Qushtapa camp, Erbil, 2 October 2021 - In 2013, with the escalating crisis in Syria, 12-year-old Rozhin moved to the Kurdistan Region of Iraq with her family, where she settled in Qushtapa Camp near Erbil.

Born with a congenital disability, Rozhin was reliant on her family to facilitate her routine tasks. Following the death of her mother, both her siblings were married, as was her father. She found herself alone, living with a stepmother who seldom showed her any empathy or understanding. Her life prospects seemed grimmer than ever.

“I was in profound isolation living with my stepmother and siblings,” recalls Rozhin. “It was a rough journey and a sad discovery to realise the prejudices my own family harboured about my disabilities.”

But Rozhin is no stranger to prejudice and discrimination. As a woman with a disability, she is considered among the most vulnerable population segments to a wide array of risks, including gender-based violence. She is also painfully aware of the pre-existing biases that continually impact people with disabilities, particularly in crisis settings.

“The puzzled gazes and looks of pity when people stare at me are discouraging, I have to admit,” she explains. “But I never allowed that to stand in my way. I have always wanted to see what life waited for me beyond my small community and somehow always knew that the right opportunity was coming.”

In her search for that opportunity,



Rozhin learned of the UNFPA-supported Safe Space at the camp, which she was advised offers services tailored to the needs of women and girls, including those with disabilities. She was intrigued at the prospect of learning new skills and decided to pay the centre a visit.

“Little did I know that I would find much more than skill-building,” she recalls.

At the centre, Rozhin was introduced to the psychosocial support services available, designed to help women and girls in need to heal, socialise, and respond to the challenges impacting their lives. She first participated in some much-needed wellness sessions, during which she learned new information about her sexual and reproductive health and rights, received support, and participated in several courses such as knitting and

hairdressing.

She learned more about herself and got the chance to express herself in new and refreshing ways, which helped her process some of the experiences she had been repressing.

The transformation followed quickly; she began forming new friendships at the centre, which helped cultivate her self-esteem in ways she never expected. Gradually, she was able to overcome her isolation, finding a support network that not only understands the difficulties of living with a disability but also helps people like her to overcome existing limitations and in search of better opportunities.

“My call to the world, especially people with special needs, is to resist and never give up under any circumstances,” says Rozhin. “My disability is not a burden. In fact, it is a source of strength.”

IADO gives UNFPA staff in Iraq a session on the challenges persons with disability face

Baghdad, 07 October 2021 - Disability Inclusion means ensuring no one is left behind and that everyone has the same opportunities to participate in every aspect of life to the best of their abilities and desires.

UNFPA Iraq thanks The Iraqi Alliance of Disability (IADO) for giving UNFPA staff in Iraq a session on the challenges persons with disability, especially women and girls with disability, face in their everyday life, especially in accessing reproductive health services! The IADO team discussed how to best respond to the rights and requirements of women with disabilities in service delivery.



UNESCO launches Iraqi Fact-Checking Platform (IFCT)



Baghdad, 22 September 2021 – Journalists and activists on social media, as well as other members of society can now utilize the Iraqi Face-Checking platform to check facts and information. UNESCO has built a smart platform based on artificial intelligence standards to address the needs of fact-checking and matching in relation to the Corona pandemic and the information surrounding it, with the generous support of the European Union. This step is part of a program to fight disinformation and safeguard journalists from COVID-19, which began last year, and it included the training of 1,800 Iraqi journalists on fact-checking and disinformation combat.

Using the Iraqi fact-checking tool (www.ifct.iq), which is the first of its type in the Arab region, Iraqi journalists and social media users can now track fake news and misinformation and expose it to the public in simple steps. The experts of the communications and information

sector at UNESCO Iraq, developed this platform in response to the agreement between UNESCO and the Iraqi Media and Communications Commission CMC in 2020, to help the Iraqi government and people overcome the risks of disinformation and fake news that framed the pandemic and still poses a major threat to public health and people’s safety.

UNESCO and CMC signed the exchanging letters of establishing the FCT Fact Checking Tools Platform to fight Disinformation and fake news amid COVID-19, as part of the EU funded project “#CoronavirusFacts: Addressing the ‘Disinfodemic’ on Covid-19 in conflict-prone environments” project.

With financial support from the European Union, UNESCO developed the FCT platform to be the main tool for fighting misinformation and a new online system for fact checking to be hosted by the CMC with open access (free for all). Iraqi FCT platform is a completely automatic fact-checking

platform that can detect a claim as it appears in real time, and instantly provide the users with a rating about its accuracy. It’s a call to the computing and journalism communities to tackle the technical challenges they face in automating fact-checking and potential solutions.

More than 50 staff from CMC took part in the factcheck training, hosted by UNESCO on 2020 and 2021, and today is the day of translating the hope into a concrete achievement. The two-day training was filled with info-sessions on the project’s lessons learned and with workshops and hands on sessions on the factcheck methodology. Moreover, today we move to the second step in which we will provide the FCT platform to be the first in the MENA region.

This platform was designed as a verification, helping journalists in saving time and to be more efficient in their fact-checking and debunking tasks on social networks especially when verifying videos and images.

The provided tools will allow users to quickly get contextual information on Facebook and YouTube videos, to perform reverse image search on Google, Baidu or Yandex search engines, to fragment videos from various platforms (Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, Daily Motion) into keyframes, to enhance and explore keyframes and images through a magnifying lens, to query Twitter more efficiently through time intervals and many other filters, to read video and image metadata, to check the video copyrights, and to apply forensic filters on still images.

UNITAD

UNITAD concluded a training on the application of 3D laser scanning technology in the recording of complex ISIL mass grave crime scenes in Iraq

Baghdad, 26 August 2021 - UNITAD’s Forensic Anthropology and Archaeology Unit conducted a three-day training for field excavation specialists from the Iraqi Mass Graves Directorate (MGD). The training comes as a part of the Unit’s continued partnership with MGD and its teams, and it covered the application of 3D laser scanning technology in the recording of complex ISIL mass grave crime scenes.

The training explored practical capacity building of the MGD experts presented in the form of mock crime scenes, as well as post processing of digital data;

all of which aims to enhance field based recording methods and the development of digital presentation tools that can be shared with the judiciary to explain the findings from mass grave sites.

Earlier in February, the Forensic Unit had introduced a primary training for MGD experts on 3D scanning technology. Additionally, UNITAD had provided MGD and other national governmental institutions with specialized high-tech equipment that are essential to their operations support of UNITAD’s investigative efforts.



UNITAD on Twitter

Baghdad, 22 August 2021 - On the International Day Commemorating Victims of Acts of Violence Based on Religion or Belief, we remember the victims and survivors of ISIL crimes across Iraq and honor the courage of

their communities in seeking justice. We reiterate our commitment to partner with all communities in Iraq to hold ISIL members accountable for their crimes. Through this partnership, combined with expertise and

technology on the ground, a clear path is now emerging through which meaningful accountability can be delivered.



UNITAD and KRG officials discussed the digitization and archiving of evidence on ISIL crimes

Erbil, 8 September 2021 - Last week, UNITAD and Kurdistan Regional Government officials met in Erbil and discussed ongoing progress and upcoming activities related to the digitization and archiving of evidence on ISIL crimes.

This important work is being undertaken with thanks to funding by the European Union.



Training in psychological first aid for national NGOs and INGOs staff

Baghdad, 9 September 2021 - Focusing on Psychological First Aid, UNITAD Witness Protection and Support Unit's psychologists conducted a training for national staff working with national and international NGOs in Anbar.

The training was conducted over two days (6th and 7th of September) in Ramadi. It aimed to enhance foundational skills and knowledge to provide humane, supportive, and practical assistance to survivors of ISIL crimes in a manner that respects their dignity, culture, and abilities.



Security Council renews UNITAD's mandate unanimously by adopting Resolution 2597 (2021)

New York, 17 September 2021 - The Security Council today decided to extend for one year the mandate of the United Nations team tasked with investigating crimes committed by Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh/ISIL), as well as the Special Adviser leading it, unanimously adopting a resolution to that effect (to be issued as document S/RES/2597 (2021)).

By the terms of resolution 2597 (2021), the 15-member organ renewed until 17 September 2022 the mandate of the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes

Committed by Da'esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, also known by the acronym UNITAD.

Reaffirming the terms of resolution 2379 (2017), by which the Team was first established, members decided that any further extension will be decided at the request of the Government of Iraq or any other Government that has requested the Team to collect evidence of acts that may amount to war crimes, crimes against humanity or genocide, committed by ISIL (Da'esh) in its territory.

The Council also requested the Special Adviser to continue to submit and

present reports on the Team's activities to the organ every 180 days.



The Netherlands commits new funding to UNITAD in support of witness protection in Iraq

Baghdad, 5 October 2021 – The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands renewed its support to the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ISIL (UNITAD) with additional funding for the support and protection of vulnerable witnesses of ISIL crimes in Iraq.

This timely contribution is critical to continue strengthening UNITAD's survivor-centered approach to investigations, through which vulnerable witnesses are provided psychosocial guidance and support before, during and after their interviews, to reduce the risk of re-traumatization while giving their testimonies. The Netherlands is a longstanding supporter of UNITAD's

Witness Protection and Support Unit (WPSU) which ensures that victims and witnesses of ISIL's crimes in Iraq can testify in a confidential setting in safe and emotionally reassuring environments with access to appropriate support.

Additionally, this contribution will allow UNITAD's clinical psychologists to continue organizing capacity building trainings for national service providers working in the field of mental health on appropriate protection and specialist intervention measures to support witnesses, victims, and survivors.

Moreover, UNITAD will continue to work closely with the Iraqi authorities to extend technical assistance in the field of witness protection and

psychosocial support to witnesses and survivors.

"UNITAD has played and is playing a key role in ensuring both accountability and support for the survivors of ISIL in Iraq and the Netherlands is a proud supporter of its work", said Yoka Brandt, Permanent Representative of the Netherlands to the United Nations in New York.

This support continues to be fundamental for the Investigative Team's efforts to uphold international standards in collecting evidence of crimes committed by ISIL members in Iraq that amount to war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide to support accountability measures in national courts.

Iraqi Authorities, in cooperation with UNITAD, complete the excavation of a mass grave site of ISIL victims in Anbar



Baghdad, 7 October 2021 – Iraqi authorities completed the excavation of a mass grave site in Bir Mantiqa al-Halwat, Anbar Governorate left by ISIL in October 2014. These efforts were done in cooperation with the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ISIL (UNITAD). The site of the mass grave excavation was selected according with the Joint Mass Graves Investigations Strategy adopted by Iraqi authorities and UNITAD in September 2020.

In parallel, the Iraqi authorities also concluded a campaign to enable the relatives of the victims to register their family members as missing and provide DNA samples to identify the human remains.

Specialists from Iraq's Mass Graves Directorate (MGD), Medico-Legal Directorate (MLD) and UNITAD, under the supervision and support of the National Coordinating Committee, with the help of the Ministry of Environment's Directorate of Mine

Action, all worked closely together to ensure the human remains, and evidence are collected in line with international standards. The joint endeavor between Iraqi authorities and UNITAD is critical to the success of excavation and investigation of mass graves left by ISIL.

"The marriage of expertise, training and mentoring in the application of innovative techniques and equipment such as 3D laser scanning, deep rooted knowledge of ISIL crimes committed in the context of Iraq, understanding of the complexity of mass grave crime scenes and outreach and engagement with local communities, contribute to establishing the evidence-based narrative of the crimes committed and support the scientific effort to establish the identity of victims" said Caroline Barker, Head of UNITAD's Forensic Anthropology and Archaeology Unit.

The campaign to collect DNA samples from families of ISIL victims was conducted in tandem with excavation activities and organized by the MLD in

cooperation with MGD. A general invite was sent out to the families of the victims of Al-Bu Nimr tribe from the District of Hit to attend the Anbar Health Directorate center, from the period of September 21 – 28. The Iraqi authorities are committed to receiving all information on family members missing as a result of ISIL crimes. The collection of evidentiary material, be it the forensic evidence excavated in the field at the mass grave site, or the DNA samples collected at the Anbar Health Directorate are indispensable to gathering concrete evidence and piecing together the narrative around the atrocities ISIL committed in Al-Bu Nimr.

According to Mr. Dia' Sa'idi, Director of MGD: "the excavations resulted in documenting all which is related to the crime scene, as well as all the evidence that will be transmitted according to the original records of seizure and disclosure to the relevant courts to enable the judiciary to identify and hold the perpetrators accountable and provide redress to the families of the victims".

The identification of the remains, and their return to their families is also important to bringing a sense of peace or closure to family members who lost their loved ones at the hands of ISIL members. Ultimately, the remains of these victims will be returned to their families where they would receive proper and dignified burial according to traditions and beliefs.

Germany renews its support to UNITAD with a new €1 million contribution to investigate financing of ISIL crimes

Baghdad, 26 October 2021 – Germany has renewed its support to the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ISIL (UNITAD) by recommitting an additional €1 million for investigations into the financial dimensions of ISIL crimes. This support is central to UNITAD's overall investigative efforts, as it seeks to uncover the financial mechanisms that supported or enabled perpetrators to profit from ISIL's grave violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law. "Accountability for the crimes committed by ISIL must include identifying and prosecuting those who enabled and profited from these acts, and Germany's contributions will be crucial in supporting UNITAD's efforts

in pursuing accountability for such crimes", noted Sareta Ashraph, UNITAD Director of Investigations. Building on this renewed support, as well as the strong collaboration already established with the Iraqi judiciary in this field, the dedicated unit investigating ISIL financial crimes will broaden its focus to cover the economic aspects of ISIL crimes. UNITAD will also continue to investigate the role of ISIL's financial support network and expand its investigations to also focus on those ISIL elements that were engaged in the persecution of ethnic and religious groups through theft and widespread pillage across Iraq. German Ambassador to Iraq, Mr. Martin Jäger, underlined that Germany remains committed to

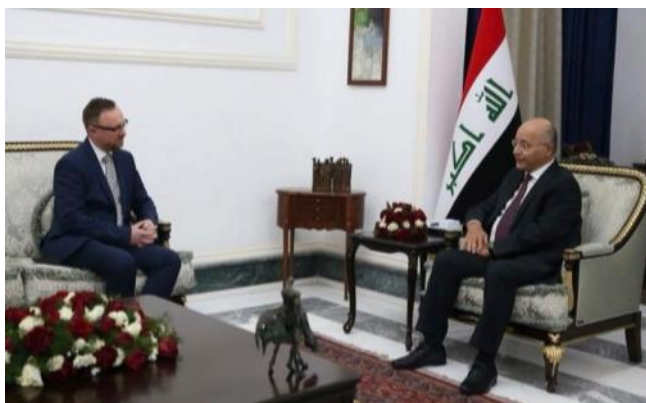
supporting the important work of UNITAD in Iraq. "Only by exposing the roots of the financial sources of Da'esh, we will be able to overcome the threat of Da'esh and achieve long-lasting stability in Iraq", Ambassador Jäger emphasized. This renewed contribution will empower UNITAD to provide greater support to domestic authorities, taking forward legal proceedings in relation to ISIL's financiers and administrators. Cooperation with Iraqi and international partners in the banking and private sector, as well as law enforcement and prosecutorial entities, remains instrumental to accountability efforts for those who financially supported ISIL and facilitated the crimes committed by its members in Iraq.



Baghdad, 11 September 2021 - UNITAD was delighted to welcome the Danish delegation headed by H.E. Gert Meinecke, the Danish Ambassador to Iraq, at its HQ in Baghdad to discuss ongoing support and further cooperation in the pursuit of accountability for ISIL crimes in Iraq.



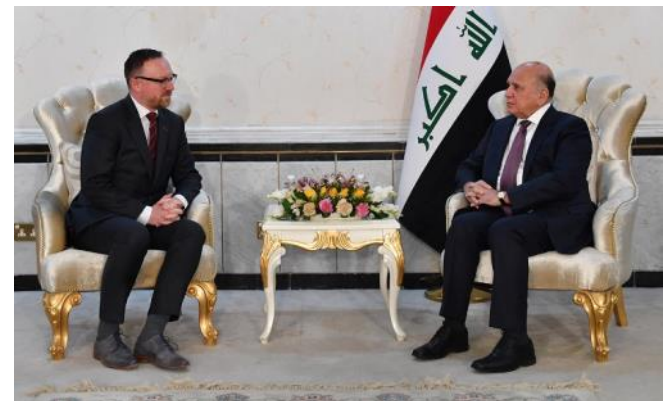
Baghdad, 25 October 2021 - Special Adviser Christian Ritscher met with the President of the Supreme Judicial Council Judge Faiq Zidan in Baghdad. They discussed ongoing cooperation and efforts to hold ISIL perpetrators accountable for the crimes they committed in Iraq.



Baghdad, 28 October 2021 - Special Adviser Christian Ritscher and Iraqi President Dr. Barham Salih discussed UNITAD's ongoing work during their meeting in Baghdad today.

The Special Adviser thanked the President for his invaluable support and reiterated that the Team is committed to deepening its partnership with Iraq to hold ISIL members accountable.

Photo credit: President of Iraq Media Office



Baghdad, 28 October 2021 - In his meeting with Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein yesterday, Special Adviser Christian Ritscher expressed his thanks for Iraq's continued strong support to UNITAD, and underscored the importance of close cooperation with Government of Iraq to ensure justice for victims and accountability for ISIL.

Photo credit: Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

IOM and KRG discussed cooperation and matters of mutual interest

Erbil, 26 August 2021 - IOM Iraq Chief of Mission Othman Belbeisi accompanied by Abraham Aniyeth, head of IOM Iraq's Erbil office, as well as Mohammed Sharif Ahmed, Head of IOM Iraq's Ninewa office met with Head of the KRG's Department of Foreign Relations, Minister Safeen Dizayee to discuss areas of cooperation and matters of mutual interest.

IOM Iraq appreciates the level of support the KRG offers to IOM in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq to facilitate delivery of assistance to the vulnerable communities including IDPs and host communities.



Technical Working Group for Migration Governance meeting held



Baghdad, 31 August 2021 - IOM Iraq held a meeting of the members of the Technical Working Group (TWG) for Migration Governance, which includes the representatives of Iraqi ministries and the Kurdistan region authorities.

The hybrid event combined in-person and virtual interventions, and took place in the presence of the delegation of the European Union Mission in Iraq. The objectives of the meeting were to brief the participants on the role of the

TWG in implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Global Compact for Migration (GCM), and to agree on the protocol for institutionalizing the TWG within the national SDGs implementation framework.

Attendees discussed updates on the implementation of Iraq's Vision 2030 strategy and the outcomes of the Voluntary National Review, as well as other migration governance related concerns.

The event was supported by the European Union through AWDA AMINA – a comprehensive response aimed at reinforcing the Government of Iraq's efforts to strengthen migration governance, including through institutional support and community-based reintegration services.

ECHO and UNICEF representatives paid a visit to Ba'aj district in Ninawa governorate to assess the living conditions and needs of the returnees

Baghdad, 9 September 2021 - In Iraq, many people have returned to their places of origin after years of being internally displaced. The head of EU Civil Protection & Humanitarian Aid - ECHO operations in Iraq, Christophe Reltien, and UNICEF paid a visit to Ba'aj district in Ninawa governorate to assess the living conditions and needs of the population. They visited two communities and camps to monitor water services, a child protection center, and education facilities, supported by EU humanitarian aid.

The EU and UNICEF continue their partnership to provide displaced populations with sustainable and inclusive solutions.



Returning hope: reintegration workshops prepare communities of return in Iraq

Baghdad, 6 September 2021 - For Iraq, a country in recovery following decades of conflict and war, a reintegration process for returned Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) focused on peaceful coexistence is required for peacebuilding in areas of return. Local officials in areas of return hold the main responsibility for successful reintegration and are required to develop solutions and submit recommendations on how to sustainably re-build the social fabric of their communities.

"It is important to facilitate the return of all Internally Displaced Persons. If this problem remains, then tribal conflict and other tensions will spread. If we achieve community coexistence, the region will enjoy peace and security," says Waleed Khalid Hamoud, Mayor, Obaidi Sub-district, Al Qa'im.

As part of UNDP Iraq's Community-based Reconciliation and Reintegration Project, with support from the Government of Japan, a series of comprehensive workshops on return and reintegration was held for 89 local government members, security officers and other officials from the governorates of Anbar (Al Qa'im and Habbaniyah), Salah al-Din (Tuz Khurmatu) and Ninewa (Ayadiyah and Muhalabiya). With a focus on these five pilot areas, through work with local peace mechanisms to facilitate agreements, over 4,000 families of IDPs mainly perceived to be affiliated with ISIL will return to their communities following years of displacement. A full-scale socio-economic reintegration support package in communities of return, including shelter rehabilitation and psychosocial and livelihood programming, will ensure a sustainable reintegration process to heal

fragmented communities.

"Our goal is to reintegrate returnees back into their communities, to end hatred, and rehabilitate our cities. This workshop is helping us to facilitate the return of the remaining IDPs in our area," says Akram Abode, Administrator, Habbaniyah

The workshops succeeded in building the capacities of attendees in dealing with issues associated with the return and reintegration of displaced persons, discussing the positive impact of the reintegration of the displaced, and the importance of cooperation between local government and community leaders in providing support. Attendees discussed conditions that must be met to facilitate the reintegration of returnees, as well as international best practices that relate to the situation in Iraq.

"Our vision is to prepare well so that families in Ayadiyah accept returning IDPs, especially perceived ISIL-affiliated families. Already, hundreds of families have returned and we have no problems. With strong reintegration efforts, we can return communities to how they were before conflict," says Mayor Nashat Sadeq Mohammed, Ayadiyah.

"Facilitating the return of IDPs is at

the core of our work in Muhalabiya. It is very important because we don't want to keep people in camps. The whole idea is built on tolerance. Community acceptance is the major factor here," adds Abdulrahman Hassan, Mayor of Muhalabiya.

"Conferences focused on reintegration such as this, as well as meetings with tribal and religious leaders, are very important to end this chapter so people can return to normal life," says Adel Shakour, Mayor of Amarli, Tuz Khurmatu.

"This workshop is very important as we discussed recommendations related to reintegration openly. With both local and international support, we will work to solve the displacement issue in Iraq," says Dr. Hassan Zine El Abidine, Mayor of Tuz Khurmatu District.

In 2020, UNDP Iraq launched a dedicated five-year Social Cohesion Programme to promote stronger, peaceful, and more cohesive communities in all areas of Iraq. The Community-based Reconciliation and Reintegration Project supports the community readiness, return, and reintegration of families perceived to be affiliated with ISIL, who are often the most marginalized and vulnerable.



Steering Committee meeting of the Awda Amina Project stakeholders took place in Baghdad

Baghdad, 12 September 2021 - IOM Iraq held a Steering Committee meeting of the Awda Amina Project stakeholders. The event took place in Baghdad and brought together representatives from the Iraqi Government, the International Organization for Migration and the Delegation of the European Union to Iraq.

The objective of the meeting was to address developments and challenges related to migration governance and flag the opportunities available for

improvement. The participants discussed the second phase of the Awda Amina Project's roadmap, including activities and latest updates from the task forces.

This event was supported by the European Union through AWDA AMINA – a comprehensive response aimed at reinforcing the Government of Iraq's efforts to strengthen migration governance, including through institutional support and community-based reintegration services.



UNICEF supports access to safe water

Baghdad, 27 September 2021 - "Water is a very beautiful thing, I was happy when the water came back to our house, we use it in many areas of our lives here," – says Dilbreen, 12. He is one of the returnees to Al-Qahtaniyah district after being internally displaced due to conflict.

UNICEF, with the support of the Government of Germany (Auswärtiges Amt), is supporting access to safe water to 5,320 returnees in this district. But for Dilbreen, it is much more than just having access to water - "I am now waiting for my return to school, I hope to have new friends, and for everyone to return."

"I love water, especially when my mother washes my hair with it, it feels



so cold!" says Nawaf, 6 years old who lives in Al-Qahtaniyah district, Iraq. Nawaf and his family have returned to their home after living in a camp for 6

years due to conflict.

As Nawaf's father says, "Now we have water we can use for many things. Water is evidence of life."

Displaced communities continue to face challenges accessing compensation to rebuild their homes

Baghdad, 11 October 2021 - ISIL's systematic destruction, looting and illegal seizure and confiscation of housing between 2014 and 2017 was a major factor leading to the displacement of around 6 million Iraqis – 16 per cent of the country's population. During this period of conflict, documents proving ownership of housing, land and property (HLP) were also destroyed and lost on a massive scale.

Today, displaced communities continue to face challenges accessing compensation to rebuild their homes, and many struggle to prove ownership of their assets due to a lack of documentation.

A new report by IOM Iraq uses the "Pinheiro Principles" – which assert the HLP-related rights of displacement-affected communities – to assess and inform IOM Iraq's HLP-related strategy and programming in areas of

displacement and return across the country.

Read the report here:

<https://iraq.iom.int/publications/housing-land-and-property-rights-iraq-assessment-progress-towards-durable-solutions?fbclid=IwAR1FLxBm69n5O43oMrAhWcGxOLuHjW1XZDT3dWRJVvhkijOiTf0-dPdZ0>

This report was developed under the COMPASS project, supported by the Government of the Netherlands.

The UN Network on Migration in Iraq conducted a Prioritization Workshop in Baghdad



Baghdad, 14 October 2021 - The UN Network on Migration in Iraq conducted a Prioritization Workshop in Baghdad in late September. Representatives of the Network's member agencies, including UNHCR, UNESCO, FAO, UNICEF, WFP and UNDP, gathered to discuss key migration-related areas that the network could develop into a strategy

ahead of the International Migration Review Forum in May 2022.

The IMRF is the primary intergovernmental global platform to discuss and share progress on the implementation of all aspects of the Global Compact for Migration (GCM) - the first inter-governmentally negotiated agreement covering all dimensions of international migration.

A roadmap for the IMRF outlines support to Member States and stakeholders at the country, regional and global levels: <https://migrationnetwork.un.org/resources/imrf-roadmap>

Iraq remains committed to improved migration governance and is a GCM Champion Country. The Government of Iraq's capacity to provide services and co-ordinate critical functions of migration management and security were severely diminished during the ISIL crisis, and 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. Within this context, the Iraq UN Network on Migration has been established to assist support the Government's implementation of the GCM.

Realities of climate-induced migration in Iraq's southern cities: new IOM report

Basra, 21 October 2021 – Environmental degradation over the last 10 years has severely damaged Iraq's agricultural sector. Worsening water scarcity and quality has left the sector unable to support sufficient and sustainable livelihoods, particularly in rural areas, where it has long been the main workforce employer.

This has directly contributed to the migration of rural populations in search of other opportunities. However, climate-induced migrants are attempting to settle into complex new environments with potentially limited financial and social capital, which may impact their ability to access services and rights.

In July and August 2021, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and Social Inquiry conducted a survey of 802 local and migrant residents in the southern city of Basra to identify key issues hindering climate migrants' ability to integrate into already fragile urban settings. The southern cities of Iraq already struggle with economic security and governance, and may not be well prepared to absorb influxes of migrants.

The study, *Migration into a Fragile Setting: Responding to Climate-Induced Informal Urbanization and Inequality in Basra, Iraq*, found that

migrants arriving in Basra tend to cluster in neighbourhoods suffering from multiple social problems related to economic security, access to rights and safety, with many moving into eviction-prone shelters and taking up low-wage jobs in the informal sector.

According to the study, over half of migrant households reported that they cannot afford enough food or basic items, and 53 per cent do not have access to a financial safety net. Migrants also tend to report higher levels of exclusion from access to public services and other rights, which may include employment support, policing and formal dispute resolution and guarantees on property rights.

This contrasts with the situation of local households, which mostly rely on government employment and report better affordability status and financial safety nets. However, a weak private sector coupled with the waning ability of the state to expand public employment limits the economic prospects of all residents and increases their risk of falling into poverty.

Based on data from IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix, there are few internally displaced persons (IDPs) still in Basra due to the ISIL conflict. Most migrants are originally from the neighbouring governorates and districts and key indicators suggest

that movements are not seasonal but permanent.

The consequences of Iraq's climate challenges, particularly those related to water scarcity, are far-reaching and urgent, requiring coordinated action to mitigate needs, avoid further displacement and prevent the magnification of existing social problems.

"This report points to the need for a two-pronged approach to strengthen the capacity of areas receiving an influx of population to adapt, while also supporting rural districts from which families are migrating due to extreme environmental degradation and an absence of diversified economic opportunities," said Clémentine Favier, head of the Returns and Recovery Unit. This study was made possible with support from the US Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM).



Humanitarian

Minister of Migration and Displaced and UNDP Iraq Resident Representative sign MoU on community reintegration at Anbar Interfaith Religious Conference

Erbil, 08 September 2021 – The United Nations Development Programme in Iraq (UNDP) and the Iraqi Ministry of Migration and Displaced (MOMD) have today signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) that strengthens the partnership between the two parties to support the return and reintegration of displaced people in Iraq. The three-year agreement emphasizes cooperation between the parties, including support to programmes and provision of technical advice and knowledge, in line with national plans and policies to support reintegration of the displaced and an enabling environment for stabilization in Iraq.

The agreement was signed at a conference held in Erbil that convened 84 religious leaders from Anbar Governorate under the auspices of the Minister of MOMD, the Council of Ministers Secretariat, and



the Governor of Anbar. The two-day conference is the third in a series of conferences held for religious leaders in governorates liberated from the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), aiming at creating an interfaith dialogue

platform and building the capacities of religious leaders to enhance their role in encouraging community coexistence and advancing the return and reintegration process for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in partnership with local and

Minister of Migration and Displaced and UNDP Iraq Resident Representative sign MoU on community reintegration... *(continued)*

national authorities.

UNDP Iraq Resident Representative Zena Ali-Ahmad emphasizes, "We are pleased to sign this MoU with the MOMD, a partnership that will strengthen our efforts for the return and reintegration of many displaced and vulnerable Iraqis back to their communities. Our conference today is part of these efforts, supported by the Governments of Denmark and Germany, aiming to bring religious leaders together to encourage solidarity in spreading messages of peace and supporting returns and sustainable reintegration."

The Minister of Migration and Displaced, Her Excellency Mrs. Ivan Faiek Jabru, states, "This coordination between the federal government represented by MOMD and UNDP has had a positive impact on reinforcing community peace and coexistence. We look forward to continued collaboration on initiatives to prevent extremism and encourage reintegration."

The Deputy Secretary General of Council of Ministers Secretariat, His Excellency Mr. Jasim Alhalbousi, emphasizes, "Through this strong partnership between UNDP and COMSEC we will we continue

our work to promote peace and security within Iraq's communities."

The Governor of Anbar, His Excellency Mr. Ali Farhan states, "This meeting presents an important opportunity to hear from Anbar's religious leaders. Our focus is to use this discussion platform to implement a plan that combats extremist ideas and encourages moderate religious discourse."

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

A carpentry course organized by IOM Iraq in Hassan Sham U3 camp



Baghdad, 15 September 2021 - Today, 24 IDPs, including eight women, graduated from a carpentry course organized by IOM Iraq in Hassan Sham U3 camp.

During the 2-month workshop, participants gained carpentry skills and participated in mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) sessions. These sessions focused on life, social and soft skills related to the carpentry course, including problem-solving, stress management and communication skills. This MHPSS skills-building component was added to the livelihood project to strengthen participants' resilience to work-related stressors and empower them to take full advantage of the offered livelihood opportunity. In addition to the skills-building component, which was provided in the form of peer-support groups, individual counseling was also available to participants. At the end of the project, each participant had created a piece of furniture to their liking, which they could use themselves or sell to other camp residents.

"Besides the carpentry skills – which I never thought I would like so much – I now know how to stay focused and control my emotions," said Zina, a 20-

year-old girl who has been living in the camp for more than 4 years.

During the graduation ceremony, all the participants shared feedback about their experiences during the project and expressed interest in using their newly acquired carpentry skills in a potential carpentry workspace dedicated to the residents of the camp.

This project is part of a new initiative by IOM Iraq that integrates MHPSS and livelihood support. The programme is based on a needs assessment that suggests that integrating the two is both relevant to the Iraqi context of displacement and capable of simultaneously improving the emotional health and livelihood prospects of IDPs.

This project was made possible with support from the Government of Canada.

On the same occasion, IOM Iraq organized an exhibition in Hassan Sham U3 camp showcasing work created by IDPs during a variety of mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) activities including handicraft, stitching, sewing, painting, cooking and sweets-making courses.

These skills-building activities strengthen existing skills of

participants and foster a sense of belonging and purpose among them. Participants spend 4 days a week over one and a half months completing the courses – except for sweets-making and cooking courses, which are usually one week in length – and can keep what they make: dresses, trousers, shoes, homecooked meals, sweets. Each activity focuses on building one skill at a time. For example, many women participants have learned how to sew dresses for themselves and their daughters, showcased at the exhibition. The training courses also act as a vehicle for the provision of psychosocial support, creating a safe space for participants to share and reflect on different topics and learn from one another. In addition to group support, IOM Iraq provides individual counselling and other MHPSS services such as specialized mental health care to maintain or improve the emotional well-being of the IDPs.

IOM Iraq applies a community-based approach to provide comprehensive MHPSS services to the IDPs at Hassan Sham U3 cam.

These activities are made possible with the support of USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance.



IOM Iraq supports IDPs voluntary return operation



Baghdad, 22 September 2021 - During the ISIL crisis, more than 6 million Iraqis were displaced. Since the official end of the conflict, hundreds of thousands of families have returned to their areas of origin; it is estimated that nearly 1.2 million individuals continue to remain in displacement. Ongoing support is needed to end internal displacement and achieve durable solutions – including voluntary returns to areas of origin or relocation to other locations in Iraq for families unable or unwilling to return.

On 20 September, 372 people from 72 IDP families departed Jeddah Camp to return to their areas of origin in Erbil, Salah al-Din and Ninewa Governorates. This facilitated voluntary return operation, supported by IOM Iraq, in collaboration with the Ninewa Governorate authorities and Iraq's Ministry of Migration and Displacement, follows the return of 73 displaced families to their areas of origin in Anbar Governorate earlier

this month.

"After I graduated from university, ISIS entered our village near the city of Mosul. I had to flee, to leave my home and go to the camp. Life inside the camp was difficult, we faced immense challenges. On top of all the day-to-day challenges, I couldn't find a job despite being a university graduate," explained Ahmed Elyas, a resident of Jeddah camp, as he prepared to return home. "I registered my name for IOM Iraq's voluntary return program, and today I get to go back to my village. I managed to rebuild my destroyed house, and I will start giving voluntary lectures in one of the schools in my area."

Interested parties registered their intended destinations and expected barriers or concerns about returning. IOM Iraq staff worked closely with the families throughout the return process. IOM Iraq also collaborated with local authorities and humanitarian actors to ensure that the returnees were consistently informed about the

assistance available to them before departure and upon arrival at their destinations.

IOM Iraq, in collaboration with the Anbar Governorate authorities and Iraq's Ministry of Migration and Displacement, recently facilitated the return of 73 displaced families in Amriyat al Fallujah camp to their areas of origin in Anbar Governorate. Interested families registered their intended destinations and expected barriers or concerns. IOM Iraq staff worked closely with the families throughout the return process.

"I've been living here in Amriyat al Fallujah camp for the past seven years. I voluntarily registered myself and my family to return to my hometown of Garma. The process went smoothly, and the IOM team spared no efforts to help us" said one of the returnees.

IOM Iraq also collaborated with other humanitarian actors to ensure that the returnees were consistently informed about the assistance available to them before departure and upon arrival at their destinations.

This programme was made possible with support from the U.S. Department of State: Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration.



IOM Iraq is holding a literacy course for women in Sharya Camp



Duhok, 22 September 2021 - IOM Iraq is holding a literacy course for women in Sharya Camp, Duhok Governorate, at a safe space that also provides protection, mental health and various other services. 15 women from the camp are currently participating in the course, which is part of a range of recreational activities offered according to the needs and priorities of the community.

In addition to supporting the well-being of participants, these activities help the women, girls and their families and communities at large to build trust and feel more comfortable entering and using the space, thus making it easier for them to ask for help or counselling.

This literacy course is made possible with support from USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance.

UNICEF presented the U-Report project targeting young IDPs in Iraq

Baghdad, 21 September 2021 - UNICEF presented the U-Report project targeting young IDPs in Iraq at an online global event: Leave No One Behind: Building Strategies to Empower the Most At-Risk Internally Displaced.

Organized by United Nations OCHA, UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency IOM - UN Migration United Nations Development Programme - UNDP Major Group for Children and Youth and UNICEF the session focused on empowering the most vulnerable IDPs – especially children and youth. UNICEF stressed the importance of the participation of young IDPs in U-Report in Iraq to amplify their voices



and opinions to better address their needs.

Renewal of refugee's certificates made easy by UNHCR registration mobile units



Erbil, 25 September 2021 - In Koya-Erbil, Iranian refugees renew their refugee certificates as easy as one-two-three.

Refugees bring their expired certificates, get eye scan for verification, new certificate is issued.

The renewed refugee certificate is the first step in protection for refugees, including

renewing residencies, obtaining services, accessing education and healthcare for refugees and asylum seekers.

UNHCR registration mobile units reach remote locations in Erbil Governorate, making it easier for refugees to renew certificates. This saves time, money and efforts for refugees as they don't have to travel to Erbil city.

Internally displaced persons (IDP) living in Ranya-Sulaymaniyah, also receive legal assistance at the UNHCR mobile registration unit.

At the centre, they are met by lawyers from UNHCR's legal partners Heartland Alliance International-Iraq. The lawyers listen to their concerns, register their issues and hence IDPs begin to receive quality legal advice and representation for obtaining civil documentation.

UNHCR values the generous contribution by the EU Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid (ECHO) and The Swedish Development Aid Organization (SWEDO) that enables UNHCR to maintain this vital protection service for displaced Iraqis and returnees. Lack of awareness and the complexity of procedures remain key barriers faced by IDPs in accessing civil documentation, making such assistance critical.

IOM Iraq provided a range of health services to IDPs who were unable to receive care from their health providers prior to returning to their areas of origin

Baghdad, 29 September 2021 - Health is an essential dimension of the safety and dignity of voluntary returns. The migration process can expose individuals to a number of health risks, including perilous journeys; psychosocial stressors and abuses; nutritional deficiencies and changes in lifestyle; exposure to infectious diseases; limited access to prevention and quality health care; and interrupted care.

IOM Iraq recently supported the voluntary returns of 77 IDP families from Al-Mateen camp in Amriyat Al-

Fallujah, Anbar Governorate to their areas of origin. As a part of this program, IOM Iraq teams coordinated to conduct medical check-ups; treat acute illnesses; verify vaccination and nutritional status for children; and



provide health counselling, reproductive health services and chronic disease management for individuals who were unable to receive care from their health providers prior to returning.

This is important because it helps to minimize health risks during travel and reduces potential risks to receiving communities, such as the of spread of infectious diseases.

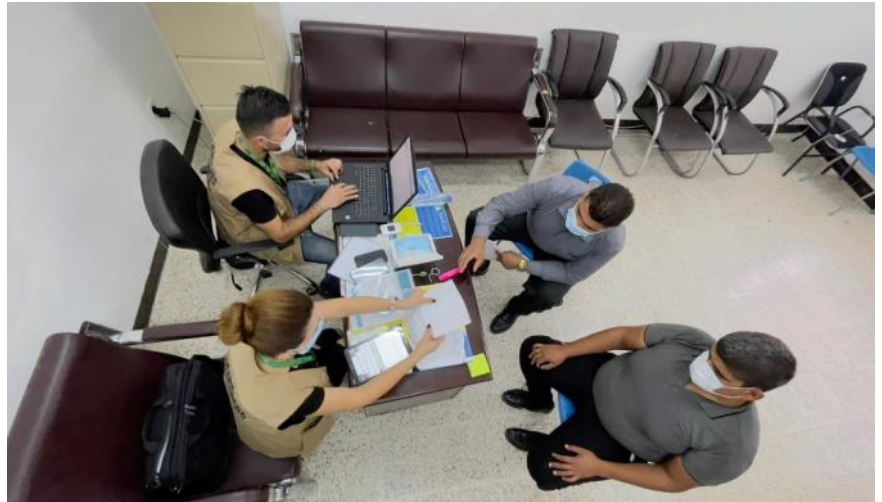
This activity is made possible with support from the U.S. Department of State: Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration.

UNHCR and the Ministry of Interior continue their cooperation on processing the civil documentation of Internally Displaced Persons

Erbil, 06 October 2021 - In cooperation with UNHCR, the Government of Iraq's Ministry of Interior conducted a mission last week to process the civil documentation of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) living in Erbil, the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

Processing their civil documentation in their area of origin can be challenging for IDPs, which could lead to limited access to basic services.

With the support of SWEDO - The Swedish Development Aid Organization, the one-week mission processed requests for civil IDs and Nationality certificates for over 3,500 IDPs.



Stabilization and Development

First opening of village dairy centers for milk collection, processing and marketing in Nineveh Governorate – Iraq

Nineveh, 26 August 2021 - For the purpose to complement the humanitarian efforts carried out by the United Nations in Nineveh Governorate, and within the framework of supporting income generation for returning families and local communities, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has opened new small/medium-scale village milk centers for collection, cooling, processing and marketing dairy products. Such activities are part of the project Support to agricultural livelihoods of rural and peri-urban returnees and communities in Nineveh Governorate, Iraq, funded by the European Union and implemented in close cooperation with Ministry of Agriculture (Nineveh Directorate of Agriculture). FAO project team and cadres of Nineveh Directorate participated to this event and in the presence of a large number of producers, milk collectors and local authorities.

FAO Representative in Iraq, Dr. Salah El Hajj Hassan, inaugurated, under the patronage of His Excellency the Minister of Agriculture, 8 new small/medium-scale village milk centers for collection, cooling, processing and marketing dairy products in areas of: 1) Tal Afar district (Zummar Sub-District, Al-Amaleh village), 2) Tal Kaif district (Al-Qusyayt village) and 3) Mosul District (Hammam Al-Alil sub-district:



Hammam Al-Alil Center, Tal Abyadh and Qabar Al-Abd villages). Dr Salah during the ceremony explained that the project is a good example of using a holistic approach to value chain development in the livestock sector and job creation within the small-scale private sector and real empowerment of rural women, by contributing to improved milk productivity, hygiene and overall food safety.

At the end of the opening ceremonies, a meeting was held with large number of farmers in Hammam Al-Alil sub-district, in which the notables of the district, local authorities and representatives from the Ministry of Agriculture (Nineveh Directorate) discussed challenges facing the agricultural sector in their region in terms of crop/vegetable and livestock

sectors. The FAO team also reviewed all the interventions that the organization undertakes in the region to support small farmers and upgrading the agricultural sector for better productivity and profitability.

Finally and on the sidelines of the meeting, the President of the Local Union of Agricultural and Cooperative Societies – Hammam Al-Alil Branch, thanked FAO and the EU for the support provided to improve the agriculture sector by restoring agricultural systems, increasing agricultural growth and generating employment opportunities; then he presented shields on behalf of farmers to FAO Representative in Iraq, Dr. Salah El Hajj Hassan and FAO International Experts Dr. Chedly Kayouli and Dr. Nakd Khamis.

Running dry: water scarcity threatens lives and development in Iraq

Baghdad, 29 August 2021- Nearly 3 out of 5 children in Iraq have no access to safely managed water services and less than half of all schools in the country have access to basic water risking children’s health, nutrition, cognitive development, and future livelihoods.

The MENA region is reported to be the most water-scarce region in the world. Nearly 66 million people in the region lack basic sanitation and very low proportions of wastewater are adequately treated according to a new UNICEF report titled ‘Running Dry: the impact of water scarcity on children in the Middle East and North Africa’.

The report, released during World Water Week, highlights key drivers behind water scarcity in the region and Iraq including rising agricultural demand and the expansion of irrigated land using aquifers. While globally, agriculture accounts for an average of 70 per cent of water use, it is more than 80 per cent in the region.

“In Iraq, the level of water scarcity is alarming, children cannot develop and thrive to their full potential without water,” said Sheema SenGupta, UNICEF Representative in Iraq. “It is time to take action on climate change and guarantee access to safe water for every child” she added.

Rising food demand, urbanisation, poor water management as well as climate change have combined to threaten

children, the poor and the marginalised.

While not the sole reason for water scarcity, climate change results in less rain for agriculture and the deterioration of the quality of freshwater reserves due to the backflow of saline water coming from the Arabian Gulf into freshwater aquifers and increased pollution concentrations. In Iraq, the 2020-2021 rainfall season was the second driest in last 40 years, caused reduction of water flow in Tigris and Euphrates by 29% and 73% respectively.

UNICEF will continue to support the federal and regional governments, local partners, civil society, and the private sector to address the vulnerability of water resources in the Middle East and North Africa, including to:

- Create a robust enabling environment with strong national policy and regulatory systems that address scarcity, including over-extraction of groundwater, water accounting and data analysis.
- Work with civil society, especially youth as agents of change, on the value of water and water conservation.
- Initiate climate change response plans, incorporate water scarcity as a priority component and allocate sufficient national budget to address water scarcity.
- Create coordination groups

between key stakeholders such as municipalities, water, environment, health, agriculture, energy, and finance), national academic institutions, sectoral actors including international community representatives to support on policy revisions, and increase of technical capacity

• Support capacity building of key water sector actors, including regulatory bodies water utilities in provision of clean drinking water especially to highly impacted communities through upgrading ageing infrastructure, developing sustainable operation, and reducing water wastage.



From Italy to Iraq: new Peer-to-Peer partnership to improve local waste management in Thi-Qar Governorate



Thi-Qar, 30 August 2021 - Iraq is at a crucial moment of change to its approach in combatting climate change, having recently finalised the final draft for its Nationally Determined Contribution to the Paris agreement through the Iraqi Ministry of Health and Environment, and with the support

of the UNDP. Within this context comes this new Peer-to-Peer project between the municipality of Prato, Italy and the Governorate of Thi-Qar, Iraq, aimed at boosting Iraq’s capacity to manage local waste. The project, which was developed around the peers’ selected

area of cooperation, has kicked off recently with a virtual meeting between the two.

Funded by the European Union (EU) and implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the project uses a participatory approach that allows the peers to exchange best practices and lessons learned, and address the gaps identified during the assessment phase. Through a series of interventions and activities, the cooperation will result in an ad hoc Waste Management Action Plan tailored to the needs of Thi-Qar and a Pilot Project to be implemented in cooperation with Prato Municipality and PIN Prato (Prato University Campus of the University of Florence) Prato is a municipality in Italy, which is one of the leading countries today in recycling and waste management. The municipality itself has a long history in

From Italy to Iraq: new Peer-to-Peer partnership... (continued)

recycling, and has honed its techniques over the past century, making it a very vital partner to Thi-Qar in that field.

The kick-off meeting represented the landmark of a process undertaken between the peers over the past months, which will come to realisation with the start of the implementation phase.

The enthusiasm shown by the peers

during this kick-off meeting reflects their willingness to commit to implementing this project that will benefit the municipality of Thi-Qar majorly, and develop a mutual greater understanding of local needs while increasing the capacity of the local authorities to address challenges in the waste management field.

The Peer-To-Peer project is a series of

collaborations between Iraqi Governorates and European local authorities, aimed at the development of infrastructure, services and the betterment of Iraqi livelihoods.

This initiative is implemented under the programme Supporting Recovery and Stability in Iraq through Local Development, funded by the EU and implemented by UNDP Iraq.

Bringing life back to Kirkuk's farms

Kirkuk, 2 September 2021 - Hawija district in Kirkuk has a rich agricultural history. It was known for its booming vegetable, fruit, corn, wheat, and cotton produce that catered to most of Iraq. Though, when ISIL arrived in 2014, farmers and their families fled for their lives, leaving behind their cultivated lands and homes.

The brutal conflict left behind destroyed irrigation systems, damaged equipment, burnt farms, and decimated livestock. It was estimated that this caused over US\$ 12.6 million worth of damage to the agricultural sector across Kirkuk.

In 2017, when farmers started to return after the liberation from ISIL, they were met with absolute devastation. Supporting the farmers of Kirkuk to build back their farmlands, UNDP's Funding Facility for Stabilization is rehabilitating critical agricultural infrastructure.

The support includes a comprehensive package of rehabilitating Hawija Agricultural Department's critical facilities, such as testing laboratories, management buildings, a river regulator, irrigation systems, and three warehouses. This will help boost Hawija's crop production, storing, and distribution while ensuring quality control and reducing cost.

How does this directly support the farmers' efforts to revive their farmlands? We speak to four of them - Ihsan, Mohammed, Sabah, Rockan - who are fighting to survive, struggling to live in better conditions, and hoping for a better future for their families.

"ISIL turned my life upside down. I fled for my life, leaving my farm and all that I loved behind in 2015. I went to Kirkuk city and worked as a taxi driver. I still remember how my life changed overnight, from owning a prosperous farming business to nothing," says 45-year-old Mohammed Khudher. He owns 25 acres of land and has been a farmer for over 25 years. Originally from the Al Riyadh district,



he is married to two wives.

"After the fighting, my well was damaged, greenhouse destroyed, and cultivated land burnt. We need support with fertilizers and soil to revive the land's health." The lack of access to water is slowing Mohammed's effort to build back. "I only produced five tons of corn last year because of the shortage of water."

"The rehabilitation of the warehouse will directly benefit my crop production as I now have a safe place I can maze and dry the corn. This is also going to encourage farmers to produce more and not worry about storage."

"My father started farming in 2001. We suffered a great deal under ISIL. We had to flee for our lives, leaving everything behind, including our clothing, land, and belongings," says 18-year-old Sabah Saad Muhammad. They fled to a family friend's residence in Tal Hussein, Kirkuk.

Sabah owns 30 acres of farmland in Hawija. Born into a family of 16, he joined the rest of his siblings to cultivate the family's farm three years ago. "When we returned in 2017, we found most of our land burnt and equipment stolen. For instance, our water pump and fertilizers were stolen while our wells were left contaminated." They grow wheat and corn.

The warehouse facilities will support the processing and storing of Sabah's

cultivated corn and wheat. "Before this, we did not cultivate as much since there was no place to safely store them. But today, now that we have access to the facility, we look forward to increasing our productivity." Sabah and his family harvest over 30 tons of corn every month.

"I encourage farmers to come back home and start reviving their land. It is the only way for us to boost the region's economy. I want to assure the other farmers that it is safe to cultivate now."

The rehabilitation of three warehouses is completed and provides facilities for corn mazing, hulling, and drying. It is directly helping 4,000 farmers and their families. Today, the farmers are back to business with a source of income, as crop produce is stored properly in the warehouses.

The rehabilitation of the R1 River Regulator will provide water to over 288,000 acres of land across Kirkuk, Salah al-Din, and Diyala. This is built to regulate the water levels fed into irrigation canals that eventually reach the farmlands.

The comprehensive agriculture package is implemented by UNDP's Funding Facility for Stabilization with funding from the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), provided through KFW Development Bank. It will directly benefit over 40,000 farmers and their families.

UN and Government of Iraq sign the updated Cooperation Framework for Sustainable Development to support prosperity and development



Baghdad, 5 September 2021 - The Government of Iraq and the United Nations have signed the updated version of the Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2020-2024, which will guide the work of the UN system in Iraq.

The signing ceremony for the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) was held in the Ministry of Planning and signed by Dr. Khaled Battal Al-Najm, Minister of Planning on behalf of the Government of Iraq, and Ms. Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano, United Nations Resident Coordinator, on behalf of the UN in Iraq.

The UNSDCF was developed in close cooperation with the Government, following a consultation process with

NGOs, the private sector, civil society and academia. It will assist the Government to accelerate developmental and social transformation across Iraq as outlined in the National Development Plan (2018-2022), Iraq Vision 2030, UN Socio-Economic Response Plan to COVID-19, the National Plan on Displacement in Iraq, and the White Paper for Economic Reform.

The UNSDCF was updated to include the impact COVID-19 and the increased need for durable solutions in order to end displacement.

“The fruitful partnership between the Government and the United Nations Country Team is formalized with the signing of the UNSDCF and is an acknowledgment of the UN’s efforts in

supporting Iraq’s development priorities and efforts to ensure that those who are most vulnerable are not left behind,” said Ms. Vojáčková-Sollorano.

The revised UNSDCF works towards the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals through its five strategic priority areas:

- Achieving social cohesion, social protection, and social inclusion to create a fair and inclusive society for all Iraqis.
 - Growing the economy for all Iraqis.
 - Promoting effective, inclusive, accountable and efficient institutions and services at all levels.
 - Promoting natural resource and disaster risk management, and climate change resilience to achieve a better, safer and more sustainable future for all.
 - Achieving dignified, safe and voluntary durable solutions to displacement in Iraq.
- In all its work, UN agencies will put greater emphasis on respect for human rights, gender equality and inclusion, empowerment of women and girls, as well as of marginalized and vulnerable populations, including displaced and refugee populations. These outcomes will only be achieved through close partnership with the government and other key stakeholders.

WFP resilience projects respond to water shortages in Iraq

Baghdad, 6 September 2021 – The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) has expanded its resilience-building programme across Salah al-Din governorate north of Baghdad, to respond to growing concerns about the lower than usual rainfall in Iraq. This year has seen the second lowest rainfall in 40 years in the country.

WFP’s livelihoods work, implemented with local communities, the Government of Iraq and NGO partners, is helping over 130,000 vulnerable people across the country in Salah al-Din and also Anbar, Basra, Maysan, Ninewa and Thi-Qar.

“Climate change is affecting Iraq, which already has a heavy post-conflict burden and is also grappling with the effects of COVID-19 pandemic. Together with the Government of Iraq and our partners, WFP is working to help affected communities become self-sufficient, so that everyone can meet

their food needs,” said WFP Iraq’s Representative Ally-Raza Qureshi. “Our partnership in areas such as rural Salah al-Din is helping vulnerable families secure sustainable incomes by developing key skills and providing them with the necessary tools. This helps them get through times of hardship.”

Traditionally, Iraq – “the land between two rivers” – had been able to meet its water needs, so the current water shortage is of particular concern. Temperatures are also hitting record highs; last year saw Baghdad’s highest temperature ever of 52 degrees Celsius. WFP’s assessments revealed that the 2021 rainfall season has been below average, particularly in the northern governorates and Kurdistan Region. This could impact the final yield of the two major crops; wheat and barley.

WFP’s May surveys noted that 8 percent of people in Ninewa and Kirkuk governorates have insufficient food consumption, twice as many as the 4

percent national average. Similarly, 13.4 percent of people in Ninewa reported employing negative coping strategies – such as borrowing money or eating less food – above the 7.5 percent national average. WFP continues to monitor the situation closely, particularly the impact on food security.

Last month, Qureshi presented his credentials to H.E. Dr Ali Shamran, Head of the Protocol Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Baghdad. Qureshi joins the Iraq team following a long career in development and also the private sector. He is passionate about combating climate change.

Both Shamran and Qureshi reaffirmed WFP’s and the Government of Iraq’s commitment to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2: Zero Hunger through effective social protection, and durable solutions including resilience-building and livelihoods for vulnerable families, working together for Iraq’s development.

A symposium at the University of Tikrit focused on Makhoul Dam and its potential impact

Tikrit, 7 September 2021 - The NGO Liwan organized a symposium today at the University of Tikrit, focused on Makhoul Dam and its potential impact. The dam's boundaries extend into both Salah al-Din and Kirkuk Governorates; while it is a highly strategic project which will provide a large water reservoir, it will also displace thousands of families, inundate agricultural land, and flood the area's cultural heritage landmarks – including important archaeological sites that have yet to be excavated.

The symposium was moderated by specialists and experts from universities in Tikrit and Kirkuk, as well as representatives from Liwan who presented recommendations on how to best manage the humanitarian and archaeological implications of the dam. The speakers covered topics related to displacement, water management, livelihoods, archaeological preservation and more.



Liwan has been working in the concerned areas to raise awareness and solicit community feedback on needs and challenges, and community members from the villages which will be affected were present during the symposium to voice their concerns and ask questions about the dam's construction.

A second event was hosted on 9 September for archaeological

authorities and community representatives in Al-Zab — a town in the Kirkuk side of the dam, whose cultural and archaeological sites may also be affected by its construction.

These events and Liwan's project to help ensure community consultation and engagement in planning around the Makhoul Dam project are supported by the Government of Australia and IOM Iraq.

Japan and UNOPS restore access to critical community services in Diyala

Baghdad, 7 September 2021 – Together with the representatives from the Government of Iraq, Al Mansouriah Municipality, and local community leaders, UNOPS marked the successful completion of the “Restoring Access to Critical Community Services in Diyala Governorate” project which aimed at improving the living conditions of the returnees in the Diyala governorate.

Funded by the Government of Japan and implemented by UNOPS, the project rehabilitated 12 internal roads and installed 200 new solar streetlights to restore access to public facilities and schools and improve safety and security of the communities. UNOPS delivered 582 garbage containers in support of the municipality's capacity to manage solid waste, and carried out a specialized training for municipal staff on effective use of resources in waste management.

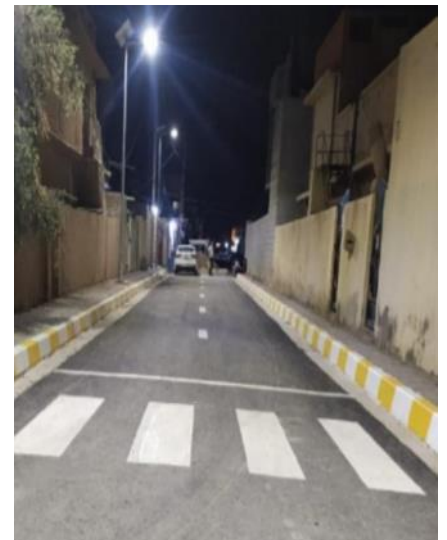
Congratulating on the successful completion of the project, H.E. Mr. SUZUKI Kotaro, Ambassador of Japan to Iraq, said “With regard to IDP issues, Japan always puts its importance on durable solutions through improving the living conditions of the returnees. I sincerely hope that the project will pave a solid path for stable and prosperous lives for the returnees in the Diyala Governorate. I praise UNOPS's tireless efforts to

support IDPs for their safe and satisfactory returns.”

Mr. Juma'a Salman Al Jabouri, Director of Al Mansouriah Municipality, delivered a speech on behalf of the Directorate of Municipalities of Diyala: “The people, particularly the returnees, have suffered for a long period of time from lack of access to basic municipal services. The deteriorated transport infrastructure and solid waste management are some of the main basic services that are urgently in need of improvement. We reiterate our gratitude to the government and people of Japan and to UNOPS for their support”.

“Through our continued partnership with Japan, UNOPS has delivered projects that have addressed critical infrastructure needs across Iraq. We are so proud to benefit over 100,000 men, women, girls and boys living in and returning to Diyala through interventions that facilitate improved access to basic services, such as transport, waste management, and protection”, said UNOPS Director of Multi-Country Office, Mr. Muhammad Usman Akram.

UNOPS has been active in Iraq since 2004, delivering close to 122 projects worth USD 330 million, in support of Iraq's humanitarian aid and



development priorities. Since 2016, UNOPS partnership with the Government of Japan has supported Iraq's recovery efforts in the areas of critical infrastructure, security, and capacity building.

The “Restoring Access to Critical Community Services in Diyala Governorate” project supported Iraq's efforts towards the realization of Agenda 2030, contributing to the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 7: Affordable and Clean Energy and SDG 9: Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure.

UNDP partners with Toyota to support youth employment and sustainable development in Iraq

Erbil, 7 September 2021 - A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has been signed today between Toyota and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Iraq to support youth employment and advance the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The three-year MoU focuses on supporting vulnerable communities affected by crisis including internally displaced persons, returnees, refugees and host communities.

Through the partnership, Toyota Iraq will provide vocational training, including apprenticeships and on-the-job training, followed by an opportunity for employment with Toyota Iraq. The training will advance the skills of young people and develop their professional capacity in three fields – auto-technician development, warehouse management and customer relations.

The collaboration is also designed to advance the implementation and mainstreaming of Iraq's 2030 agenda and its SDGs at both national and sub-national levels, and promote active engagement of young people, women,

and people with disabilities in the development process, in partnership with the private sector.

"Today's MoU signing reaffirms our commitment to supporting young Iraqis and other vulnerable communities who, due to multiple crises, including decades of conflict and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, have missed out on critical opportunities for long-term, sustainable employment. It also signifies a crucial step forward for achieving Agenda 2030 in Iraq. We're extremely grateful to Toyota for our ongoing partnership and its continued support to empowering young people and building a peaceful and prosperous

Iraq," says Resident Representative of UNDP Iraq, Zena Ali Ahmad.

"This is part of our participation in the activity for Sustainable Development Goals and Corporate Social Responsibility, not only to share our expertise and technology with Iraq youth, so that they can gain equal opportunities for employment, but also to add more area of collaboration to serve Iraqi society", said Toyota Iraq CEO, Yutaka Ezaki.

This MoU is framed under UNDP Iraq's Stabilization pillar through its Iraq Crisis Response and Resilience Programme (ICRRP).



Fighting unemployment with proper data collection

Nineveh, 08 September 2021 - Asuda Organization partnered with a volunteer group "Volunteerism Community Based Support Group in Nineveh Governorate" and strengthened their skills in data

collection to contribute in developing and conducting the unemployment assessment tool in the region. Data collected by the group will be provided to Asuda analyze the current economic situation in Nineveh.

This activity was done under project "Women, Peace and Security in the Arab States Project - Phase II" funded by the government of Finland and in partnership with UN Women.

Increasing skills and capacities for women's meaningful participation

Baghdad, 07 September 2021 - Baghdad Women Association enhanced the capacities of women and girls to develop business plans and manage their finances through a cash-for-work training. The training was done for two groups at the listening, Psychosocial and Legal Counseling Center in Duhok where 32 women participated from Duhok and Kabarto camps.

After completed training 32 women began working - cleaning, planting and painting, by following COVID-19 instructions in workplaces.

The women workplaces were divided in various areas in Duhok governorate through coordinating with the Kurdistan Women Union / Duhok, the General Directorate Social Welfare and

the Shariya Women Union, in addition, at Kabarto 1 & 2 camps by coordinating with the administration of each camp, for a period of 40 working days. The main aim is enhancing the ability of women and girls to work and expanding the circle of women financial self-reliance in a way that guarantees them moving forward towards a better future.

The activity was done under project "Women, Peace and Security in the Arab states- Phase II" funded by the government of Finland and in partnership with UN Women.

UNICEF continues to support vulnerable groups in Iraq with special attention to people with disabilities, and female-headed households. In cooperation with Sorouh for



Sustainable Development Foundation and thanks to the Canada's International Development – Global Affairs Canada and Germany (Auswärtiges Amt), a sewing course was organized, reaching more than 300 women and girls as part of a life skills support program to improve their economic situation.

Senior Government and UN officials attend an Inception Workshop of FAO's Project: "Restoration and strengthening the resilience of agri-food systems in Southern Iraq"



Baghdad, 9 September 2021 - In the presence of H.E Eng. Mohammed Kareem AlKhafaji, Minister of Agriculture and other senior government and UN officials, The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in Iraq organized an Inception Workshop for the EU -funded project: "Restoration and strengthening the resilience of agri-food systems in Southern Iraq".

This project aims at contributing to the Iraqi economy by improving the agriculture sector in southern Iraq, creating sustainable job opportunities to the rural poor households and achieving a more resilient food system. More specifically, the project targets poor smallholder farmers and landless rural households in Basra, Missan and Thi-Qar Governorates and improve their agricultural productivity and income generation in priority value chains such as vegetables, dairy (buffalo), animal fodder, and date palm while enhancing land and water resources and bio-diversity. The project is managed and implemented by FAO in cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Water Resources, Ministry of Health and Environment and Ministry of Planning and local authorities.

Dr. Salah ElHajj Hassan - FAO Representative to Iraq – said: "I'm pleased to see more attention for the south, which is traditionally the poorest part of Iraq. Based on our work undertaken during the start-up phase, we see great potentials for economic growth and greater prosperity among farmers and micro enterprises. Let me take this opportunity to thank the EU for its generous financial support for turning these ideas into reality and to thank the line ministries partners in this project as well as local governments of the three-targeted governorates". Dr. Salah confirmed that FAO will make all possible efforts with all partners to make real positive changes in the livelihoods of the targeted rural families, create more dynamics with the public and private sectors and enhance climate resilience by promoting sustainable value chain development practices.

After an initial project launch in Basra earlier this year, this workshop provides an opportunity for greater awareness among stakeholders of the proposed outputs and an opportunity to strengthen partnerships, and discuss complementarity with other projects that aim to strengthen agri-food systems in the country.

This project is part of the "EU Action Document for Support to Governance and Sustainable Job creation in Iraq." Several international partners (FAO, GIZ, ILO, IOM, ITC, and UNESCO) are collaborating to improve selected value chains more holistically.

The Head of Cooperation at the EU Delegation to Iraq, Ms. Barbara Egger, said: "Addressing diversification of the economy and reducing unemployment are key priorities of the EU intervention in Iraq. This project is part of a wider EU programme approach that addresses several constraints along the agricultural value chain. With this approach, we will target key Iraqi institutions to improve their capacity to deliver public services, and also target the supply and demand dimension of sustainable job creation. The EU is proud to support the agricultural sector in the South of Iraq, and in particular the rural areas where unemployment is even higher than in urban areas and our support is dearly needed".

Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano, the United Nations Secretary-General's Deputy Special Representative for Iraq and Resident Coordinator, noted that she had recently met two Iraqi farmers – a husband and wife – in Basra. "Before, Ahmed and Zahraa were not able to produce tomatoes because of droughts and a lack of water. But now, thanks to this EU-funded FAO project, which uses greenhouses and new technology, they can produce enough tomatoes for their entire village." She added, "The UN has increased its footprint in the south, because we recognize the region's pressing needs. And we're ready to step up and do even more."

The workshop was followed by the Project Steering Committee endorsement of the work plan.

Supporting Iraq's local economic development through sustainable energy solutions – new projects launched

Erbil, 9 September 2021 - Three innovative projects aimed at promoting sustainable energy solutions were launched today in partnership with the European Union and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Iraq and the governorates of Erbil, Sulaymaniyah, and Duhok.

The projects, which were designed by the individual governorates based on

their strategic plans, come at a time where many governorates in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) face environmental sustainability challenges, and are seeking sustainable alternative sources of energy, in line with their commitment to reducing Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions according to the developed Sustainable Energy Action Plan

(SEAP) in 2018, under Supporting Recovery and Stability in Iraq Through Local Development programme, funded by the EU and implemented by UNDP. The project to be implemented in Erbil project will include the installation of solar panels for water pumps in 45 rural areas, as well as 100 solar water heaters in farms to be used for agricultural production. These will

Supporting Iraq's local economic development through sustainable energy solutions – new projects launched *(continued)*

reduce costs for production.

In Sulaymaniyah, conventional streetlamps that consume a large amount of electricity due to the usage of high-pressure lamps, will be replaced with 10,000 energy efficient LED lamps that will result in a significant reduction of governorate's energy bill.

In Dohuk, the governorate is turning its attention to the enormous potential of solar power and will install a mini solar park with capacity of up to 2 Mw. This will be the first introduction of solar supply in Iraq and will also support a potential Public Private Partnership (PPP) and serve as a bankable pilot for major future investments in the project.

Ms. Zena Ali Ahmad, Resident Representative of UNDP in Iraq said: "Providing renewable energy solutions to the Kurdistan Region of Iraq is critical to addressing many of its environmental challenges. These projects are the first initiatives for the region, pioneering its transition from traditional sources of power to clean energy, and showcases the individual governorates' commitment to a cleaner, greener Iraq."

The Ambassador to the European Union to Iraq, Mr. Ville Varjola, mentioned "the launch of three projects is the result of committed and innovative work under the leadership of the Governor of Erbil, Governor Dohuk and Governor of Sulaymaniyah to address local priorities but in parallel to take steps towards green economy and reduction of CO2 emissions. Both are high priorities for Iraq as well as for the EU cooperation with Iraq. I congratulate these achievements and look forward to speedy implementation to the benefit of the people of Erbil, Dohuk and



Sulaymaniyah."

Mr. Omed Xoshnaw, Governor of Erbil: "This project enhances our governorate's efforts in adapting alternative and advanced methods to generate electricity, such as solar energy. The project, supported by the United Nations Development Programme and funded by the European union, aims at benefiting from natural resources and advance the development of power generation, development of agriculture sector, and encourage farmers to increase local production in the region.

This project is a new confirmation to the importance and the effectiveness of the partnership between the Governorate of Erbil and UNDP and the coordination with local communities and private sectors."

Dr. Haval Abubakir, Governor of Sulaymaniyah: "This project was nominated according to Sulaymaniyah (Sleman) Governorate's Strategic Plan for Renewable Energy and Environment, approved by European Union and UNDP, in cooperation with UNDP, Planning and Electricity Directorates in the governorate.

It is an important project for lighting the main streets, reducing electricity consumption and CO2 emission, saving huge expenses for the public treasury, providing job opportunities and contemporary development for the governorate, directly benefiting citizens."

Mr. Ali Tatar, Governor of Duhok: "We appreciate the active role of UNDP to serve the people of Duhok, from refugees and internally displaced people to the local communities for years.

We are particularly grateful for the initiation of the first project on renewable energy, which is the solar power project in our governorate that will protect and sustain a healthy environment"

The projects reaffirm the governorates' commitment to developing clean energy solutions, in addition to UNDP's and the EU's continuous support to projects that address climate change and a green economy in Iraq, under Supporting Recovery and Stability in Iraq Through Local Development programme, funded by the EU and implemented by UNDP.

Honoring the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in Iraq

Baghdad, 9 September 2021 - His Excellency the Minister of Agriculture Mr. Muhammad Karim Al- Khafaji honored Dr Salah El-hajj Hassan FAO Representative in Iraq and his team of experts in appreciation of their distinguished and outstanding efforts supporting farmers' livelihoods in Iraq. During the inauguration of an inception workshop of the EU-funded FAO project: "Restoration and strengthening the resilience of agri-food systems in Southern Iraq", organized on 9 September 2021 in Baghdad, the Minister honored the successful work undertaken by FAO in Ninewa Governorate and handed over certificates of appreciation. The Minister said he valued the efforts

made by FAO to help smallholder farmers, especially in the liberated areas after ISIS was defeated, and stressed the great role played by the organization in order to advance the reality of the targeted governorates and improve livelihoods, food and water security by supporting agriculture, both animal and plant sectors.

H.E Mr. Al-Khafaji said: "These efforts help raise the capacity of smallholder breeders and farmers and develop their skills through inputs capacity-building and providing the necessary support to improve their livelihoods with their efforts and experience and to achieve self-sufficiency with continuous work and concerted efforts".

The special ceremony was further attended by senior officials, including Dr Jasim AL-Falahi, Minister of Environment; Ms Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano - Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq and Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator; Ms Barbara Egger - Head of Cooperation at the EU Delegation to the Republic of Iraq; and Mr. Fadel Mozan, representative of the Ministry of Water Resources.

A number of Ninawa farmers and beneficiaries of the EU-funded project in Ninewa were present and offered a taste of their high-quality dairy products. The lessons learned in Ninewa will be replicated in southern Iraq.

New study to help strengthen Iraq's private sector



Baghdad, 12 September 2021 - The Ministry of Planning's Central Statistical Organization (CSO) in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and with funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has today launched a study on Micro, Small, and Medium-Enterprises (MSMEs) in Iraq. The study provides an evidence base to inform policies and strategies aimed at creating sustainable livelihoods, including through MSMEs' development.

Funded by USAID, the Mixed Formal and Informal Micro, Small, and Medium-sized Enterprises Survey covered the three governorates of Baghdad, Basra, and Nineveh. It is designed to build a comprehensive analysis on the MSMEs structures, trends, business dynamics, challenges and opportunities through up-to-date, reliable, relevant market information and analysis.

Some of the main findings of the survey highlight the low participation of females in MSME ownership (5%); the increasing challenges faced by MSMEs due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic; and the weak networking

structures and business clustering of MSMEs.

The Minister of Planning, Dr. Khalid Battal Al-Najm, reiterated his support for the initiative.

"In light of the directions of the Iraqi government, represented by the Ministry of Planning to address and reform the economy, activate the private sector, and enable it to actively contribute to the economy in all its sectors, it was necessary to identify the size of this sector and its needs, and the level of small and medium enterprises for workers in the informal sector," says Dr. Al-Najm.

"In cooperation with UNDP and with funding from USAID, the CSO carried out a survey covering individuals working in the private sector with the aim of providing economic indicators that will guide planning for the advancement of the private sector and development of MSMEs. The study covered multiple areas, including financing and challenges faced with regards to loans and the use of modern technology, as understanding the participation rate of women entrepreneurs," adds Dr. Al-Najm.

His Excellency valued the great

support provided by UNDP Iraq and USAID, in implementing and the completion of this important study, which it is hoped to include all governorates in the next stage, and expressed his will for further cooperation, in various fields.

John Cardenas, Mission Director of USAID Iraq emphasized the critical role MSMEs play in building local economies. "MSMEs are the lifeblood of any healthy economy. They also offer untapped opportunities for youth, women, and vulnerable populations to actively participate in the market and contribute to the country's economic growth and long-term stability. We are proud to be partnering with our Iraqi government counterparts and the private sector to enact critical initiatives and reform projects that empower MSME growth and elevate their role in the Iraqi economy," says Mr. Cardenas.

"MSMEs in Iraq face significant challenges. As we continue to grapple with the social and economic impacts of COVID-19 in Iraq, this study once again highlights the importance of the private sector in Iraq to create much-needed sustainable employment opportunities, especially for vulnerable groups. This critical work could not have been possible without our strong partnership with the Ministry of Planning, and the generous support from our longstanding partner USAID," added Zena Ali Ahmad, Resident Representative of UNDP Iraq.

The survey is part of UNDP Iraq's Funding Facility for Economic Reform programme – designed by UNDP Iraq to promote sustainable poverty-centered economic reform in the country, and with the generous support of the American people through USAID.

The European Union supports UN-Habitat to expand basic services to poor neighborhoods in Basra City

Basra, 13 September 2021 - The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound effect on poor communities. The last 18 months have highlighted the importance of access to safe potable water, sanitation, waste management, and hygienic conditions to prevent and protect human health during disease outbreaks. Nearly 1.8 billion people world-wide live in inadequate housing, in overcrowded conditions with lack of access to clean water. The absence of basic services leaves families with increased exposure to disease outbreaks, including COVID-19.



On 13 September, UN-Habitat, in cooperation with the European Union, brought together the Governor's

Assistant for Administrative Affairs, Governor's Assistant for Labor and Social Affairs Departments and Head of

EU supports UN-Habitat to expand basic...(continued)

DOLSA, the Head of Basra Municipality and representatives from the directorates of Water, Sewage, Planning, Physical Planning, Electricity, Labour and Social Affairs, Health and Environment to discuss upgrading under-serviced neighbourhoods in Basra city, within which some of the poorest families in Basra live as well as provide vocational training and waste management solutions. The purpose of the meeting was to confirm two of the three neighbourhoods within which UN-Habitat will work for the coming three years. The committee has agreed on the general approach to the project and two of the three locations, Al-Ehrrar and Al-Kubyah neighbourhoods, and a third will soon be identified.

Mr. Arab Al-Jabri, Governor's Assistant for Labor and Social Affairs Departments and Head of DOLSA said in his opening remarks, "With the help of this organisation, we can find solutions for these crises, creating work opportunities, in addition to other problems. We are calling on the local authorities, and Water, Municipality, Environment, Health, to help them move forward in their aim. We wish them success in elevating the problems, most important the unemployment among the young, the housing crises, and infrastructure. We hope all Directorates respond to their needs."

In her opening remarks, Ms. Barbara Egger, Head of Cooperation for the

European Union Delegation to Iraq, said, "Through this project, the European Union is providing critical urban planning support to help the governorate of Basra, in consultation with the people of Basra, to oversee, prioritize, plan and implement priority interventions for improved service delivery and generation of employment. The ownership and leadership of the Basra Governorate, Basra municipality and various technical directorates is key, and we continue to count on sustained close collaboration. We look forward to the next steps in implementation and to the continued focus on sustainability and community engagement."

UN-Habitat has worked in Basra for many years, both through normative and operational projects. In 2007, UN-Habitat supported the development and implementation of new laws, policies and programme for solid waste management. More recently, in 2019, UN-Habitat implemented a pilot project in Al Qibla informal settlement to improve living conditions and in 2020, conducted a comprehensive urban assessment of Basra City and published the Basra Urban Profile. One of the key findings of the Basra Urban Profile shows that upgrading of basic services in Basra would considerably reduce environmental problems faced in the city.

"Under this project, UN-Habitat will implement a number of activities that

contributes to improve the overall living conditions and environment in Basra city. We very much look forward to working very closely with our counterparts in Basra Governorate, Municipality, and relevant Directorates and count on your support to ensure success of this very important project," said Mr. Wael Al-Ashhab, Head of UN-Habitat Iraq, during the meeting.

Mr. Moeen Saleh Al-Hassan, Governor's Assistant for Administrative Affairs, said at the close of the meeting, "I reiterate my appreciation to the European Union for their time and effort and welcome any project by the European Union. We thank the European Union for working in Basra, and we will work together to ensure the success of the project."

The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) would like to thank the European Union for supporting the project titled "Increasing Access to Employment Opportunities for Vulnerable Urban Population in Basra City in Response to the COVID-19 Crisis". This project will provide support for vulnerable populations in underserved neighbourhoods in Basra City which aim to increase access to employment opportunities in basic services and waste management sectors for unemployed youth, women and vulnerable urban population.



DSRSG/HC/RC Vojáčková-Sollorano, with the Governor of Ninewa and the Mayor of Mosul, launched an Area-Based Coordination (ABC) initiative

Mosul, 16 September 2021 - The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq/Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano, with the Governor of Ninewa and the Mayor of Mosul, has launched an Area-Based Coordination (ABC) initiative. Through the ABC, local government works with humanitarian and development actors to ensure no Iraqi is left behind. The Resident Coordinator led the discussion to highlight the urgency of responding to current needs and efforts to support IDPs, returnees and host communities and working closely with the government to identify solutions to displacement. The United Nations in Iraq reiterates the continuous support

to Iraq in achieving the objectives of the Cooperation Framework in

achieving dignified, safe and voluntary durable solutions to displacement.



UNDP restores essential services in western Anbar



Haditha, 15 September 2021 – Six new facilities providing basic services to 230,000 residents in western Anbar have officially opened thanks to a partnership between the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Iraq, the Governorate of Anbar, and the international community.

The facilities, completed under UNDP's Funding Facility for Stabilization (FFS), were inaugurated as part of a UNDP Iraq visit to Heet, Haditha, Anah, Rawa, Qaim and Rummanah led by Resident Representative Ms. Zena Ali Ahmad. They included:

- Al-Mohamadi Municipality Building, Heet (funded by USAID)
- Al-Baghdady Municipality Building, Heet (funded by USAID)
- Al Khasfa Water Treatment plant, Haditha (funded by the Government of Sweden)
- Rawa Municipality building (funded by USAID)
- Al Qaim Electricity Substation (funded by USAID)
- Al-Aseel Primary School, Rummanah (funded by USAID)

The mission commenced with a meeting between UNDP and Anbar Governor H.E Ali Farhan to discuss UNDP's support to the province as well as

remaining needs. Visits to other completed projects under FFS including Haditha Public library (funded by the Government of Iraq), Anah Municipality Building (funded by the Government of Finland), and Al Qaim Vocational Training Centre (funded by the Government of Canada) and an oasis agricultural project (also funded by Canada) were also included.

Additionally, a meeting with the Al Qaim Local Peace Committee supported by UNDP Iraq under its Social Cohesion programme was held, with discussions focusing on the sustainable reintegration of returned IDPs including families with a perceived affiliation to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

Future areas of collaboration were also explored, with a site visit to discuss potential livelihood projects in the productive sector on land owned by Haditha's Department of Agriculture, and a stop by the Haditha Women's Cultural Centre to better understand the specific needs of local women. The mission concluded with a visit to an ongoing livelihood project funded by Canada which employs 200 workers – including women – to plant 15,000 olive seedlings (high olive oil trees), 2,000 palm seedlings (Zahddi trees) and build

five wells.

“It's great to see cities in western Anbar so lively again. Essential services are up and running, shops and traders are open for business and people are out and about. The area was one of the first to be taken by ISIL and the last to be liberated, and I am proud that UNDP Iraq, in partnership with the Government of Iraq and the international community has completed 200 stabilization projects in the area, collectively benefiting more than 800,000 Iraqis,” says Ms. Ali Ahmad.

“Western Anbar has always been a priority area for UNDP and will continue to be as we work tirelessly alongside the Anbar Governorate and local community leaders to support the return of remaining IDPs. I'd like to extend my deepest appreciation to our donors – particularly our longstanding partners USAID who funded five out of the six new facilities we inaugurated. USAID has made generous contributions to western Anbar, and to stabilization in Iraq generally. I would also like to express my gratitude for the strong partnership with the federal government and local authorities, which enables us to implement projects and ensure their sustainability in the most effective way,” she added.

UNDP Iraq's FFS was established in 2015 at the request of the Government of Iraq with support from the member states of the Coalition to Defeat Da'esh (ISIL), to facilitate the return of displaced persons by rehabilitating critical services and infrastructure, provide short and medium-term employment, provide capacity support for municipalities and foster social cohesion across the liberated areas of Anbar, Diyala, Kirkuk Ninewa and Salah Al Din.

To date, \$1.4 billion has been mobilized from the international community, with 2,944 projects completed, supporting more than 14 million Iraqis. Another 563 projects are currently underway.

IOM Iraq completed the rehabilitation of a fruit and vegetable market in Semel city

Baghdad, 15 September 2021 - IOM Iraq recently completed the rehabilitation of a fruit and vegetable market in Semel city, building 24 stores. The market is in one of the central business areas of Semel city and will be used by local producers, vendors and consumers to sell and purchase locally grown produce.

The market rehabilitation will offer

sellers and consumers a clean, well-ventilated and organized indoor space. The project will also aim to create a better economic environment in the area.

This project was supported by the Government of Germany through the German Development Bank KfW.



IOM Iraq is operating an integrated shelter and debris recycling project in Ninewa Governorate

Baghdad, 19 September 2021 - Damaged or destroyed housing is one of the biggest obstacles to return for displaced persons across Iraq. Due to the hardship and expense of displacement and return, the cost of home repair may be too high for many families.

With the support of USAID, IOM Iraq is operating an integrated shelter and debris recycling project in Ninewa Governorate. In Sinjar and Hamdaniya districts, IOM teams are identifying households whose homes were destroyed during fighting in order to provide them with shelter support.

Most of what is left of these shelters is debris and rubble, which IOM Iraq supports households to remove and transport to IOM debris recycling plants. There, individuals from the local community are employed to sort and process the debris through a crusher machine.

The material is then assessed by



partners at the University of Mosul, after which the final processed material is provided to municipalities in Sinjar and Hamdaniya to be used for the construction of new roads, sidewalks and other infrastructure, thus turning the remnants of war into benefits for society.

IOM Iraq and Samaritan's Purse then

work together to provide shelter support enabling families to replace the freshly cleared debris with a new home. This project will provide debris removal and new shelters to 300 households in Sinjar and Hamdaniya. It will also provide employment for 290 individuals who will be working at the debris recycling site.

The Government of Iraq, UNICEF, WFP and ILO partner to reform social protection with support from the European Union

Baghdad, 21 September 2021 – A new Social Protection Programme was launched today by the Ministry of Planning, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, and the Ministry of Trade of Iraq, along with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), and the International Labour Organization (ILO), to reform the social protection system and the effectiveness of its response to ongoing socio-economic shocks. The European Union (EU) has contributed 30 million euro towards the new four-year Social Protection Programme, which aims to build a sustainable and more inclusive system for those in need.

The Ministry of Planning, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, and Ministry of Trade, lead work on the Poverty Reduction Strategy and the COVID-19 Response Plan as well as reforms at the programme implementation level, focusing on Social Safety Nets, the Public Distribution System for food rations (PDS) and Social Security.

To support these efforts, UNICEF, ILO and WFP worked closely with the three Ministries to develop a Joint Programme to accelerate social protection reform. Under this programme, first and largest of its kind in Iraq, UNICEF, ILO, and WFP will support the Ministries over 2021-2025 to build Iraq's strategy for social protection and implement a reform roadmap, roll-out and scale up child-

focused and employment-related social protection schemes, and build up a unified national registry underpinned by the PDS.

The Social Protection Programme also aims to develop a national strategy and roadmap to expand social security coverage to include informal workers, while supporting the most vulnerable workers in the informal economy and alleviating the effects of COVID-19. The programme hopes to achieve comprehensive, efficient, and effective social protection coverage of vulnerable groups and to offer pathways for vulnerable people for human development, economic inclusion, and enhanced resilience by 2025.

The most vulnerable groups prioritized include children, youth, women, the elderly, people with disabilities, displaced persons and workers in the informal sector. Cash transfer programmes for children and pregnant women are also being developed, with linkages to key services. Underpinning all initiatives is the digitalisation of the PDS, which is enabling better citizen data systems and the establishment of a single registry for eligible people.

"We are grateful for the support from the EU, UNICEF, WFP and ILO. Our Ministries are committed to these reforms, and we will work together to improve the lives of the most vulnerable Iraqis under this programme," said the representatives of the three Ministries

Mr. Maher Johan, Ms. Abeer AlChalabi and Mr. Waleed Al-Mosawi, in a joint statement.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has led to a significant loss of jobs and income, making it even more difficult for vulnerable families to afford basic needs such as food and to access health care, education and vital public services, leading to further risks of exclusion. Reforming social protection helps address poverty and vulnerability, as well as support people during shocks, from childhood to old age," said UNICEF Iraq Representative Sheema Sen Gupta, WFP Iraq Representative Ally-Raza Qureshi, ILO Country Coordinator in Iraq Maha Kattaa, and EU Ambassador to Iraq Ville Varjola, in a joint statement.

The three UN agencies will support the Ministry of Planning, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, and Ministry of Trade in evidence generation including assessment and mapping of social protection, public expenditure review of government spending on social protection, and analysis of multidimensional poverty, food insecurity, the labour force, and household access to social protection. The Social Protection Programme therefore creates the base to build an evidence-based approach to reforming social protection, that is supported by policies, enhanced institutional capacities, and effective coordination. Such reforms are especially vital in the context of the pandemic.

Slovenia lends both hands to Basra and Anbar - a triangle of cooperation in Iraq

Baghdad, 21 September 2021 - UNDP Iraq's Peer-to-Peer project serves as a link between local authorities from Iraq and their European counterparts to cooperate and share their experience in a selected area of collaboration. In the case of Slovenia, the Association of Municipalities and Towns with its consortium partners is working simultaneously with two Iraqi Governorates, Basra and Anbar, on two different fronts, namely employment and agriculture.

Basra has grappled with unemployment for a long time, mainly because of its socio-economic climate, as well as its economy's heavy reliance on the oil sector.

The second biggest city in Iraq is home to the largest oil fields in the country and the largest national oil company, yet the oil sector fails to cope with the employment demand of the local population. The city is in urgent need of intervention and long-term sustainable solutions in order to support its youth to integrate in the work force.

The Association of Municipalities and Towns of Slovenia, from a country with a unemployment rate of 7-9%, is working together with the Governorate of Basra to provide the needed knowledge from its experience in the employment field. This particular area of cooperation was chosen by the Iraqi governorate.

The exchange of experiences and strategies between the Peers will result in tangible action for the local community. The representatives of Basra Governorate found that there is great potential in the region to

establish a business incubator to promote youth employment, which will host a user-friendly online employment platform accessible to Basrawi job seekers and employers. Direct financial grants to the local population will be provided through local competitions as seed money to develop and finance their own project.

Both initiatives will strongly encourage the participation of women.

Representatives of Basra governorate, experts and mayors from Slovenia met in person in Erbil over a four-day workshop to explore ways of establishing a business incubator in their community, discuss and design the first steps of an action plan to implement the incubator and the online platform in Basra, and simulate the Financial Participatory Approach (FPA), a method of decentralized decision making, that would practically be financial support to local citizens with the best project ideas, chosen in an open contest.

The Association of Municipalities and Towns of Slovenia and its consortium partners is also collaborating with the Governorate of Anbar in the field of agriculture.

The Iraqi province has suffered heavily from consequences of war, most recently with the occupation of ISIL which led to the destruction of critical infrastructure, displacement of more than six million people and an economic downturn.

The region that was once exceptionally fertile and had sufficient water supply from Euphrates and surrounding lakes, today suffers from ongoing droughts and a decline in agricultural production. Prior to the war, this field employed most of the governorate's population, especially women, over 40 percent of whom were employed in agriculture.

The province needs new approaches in appropriate agricultural management. This is where the Slovenian peer comes in. The European side's role is to offer best practice examples, offer help with adapting them to the local context and implementing a viable model in Al Anbar, involving citizens in decision-making.

An example would be the establishment of a cooperative of farmers, owned by individual farmers. An initiative that can grow its competences and steer future of agriculture in Al Anbar, providing quality local food at fair price to the local population, addressing common challenges.

The Peer-To-Peer project is aimed at the development of projects, services and the betterment of Iraqi livelihoods. This initiative is implemented under the programme Supporting Recovery and Stability in Iraq through Local Development, funded by the EU and implemented by UNDP Iraq.



The KRG Minister of Interior and UNHCR lay the foundation stone of the new registration centre in Baharka

Erbil, 22 September 2021 - UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, and the Ministry of Interior, the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) today laid the foundation stone of the new Registration Centre in Baharka, Erbil, the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI).

His Excellency, Reber Ahmed, KRG Minister of Interior, his Excellency, Omed Khoshnaw, the Governor of Erbil and Ms. Nicole Epting, UNHCR Representative a.i., together laid the foundation stone for the new registration centre that will serve and benefit thousands of refugees and asylum-seekers residing in urban, peri-urban, and rural areas in Erbil Governorate.

In addition to UNHCR registration



offices, the centre will house governmental departments that are an integral part of the registration process,

allowing the whole process to be completed in one visit. The centre will function as a one-stop-shop for protection

The KRG Minister of Interior and UNHCR lay the foundation stone of the new registration centre in Baharka *(continued)*

and assistance services for refugees and asylum-seekers while also providing counselling and support to internally displaced persons living in Erbil.

The construction of the registration centre is funded through a generous contribution by The Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED). Over the past five years, KFAED has contributed more than USD 12.5 Million to help improve living conditions and increase access to services for Syrian refugees in Iraq by supporting shelter construction, road rehabilitation,

installation of solar streetlights, and water infrastructure projects.

“The new centre will facilitate access to registration services for refugees and asylum-seekers who live in Erbil Governorate, for whom registration is essential as a basis for protection and the first step to accessing basic services, including education, livelihoods, and healthcare,” said Nicole Epting.

“The Kurdistan region has faced several crises during the past years, including the COVID 19 pandemic. I thank the state of

Kuwait for supporting this important project and I take this opportunity to appreciate the support of UNHCR and also call for the international community to continue to assist the KRG in addressing the needs of refugees and internally displaced,” said Reber Ahmed, KRG Minister of Interior.

UNHCR currently runs three registration centres in the KRI, supporting over 263,000 refugees and asylum-seekers.



Shayma'a starts again: “I thought that life in a camp was all my family would ever know.”

Anbar, 28 September 2021 - Shayma'a, 35, is a mother of eight from Fallujah district in Anbar Governorate. When the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) entered Anbar, Shayma'a was displaced from her beloved neighbourhood, Al Shuhada'a, with her husband and children.

“I thought that it would be impossible to return. I witnessed homes collapsing and everything falling down around me,” Shayma'a recalled. “I saw many martyrs and wounded people, and I felt like everything was over for us. [When we fled,] I thought that life in a camp was all my family would ever know again.”

Like many families from her area of origin, Shayma'a went to Amiriyat Al-Fallujah camp, and the experience was very difficult. She spent many sleepless nights thinking about her home; she knew it had sustained damage during the conflict with ISIL, but she began to imagine how she would restore it. Shayma'a tried her best to cope with the stress and sadness brought on by her family's situation.

After the liberation of Fallujah district, Shayma'a and her husband, like others from the area, returned to visit their house and assess the damage. They were met with a miserable sight: it was completely destroyed.

“But I did not give up. I decided to pick myself up again,” she explained. “My family and I had a piece of land left, and I had the idea to build the foundation for a new home. I gathered some money, and we started building something simple from it, but it was very difficult to go back to a place where I had so many bad memories. We also quickly ran out of funds.”

Not long after, International Organization for Migration (IOM) field teams visited Amiriyat Al-Fallujah camp where they assessed Shayma'a's



situation. They offered her support to finish building her new house so that she could comfortably return to Fallujah.

“IOM gave me financial assistance in the form of grant payments. At the completion of each stage of construction, I would get a grant for the next phase,” Shayma'a said.

With patience and determination, Shayma'a saw through the completion of her new home. It came to represent a new beginning and a chance at a better life for herself, her husband and her children.

In Amiriyat Al-Fallujah, Shayma'a ran a small shop to make ends meet; today, she rents a larger storefront by her new home, using the money earned from sales to support her family as they continue to rebuild and move forward.

“A person should never stop dreaming, but sometimes it takes a lot of support to achieve these dreams,” Shayma'a continued. “Our situation in the camp was so difficult, and I knew that no one should spend their whole life in that environment. I was fortunate enough to get help from IOM and recover everything I lost.”

Damaged or destroyed housing is one of the biggest obstacles to return for displaced persons that previously owned a home. Since July 2020, IOM

Iraq has supported returns from Amiriyat Al-Fallujah and other locations across Iraq by facilitating a process that is safe and voluntary; providing assistance, funding and accompaniment for families from their departure from the camp to their arrival and reintegration into their area of origin – or their resettlement in new areas for those wishing not to return. Families receive an initial financial sum to help cover immediate needs stemming from the arrival, including rental housing and other needs.

Following return or relocation, IOM teams carry out a further assessment to evaluate families' needs and circumstances. Based on this assessment, they may receive funds to complete the rehabilitation of their destroyed homes with oversight from IOM Iraq teams. IOM also assists families to restore their livelihoods, including through cash-for-work projects and small business development grants.

IOM Iraq's assistance to families like Shayma'a's is made possible with support from the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migrants (PRM).

By Rafal Abdulateef, IOM Iraq

Cash for work activities in Halabja support socio-economic recovery and development



Halabja, 29 September 2021 - Since the official defeat of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, many Iraqis continue to need support accessing livelihood opportunities to make ends meet.

A team from IOM Iraq recently visited

an ongoing Cash for Work (CfW) activity in Halabja alongside the city's governor and mayor, as well as Minister of Culture of the Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq.

CfW activities support socio-economic recovery and development by offering

vulnerable people the opportunity to earn money for their work under IOM projects. These groups generally consist of internally displaced persons, returnees, and vulnerable host community members.

This CfW activity brings together 30 women from Halabja city to produce and package face masks for children returning to school and employees at local governmental offices. The women also sew medical gowns and bed sheets for hospitals in the area to support the community's fight against COVID-19.

In addition to receiving payment for their work, participants are learning new skills, contributing to the prevention of COVID-19, and building new relationships with each other.

This programme is made possible with support from the German Development Bank (KfW).

UNDP welcomes Greece as the Funding Facility for Stabilization's 29th funding partner

Baghdad, 29 September 2021 – The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Iraq welcomes a € 50,000 (US\$ 59,400) contribution from the Government of Greece to UNDP's Funding Facility for Stabilization (FFS), which implements fast-track initiatives to stabilize areas liberated from the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

Greece's first contribution makes it the 29th partner to fund UNDP's flagship stabilization programme. This important contribution will be utilized for critical projects in ISIL impacted areas that still require support to ensure returnees' access to basic services. To date, the FFS has completed over 2,900 projects in the

areas liberated from ISIL, benefitting more than 14.7 million Iraqis.

"We welcome the Government of Greece as UNDP's newest partner to the programme. Thanks to the generous and unwavering support of all our partners, the FFS can continue its critical work to improve conditions in the liberated areas and assist those who remain displaced to come home with dignity," says UNDP Resident Representative Zena Ali Ahmad.

"This contribution illustrates our partners' continued trust and confidence in the FFS' ability to support the people of Iraq to address the residual stabilization needs in the areas liberated from ISIL," adds Ms. Ali Ahmad.

UNDP Iraq's FFS was established in 2015 at the request of the Government of Iraq with support from the member states of the Coalition to Defeat Da'esh (ISIL), to facilitate the return of displaced persons by rehabilitating critical services and infrastructure to ensure access to basic services, provide short and medium-term employment, provide capacity support for municipalities and foster social cohesion across the liberated areas of Anbar, Diyala, Kirkuk Ninewa and Salah Al Din. The FFS continues to work very closely with the Government of Iraq and local stakeholders to ensure it is addressing the needs of the individuals impacted by the ISIL conflict.

Economic recovery is slow for SMEs in Iraq during the second year of COVID-19

Erbil, 30 September 2021 — To measure the impact of COVID-19 on small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Iraq, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and the International Trade Center (ITC) conducted a panel study of 716 SMEs, covering June 2020 to June 2021.

IOM, FAO and ITC have now released the Panel Study IV: Impact of COVID-19 on Small- and Medium-Sized Enterprises in Iraq report. The study found that

recovery from the economic slowdown produced by the COVID-19 virus has been sluggish in the surveyed SMEs. Roughly 25 per cent of the businesses was "very concerned" about recovery from the COVID-19 crisis.

The 716 surveyed firms are located in 15 governorates with activities spanning 16 economic sectors, mainly in the food and agriculture sectors. The study assessed the impact on these firms when compared with non-agricultural businesses.

Almost all firms reported reductions in

revenue in the early months of the pandemic, on average of 23 per cent between February and November 2020. By October 2020, revenue began to slowly recover. However, by the end of the study period in June 2021, the SMEs' average monthly revenues hovered at around 60 per cent of pre-COVID-19 levels.

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

Water accounting and water productivity assessment training workshop



Erbil, 29 September 2021 - FAO-Iraq conducted a two-day training workshop in Erbil on Water Accounting and Water Productivity assessment within the implementation of an FAO project aiming at agricultural Water Resource Management Improvement, Water accounting with a baseline water productivity assessment” to demonstrate the value of water accounting (WA) and water productivity (WP) assessment and to build capacity among stakeholders in agriculture and water sectors.

Representatives from Ministry of Water Resources, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Higher Education and

Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources of Kurdistan were participated in the training workshop. In the opening session, FAO Representative in Iraq Dr. Salah El Hajj Hassan has stressed on the importance of the FAO training workshop in improving of water productivity and efficiency, sustainability and improvement of agricultural water resource management. “The timing of the workshop is critical since Iraq has recently experienced sever dry season”. FAO Representative expressed.

He thanked the participants, the stakeholders of agriculture and water

resources and he confirmed that FAO commitments to make all possible efforts to support communities, and national authorities to develop feasible and adaptable measure to overcome the impacts of water scarcity, lower rain precipitation, an increase in the frequency and severity of droughts and climatic changes that affect the country.

The training provided presentations on WA definition, important concepts in WA, and analysis methods, followed by hands-on group exercises on various analyses/skills used in WA, such as water budgeting, supply-demand gap analysis, water use fraction analysis, and perceptual model development. The training also introduced different kinds of WP, interpretation of WP data, field data collection approaches, and utilization of FAO’s WaPOR (online data portal). In addition, participants practiced calculation/estimation of yields, different types of WP, and WP gap with example data through a group exercise.

FAO’s experts in Iraq and from the regional office in Cairo participated in the preparation of lectures, training and discussions, whether by attendance or through zoom applications.

FAO supports corn silage production in Kirkuk

Kirkuk, 3 October 2021 - Within the framework of the EU funded project Support to livelihoods of rural and peri-urban returnees and communities in Ninewa Governorate, Iraq, a high-level meeting on processing and marketing of corn silage to support the production of fodder crops in Iraq was held in Kirkuk Agriculture Directorate.

The meeting was attended by Mrs. Ahlam Fakhreddin, Assistant Director of Agriculture, and a delegation from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in Iraq, headed by Dr. Salah El-Hajj Hassan, FAO Representative, including FAO experts and five extension project supervisors division cadres in Kirkuk Directorate and representative from the private sector.

The meeting provided an excellent opportunity to discuss the organization plans to support the agricultural sector in Iraq and the main achievements of FAO work in Ninewa Governorate, in particular in the field of fodder production and dairy processing.

Dr. Salah highlighted that the purpose of the visit is to study and improve the reality of agriculture in Kirkuk



governorate. He presented FAO plans to replicate the successful experience of Ninewa in Kirkuk governorate, main area for cultivation of yellow corn in Iraq, indicating the opportunities to process and market yellow corn silage to supply livestock breeders throughout Iraq, where corn silage is considered a high quality feed.

The FAO Representative congratulated the pioneering initiatives of the private sector to investment in the production and processing of corn silage, also a

priority of FAO as main solution to improving the financial returns of livestock breeders.

The visit also included a field observation to the silage plant in the village of Al-Bdeir in the Dibis district, where, for the first time in Iraq, 3000 dunums of corn will be harvested for making silage.

The FAO team emphasized on the follow-up of the silage manufacturing process and the commitment to technically support this initiative.

“Hand in hand we create tomorrow” initiative

Baghdad, 05 October 2021 - Murals of hope bring color to once empty walls in Kirkuk and Diyala governorates. In partnership with Al-Tahreer Association for Development and with support from the Government of Denmark, UNDP Iraq is empowering community leaders and local peace structures with training sessions on proposal writing and designing initiatives, as well as the implementation of the new community

initiatives in Anbar, Ninewa, Salah al Din, Diyala, and Kirkuk. In Muqdadiya District of Diyala Governorate, the “Hand in Hand We Create Tomorrow” initiative was implemented by community leaders supported by Hawa organization. Similarly, the Local Peace Committee in Kirkuk, in cooperation with Al-Ghad League, established the “Peace Murals” initiative.



Newly rehabilitated bridges re-link Anbaris



Anbar, 6 October 2021 - Anbar is the largest and one of the most sparsely populated governorates in Iraq. Under ISIL occupation, the region suffered greatly for well over three years. During which, many lives were lost, businesses closed, and key infrastructure destroyed. Among them were roads and bridges that served as linkage points to and from cities in the region. They were blown up during the conflict, cutting off the movement of people.

“I was heartbroken when I returned with my family. We were met with absolute devastation. We found almost everything destroyed, including

bridges, roads, schools, water connections and electricity supply,” says Louay Mounadi Ali, 42, a resident of Al Qaim.

Supporting Anbaris rebuild, through the Funding Facility for Stabilization, UNDP has rehabilitated over 2,630 key public facilities, such as roads, bridges, water treatment plants, electricity networks, schools and hospitals. Of which, 17 bridges in Al Qaim, Al Karma, Fallujah and Ramadi were rebuilt. For a governorate the size of Anbar, it has played a key role in reconnecting residents and reviving vital trade routes.

The Al Rommana bridge, situated along the Euphrates River in Al Qaim, was left severely damaged during ISIL. “The bridge is a vital link between western Anbar and the rest of the governorate. For most Iraqis living in the region, it links them to the main hospital and municipality facilities in Al Qaim city. After the damage caused by ISIL, people would travel by foot or use boats, risking their safety to access facilities,” adds Louay.

The Al Rommana bridge is now up and running. It is expected to serve over

75,000 residents living in and around Al Qaim. On average, 11,500 people cross the bridge every day. “Now, I see people moving freely and safely across the region. This has created a sense of community and stability for us as residents,” says Louay.

On the other side of Anbar, the Ali Sulaiman bridge in Al Karma, the Al Shehabi bridge in Fallujah, the Thaileb and Al Fokanee bridges in Ramadi were also rehabilitated, benefitting over 50,500 people.

“The rehabilitation of Ali Sulaiman bridge is considered one of the most important projects in Al Karma as it connects the Karma district center with Al-Khairat and Al-Jazeera districts. This bridge is crucial and is used to transport construction materials,” says Mohammed Ghazi, site engineer who was part of the team reconstructing the Ali Sulaiman bridge in Al Karma.

The bridges in Anbar were rehabilitated thanks to support from Australia, Denmark, European Union (EU), Finland, Italy, Netherlands, Sweden, United Kingdom (UK), and United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

Cash for Work program started for 33 women in Kirkuk for handicraft skills, cooking, sewing

Kirkuk, 6 October 2021 - Women Leadership Institute (WLI) started the implementation of the Cash for Work program for 33 women in Kirkuk for handicraft skills (cooking, sewing) within the Leadership, Empowering, Access, and Protection (LEAPII) project which is implemented in partnership with UN Women Iraq and support of the Government of Japan.

Cash for work programs include training the beneficiaries on these skills (cooking, sewing in addition to online marketing that will be started soon) to produce and market products inside the governorate of Kirkuk for the

next period, to provide income for the beneficiaries besides keeping them



active and productive inside their families and society.

This program will continue until December 2021 to focus and achieve the economic revival for the beneficiaries by providing temporary jobs opportunities, restoring the flow of income for their families and maintaining their families and society. These opportunities help the IDPs to return to their areas as well and avoid selling their properties and accumulate debts due to financial pressures due to displacement operations and the economic effect that resulted from the COVID-19 pandemic.

IOM Iraq's Enterprise Development Fund aims to contribute to economic recovery and private sector revitalization



Baghdad, 14 October 2021 - "I am Noor Hashim, the owner of the Hili Project. I'm married and 32 years old. The Project launched in 2016 – it's a handicraft shop.

Its name originates from the Sumerians, who used the word 'Hili' to express the feeling of love. We use it to mark our handmade products inspired by Mesopotamian art and culture."

Though the Hili Project struggled to stay afloat over the years, Noor did not give up. She set out to develop the shop further and worked to market it professionally. Today, Hili is the first registered trademark for traditional Iraqi handicrafts – an achievement in the preservation of traditional craftsmanship and Iraqi heritage.

"We have gone through difficult periods, such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant's occupation of areas of Iraq, which affected the Iraqi streets at large, but the [government's] liberation of cities and reclamation of control over governorates surrounding

Baghdad helped to improve the economic situation."

However, as markets returned to normal, the COVID-19 pandemic struck; infection rates soared across Iraq, and a number of restrictions were implemented to prevent further spread, including quarantine and lockdown measures.

"Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, Hili Project has relied on points of sale in separate areas of Baghdad Governorate. After quarantine and other safety measures [were put in place], we turned to electronic marketing through social media pages."

With tenacity and entrepreneurial drive, Noor was able to rent a number of small retail spaces on Babylon Malls's Al-Mutanabbi Street and combine them into a single large shop from which to sell Hili products.

Noor later read about the grants provided by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to small and medium-sized enterprises

(SMEs) and was encouraged to apply.

"I got the idea to apply for a grant from IOM because my ambition to develop the project made this necessary for me," she explained. "I saw it as a good opportunity."

Noor submitted her grant application at the beginning of 2021. It was approved.

"After receiving the grant, I expanded the Project and employed a number of young job seekers, so the Hili Project has an efficient team. Now, we are about to expand into the central and southern regions of Iraq and focus on e-marketing at the same time because there is an increase in demand in those governorates."

The conflict with the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant from 2014 to 2017 left most SMEs struggling to recover from large scale destruction or loss of access to finance to rebuild, a situation further complicated by the economic impacts of COVID-19 prevention measures.

Noor was able to expand her business and hire five new employees through IOM Iraq's Enterprise Development Fund, which aims to contribute to economic recovery and private sector revitalization by providing grants to assist and develop SMEs and facilitate rapid job creation.

This grant was made possible with the generous support of U.S. Department of State.

Amid water shortages in Iraq, FAO, IFAD and WFP call for action on World Food Day to help communities confront climate change

Baghdad, 16 October 2021 – Today on World Food Day, the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) renew their commitment to help reform food systems in Iraq, calling for action to tackle water shortages and climate change.

Building on this year's theme for World Food Day, "Our actions are our future- Better production, better nutrition, a better environment and a better life," the UN partners and World Bank's latest research highlights the impact of lower rainfall on people's food security.

"The impact of water shortages in Iraq is becoming evident through the lower crop yields for 2021. Urgent action is required to confront climate change, working together to address the root

causes," said FAO Representative in Iraq Dr Salah El Hajj Hassan, WFP Iraq Representative Ally-Raza Qureshi, and IFAD Lead Economist Alessandra Garbero in a joint statement. "Reforming food systems will also help the most vulnerable communities in Iraq withstand future shocks. Resilient, modern food systems are important for long term food security and the sustainable economic growth of Iraq."

Water shortages have resulted in below-normal development of vegetation and are affecting crop yields. According to estimates from FAO, by the end of the season, wheat production will be 70% lower and barley production negligible. The lower levels of rainfall this season are having a knock-on effect on smallholder farmers who have already been dealing with challenges in accessing markets due to higher prices.

In Ninewa and Salah al-Din governorates, which are worst-affected by lack of rainfall, WFP's analysis identifies that insufficient food consumption and use of negative coping strategies such as borrowing money or eating less food among households, are almost double the national average.

Vulnerable communities, a vast majority of whom rely on agriculture, fishing, and livestock, who contribute the least to the climate crisis bear the brunt of the impacts with limited means to cushion the blow. Urgent action is required to address the water shortages in Iraq and climate change, as focus shifts to the 26th Conference of the Parties (COP26).

Download copies of the latest report in Arabic and English at: <https://bit.ly/2YKINTT>

Boosting household income through Cash-for-Work



Baghdad, 17 October 2021 - How providing short-term job opportunities for families returning to Mosul and Diyala creates a sense of renewed hope?

Four years since its liberation from ISIL, the people of Mosul continue to work hard to build back their lives. The brutal conflict left absolute devastation, including damaged homes, schools, roads, and health facilities.

Today, over 1 million people have returned to their homes in Mosul. However, families face many challenges which prevent restoring any sense of normalcy. It includes lack of enough employment opportunities resulting in depleted savings and increased debt to cover basic daily needs.

"We were forced to flee for our lives during ISIL. I was worried about my children. With losing most of our house and belongings, I also lost my job," says Khudair Hammoud Abdullah, 49, from Mosul. He is married with eight children. "I used to collect nylon and metal scraps to resell for recycling. Unfortunately, I lost my shop when ISIL took over Mosul."

During the conflict, Khudair and his family were forced to flee to a nearby camp, where they lived for two years. Upon Mosul's liberation, Khudair and his family were determined to return, rebuild their lives, and reconnect with loved ones they had not seen for years. For people like Khudair, who are left extremely vulnerable after the conflict, UNDP provides cash-for-work opportunities. These short-term opportunities provide temporary employment to returnees to restore public infrastructure.

"After returning home, I have been doing odd jobs to make ends meet. This was when I came across the cash-for-work opportunity," says Khudair. He used his earnings to rebuild two rooms in his home that were damaged during the liberation. "I also purchased a

three-wheel motorcycle to restart my nylon and metal scraps business."

To ensure an inclusive process, 40 percent of people hired under cash-for-work are women.

For a 39-year-old mother of five, Laila Merhi Hassan, this opportunity came at the right time. Laila's husband was left physically disabled during the conflict. As the sole breadwinner for the family, she says, "I just started my new job working at a factory making children's toys and stationaries. But the first time I got a job was when I was selected for the cash-for-work job. It gave me a taste of what it means to be financially stable.

Even while she was displaced, Israa continued to bake bread and sell it to families in Tikrit. "I never stopped working. I was thinking ahead for my family. I saved my earnings so that we could use it to go back home to restart our lives."

When it was safe to come back, they returned home in 2018. "I came back to find my house severely damaged, and the shop destroyed. But this just meant I needed to work harder to provide for my family."



While on the other hand, 28-year-old Ihab Alaa Saleh used his savings to start a barbershop. "Working for those 40 days under cash-for-work gave me the confidence to finally start the barbershop," says Ihab.

Ihab has built a loyal clientele of over 25 people that visit his shop every week. "The positive response from people has been tremendous. My client base is growing thanks to word of mouth from my satisfied customers. Looking ahead, I will expand my shop to accommodate more clients and create more jobs in my community," he adds.

Khudair, Laila and Ihab were hired under cash-for-work for 40 days (about one and a half months) for replanting trees, carpentry, and welding across

rehabilitation sites in Mosul. Providing such job opportunities for families returning to Mosul creates a sense of renewed hope while boosting household incomes.

32-year-old Mohamed Ahmed Nasser is married and has four children. He is also responsible for his ailing parents. "I was able to pay for my mother's life-saving surgery thanks to my cash-for-work earnings," he says.

Mohamed is among the 280 Iraqis who were employed under cash-for-work to clean the streets of Baqubah in Diyala. Immediate income opportunities provide families returning with the freedom to prioritize and meet their needs while restoring public infrastructure damaged during ISIL.

Meet best friends Younes Maher and Ali Mahdi from Baqubah, Diyala. The young 19-year-olds are responsible for providing for their families as their parents were left wounded during ISIL. They work as tricycle drivers. However, the salary is not enough to cover the family's medical bills.

"I was eagerly waiting for a job that would provide me with an immediate source of income to cover the medical bills. Today, my father has recovered and is feeling better," shares Younes. Both saved money from their cash-for-work earnings to cover their parent's medical bills. "I will save my earnings and open a barbershop one day," adds Ali.

Cash-for-work provides opportunities for families to spend their earnings on medical needs. This helps them recover and go back to work, to provide for their families.

This project was implemented by UNDP Iraq's Funding Facility for Stabilization with funding from German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), provided through KFW Development Bank.



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

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

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

“After ISIL occupied Heet district in 2014 for two years, the infrastructure, houses, and public services of the district were destroyed, so we coordinated with the central government, Anbar governorate, Civil Society organisations and United Nations to rehabilitate what ISIL destroyed. Because the biggest problem was in the residential buildings, we coordinated with UN-Habitat to rehabilitate the damaged houses,” said Heet Mayor Muhanned Zbar.

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

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



Having implemented a set of impactful recovery projects in Al-Baker West in close coordination with the local authorities, UN-Habitat was able to secure a complementary partnership with Alwaleed Philanthropies in mid-2020 for activities aimed at mitigating COVID-19 transmission and enhancing community resilience in Al-Baker East. Between these projects combined, UN-Habitat has rehabilitated 180 war-damaged houses; renovated a primary school; created a new park and two sports facilities; upgraded and extended potable networks serving over 600 houses, supporting water supply to 4,125 people; and upgraded seven health facilities, including Heet's General Hospital, to protect some 130,000 people among health personnel and community members in the current pandemic crisis.

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

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

such as children's activities and planting campaigns.

UN-Habitat's 360-degree approach in Heet to solving community problems through local area development projects has also manifested itself through a lasting trust relationship with the local authorities, specifically the mayor's office.

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

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

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

Taking volunteering in the country to another level

Baghdad, 8 October 2021 - Young people with professional and technical skills are drivers of change and lead in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in Iraq.

In collaboration with the Ministry of Youth and Sports, and funding from

Canada in Iraq, UNFPA organised a training for young activists from seven governorates across Iraq to come together, learn new skills and take volunteering in the country to another level.

The training aimed at building capacity

and improving their skills including raising awareness on their reproductive rights and choices and encouraging community engagement to build an environment that involved young people in achieving the SDGs.

Beekeeping for recovery and stability

Dohuk, 24 October 2021 - Did you know that beekeeping existed in Iraq for thousands of years? But in some areas, it is considered a male job only. Bojeen organization is trying to break this stigma by teaching 50 young women the craft of beekeeping and providing them with the necessary tools

to kick start their own honey businesses in Duhok and its surroundings.

This project is under UNDP Iraq's Supporting Recovery and Stability in Iraq through Local Development programme, funded by the European Union.



UNDP's Funding Facility for Stabilization supports women farmers by replacing assets lost during the conflict

Baghdad, 25 October 2021 - Meet 22-year-old Nahida from Sinuni. She runs three hectares of farmland along with her family. They produce pomegranates, figs, grapes, and olives. During ISIL, in 2014, Nahida was still in school. "I have been assisting my father at the farm since childhood. I always dreamed of taking over our ancestral farmland and seeing it flourish." However, during the conflict, her family and her were forced to flee for their lives to Sinjar mountain. When they returned, they were met with

absolute devastation. "The trees were burnt down and the soil degraded."

Today, Nahida runs the farm and is working hard to bring it back to life. Women farmers like Nahida are being supported through UNDP's Funding Facility for Stabilization by replacing assets lost during the conflict. "The equipment we received will help revive my farm to what it was before ISIL. Hopefully, we will be able to increase production."

This was possible thanks to support from Japan.



FAO launches Peer-to-Peer training program for Ministry of Agriculture extension officers

Erbil, 25 October 2021 - Under the patronage of His Excellency the Minister of Agriculture, Engineer, Muhammad Karim Al-Khafaji, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) launched an innovative Peer-to-Peer training Program for Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) Extension Officers on Monday, October 2021 in Erbil. The program had been designed for 12 MOA staff from the southern governorates of Maysan, Dhi Qar and Basra and was supported by 30 extension officers and female dairy producers from Ninewa Governorate.

The opening ceremony was attended by Dr. Hadi Hashem Hussein - representative of the Agriculture Minister and FAO-MOA Coordinator; D. Rabie Youssef Elias - Director of Ninewa Directorate of Agriculture; and Dr. Salah Al-Hajj Hassan, FAO Representative in Iraq, and other staff from the EU-funded project "Support to agricultural livelihoods of rural and peri-urban returnees and communities in Ninewa Governorate, Iraq."



Dr. Hadi Hashem Hussein said that the project implemented in Ninewa also achieved its remarkable results by introducing additional innovative technologies with forage crops and complementary feeding. Producing more milk products –and of higher quality (including better hygiene practices) have led to increased incomes. Dr Hadi stressed that the Ministry of Agriculture gives great importance to this project and encourages the transfer of its methods and new practices to be shared and rolled out to other Iraqi governorates as well.

Dr. Rabea Yousef Elias said he was very happy with the capacity building his extension staff of the Ninewa Agriculture Directorate had been exposed to, and he also appreciated the important role played by his staff in various implementation steps of the project supporting the beneficiary farmers in the field. In total, more than 30 extension officers had been able to develop their skills and capabilities through FAO training in innovative technologies, especially related to livestock (early weaning practices) and green fodder production.

Dr. Salah Al-Hajj Hassan, FAO Representative in Iraq, thanked the Ministry of Agriculture with all its staff, for the strong support of all FAO projects implemented in cooperation with the Ministry and for the approach followed to involve extension staff in the implementation of projects. He said that

the involvement ensures the sustainability of interventions through strengthening of the farmer support services. Dr Salah further said that these well-trained extension workers can now also contribute to capacity development of their colleagues in other governorates. This workshop is a first opportunity to train colleagues from southern governorates to become district-level lead trainers or Trainer-of-Trainers and Farmer Field School facilitators (FFS). He was grateful that the extension team in Ninewa was supportive of the transfer of expertise between peers.

Dr. Salah Hajj Hassan also announced that a first opportunity has arisen with new funding received from the EU for the project: "Restoration and Strengthening the Resilience of Agri-Food Systems in Southern Iraq", implemented by FAO in cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Water Resources and local authorities in the Governorates of Maysan, Dhi Qar and Basra.

The FAO expert stressed that the main output is to have trained 12 MOA extension staff from the target districts and sub-districts in Southern Governorates in Ninewa Governorate through peer-to-peer training to help FAO to implement project activities in livestock, fodder and feeding. At the end of the training, the extension staff will be considered fully trained as district-based leading trainers (TOT) and FFSs facilitators.

ILO holds training workshop on Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) for social partners in Iraq



Erbil, 27 September 2021 - The ILO held a four-day workshop in Erbil to build the capacities of representatives of employers' and workers' organizations of the Federal of Iraq and Kurdistan Region of Iraq on Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) mechanisms, as part of wider efforts to promote decent work, in line with national legislation and international labour standards.

The training, which was conducted in collaboration with the Peace and Freedom Organization, took place between September 24-27, bringing together 30 workers' and employers' representatives from across Iraq including the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. 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.

The training familiarised participants on basic concepts, principles and guidelines related to OSH and focused on different potential occupational safety and health hazards associated with the workplace, especially in light

of COVID-19. It also highlighted key areas related to guidelines on OSH management systems, as well as the role and responsibilities of authorities, including OSH inspectors in promoting health and safety in the workplace. It also addressed the legislative framework for Occupational Safety and Health in Iraq and the Kurdistan Region and discussed ways to develop related policies and procedures.

During the sessions, Dr. Amin Alwreidat, the ILO Regional Advisor on Labour Inspection and OSH, spoke about the fundamental principles and rights at work and the International Labour Standards on OSH and highlighted relevant good practices in the Arab region. He also spoke about work-related diseases and epidemics, including COVID-19, highlighting their causes, modes of transmission, workplace effects, means of control and prevention and relevant responsibilities of governments and workers' and employers' organizations.

Abdullah Khalid, Director of the Peace and Freedom Organization, said: "There are challenges faced in terms of occupational safety and health which we addressed this week with

representatives of workers and employers organizations (...). Through this workshop, participants gained new knowledge, which can help them analyse the reality on the ground and suggested ways to promote OSH in Iraq and KRI."

"These workshops are always useful as they enlighten us with modern knowledge," said Sadiq Ramadan Hassan, a member of the Kurdistan United Workers Union and labour inspector who attended the workshop. "The workshop used a modern approach which allowed everyone to play a proactive part, and it was not merely a lecture, which we listened to. It also helped us in broadening our understanding of international standards, which will help us in our field of work."

In addition, the EU-supported project is developing a national OSH policy and programme, which will include reviewing, updating and validating the national labour inspection and OSH policies.

"Improving the working conditions of agricultural workers is a key priority for the ILO in Iraq," said Racha Elassy, ILO Chief Technical Advisor. "We are working with our stakeholders to pilot interventions on specific farms that will promote decent working conditions and improve compliance with national legislation and International Labour Standards. The plan is to afterward facilitate coordination between labour and OSH inspectors, employers' and workers' organizations through establishing and operationalizing national tripartite committees on labour inspection and OSH and which will actively involve workers' and employers' organizations."

Ministers of Labour and Social Affairs and social partners meet with ILO to discuss joint activities to advance decent work in Iraq, with support of the European Union

Baghdad, 29 September 2021 - A Steering Committee, represented by ILO's tripartite partners, held its first meeting to discuss progress made in the implementation of a project, supported by the European Union, aimed at enhancing labour governance, inspection and decent working conditions in Iraq, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The meeting brought together high level officials, including Iraq's Minister of Labour and Social Affairs, Adel Al-

Rikabi and his counterpart in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, Kwestan Mohammed, in addition to other Government officials, employers' and workers' representatives, EU Head of Cooperation to Iraq, Barbara Egger and ILO Country Coordinator for Iraq, Maha Kattaa.

"The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs signed the Decent Work Country Programme with the ILO in December 2019, and we have repeatedly stressed the need to improve

working conditions in all areas of work, especially in labour inspection and Occupational Safety and Health. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, there needs to be more focus on the requirements of the labour market and the return of employers to their workplace. We applaud this first steering committee meeting. Collaboration between the various ministries is crucial in helping develop strategies that aim to facilitate job opportunities, and activate a national

Ministers of Labour and Social Affairs and social partners meet with ILO to discuss joint activities *(continued)*

employment policy which is responsive to the realities on the ground. We look to (promoting) decent work opportunities, a responsive private sector, and safe social protection, in collaboration with our social partners and the ILO,” said Minister Al-Rikabi.

The EU-supported project addresses some of the challenges imposed by the pandemic, as well as the longer-term decent work priorities of Iraq. Implemented by the ILO and its partners, the project seeks to strengthen labour inspection, occupational safety and health (OSH) in line with International Labour Standards and advance employment in compliance with decent work principles.

“On behalf of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, we would like to thank the ILO for all its efforts and support under the framework of this project, which addresses Occupational Safety and Health and labour inspection for workers in the Kurdistan Region, especially in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. We hope that this steering committee meeting, which is the first to take place, will address both areas of Occupational Safety and Health and labour inspection, covering our needs, and those of workers in the Kurdistan Region. In addition, we hope (these efforts will) strength the labour market through improving employability skills that will contribute to enhancing employment opportunities aiming at activating the national employment policy. Finally, we truly wish the best of luck for this project and the meeting,” added Minister Mohammed.



Following the meeting, the workforce planning committee also met and discussed the development of a National Employment Policy aimed at facilitating job creation, improving working conditions and promoting social and economic development. The National Employment Policy will help guide labour market policies in the country and ensure synergies between relevant stakeholders in addressing the labour market needs of Iraq.

The ILO is currently working with the Central Statistical Organization (CSO) and Kurdistan Region Statistics Office (KRSO) in the development of a national Labour Force Survey. The results of the survey will feed into the formulation of the National Employment Policy.

“The steering committee meeting is important in facilitating the implementation of the project's activities in a manner that achieves its objectives and desired results,” said ILO Country Coordinator Kattaa. “We look forward to the development of strategies supporting job creation, that will prepare the ground for a comprehensive national employment policy which will address the

immediate livelihoods needs of workers and their families, while also focusing on the longer term structural labour market changes required to address the decent work needs of women and men.”

“Access to decent work is the main route out of poverty. At the same time, employment must be safe for all members of society, including women and people with disabilities. The Covid-19 pandemic has further illustrated the need for a joint strong effort to ensure the quality and safety of work. This project contributes to this crucial objective by promoting compliance with labour standards and enhanced social dialogue. I am also pleased with the discussions taking place on developing a national employment policy which is urgently needed to address the structural deficiencies of the labour market in Iraq”, said EU Head of Cooperation, Barbara Egger.

The Iraq Decent Work Country Programme, which was signed in 2019, focuses on three key areas of priority: job creation and private sector development; social protection and addressing child labour; and labour market governance and social dialogue.

Mine Action

Children under attack – for an Iraq free of explosive remnants of war

Baghdad, 26 August 2021 – Ms. Sheema SenGupta, UNICEF Representative in Iraq issued the following statement:

“UNICEF is deeply concerned after the reported deaths of a 10-year-old child on 24 August in Diyala by the detonation of an explosive remnant of war (ERW) and of an 11-year-old child on 25 August in Muradiya Village, South of Baquba, due to an IED. UNICEF expresses its deep sorrow and condolences to the children's families, friends, and their communities.

“Sadly, these are not isolated losses of innocent lives. UNICEF expresses its alarm over the increase in child deaths and injuries due to landmines and ERW in

Iraq in recent months. Between January and August 2021, the UN has recorded the loss of the lives of 35 children from ERW across the country, and 41 more were maimed. This represents an alarming increase in child casualties compared to 2020 when the UN verified the killing of 6 children and maiming of 12 children for the same period as a result of ERW and landmines.

“Child safety must remain as the primary consideration in all contexts. Landmines and ERW often result in civilian casualties, with children being the most vulnerable. Since children are smaller than adults, they are more likely to take

the full impact of the blast and are therefore more likely to suffer death or serious injuries.

“UNICEF urges all parties to accelerate every effort to clear existing mines and unexploded ordnance and promote victim assistance and to uphold children's right to a safe and protective environment.

“UNICEF also urges the Government of Iraq and the donor community to support the scale-up and provision of Explosive Ordnance Risk Education activities so that children and other community members receive explosive ordnance risk education in schools and communities in all areas previously affected by conflict in Iraq.”

UNMAS training sessions built a sustainable capacity of the GoI at the local level to support all humanitarian mine action activities

Baghdad, 21 September 2021 - Over the last three years, UNMAS in Iraq has conducted 11 Basic Humanitarian Mine Action training sessions, across 10 governorates, for 334 Government of Iraq (GoI) staff members, including 60 women. These training sessions built a sustainable capacity of the GoI at the local level to support all humanitarian

mine action activities. These trainings resulted in excellent cooperation between clearance organizations and the local representatives of the GoI, who assisted clearance partners with security and access, ensuring successful clearance of explosive ordnance in many areas of Iraq.



UNMAS in Iraq continues its clearance operations in Shatt al Arab

Basra, 22 September 2021 - Shatt al Arab was a highly-contested battlefield during the Iran-Iraq War. Enormous numbers of mines were laid. The land was once rich and fertile farmland. Today it is largely deserted. In the region there is a growing need for residential homes and farming land.

UNMAS in Iraq continues its clearance operations in Shatt al Arab, working with Al Khebra Al Fania Company for Mine & UXO Clearance (AKAF).

The expansion of UNMAS Iraq clearance operations in the South aims to support the Government of Iraq to release fertile land that will assist to reinvigorate the local economy. This, in turn, will have a positive economic effect on communities living in the area.

UNMAS in Iraq recently organized a field visit to the ongoing mine clearance site in Shatt al-Arab district of Basra together with the national mine action authority, the Directorate of Mine Action (DMA).

Supported by the EU, this is the first time UNMAS conducted a legacy clearance project on a large scale. The field to be cleared was Iraq's largest forest of palm trees and farms. This

clearance project will support the revitalization of agriculture.

UNMAS's implementing partner in Iraq, Al-Khebra Al-Fania, a national demining company will clear large swathes of fertile lands that were polluted during the Iraqi-Iranian war, and make the land accessible to its original inhabitants who were displaced by the explosive threats.

"We are very grateful for the EU's generous contribution to the area, which will provide numerous acres of

farming land and allow people, who suffer from housing issues and lack of livelihoods, to once again populate this rich part of Iraq," said UNMAS Iraq's Chief of Mine Action Programme, Pehr Lodhammar. "This important work highlights the EU's commitment to helping Iraq on its path to eradicate the threat of explosive hazards and help vulnerable communities," he added.

UNMAS would like to thank the EU for its continuous support to vulnerable and displaced communities in Iraq.



UNMAS in Iraq and the Directorate of Mine Action (DMA) collaborated to update 13 National Mine Action Standards (NMAS)

Baghdad, 24 September 2021 - UNMAS in Iraq and the Directorate of Mine Action (DMA) collaborated to update 13 National Mine Action Standards (NMAS) over the last year for a more gender-inclusive and technically-updated approach. The DMA, as the national mine action authority, has a crucial role in regulating, managing, and coordinating the response to explosive ordnance in Iraq which has resulted in rendering safe hundreds of thousands of pieces of explosive ordnance in key infrastructure sites. Iraq NMAS are considered the national regulations that govern mine action activities in

Iraq, for the DMA to better control and manage mine action activities

according to the most recent international standards and norms.



UNMAS in Iraq recently conducted an assessment to determine the impact of the clearance activities by UNMAS and its partners over the past four years

Baghdad, 26 September 2021 - UNMAS in Iraq recently conducted an assessment to determine the impact of the clearance activities by UNMAS and its partners over the past four years. Impact is assessed in terms of intended use of the cleared land, enhanced safety of the communities living there and changes in the livelihood of the people living there.

The study found that in general, community members were pleased with mine action activities and that some semblance of "normal" life was returning. However, more clearance

and development is needed for all communities to return home safely and to begin rebuilding their lives.

One prominent story is the case of Al-Batool hospital in Mosul. This acclaimed maternity hospital that boasts the best obstetricians in Ninewa governorate was destroyed by ISIL and when it was retaken, UNMAS teams cleared the area. Once cleared, the destroyed parts of the hospital were replaced with shipping containers until a more sustainable building could be built. Currently, there are 837 staff members working there, 65% women,

helping 150 patients every day. A bigger modern hospital is currently being built in the area to host even more patients.



Czech Republic, Estonia, and Slovakia contribute more than USD 334,041 to Humanitarian Mine Action in Iraq



Baghdad, 27 September 2021 – Unexploded artillery shells, grenades, missiles and improvised explosive devices left behind by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), threaten the lives of civilians, and children in particular, in many parts of Iraq.

As a result, the continued threat of destabilization is substantially heightened through the presence of explosive ordnance in residential and rural communities. This ensures that a continued "de facto battle" exists, resulting in lives lost with no enemy in sight.

The legacy of ISIL will continue to be a problem as long as explosive ordnance are scattered in houses, neighbourhoods, and across communities, posing a threat to civilians set on rebuilding their lives post-ISIL occupation.

The United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) continues to clear these hazards with generous support from many governments. UNMAS

thanks the Governments of the Czech Republic, Estonia and the Slovak Republic for their contributions to this life-saving work. These contributions make it possible for UNMAS to ensure that technical support, explosive ordnance risk education, and explosive hazard management advance in 2021/2022.

This contribution from the three generous donors will enable UNMAS to assist the Government of Iraq in achieving the vision of an Iraq free from explosive ordnance.

"Reconstruction, stability and security of Iraq remains one of the key priorities of the Czech Government in the entire Middle East region. We are therefore happy to contribute to achieving this ultimate goal through such concrete, visible and tangible activities as the UNMAS demining projects have proven to be", said Chargé d'Affaires a.i of the Czech Embassy in Baghdad.

"For Estonia, mine action is a priority area in our Government's Strategy for

Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Assistance. Therefore, we are proud to continue with our contribution to UNMAS to support the Mine Action programmes in Iraq," stated a representative of the Government of Estonia.

Mr. Marian Majer, State Secretary of the Ministry of Defence of the Slovak Republic: "Mines are a terrible legacy of war. People fall victim to them every day - often long after the actual fighting has ended. The affected countries need our support and that is why Slovakia financially supports the UNMAS's essential role in Iraq. Slovakia is committed to mine action in all its aspects and we commend UNMAS efforts that contributes to safe return of Iraqi people to their homes and to the socioeconomic reconstruction of communities."

Commenting on the contribution, Pehr Lodhammar, UNMAS Iraq Senior Programme Manager, stated: "The presence of explosive ordnance will continue to impede the safe and dignified return of displaced communities and the resumption of livelihoods until cleared. UNMAS is committed to facilitating a safe environment for Iraqis to live their lives unimpeded, and without fear."



WHO and MoH launch mass vaccination campaign in Kirkuk

Kirkuk, 4 September 2021 - WHO Iraq with the Ministry of Health and the Directorate of Health in Kirkuk launched a mass vaccination campaign in Kirkuk, where questions concerning the COVID-19 vaccines from the participants were answered. The perception of at least 100 participants was changed and received their first dose of the vaccine on the spot.

In partnership with the Ministry of Health and the Directorate of Health in Kirkuk WHO Iraq conducted three days' workshop that targeted 92 journalists, health workers, clerics, and public figures, to bust rumors and misinformation around COVID-19 vaccination and sensitizing the Kirkuk community about the importance of vaccines to curb the virus.



Intensifying routine immunization and COVID-19 vaccination

Baghdad, 12 September 2021 – The World Health Organization (WHO) in Iraq in partnership with the Ministry of Health (MoH) of Iraq concluded this week a national consultation with EPI managers and Cold-Chain officers from all Iraqi governorates on intensifying the Routine Immunization and COVID-19 vaccination in Iraq.

Discussions tackled the routine immunization coverage rates amid the current focus on the COVID-19 vaccination in Iraq. Targeting high-risk

areas with multi-antigen campaigns and balancing inoculation measures for both routine immunization and COVID-19 vaccination is a priority for WHO Iraq and MoH.

WHO Iraq Representative Dr Ahmed Zouiten emphasized in his opening remarks the safety of all WHO certified vaccines approved by the Iraqi government and the importance of immunizing at least 10% of the target population by the end of September and 40% by the end of 2021.



Iraq received 100,800 COVID-19 vaccine doses donated by Italy through COVAX

Baghdad, 12 September 2021 – 100.800 of the AstraZeneca (AZ) vaccine have arrived to Iraq, as the first delivery from a pledge of 15 million doses to be donated to COVAX by Italy. This donation of doses to COVAX comes on top of the USD 470 million Italy has pledged to the Gavi COVAX Advance Market Commitment (Gavi COVAX AMC).

In May this year, as chair of the G20, Italy hosted The Global Health Summit alongside the European Commission, which saw seven European countries pledge to share over 100 million vaccine doses to priority countries like Iraq, boosting short-term supplies.

This donation by Italy allows COVAX to deliver more vaccines in the third quarter of this year, before supply from COVAX purchase agreements increases in Q4, meaning that more people will

be able to access vaccines now, at a time when variants are a major threat to global health and stability.

"Italy stands by Iraq and supports its efforts in tackling the Covid-19 pandemic" said the Ambassador of Italy, H. E. Mr. Bruno Pasquino, attending the delivery of the vaccines at the Baghdad International Airport. "This donation is a tangible sign of the solidarity and friendship ties between Italy and Iraq, with a view to contributing to economic, social and sanitary recovery."

"In continuation of the efforts of the Ministry of Health to provide vaccines from various solid global origins, and with the support of the World Health Organization and UNICEF, the Ministry of Health is happy to receive a plane loaded with more than one hundred thousand doses of the anti-

Coronavirus vaccine thanks to a donation of the Italian Government through the COVAX Global Facility," stated Dr. Riyadh Al-Hilfi, Director General of the Public Health Directorate of the Ministry of Health.

"UNICEF thanks the Government of Italy for its donation of vaccines to Iraq through the COVAX facility. We look forward to more vaccines becoming available in the country as other COVAX partners share their doses of vaccines and help secure full funding for the global initiative and more vaccines," stated Sheema SenGupta, UNICEF Representative in Iraq.

"In WHO, we believe that we are only safe when we all are safe, and we will control this pandemic only when all people eligible for the vaccine have been vaccinated. The Iraqi government and its partners have deployed tremendous efforts in securing safe and effective vaccines for Iraqi people and through this type of solidarity demonstrated today by the Italian people, we are a step closer to achieving our goals." Dr Ahmed Zouiten WHO Iraq Representative.

These doses donated by Italy are produced by the AstraZeneca manufacturing network. Donating through COVAX helps to increase vaccine coverage, and helps to bring an end to the acute phase of the pandemic.



IOM Iraq provides assistance to ensure that IDPs, returnees and host communities have increased access to essential healthcare services

Baghdad, 14 September 2021 - "I came to this health center in order to protect myself, my family and my society and to reduce COVID-19 infections in general by getting the vaccine," said 29-year-old Ihab Mohammed from Baghdad.

"My family and I, we follow the instructions of the Ministry of Health because it would be unreasonable for a doctor to vaccinate if it would cause harm. Most of the people I know are vaccinated. It has become widespread in my area," Ihab continued, "but there are some individuals who are hesitant to receive the vaccine because of rumors that have spread on social media. Many people do not turn to specialists in order to verify the information provided there. Therefore, raising awareness of these matters is very important and useful."

"We are very thankful for all the awareness campaigns led by various organizations and the Ministry of Health, and we hope that things will return to normal as soon as possible and that this pandemic will end," he expressed.

"Lastly, people must decide to protect society and restore normalcy – they must receive the vaccine, otherwise the situation will remain as it is, with all the complications, continued spread and large number of cases," Ihab concluded.

With support from the Governments Germany and Canada, IOM Iraq provides assistance to Hay Sumer Primary Healthcare Center (PHCC) in Baghdad's Al Ressaqa district, a healthcare facility working to ensure that IDPs, returnees and host communities have increased access to

essential healthcare services. In addition to awareness-raising initiatives, IOM Iraq's interventions include trainings for health workers on key health topics and the provision of essential medical supplies such as medication, consumable products and personal protective equipment, as well as ambulatory services for emergency case referrals.



WHO concludes a workshop focused on COVID-19 prevention, vaccination, and RCCE issues

Duhok, 14 September 2021 – WHO Iraq, in partnership with Duhok Department of Health (DoH) and in coordination with the ministries of health at Central and Kurdistan Region levels, concluded on yesterday a 3-day workshop focused on COVID-19 prevention, vaccination, and RCCE issues.

The workshop is part of the WHO Roadshows and was attended by health professionals, media outlets' managers, clerics, and community figures in Duhok Governorate.

More than 40 religious' leaders representing Muslims, Christians, and Yazidis took part in the sessions and enriched them with contributions related to vaccine hesitancy and certain COVID-19 mal perceptions.

The workshop included a Mass-Vaccination event where over 50 people with special needs got vaccinated. Vaccinated community members welcomed the initiative and thanked WHO and DoH for facilitating their vaccine intake.



COVID19 awareness-raising tours throughout the markets of Baghdad



Baghdad, 21 September 2021 - IOM Iraq, in cooperation with the Rusafa Health Department and Community Police, conducted COVID19 awareness-raising tours throughout the markets of Baghdad's Sumer neighborhood. The

team explained the benefits of the vaccine and the protection it offers individuals, their families and their communities, encouraging them to get vaccinated.

"The cooperation of organizations with

government agencies in raising public awareness is very important. Most people have little information about the vaccine, and I was among those people. We hear a lot of false information from social media and from the street as well, and this is something that worries everyone and makes them hesitate to go to vaccination centers. But after the awareness discussion, I was very encouraged and convinced to go get the vaccine and protect my family and society," said Sumer neighborhood resident Reham Jabar, 45 years old. This awareness campaign was made possible with support from the Governments of Germany and Canada.

IOM Iraq supported a COVID-19 vaccination campaign in Erbil's Debaga camp

Erbil, 2 October 2021 - Vaccination is the most effective tool we have to prevent COVID-19. Unfortunately, IDPs are often left behind and unaccounted for in health systems – a problem made even more dire by the global pandemic. IOM Iraq supported a COVID-19 vaccination campaign implemented by the Emirati Red

Crescent in Erbil's Debaga camp by mobilizing the community to receive the vaccine, address vaccine hesitancy, and tackle misinformation. More than 2000 IDPs were vaccinated.

This vaccination campaign was made possible with support from USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance.



UNICEF and WHO launch “Let’s spread the word – Get Vaccinated” national campaign

Baghdad, 06 October 2021 - UNICEF, in collaboration with World Health Organization (WHO) has supported the Ministry of Health, thanks to financial support of the German Government, in launching today the "Let's spread the word – Get Vaccinated" national campaign to urge communities to get their vaccines as a highly effective tool to prevent COVID-19.

In the words of UNICEF Representative, Sheema SenGupta, “A

COVID-19 vaccine, wearing a mask, staying at least 2 meters away from others, avoiding crowds and washing hands often is the best combination to protect yourself and others from COVID”.

UNICEF will continue working with the Ministry of Health, WHO, and other UN agencies and partners to change behaviors and make sure that everyone in Iraq has all information to get vaccinated. This is the quickest way for life to return to normal in Iraq.



IOM and partners implement a COVID-19 vaccination campaign targeting vulnerable communities

Baghdad, 07 October 2021 – “We were reluctant to get vaccinated due to the rumours, particularly that vaccination would cause negative side effects after two years,” said Muhammad Sultan, 49-year-old resident of Sumer Neighbourhood.

“A few weeks ago, IOM staff [came to our local] market to lead an awareness-raising session about the vaccine and distribute masks and informational brochures. These awareness campaigns have a very positive impact. The staff is working to advise people on the best path for their safety and the safety of their families.”

With support from the government of Germany and Canada, IOM's risk communication and community engagement team conducted informational and awareness-raising activities throughout several Baghdad



neighbourhoods in order to reduce COVID-19 infections and persuade people to receive the vaccine. IOM's team also coordinated with community police, local NGOs, the Directorate of Health and others to implement a vaccination campaign targeting vulnerable communities served by the IOM-supported Hay Sumer Primary Healthcare Center.

“Because of this campaign, many people are heading to vaccination centres – we witnessed this ourselves,”

continued Muhammad. “When we went to register our names, we found the vaccine in high demand, and lots of people from the neighbourhoods ended up getting vaccinated.”

“I went to my wife and talked to her about receiving the vaccine. I convinced her using the same information that I received through the awareness campaign. That's why I advise everyone to get the vaccine: because it provides great protection for us and our families.”

PPE made available for the frontline heroes

Baghdad, 07 October 2021 - With the support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP Iraq) Accelerator Lab Iraq, Science Camp nowadays returns back to develop and produce 3,500 protective face shields

for the medical staff facing the increment numbers of cases infected by the Coronavirus (COVID-19).

These face shields will be distributed for free for the frontline medical staff in the hospitals, with the collaboration

with the local stakeholders like the Iraqi Association for Medical Research & Studies (IAMRS). Thanks to the UNDP team to make this project possible and make the PPE available for the frontline heroes.

Germany and UNICEF work together to support most vulnerable children and respond to COVID-19 in Dohuk Governorate



Dohuk, 7 October 2021 - On 5 October, a joint visit of the acting German Consul General, Sven Mossler, and UNICEF to Dohuk governorate served to assess children rights situation in the area, along with COVID-19 response, and reflect on joint work supporting most vulnerable children in the area.

The first part of the visit focused on Domiz Camp for Syrian Refugees, and children situation in the camp. Acting German Consul General and UNICEF had the opportunity to observe the work done with the financial support of German Government, including a child protection center and Afreen school, which also counts with support from the Netherlands and BPRM.

Thanks to the joint work with national and international partners in the field, UNICEF projects supported by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development through

KfW Development Bank have allowed to improve child protection situation in the camp. Only for 2021, 623 children (331 girls and 292 boys) have completed a full cycle of structured psychosocial support and the same number of parents were involved in a preparatory session at the beginning of the cycle and an evaluation session at the end of the program.

In addition, 144 children (54 girls and 90 boys) were assisted through individual case management and almost 3,250 children and caregivers were reached through awareness raising sessions on child protection issues.

The second part of the visit allowed to better understand COVID-19 response in Azadi Hospital, the biggest hospital in Dohuk Governorate, currently accommodating over 15,000 patients, providing medical services for IDPs, refugees and host communities.

Through the funds provided by the German Government for the work done in the hospital, UNICEF has worked jointly with the Directorate of Health in Duhok with COVID-19 response support, including provision of cold-chain equipment, training courses for the medical teams working at the vaccination center at the hospital, and also supported printing registration cards and books. The vaccine unit at Azadi hospital started the operations on 12 April this year, and till now 44,315 shots were delivered for 30,685 eligible individuals (13,685 of them are fully vaccinated now).

Furthermore, thanks to the WASH component of the project, most hospitals medical liquid wastes are treated as per required standards, which will contribute in reducing pollution impact on the environment by reducing discharging medical liquid waste to open environment. This treatment serves to eliminate the health risk hazards, prevent WASH related communicable diseases spreading among children and their families through reducing medical liquid waste impact on the environment.

These two visits served to showcase the strength of UNICEF and German development cooperation in Iraq and the need to continue working for every child and in the response to COVID-19.

IOM Iraq with partners initiated home-based care for mild COVID-19 cases in Dohuk

Dohuk, 10 October 2021 - Mild COVID-19 infections can be managed at home if monitored by a healthcare worker and if infection prevention and control measures are put in place. As a pilot initiative outside of camp settings, IOM Iraq teams collaborated with the health authorities in Dohuk to initiate

home-based care for mild COVID-19 cases. Health facility staff involved were trained and equipped to monitor people in home-isolation until they recovered.

This initiative was supported by the German Government - Auswärtiges Amt.



WHO Representative meets acting Minister of Health

Baghdad, 26 October 2021 - WHO Iraq Representative, Dr Ahmed Zouiten, met with Dr. Hani Al-Eqaby, acting Minister of Health, to finalise the last preparations for the COVID-19 vaccination campaign targeting the whole territory of Iraq.



IOM assessments highlight evolving economic needs under unprecedented impacts of COVID-19 in Iraq

Baghdad, 14 October 2021 - Necessary measures to contain the spread of COVID-19 combined with volatile oil prices and a decrease in the value of the Iraqi dinar brought an end to two years of sustained economic growth in Iraq, heavily impacting individuals and communities affected by conflict and displacement.

To ensure that livelihood programming continues to be responsive to the evolving needs of Iraqi communities, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) conducted 29 Labour Market Assessments (LMAs) – studies involving individual interviews and focus group discussions to help IOM Iraq teams better understand the realities of local markets; the hiring preferences of employers; and the skills, needs and goals of jobseekers, consumers and others.

The results of these assessments have been published alongside LMA reports from 2020 and 2019 in a collection titled Labour Market Opportunities and Challenges. They highlight the considerable livelihood needs remaining as communities recover from the ongoing impacts of COVID-19 and years of conflict.

“As conditions evolve, so must our response. Together with our community consultation process, the LMA findings help us understand how we can adjust how we provide livelihoods programming to have the greatest



impact, with an eye to inclusivity and sustainability,” said Clementine Favier, Head of IOM Iraq’s Returns and Recovery Unit.

The LMA findings identified the types of vocational training, on-the-job training and business support packages that would be most beneficial in each surveyed district, information that is already being used to focus funding and plan interventions.

The LMAs showed that 74 per cent of jobseekers preferred cash over voucher or in-kind livelihood assistance. The assessments also suggested a preference for entrepreneurship, with about 70 per cent of jobseekers preferring to run their own business over being employed in the private sector. These findings emphasize the instability of the private sector, where price hikes and informal working conditions are common.

It is estimated that Iraq’s economy shrunk by 10.4 per cent in 2020, the largest contraction since 2003. This deterioration demands a robust, targeted response, particularly in areas previously occupied by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, which continue to suffer from a lack of services and extensive damage to infrastructure.

Market assessments and thematic reports are also conducted for IOM’s Enterprise Development Fund to further analyse emerging opportunities and challenges facing the Iraqi economy.

IOM Iraq carries out LMAs with support from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID); KfW, the German Development Bank; and the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM).

Healthcare

Groundbreaking ceremony: New Primary Health Care Center serving host community and refugees in Kawergosk

Erbil, 5 September 2021 - Dr. Saman Barzinji, Minister of Health; Mr. Omed Khoshnaw, Governor of Erbil; and Ms. Yuko Doi, Officer-In-Charge for UNHCR Erbil Office, took turns in laying the cornerstone for the new Primary Health Care Centre (PHCC) that will serve the Kawergosk area.

The new PHCC will serve refugees, IDPs, and host community members and is one of the first in a series of projects to be undertaken under the new Camp-to Neighbourhood Approach, which includes service facilities that serve all communities present and promote integration and cooperation.

Dr. Dlovan M. Jalal, Director of Erbil Directorate of Health; Ms. Srwa Rasul, Director of the Directorate of Migration and Crisis Response; and the Mayors of Khabat and Kawergosk also attended the groundbreaking ceremony.



National version of the Global Patients' Safety Action Plan 2021 – 2030 launched



Baghdad, 19 September 2021 - On World Patient Safety Day WHO Iraq and Ministry of Health of Iraq joined World to promote safe and respectful maternal health and childbirth, by conducting a joint scientific symposium together with UNFPA Iraq, UNICEF Iraq to advocate for pregnant woman and baby health.

While participating in the launching of the National version of the Global Patients' Safety Action Plan 2021 – 2030, Dr Ahmed Zouiten, WHO

Representative in Iraq, stressed that providing safe and respectful health care for pregnant woman and babies is one of the top priorities for WHO in Iraq health strategy.

Iraq is on the track to prepare for a long-term Patient Safety policies and national strategic plan 2021-2030 to build the capacities of health workers and to review and update the currently patient safety manuals in line with the global plan for patient safety.

Improving access to maternal care in Ramadi

Ramadi, 9 September 2021 - The rehabilitated Ramadi Teaching Hospital for Women and Children serves over 400,000 women across Anbar, improving their access to essential maternal care.

The Ramadi Teaching Hospital for Women and Children was one of the first hospitals in Anbar to restart its operations after the city's liberation from ISIL in 2016. Even though the hospital underwent significant damages during the fighting, they re-opened their facilities to help cover the urgent healthcare needs for people returning.

"It was difficult as most parts of the hospital were either damaged or destroyed. We worked hard to restore small parts of the hospital. I remember staff working day and night to clear the rubble, wash the floors and fix some equipment. This was only possible because we worked together as a team," shares Dr. Monem Aftan Ayed, Director of Ramadi Teaching Hospital.

At that point, for families returning, access to healthcare services was challenging since most of the primary health centers and hospitals were either damaged or destroyed. Therefore, the hospital staff used a small part of the facility to restart services.

"One of the main difficulties we faced at the time was maneuvering through the collapsed infrastructure, shortage of medicines, operating equipment, and a dedicated space for post-operative and infant care. We worked tirelessly to accommodate and treat all patients who came through the hospital doors. However, we still lacked adequate space and facilities," says Dr. Tamader Al Aloosi, 51, a specialist in obstetrics and gynecology at the hospital.

In early 2020, UNDP completed the large-scale rehabilitation of Ramadi Teaching Hospital for Women and Children. The work included rehabilitating operating theatres, labor



wards, water, electrical systems, and doctor's accommodation. The 260-bed modern medical facility serves over 400,000 women in Anbar with specialized maternity services.

"Today, the hospital looks nothing like what it did a few years ago. The hospital's rehabilitation has turned from a collapsed building that lacked adequate facilities to a great hospital. It is filled with all the equipment and furniture we need to provide quality services to expectant mothers and newborn infants," adds Dr. Tamader.

The rehabilitation included significant parts of the hospital, such as the operating theatres, water piping, electrical systems, patient wards, and staff accommodation. UNDP also supplied medical equipment for natal care, testing, complex surgeries, and screening. Currently, the hospital serves over 6000 women every month. Of which, over 1,200 are complex cases and more than 600 are surgeries requiring intensive post-operative care.

"As a hospital, we are doing so much better today. We provide medical services to all residents across Anbar. Going forward, we need to stay up to date with our skills and facilities to keep up with the innovations in health care," says Dr. Nibras Rabie, 43, Senior Medical Officer at the hospital.

As the only such facility in Anbar, the



hospital serves women from areas such as Heet, Haditha, Anah, Rawa, and Al Qaim. They have over 1450 qualified medical and administrative staff to provide quality maternal care to patients.

"All my deliveries were done successfully in this hospital. When I returned post-ISIL, I found it hard to imagine that life could ever go back to normal, let alone access quality health care facilities. But three deliveries later, I am proud of the excellent services and facilities this hospital offers," says Mona Sattar, 27, who recently gave birth to her third child.

The rehabilitation of the Ramadi Maternity Hospital was implemented by UNDP's Funding Facility for Stabilization with funding from the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), provided through KFW Development Bank.

To further improve facilities, UNDP is also supplying equipment to upgrade the hospital facilities, such as MRI and CT scanners, oxygen generators, backup power generators and a central air conditioning system. In addition, the support will also include establishing a waiting hall, dedicated clinic for external consultations, water storage tower, laboratory, and teaching hall.

Ministry of Planning, UNFPA conduct workshop on national priorities for population development and policy in Iraq

Sulaymaniyah, 9 September 2021 - UNFPA and the Ministry of Planning concluded today a two-day workshop focused on national priorities for population development.

The National Committee on Population and Development members discussed the current population trends and interventions undertaken by the Ministry of Planning and line ministries to strengthen human capital development in Iraq. They also went over the existing gaps in the national population policy.

Presentations highlighted the thematic areas of the 2014 National Population Policy, progress with its implementation and challenges. The Committee also highlighted key changes that should take place during the revision of the Policy. Discussions also tackled the demographic dividend and the indicators that will help achieve sustainable development.

Speaking at the event, the Minister of Planning, Dr Khalid Battal Al-Najim, spoke about the importance of evidence-based policies and reaffirmed the commitment of the Iraqi Government to holding the National Housing & Population Census, calling



for a joint effort in revising the population policies: "The population policy should be inclusive. All ministries should collaborate in revising the policy to ensure commitment - including financial, engagement and proper implementation".

Dr Rita Columbia, UNFPA Representative to Iraq, emphasised the need for the revised population policy to increase investments in human capital, focusing on young people and women, facilitate youth and women's access to financial resources and jobs, and improve conditions for women to be able to work and take care of their

families.

The workshop was concluded successfully by presenting a plan of action for revising and updating the national population policy 2014.

Participating at the workshop were director generals from and representatives from the Ministry of Planning, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Women Empowerment Department of Council of Ministers, Ministry of Health & Environment, Ministry of Labor & Social Affairs, Ministry of Displacement & Migration, Ministry of Education, Awkaf representatives, governmental partners and civil society representatives.

Integrating demographic factors into the planning process is crucial for ensuring Iraq reaches sustainability

Baghdad, 15 September 2021 - UNFPA & the Department of Human Development at the Ministry of Planning organized a workshop for Directors of Planning from 15 Governorates from across Iraq to enhance their knowledge and works towards population issues and trends and showcase the importance of taking demographics changes and tendencies into consideration in the planning process.



UNFPA and partners strengthened the capacity of junior resident doctors on pregnancy and delivery complications

Baghdad, 17 September 2021 - Having resident doctors capable of providing emergency maternal obstetric care is crucial to respond swiftly to emergency pregnancy complications.

UNFPA, with the Ministry of Health and support from Sida - Styrelsen för Internationellt Utvecklingssamarbete, strengthened the capacity of junior resident doctors on pregnancy and delivery complications. The workshop held included topics like infection

prevention, clinical management of rape and inclusion of women disabilities sessions.



World Suicide Prevention Day commemorated in Duhok



Duhok, 13 September 2021 - On World Suicide Prevention Day (10 September), Azhee Foundation and the University of Duhok organized a conference about suicide prevention with support from IOM Iraq. The conference provided a platform to engage academics and media professionals in a discussion to exchange ideas about the important role of academia in researching suicide and the vital role of media in influencing the community's perspective about suicide. The event hosted families and friends of suicide victims, academics, media

professionals, and representatives from local and international NGOs working on suicide prevention.

Sakar Zerine, from the Azhee Foundation, spoke to Rudaw about the aims of the conference and how academic institutions, as well as the media, can play a role in suicide prevention efforts.

IOM Iraq's Mental Health and Psychosocial Support programme prioritizes suicide prevention activities as one of its key strategic priorities.

This conference was made possible with support from the German Embassy Baghdad.

Following decades of war, sanctions and civil conflict, suicide prevention has emerged as a top concern in communities throughout Iraq and a key priority of IOM Iraq's Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) Programme.

A recent article in the *Intervention Journal* by IOM Iraq's MHPSS Programme Coordinator, Dr. Hatem Alaa Marzouk, introduces factors related to the phenomenon of suicide in Iraq and outlines the aims and activities that form IOM's response, including steps taken to support the Government of Iraq in developing the National Suicide Prevention Strategy and efforts undertaken towards increasing community awareness about the issue and strengthening the ability of community members to recognize and respond to people who are at risk.

Read the piece here: <https://bit.ly/3kg8fsg>

IOM Iraq's suicide prevention activities have been made possible with support from the German Federal Foreign Office, USAID including the Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) and the UK Foreign Commonwealth Office (FCO).

Young people face many challenges and situations that could affect their mental health and often leads to depression

Baghdad, 16 September 2021 - To ensure young girls and boys have access to proper counselling within the youth centres, UNFPA organised a training for 27 social workers from the Ministry of Youth and Sports on counselling skills and ethics, mental health and psychosocial support guidelines, how to deal with GBV survivors and trauma as well as self-care!



Environment

UNICEF and Ministry of Environment discuss the environmental context in Iraq and the impact of climate change and COVID pandemic on women and children

Baghdad, 29 August 2021 - UNICEF Representative, Sheema Sen Gupta, met the Minister of Environment, His excellency, Dr Jasim AL-Falahi and they discussed the environmental context in Iraq and the impact of climate change and COVID pandemic on women and children. The Minister explained the role of his Ministry in leading climate processes such as the

National Adaptation Planning (NAP), and the submission of revised National Determined Contributions (NDC).

UNICEF and the Ministry of Environment will continue to work together to strengthen environment and public health services in Iraq, through partnerships on capacity development, system strengthening and behavior change.



Iraq is committed to climate action - The Government of Iraq approved its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) document

Baghdad, 14 October 2021 - Did you know that Iraqi Government will participate in the 2021 United Nations Conference on Climate Change, enhancing the country's position in combating Climate Change?

UNDP is running a two-day workshop to support the Iraqi delegation in the pre-event by providing technical training that includes building their negotiating skills. UNDP is proud to support climate action towards cleaner and greener Iraq.

On 14 October 2021, in a milestone moment, the government of Iraq approved its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) document and officially submitted to the secretariat of the United Nation Framework Convention on Climate Change



(UNFCCC).

UNDP Iraq is proud to have supported Iraq in developing this critical document which will direct Iraq's

climate policy going forward.

Next step will be to develop the Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions (NAMA) for the country.

Iraq faces a multifaceted water crisis



Baghdad, 17 October 2021 - Iraq faces a multifaceted water crisis impacting water supply and quality throughout the country. Conflict-affected communities such as those experiencing or recovering from periods of displacement are particularly vulnerable to the effects of this crisis.

After being displaced from 2014 to 2020, Wafaa returned to her home area

of Saqlawiya district.

"I currently live in a group of tents on the land that I own. We herd sheep, and my children and grandchildren live with me. We had a problem with water and sanitation, and we did not have a toilet as the situation is somewhat difficult to live in," said Wafaa, who lived in Ameriyat al-Fallujah camp until her return to Saqlawiya.

As part of efforts to support returnees in areas previously occupied by ISIL, IOM Iraq has built sanitary facilities including toilets and installed water tanks in Saqlawiya.

"After the construction of sanitary facilities and water tanks, the situation has changed. We can now store water after suffering due to water scarcity and difficulties preserving it. We can now make use of the tanks to meet our needs, especially since water is a necessary thing for every human being," Wafaa concluded.

Iraq's water crisis is expected to persist and requires urgent action to mitigate looming humanitarian, economic, security and social implications (including on population movements).

This construction of sanitary facilities and water tanks was supported by USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance

Climate change awareness raising workshop held in Erbil

Erbil, 24 October 2021- UNEP-Iraq in partnership with UNDP and Ministry of Environment conducted a two-day training workshop in Erbil on Climate Change within the implementation of the Iraq National Adaptation Plan Project (NAP) aiming at "building the institutional capacity to advance the National Adaptation Plan process in Iraq" to raise awareness of stakeholders (including vulnerable groups and the private sector) on current and future climate change scenarios, socio-economic and environmental impacts, priority actions

and investment opportunities to increase resilience to climate change across Iraq.

Representatives from Ministry of Environment and Directorate of Environment of Kurdistan, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Higher Education, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Water Resources, Ministry of Health and civil society organizations participated in the awareness raising workshop. In the opening session, Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Environment, Dr. Kamran, has stressed on the importance of the

UNEP workshop to raise awareness of key stakeholders of the alarming impacts of climate change in Iraq and the need to mobilize efforts and resources to address these impacts. "This workshop is the first in a series of planned workshops to showcase the serious implications of climate change for the country", the Deputy Ministry expressed.

Mr. Issa, Director General of the Technical Department, thanked UNEP for supporting this workshop, and he confirmed that Ministry of Environment will continue working

Climate change awareness raising workshop held in Erbil (continued)



closely with UNEP on the campaign targeting other governorates in Iraq to address the impacts of climate change in the country. "Rising temperatures, intense droughts, declining precipitation, desertification, salinization, and the increasing

prevalence of dust storms are evident incidents we already started to experience", Mr. Isaa added.

The training provided presentations on climate risk and early warning systems followed by a presentation on the use of GIS to support adaptation measures. A

presentation on the impacts of climate change on health, agriculture, water resources, biodiversity and human settlements was also facilitated. This was followed by hands-on group exercises on identifying extreme weather events and developing climate scenarios and priority actions to increase resilience to climate change. The workshop also included discussions and reflections on the priority sectors most affected by the climate change in the country and the necessity to develop short and medium strategies to address these impacts. It also created space for discussion on current civil society lead climate adaptation initiatives.

UNEP National Officer and a National Consultant in Iraq participated in the preparation of lectures, training and discussions, whether by attendance or through zoom applications.

Culture

Emmanuel Macron, President of France visits UNESCO works in Mosul

Mosul, 31 August 2021 - President Macron's visit to the city of Mosul carries an important message of support and hope for Moslawis who suffered through a violent and oppressive occupation for four years that nearly ripped the soul from a city that has been a cultural and religious crossroads for centuries. Mosul is among the larger and more historically significant cities of the Arab World.

Macron was welcomed by Paolo Fontani, UNESCO Representative to Iraq, Fr. Olivier Poquillon O.P., in charge of Our Lady of the Hour, Najm al-Jubouri, Governor of Nineveh, Fuad Hussein, Iraqi Minister of Foreign Affairs, Monseigneur Najib Mikhael Moussa O.P., Archbishop of Mosul, Saad Kambash, President of the Sunni Waqf of Iraq, Monseigneur Raed Adel, in charge of the Syriac Catholic Churches in Mosul, local government, and SBAH, actively involved in the reconstruction and rehabilitation of the historic landmarks of Mosul.

The French President toured the Al-Nouri Mosque Complex being rebuilt by UNESCO with Rakan Al-Allaff, Senior Culture Officer, and witnessed first hand the progress that has taken place on site. He was impressed by the beauty of the mosque and was touched by the damage that struck the Al-Hadba Minaret. During the tour, Macron entered the warehouse in



which all the historical fragments were collected and was impressed by the huge amount of work done by UNESCO in such a short period.

During his tour in Our Lady of the Hour, Dominican Convent, being rehabilitated by UNESCO, Fr. Olivier Poquillon O.P., in charge of Our Lady of the Hour, gave President Macron details about the church and convent built in the 19th century. He witnessed the progress that has taken place on site, in the framework of the UNESCO project to Revive the Spirit of Mosul, supported by the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Macron highlighted the need to act on the reconstruction of education and cultural landmarks. In this spirit, he commended the work of UNESCO on

the ground as a key accelerator for stability and cohesion in the country.

"We will be with you in order to help rebuild monuments, churches, schools, mosques, minarets, and so on, but we will help as well to build economic opportunities, I am here a few years after the city was destroyed, which witnessed the reconstruction thanks to UNESCO, which I greet," said Emmanuel Macron, President of France.

The battle for Mosul left behind an estimated 8 million tons of rubble and destroyed prominent historical landmarks. Al-Nouri Mosque was destroyed and Our Lady of the Hour, Dominican Convent was damaged.

UNESCO set forth on a path of reconstruction and reconciliation to

President of France visits UNESCO works in Mosul *(continued)*

bring this rich and diverse city, with its pluralistic history at the crossroads of cultures and religions of the Middle East, back to its former glory. At the Kuwait International Conference for the reconstruction of Iraq, in February 2018, UNESCO Director-General, Audrey Azoulay, announced the launch of the Organization's flagship initiative, "Revive the Spirit of Mosul".

"It is through education and culture that Iraqis, men and women alike, will be able to regain control of their destiny and become actors in the renewal of their country", said Audrey Azoulay, UNESCO Director-General.

At its heart, "Revive the Spirit of Mosul" is UNESCO's response for the recovery of Mosul by empowering the population as agents of change involved in the process of rebuilding their city through three main axes: heritage, education and cultural life. The Initiative was born to carry a strong message of hope and resistance to Iraq and to the world: a message that an



inclusive, cohesive and equitable society is the future that Iraqis deserve. As a first major step towards the recovery of Mosul, UNESCO is working on the rehabilitation of Al-Nouri Mosque and its famous Al Hadba leaning minaret, Al-Tahera Church and Our Lady of the Hour, Dominican Convent, funded by the United Arab Emirates. Other donors of the Initiative

include the European Union, the Flanders, The Netherlands, Canada, Japan, Sweden, Italy, Latvia and Germany. Beyond the rehabilitation of architectural landmarks, the initiative includes on-the-job training for young professionals, strengthening the capacities of craftspeople, job-creation opportunities and technical and vocational education.

DSRSG Sólrún Gísladóttir visits UNESCO projects in Mosul

Mosul, 29 September 2021 - The UNESCO team in Mosul welcomed the visit of the DSRSG, Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir, to the Al-Nouri Mosque and Al-Tahera Church in the Old City of Mosul, in the framework of the UNESCO project to Revive the Spirit of Mosul, funded by the United Arab Emirates.

The conflict in Mosul left behind millions of tons of rubble and destroyed prominent historical landmarks. The DSRSG could witness the progress made and get a first-hand briefing of the challenges ahead.

The DSRSG was welcomed by the UNESCO team in Mosul, the local government, Sunni Waqf and the MoC, actively involved in the reconstruction and rehabilitation of the historic landmarks of Mosul. UNESCO explained the wider implications of the programme which involves rehabilitation of the historic urban fabric of Mosul, including houses of historic character, churches, mosques,



schools and other public buildings. Moreover, within the framework of the Revive the Spirit of Mosul Initiative, UNESCO seeks to promote reconciliation and a return to normalcy by supporting programmes in education and which focus on the cultural life of the city.

As a first major step towards the recovery of Mosul, UNESCO is working

on the rehabilitation of Al-Nouri Mosque and its famous Al Hadba leaning minaret, Al-Tahera Church and Our Lady of the Hour, Dominican Convent, funded by the United Arab Emirates. Other donors of the Initiative include the European Union, the Flanders, The Netherlands, Canada, Japan, Sweden, Italy, Latvia and Germany.

French Ambassador to Iraq visited Al-Saa'a Conventual Church

Mosul, 27 September 2021 - Éric Chevallier, French Ambassador to Iraq, visited Al-Saa'a Conventual Church to witness the progress that has taken place, in the framework of the #ReviveTheSpiritOfMosul initiative supported by the European Union and United Arab Emirates. He expressed appreciation for UNESCO's efforts in restoring this church.



IOM Iraq supports coordinated efforts to rehabilitate the Anglican church in Khanaqin District

Baghdad, 08 September 2021 - Representatives from IOM Iraq's community stabilization team recently visited the Anglican church in Baghdad, where Reverend Fayez Jerjes, leader of the Anglican church and Episcopal congregation in Iraq, welcomed them. They discussed coordinating efforts to rehabilitate the Anglican church in Khanaqin District, Diyala Governorate, an important and

prominent landmark. As an IOM Iraq quick impact project – smaller-scale, rapidly implemented projects to improve community services and infrastructure – the rehabilitation process is planned to be completed soon.

This activity was supported by the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS).



UNESCO started reconstructing the next group of 75 historic houses in Mosul



Mosul, 15 September 2021 - Today, UNESCO started reconstructing the next group of 75 historic houses in Mosul, thanks to support by the European Union.

T o g e t h e r , w e #ReviveTheSpiritOfMosul!

The scope of the proposed action is to foster resilience, cultural identity, social cohesion and inter-community reconciliation through the creation of job opportunities and the development of youth skills among IDPs/returnees of the Old City of Mosul's local communities, as well as applying the

same approach to the recovery of urban cultural heritage through skills development and job creation for urban youth in Basra. The overall objective is to promote the stability and socio-economic development of Iraq. The specific objective for the urban recovery of Mosul and Basra's Old Cities is to foster and improve community resilience and livelihood.

The project started in March 2019 and ends in November 2021. Total budget is US\$ 22,858,000 donated by the European Union.

EU funding will promote social

cohesion and reconciliation through the restoration and reconstruction of historic urban landscapes. The program will also fund the urban revitalisation of portions of the old city of Basra, another highly significant historical city of Iraq. The priority areas for support are youth livelihoods in historic urban areas, as well as the rehabilitation of (primarily but not strictly) cultural heritage assets, resources, skills and knowledge.

In both old cities, urban reconstruction projects will be implemented jointly with job creation and skills development, responding to a severe lack of work opportunities, especially among young people, internally displaced persons and returnees. Some 1,500 young people will be provided with training by recognised training providers, combined with on-the-job training for semi-skilled and unskilled youth labourers. Cultural events will also be organised around restored sites to strengthen social cohesion and reinforce cultural identities around urban heritage.

The EU High Representative visits Erbil Citadel

Erbil, 7 September 2021 - Josep Borrell, EU High Representative, visited Erbil Citadel, a UNESCO World Heritage Site in the presence of the Governor, the Mayor of Erbil and EU Ambassador in Iraq. He was briefed on the progress of the EU funded project "Support to Livelihoods through Cultural Heritage Development" on the site by Mr. Junaid Sorosh-Wali, Chief of Culture, and the project team and appreciated the achievements. The project is implemented in partnership with the High Commission for Erbil Citadel Revitalization.

Erbil Citadel is one of the oldest inhabited settlements in the world!

The visit of Mr. Josep Borrell, EU High Representative, to the World Heritage site of Erbil Citadel, where UNESCO is implementing the EU funded project "Support to Livelihoods through Cultural Heritage Development", highlights the importance of the EU's support to this project using culture as driver for socio-economic development and social cohesion through creation of jobs in cultural heritage rehabilitation and development, likewise the EU funded project "Reviving Mosul and Basra Old Cities".



The first Joint Technical Committee of the project “Support to Livelihoods through Cultural Heritage Development” held in Erbil

Erbil, 9 September 2021 - The first Joint Technical Committee of the project “Support to Livelihoods through Cultural Heritage Development” implemented by UNESCO, in



partnership with High Commission for Erbil Citadel Revitalization (HCECR) and ILO, and generously funded by the European Union through the EU Regional Trust Fund in response to the Syrian crisis (the EU Madad Fund), was successfully held in the presence of the donor's representative and chaired by the Head of HCECR. The Committee reviewed the progress and achievements as well as the main challenges of the project and endorsed the workplan for the way forward.

UNESCO, the European Union and the HCECR are implementing a project in Erbil Citadel to ensure dignified, sustainable livelihoods and create

economic opportunities for Syrian refugees and Iraqis alike in the cultural heritage sector. The project targets the creation of over 90000 worked days, mainly through:

- Conservation of built heritage and historical buildings (two group of houses + 5 individual buildings).
- Development of the Citadel central pathway, access ramps and trails.
- Renovation and opening of the Citadel's Interpretation and Visitors' Centre.
- Cleaning and maintenance of the Citadel's alleyways and slopes.
- Training and employment of Citadel Guides.

UNESCO celebrates US handover of 3,500-year-old Gilgamesh Tablet to Iraq



Baghdad, 20 September 2021 - UNESCO will celebrate a significant victory in the fight against the illicit trafficking of cultural objects when one of the oldest literary works in history is formally handed back to Iraq by the United States of America at a ceremony at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington DC this Thursday, September 23rd. In addition to this exceptional piece, in July, the US Government facilitated the voluntary repatriation of 17,000 artefacts to Iraq which were discovered to have been looted in recent decades.

The “Gilgamesh Tablet”, also known as the “Gilgamesh Dream Tablet”, is believed to have been looted from a museum in Iraq following the conflict in that country in 1991. In 2007 it was fraudulently introduced into the US art market and in 2019, it was seized by the US Department of Justice.

The restitution of this valuable artefact is the culmination of decades of cooperation between states such as the

United States and Iraq who are both signatories of UNESCO's 1970 Convention, which provides countries with the legal and practical framework to prevent illicit trafficking, and to ensure that recovered items are returned to their rightful place.

The Gilgamesh Tablet's return also symbolises the wider international mobilisation, both by countries and organisations such as UNESCO, to prevent and tackle the illicit trade in ancient artefacts.

By returning these illegally acquired objects, the authorities here in the United States and in Iraq are allowing the Iraqi people to reconnect with a page in their history. This exceptional restitution is a major victory over those who mutilate heritage and then traffic it to finance violence and terrorism.

The theft and illicit trafficking of ancient artefacts continues to be a key funding source for terrorist groups and other organised criminal organisations. “The United States deeply values the

cultural heritage of Iraq. We have worked for nearly 20 years with Iraqi counterparts and American academic and nonprofit institutions to protect, preserve and honour the rich cultural heritage of Iraq,” says Stacy White, Acting Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Educational and Cultural Affairs, US Department of State.

According to Interpol, there has been a considerable global increase in the destruction of cultural heritage due to armed conflict over the past decade.

The authorities in the United States, which is a key stakeholder, representing an estimated 44% of the global art market, have made significant progress in recent years. With the help of an improved legislative framework and the assistance of key cultural institutions, the US Antiquities Trafficking Unit has, in 2021 alone, helped return valuable items to the people of Pakistan, Cambodia, Thailand, Nepal and Sri Lanka.

Made of clay, the Gilgamesh Tablet includes inscriptions in Sumerian, a civilisation of ancient Mesopotamia. It features sections of a Sumerian poem from the “epic of Gilgamesh”, which form parts of epic stories mirrored by the Old Testament, making it one of the world's oldest known religious texts.

UNESCO has, in recent months, been supporting the Iraq National Museum in its efforts to carry out inventory and research work to help safeguard and promote the museum's invaluable collection.

Supporting Iraq's PVE efforts through education

Erbil, 28 August 2021 - UNESCO Iraq presented its approach to Preventing Violent Extremism through Education (PVE-E) and projects implemented under the "Revive the Spirit of Mosul" initiative at the conference on "Iraqi National PVE Efforts, Progress and Challenges" organized by IOM and the Office of the National Security Advisor during 27 – 28 August in Erbil. Mr. Humam Ghanim, UNESCO PVE-E National Project Officer explained the efforts of UNESCO in building the mental defenses of peace in the minds of young men and women through education, as



education is a driver of resilience, recovery, and reconciliation as well as opportunities for partnerships and

cooperation with the ONSA, UN agencies, Civil Society Organizations and Governmental Institutions.

PVE-E training in Ninewa and Al Anbar



Mosul, 12 September 2021 - UNESCO organized four rounds PVE-E training to strengthen the capacities of

526 teachers, 29 principals and education supervisors, and 100 parents from 35 primary schools in Mosul, Al

Ramadi and Al Falluja. Funded by the Government of Canada, UNESCO is collaborating with ZOA and Iraqi Institute for Development (IID) to train, mentor the teachers to cultivate resilience among their pupils.

Capacities of 10,000 teachers, principals, other administrators and parents will be enhanced by the project to further advance the culture of peaceful coexistence.

The Master Trainers trained by UNESCO led the training workshops, which equipped teachers and parents with the educational tools to cultivate learners' resilience against violent extremism in the schools, homes and wider community.

UNICEF strengthens relations and develops partnerships with Iraqi universities and scientific and educational institutions

Baghdad, 15 September 2021 - A new Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed today by the University of Baghdad - College of Education for Women (UoB/CoEduW) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) as part of UNICEF efforts to strengthen relations and developing partnerships with Iraqi universities and scientific and educational institutions.

The University of Baghdad – College of Education for Women and UNICEF will cooperate to promote children's rights in the following strategic areas: (1) produce research papers on the rights and development of children, adolescents, and youth; (2) organize seminars and conferences about issues of children's rights and development; (3) prepare, present and institutionalize training courses for researchers and students in areas

related to child development.

The ceremony was attended by the Dean of the College of Education for Women/ University of Baghdad, Prof.

Dr. Ishaq Saleh Al-Akkam, and Ms. Paula Bulancea Deputy Representative of UNICEF in Iraq.



UNESCO and partners are working to enhance competencies and employment of youth in Iraq

Erbil, 17 September 2021 - UNESCO's training workshop on Competency Based Technical, Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and assessment is underway in Erbil for the Experts from the MoE, MoLSA, DoEs and principles of the Vocational Schools from Baghdad, Basra, Karbala, Ninewa, and Erbil. With funding support from the European Union, UNESCO is working with the Government of Iraq, ministries, TVET schools, technical schools, trainers and employers to enhance competencies and employment of youth in Iraq.



UNICEF and UNESCO Iraq facilitated finalizing the Iraq National Education Strategy 2021 - 2031 (INES)

Erbil, 20 September 2021 - Senior Policy Makers from the PMAC, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Ministry of Planning and Ministry of Finance met in Erbil from 12 - 16 September 2021 to finalize the draft of the INES. Technical assistance in developing the INES was provided by UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning - IIEP with funding support from the World Bank and the Government of Germany (Auswärtiges Amt) for the workshop. The Higher Committee for the Development of INES will present the draft of the INES 2021-2031 to the Cabinet upon finalization.



UNESCO has successfully completed the third workshop on Competency-Based Training and Assessment

Baghdad, 03 October 2021 - UNESCO has successfully completed the third workshop on Competency-Based Training and Assessment, within the TVET reform project - phase 2, funded by the European Union in the presence of the Director-General of the General Directorate of Vocational Education Mr. Saadi Ali Hameed. Participation certificates were distributed to the participants 18 (9 Male, 9 Female) teachers and trainers from Ninewa Vocational School MoE, as well as 3 trainers (2 Male, 1 Female) from Ninewa Vocational Training Center related to MoLSA.



The Chasing a dream – the story of Haya



On International Day of the Girl Child, the inspiring story of a girl attending the child protection center supported by UNICEF thanks to German Government funding.

Baghdad, 10 October 2021 - “A girl represents exactly half of society. Girls can do everything.” – Haya is a 13-year-old girl living in Domiz camp for Syrian refugees in Dohuk, with a clear mindset about her rights and her equal role in society, upholding all values highlighted today marking the International Day of the Girl.

“I love drawing a lot, here my talent has developed more, I can draw everything, in addition to learning a lot

of things that help me develop myself and develop my education.” Haya shares these words while working on a new drawing in the Child Protection Center (CPC). She comes regularly to this UNICEF-supported center run by the Directorate of Social Labor Affairs from Dohuk Governorate. The center, established in Domiz in 2012 to respond to the Syrian refugee crisis and developed with financial support from the German Government, supports that every girl and boy in the camp can continue to reach their full potential. The CPC is part of the child protection programme that UNICEF oversees in Domiz camp, and all staff on the ground is supervised by a team of social

workers. The team provides mental health and psychosocial structured support for children and adolescents with the aim of providing them with new skills to deal with stress and protect themselves and their peers. Thanks to this Project, girls like Haya build their confidence and grow in a safe environment - “Here we are encouraged and strengthened, and we can know what we will be in the future. I would like to become a teacher. I am young now, but this is my dream.”

The International Day of the Girl Child aims to focus attention on the challenges girls face to achieve their dreams and promote girls' empowerment. “Today I am drawing a picture of a girl, and I see her beauty. There is no girl who is not beautiful. All girls are beautiful in their bodies and minds in their own way” says Haya.

Investing in empowering girls and young women and upholding their rights will return to a more prosperous future for Iraq. As Haya says, leaving behind half of the society is not an option if the country wants to overcome all the challenges – conflict, climate change, gender equality - faced by children in their daily lives.

By Anmar Rfaat, UNICEF Iraq

'It will help me to achieve my dream': Helping Iraqi girls stay in school

Basra, 13 October 2021 - When COVID-19 closed schools in Basra, southern Iraq, the academic prospects for many schoolgirls were put at risk. On International Day of The Girl Child, we look at a UN program which is helping girls in the region to keep learning.

The 2,570 primary school children from Basra's Shatt al-Arab district who are involved in the trial project from the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Food Programme (WFP), receive a cash stipend to support their education.

“This will help me achieve my dream of becoming a dentist,” says 12-year-old Baneen, whose family were able to buy her own mobile phone with the money from the programme: mobiles phones were a popular choice amongst the families involved in the project.

“The mobile phones have been helping with online study”, explains Principal Zainab Karim, a headteacher in Basra. “Many schoolchildren live in the same home as several other children, and share the same phone as their moms



and dads. The students benefit from having their own phones. If they don't need a new one for e-learning, the families can use the money to pay for transport, daily expenses, or clothing.” This year, for the first time, the UN agencies have also introduced the ‘Shatt al-Arab Coding Club for Girls,’ which enables the girls in the project to study in a safe environment, learn new tech skills, and innovate to create

digital solutions. The students are proud to be part of the first club of its kind in Iraq. “The sessions have taught me a lot, and they're also fun”, says 12-year-old Narjis. “Also the idea of mixing education with play works because we usually grab our phones for games. Here they include educational games”. When girls stay in school and complete their education, their expanded opportunities help avoid them

'It will help me to achieve my dream': Helping Iraqi girls stay in school *(continued)*

marrying or working too early. The project partners are currently working on a campaign to win hearts and minds to continue educating girls through the pandemic and beyond, and putting into practice the saying, "If you educate a girl, you educate a nation."

Cash and training sessions

Alongside the cash support, UNICEF and WFP, together with local NGO

Mercy Hands and partners including the Directorates of Education and Health, ran extra training sessions to support girls on health, hygiene, nutrition, and key protection issues.

The stipends, which were paid in Iraqi dinars in three instalments at the equivalent of around \$80 each, helped vulnerable families to provide for their children during the academic year. The

instalments were paid periodically to the households during the girls' year in Grade Seven, amounting to a total of \$240 per schoolgirl who stayed in education.

This project championing girls was made possible thanks to the support of Germany, Canada, and multilateral funds.

By UN News.

UNESCO Iraq continues rehabilitation and school furniture provision

Baghdad/Erbil, 13 October 2021 - UNESCO's "Educate A Child" project team, visited Directorate of Education in Nineveh Governorate and held several coordination meetings, followed by field visits to three out of eight schools included in the plan for rehabilitation and school furniture provision. The team also visited Sorouh Foundation for Sustainable Development, UNESCO's Implementing Partner in the targeted governorates in North of Iraq, to discuss the plan for the new academic year.

UNESCO's "Educate A Child" project team, visited 4 out of 10 schools in Erbil Governorate in which UNESCO

completed rehabilitation with school furniture provision in 2020 to observe the impact of UNESCO's intervention. The team also visited the Head of

Planning department in Directorate of Education in Erbil to discuss project activities for the new academic year and the work mechanism.

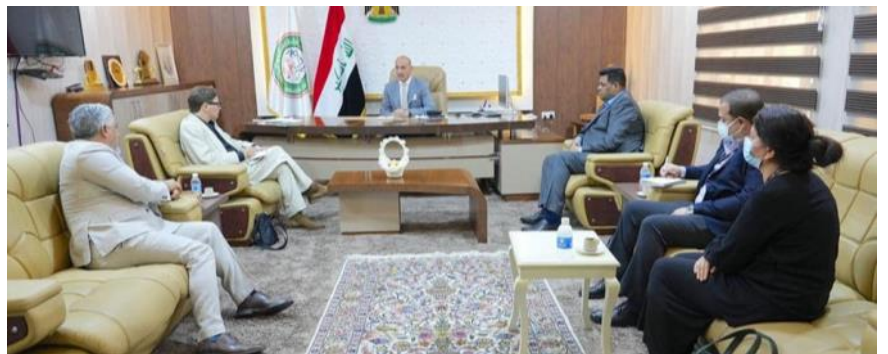


Youth

UNFPA remains committed to young people and their aspirations

Baghdad, 31 August 2021 - UNFPA remains committed to young people and their aspirations.

For this reason, UNFPA youth team met today with the Minister of Youth and Sports, Adnan Darjal, to discuss the continuous collaboration with the Ministry across the country, with discussions focusing on youth empowerment and involvement through the Youth Volunteerism Strategy and the Youth Advisory Boards.



Youth Leadership Programme training of trainers workshop

Baghdad, 02 September 2021 - Youth Leadership Programme and UNDP Accelerator Labs at UNDP Iraq have joined efforts to deliver the Youth Leadership Programme Training of Trainers Workshop for nine youth-serving organizations (YSOs) from

across Iraq.

During the training, we took capacity building with new tools and innovative methodologies to a whole new level!

The tools included Design Thinking, Systems Thinking, and Future Thinking. For the youth involved, the

training enhanced their analytical skills and played a key role in building capabilities to identify priorities, needs, and ideas for potential solutions. This year we engaged the YSOs to identify the existing challenges facing programme implementation and

UNICEF representative in Iraq visits Basra

Basra, 03 September 2021 - Shema Sen Gupta, UNICEF representative in Iraq, made her first visit to Basra this week.

During her visit, she had the opportunity to meet with the first deputy Governor, Mohamed Tahir Al-Tamimi, and thanked him for his commitment to promoting early child education in Basra Governorate.

The representative of UNICEF also met with the second deputy governor, Dr. Zargham Al-Agwadi, and expressed appreciation for his efforts to strengthen relations with UNICEF and advocate for commitment to the rights of the child.

Finally, she also had the opportunity to visit several child-focused and young projects, such as the Transition Project for Girl s' Education, in partnership with WFP, Mercy Hande and Rond Elementary Schools project part of the DMS project and also visited one of the protection units The family, charged with responding to, reducing and



combating violence against women and children, and one of the ten Basra youth centers, targeted through the youth and sports directorates and active youth centers distributed in Basra, aimed at improving knowledge skills and Professional readiness for socially excluded and most vulnerable young people.

During the visit Ms. Sen Gupta inaugurated a recently rehabilitated

hospital sewage treatment plant in Basra, accompanied by Dr. Nehad Qasim, Basra's Deputy Director General of Health.

Within the medical wastewater project, and thanks to Australian Aid, UNICEF has rehabilitated 7 wastewater treatment systems in Basra to eliminate the risk of uncontrolled discharge of sewage to scarce water resources directly and indirectly.

From youth to youth

Baghdad, 09 September 2021 - Young people must have a say in what their lives are really like and for that, UNFPA relies on a transparent and open dialogue with young people across Iraq.

Most recently, Y-Peer IRAQ with support from UNFPA Iraq presented the new Y-Peer manual that was developed and updated in consultation with youth from the Arab Region and UNFPA Arabic.

Young people attending shared their thoughts and ideas and got acquainted with the new manual for peer-to-peer education.



Iraqi Firdaws society held the final conference for project “The Social Survey of Basra’s Youth”

Basra, 27 September 2021 - Iraqi Firdaws society held the final conference for project “The Social Survey of Basra’s Youth” where a number of religious and governmental figures, minorities and youth attended. The conference focused on summarizing the findings of the youth study and designing a plan of action for ministries and governmental institutions to support Youth in Basra. The plan included recommendations to enhance the political and social engagement of youth. This activity was done under the Women Peace & Humanitarian Fund and in partnership with UN Women.



UNICEF statement on violence against children

Baghdad, 24 September 2021 - UNICEF is gravely concerned about the video recently circulated in social media in Iraq, portraying a child brutally mistreated by a family member. This video is a horrific reminder of the scourge of violence against children that must end.

UNICEF commends the rapid reaction of the authorities to this case and encourages anyone aware of such cases to report it to the hotline 497 facilitated by the Community Police.

Nothing ever justifies violence against a child, and it is preventable. However, according to the Multiple Indicator Survey (MICS6) 2018, still 4 out of 5

children in Iraq experience violence at home or in school. UNICEF condemns all acts of violence against children and call for society to protect them from such behaviors.

UNICEF calls on government authorities to strengthen mechanisms to bring perpetrators of such crimes to justice and safeguard the life of the child. Children in Iraq need a safe environment, free of violence and conducive to allow them to develop their full potential.

In order to ensure children's right to privacy and dignity, UNICEF calls for everyone in society to protect children by preventing the distribution of

materials online in which they are subject to violence, bullied or vilified. This content should be only shared with relevant authorities to support the legal prosecution of crimes against children.

UNICEF will continue to support the Governments in both Federal Iraq and the Kurdistan Region with a shared vision that by 2024 children, adolescents and women, especially the most vulnerable, are protected from violence, exploitation, abuse and neglect, in accordance with national legal and policy framework and international standards.

Timeline

For Peace: Our service; Our inspiration

For Peace: Our service; Our inspiration
Baghdad, 14 October 2021 - "We are inspired by our fathers and by our brothers to serve for peace"

These are the words which create the strong bond amongst a group of seven young, inspiring, courageous and skilled female soldiers of the 1st Fijian Infantry Regiment currently serving with the United Nations Guard Unit (UNGU) in Iraq.

In the midst of the intense rays of the mid-morning sun, the women soldiers - two of whom are pioneering Naval Officers with the Fiji Naval Unit - adjust their blue UN embossed berets and take their positions alongside the 55 male soldiers of the Fiji UNGU. While their heartbeats are racing - due to the excitement of receiving their first-ever UN medal honouring their initial three-month service - their heads are held high and their feet march in formation to the beat of the drums. The ceremony has begun.

Of significance is the fact that the auspicious occasion also marks the 51st anniversary of the Republic of Fiji's



independence, and honours the dedication, sacrifice and service of the Fijian troops - past and present - who have served in Iraq since 2004.

Presiding over the ceremony as Chief Guest of Honour was the Deputy Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General, Ms. Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir. She gracefully inspected the Guard of Honour, following which she pinned on shiny, silver UN medals on the left breast pocket of the deserving soldiers. In her remarks, DSRSG Sólrún Gísladóttir congratulated the Fiji battalion and commended them for their "commitment, dedication, grace and humbleness" to provide safety and security for the premises of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and hubs across the country. The parade fall out indicated the end of a colourful and prestigious event, but also marked the start of a customary informal gathering. If one has had the pleasure of being in the company of Fijians, or being welcomed with the

traditional warm greeting of "Bula, Bula", then surely it would come as no surprise when the Fiji UNGU naturally burst into choir with the most upbeat and melodious hymn symbolising the gist of service and sacrifice; the zest of happiness and pride.

Looking around the UNGU camp, the visible smiles on the faces of these commendable seven young women, all between the tender ages of 24 and 28 years, wipe out the worries of being so far away from home and from the embrace of loved ones. They truly fit into the peacekeeping environment and are confident that sharing their time and expertise in the field has an underlying sense of satisfaction that they probably would not experience in a home-setting. As one of the women shyly notes: "I am inspired to serve for peace; to make the world a better place".

Thank You, Fiji, for your service and sacrifice!

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