

UNAMI Herald

Volume 8, Issue 3

May - June 2021



Credible elections can help propel Iraq towards 'safe and prosperous future'



New York, 11 May 2021 - A trusted electoral process with “free and wide-ranging participation” can steer Iraq towards a “safe and prosperous future”, the country’s UN envoy told the Security Council on Tuesday.

“The way to express one’s voice, to make one’s choice, is at the ballot box. This essential democratic exercise requires every voter, candidate, journalist and activist to play their part”, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, Special Representative and head of the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), updated the Ambassadors via video-teleconference from Baghdad.

She said that Iraqis have spoken “loudly and clearly” in demanding fresh elections, and a failure to hold them would cause “significant, lasting, widespread anger and disillusionment” that could further destabilize the country at a time when “strength and unity are desperately needed”.

Stressing that elections due in October will remain “Iraqi-owned and Iraqi-led”, the UN envoy reiterated her call to uphold the integrity of the process, warning that “political pressure and interference, intimidation, and illicit financial flows” would jeopardize their credibility.

Punishing perpetrators

Accountability for serious crimes and human rights violations, such as targeted killings, abductions and intimidation, remains “very, very limited”, the UNAMI chief said, warning that impunity can only embolden perpetrators and further erode trust in the State.

Despite public statements expressing intent to ensure accountability and establish investigative committees, “there have been few prosecutions for the killing and serious injury to protestors”, she said.

Rising unemployment, years of corruption and failing public services had sparked massive anti-Government protests at the start of October 2019. Yet to date, no information has been made public on the patterns of violent attacks against demonstrators and critics, attributed to so-called unidentified armed actors.

Kurdistan

Turning to a curtailment of free expression in the Kurdistan region, Ms. Hennis-Plasschaert told the Council that critics risk intimidation, movement restrictions and arbitrary arrest, adding that some were even prosecuted under national security laws.

Meanwhile, as representatives of the federal and Kurdistan regional governments discuss security

provisions, progress remains slow on administration and reconstruction.

“The absence of an institutionalized dialogue and implementation mechanism between Baghdad and Erbil, is being negatively felt, fuelling misperceptions and distrust”, the UN official said.

One bright note was the passing of the Yazidi Survivors Law which provides reparations and legal recognition of ISIL’s atrocities against women and girls as crimes of genocide and crimes against humanity.

Terrorism

While progress is being made in combating remnants of ISIL, “terrorism continues to claim far too many innocent lives”, said Ms. Hennis-Plasschaert.

She described rockets and improvised explosive devices as “a constant in Iraqi life” used by “cynical and callous armed entities” to destabilize the country.

Notwithstanding the Government’s objective of bringing all arms under State control, “we are witnessing the use of new capabilities by non-State actors, with potentially devastating effects”, she said.

Dismantling camps

Over the past seven months, 16 camps for those internally displaced, have been closed or reclassified.

Often carried out on short notice, the necessary preparations for the safe return of some 50,000 Iraqis to areas of origin had not been made, said the UN envoy.

“When camps are closed before return conditions are appropriate, Iraqis face dire consequences”, she explained pointing to their rejection by local communities, a lack of protection from authorities and even physical attacks against the returnees.

“This is certainly not the path towards recovered and stabilized communities”, said the UNAMI chief.

By UN News.

In this edition ...

Security Council deliberated situation concerning Iraq on its videoteleconference

New York, 11 May 2021 – On its meeting convened on 11 May 2021, the United Nations Security Council deliberated on the situation concerning Iraq. The text of the briefing (as delivered) by the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert on this meeting starts on page 3.

Security Council extends mandate of United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, unanimously adopting resolution 2576 (2021)

New York, 27 May 2021 - The Security Council today extended the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) until 27 May 2022, deciding to provide a strengthened United Nations team in advance of the country's election, to monitor election day and to continue to assist with the vote. *More on page 5.*

SRSO Hennis-Plasschaert: "It is high time for genuine reconciliation, for political stability to prevail."

Erbil, 19 May 2021 – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, participated today at the University of Kurdistan in Erbil at a conference entitled "The Kurdistan Region of Iraq: Unity and Constitution". *The text of the SRSO's remarks at this event starts on page 7.*

UNDP Iraq hosts Interfaith Religious Conference in Erbil on peaceful coexistence to encourage return and reintegration of the displaced

Erbil, 2 June 2021 – The United Nations Development Programme in Iraq (UNDP) in partnership with the Iraqi Ministry of Migration and Displaced (MOMD), the Governorate of Ninewa, and supported by the Government of Denmark, concluded an interfaith religious conference held in Erbil today. *More on page 10.*

Special Adviser Khan briefs Security Council on UNITAD investigations; ISIL crimes against Yazidis constitute genocide, UN investigation team finds

New York, 10 May 2021 - A UN team investigating ISIL atrocities in Iraq has established "clear and convincing evidence" of genocide against the Yazidi religious minority, the Security Council heard on Monday.

In his final briefing to ambassadors, Karim Khan, Special Adviser and Head of the team, known as UNITAD, reported that investigators have reached a "landmark moment" in their work.

They have finalized initial case briefs on two key priorities: attacks against the Yazidi community in the Sinjar region in northern Iraq, and the mass killing of unarmed cadets and military personnel at Tikrit Air Academy in June 2014. *More on page 32.*

Iraq receives the second delivery of COVID-19 vaccines through the COVAX Facility

Baghdad, 12 May 2021 – Despite the continued global shortage and limited production of COVID-19 vaccines, Iraq received on 9th May, the second shipment of AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine contracted through the COVAX Facility. The arrival of the second shipment of exactly 499,200 doses brought the total number of vaccines received by the Iraqi health authorities from COVAX to nearly one million so far.

More on page 18.

On World Press Freedom Day, Iraqi journalists discuss their concerns and demand support

Baghdad, 4 May 2021 - UNESCO Iraq Office and the Communication and Media Commission (CMC), celebrated the WPF through a blended event (online and physical presence), at the headquarters of the CMC in the capital, Baghdad. Journalists from all Iraqi provinces joined the open debate on this day in conjunction with the central celebration being held in Namibia to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the Windhoek Declaration on Press Freedom.

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

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

Security Council deliberated situation concerning Iraq on its 11th May videoteleconference

New York/Baghdad, 11 May 2021

– On its meeting convened on 11th May 2021, the United Nations Security Council deliberated on the situation concerning Iraq. Here is the text of the briefing (as delivered) by the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert at the meeting:

“Mr. President,
Distinguished members of the Security Council,

We are now five months away from all-important national elections, scheduled to take place on October 10.

These elections were a central demand of the protest movement; and yet, many of its members continue to be persecuted with rampant impunity. The assassination of prominent activist Ihab Jawad Al-Wazni just two days ago, by unidentified gunmen in front of his house in Karbala, is yet another tragic example.

Now – the killers, the perpetrators, may think they have silenced a voice. The truth is: they have only amplified it. And our heart goes out to his loved ones and all of those who have lost friends and family in the fight to have their voices heard.

The promise of COVID-19 recovery is in sight with the beginnings of a vaccination campaign; at the same time - Iraq is struggling, like many other countries, with a large recent spike in cases nationwide.

An increase in oil prices has provided some budgetary breathing room, yet the economy remains in dire need of structural reform.

And while Iraqi leaders call for stability as a prerequisite for progress, violent attacks against both civilian and military targets continue with troubling regularity.

Now, these are but a few examples of the daily struggle in Iraq.

Ladies and gentlemen, as we speak, and for the second year in a row, Iraqis have had to mark Ramadan, and will soon celebrate Eid, while observing safety measures which are as restrictive as they are necessary.

And I would like to take this opportunity to again express my sincere condolences to those who lost friends and family members in the tragic fire at Ibn al-Khatib hospital in Baghdad last month.



Mr. President, on the 31st of March, after months of intense political negotiations, the Council of Representatives - at long last - approved the federal budget law for 2021.

While any budget is a work of compromise, we do note that efforts to control public spending and to invest in the private sector were thwarted as the budget law underwent parliamentary revision.

Also of concern: the budget remains heavily reliant on the oil sector, which accounts for roughly 80% of government revenues under the 2021 projections. Although oil prices have since risen, volatility in 2020 wreaked havoc on GDP. It turned surpluses into deficits, putting pressure on public debt and foreign currency reserves.

Looking beyond COVID-19, the economic outlook will depend on both structural reform and the oil markets. Needless to say, only one of these elements is in Iraq's control. Simply put: a continued dependency on oil is not a solid strategy, far from it.

On this note, modest - indeed, minimal - progress can be reported on the implementation of Iraq's recent economic white paper. The Ministry of Finance has been disbursing quick loans to small and medium-sized enterprises. And some private sector investment is taking place in the infrastructure, healthcare, education and tourism sectors.

But one cannot overemphasize the importance of tangible results for the

population. Also, one cannot overstate the need for transparency, good governance and integrity in achieving these results. In other words: the return on investment must benefit the Iraqi people and not illicitly flow into private pockets.

Mr. President, turning to the vital Baghdad-Erbil relationship:

As you have heard me say before, we remain in ad-hoc compromise mode. Despite some intermittent successes in the form of one or two specific agreements, we are still in dire need of a long-term, constitutional way forward.

Parties continue to express their willingness to come to the table, but in the absence of an institutionalized, regular, structured dialogue, sustainable progress will remain elusive.

A case in point: the budget I was just referring to includes a deal on revenue sharing between the federal and Kurdistan Regional governments, reached following lengthy negotiations. However - here again, the devil is in the details, as ambiguous wording opens the door to divergent interpretations and mutual accusations of non-compliance.

Now, this bodes ill for the future of Baghdad-Erbil relations, and is also worrisome in the context of the upcoming elections: disagreements could easily be exploited to amplify divisions.

It is my hope that the Kurdish calls for stepped up UN mediation will bear fruit. But for that to happen, UNAMI needs the buy-in of the

Security Council deliberated situation concerning Iraq on its 11th May videoteleconference (continued)



federal authorities as well. One thing is clear: the all-important Baghdad-Erbil relationship urgently requires sustained, strategic dialogue as well as clear-cut implementation mechanisms. I have to admit: my experiences thus far do not lend themselves to optimism in this regard.

On a separate note: the recent efforts of the Kurdish Presidency seeking to build greater Kurdish unity are commendable and encouraging. A federation is only as strong as the bonds between its components, and these bonds are strengthened by community reconciliation and cohesion. Turning to elections: as I mentioned at the outset, we are mere months away from a milestone in the young history of Iraq's democracy.

I am pleased to note that all necessary laws have now been adopted, including the Federal Supreme Court law. Our technical support to the Iraqi High Electoral Commission is ongoing - and we remain committed to assist Iraq in delivering these elections.

Having said that, I reiterate my call to all Iraqi stakeholders to uphold the integrity of the electoral process. The world is watching. Political pressure and interference, intimidation, illicit financial flows, all of it is most harmful to the credibility of elections, and hence to turnout.

And as I said before: candidates, campaigners, the media, voters, all of them, must be free to exercise their democratic rights before, during and after the election.

For elections to be trusted, disinformation must be combatted with facts, and intimidation must be replaced with accountability.

Mr President,

The people of Iraq have spoken loudly

and clearly as they demanded these elections, too many of them paying the ultimate price: now is not the time to let them down.

The failure to hold credible elections would cause significant, lasting, widespread anger and disillusionment, which in turn could further destabilize the country at a time where strength and unity are desperately needed.

Now to avoid any misunderstanding, let me underline once again: the October elections are and will remain - at all times - Iraqi-owned and Iraqi-led. Meaning that Iraqi authorities and stakeholders bear the full and ultimate responsibility.

Ladies and gentlemen, as I have shared many times: accountability for serious crimes and human rights violations remains limited - very, very limited.

Despite public statements expressing intent to ensure accountability and the establishment of investigative committees, there have been few prosecutions for the killing and serious injury to protestors. No information has been made public on the patterns of violent attacks against demonstrators and critics, attributed to so-called "unidentified armed actors".

Now, this climate of continued impunity for serious crimes and human rights violations - such as targeted killings, abductions, intimidation, such a climate - can only embolden perpetrators, further eroding trust in the State and raising serious concerns ahead of the October elections.

Different, but also worrisome: the developments in the Kurdistan region in the past year. These developments give rise to concern about the active curtailment of free expression. Critics of public authorities have risked not only intimidation, movement

restrictions and arbitrary arrest, but some were also charged with defamation, and others, more recently, were prosecuted under national security laws.

Mr. President, some words on Kirkuk and Sinjar:

With regards to Kirkuk, I note that - for two years now - we have been facilitating dialogue between representatives of the components of Kirkuk. An agreement, however, has still not been reached. I would like to use this opportunity to urge all stakeholders to spare no efforts and to conclude a fair agreement without further delay. The people of Kirkuk deserve to live in stable and prosperous conditions.

With regards to Sinjar: representatives of the federal and Kurdistan regional governments are engaged in discussions around the security provisions in the agreement reached last October. These provisions have not yet been implemented, hindering progress on administration and reconstruction. Here too, the absence of an institutionalized dialogue and implementation mechanism between Baghdad and Erbil is being negatively felt, fuelling misperceptions and distrust.

One brighter development is the passing of the Yazidi Survivors Law. The provision of reparations to survivors, and the legal recognition of ISIL's atrocities against women and girls as crimes of genocide and crimes against humanity, further underscores the need to hold the perpetrators accountable for the crimes they committed.

Mr. President, progress is being made in combatting the remnants of ISIL, with international support at the request of Iraq, but terrorism continues to claim far too many innocent lives.

Also of grave concern is the fact that rockets and improvised explosive devices remain a constant in Iraqi life. Cynical and callous armed entities continue to seek a destabilized country. And despite the government's objective of bringing all arms under state control, we are witnessing the use of new capabilities by non-state actors, with potentially devastating effects.

Now, looking at the region and beyond, and as I have said many times: the Iraqi government is deeply committed to playing a constructive regional role rather than falling victim to external tensions. And we are seeing early signs

Security Council deliberated situation concerning Iraq on its 11th May videoteleconference *(continued)*

that this commitment is paying off.

And very true, Iraq has great potential to operate as an honest broker, promoting peace and stability in the region. But to truly succeed, and at the risk of repeating myself, this should go hand in hand with concrete actions focused on bringing all arms under state control.

More broadly, I would like to call - once again - for all parties to respect the principles of state sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Turning to the humanitarian situation: in the past seven months, sixteen camps have been closed or reclassified - affecting around 50,000 Iraqis.

These closures, often carried out at short notice, did not always permit the necessary preparations for families to safely return to areas of origin.

Needless to say: when camps are closed before return conditions are appropriate, Iraqis face dire consequences. Families are rejected by home communities, denied protection by local authorities, stranded by security escorts en route, and even physically attacked. This is certainly not the path towards recovered and

stabilized communities.

The position of the UN remains unchanged: we fully understand and support the goal of the Iraqi authorities to end displacement. However, durable solutions must be in place to succeed in doing so.

In other words: the focus must be on solving displacement rather than closing camps.

Mr. President, on the issue of missing Kuwaiti, third-country nationals and missing Kuwaiti property, including the national archives:

The human remains of an additional eight Kuwaiti missing persons and one third-country national were identified since I last briefed this council.

Additionally, the remains of an Iraqi soldier were handed over by Kuwait to Iraq, in the first transfer of its kind since 2013.

I extend my heartfelt condolences to all the families of the missing persons, who have long awaited information about the fate of their loved ones.

Despite COVID-19 related challenges, the persistent efforts by the Governments of Iraq and Kuwait, the ICRC and the Tripartite Commission,

have collectively yielded progress. And it is my sincere hope that this cooperation will yield further positive advancements in the months to come.

Ladies and gentlemen, allow me in closing to emphasize once again the importance of credible elections.

At this critical juncture, transparency and the rule of law must prevail.

A trusted electoral process, with free and wide-ranging participation, can help steer the country towards the safe and prosperous future Iraqis deserve.

The way to express one's voice, to make one's choice, is at the ballot box.

This essential democratic exercise requires every voter, candidate, journalist, activist, all of them, to play their part. Boycotting elections, and thus staying outside the electoral process, is risky business and comes potentially at high costs.

Now, Mr. President, as the holy month of Ramadan draws to a close, I would like to end by conveying my best wishes to all those celebrating despite the restrictions.

Thank you. Eid Mubarak."

Security Council extends mandate of United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, unanimously adopting resolution 2576 (2021)



New York, 27 May 2021 - The Security Council today extended the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) until 27 May 2022, deciding to provide a strengthened United Nations team in advance of the country's election, to monitor election day and to continue to assist with the vote.

Unanimously adopting resolution 2576 (2021), the Council requested the Secretary-General to provide a detailed summary report on the electoral process and the Mission's assistance to

it, no later than 30 days after the conclusion of the election.

By other terms, the Council decided that the Mission and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General shall prioritize the provision of advice, support, and assistance to the Government and people of Iraq on advancing inclusive, political dialogue, and national and community-level reconciliation, taking into account civil society input with the full, equal and meaningful participation of women.

Further terms directed the Mission to

promote, support, and facilitate, in coordination with the Government of Iraq, the delivery of humanitarian and medical assistance, notably to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and the safe, timely, orderly, voluntary and dignified return or local integration, as appropriate, of refugees and displaced persons.

The Council had previously decided on 29 May 2020 to extend UNAMI's mandate for one year through resolution 2522 (2020).

By UN News.

SRSG for Iraq briefs diplomatic representatives on the new mandate; UNAMI aims to strengthen Iraq's electoral capacities and promote transparency

Baghdad, 9 June 2021 – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, briefed today in Baghdad representatives of the diplomatic missions accredited to Iraq, on the latest Security Council resolution concerning Iraq and the correspondingly enhanced mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI).

In its resolution 2576 (2021) adopted on 27 May, the Security Council commended the Government of Iraq's efforts to plan and execute genuinely free and fair early elections that are credible, participatory and inclusive, with the full, equal and meaningful participation of women. The resolution also welcomed the government's request for further UN electoral advice, support, and technical assistance in this regard.

UNAMI already provides comprehensive technical assistance and advice to IHEC on election management, legal and regulatory frameworks, training and procedures, Covid preparedness, procurement, logistics, information and communication technology, field-level coordination, communications and outreach, gender policies, and election security planning at the HQ and governorate levels. "With more than 70 UN electoral staff currently deployed throughout the country, the aim is to strengthen Iraq's electoral capacities and promote transparency, thereby rebuilding trust in Iraq's electoral institutions and processes", SRSG Hennis-Plasschaert clarified.

Pursuant to the recently adopted Security Council resolution, UNAMI is now in the process of preparing for the



phased deployment of additional UN teams on the ground in the lead up to, and on election day. The SRSG invited the international community to support this initiative so as to ensure that sufficient UN electoral staff can indeed be deployed.

"Positively responding to the request of the Government of Iraq, the Security Council decided to endorse a strengthened, robust and visible UN team, with additional staff, in advance of Iraq's forthcoming election, to monitor Iraq's election day with as broad a geographic coverage as possible, and to continue to assist with the election, in a manner that respects Iraqi sovereignty", SRSG Hennis-Plasschaert stated.

The SRSG emphasized the importance of all Iraqis using their democratic right by casting their votes in high numbers, thus making these elections a true democratic milestone in the history of Iraq. "The people of Iraq have spoken loudly and clearly to demand these elections: now is the time to make these voices heard through the ballot

box. This is your country, and your vote can shape the future of Iraq".

"The United Nations fully supports the Iraqi people's desire for a political system that truly represents them and meets their needs. The October early elections can help realize that desire, hopefully strengthening the foundations of a strong, stable and sustainable Iraq", SRSG Hennis-Plasschaert said.

In line with the Security Council resolution, she also made it clear that the elections are at all times Iraqi-led and Iraqi-owned: "it is first and foremost the responsibility of the Iraqi institutions and political leadership to ensure transparency and accountability in the electoral process. The elections must be conducted in a conducive environment where candidates conduct their campaigns, and voters cast their ballots, freely and safely".

UNAMI publishes regular reports on Iraq's electoral preparations and processes, which can be accessed at <https://bit.ly/3g1fClb>

Political Situation

UNAMI on Twitter

Baghdad, 26 May 2021 - Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert: "Any arrest case

should run its course, as goes for any Iraqi. And surely, nobody should resort to a show of force to get their way. Such behaviour weakens the Iraqi state and

further erodes public trust. State institutions must be respected at all times. Nobody is above the law".

Baghdad, 28 June 2021 - Regarding reports of US airstrikes along the Iraq-Syria border: the UN remains

concerned about the volatile situation in the region and renews its urgent call for restraint. Any escalation could

undermine ongoing diplomatic efforts to peacefully resolve regional tensions.

SRSG Hennis-Plasschaert: “It is high time for genuine reconciliation, for political stability to prevail.”

Erbil, 19 May 2021 – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, participated today at the University of Kurdistan in Erbil at a conference entitled “The Kurdistan Region of Iraq: Unity and Constitution”. Here is the text of the SRSG’s remarks at this event:

“Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,
Distinguished guests,

Let me start by thanking the University of Kurdistan for inviting me to participate in today’s event. A great honour, and I am very pleased to be here.

If you allow me, I will speak candidly today. My comments aim to be at once challenging and thought-provoking, so that we can attempt - honestly and constructively - to tackle some of the problems and systemic concerns.

In other words: some of you might consider my points to be quite frank, perhaps excessively so. But as the Kurdish saying goes “Dost Aw Kasaya et Grini” - your friend can make you cry...

And let’s face it, in my many conversations in the Kurdistan Region, views expressed are in general very outspoken - whether I like it or not. At the same time, this is one of the things I appreciate most. Not to exchange views just for the sake of making conversation, but to go into the essence of things - in an effort to find solutions.

Ladies and gentlemen, to control one’s destiny is a permanent struggle -in and of itself. For anyone. And looking at the history and geography of this region, I think it is safe to say that this is particularly the case for the peoples of the Kurdistan Region. The past is telling. So, is the present. And the future, is full of uncertainty. What we do know is that it has taken a long, long time to achieve today’s level of autonomy. And not only time. The price was high - with many people paying the ultimate price. But like anywhere else in the world, today’s rights and freedoms are not a given. Never.

What I am saying is: do not take today’s autonomy for granted. In order to sustain it, unity will prove essential.

Indeed, and as I remarked to the Security Council just last week, a



federal system is only as strong as the bonds between its components - and these bonds are strengthened by community reconciliation and cohesion.

In the case of Iraq, this means that the country is as strong as the ties that unite its diverse peoples. And very often, these diverse peoples are in need of intra-community reconciliation as well. Now, the Kurdistan Region is inherently diverse. It is home to a vast array of peoples, languages and religions. And its embrace of this diversity was recently and remarkably exemplified during the landmark visit of Pope Francis.

One could say that the remarkable strength and resilience of the Kurdistan Region arises from this diversity.

One could even say that “unity in diversity” is the foundational recipe that allowed the Kurdistan Region to come into being. It is certainly the principle that will guarantee its future.

And yes, political diversity exists as well in the Kurdistan Region. As is the case in many, many other countries. While many of these diverse democracies appear strong and stable today, their history was also marked by bloody wars and suffering.

Needless to say: a strong Kurdistan Region is best equipped to protect its interests. Conversely, with disunity comes weakness.

A strong, united Kurdistan Region also strengthens federal Iraq, not only domestically but also

internationally. Strength abroad begins with strength at home.

Ladies and gentlemen, as a former European and national politician, I can tell you from experience that democracy, especially democracy with several levels of governance, is painstaking business.

And very true, sustainable democratic societies are the opposite of overnight miracles - they require immense patience and an unwavering willingness to compromise.

Impatience is, of course, understandable. I know all about it. It can even be desirable to move things in the direction of the greater common good.

But inevitably, the democratic process must be given time to take root.

And as this happens, the healthy interplay of opposition and government, the formation of parties and coalitions, must be allowed to function - at the local, regional and national levels.

Throughout all this, the ultimate concern of the political leadership must be: service to its citizens. The focus must be on solutions that represent the interests of all peoples living in the Kurdistan Region. Solutions that only speak to the majority are untenable in the long run.

Now, as I said: even once achieved, unity can never be taken for granted - lest it be lost. It must constantly be tended to.

This ‘maintenance work’ includes constant grassroots outreach,

SRSB Hennis-Plasschaert: “It is high time for genuine reconciliation, for political stability to prevail.” *(continued)*



dialogue and concrete actions which demonstrate that communities and components are listened to at all times. When unity risks fracturing, it is the responsibility of the leadership to guide and lead outreach, to unify opposing interests.

At the same time, it is the responsibility of every citizen to recognize and accept the fact that balancing multiple different opinions and interests requires constant compromise, as is the case in any diverse society.

Politics is also described as ‘the art of the possible’. Whether we like it or not, making concessions is the way to settle differences. I do not deny that a compromise can suddenly taste like disappointment. But the seemingly bitter pill of a concession ultimately opens the door to lasting success.

And since all politics is ultimately local, it is imperative that the spirit of unity and partnership be practiced first and foremost at that level. A balanced system is one in which service delivery is fully assured in all areas at all times – and regardless of which political formation may be in power.

Having said all this, it is critical to distinguish unity from uniformity.

Just because a group can stand united as one, does not mean that vibrant and healthy internal debate cannot take place, or that a plethora of different voices cannot be heard. On the contrary. Diversity of opinions is a source of strength and enrichment, not a threat.

Equally important: actions speak louder than words. Beautiful declarations and speeches have their place, but at the end of the day it is all about getting things done.

From combatting corruption and leaving aside narrow party interests to moving seriously ahead with the Peshmerga unification and reforms. And yes, the Peshmerga Vision 2025 is one of the best and most concrete examples. It sparks the imagination. The Kurdistan Region should not remain divided between “green” and

“yellow”. Or any other colour definitions for that matter.

It is high time for genuine reconciliation, for political stability to prevail.

Turning to national sovereignty, it is painfully apparent that geography does not always play out to Iraq’s advantage, and the Kurdistan Region is certainly no exception. In other words: you are facing unique geopolitical circumstances. That fact alone should be enough to make one think twice.

Ladies and gentlemen, with elections to take place on October 10, Iraq is at a crossroads. A trusted electoral process, with free and wide-ranging participation, can help steer the country towards a safer and more prosperous future. And of course, the outcome of these elections is also of great importance for the vital Baghdad-Erbil relationship.

Meanwhile, the Kurdistan Region has a choice. It can unite, further strengthen its respect for fundamental rights and freedoms, make meaningful progress on long-awaited security and economic reform, and engage in dialogue despite internal differences that at times (I admit) seem insurmountable.

Or...or it can fail to put its house in order, putting at risk what it has achieved.

Ladies and gentlemen, recently - discussion re-emerged on the possibility of a regional constitution. Now, most people will not dispute the added value of such a constitution.

If I am not mistaken, a first draft was presented in 2009. Several attempts followed but were stranded at different stages due to a lack of political consensus.

Now, let me be clear: political leadership is all about the people. And so is a constitution. It is about the people, about their rights and how their rights are protected. It sets limits on the power of authorities. A constitution is a social contract.

And yes, a reactivation of the process would certainly provide an important opportunity for all components and

communities in the Kurdistan Region to come together.

It could help bridge differences and grievances, to accept others and - where needed - to apologize to others, to respect each other’s unique history. It could help overcome political rivalry, partisanship as well as the deadlock between ruling elites.

It could provide a wonderful opportunity to forge a sense of forward-looking pride and confidence.

It is also an opportunity to clearly define institutional powers and responsibilities. Legal ambiguity is as harmful at the federal level as it would be within the Kurdistan Region.

So: if you do it, a reactivation of the process, do it right. Political will is a precondition. Empty or broken promises will only further erode public trust. And do not underestimate the ease with which simmering anger can swell.

Political infighting and factionalism are toxic – and yet, they are found at every turn. Is it any surprise that the people do not believe that the political process serves them, or that it can bring about change?

Again, if you do this – do it right.

And needless to say: the outcome document will have to fit hand-in-glove with Iraq’s federal constitution.

This represents another challenge, as the federal constitution lacks clear guidance. At the time the federal constitution was drafted, general principles were enshrined in the text, with their implementation left to be specified by subsequent supporting legislation.

Sixteen years later, however, this lack of specificity continues to shape the debate between the federal and Kurdistan Regional governments. Lasting solutions are urgent. I am certain we can all agree that it is past time for Iraq to become more than the sum of its components.

Ladies and gentlemen, in closing, let me emphasize once again the significance of what has been achieved by the peoples of the Kurdistan Region in the past centuries.

The question now is: how to sustain and consolidate these achievements?!

While the United Nations stands by your side, it is important to realize that - first and foremost - all of you are in this together.

Unity in diversity. The key is in your hands.

Thank you.”

IOM Iraq and EPIC partnered for a project aimed at building the capacity of civil society organizations in Sinjar



Baghdad, 9 May 2021 - IOM Iraq and Enabling Peace in Iraq Center - EPIC partnered for a project aimed at

building the capacity of civil society organizations in Sinjar to use social media tools; conduct effective

communication, outreach and education; highlight the issues that are important to the Sinjar community at home and abroad; and promote dialogue and communication around them.

EPIC organized a closing ceremony and contest online for the project on May 5. Videos produced by the project's participants were screened during the ceremony and each participant discussed their experience, as well their improved understanding of and interest in enhancing security, stability and community peace in Sinjar.

The project was implemented with generous support from USAID - US Agency for International Development.

Engaging CSOs to contribute to social cohesion

Basra, 23 May 2021 - IOM Iraq brought together today 14 Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in Basra for a 24-day workshop, during which possibilities for enabling CSOs to contribute to IOM's projects in Basra will be explored.

The participants discussed the role of CSOs in Iraq, youth engagement and livelihoods. The workshop will also cover the development of awareness raising campaigns, disability inclusion, leadership skills for women, proposal writing, mental health and psychosocial support, media, and more. These activities are supported by the European Union.



IOM supports a policymaking training for Iraqi youth



Baghdad, 3 June 2021 - Rewaq Baghdad Center For Public Policy launched its 2021 Programme to train young professionals aged 26-36 in bringing about positive change through policymaking in Iraq. This unique initiative will afford participants the

opportunity to get involved in a multidisciplinary 9-month programme that combines trainings, research and mentoring in policymaking and advocacy tools.

The programme brings together academics, state employees and civil

society activists to work synergistically towards effective policymaking, relying on the group's vital combination of nuanced understandings of problems affecting Iraq; experience in best practices associated with the implementation of policies aiming to tackle those problems; and proximity to and on-the-ground knowledge of popular experiences and needs related to those problems.

In addition to receiving exposure to important policy discussions and debates in Iraq, participants will engage with policy makers in their areas of interest and write policy briefs deepening analyses of relevant issues and proposing feasible, desirable policy alternatives to guide reforms processes. IOM Iraq is helping to make this initiative possible with the support of Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung Syrien/Irak.

UNDP Iraq hosts Interfaith Religious Conference in Erbil on peaceful coexistence to encourage return and reintegration of the displaced



Erbil, 2 June 2021 – The United Nations Development Programme in Iraq (UNDP) in partnership with the Iraqi Ministry of Migration and Displaced (MOMD), the Governorate of Ninewa, and supported by the Government of Denmark, concluded an interfaith religious conference held in Erbil today.

The two-day conference gathered around 100 religious leaders to elaborate on how best to advance reconciliation, coexistence and combating violent extremism, as well as encourage the return and reintegration of displaced families in Ninewa Governorate. Participants had the opportunity to discuss critical topics like the return of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and preventing violent extremism within communities in Ninewa, and raise important issues directly with the Minister of Migration and Displaced, Her Excellency Mrs.

Ivan Faiek Jabru and the Governor of Ninewa, His Excellency Mr. Najim Aljabouri.

Key recommendations include the need for religious leaders to work together to support the Ministry of Migration and Displaced build trust between religious groups to help prevent crises from impacting civil peace; and that leaders are encouraged to support religious speech that promotes moderation and mediation, resenting hate speech, and respect for other religions or beliefs.

The conference follows intensive training undertaken by UNDP Iraq of 87 religious leaders from different backgrounds to enhance their role in community coexistence and social cohesion. A co-existence network was established to foster dialogue, with sub-network hubs for religious leaders in Anbar, Baghdad, Erbil and Ninewa governorates. The trained leaders engaged over 150 community members

from different religious backgrounds in training sessions to enhance their skills and knowledge regarding social cohesion, forgiveness, family violence, and COVID-19 public health messages. Work undertaken with interfaith religious leaders contributes to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal of Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions (Goal 16).

UNDP Iraq Resident Representative Zena Ali-Ahmad emphasizes, “We are very pleased with our partnership with the MOMD and local government to encourage the return and reintegration of many displaced vulnerable Iraqis to their communities. Through our work to bring religious leaders from different faiths together, we aim to encourage solidarity in spreading messages of peace and supporting returns. We are thankful to the Government of Denmark for their continued support to this important Social Cohesion agenda in Iraq.”

The Minister of Migration and Displaced, Her Excellency Mrs. Ivan Faiek Jabru, states, “We need to support community peace and return the displaced, and it is our duty as Iraqis to support peaceful coexistence by rehabilitating displaced families as well as spreading the concept of community peace among all segments of society.”

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.

Building capacities for the prevention of violent extremism

Baghdad, 3 June 2021 - In partnership with the National Security Advisory and in support of efforts to develop an action plan for the implementation of the Government of Iraq’s National Strategy for Combatting Violent Extremism, IOM recently organized a workshop focusing on factors behind violent extremism affecting Kirkuk Governorate’s Hawija district. The workshop was held in Sulaymaniyah Governorate.

“We discussed causes of extremism and several ideas were voiced. These included: the existence of hardline clerics who preach from pulpits, especially in unlicensed mosques within informal settlements; the publication of extremist religious books without censorship; the exploitation of



youth by militants; and often times there are outcasts from society who join extremist groups to restore self-confidence. However, there are also

economic factors contributing to extremism; extremist groups either give their members a salary or a new car as an incentive to join,” said

Building capacities for the prevention of violent extremism (continued)

Mua'adh, one of the workshop's participants.

"We must delve deeper into the discussion and involve more people with different positions – such as psychology professors, conflict resolution experts, and other such as respected tribal personnel – in order to devise different solutions that can be applied on the ground."

With the participation of local government officials, civil society organizations, and community members, these workshops support the development of Al-Hawija district's Prevention Plan of Action in collaboration with the Iraqi National

Prevention of Violent Extremism Committee.

"Southwest Kirkuk areas that were occupied by ISIS in 2014 have suffered a lot of violence and many waves of displacement and return. Many of those who live in these areas believe that there will be a resurgence of violence and terrorism," said Mahir, one of the participants in IOM Iraq's workshops for the prevention of violent extremism.

"Through these workshops, we hope to draw the attention of international organizations to help address our fears. The topics that were raised are of concern to security, return and

integration. We also discussed the vision of the International Organization for Migration for peacebuilding and combatting extremism in the area. We discussed several axes, namely religious, security, economic, and social. We expect this type of workshop to be the start of larger projects."

Such workshops are a key component of IOM's partnership with the National Security Advisory to support planning for the implementation of the Government of Iraq's National Strategy for Combatting Violent Extremism.

This workshop was funded by the Government of New Zealand.

Celebrating Iraqi culture: diversity is strength in the Ninewa Plains

Baghdad, 6 June 2021 - Located on the banks of the Tigris River, the Ninewa Plains is a region of Iraq that is exceptionally rich in culture thanks to its multi-faith communities. Today, UNDP held a festival celebrating strength in diversity that brought together community leaders and members of various ethnic and religious groups from the region in celebration in Bartella in partnership with Al-Tahreer Association for Development and Wasel Tasel Organization.

The event is part of UNDP Iraq's Social Cohesion Programme activities, which work to empower local community leaders with skills in community outreach, conflict resolution, design and implementation of community initiatives, to ensure these influential members of society are well equipped to facilitate peace and co-existence. The programme covers the governorates of Ninewa, Anbar, Salah al-Din, Diyala and Kirkuk thanks to generous support from the Government of Denmark.

Maryam, from Baghdida, Hamdaniya district, belongs to a folk ensemble for Syriac costumes and folk dances. Maryam has participated in several festivals and community events at the governorate and national level to shed light on the fashion culture of Baghdida. Maryam says, "This opportunity is very important in order to highlight our historical and cultural identity, and to get to know the cultures present in Ninewa Governorate and Iraq."

Ninos, a plastic artist from Baghdida, Hamdania district, has worked on rebuilding the symbols of civilization destroyed by ISIS, and uses sculpture



and painting in his artwork. Through painting, Ninos expresses that the Assyrian civilization survives with the efforts of the people of Ninewa, despite all previous attempts to destroy it. Ninos says, "Through our paintings, we were able to convey a message that Ninewa is a city of diversity, civilization and history."

Rafal 15, from Al Kafaat, Mosul, brought her paintings to the celebration. Rafal says, "We must all unite at this stage and maintain this cohesion and paint our city with art to remove the effects of war."

Sahar, who works in handicrafts and decorates halls, weddings and events, says, "Today's event is a safe space for women to participate in building a peaceful society."

Shatat, from Bashiqa district, says, "For fifty years I have lived among my family and brothers, and nothing can differentiate between this love that binds us and that brings us together. I participated in this festival to show people that we are one and that neither ISIS nor war will divide us."

Suzan and Ashwaq from Bahzani

presented famous food dishes from Bahzani. Suzan says, "This was a beautiful opportunity for us to participate with our brothers and sisters from all parts of Ninewa and promote this diversity that enriches our country and governorate."

Ashwaq adds, "There are some dishes that can only be found in Bashiqa. Through our participation, we shed light on these foods and explained how these historical dishes are made in Bashiqa."

Azhar, a 22-year-old community activist from Tal Al-Laban village, Al-Hamdaniya district, works in the field of promoting peace and community cohesion as the technical director of the Center for Democracy Organizations. Azhar says, "At this stage, we must all unite for one unified Iraq, in order to remove the effects of the war, contribute to the recovery of Ninewa, and promote peace forever."

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.

UNDP Iraq launches handbook on citizen journalism to promote social cohesion as part of young media professionals program



Baghdad, 20 June 2021 – The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Iraq has released a handbook on citizen journalism following an intensive training program for young media professionals on various topics including citizen journalism tools, ethical journalism, and conflict-sensitive reporting to promote social cohesion in Iraq. The Media and Advocacy component of UNDP Iraq's Social Cohesion Programme seeks to promote unity between societal groups through use of social media platforms, nation-wide competitions, media stories, and the training and capacity building of media professionals in general, with a focus on youth.

The Use of Citizen Journalism Tools to Promote Social Cohesion is a handbook designed for young media professionals,

students, and academics as a reference point for citizen journalism tools, helping to facilitate the creation of products that contribute to positive, solutions-oriented journalism in Iraq. Available online, copies of the handbook will also be distributed to media faculties, students, and media professionals in Arabic and Kurdish.

Launched in December 2020, UNDP Iraq's Citizen Journalism Project encourages and supports 120 young Iraqi journalists, bloggers, and social media activists from Baghdad, Anbar, Ninewa, Salah al-Din, Diyala, Dhi Qar, Najaf, Karbala and the Kurdistan Region, implemented in partnership with Tammuz Organization for Social Development and Sabaq Center for Media Development.

The second phase of the citizen journalism project will include

roundtable discussions for media representatives on the media landscape in Iraq and a short film contest related to social cohesion and diversity in Iraqi communities. These activities will complement the online platform Diversity (or "Tanawo3" in Arabic) launched collectively by participants to share their stories, photographs and videos related to peacebuilding and community cohesion in Iraq.

UNDP Iraq Resident Representative Zena Ali Ahmad states, "With a media landscape that is constantly shifting toward a greater focus on online journalism, supporting Iraq's citizen journalists is vital to ensuring well-rounded and informed reporting. With the launch of this handbook and platform, all Iraqis can participate in sharing stories from their diverse communities. We are grateful to the Government of Denmark for their support in funding this important initiative."

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, and working with media and citizen journalism is identified as one of the key priority areas under this programme.

Building capacity in social and disability inclusion, youth engagement, risk management and approaches to volunteerism

Koya, 20 June 2021 - In cooperation with Koya University, IOM Iraq organized a 5-day training in Koya city for 15 of the university's recent graduates. The participants came together from the area's host and refugee communities to build their capacity in social and disability inclusion, youth engagement, risk

management and approaches to volunteerism. Trainees will apply the skills gained to effectively promote social and disability inclusion within their communities.

This activity was supported by the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.



IOM led a youth problem solving course in the town of Zab, Hawija district

Baghdad, 21 June 2021 - In support of social cohesion efforts taking place across Iraq, IOM led a youth problem solving course in the town of Zab, Hawija district throughout May 2021. The course convened 13 youths representing the town's diverse ethnoreligious makeup to collectively build a shared sense of community identity, empower themselves to

identify community issues and find common ground for action. Trainings were designed to improve communication and listening skills in order to strengthen relations among community members and reduce community tensions.

This activity was supported by the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade.



Iraq's Electoral Preparations and Processes | Report No. 8

Baghdad, 10 May 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 eight report is now available on the UNIraq website (www.uniraq.org) through the following link: <https://bit.ly/2Z63RBc>

Among the highlights for April 2021 are:

On 12 April, the President of Iraq signed a decree on holding the Council of Representatives (CoR) elections on 10 October 2021. In his speech

following the signing of the decree, the President referred to the decision taken by the CoR to dissolve itself by 7 October 2021. He also called upon all state institutions to fulfil the requirements for conducting the elections.

The IHEC Board of Commissioners still has to take a final decision on the establishment of the so-called audit centres. On 7 April 2021, UNAMI shared an advisory note with IHEC advising against the establishment of such audit centres as an integral part of the electoral procedures, emphasizing that this would add an extra step to the process, could delay the announcement of results and might also affect the integrity and transparency of the electoral process. A follow up meeting took place on 12

April at the request of the IHEC CEO to further discuss the advisory.

Following the completion of the voter registration update period, IHEC has started working on the next phases of public outreach. IHEC is addressing each electoral phase separately and is currently focusing on the outreach campaign for the distribution of voter cards. UNAMI had previously advised them on the need to develop a comprehensive and inclusive strategy and campaign covering the entire period, especially taking into consideration the engagement of selected CSOs for CVE small grants. Templates and examples of comprehensive outreach planning, strategy and products were shared to assist IHEC in such a process.

The plan of the Supreme Committee to support women's political participation in the elections was launched

Baghdad, 17 June 2021 – The Deputy Special Representative for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance of the United Nations Secretary-General, Ms. Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir, and UN Women Representative in Iraq, Ms. Dina Zorba, attended in Baghdad an event organized by the Department of Women Empowerment of the Council of Ministers. At the event, the plan of the Supreme Committee to support women's political participation in the elections under the patronage of the Secretary-General of the Council of Ministers and in partnership with UN Women was launched. The United Nations is assisting the Iraqi Government and the Iraq Independent



High Electoral Commission (IHEC) in their preparations for the forthcoming early general elections in October 2021. At the event, the Secretary-General of the Council of Ministers, Mr. Hamid Al-

Ghazi said: “The Iraqi government is committed to holding the elections on schedule and is determined to provide the appropriate environment for women's political participation.”

UN Women participates at the meeting at the Council of Representatives dedicated to the preparations of the early general elections

Baghdad, 17 June 2021 - Hassan Karim Al-Kaabi, First Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives, called on the security services to cooperate with the Media and Communications Commission, the Iraqi Media Network and the Independent High Electoral Commission to control the sites and pages that offend the candidate woman and her presence in the next stage, and to impose all legal punishments against the mongers of lies and rumors, to preserve the democratic atmosphere for the participants in the elections, in

particular the female candidates.

The First Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives met with the members of the Higher Committee supervising the participation of women in the upcoming Parliament elections - Dr. Ahlam Al-Jabri, Head of the Committee, Member of the Board of the Independent High Electoral Commission, Dr. Yousra Karim Al-Mashref, Director General of the Department of Women Empowerment, Dr. Marlin Aweish, Member of the Board of Trustees of Iraqi Media



UN Women participates at the meeting ... (continued)

committee's work plan for the next phase and its role in promoting women's political rights.

Al-Kaabi called for empowering and supporting women to participate in the upcoming elections in a manner commensurate with their presence and

position in society, considering that caring for women at this stage is very important and contributes to encouraging participation in early elections, given that women represent more than 50% of Iraqi society. He stressed that the committee, in

coordination with the House of Representatives, is about to launch a comprehensive strategic plan to support women in the upcoming elections and protect them from illegal acts that may be adversely reflected on their participation in the elections.

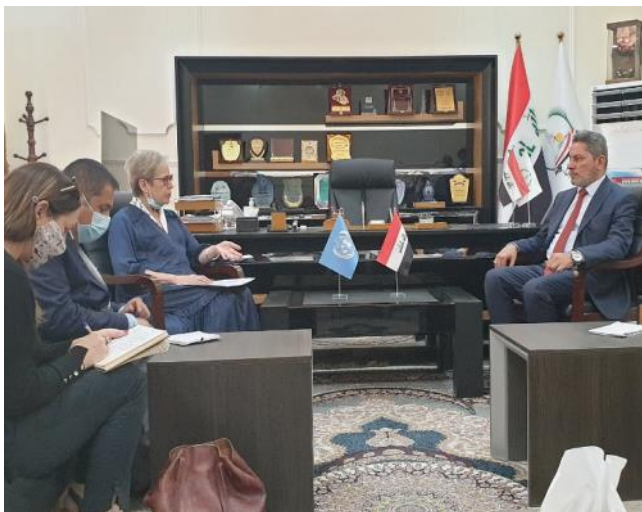
Political Affairs

DSRSG for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance paid an official visit to Basra

Basra, 24 May 2021 - The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, Ms. Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir, paid an official visit to

Basra. The Deputy Special Representative held a series of meetings with Deputy Governor Mohammed al-Tamimi, tribal sheikhs and civil activists, during which they discussed issues related to the

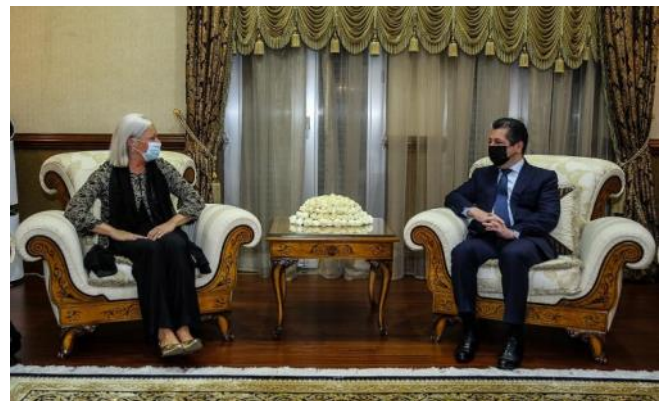
upcoming elections, the security situation in the governorate, tribal conflict, local projects and investment, and key challenges facing Basra.



Political Consultations



Baghdad, 18 May 2021 – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, accompanied by the Deputy Special Representative, Ms. Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir, met with the Undersecretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for Legal Affairs, Mr. Qahtan Taha Khalaf. They discussed various issues related to the cooperation between Iraq and UNAMI.



Erbil, 20 May 2021 – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met today with the Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Region, Mr. Masrour Barzani. They discussed the political situation in the region and Iraq, including Baghdad- Erbil relations.
Photo courtesy of the Office of the Prime Minister.



Erbil, 20 May 2021 – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met with the Minister of Interior of the Kurdistan Region, Mr. Réber Ahmed. They discussed the current security situation in the region, including implementation of the Sinjar Agreement and the upcoming elections. Photo courtesy of the Office of the Ministry of Interior, Kurdistan Region.



Sulaimaniya, 22 May 2021 – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met today with the Co-President of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), Mr. Bafel Talabani. They discussed the current situation in Kurdistan region, Baghdad-Erbil relations and the upcoming elections in Iraq. Photo courtesy of PUK Media.



Sulaimaniya, 22 May 2021 – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met today with Co-President of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), Mr. Lahur Talabani. They discussed the current political situation in Kurdistan Region and Iraq in general. Photo courtesy of PUK Media.



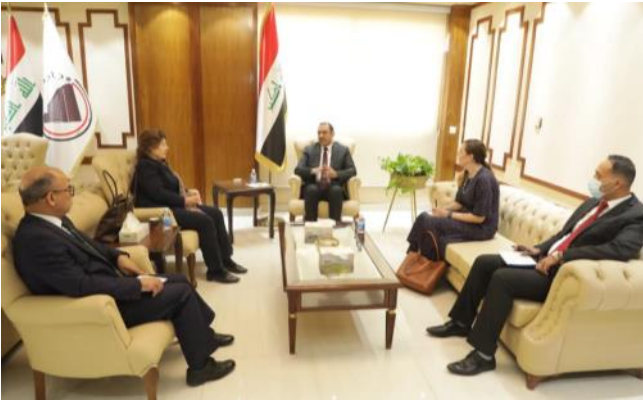
Sulaimaniya, 22 May 2021 – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met today with the General Coordinator of the Gorran Movement, Mr. Omar Said Ali. They discussed the current political situation in Iraq and in the Kurdistan Region in particular. Photo courtesy of the Gorran.net.



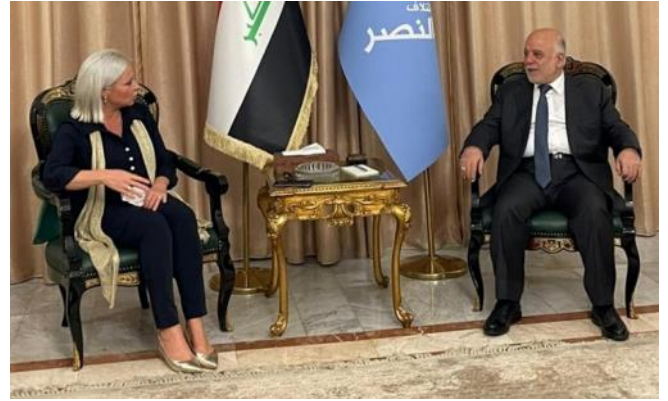
Baghdad, 23 May 2021 – Today, the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, attended in Baghdad the meeting of the President of the Republic of Iraq, H.E. Dr. Barham Salih, with the Board of Commissioners of the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC). Preparations for the forthcoming early general elections were discussed. Photos courtesy of the Media Office of the Presidency of the Republic of Iraq.



Baghdad, 25 May 2021 - The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, Ms. Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir, met with the Chairman of the Board of Commissioners of the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC), Judge Jalil Adnan Khalaf. They discussed the preparations for the forthcoming early general elections in Iraq. Photo courtesy of IHEC.



Baghdad, 26 May 2021 - The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General/Humanitarian and Resident Coordinator for Iraq, Ms. Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano met in Baghdad with the Minister of Planning, Mr. Khalid Bettal al-Najim. They discussed, among other things, mutual development cooperation and the way ahead.
Photo courtesy of the Ministry of Planning.



Baghdad, 27 May 2021 – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met with the Chairman of the Leadership Council of the Alliance of National State Forces, Mr. Haider Al-Abadi. They discussed current political situation in Iraq in light of the preparations for the forthcoming early general elections.



Moscow, 31 May 2021 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met with the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Mr. Sergey Vershinin. They discussed the current political situation in Iraq and the region, with special emphasis on the preparations for early parliamentary elections in October, and the role and place of the UN in the electoral process in light of the latest Security Council resolution.

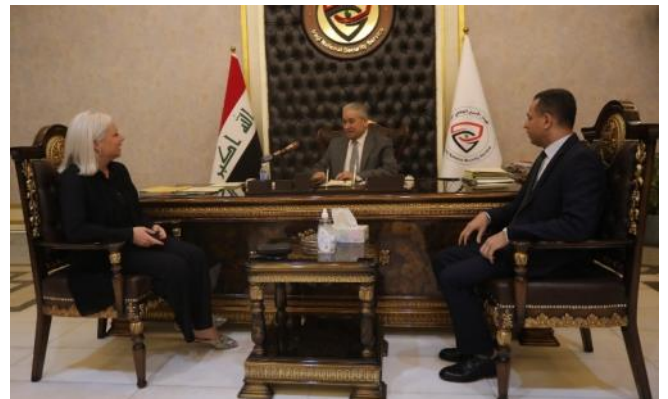


Baghdad, 2 June 2021 – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, accompanied by the Deputy SRSF for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, Ms. Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir, met today with the head of the Al Hikma National Movement, Mr. Ammar Al-Hakim. They discussed the current political situation in the country with special emphasis on the preparations for the forthcoming early general elections.

Photo courtesy of the Al Hikma National Movement.



Baghdad/New York, 2 June 2021 – The Deputy Special Representative for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance of the United Nations Secretary-General, Ms. Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir, met virtually with the United Nations Development Programme Administrator, Mr. Achim Steiner. They discussed the cooperation between UNAMI and UNDP on the electoral assistance program for the early general elections in Iraq as well as new tasks based on the latest Security Council resolution.



Baghdad, 3 June 2021 – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met today with the head of the National Security Agency, Mr. Abdul-Ghani Al-Asadi. They discussed the current political and security situation in the country, including preparations for the forthcoming early general elections in October 2021.



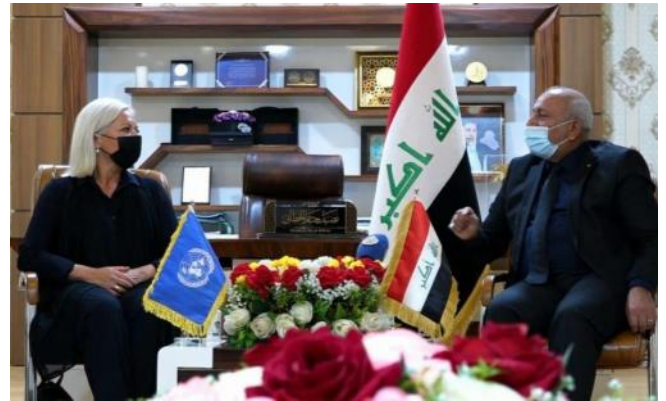
Baghdad, 3 June 2021 – The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General/Humanitarian and Resident Coordinator for Iraq, Ms. Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano met today with the Secretary General of the Council of Ministers, Mr. Hameed Al Ghizzi. They discussed, among other things, ongoing humanitarian and development activities.



Baghdad, 15 June 2021 - The Deputy Special Representative for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance of the United Nations Secretary-General, Ms. Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir, and the Chairman of the Board of Commissioners of the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC), Judge Jalil Adnan Khalaf had one of their regular meetings. They discussed the preparations for the forthcoming early general elections in October 2021 as well as the new resolution of the Security Council that has further strengthened the electoral support provided by UNAMI. Photo courtesy of IHEC.



Baghdad, 22 June 2021 – The Deputy Special Representative for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance of the United Nations Secretary-General, Ms. Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir, met today with former MP and leading figure of the Iraqi Turkmen Front, Mr. Hassan Turan. They discussed the political situation in the country, including preparations for the forthcoming early parliamentary elections in October 2021. In particular, discussions focused on the elections and related challenges in Kirkuk Governorate.



Karbala, 24 June 2021 – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met today with the Governor of Karbala, Mr. Nassif Jassem al-Khattabi. They discussed the need to ensure accountability for crimes against civic and political activists. Photo courtesy of the Media Office of the Governor.



Karbala, 24 June 2021 – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, visited the mother and brothers of the prominent activist Ihab Jawad Al-Wazni, who was recently assassinated in Karbala. SRSR Hennis-Plasschaert expressed her heartfelt condolences and explained the UN's efforts to promote accountability for the attacks targeting civic and political activists. She underlined that the perpetrators of these hideous crimes must be brought to justice. Photo courtesy of Shafaq News.

Iraq receives the second delivery of COVID-19 vaccines through the COVAX Facility

Baghdad, 12 May 2021 – Despite the continued global shortage and limited production of COVID-19 vaccines, Iraq received on 9th May, the second shipment of AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine contracted through the COVAX Facility. The arrival of the second shipment of exactly 499,200 doses brought the total number of vaccines received by the Iraqi health authorities from COVAX to nearly one million so far.

“The epidemiological situation might have shown a slight improvement, but is not yet under control and the number of infections and fatalities remains of high concern in Iraq. Controlling this Pandemic is our common goal, and we need to do everything we can to reduce the transmission of the virus and the subsequent mortality in Iraq. The more people get vaccinated the more we move closer to controlling this pandemic in Iraq and around the world” said Dr. Ahmed Zouiten WHO Representative and Head of Mission in Iraq.

As of 10th May, a total of 441121

people have already received vaccination in the different governorates of Iraq, with an average of 15000 people vaccinated every day. “We need to fast-track procurement of more vaccines to ensure that at least 20% of the eligible population in Iraq is vaccinated by the end of the year 2021,” Dr Zouiten added.

The levels of COVID 19 infection rates in Iraq continue putting enormous pressure on hospitals, intensive care units, health workers, and country resources. While the preventive measures can effectively reduce

transmission, their effectiveness still always depends on citizens’ adherence to these measures. This makes the vaccination a top nationwide goal to win the battle against the pandemic.

Since the start of the pandemic and as of 10 May, Iraq reported a total of 1,117,627 confirmed cases of COVID-19 infection, and 15,800 related deaths, and have experienced 2 distinct waves of high periods of transmission, the last of which started in late January 2021 and is still ongoing with an average of 4000 to 5000 cases every day for the last few weeks.



Pandemic has limited health services for women

Erbil, 12 May 2021 - In an interview with Rudaw’s Rozhin Mahdi, Dr Rita Columbia, the UNFPA representative to Iraq, said that women, especially IDPs and refugees, have had to deal with a lack of health services during the pandemic, including consulting a midwife and accessing family-planning services.

“One of the obstacles was a shortage of health personnel because many of the doctors, nurses, midwives, shifted their tasks... to provide services related to COVID,” she said.

According to Dr Columbia, before the pandemic, 67 per cent of outpatient clinics in Erbil provided family-planning services. “During COVID,

this service was reduced to 8 per cent,” added Dr Columbia.

This interview was conducted in Erbil on May 1, 2021.



IOM held two psychological first aid trainings

Kirkuk, 22 June 2021 - Healthcare professionals in Iraq persist in working tirelessly to respond to the COVID-19 crisis, which continues to have adverse effects on emotional and psychological well-being across all segments of the Iraqi population. In coordination with the Kirkuk Department of Health, IOM Iraq held two psychological first aid trainings for 13 frontline healthcare staff from Al-Askari Public Health Care Center and the town of Zab in Hawija

district, during which participants learned how to respond to stressors faced by patients and healthcare workers as they fight COVID-19.

This activity is part of a wider campaign by IOM to support the Iraqi government’s COVID-19 response efforts across the country.

These courses were supported by the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade.



UN Women and ESCWA launch 3 studies focusing on the impact of COVID-19 on women in Iraq

Baghdad/Beirut, 27 May 2021-- The COVID-19 pandemic has challenged current economic, social and healthcare systems and had a huge impact on society in general. Women have been greatly affected as a result of this pandemic due to the added socio-economic and political challenges. The pandemic also exacerbated gender inequalities and widened the existing gaps despite all the measures taken to protect them. Today, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and UN Women have launched three studies to assess the impact of COVID-19 on the economic, political and social scene on women in Iraq. Policymakers, representatives from UN entities and non-governmental organizations, authors of the studies, experts in the field of women's empowerment from Iraq, civil society organizations and non-governmental organizations participated in the launching of the studies in Baghdad.

The three studies aim to support the Iraqi Government in increasing the effectiveness of its efforts towards implementing the gender equality and women empowerment agenda in Iraq in the context of the pandemic and beyond. The studies provide actionable recommendations and the way forward to empower Iraqi women economically, socially and increase their political

participation.

"These field studies give us an overview of the pandemic's impact on women's political and economic participation and their ability to benefit from the social protection programmes available in Iraq," said Mehrinaz El Awady, Leader of the Gender Justice, Population and Inclusive Development Cluster at ESCWA. "They will also help us identify ways to build a society that avails from the expertise of Iraqi women and ensures they enjoy equal rights," she added.

Dina Zorba, UN Women Representative for Iraq & Yemen, said "the world is still suffering from the economic challenges and political instability caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Numerous studies have shown that women were mostly affected by the pandemic especially when the conditions of illness were accompanied by poverty, disability, unstable political situations, and problematic traditions imposed on women due to the gender inequalities and discrimination. As a result, women's opportunities for social, economic and political justice have been hindered".

The first study focuses on the "Impact of Social Protection Policies Responding to COVID-19 on Gender Equality in Iraq" and calls to develop a strategic plan to respond to crises and to include women in developing response

measures and other socio-economic plans.

The second study is on "The Impact of the Conflict and the COVID-19 Pandemic on Iraqi Women's Political Participation and Engagement in Peace Negotiations and Peacebuilding". It recommends the engagement of women in drafting pandemic-related policies, providing governmental support for women's organizations and ensuring women's participation in all reconciliation and peacebuilding processes, and requires a quota for women in government and top leadership positions.

The third study aims to assess "The Impact of COVID-19 on Women's Economic Participation in Iraq" and explores solutions to bridge the gender gap and increase women's participation in economic activities and support women's entrepreneurship.

More details are available at <http://publications.unescwa.org/projects/icwi/index.html>



More refugees are being vaccinated in Iraq as awareness campaigns move ahead

Baghdad, 2 June 2021 - Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, UNHCR has been working closely with health authorities in Iraq to include refugees in the response plan and the vaccination roll-out. As a result, refugees are able to register for vaccination using their UNHCR registration certificates or government

issued residency permits through the online platforms for vaccinations.

Since April 2021, over 6,243 refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) have been vaccinated against COVID-19 in Iraq. UNHCR is working with national health authorities in federal Iraq and in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) as well as with other health

partners to increase awareness about the importance of vaccinations among refugees, to protect themselves and their loved ones.

In Domiz Refugee Camp, the biggest refugee site in KRI, the Department of Health in Duhok will open a vaccination unit with the support of UNHCR and UNICEF. This step aims to make available vaccinations for all refugees living in Domiz 1 and Domiz 2 camps as well as those living in nearby camps and communities.

At the same time, we have coordinated with KRG health authorities in KRI to train all health staff in refugee camp Primary Health Care Centers on the COVID-19 online registration platform to assist refugees in registration for the vaccine. It is noted that most health workers in and outside of camps were the first to be vaccinated in the first round of vaccinations that was launched in March 2021 all over Iraq.



Addressing needs of Iraq's most vulnerable critical for inclusive and sustainable recovery from COVID-19, new UNDP reports say

Baghdad, 7 June 2021 – Recovery strategies targeting Iraq's vulnerable populations – including women, youth and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) – must be prioritized to ensure inclusive and sustainable recovery from COVID-19 in Iraq, according to two new complementary reports released today by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Iraq in collaboration with the United Nations Human Settlement Programme (UN-Habitat) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

Both reports emanate from a study that explores the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on socio-economic status and livelihoods at the household level, with a focus on its impact on vulnerable groups such as women, youth, children, persons with disabilities, and displaced communities. It compares urban and rural settings and considers impacts in both Federal Iraq and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

Original data collected and presented in the first report, Findings of the Assessment of COVID-19's Socioeconomic Impact on Iraq's Vulnerable Populations forms the basis for the subsequent policy report: Impact of COVID-19 on Iraq's Vulnerable Populations. The latter examines policy implications of the data findings and argues that building an inclusive path forward will require establishing sustainable systems and structures, listening and responding to the voices of the vulnerable, and laying out realistic goals to enable attainment of the 2030 Agenda.

Key findings include:

- Income losses were widespread, with differences between Federal Iraq and the Kurdistan Region

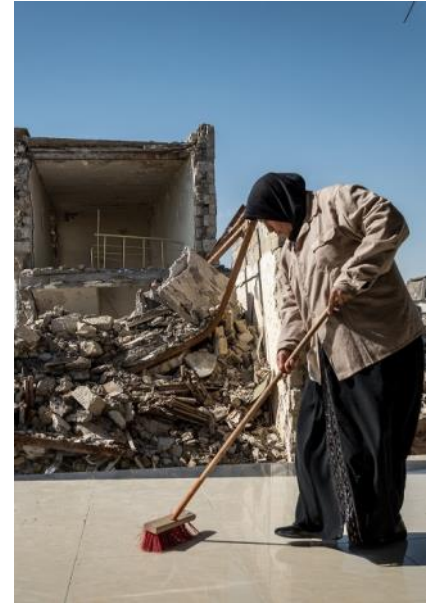
of Iraq, displaced vs non-displaced populations, and women and men employees.

- Daily workers were most affected by the economic downturn
- COVID-19 led to high food costs and the need for coping strategies
- While community insecurity and gender-based violence increased, community level tensions were low.
- Delayed income and loss of employment opportunities impacted households
- Women and female-headed households reported greater impacts in some areas, such as a reduction in household income.

The reports are the sixth and seventh papers in a series released by UNDP on the impact of COVID-19 in Iraq.

“COVID-19 has, and will continue to have, long-term consequences for vulnerable Iraqis in accessing sustainable livelihoods, food security, health and education – particularly women, youth, the elderly, people living with disabilities and the displaced,” says Resident Representative of UNDP Iraq, Zena Ali Ahmad.

“As the report clearly suggests, without sufficient attention to these vulnerable communities, Iraq may not achieve long-term, equitable sustainable development and recovery, and risks undoing the progress made towards achieving Agenda 2030. This could further undermine the social contract between the State and its citizens at a time where this is of critical importance. We urge the Government of Iraq, Kurdistan Regional Government, local actors and the international community to consider the policy recommendations outlined in the report and band together and tackle this issue. As always, UNDP Iraq



stands ready to support these efforts to improve the lives of all Iraqis,” adds Ms Ali Ahmad.

UNDP Iraq is grateful to UN-Habitat and IOM for its partnership and important contributions to Findings of the Assessment of COVID-19's Socioeconomic Impact on Iraq's Vulnerable Population and Impact of COVID-19 on Iraq's Vulnerable Populations.

Previously released papers in UNDP's socioeconomic impact assessment series:

Impact of COVID-19 and the Oil Crisis on Iraq's Fragility

Impact of COVID-19 on the Iraqi Economy

Impact of COVID-19 on Social Cohesion in Iraq

Impact of COVID-19 on Social Protection in Iraq

Impact of COVID-19 on Environmental Sustainability in Iraq

Gender

Strong cooperation is key to helping those in need

Sulaymaniyah, 2 May 2021 - UNFPA Representative, Dr Rita Columbia, met with officials from the Directorate of Labor and Social Affairs (DOLSA) in Sulaymaniyah to discuss the beginning of the hand-over process of the women centers.

UNFPA is thankful for DOLSA's commitment to continue supporting women, especially those with disabilities, who benefit from these

services and centers.

The Governor of Sulaymaniyah, Dr Haval Abubakir, and Dr Rita Columbia, UNFPA Representative in Iraq, discussed gender equality, women empowerment and bodily autonomy in Sulaymaniyah.

The Governor ensured full supported to UNFPA interventions and to men and boys engagement in preventing gender-based violence and raising awareness

about gender equality and equity.



Australian delegation and UNFPA visit supported facilities in Duhok

Duhok, 4 May 2021 - Ms. Emily Lyons from the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and UNFPA Representative to Iraq, Dr Rita Columbia, visited Duhok Governorate on 28 April, where UNFPA supports the provision of sexual and reproductive health (RH) and comprehensive gender-based violence (GBV) services through RH clinics, women social centres and youth centres.

DFAT and UNFPA representatives paid a visit to the reproductive health clinic, the women social centre and youth centre in Domiz camp as well as the women social centre in Domiz non-camp and the Sumel youth centre in Duhok.

The health service providers and partners in the clinic had an opportunity to exchange thoughts on the importance of quality, culturally and gender-sensitive sexual and reproductive health education and counselling and share their successes and challenges with Ms Lyons and Dr



Columbia.

At the women centres, they listened to women and their stories that brought them to these centres, where survivors of gender-based violence could receive necessary services. At the youth centres, they observed the ongoing sessions to enhance young people's engagement and leadership.

UNFPA wishes to thank Australia,

Sweden – through the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Canada, Norway, and the European Regional Development and Protection Programme for Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq (RDPP II) for supporting the reproductive health clinic, the women and youth centres in Domiz 1 camp and Domiz non-camp in Duhok.

Advocating a gender perspective in peacebuilding: new MoU between UNDP Iraq and Folke Bernadotte Academy signed

Baghdad, 06 May 2021 – A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has been signed between the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Iraq and Folke Bernadotte Academy (FBA) to enhance local capacities for peacebuilding in Iraq with concentration on gender mainstreaming in peacebuilding. With a mandate to support international peace and security-related efforts, Folke Bernadotte Academy is a governmental agency based in Stockholm, Sweden.

Focused on effective peacebuilding, FBA and UNDP Iraq's new partnership aims at advancing the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 agenda on women, peace, and security, within the realm of social cohesion and the promotion of peaceful co-existence. Through working to advance a gender perspective in community peace processes, this partnership also contributes to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals of Gender Equality (Goal 5) and Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions (Goal 16).

UNDP Iraq's Social Cohesion Programme works with Iraqi local

peace practitioners, including Community-Based Organizations and Communal Peace and Dialogue Committees, which FBA will provide training for on gender mainstreaming in dialogue processes under the year-long agreement.

According to UNDP Iraq Resident Representative Zena Ali-Ahmad, "This new collaboration with Folke Bernadotte Academy will further strengthen our efforts for inclusive and gender sensitive peacebuilding in Iraq through our extensive work with local organizations and peace structures. We are thankful to Folke Bernadotte Academy for this partnership and its contribution to advancing gender equality through our Social Cohesion Programme in Iraq."

Taleb Sobeh, project manager for Sweden's strategy for development cooperation with Iraq, from FBA states, "UNDP is a key actor in the promotion of social cohesion and peaceful co-existence in Iraq, and this cooperation enables us to, together with local actors, work for gender equal processes that strategically take the priorities and perspectives of both women and men into account."

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.



UNFPA engage men to create better communities for everyone

Baghdad, 26 May 2021 - It is imperative that men and boys are educated alongside women and girls on gender-based violence and are included in the efforts to end gender-based violence (GBV) for healthier societies to emerge.

With support from Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Canada in Iraq and Royal Norwegian Embassy in Amman,

UNFPA organises outreach activities in camps to raise awareness on the implications of GBV.

To increase knowledge about the dangers and consequences of domestic violence, UNFPA mobile teams organise outreach activities to help men and women in rural communities understand the risks of violence on families and societies.



Mainstreaming of gender perspectives in military operations

Baghdad, 27 May 2021 – The Deputy Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary-General, Ms. Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir, attended a symposium on the mainstreaming of gender perspectives in military operations in Iraq held at the Defense University for Postgraduate Military Studies in Baghdad. She noted in her remarks that gender mainstreaming allows us to see how insecurity affects different demographic groups and how those risks could be addressed.



Training session on elimination of gender-based violence targeting community leaders, social workers and support groups held in Erbil

Erbil, 3 June 2021 - To accelerate the work towards the elimination of gender-based violence, UNFPA with support from Sida - Styrelsen för Internationellt Utvecklingssamarbete and Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, organised a training session targeting community leaders, social workers and support groups.

Twenty women participated in the Mentorship Training to Community-Based Women Support Groups held last week in Erbil.



Training on sexual reproductive health for youth centers staff

Baghdad, 6 June 2021 - UNFPA and the Ministry of Culture and Youth concluded a three-day training on peacebuilding and life skills focusing on awareness on sexual reproductive health and rights to 20 youth centres staff in Erbil, Duhok and Sulaymaniyah with support from Sida [The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency] to enhance service provision to youth.



And I was Born Again

Erbil, 6 June 2021 - Noora was only 12 years old when her family fled Al Hassakah, Syria, looking for shelter in the Duhok governorate of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. The living conditions at the camp were difficult and her father could barely make ends meet. He took Noora out of school and sent her younger brother to work to support the family. Three years later, the situation worsened as her father became unemployed.

One day, he received an offer he thought he could not refuse: marry off his daughter to a man 25-years her senior in exchange for a given fee. She was only 15 at the time. Luckily, Noora was a regular at the UNFPA-supported Adolescent Toolkit Programme and was aware of the dangers of child marriage. She begged her father not to give her away to man she knew was not going to be kind to me. He cried and told her he had no other choice.

"I was desperate, so I decided to get the social worker at the women's centre to help me", she explained.

Past experiences would make her right; engaging men and boys in awareness programmes on child marriage and gender-based violence is one of the



most effective ways of promoting social progress. The next day, the social worker conducted a home visit to Noora's family and discussed the dangers and risks of child marriage. She told Noora's father of her daughter's immense potential and the fact that she was a gifted artist whose work has amazed plenty at the centre. She told him that if he helps nurture her talent, she would be able to sell her paintings and help him with some

income. Towards the end of the conversation, he reluctantly acquiesced, making the choice to invest in his daughter's future and wellbeing.

Today, Noora takes art classes at the youth centre and, when opportunities arise, she displays and sells her art at various exhibitions.

"Had I been married, my life would have ended but now, I am able to see a bright future and dream big," said Noora.

A new step towards gender equality in Iraq; new MoU signed

Baghdad, 10 June 2021 – A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has today been signed between the General Secretariat of the Iraqi Council of Ministers' (GSCOM) Women Empowerment Directorate and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to advance gender equality and women empowerment in Iraq.

Building upon existing structures and ongoing gender mainstreaming efforts, the new partnership will strengthen the institutional and analytical capacity of relevant Iraqi stakeholders to advance gender equality, focusing on the specific needs of women and girls in Iraq. It will help Iraq achieve its gender equality commitments under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by integrating gender perspective in governmental policies and plans.

One of the priority activities under the MoU is to assist the government's Central Statistical Organization to establish an e-platform that aims at bridging the gender classified data gap by facilitating the flow of reliable, gender-specific data across different institutions in the country that will help shape government policies.

The Secretary General of the Council of Ministers, His Excellency Mr. Hamid Al-Ghazi said: "Whereas women around the world are seen as powerful agents of change towards advanced, sustainable and inclusive societies, Iraqi women have played a strong role in addressing the crises and challenges that Iraq has experienced and have had an effective role and contribution in establishing inclusive society. Hence, we believe that this MoU is an important step towards strengthening these roles"

"While Iraq still grapples with the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, it

has disproportionately affected women and girls, exacerbating numerous existing social, economic and political challenges. This calls for increased gender responsive efforts towards achieving gender equality. UNDP Iraq will continue support the government to mainstream gender equality and fulfil its national obligations under the SDGs. This MoU with GSCOM will further strengthen inclusive and gender sensitive policies, as well as our efforts to achieve gender equality in Iraq," says Resident Representative of UNDP in Iraq, Zena Ali Ahmad.



Workshop on Gender-Based Violence data management guiding principles held in Basra

Basra, 7 June 2021 - UNFPA and the Directorate of Health of Basra conducted a three-day training to 25 staff and social workers from the governorate on Gender-Based Violence Data Management Guiding Principles. The training, supported by Sida -

Styrelsen för Internationellt Utvecklingssamarbete and United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Iraq, aimed at further widening the participants' knowledge on data collection related to GBV and protection of the cases.



UN Women organized a workshop aimed at highlighting the importance of implementing legal procedures in reducing violence against women

Baghdad, 7 June 2021 – UN Women conducted a two-day workshop for investigative judges from all governorates of Iraq, in which 32 judges participated. The workshop aimed at highlighting the importance of implementing legal procedures in reducing violence against women and raising awareness on the increasing numbers of gender-based violence cases during conflicts and the covid-19

pandemic. International covenants related to human and women's rights were also discussed.

In addition, the discussions included the challenges facing the judicial system and the needs that must be met in order to achieve an appropriate response to survivors of gender-based violence.

As a result, recommendations were concluded regarding services for

survivors of gender-based and domestic violence, and the legal procedures that need to be applied by health and legal service providers. This workshop was done under project “Gender-responsive Management and Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic in Iraq: From Emergency Response to Recovery and Resilience” funded by the Government of Japan.

Women’s Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF) National Steering Committee for Iraq meets in Baghdad

Baghdad, 13 June 2021 - The Secretary-General of the Council of Ministers, Hamid Naim Al-Ghazi, co-chaired the meeting of the Women’s Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF) National Steering Committee for Iraq with the Deputy Special Representative, Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano to approve and decide upon the scope of the upcoming WPHF Call for Proposal. The meeting was attended by representatives from the government (MOLSA, MoPIC and Department of Women Empowerment), KRG (High Council for Women Affairs),

German and Austrian embassy and UN Agencies (UN Women and UNFPA).



Preparation for the second Iraq Woman Integrated Social and Health Survey

Baghdad, 17 June 2021 - UNFPA, in partnership with Central Statistical Office and Kurdistan Region Statistics Office, began preparation for the second Iraq Woman Integrated Social and Health Survey (I-WISH II).

Earlier this week, UNFPA conducted a four-day training to 23 staff involved in the survey where they went over two of the I-WISH II questionnaires. Participants shared comments and suggestions to enhance the data collection process. I-WISH II and the workshop are made possible thanks to support from Sida.



IOM Iraq held a women's leadership training programme

Baghdad, 17 June 2021 - In May 2021, IOM Iraq held a women's leadership training programme in the town of Zab, Hawija district. In coordination with Iraq's Department of Youth and Sport, the programme brought together 12 women for six sessions of training in strategies to build agency around and advocate for women's rights their communities. Sessions emphasized creating a sense of communal belonging among participants in order to cultivate

leadership skills.

This activity was supported by the New

Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade.



Statement by UNAMI DSRSG Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir on the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict

Baghdad, 19 June 2021 - Today, the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) reaffirms its commitment to the elimination of sexual violence in conflict.

The enactment of the Yazidi Survivors Law in March this year was a major step in addressing the needs of survivors of atrocities committed by the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). The law provides for reparations, care for survivors and their rehabilitation into society. The full implementation of the law is essential. Survivors should be enabled

to access all relevant benefits contained in the law.

I encourage the Iraqi authorities to redouble efforts to ensure perpetrators are held accountable for these atrocious crimes, and to ensure that sufficient resources, including financial and human resources, are made available to meet the needs of all survivors of conflict-related sexual violence.

As we commemorate this important day, we honor the victims and survivors of sexual violence, and pay tribute to those working towards prevention and accountability.



Awareness raising on female leadership in decision making

Karbala, 25 June 2021 - At a conference organized by JSSOR Youth Organization, the United Nations Human Rights Office highlighted how women across Iraq powerfully demonstrate their desire to shape their own future and critical to the full enjoyment of their human rights. In its message the office provided examples of its work on the promotion, protection and respect of women rights, including by highlighting the prominent and active role of women and girls in recent demonstrations, expressing a shared commitment to the promotion of women's rights and empowerment as a means of overcoming many social and cultural barriers.

The 120 participants highlighted the importance of full participation of women in all aspects of political, social, economic, educational and cultural life by sharing their own experiences and initiatives to counter gender restrictive norms and practices as an important step to ensure gender equality among women and men in Iraq. Participants included members of civil society



organizations, youth groups and local government coming from Iraq's central and southern governorates.

At the end of the event, participants called for a strong participation of women in the upcoming elections, and

to create more opportunities for women to share their experience in supporting local peace initiatives and social cohesion activities across Iraq. Photos courtesy of Jssor Youth Organization.

UNAMI on Twitter

Baghdad, 3 May 2021 - Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, on the World Press

Freedom Day: We salute the work of media professionals in Iraq and globally. Supporting and protecting a free, independent and diverse media is

essential in building strong and resilient societies.

On World Press Freedom Day, Iraqi journalists discuss their concerns and demand support

Baghdad, 4 May 2021 - UNESCO Iraq Office and the Communication and Media Commission (CMC), celebrated the WPFJ through a blended event (online and physical presence), at the headquarters of the CMC in the capital, Baghdad.

Journalists from all Iraqi provinces joined the open debate on this day in conjunction with the central celebration being held in Namibia to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the Windhoek Declaration on Press Freedom.

This year's World Press Freedom Day theme "Information as a Public Good" serves as a call to affirm the importance of cherishing information as a public good, and exploring what can be done in the production, distribution and reception of content to strengthen journalism, and to advance transparency and empowerment.

The theme recognizes the changing communications system that is impacting our health, human rights, democracies and sustainable development.

In the opening speech, the head of the CMC, Mr. Adil Selman, stressed the need to respect press freedoms and support the Iraqi journalistic community due to the COVID pandemic in which many journalists lost their jobs.

The journalists who participated in the



discussion highlighted the need to build capacity, enhance digital journalism skills, create media content and eradicate information literacy, for them to keep up with the current of professional development. They believe that the digital inclusion will help them engage in global digital transformation and thus breathe life into traditional journalism by turning it into a digital journalism.

To underline the importance of information within our online media environment, WPFJ 2021 highlighted three key topics:

- Steps to ensure the economic viability of news media;
- Mechanisms for ensuring transparency of Internet companies;

□ Enhanced Media and Information Literacy (MIL) capacities that enable people to recognize and value, as well as defend and demand, journalism as a vital part of information as a public good.

May 3rd acts as a reminder to all government to respect their commitments in press freedom and is also a day of reflection among media professionals about issues of press freedom and professional ethics. Just as importantly, World Press Freedom Day is a day of support for journalists which are targets of restraint or abolition of press freedom. It is also a day of remembrance for those journalists who have lost their lives in the pursuit of a story.

Freedom of expression increasingly curtailed in Kurdistan Region of Iraq - UN report

Geneva/Baghdad, 12 May 2021 - Freedom of expression in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq has been increasingly curtailed over the past year, according to a UN report issued today. Critics of public authorities have risked not only intimidation, restrictions on their movements and arbitrary arrests, but some were also charged with defamation, while others, more recently, were prosecuted under national security laws.

The report, by the UN Human Rights Office and the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), documents a concerning pattern, observed from

March 2020 to April 2021, of people being targeted for exercising their legitimate right to report on or criticize the actions of the public authorities.

"The pattern of repression documented in this report is deeply worrying, highlighting not only the threats and intimidation of critics, but also the chilling effect such actions can have on others seeking transparency and to hold public authorities to account," said UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet.

While recognizing that the Kurdistan Regional authorities are facing uniquely challenging domestic, regional

and international circumstances, the key findings of this report are of serious concern, particularly the behaviour of the security apparatus, the selective application of laws and the lack of compliance with relevant legal procedures and international human rights standards.

"Recent years have seen progress towards a democratic Kurdistan Region where freedom of expression and the rule of law are valued. But democratic societies need media, activists and critics to be able to report on public issues without censorship or fear, and citizens also have a right to be

Freedom of expression increasingly curtailed in Kurdistan Region of Iraq - UN report (continued)

informed,” Bachelet stressed.

“Transparency, accountability and openness to questioning is vital for any healthy democracy,” the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq and head of UNAMI, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, added.

The High Commissioner and the UN Iraq Special Representative both said that they are encouraged by the continuing cooperation of the Kurdistan Regional authorities with their offices, noting that report and its recommendations are part of an ongoing dialogue with the Kurdistan Regional Government to promote human rights and foster accountability for human rights violations and redress for victims.

Among its recommendations, the report

urges the Kurdistan Regional authorities to take immediate steps to fully protect the right to freedom of expression and to end harassment, intimidation and reprisals against journalists, human rights defenders and activists. It also calls on the authorities to ensure that criminal law is not used as a tool to limit freedom of expression, including by refraining from arresting and/or detaining individuals lawfully expressing dissent and/or discontent. In addition, existing laws should be amended to provide clear definitions of prohibited speech and all restrictions on freedom of expression set out in domestic legislation should be consistent with relevant international human rights standards.

The report was shared in advance with

the Federal Government of Iraq and Kurdistan Regional Government and includes the response from the Kurdistan Government as an annex.

To read the report, please visit <https://bit.ly/3uIdUKa>



Freedom of Expression
in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq



UNAMI on Twitter

Baghdad, 28 June 2021 - Yesterday's decision by the Kurdistan Region's Cassation Court regrettably confirms

the urgent need for judicial and institutional reform in the KRI to prevent such miscarriages of justice in

future.

Human Rights

UNAMI Human Rights Office attends the official launch of Iraq's Human Rights National Action Plan (HRNAP)

Sulaymaniyah, 6 May 2021 – Iraq's Human Rights National Action Plan (2020 – 2024 / HRNAP) was launched in an event organized by the Federal Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Justice for the Kurdistan Region, civil society organisations and the participation of UNAMIs Human Rights Office (HRO). The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) mentioned that it would also be launching its human rights plan for the region soon.

Mr. Salar Abdulsattar, Minister of Justice, highlighted in his opening remarks that the HRNAP was officially adopted by the Council of Ministers on 23 March 2021 and aims to address recommendations endorsed by the Government of Iraq during its most recent Universal Periodic Review. In particular he affirmed that one of the main goals of the plan is to ensure that national legislation is in compliance with international human rights treaties.

Dr. Dindar Zebari, the Coordinator for



International Advocacy for the KRG said that HRNAP would be used as a basis for the KRG's human rights plan. He stressed that the KRG human rights plan would be prepared in coordination with the Independent Board for Human Rights, UNAMI HRO

and civil society in the Kurdistan Region.

UNAMI will continue to support the efforts of both the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government to promote and protect the rights of all persons.

ILO and partners launch nation-wide campaign to tackle the worst forms of child labour in Iraq

Baghdad, 12 May 2021 - The International Labour Organization in Iraq and partners launched a nation-wide campaign to tackle the worst forms of child labour in the country. The campaign will target 10,000 children, their families and guardians, teachers, employers, and the media through a series of activities which aim to raise awareness on the increasing dangers of child labour, mobilise efforts to reach the heart of communities most effected by the rise of child labour in the country; and encourage activities to amplify the voices of those effected by the problem.

During a virtual meeting, which was attended by senior representatives of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of Iraq, including the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, as well as representatives of ILO's local implementing partners Al-Tahreer Association for Development and Kurdistan Save the Children, partners discussed joint efforts in the implementations of the campaign and its activities.

"The year 2021 has been declared as the International Year for the Elimination of Child Labour, and our campaign in Iraq is part of these global efforts to combat child labour," said Dr. Maha Kattaa, ILO Country Coordinator in Iraq. "We hope through your support, recommendations and collaboration, this campaign will have a significant and lasting impact on the ground. We want to speak as one voice against the dangers of child labour and seek wider partnerships, such as that of the private sector, to address these issues."

Child labour has been on the rise in Iraq in recent years due to a combination of factors including armed conflict, displacement and economic challenges, which have been further compounded by COVID-19, forcing a growing number of children into the workforce.

This campaign aims to inform communities about the negative consequences of child labour and ultimately change behaviour of society and institutions alike. While it may not be effectively removing these factors, it



aims to make child labour unacceptable and make it an urgent priority for responsible authorities to tackle and for businesses to reject.

"Our ministry is conducting a campaign through its inspection unit to tackle the worst forms of child labour and we hope that these and other efforts will complement the activities of the campaign which is being undertaken by the ILO," said Mr. Raed Jabbar Bahedh Director General of the Department of Labour and Vocational Training at the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.

"We are ready to coordinate, support and engage in the awareness raising campaign," said Dr. Arif Hito, the Director General of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs in Erbil, Kurdistan Region of Iraq. "Such a campaign needs take into account awareness raising on the social level and ensure there are alternative solutions to families and children."

The campaign will be guided by existing ILO tools to combat child labour, such as SCREAM, which is an education and social mobilization initiative, to help educators worldwide promote understanding and awareness of child labour among young people, and the recently launched inter-agency toolkit to guide humanitarian actors and other agencies in the global community to effectively prevent and respond to child labour in humanitarian action. These tools will be translated and adapted to the Iraq context and used through various

activities including social media campaigns and community-level outreach.

The campaign will also support ongoing efforts that seek to link children and their families with existing support mechanisms. This will complement activities by the ILO and partners to address child labour. With support from the European Regional Development and Protection Programme for Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq (RDPP II) – a joint European initiative by the Czech Republic, Denmark, the European Union, Ireland and Switzerland, the ILO is currently implementing a project which tackles the worst forms of child labour amongst Syrian refugees, internally displaced persons and vulnerable host community members in Iraq.

Iraq has ratified the ILO Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138) and the ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), which are central to the fight against child labour. In December 2019, the ILO signed and launched a new Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP) in Iraq in partnership with the Government and social partners for the period 2019-2023. Under the programme, the ILO is working with government, worker and employer organizations to support national initiatives on employment promotion, rights at work, social dialogue and social protection, including developing an effective framework to address child labour.

UNAMI on Twitter

Baghdad, 25 May 2021 - Only accountability will stop the pattern of deadly attacks targeting civic and

political activists. While the perpetrators may think they have silenced voices, they have only

amplified them. Accountability is key for Iraq's stability. The Iraqi people have a right to know.

UNAMI HRO participated at the high-level virtual public event entitled “Contributions of Special Political Missions to the Protection of Civilians”

Baghdad, 25 May 2021 - Today, Ms. Danielle Bell, the Chief of UNAMI's Human Rights Office, together with other senior UN officials, took part as a panelist in a high-level virtual public event entitled “Contributions of Special Political Missions to the Protection of Civilians.” The event was convened as part of Protection of Civilians Week, in the margins of 2021 United Nations Security Council Open Debate on Protection of Civilians. Speaking at the event, Ms. Bell, highlighted how the work of the UNAMI Human Rights Office measurably contributes to civilian protection in Iraq on subject matters including demonstrations, detention and trial monitoring as well as freedom of expression: “Our monitoring and reporting strategically concentrates on distinct priorities, feeding directly into a process aimed toward behavioral change that prevents

and pre-empts future human rights violations and conflict”, Ms. Bell stated, adding “ that despite countless challenging factors, our data confirm

that change can be brought”.

For further details, please go to <https://www.unocha.org/protection-civilians-week-2021>



UNAMI Human Rights Office conducts human rights advocacy training to the Norwegian Refugee Council

Erbil, 26 May 2021 - On 25 and 26 May 2021, the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) Human Rights Office conducted a two-day training workshop for the staff of the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) in Iraq who work on human rights issues. Fourteen participants (nine female and five male) from Anbar, Diyala, Dohuk, Erbil, Khanaqin, Kirkuk, and Mosul attended the capacity building workshop. The aim of the training was to familiarize participants with human rights advocacy with a focus on how to

develop an evidence based human rights advocacy strategy and understanding the different types of human rights advocacy. The training also focused on how to conduct a human rights analysis so as to design an effective advocacy strategy. The training was participatory in nature and included plenary discussions, case studies and role plays. Participants were given exercises to do as part of the training which included designing advocacy messages and how to identify advocacy targets.



Building knowledge and skills about human rights in Ninewa's schools

Alqosh and Bazani, Ninewa, 27 May 2021 - Through a project by UNAMI Human Rights Office started in December 2020, female and male high school students in Alqosh and Bazani, primarily Christian and Yazidi communities, respectively, are learning about human rights. Working with school principals and students, UNAMI has created meeting places in the schools and provided their libraries with human rights-themed literature. It also organizes regular activities with the students like thematic discussions which have included topics, such as non-discrimination and women's rights. Due to the pandemic these activities



have been carried out through digital platforms. The project aims to foster leadership and empower youth with knowledge and skills to promote

respect for diversity, participation, accountability and attention to vulnerable groups within their schools and local communities.

Update on demonstrations in Iraq: accountability for human rights violations and abuses by unidentified armed elements

Baghdad, 30 May 2021 - Pursuant to its mandate under Security Council Resolution 2576 (2021) to 'promote accountability and the protection of human rights', UNAMI continues to monitor and document human rights violations and abuses in the context of ongoing demonstrations, which began in October 2019 and have continued into 2021, calling for political reform and the fulfilment of economic and social rights in Iraq.

This report, "Update on Demonstrations in Iraq: Accountability for Human Rights Violations and Abuses by Unidentified Armed Elements", is UNAMI's sixth public report on this subject since October 2019. It focuses on the steps taken by the Iraqi authorities to ensure accountability for human rights violations and abuses linked to these demonstrations, in particular those attributed to 'unidentified armed elements'¹ frequently referred to by victims and witnesses as 'militia'.²

The report serves as an update to "Human Rights Violations and Abuses in the Context of Demonstrations in Iraq", released in August 2020, which documented a range of human rights violations and abuses attributable both to state security forces and 'unidentified armed elements', and detailed patterns of demonstrations-related violence between 1 October 2019 and 30 April 2020 which resulted in the deaths of at least 487 people and injury to 7,715.

In all its previous public reports on demonstrations UNAMI provided concrete recommendations aimed at ensuring accountability and providing redress to victims. Since taking office in May 2020, the Government has taken welcome steps to establish an independent fact-finding body, and offered certain redress for the victims and their families. The High Judicial Council established judicial investigative committees in each governorate, registered 8,163 cases of violations, abuses, criminal acts and complaints related to violence during demonstrations, and initiated thousands of investigations.

However, much more needs to be done,

UNAMI on Twitter

Baghdad, 28 June 2021 - Yesterday's decision by the Kurdistan Region's Cassation Court regrettably confirms



Update on Demonstrations in Iraq:
Accountability for Human Rights Violations and Abuses by
Unidentified Armed Elements
May 2021, Baghdad



United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI)

particularly the implementation of arrest warrants and the initiation of prosecutions to hold accountable perpetrators of serious crimes against activists.

Between 1 October 2019 and 15 May 2021, UNAMI documented 48 incidents of attempted or completed targeted killings of protestors and critics, mostly shootings by 'unidentified armed elements', resulting in at least 32 deaths and injuries to 21 others. Although there have been several arrests related to targeted killings, not a single case appears to have moved beyond the investigative phase. The 'unidentified armed elements' responsible for the abduction and torture or ill-treatment of at least 32 protestors from across Iraq similarly enjoy impunity. At least 20 protestors abducted by 'unidentified armed elements' remain missing, without any apparent efforts to locate and release them or determine their fate.

Moreover, no information has been released publicly as to the circumstances behind the violent attacks attributed to 'unidentified armed elements', including information on the identity of those responsible. Consequently, UNAMI finds that in addition to the observed inability to fully guarantee the right to life, or to uphold obligations to protect all persons from enforced disappearances and torture and ill-treatment, the rights of many victims and their families to truth, justice, redress and

reparation have not been fully respected.

UNAMI acknowledges the complex environment in which the Government operates, facing many challenges at once in its pursuit of accountability. Whilst the complexity is well understood, the pursuit of accountability must remain a priority.

The lack thereof only emboldens the perpetrators and enables recurrence of serious abuses with impunity. Moreover, and with only limited protection available, the continued attacks against critics give rise to serious human rights protection concerns. Space for freedom of expression has significantly deteriorated meanwhile, leading many to self-censor and others to relocate to areas outside of Federal Iraq.

This report aims to highlight the criticality and urgency of meaningful steps toward accountability, and the responsibility of the Iraqi authorities to provide victims the right to justice, truth, redress, and reparations beyond financial compensation.

1 UNAMI/OHCHR defines 'unidentified armed elements' as armed actors not clearly identifiable as regular state security forces. This does not preclude the possibility that these 'elements' may have various links to the state and/or political parties.

2 'Militia' is terminology commonly used in Iraq to describe armed groups operating outside state control.

the urgent need for judicial and institutional reform in the KRI to prevent such miscarriages of justice in

future.



ILO and partners mark World Day Against Child Labour in Iraq

Baghdad, 10 June 2021 – The ILO, together with national and international partners marked World Day Against Child Labour in Iraq with a virtual event highlighting the plight of working children and efforts to tackle the worst forms of child labour in the country. The event took place on Thursday (June 10), ahead of World Day Against Child Labour which is observed annually on June 12.

Organised by the ILO, the event was attended by the Minister of Labour and Social Affairs of the Kurdish Regional Government, Ms. Kwestan Mohammed and key officials from the government, including the Deputy Director General of the Department of Labour and Vocational Training at the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Federal Government of Iraq, Mr. Abbas Fadel. It also brought together representatives from Save the Children International, UNHCR, UNICEF, the child protection sub-cluster, as well as Al-Tahreer Association for Development and Kurdistan Save the Children, ILO's local implementing partners.

“Your work in this field is very valuable. Through our work at the ministry, and with your engagement we continue to tackle the issue of child labour in efforts to promote and protect children’s rights. However, we must also continue working with the children’s families to ensure they have access to economic and livelihoods opportunities,” said the Minister.

“Child labour in Iraq has been on the increase due to armed conflict, displacement and economic challenges, which have been further exacerbated

by the COVID-19 pandemic. On World Day Against Child Labour, we call on our partners to put the issue of child labour at the core of their programmes as it requires drastic efforts that address the root causes of the problem,” said Mr. Fadel.

Iraq has ratified the ILO Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138) and the ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), which are central to the fight against child labour. The event took place as global activities to mark this year’s world day kicked off, focusing on action taken for the 2021 International Year for the Elimination of Child Labour .

“The issue of child labour is complex and has hazardous consequence on children’s safety, wellbeing and education. At the ILO, we will continue to work with partners on finding solutions to remove children from the worst forms of child labour and provide

them with access to the services and support which they need,” said Dr. Maha Kattaa, ILO Country Coordinator in Iraq.

With support from the European Regional Development Protection Programme (RDPP II) – a joint European initiative by the Czech Republic, Denmark, the European Union, Ireland and Switzerland, the ILO in Iraq is implementing a programme which tackles the worst forms of child labour amongst Syrian refugees, internally displaced persons and vulnerable host community members. This includes piloting a Child Labour Monitoring System, increasing access to quality education for children, providing skills training and income-generating activities to older siblings and caretakers of vulnerable children, and supporting the development of a National Action Plan against child labour.



Advancing the expansion of support services for persons with disabilities

Baghdad, 2 June 2021 - In cooperation with the Iraqi Alliance for Disability Organizations (IADO), IOM recently held a two-day workshop in Baghdad to advance the expansion of support services for persons with disabilities. The workshop brought together field teams working in the areas of mental health and disability inclusion to build their capacity to offer mental health and psychosocial support services that are meaningfully responsive to the needs of persons with disabilities across their diverse worksites.

This workshop was funded by USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance.



Special Adviser Khan briefs Security Council on UNITAD investigations; ISIL crimes against Yazidis constitute genocide, UN investigation team finds

New York, 10 May 2021 - A UN team investigating ISIL atrocities in Iraq has established “clear and convincing evidence” of genocide against the Yazidi religious minority, the Security Council heard on Monday.

In his final briefing to ambassadors, Karim Khan, Special Adviser and Head of the team, known as UNITAD, reported that investigators have reached a “landmark moment” in their work.

They have finalized initial case briefs on two key priorities: attacks against the Yazidi community in the Sinjar region in northern Iraq, and the mass killing of unarmed cadets and military personnel at Tikrit Air Academy in June 2014.

“I am able to announce that based upon independent and impartial investigations, complying with international standards and UN best practice, there is clear and convincing evidence that the crimes against the Yazidi people clearly constituted genocide,” he said.

‘Convert or die’

Mr Khan recalled that the crimes committed by ISIL, also known as Daesh, “shocked the conscience of humanity”, as manifested by the group’s ultimatum to convert, or die.

“A full scope of criminality is displayed in the awful criminality of Daesh against the Yazidi community”, he said. “Executions, slavery, sexual slavery. Crimes against children that are horrific, and really chill one’s soul, that how on earth could such things be allowed to happen. Yet they did.”

UNITAD has supported the return of the remains of more than 100 Yazidis recovered from nine mass grave sites in the village of Kojo.

Nobel Peace Prize winner Nadia Murad, who was kidnapped by ISIL, told ambassadors that her people had experienced the worst atrocities known to humankind.

“I will never forget the grief in my mother’s eyes when she realized her sons had been executed – not knowing



she would face the same fate”, Ms Murad said.

“I can still feel my niece’s hands being ripped out of mine as we were separated and loaded onto buses like cattle. And I can still calculate what my body was worth to those who bought and sold it.”

Chemical weapons capacity

ISIL’s brutality affected all communities in Iraq, as the incident at the Tikrit Air Academy has also shown. The cadets, mainly Shia Muslims, were led away and many were massacred. An ISIL propaganda video of their murder was clear evidence of the crime of direct and public incitement to commit genocide, according to Mr Khan.

“One doesn’t even need to look into the content of the video, though we’ve done that and we’ve had language experts to analyze it,” he stated. “But it’s by the title of the video that Daesh broadcasted: Kill them wherever you find them.”

Investigations have also revealed ISIL’s “demonstrated capacity” to manufacture and deploy chemical and biological weapons, focused on the group’s takeover of Mosul University, in Iraq’s second city which they occupied until the end of 2017.

ISIL attracted combatants from the region and abroad. Drawing on the expertise of scientists and medical professionals in its ranks, the group began “weaponizing” chlorine from water treatment plants, testing biological agents on prisoners, and firing

40 mustard gas rockets on the Turkmen Shia town of Taza Khurmatu.

Crimes must be prosecuted

Mr Khan leaves UNITAD shortly, and next month assumes the post of Prosecutor with the International Criminal Court.

UN teams in Iraq gathered a “mountain” of information, including testimonies, forensic evidence from mass grave sites and digital data extracted from ISIL hard drives. Investigators have also completed an initial case brief identifying individuals and companies that provided financial services to ISIL. Meanwhile, work continues to ensure “no victim, no child of humanity, is left behind”, Mr Khan said, pointing to progress surrounding crimes targeting the Sunni, Shia, Christian and other communities.

He emphasized, however, that it was not sufficient to simply document ISIL’s crimes, and UNITAD continues to support developments towards legislation that will allow for ISIL members to be prosecuted.

“Legislation of course is needed to ensure that Iraq has the legal architecture in place to prosecute this haemorrhage of the human soul: not as common crimes of terrorism, heinous though they are, but as acts of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes,” he said.

By UN News.

New MoU signed between Sweden and UNITAD

Baghdad/Stockholm, 7 May 2021 - Special Adviser Karim A. A. Khan QC was delighted to join H.E. Sweden Minister of Interior Mikael Damberg and Ambassador Anna-Karin Eneström today to sign a Cooperation Agreement between Sweden and UNITAD. Special Adviser Khan expressed hope the agreement will further strengthen

excellent cooperation with Sweden.

Special Adviser Khan thanked Minister Damberg for the extensive support Sweden has provided to UNITAD’s investigations into ISIL crimes in Iraq thus far, stressing the importance of such partnerships with all member states for the Team’s work.



UNITAD launches multimedia video demonstrating evidence of crimes against Yazidi community



Baghdad, 13 May 2021 – UNITAD launched today the full-length video outlining the range of evidence collected in its investigations into crimes committed against the Yazidi community in Sinjar. This follows the briefing by Special Adviser Karim Asad Ahmad Khan, Head of UNITAD to the Security Council on Monday in which he confirmed the Team had clear and convincing evidence that crimes committed against the Yazidi community constituted genocide. The video can be accessed at

<https://www.unitad.un.org/news/unitad-launches-multimedia-video-demonstrating-evidence-crimes-against-yazidi-community>

Developed in collaboration with SITU Research, a visual investigations practice, the video synthesizes the testimonial, documentary, digital and forensic evidence collected by the Team in this investigation.

Special Adviser Khan noted that this

video represented a distillation of the innovative approach the Team has sought to adopt in the implementation of its mandate: “From the beginning of our work in 2018 we have sought to integrate the most advanced technological solutions to the challenges posed by the depth and scale of crimes committed by ISIL. The video released today with SITU Research provides a window to some of the results produced in this effort and demonstrates how we can take evidence collected on the ground in Iraq and present it in a compelling narrative in national courts” Brad Samuels, Director, SITU Research noted: “This video presents a vast array of disparate assets assembled into a coherent account of these complex and tragic events. No single source of data tells the whole story but our collaboration with UNITAD seeks to organize, synthesize and make accessible the facts of this case.”

Building on the collection and analysis

of visual assets such as 3-D scans, geospatial data and drone footage, the video features an advanced evidence-presentation platform, which was also developed with SITU, that can be used to create an integrated, virtual environment which can both assist investigators in reviewing information collected and support witnesses in engaging with crime scenes. With respect to crimes committed at Kojo Village, the video demonstrates the integration of 3-D laser scans of mass grave sites into drone footage, while autopsy reports and DNA results of individual victims can be placed visually at the specific locations they are identified in the crime scene.

Special Adviser Khan noted that: “The utility of the platform demonstrated in this video is not just limited to the work of UNITAD investigators. Key challenges continually underlined by national authorities include an inability to access crime scenes so as to corroborate testimonial evidence, and the significant hurdles faced in communicating the gravity and scale of ISIL crimes in domestic courts. By harnessing platforms such as these and making them available to domestic authorities, UNITAD is able to bring the crime scene to national courtrooms globally.”

In addition to the full-length video linked above, a short version for press can be found at <https://youtu.be/uVDplh3PEvg>

Security Council Arria Formula meeting highlights UNITAD innovation and partnership as model for accountability efforts globally

New York, 20 May 2021 – UNITAD’s innovative and technology-focused approach to the collection and analysis of evidence of ISIL crimes was welcomed by United Nations Member States in an Arria Formula Meeting of the Security Council on Wednesday last week, chaired by the United Kingdom.

At the event, two key pillars of innovation were highlighted: the use of advanced technology to exploit mass data collection; and applying a trauma-informed approach to all aspects of contacts with witnesses and survivors.

At the opening of the meeting, Special Adviser Karim A. A. Khan QC introduced a video outlining a range of technologies the Team, including 3-D modeling of crime scenes, excavation of mass graves, and the use of advanced

search technologies to, in particular, ISIL documents. Referencing the presence of Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, Ms. Nadia Murad, Special Adviser Khan noted that “what you will see today is not a movie or fictional account, but real life. The village you will see, is Nadia’s village, the school you will see was Nadia’s school”. The Special Adviser highlighted how UNITAD had used technology to take these crimes scenes and bring them to national courtrooms globally.

Ms. Murad acknowledged the progress of investigations, observing that “if you had told me when the Security Council was debating UNITAD’s creation that I would be able to bury my brothers within four years, I would not have believed you”. She further noted “For

true justice and reconciliation, survivors must see that due process is upheld in Iraqi courts... and that survivors are included in this process every step of the way.”

Also addressing the continued imperative to hold ISIL members accountable for their crimes, Ms. Amal Clooney, Counsel for ISIL victims, noted that ISIL had not tried to hide its crimes but had in fact publicized them widely, underlining that innovative uses of technology adopted by UNITAD could be used to exploit this digital record of ISIL’s crimes. Noting that UNITAD had now finalized its initial case-brief in relation to crimes against the Yazidi community and found clear and convincing evidence of genocide, Ms. Clooney underscored “that this

Security Council Arria Formula meeting highlights UNITAD innovation and partnership... *(continued)*

investigation was always meant to be the beginning, not the end”, and called on states “that believe in human rights to commit to holding international trials”.

Justin Spelhaug, Vice-President of Tech for Social Impact Group, Microsoft Corporation described its partnership with UNITAD in the development of the “Zeteo Project”, leading to the development of cutting-edge tools using artificial intelligence and machine learning to identify those responsible for ISIL crimes. Mr. Spelhaug noted that the opportunities presented by the application of such technologies in criminal investigations were vast, emphasizing that “the common thread that binds these efforts is our focus on using AI to seek truth and actionable insight in an ocean of data so that investigators, researchers, front line providers and policy makers can take more effective action. Our work with UNITAD really personifies [the] objective of seeking truth and actionable insight and data”. He expressed his hope “that these efforts can be shared with others and the collective learnings that have been gained can be used to deliver accountability and justice for other important international criminal investigations”.

Dr. Daryn Reicherter of Stanford University described the partnership



with UNITAD in developing and implementing a trauma-informed approach to engagement with survivors. He noted that addressing the needs of those who have suffered trauma is not only the correct approach from a medical and normative perspective, but was also essential in ensuring survivors are empowered to provide the most effective testimony possible.

Member States welcomed UNITAD’s innovative approaches in the implementation of its mandate and underlined their commitment to continue to support its work. A number of States noted the pioneering nature of some of the working practices of UNITAD, emphasizing that these good practices should be implemented more broadly.

Special Adviser Khan concluded the meeting by noting the Security Council’s strong and unified support for UNITAD, which provides the foundation for strengthening efforts to prosecute ISIL members for their crimes. The Special Adviser stated “I would simply, and with the greatest humility, suggest to all members of the United Nations to look at the legal option that you know exists, look at the legal tools that are available, open the doors that you know are there. You have identified consensus. You have identified this common ground. With the greatest of respect, hold on to it, stand on it, build on it.”

You can see the video of the meeting at <https://www.unitad.un.org/content/multimedia>

UNITAD releases publications on: “Harnessing technology in complex criminal investigations” and a “Trauma-informed approach to witnesses and survivors”

New York, 23 May 2021 – During a Security Council Arria Meeting held at the United Nations headquarters on 12 May 2021, the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da’esh/ISIL (UNITAD) launched publications on the use of advanced technology in international criminal investigations, and the implementation of a trauma-informed approach to working with witnesses and survivors.

“*Harnessing Technology in International Criminal Investigations*” outlines ways in which technological tools have been deployed in the implementation of UNITAD’s mandate, and how UNITAD, in partnership with key private sector actors, has adapted and developed new technologies in dealing with huge volumes of complex

and challenging data. This publication presents lessons learned that may serve as a resource for domestic and international entities alike, especially in respect of international crimes.

The “*Trauma-Informed Investigations Field Guide*” sets out the trauma-informed approach that has guided UNITAD’s investigative practice. This approach has been developed in collaboration with the Human Rights in Trauma Mental Health Program at Stanford University, which has also provided UNITAD with expert impact reports synthesizing available mental health data pertaining to those affected by crimes committed by ISIL. UNITAD has developed standard operating procedures on the basis of the trauma-informed approach and drawing on international best practice, several of



which are appended to the Field Guide. “The grave suffering of survivors of heinous international crimes is not abstract – it is, in fact, well understood in the medical, psychological, and social sciences. The Human Rights in Trauma Mental Health Program aims to fundamentally adapt the way legal advocates, investigators, first responders, and mental health

UNITAD releases publications ... *(continued)*

practitioners understand this suffering, both in how they are trained to work with survivors and how they guide various justice systems' understanding of the impact of these harms. We are pushing to ensure trauma-informed practice becomes the norm, rather than a luxury," said Dr. Daryn Reicherter, Director of the Human Rights in Trauma Mental Health Laboratory and

Clinical Professor in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at Stanford University.

Special Adviser Khan stressed that "from the outset of its work, UNITAD has sought to implement its mandate through a creative approach drawing on a wide range of partnerships with survivor groups, national authorities, private sector entities, and non-

governmental organizations. In doing so, the Team has identified areas in which current international standards can be further enhanced through its work on the ground in Iraq. This has been most evident in the development of those two important publications, which will serve as resources on best practices in two areas in which UNITAD has pioneered."

UNITAD welcomes Swedish diplomats in its Duhok offices

Duhok, 30 May 2021 - UNITAD was delighted to welcome H.E. Lars Ronnäs, Swedish Ambassador to Iraq and Mr. Kristian Selerud, Deputy Head of Mission, at our office in Duhok. The team provided a full briefing on UNITAD's use of advanced technologies, forensic expertise, PSS support and partnerships in advancing investigations.

UNITAD remains thankful to the Government of Sweden's contributions through the provision of four

international investigators as part of Member States commitment to

accountability and justice for victims and survivors of ISIL crimes.



UNITAD psychologists continue providing various trainings

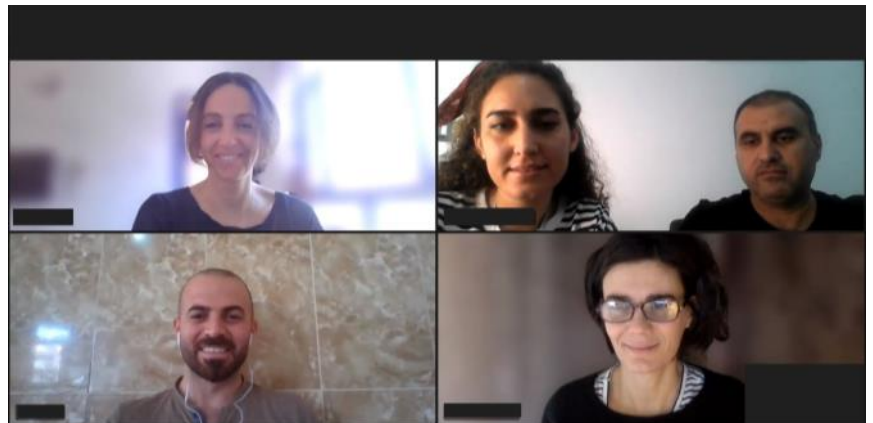
Baghdad, 25 May 2021 - UNITAD Psychologists concluded the training series provided for Emma Organization for Human Development today with a session on dealing with dissociation. In the session, they discussed main characteristics of dissociation and provided trainees with resources to confront it.

UNITAD Psychologists initiated a training series for Yazda Organization's MHPSS staff with a session on skills for handling reluctant behavior in children, especially victims and survivors of ISIL crimes.

In their continued effort to build capacities of national entities, UNITAD's Psychologists initiated a series of trainings for CIGE's legal and

psychosocial support teams. The first session covered Trauma and Managing Common Reactions.

UNITAD's psychosocial trainings are supported by the Kingdom of the Netherlands.



UNITAD team members bid farewell to SA Khan

Baghdad, 14 June 2021 - UNITAD team members bid Special Adviser Karim A. A. Khan QC farewell during a virtual town hall meeting held today. They shared stories and experiences of working with Special Adviser Khan over the last three years.

UNITAD is grateful for his inspirational leadership and wishes him success continuing to serve international justice as Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC).



UNITAD attends the commemoration ceremony for the victims of the Camp Speicher massacre



Baghdad, 12 June 2021 - UNITAD participated today in the commemoration ceremony for the victims of the Camp Speicher Massacre, underlining our commitment to work with the Government of Iraq and impacted communities in delivering justice for acts which represent some of the gravest crimes under international law.

As announced in the United Nations Security Council in May, UNITAD has concluded that ISIL attacks on Shia personnel at Camp Speicher constitute war crimes including murder, torture and outrages on personal dignity. Investigations have also concluded that ISIL incited genocide against Shia Muslims.

UNITAD continues to work in partnership with survivors and victim's families and support the Government of Iraq in delivering comprehensive accountabilities for all victims of ISIL crimes.

Here is the text of the speech of UNITAD representative at Speicher Massacre victims commemoration event:

"Distinguished Guests,

It is a great honor for me to join you today and to speak to you on behalf of UNITAD, the United Nations Investigative Team that is supporting the investigation of crimes committed by Da'esh in Iraq, including the Camp Speicher massacre.

Exactly seven years ago, in this place, some of the most heinous, inhumane crimes one can imagine were committed. Each one you lost a loved one, a son, husband, father, uncle, nephew, son-in-law because of these crimes. I wish to extend to you on behalf of the Team, and in particular the Head of our Team, Mr. Karim Asad Ahmad Khan QC, my most sincere condolences for your great loss. The pain and suffering you have endured,

and that you continue live every day, is beyond imaginable. It is essential that these crimes are not forgotten.

In my role at UNITAD, I am leading the Team responsible for investigating the crimes of ISIL at Camp Speicher. I am also joined by other members of our Team here today in order to pay our respect to the victims and underline our commitment to continue to work with you to deliver meaningful justice.

The mandate of our Team, the range of crimes that we investigate, reflects the horrific scale of ISIL's crimes and the depth of suffering they imposed on Iraq. Specifically, our Team is tasked with collecting evidence that demonstrates these crimes were not only acts of terrorism, but were targeted attacks on the communities and people of Iraq, constituting war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. These are recognized as the gravest possible crimes under international law.

The evidence we have collected can then be used in national proceedings in order to bring forward trials against those responsible and recognise the gravity of the crimes inflicted on your communities. In partnership with Iraqi authorities, we hope to deliver on our objective to assist in holding the perpetrators accountable for the crimes they have committed.

In his most recent address to the United Nations Security Council, just three weeks ago, Special Adviser Karim Khan announced the initial findings of our Team in relation to the Camp Speicher massacre.

Specifically, Special Adviser Khan noted that there was clear and convincing evidence that the massacres at Camp Speicher constituted a number of war crimes under international law. Special Adviser Khan also announced that evidence collected by the Team had demonstrated that ISIL, through

its propaganda, sought to incite genocide against Shia Muslims in Iraq. These are important recognitions of your suffering, but our investigations are ongoing, and with the new evidence currently being analysed we believe that other very serious crimes under international law may well be found.

In addition to Camp Speicher, we are also investigating ISIL crimes against the civilian population in the area of Tikrit. If you have evidence about Camp Speicher or other crimes in Tikrit that you would like to share with us, please feel free to contact us today or later by calling or through an online form called Shuhud. The evidence could be for example photos, videos or your personal observations of the crimes. All this information will help us in the investigation and eventually in bringing justice. I have made available materials [location] that you can take with you.

I wish to warmly thank the Chairman, Executive Director and other personnel of the Committee to Commemorate the Tikrit massacre and other organizers for organizing this memorable event and for inviting us to participate. This day, every year until now and every year to come, is an occasion for you, the families of the victims to mourn your loved ones but also for the wider community to remember the sacrifice they made. It should never be forgotten. While your wounds may not be healed, I hope this day brings you some comfort.

I would wish to conclude today by providing you with a message from the Special Adviser, Mr. Karim Khan: "Today I join with the mothers, fathers, brothers and sisters that mourn the loss of their loved ones at Camp Speicher. Please know that in your mourning, and in seeking justice, you are not alone. In establishing UNITAD to investigate these crimes, the international community has sought to recognize the breadth and depth of your suffering. I pray that through our work, by walking with you side-by-side towards justice, we can begin to bring some peace to you and to the memory of those you love. It is with the deepest sense of responsibility that we will continue this work in partnership with all of you."

I wish you courage and all the best on this important day and every day of your lives. Thank you."

For information about Speicher investigations please visit <https://bit.ly/3g6ig9g>

UNHCR appreciates the generous contribution from the Government of Switzerland

Baghdad, 12 May 2021 - UNHCR appreciates and welcomes the generous contribution of CHF 1,000,000.00 from the Government of Switzerland (equivalent to 1.1 million USD). These flexible funds are provided to

UNHCR to use when and where they are needed the most.

These funds come as part of global Swiss contribution to UNHCR of nearly 18 million USD for the year 2021.



UNHCR thanks France for its contribution in the protection of Syrian refugees in Iraq

Baghdad, 16 May 2021 - UNHCR wishes to express sincere thanks and gratitude to the Government of France for its recent generous contribution of EUR 1,000,000 towards UNHCR's protection and assistance programmes for the Syrian refugees in Iraq. This contribution will help UNHCR meet the needs and implement activities to relieve the dire conditions the Syrian refugee families face in Iraq. The COVID-19 pandemic impact on those having faced years of conflict and economic downturn, such as in Iraq,

has been disproportionately harsh. This generous contribution highlights the longstanding engagement and importance the Government of France has placed on addressing the humanitarian needs of displaced and conflict-affected communities in Iraq, thereby alleviating suffering and working together towards long-term and sustainable solutions. UNHCR remains fully available to welcome and facilitate field visits to project locations when conditions permit.



U.S. Consulate delegation visits Duhok

Duhok, 20 May 2021 - Yesterday at Sharya camp for displaced Iraqi families in Duhok, the team from the U.S. Consulate in Erbil, including Deputy Principal Officer Katie Kiser and representatives from USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) and U.S. Department of State's Bureau for Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) and Political section met with families who receive support from UNICEF, WFP, WHO and partners.

The team met and discussed with women who receive support for their families, from learning about protecting their children through the Child Protection Center, to monthly cash assistance for food, and healthcare including mental health support. The discussions were held safely outdoors with masks and social distancing, and the visiting group also met with Camp Representatives and Management.



Many thanks to USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance and U.S. Department of State: Bureau of

Population, Refugees, and Migration and our partners for their continued support to families in Iraq.

UNHCR organized a training for volunteers on UNHCR mandate

Erbil, 3 June 2021 - UNHCR Office in Erbil organized trainings on the UNHCR mandate, Community-Based Protection and Identification of Persons with Specific Needs for Community Outreach Volunteers (COVs). These volunteers are from the refugee, displaced persons and host

communities. They help us advocate and disseminate vital information to persons of concern.

The training which included over 120 COVs over 5 days also included an information session on registration for COVID-19 vaccination. This sessions intends to so that volunteers can assist

their community members to register for vaccination using the online platforms.

The training was conducted by Saea and Banaz from our protection team in Erbil in partnership with our partner NGO SWEDO - The Swedish Development Aid Organization.

Yazidi survivors in Germany and Iraq's reparation programme: "I want for us to have a share in Iraq"

Baghdad, 20 May 2021 – IOM recently published a report entitled "Yazidi survivors in Germany and Iraq's reparation programme: "I want for us to have a share in Iraq".

This report provides an overview of reparation demands of Yazidi women living in Germany and their opinions regarding the law and its future implementation.

Executive summary

Iraq recently adopted the Yazidi [Female] Survivors Law – a landmark bill that outlines and stipulates for a host of reparation benefits for survivors of the ISIS conflict, particularly Yazidi women and girls who survived conflict-related sexual violence.

However, specific details regarding the implementation of the programme remain largely unclear. Participation of potential applicants to the programme's design and implementation will play a significant role in its success. Although some past initiatives have brought decision-makers, survivors, and civil society together, the reparation programme must also be sure to meet the particular demands of Yazidi refugees that are currently forcibly displaced outside the territory of Iraq due to fears of persecution and devastating consequences of the genocide.

The Yazidi [Female] Survivors Law does mention applications received from outside of Iraq, thus pointing to the existence of political will to include refugee survivors. Nonetheless, implementation should be designed with careful consideration to ensure both availability and accessibility.

Drawing upon semi-structured interviews with 13 Yazidi women, this report provides an overview of reparation demands of Yazidi women living in Germany and their opinions regarding the new law and its future

implementation. The interviewees are part of the Baden-Württemberg Special Quota Humanitarian Admission Programme that was announced in 2014 to provide medical and psychosocial support to Yazidi women and children who survived ISIS, through which 1,100 survivors arrived in Germany. The report concludes by offering decision-makers concrete recommendations for the implementation of reparations and development of secondary legislation (bylaws).

Yazidi survivors in Germany who were interviewed as part of this study directed their reparation demands at Iraq, which they have a right to regardless of their intention to return. They also asked for the inclusion of Yazidi men and children as well as survivors from other communities in the scope of the reparation programme. Still, answers indicated a prioritization based on vulnerability as many asked for reparations for Yazidi survivors in Iraq first.

Among the chief demands, interviewees emphasized the restoration of property. However, barriers to return, especially lack of security, basic services, infrastructure and income in Sinjar must first be addressed in order to enjoy this benefit. Addressing these barriers beyond reparation programmes could help prevent the recurrence of atrocities. Compensation in the form of a monthly payments is of critical importance, not only for survivors in Iraq who live under poverty, but also for survivors residing in Germany, to support their economic empowerment. Considering the multifaceted harms arising from conflict-related sexual violence, survivors prioritized rehabilitation and particularly psychosocial support. Education and employment were raised

as critical elements supporting survivors in rebuilding their lives and coping with trauma. The most vocalized demand was initiating search and rescue operations for those who are still in captivity. Survivors also expressed the urgency of exhuming all mass graves, identification of the remains, collective (rather than gradual) announcement of victims' names, and financial and logistical support in visiting Iraq for participating in justice and reparations mechanisms. Demands for symbolic measures included proper reburials conducted in accordance with Yazidi rituals, statues and monuments marking the mass graves to honour the victims, official recognition of the genocide and declaring August 3 as a national day. Perpetrators should be prosecuted under international crimes and measures adopted to ensure safe participation by survivors in trials.

The Yazidi [Female] Survivors Law seems to capture many key demands of Yazidi survivors in Germany. Secondary legislation must aim toward swift and survivor-centric implementation.

Participation of survivors, communities impacted by the conflict and civil society in determining the specifics of the reparative measures and their overall implementation is key to ensuring accessibility by all survivors, both inside and outside of Iraq.

Creating application, verification and distribution mechanisms to support refugee survivors' access to benefits requires that the Government of Iraq develop innovative solutions. Given its status as a host country, Germany can support survivors in accessing reparation benefits distributed by Iraq.

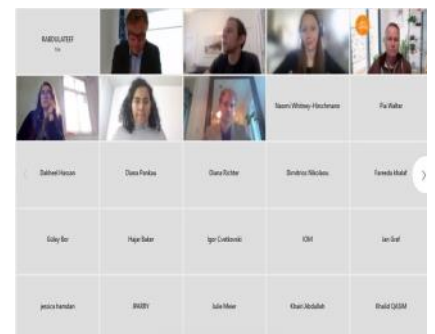
Download report at <https://iraq.iom.int/file/124252/download?token=UrMuUeBy>

A virtual briefing on reparations for Yazidi survivors of conflict-related sexual violence held recently

Baghdad, 20 May 2021 - IOM Germany, in cooperation with IOM Iraq and German counterparts, held a virtual briefing on reparations for Yazidi survivors of conflict-related sexual violence: assessing survivors' expectations in Germany. Yazidi survivor and human rights activist Farida Khalaf gave a speech about Yazidi women during the meeting and commented on the current situation of Yazidi survivors in Germany and Iraq,

sharing her own experiences and the stories of others. The results of the study "Reparations for Yazidi Survivors from Conflict-Related Sexual Violence: Assessing Survivors' Expectations in Germany", conducted by IOM Germany and IOM Iraq (2020-2021), were also reviewed during the briefing.

The study and the event were supported by the Government of Germany.



UNHCR is saddened by the tragic incident in Erbil

Erbil, 20 May 2021 - UNHCR is saddened by the tragic incident that occurred on Tuesday (18 May 2021), when an Iranian asylum-seeker set himself on fire outside the entrance of the UN compound in Erbil in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI). The UN medical team responded with first aid and transferred the asylum-seeker to hospital where he is now receiving medical treatment. UNHCR

is following closely with the Department of Health and hospital administration regarding the condition of the asylum-seeker.

UNHCR works in partnership with the Kurdistan Regional Government and the Federal Government in Iraq in providing registration and documentation to refugees and asylum seekers, in accordance with the International Humanitarian and

Refugee legal standards.

UNHCR also provides direct assistance to vulnerable refugees and asylum seekers across Iraq including KRI regardless of nationality, including protection services, legal assistance, cash assistance. We also support Government institutions in providing community access to public services such as health, education, water, and electricity.

UNHCR: "This tragic loss of life is regrettable"

Erbil, 24 May 2021 - UNHCR is saddened by the death of the Iranian asylum seeker who had set himself on fire last Tuesday, the 18th of May in front of the UN compound in Erbil. This tragic loss of a human life is

regrettable, and we express our deepest sympathy and stand with his family, friends and loved ones during this difficult time.

UNHCR met with representatives of the Iranian displaced community

yesterday, Sunday 23 May to discuss their concerns and how UNHCR can continue to support this community to the extent of our mandate and capabilities.

UNHCR is saddened by the fire in Shariya camp for displaced persons in Dohuk

Baghdad, 4 June 2021 - UNHCR is saddened by the unfortunate incident, the fire in Shariya camp for displaced persons in Dohuk that broke out today and destroyed some 400 tents. We are

working with local authorities and partners to determine needs and appropriate ways to provide assistance to the affected families. We continue to work with authorities and residents of

the camp on ways to prevent such incidents from reoccurring in the future. We wish those injured a speedy recovery.

UNHCR welcomes the Government's decision to allow the construction of semi-upgraded shelters in camps for displaced persons in Duhok Governorate

Duhok, 9 June 2021 - UNHCR, which leads the Camp Coordination/Camp Management and Shelter Clusters in Iraq, welcomes the Government's decision to allow the construction of semi-upgraded shelters in camps for displaced persons in Duhok Governorate. The decision represents a longer-term response to the large fire in Shariya IDP camp on 4 June and will not only

reduce risks of fire but is a positive step in terms of protection, dignity, safety, and privacy for each individual family. The shelter upgrade, something that UNHCR and humanitarian partners have been advocating for, is a transitional solution until these families can go back home in a voluntary, safe and dignified manner. UNHCR and humanitarian partners

will work closely with the authorities, Camp Management, and the community to set appropriate standards for the upgrades. The decision complements the immediate response of Government, Camp Management, and humanitarian partners to the 4 June fire. In the immediate aftermath of the fire, UNHCR and its partners contributed tents, core relief items, additional fire extinguishers and other protection and assistance services, such as replacement of civil documents, to the affected population.

UNHCR will continue its long-standing fire prevention activities including provision of fire extinguishers and risk awareness and risk mitigation activities in support of and in coordination with Camp Management and camp-based Civil Defence authorities. UNHCR would also like to urge donor countries to contribute to this urgent shelter need so that displaced families in Shariya and other camps can live with peace of mind, protected from hazards until they find longer-term solutions.



The Humanitarian Coordinator visits Shariya Camp and welcomes KRG decision to allow semi-upgraded shelters for camp residents

Duhok, 9 June 2021 - The Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Ms. Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano, visited Shariya IDP Camp in Dohuk governorate. The visit came in the aftermath of a fire on 4 June, that destroyed some 288 tents in the camp, leaving over 1000 persons homeless. Ms. Vojáčková-Sollorano met with the Director of the Department of Migration and Crisis Response, Ms. Manal Mohamed Fouad of the Kurdish Regional Government. They discussed the efforts of the Department of Migration and Crisis Response in combatting the fire and the way ahead in terms of putting up semi-upgraded shelters. Ms. Vojáčková-Sollorano also met with representatives of the UNHCR led Camp Coordination and Camp Management Cluster and with OCHA to discuss current needs and the way towards durable solutions. Resources were swiftly deployed last Friday to put out the fire, secure the area and support those impacted. Temporary tents, alternative shelters, water, hot meals, and Core Relief Items were provided. During her visit to Duhok, Ms. Vojáčková-Sollorano met with families that were affected by the

fire and listened to their concerns and the challenges facing them. “While I am saddened by the fire incident last Friday, the UN welcomes the KRG and the Governor of Dohuk’s decision to allow the construction of semi-upgraded shelters so that camp residents can live in safety and with dignity. I hope this will put a stop to any such incidents happening again in the future” said the Humanitarian Coordinator.

The UN underscores the increased need to find durable solutions to end displacement in Iraq. All forms of durable solutions have to be voluntary, safe, dignified, and sustainable. The creation of safe conditions and the availability of basic services are an essential.

Ms. Vojáčková-Sollorano reaffirmed the UN’s commitment to continue providing humanitarian assistance for both IDPs and returnees.



Burnt tents were replaced with a semi-upgraded shelter

Duhok, 14 June 2021 - Just last week, Mirna 12, was standing where their tent used to be in Shariya camp for displaced near Duhok, right after the fire of June 4th.

Today, almost 10 days later, each burnt tent is being replaced with a semi-upgraded shelter. These shelters will not only reduce risks of fire but are a positive step in terms of protection, dignity, safety, and privacy for each individual family.

UNHCR and partners assessed the damage immediately, quick response was needed. The Government allowed the construction of semi-upgraded shelters in camps for displaced persons in Duhok Governorate. Within the next few days, bricks were brought, and building of shelters started.

The shelter upgrade, something that UNHCR and humanitarian partners have been advocating for, is a transitional solution until these families can go back home in a voluntary, safe and dignified manner. UNHCR and humanitarian partners are working closely with the authorities, Camp Management, and the community to set appropriate

standards for the upgrades. The decision complements the immediate response of Government, Camp Management, and humanitarian partners to the 4th of June fire in Shariya camp. In the immediate aftermath of the fire, UNHCR and its partners contributed tents, core relief items, additional fire extinguishers and other protection and assistance services, such as replacement of civil documents, to the affected population. UNHCR will continue its long-standing

fire prevention activities including provision of fire extinguishers and risk awareness and risk mitigation activities in support of and in coordination with Camp Management and camp-based Civil Defense authorities. UNHCR would also like to urge donor countries to contribute to this urgent shelter need so that displaced families in Shariya and other camps can live with peace of mind, protected from hazards until they find longer-term solutions.



OCHA visits returnees and IDPs, provides assistance

Mosul, 26 April 2021 - OCHA Iraq visited Muhallabiyah in west Mosul, to speak to people who recently left closed internally displaced (IDP) camps in Ninewa and returned to their hometown. Through the Iraq Humanitarian Fund, partner Oxfam has distributed emergency non-food items (NFIs) to people in need. The kits included basic household essentials: kerosene stove and heater, blankets, pots, portable cooler, kitchen items, COVID-19 hygiene items, mattresses, solar lamp, jerry can, rope, water storage container, tarpaulin and bucket, to help people restart their lives. The people of Muhallabiyah need significant humanitarian aid but also longer term

assistance. Repairing war-damaged shelter, providing basic services, and creating jobs are some of the many priorities for people in this region.

OCHA team led an interagency mission to the villages of Albo Habash and Um Algita in Salah Al-Din. They met with local leaders and returnees in the two villages. Returns began in 2020 but many people are not willing to come back due to the huge destruction in the villages. Electricity is provided to the villages for only two hours each day. Both villages need to be supplied with electrical posts/wires. There is no potable water network in the villages, which need to be connected to the main water pipeline or rely on other more

expensive methods.

OCHA Duhok team visited both in-camp and out-of-camp internally displaced persons (IDPs) originally from Sinjar. Families living in Darkar camp live in caravans; families in Hawishke village are in unfinished buildings. Both groups have with access to water, electricity, health and education. No major humanitarian needs were assessed among either group. Everyone interviewed indicated they have no intention of returning to Sinjar due to the lack of basic services and livelihood opportunities, and the presence of various armed groups.

IOM supports the Ministry of Migration and Displacement in establishing a referral system to help returnees

Baghdad, 6 May 2021 - The Government of Iraq's Ministry of Migration and Displacement (MoMD) is establishing a referral system to help the thousands of people who have returned to Ninewa Governorate after being displaced by the ISIL conflict or migrating abroad. The referral system will link returnees to organizations in Ninewa that provide support services ranging from housing assistance to providing vocational and skills training, and school enrollment.

To prepare for the rollout of this

system, IOM Iraq and MoMD staff organized a training in Erbil to prepare the MoMD local offices to effectively assess the needs of returnees in Ninewa and refer them to the appropriate services in the lead up to the launch of the referral system. This training is one more step forward as Iraq's capacity to address return migration grows.

The training and referral system are supported by Australian Department of Home Affairs.



IOM Iraq distributed Cash for Non-Food Items (NFI) cards in Jeddah Camp

Baghdad, 6 May 2021 - "This is a very good initiative by IOM. With this cash for NFI card, the joy of Eid was brought to the displaced families in the camp. We can use the card to purchase clothes for children and adults as well, or household appliances, everyone was overwhelmed with joy. Some families came here to buy items that were not available in the camp before. Many of these families left their homes and came here with nothing, and now they can equip their tents with these items that help them lead their simple lives and make these tents as close as possible to home," said Abdullah, displaced from Mosul.

IOM Iraq recently distributed Cash for Non-Food Items (NFI) cards in Jeddah Camp for Internally Displaced Persons. The cards contained 124,000 IQD per household which allowed residents to shop at dedicated stores in the camp to purchase different items such as



carpets, pots, pans, gas stoves, buckets and other useful household items.

IOM Iraq regularly distributes NFI kits and COVID-19 kits for families with urgent needs; as a complement to these activities, cash cards give the families

flexibility to buy additional items that they want. 1,760 families were reached by this latest distribution.

This project was supported by - USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance.

Returning Iraqis face dire conditions following camp closures



With 250,000 Iraqis still living in camps after fleeing ISIS, sudden closure of 14 sites in late 2020 forced many to return to destroyed homes and villages lacking basic services.

Baghdad, 27 May 2021 - When 68-year-old farmer Dahi finally returned to his village after spending more than three years in a camp south of Mosul for Iraqis who fled ISIS militants, his homecoming was far from the joyous occasion he had long imagined.

At the end of last year, the authorities announced the closure of Salamiyah camp, giving Dahi's family and others just days to pack their things and return to Risala village near Iraq's northwestern border with Syria. On arrival they found widespread destruction to homes and infrastructure including the small local school.

"We found it in ruins. It was abandoned, left for three or four years," Dahi said. "The houses here are built from mud, if you leave a mud house without maintenance for a period of time it will collapse. We saw several houses that had collapsed."

"We need help."

The immediate challenge facing the villagers was how to provide for themselves, being unable to grow crops due to a lack of agricultural materials and equipment and without jobs or alternative sources of income. Even securing water was a major challenge, having to rely on costly deliveries by truck that were often impossible when the only dirt road into the village became a quagmire following winter storms.

The precariousness of their situation

was tragically revealed when a next-door neighbour's three-month-old daughter became feverish, and their attempts to reach the nearest town with a hospital 12 kilometres away failed after their vehicle became stuck attempting to navigate the swamp-like road.

"My neighbour Abdulhadi, his infant daughter fell sick and because he couldn't reach a hospital due to the road, she died," Dahi explained.

More than 6 million Iraqis were forced to flee their homes when ISIS militants took control of large swathes of territory in 2014. Some 4.8 million people have since returned home, but more than 1.2 million remain internally displaced.

Of those still displaced inside Iraq, some 250,000 were living in camps, where conditions are basic but essential services such as shelter, schools and health care were provided by UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, and its partners.

In October 2020, the Iraqi government announced the sudden closure of 13 camps, affecting more than 34,000 residents, with more camps closing in the following months. While voluntary return to their area of origin is the preferred outcome for most, many of those affected by the decision to close camps must now contend with destroyed properties and infrastructure, insecurity and a lack of jobs.

UNHCR has raised its concerns with the government, stressing that some of the closures were conducted without adequate notice and consultation with camp residents.

Following a recent assessment,

UNHCR is now working to pave the road linking Risala village to the nearest town and will also rehabilitate the local school and teachers' guesthouse.

But the future remains uncertain for Dahi and the 300 other families living in Risala, with drought now threatening their ability to feed themselves in the coming months.

"Our living conditions are very difficult. Our source of income is farming and this year due to drought we have no crops," Dahi said. "We need help. No one can live on thin air alone."

Other Iraqis affected by the camp closures face a similar struggle. In Tabouqa village southwest of Mosul, 37 families arrived home at the end of last year following the closure of Hamam al Alil camp, only to find a jumble of ruined buildings and a village devoid of even the most basic services.

One resident, 48-year-old Abdelwahed, described the situation facing him and his young family as desperate.

"My children are still young and should be in school, but they are not, because we have no school in the village," he said. "If someone needs to see a doctor, we have to drive for hours through muddy roads to reach a hospital. In the camp we used to receive kerosene, we had a school and healthcare."

"We don't know how to start again."

The situation has left Abdelwahed and other villagers yearning for an alternative that previously would have seemed unthinkable.

"We all are on the same sinking ship. No one wants to stay in our damaged village," he said. "I wish we could go back to the misery of the camp. At least it was better than living here," he said.

"We don't know how to start again," Abdulwahed continued. "We have spent all the money we had. We need financial support to buy agricultural material and machinery ... so that we can start rely on ourselves to rebuild our lives, our farms and village again."

By Firas Al Khateeb, UNHCR.



Refurbished homes facilitate return of IDPs

Baghdad, 20 May 2021 - The situation in Marwan's village of Yengija, Salah al-Din, was tense even before ISIL took control in June 2014. He had been attacked once by unidentified gunmen and wounded in the leg. When ISIL took control of the village, Marwan lost all hope of returning. He lived in displacement in Kirkuk for six years in a rented house before finally trying to return to his own home. He found the house burnt and partially in ruins.

In November 2020, IOM Iraq helped Marwan rehabilitate his home with support from the Government of Germany. The destroyed parts of the home were rebuilt; the floors were cast in concrete; walls were re-plastered; new doors and windows were installed; and water and electricity networks were set up.

"I am very happy. Without the assistance, I would not have been able to rehabilitate my house and settle down again in my village," said Marwan.

Many homes in Anah district, west of Anbar Governorate, were damaged during the conflict with ISIL. Nabil, 53, fled with his family to Erbil Governorate in 2014; he returned to Anbar in 2018 after the governorate and his district were liberated. He found his house badly damaged and lacked the means to restore it because his financial situation was very difficult — he lost everything when he was displaced.

IOM Iraq's shelter team built new rooms, restored the walls, established the water and electricity network, and installed new windows and doors at Nabil's family home.

Prior to the restoration, Nabil was struggling to pay rent and cover his family's expenses. He felt happy when he saw his home again, as he did not expect that his house would be fully restored.

This housing rehabilitation initiative was supported by the Government of Germany.

IOM Iraq, with support from the U.S. Department of State: Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, recently supported the voluntary return of 42 displaced families from Amriyat al Falloujah camp to their areas of origin across Anbar Governorate.



IOM Iraq helped 18 families rebuild their destroyed homes in West Mosul

Mosul, 3 May 2021 - During a ceremony attended by the representative of the Governor of Mosul on 28 April, IOM Iraq marked the completion of the project "Rehabilitation of Damaged Houses in West Mosul" in Zanjili, Mosul.

With support from Qatar Charity, and as part of IOM's ongoing efforts to support the Government of Iraq's durable solutions efforts, IOM Iraq helped 18 families rebuild their destroyed homes in West Mosul.

"After ISIL took over Mosul, we were displaced to Salamiyah Camp until 2017. When we came back, our house was destroyed. We rented a house, but we kept hoping that one day we would go back home. IOM gave us hope and now my family is back living in our

house," said Faris.

"After the liberation of Mosul, we came back to see nothing but debris; I was working and living in a rented house. Without IOM, I would have never thought of rehabilitating my house again," said Sleman.

The destruction of houses is one of the most significant barriers to return for Internally Displaced Persons. The project created jobs, enhanced skills, and supported the overall efforts to rebuild areas in West Mosul during the ISIL crisis; its overall objective was to support durable solutions for IDPs, returnees, and host communities. IOM Iraq is reconstructing over 200 houses in Ninewa and Anbar governorates using an owner-driven, cash-based model.



Trainings in cross-organizational coordination and referrals held in Baghdad and Erbil

Baghdad/Erbil, 1 June 2021 - IOM Iraq is holding a series of trainings in Baghdad and Erbil to train employees of the Iraqi Ministry of Migration and Displacement in cross-organizational coordination and referrals. The trainings advance the establishment of a referral system between the Ministry and service providers to support migrants in their diverse needs. The

system is piloted in Ninewa Governorate, where it will support the thousands of people who returned to the area following their migration out of Iraq or displacement due to the conflict with ISIL. This system will provide for the efficient referral of returnees to organizations that offer support services in Ninewa Governorate, such as housing

assistance, vocational training, livelihood support and medical assistance.

This training constitutes another step forward as Iraq continues to expand its efforts to effectively manage return migration.

This training was funded by the Government of Australia.

The Stabilization Task Force advises Kirkuk

Kirkuk, 30 May 2021 - Today, Technical Advisors of Germany, France and Denmark visited Kirkuk to convey a clear message: social cohesion, peace and security are preconditions for stability, recovery and development. Mr. Martijn Dalhuijsen, the Development Coordination Officer from UNAMI in Kirkuk, was delighted that



the Stabilization Task Force conducted a mission to better understand the local situation. While high-level meetings in Baghdad are certainly important to strengthen policy coherence, such discussions are more informed with first-hand information on the ground. The Stabilization Task Force coordinates the efforts of the 27 major donors in Iraq, co-chaired by Iraq and Germany. The Stabilization Task Force focuses on a different Governorate every quarter and provides strategic guidance to the Iraqi and international stabilization partners through the Funding Facility for Stabilization (FFS). This Fund, implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), has allocated USD \$ 1.4 billion dollars towards the recovery across five liberated governorates including Kirkuk, and in nine major sectors: electricity, health, water, education, sewage, livelihoods, municipalities, roads and bridges, and

social cohesion.

According to Ms. Zena Ali Ahmed, the UNDP Resident Representative, the FFS remains the Government of Iraq's and the international community's partner of choice to implement its stabilization work, bringing peace and stability to a country that suffered immensely under ISIL.

During the meeting with H.E. Mr. Rakan Al-Jubouri, the Governor of Kirkuk highlighted the need for shelter rehabilitation. The German chair of the Technical Advisors Group, Ms. Beata Hoppe, stressed the continuous support of the donor community to the joint stabilization efforts in Kirkuk as well as all liberated areas.

After a successful visit to Kirkuk, the Technical Advisors returned to the capital with first-hand insights into ongoing stabilization activities in Kirkuk in preparation for the high-level Stabilization Task Force meeting on 02 June 2021 in Baghdad.

IOM Iraq recently organized an art exhibition in Al-Shirqat

Baghdad, 7 June 2021 - IOM Iraq's Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) team in Salah Al-Din Governorate recently organized an art exhibition in Al-Shirqat district's Al-Eitha village. The exhibition displayed work including drawings, knitted pieces and architectural models submitted by youths from the area to the IOM Iraq MHPSS center in Al-Eitha.

Art creation is an accessible method for returnees to name, give meaning to and

transform personal themes and lived experiences. By highlighting their artwork, the exhibition helped to connect the youths with their community and strengthen collective communication and social cohesion. This exhibition is part of IOM Iraq's efforts to support returnee reintegration into their areas of origin after years in displacement.

This activity was funded by the Government of Germany.



A football tournament in Salah Al-Din Governorate organized as part of efforts to support the reintegration of returnees

Baghdad, 7 June 2021 - In collaboration with the Reconciliation Committee of Gannous, IOM Iraq's Social Cohesion and Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) programmes jointly organized a football tournament in Salah Al-Din Governorate's Gannous area as part of efforts to support the reintegration of returnees after years of displacement.

In addition to arranging the tournament, IOM Iraq and the Reconciliation Committee provided the necessary equipment and attire to bring together 24 teams comprised of young men from returnee and host community families in the area for a series of good-spirited, community-building football matches.

"This is an important activity. It will contribute to the reintegration of the



returnee families with the community, as young men from the whole area will participate in the tournament," said Salih, a member of Gannous' Reconciliation Committee.

The activity is part of ongoing social

cohesion and MHPSS programming that works to bridge gaps between returnees and host community members.

This project is funded by the Government of Germany.

UNHCR delegation met the Governor of Erbil; discussed UNHCR’s structural contributions to towns hosting refugee camps

Erbil, 15 June 2021 - A UNHCR delegation headed by the Representative in Iraq, Ms. Philippa Candler, visited the Governor of Erbil, Mr. Omed Abdulrahman Hassan. They discussed cooperation and humanitarian assistance to refugees and internally displaced persons living in Erbil governorate, in particular UNHCRs structural contributions to towns hosting refugee camps. UNHCR will increase its engagement with local communities that has opened their doors to refugees and undertakes to work with the government to improve the services and infrastructure in towns in Erbil hosting refugee camps. The Governor reaffirmed his commitment towards supporting persons forced to flee their homes who have found shelter in Erbil. During the meeting the Governor presented UNHCR with a plaque as a tangible sign of his appreciation of the role and contributions of the organization.

"This plaque is a reflection of the strong and positive cooperation between the Government and UNHCR in Erbil. I appreciate the commitment of the Governor of Erbil to protect and support the 135,000 refugees living in

Erbil Governorate - half of all refugees in the country. UNHCR will continue to work closely with the Governor and his team in support of refugees and the areas in the governorate generously hosting them," Philippa Candler said.



World Refugee Day 2021 – No one is safe until we are all safe!

Baghdad, 20 June 2021 - "We are living in difficult times at the moment with over 80 million people who have been forced to flee from their homes and the global pandemic wreaking havoc.

On World Refugee Day 2021, we call on countries to follow the example of Iraq and to include refugees and displaced people in their national health care response plans, in particular their vaccination programs.

No one is safe until we are all safe," Philippa Candler, Representative UNHCR Iraq.

On World Refugee Day UNHCR

organized a bike race at Sami Abdulrahman park in Erbil. This year

theme is inclusion of refugees in health, education and sports.



UNDP Administrator meets Iraqi ministers

New York, 26 June 2021 - Achim Steiner, Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme met with Iraq Minister of Planning, Khaled Battal Al-Najem, and Minister of Migration and Displaced, Ivan Faeq Jabro, with Assistant Secretary-General and Director of the UNDP Regional Bureau for Arab States, Khalida Bouzar. They reviewed joint priorities on stabilization, return and reintegration of IDPs and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). UNDP committed to supporting peace, inclusion and sustainable development in Iraq.



WFP and the Iraqi Ministry of Trade launch a food ration smartphone app for 1.6 million people in Iraq

Baghdad, 27 June 2021 - The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) and Iraqi Ministry of Trade launched the 'Tamwini' (My Food Ration) smartphone application in Najaf, which will roll out for 1.6 million people across the governorate.

The Tamwini app allows families to easily update – directly on their smartphones – their information for the Public Distribution System for food rations (PDS). The initiative is part of the digitalisation of the PDS, which WFP and the Ministry of Trade launched in January 2019 and provides added benefits during COVID-19 pandemic as people can update their information – for example in the case of a newborn or a marriage – directly on their phone from the safety of their homes instead of visiting PDS offices in person.

“As well as providing a practical, time-saving solution for families benefiting from the scheme as well as government staff, the Tamwini app is especially useful in a governorate such as Najaf, where some communities live far apart,

and updating personal family data means longer journeys to PDS offices,” said Iraqi Minister of Trade Alaa Ahmed al-Jubouri. “Together with WFP and partners, since July 2020 we have successfully trialled Tamwini in two neighbourhoods in Baghdad and Mosul. The rollout to 1.6 million people in Najaf is a milestone towards expanding the use of the app across the country.” “The strong partnership between WFP and the Ministry of Trade is the foundation for this innovation: from the smartcards that are being introduced across Iraq to replace paper cards, iris scanning verification, and now expanding access to the Tamwini app to people across Najaf governorate,” said WFP Representative in Iraq Abdirahman Meygag. “By creating better solutions and services for families in Najaf, we are moving towards enhancing social protection for the entire country.”

A robust Public Distribution System that is constantly updated – in real time – will also allow for prioritisation of the most vulnerable families. Under

WFP’s social protection programme, the PDS digitalisation is also providing the foundation for other government Ministries to align and create one single, social register of families most in need of support.

Tamwini can be downloaded by Najaf residents by collecting a dedicated QR code card from their PDS branch in Najaf – just one time. Scan the QR code with a smartphone – one per household – and the option to download Tamwini appears via the Google Play Store. Soon, Tamwini will also be available on the iOS App Store. Each QR code corresponds to the family’s individual electronic PDS (‘ePDS’) number.



The Iraqi Ministry of Education and WFP plan to broaden access to school feeding for 3.6 million children

Baghdad, 28 June 2021 - The Ministry of Education of Iraq (MoE) and the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) have agreed to broaden access to school feeding for 3.6 million school children across the country. So far this year, 264,000 of the most vulnerable children have been provided with school meals and support in 11 districts. Partners plan to expand the programme over the next four years to provide better opportunities to all children in need, to stay in school and support their learning and futures.

“The Ministry of Education is a longstanding champion of school nutrition, which is a pillar to help children stay in learning. It is proven that the school feeding programme is vital for achieving success in education, strengthening children’s focus and mental capacity. Last year, the schools where we ran the National School Feeding Programme had improved rates of 99 percent retention, and 97 percent attendance of students,” said Iraqi Director of Sport and Deputy Education Minister spokesperson Mohammed Al Aboudi.

At a two-day, consultative workshop last week, the partners, including the Ministry of Planning, Ministry of Trade and Ministry of Health, worked on a

strategy to expand the school feeding programme based on its success in improving learning opportunities.

The school meal includes a bottle of water, freshly baked bread, cheese and a piece of fruit. This balanced meal provides the energy that school children need to focus during classes. In addition, all the food is purchased from local suppliers, bakeries, fruit markets and small businesses. This strengthens the capacity of small business owners, facilitates the creation of hundreds of livelihood opportunities in areas where the programme is implemented, and invigorates national and local food systems.

In the new 2021-2022 academic year, the partners’ aim is to support 450,000 children, then 900,000 children the following year, subsequently 1.8 million, and 3.6 million by 2024-2025. The plan is also to hand over the joint programme to the government.

The high-level workshop provided the opportunity for MoE, WFP and partner ministries to discuss priorities such as focusing on the most vulnerable children, and the selection of food items for the school meals. A national school meals committee – chaired by Ministers – will also be formed, to help place children’s futures at the centre of the

national agenda. A new National School Feeding Policy is also being jointly developed.

“WFP appreciates the continuous investment of the Ministry of Education in the School Feeding programme in past school years, in recognition of the importance of health and nutrition for school children in Iraq,” says Abdirahman Meygag, WFP Representative in Iraq. “WFP is committed to supporting the Ministry of Education to create a strong school feeding policy and to expand the programme, so more children have the chance to learn better, leading to improved chances to fulfil their potential as adults.”

The partners also committed to advocate for the creation of a national pooled fund for school feeding, to help with long-term finance needed for the programme. To ensure a successful handover, WFP will also continue to support the Ministry of Education with training and development on key systems and staff skills, alongside local Directorates of Education. Such capacity strengthening can enhance the long-term success of the School Feeding Programme, and ultimately the futures of millions of school children.

Struggling Iraqi mother learns new gardening skills in EU project

Mosul, 12 April 2021 - After struggling to support her family for the past six years, Nafla Mohammad Ali is now a gardener at Al Yarmouk Park currently being transformed as part of the EU-funded area-based urban recovery programme.

Nafla and her family used to live on a chickpea plantation in the town of Batnaya, north of the Mosul but during heavy fighting in 2014 they fled to Mosul and settled near Al Yarmouk Park.

When her husband lost his job due to spinal issues, Nafla was forced to support both of them and five children. "If I did not work for one day, my family would have nothing to eat for lunch," she remembers. "I was stressed and completely desperate for an opportunity."

She came across UN-Habitat's horticulture training programme which was recruiting female gardeners as one of the initiatives under the EU-funded urban recovery programme. She says her financial situation has improved drastically.

Nafla is one of the 30 vulnerable

women selected from the 410 women who applied to UN-Habitat's "Horticulture Training Programme for Women." Many of the candidates enrolled in this programme are destitute widows whose families survive on charity and food provided by the local mosques.

The initiative provided Nafla and her colleagues with an intensive 10-day long vocational training comprising core lessons in horticulture, including soil composition, plant species, planting, pruning and general maintenance. The training was held in close consultation with Agriculture Department in Mosul University, Ninewa Agriculture Department and Mosul Municipality.

Nafla and other female gardeners from her batch are expected to continue working on this programme for the next year. UN-Habitat is negotiating with Al Rabee Sector Municipality to hire five of the best trainees from their programme as full-time employees to help maintain Al Yarmouk Park. Other trainees will be enrolled on an entrepreneurship training course

running in parallel to this initiative.

At a macro level, such public space rehabilitation initiatives contribute to social cohesion within war-torn communities. Free accessibility to public spaces play an integral role in the physical and social inclusion of the population, especially in Mosul's case, where the many green areas have been built over in the late 1980s and many parks are leased to recreational enterprises. Through this initiative, UN-Habitat will restore public access for over half a million people living in west Mosul to the park. The shade of the trees planted by Nafla and her colleagues will provide welcome shade during the blistering heat of Mosul's summer.



Behind-the-scenes: Meet the stabilization team in Mosul

Mosul, 18 April 2021 - We take you behind the scenes to meet UNDP Iraq's dedicated team working on stabilization efforts in Mosul.

Since its launch in 2015, UNDP's Funding Facility for Stabilization has set the stage for Iraq to build forward better through rehabilitation of critical infrastructure and restoration of essential services affected by the conflict with ISIL. To support Iraqis, build back the country, this is done through leveraging localized expertise and talent. Over 95% of the work is contracted through the local private sector, which reduces costs, bolsters local economies, and provides emergency incomes.

We spoke to some of the engineers working in East and West Mosul on how this work has helped them grow personally and professionally.



Meet Ibrahim Tayyar, civil engineer working on Mosul University "This work gives me hope for returning to life after a dark period during ISIL. When people who are displaced see our reconstruction

efforts, they will be encouraged to return to their homes in Mosul," says 42-year-old Ibrahim Tayyar, a civil engineer. Since 2017, Ibrahim has been working on rehabilitation of Mosul University's Central Library. "When we started, we could still hear bullets on the west side of Mosul. I love my job as an engineer because we make future better by building facilities that serve our people." Before ISIL, the Central Library played an important role in research and literary gatherings in Mosul. It contained over a million books, an electronic library, newspapers, and several academic journals – all burned by ISIL. Once rehabilitated, it will provide students with spaces of diverse options such as, silent, and non-silent reading rooms, meeting halls, a computer

lab and much more. It will have the capacity to host over 1,000 students at once and store more than 100,000 books.



Meet Sahar Mohanad Yahya, an electrical engineer working on Northern Technical University and Mosul

University

"It was scary to hear the fighting while we tried to work. I stayed motivated by thinking of all the families and their children who needed our support to rebuild our city," says Sahar Mohanad Yahya, an electrical engineer. On entering a traditionally male-dominated field in Iraq, Sahar had to work hard to create her space. "It was not easy for the contractors, workers, end-user to get instructions from a female engineer. I worked hard to improve my communication skills and they came around eventually," she says. Calling on young Iraqi women to follow her lead, "Do not let your circumstances come in your way. Our country needs the energy of young people to rise again. Always remember that countries are not built overnight, you must work diligently and consistently," says Sahar. Sahar worked on the recently rehabilitated women's dorm for Northern Technical University.

The building was used by ISIL as a weapon store, while parts were left vandalized and burnt.

The newly rehabilitated women's dorm will provide over 250 students with a safe atmosphere to study and live.

Meet Ahmed*, civil engineer working on Ibn Al Atheer hospital

"The work can be very difficult at times

Behind-the-scenes: Meet the stabilization team in Mosul *(continued)*

based on the type of damage. The reward of stressful weeks of work can be seen when we improve the access to health services for residents of Mosul," says Ahmed, a civil engineer.



The Ibn Al Atheer hospital was the only specialized pediatric hospital within Ninewa. Even though it was severely damaged during the liberation of Mosul, parts of it still remains operational. Currently being rehabilitated, the hospital hopes to scale up its operations and quality of services by hiring over 500 medical and 250 administrative staff.

*Name change to protect identity.



Meet Ashraf Abdul Kader Ahmed, Quality control and assurance engineer, working on Al Shifaa complex

"While I move between projects inside Al-Shifaa health complex, many people ask me for medical assistance mistaking me as a health care worker," says Ashraf Abdul Kader Ahmed, quality assurance engineer. "I am proud to be on this team as we work hard to restore life to the city of Mosul."

Ashraf's role focuses on checking the quality of work while also ensuring all safety and health protocols are followed. "This project is crucial as it is helping restore essential health services. Once done, the complex will serve over 3 million people," he says. Within the Al Shifaa hospital complex, the rehabilitation of radiology unit and fertility clinic is currently underway.



Meet Hassan Sheikh, engineer, working on health, safety, and environment compliance

"I conduct site visits, mostly unannounced to verify that all our teams are following the required health and safety measures, including our COVID-19 safety guidelines. Dealing with our teams can be tough at times as I have to sometimes reinforce the safety measures," says Hassan Sheikh who is responsible for health, safety and environment monitoring. "I like that our projects give employment opportunities and support people to be self-sufficient." These stabilization efforts in Mosul have been possible due to funding from partners, such as, Germany for Mosul University's Central Library and Ibn Atheer hospital, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) for Al Shifaa complex. Once rehabilitated, the hospitals in Al Shifaa complex will be equipped with support from Australia and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

To date, through the stabilization programme, over 1,400 hospitals and educational institutions across Iraq have been rehabilitated.

The Netherlands' Ambassador visits Basra

Basra, 3 May 2021 – UNDP Iraq hosted Ambassador of the Netherlands to Iraq, Michel Rentenaar, in Basra. The trip included a visit to the R-Zero water facility, the primary source of water supply to residents in Basra. With summer approaching and COVID-19 cases on the rise, reliable water infrastructure is critical in Basra, where less than 11% of the population has access to clean drinking water on site. We are proud to be working together to provide safe and accessible water to residents in Basra.



The Minister of Agriculture affirms the Ministry's endeavor to achieve a qualitative improvement in buffalo breeding, milk production and rehabilitation of the infrastructure

Baghdad, 6 May 2021 - The Minister of Agriculture, H.E Muhammad Karim Al-Khafaji, received today, the Representative of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in Iraq (FAO), Dr. Salah Hajj Hassan, and his accompanying delegation, in the presence of the Ministry's Technical Undersecretary Dr. Mithaq Abdul-Hussein, the Ministry's advisor, Dr. Mahdi Damad Al-Qaisi, and Adviser Raed Haddad

During the meeting, H.E Al-Khafaji stressed the ministry's endeavor to achieve a qualitative leap in the methods of raising buffaloes, providing fodder and producing milk, and rehabilitating the infrastructure for agricultural projects in various Governorates, including Nineveh, Maysan, Basra and Dhi Qar. While referring to the rehabilitation of the agricultural infrastructures in the governorates, the Minister underlined

the need to establish Milk collection centers and to adopt advanced marketing methods.

He explained that there are large numbers of livestock in Iraq, and in various provinces, including Nineveh. From his side, Dr. Salah Hajj Hassan confirmed that the FAO has carried out many activities in Nineveh Governorate in the field of upgrading technical skills of producers providing them with advice and support of inputs

The Minister of Agriculture affirms the Ministry's endeavor to achieve a qualitative... *(continued)*

to grow large areas of fodder crops, to benefit with feeding their while achieve appropriate economic viability for livestock producers.

FAO delegation also expressed full readiness to cooperate with the Ministry in providing support to the agricultural sector in Iraq, through research work, capacity building, agri-food businesses and agricultural value chains development.

The meeting ended with a strong emphasis on coordination and cooperation in light of the agricultural renaissance and the promotion of the local agricultural product.



Agreement between REFAATO and UNDP and provides safe drinking water to Iraqis

Baghdad, 10 May 2021 – The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Iraq has signed an agreement with Government of Iraq's Reconstruction Fund for Areas Affected by Terroristic Operations (REFAATO) to provide residents in Ishaqi, Salah-Al Din with access to safe reliable drinking water.

Approximately \$1.25 million, generously provided to REFAATO by the Islamic Development Bank, will be used to rehabilitate the Yathrib Water Treatment Plant in Salah Al-Din which was severely damaged in the conflict against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL.)

The agreement will be implemented through UNDP's Funding Facility for Stabilization (FFS), which supports the return of Internally Displaced Persons from the five ISIL liberated governorates through stabilization interventions including infrastructure rehabilitation, livelihoods support, municipal support and social cohesion activities.

"Since we commenced our stabilization programming in mid-2015, UNDP has worked in tandem with ReFAATO on the challenging task of rebuilding the areas damaged by the ISIL conflict. With almost 3,000 projects completed supporting 11 million Iraqis, UNDP Iraq continues to address critical stabilization needs in vulnerable communities. This milestone agreement charts the path to a growing partnership between UNDP Iraq and ReFAATO, and we look forward to working closer together to bring peace and stability to Iraq," says Resident Representative of UNDP Iraq, Zena Ali



Ahmad.

"We also welcome the new collaboration with the Islamic Development Bank who has generously provided funds that will allow 80,000 vulnerable residents access safe and reliable drinking water," adds Ms Ali Ahmad.

Head of the Reconstruction Fund for Areas Affected by Terrorist Operations (REFAATO), Dr. Mohammad Hashim Al-Ani, stated: "We are pleased to witness the continuation of serious international and regional support to Iraq in its reconstruction efforts and support to communities."

"The agreement between the REFAATO and UNDP to provide safe drinking water in Al-Ishaqi area is of the utmost importance as the clean drinking water is invaluable item and an essential need."

"In this regard, we take the opportunity to affirm our readiness for cooperation and joint coordination in advance for all international parties that plan to, and already contribute, to Iraq's reconstruction, recovery and urban development programmes. Today we commend the generous initiative from the Islamic Development Bank and the United Nations Development Programme." added Dr. Al-Ani.

Under the FFS, UNDP Iraq has completed almost 200 water infrastructure projects across the liberated areas of Anbar, Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninewa and Salah Al-Din, and provided more than 3.5 million residents with improved access to water. Another 50 water projects are currently underway.

War-destroyed houses reconstructed for vulnerable families in Mosul: IOM Iraq, Qatar Charity

Erbil, 24 May 2021 — As millions of Iraqi returnees continue to grapple with post-conflict realities in areas heavily affected by war, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Iraq has helped 18 families rebuild their destroyed homes in West Mosul with generous support from Qatar Charity.

The recently concluded “Reconstructing Destroyed Housing in Mosul” project contributed to the supporting durable solutions to displacement in Iraq and provided support to the most vulnerable families.

“We appreciate IOM Iraq and Qatar Charity’s initiative to rehabilitate 18 houses in Zanjili and [support] many projects in Mosul. Ninewa Governorate will do everything it can to facilitate rebuilding Mosul and bring life back,” said Ali Salih Khair, a representative for the Governor of Mosul, during a ceremony on 26 April to commemorate the achievement.

“After ISIL took over Mosul, we were displaced to Salamiyah Camp until 2017. When we came back, our house was destroyed. We rented a house, but we kept hoping that one day we would go back home. IOM gave us hope and now my family is back living in our house,” said Faris, a project beneficiary from Mosul.

Housing destruction remains one of the biggest obstacles to return faced by internally displaced persons (IDPs). Lack of safe, dignified housing also

poses challenges in terms of protection, putting especially women and girls at risk of gender-based abuse; it also causes additional hardship for households including elderly relatives and persons living with disabilities.

“Through this project, and with Qatar Charity’s support, IOM Iraq intervened in 24 sites to remove post-conflict debris and supported 18 families to build housing units. The project also included cash-for-work opportunities and skills-training, which allowed more community members to benefit and participate in the reconstruction efforts,” said IOM Iraq Chief of Mission Gerard Waite.

“We are delighted to rebuild destroyed homes in Mosul, in cooperation with IOM, which would contribute to providing a dignified life and creating a better environment for the beneficiaries,” said Mr. Ahmed Saad AlRumaihi, Director of Emergency and Relief at Qatar Charity. He added that

“Qatar Charity is proud of its partnership with IOM in supporting and completing this important project”, and keen to work with UN agencies and international organizations, especially in crisis-stricken regions worldwide, to implement projects for the benefit of IDPs and refugees.

“After the liberation of Mosul, we came back to see nothing but debris. I was working and living in a rented house. Without IOM, I would have never thought of rehabilitating my house again,” said Sleman.

In cooperation with the Government of Iraq and local communities, IOM Iraq continues to implement comprehensive projects in areas of return to assist the sustainable reintegration of IDPs, including through rehabilitating infrastructure, livelihood support, improving access to basic social services, community policing forums, and social cohesion and peacebuilding initiatives.



World Bank: Standing at a crossroad with limited fixes to an economy that is desperate for transformation

Baghdad, 27 May 2021 – Oil price volatility and COVID-19 have increased Iraq’s economic woes and deepened existing economic and social fragilities.

With global oil markets trends turning positive, the outlook for Iraq is set to improve. The new edition of the Iraq Economic Monitor for Spring 2021 titled “Seizing the Opportunity for Reforms and Managing Volatility” expects the economy to gradually recover on the back of rising oil prices and rising OPEC+ production quotas, with GDP forecasted to gradually grow by 1.9 percent in 2021 and 6.3 percent on average in 2022-2023. Higher oil revenues in tandem with the devaluation effect are projected to narrow the fiscal deficit to 5.4 percent of GDP in 2021.

Nevertheless, the fiscal stance remains

expansionary with budget financing needs forecasted to average US\$13.7 billion per year (7.5 percent of GDP) in the outlook period (2021-2023), an elevated level compared to pre-COVID-19 levels. Despite being watered down, the 2021 budget includes reforms such as measures to improve public financial management and domestic revenue mobilization efforts. If implemented they could help moderate the fiscal deficit and exchange rate pressures. However, more structural issues such as public wages and pension rigidities remain unaddressed.

The report finds that this cautious improvement in the outlook masks sizeable risks that can materialize anytime. Dependency on oil for growth, exports and revenues coupled with growing budget rigidities threatens macroeconomic stability with oil price

down cycles and failure to implement structural fiscal reforms in an election year. Continued underinvestment, linked with weak execution of public investment and an unfavorable business climate for private investments in non-oil sectors, hampers pro-growth programs and service delivery. Delays in vaccine rollout could lead to additional lockdowns with negative knock on effects on the services sectors’ activities. And finally, the potential deterioration in security conditions amidst high regional geopolitical tensions could reverse many of the past economic gains.

To manage those risks and avoid a repetition of the past economic performance Iraq has a way forward: the ambitious reforms devised under the GoI white paper. The economic monitor notes that the Iraq experience

World Bank: Standing at a crossroad with limited fixes to an economy that is desperate for transformation *(continued)*

has repeatedly showed that oil prices and reforms are inversely related. Successive governments have launched reforms under the pressure of low oil prices and amidst persistently high perception of corruption as well as weak public service delivery. Such combination gave rise to social and political tensions that undermined the success of most reform initiatives.

“Structural reforms are of essence for the creation of a sustainable economic future in Iraq,” said Saroj Kumar Jha, World Bank Mashreq Regional Director. “Building back better is key to create the imperative jobs for youth and help restore the poise of Iraqis, let alone the transformations required to build economic equal opportunities for women”.

This time is different. The country stands at a crossroad where quick fixes are limited, and the economy needs a serious transformation if it is to create jobs for its growing youth. The IEM Spring 2021 Edition estimates that Iraq can have an annual fiscal gain of US\$11 billion if pro-growth policies in non-oil sectors are implemented alongside tackling budget rigidities. Accelerating the vaccination program could also help speed up the recovery and gradually reverse the surge in poverty observed during the summer of 2020. With oil prices trending above the

US\$60/barrel, Iraq could use those windfalls to soften the social repercussions of those intended reforms and invest in its human and physical capital.

One area that is not explicitly referred to in the white paper but is instrumental to achieving economic transformation in Iraq is increasing women’s labor force participation rate. Female labor force participation in Iraq is among the lowest in the world, and even when women do enter the labor force, they are 3 times as likely to be unemployed compared to men. Obstacles to entering and remaining in the labor market vary drastically for women from different socio-economic groups, and across critical turning points in women’s lives.

To remedy this, labor market interventions are needed to ensure a better match of labor supply and demand. Such interventions include a focus on the existence and accessibility of demand-driven skills training programs, improving access to affordable and quality childcare, providing incentives to the private sector to invest in sectors that employ more women and providing culturally acceptable income-generation options for women and supporting such initiatives to scale. Specific legislation and regulations could contribute to

limiting women’s access to employment opportunities including ambiguous child marriage legislation, as well as striking gender inequalities in property and inheritance rights. Revisions to laws and regulations are needed, and although addressing social norms can be challenging, some interventions aimed at correcting misperceptions can be effective in improving labor market participation of women in Iraq.

The economic report offers a non-exhaustive set of recommendations to help the GoI reach its objective of increasing labor force participation rate by 5 pp in 2025. These recommendations call for a better match between labor supply and demand (e.g. via the development of credible matchmaking services), the establishment of gender-specific solutions in the workplace, and the creation of an inclusive legislative framework (e.g. via the elimination of occupational and sectoral restrictions). Beyond the intrinsic value of empowering women, greater gender equality in the labor market is smart economics. Boosting the labor force participation of women in Iraq to the average rate of its income group would increase GDP per capita by almost 31 percent. A remarkable gain in country wealth.

Iraq ratifies Agriculture and Seafarers Conventions



Geneva, 27 May 2021 - On 21 May 2021, His Excellency Ambassador Abdul Karim Hashim Mostafa, Permanent Representative of Iraq presented the instruments of ratification for the Safety and Health in Agriculture Convention, 2001 (No. 184) and the Seafarers' Identity Documents Convention (Revised), 2003, as amended (No. 185) to the ILO Director-General, Guy Ryder.

The ILO Director-General Guy Ryder welcomed the ratifications, stating “With these ratifications, Iraq has re-

affirmed its commitment to decent work and the ILO’s standards system, during this time of crisis.” Upon receipt of the instrument of ratification of Convention No. 184, he stated “I am pleased to welcome Iraq’s formal commitment to improving occupational safety and health in the agricultural sector, in consultation with the social partners. Agriculture is one of the most hazardous economic sectors in the world. By ratifying Convention No. 184, the Government of Iraq confirms its determination to prevent accidents and occupational diseases in this sector in a continuous and sustainable manner. This is the 10th occupational safety and health Convention ratified by Iraq - I welcome this significant step towards building and strengthening a preventative safety and health culture.” Turning to Convention No. 185, Mr Ryder indicated “It is with great pleasure that I welcome Iraq among the States parties to Convention No. 185. This ratification strengthens Iraq’s commitment to ensuring decent

working and living conditions for seafarers by facilitating their rights to shore leave, transit and transfer. The vital importance of these elements for seafarers’ general well-being has clearly been exposed during the crisis currently faced by the maritime sector as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.” On depositing the instruments of ratification, Ambassador Abdul Karim Hashim Mostafa stated: “These two Conventions, ratified by the Council of Representative of the Republic of Iraq, will play a crucial role in promoting the Iraqi labour market in both the agricultural and maritime sectors. As of today, the Republic of Iraq has ratified 70 Conventions, including the eight fundamental Conventions. We will continue our endeavours to ratify and implement ILO standards, as we aim to address gaps in the labour market and to defend workers’ interests, as a major pillar of the Iraqi economy.” Conventions Nos 185 and 184 will enter into force for Iraq, respectively, on 21 November 2021 and 21 May 2022.

New era of mapping digital local solutions to tackle development challenges in Iraq by UNDP Accelerator Lab



Baghdad, 30 May 2021 - Humans have continuously developed means to adapt, progress, and face daily challenges. Today, we call these means “technology”, and we use it daily to communicate, learn, work, and connect to the outside world. Technology has continued to develop, reaching the advanced stages of Artificial Intelligence (AI), Machine Learning, Internet of Things (IOT), including programming languages and much more. Most recently, these helped level up our daily practices, and sustained communities at a time of disconnection during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Back in April, 2020, the UNDP Accelerator Lab in Iraq sensed potential opportunities in advanced technology to design and find local solutions to the current situation related to the coronavirus pandemic. Following this, the UNDP AccLab Iraq started to engage with mapped technology-based local initiatives and groups to design digital solutions for a set of worth-solving problems within

country development challenges. One of these mapped initiatives, CS50x-Iraq, is a local startup in Iraq that is registered as a private sector by a group of young programmers. This startup aims to provide digital and computing services to solve local challenges. The founders of this startup are certified development trainers who are enrolled in the largest class in the world for computer science and the art of programming at Harvard University. At the core of the programmer’s task is serving users needs, but the machine mindset requires a bridge to reach in-depth human needs. At this point, the UNDP Accelerator Lab intervened presenting the “bridge” through delivering an intensive Human-User Centered Design Training that helped raise levels of production, design, and expand thinking from isolated desks due to the pandemic to the surroundings of end-users. In parallel, the UNDP Accelerator Lab was working to sense and explore country development challenges within three

domains; E-Learning, Climate Changes and Entrepreneurship, to lay the ground for CS50x-Iraq to work on ideating innovative tech-based solutions for the current context. Their efforts resulted in the innovation of 11 tech-based projects by over 20 Iraqi youth who have been trained by CS50x-Iraq on the latest programming languages to enable them to innovate tech-based solutions for the challenges identified by the UNDP AccLab in Iraq. These solutions saw light during the recently held CS50x-Iraq Fair 2020-2021 in Baghdad, which presented customized solutions for the Iraqi market context during the pandemic, and for the post-pandemic period. This fair came synchronously with the Harvard fair event (founder of CS50x). The Fair was organized by CS50x-Iraq and sponsored by Earthlink tele-communication company in cooperation with technical sponsors including the UNDP-Accelerator Lab in Iraq, Integrated Path, The Station for Entrepreneurship, BandTech Company and Codi startup.

These digital solutions were presented during a well-organized exhibition with the presence of various audiences from the private/public sectors in addition to INGO/NGOs and interested individuals. If you are interested to learn more, please visit the link below to take a tour of the virtual event hall: <http://projects.cs50x-iq.com>

Currently, the lab is experimenting within the era of digital solutions on the challenges identified to scale them up to reach their final destination.

IOM Iraq is partnering with Nadia's Initiative to develop “New Kocho”

Baghdad, 2 June 2021 - IOM Iraq is partnering with Nadia's Initiative to develop “New Kocho,” a project building housing and providing support for survivors of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant’s genocidal massacre of Yazidis in Ninewa Governorate’s Kocho village. In addition to creating durable solutions for survivors of the massacre, the project also aims to commemorate the dead by constructing dedicated memorials. These efforts are crucial to the dignified return of displaced Kocho community members.

On 2 June 2021, IOM Iraq held a consultation session with Yazidi survivors in Qadia Camp to answer questions, gather opinions and decide

collectively on the project’s next steps. Involving the community and beneficiaries at every stage of the project’s implementation is central to IOM Iraq’s commitment to ensuring

that outcomes are grounded in and responsive to the needs, concerns and goals of the returning survivors. This project is funded by USAID - US Agency for International Development.



UNICEF and the Netherlands' Embassy delegation visit Duhok

Duhok, 10 June 2021 - During UNICEF visit to Dohuk, we met with workers and youth who are being supported under the PROSPECTS programme together with our partner International Labour Organization (ILO). ILO is implementing employment intensive investment programme (EIIP) interventions to improve water irrigation channels, leading to enhanced productivity on targeted farms. Together with a similar programme being implemented to improve solid waste management, the employment-intensive interventions will generate over 12,000 working days and 300 decent jobs for vulnerable workers, by the end of 2021.

The visit also included a meeting with young people at a UNICEF-supported youth centre, where the ILO and UNICEF are collaborating under PROSPECTS to help young people transition from learning and skills development to decent work through a range of self-employment and wage employment interventions. PROSPECTS programme in Iraq, a



strategic partnership, spearheaded by the Government of the Netherlands, which seeks to improve education, employment and protection in the context of forced displacement. With the support of the Netherlands, UNICEF is working to support displaced and host community young people to become social and business entrepreneurs. The delegation visited Duhok Youth and Sport center and discussed with the youth on

entrepreneurship and employability skills.

With the support of the Netherlands, UNICEF is working to ensure children in Kabrtu camp in Dohuk have access to quality education and child protection services.

During this weeks visit, the Netherlands Embassy met with social workers and visited the school to discuss creative solutions to education gaps as result of Covid-19.

Supporting increased returns a top priority for Denmark with new DKK 50 million contribution

Baghdad, 13 June 2021 - The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Iraq welcomes an additional DKK 50.3 million (US\$8 million) contribution from the Government of Denmark to its flagship Funding Facility for Stabilization (FFS). The funding will support the safe return of people in areas liberated from ISIL in Iraq by rehabilitating critical infrastructure, creating livelihoods and building social cohesion.

This contribution brings Denmark's total investment in FFS to US\$53.9 million since 2015. To date, the FFS has completed over 2,831 projects in areas liberated from ISIL, benefitting more than 13 million Iraqis with improved basic services, education, health and infrastructure. It has assisted 4.8 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) to return home.

Danish Foreign Minister Jeppe Kofod stresses Denmark's continued commitment to help assist in addressing the challenges Iraq faces: "The work of the UN in Iraq is absolutely vital for the long term stability and prosperity of Iraq and its people – who over the years have endured so much hardship. A stable and democratic Iraq is absolutely key is

ensuring stability and security in the region, but also in Denmark and Europe. I am therefore happy to announce a further contribution of approx. 8 mio. USD to the United Nations Stabilisation Fund".

"Through generous support from international partners like Denmark, critical services damaged during the conflict have been restored, livelihoods have been created and reconciliation efforts have been furthered," says UNDP Resident Representative Zena Ali Ahmad.

"We are grateful for Denmark's new contribution, which will support the people of Iraq to pick up their lives and build forward better. The time is now to bolster our stabilization efforts as 1.2

million people continue to remain displaced and need essential services. This funding prioritises the most vulnerable communities to increase returns to the hardest to return areas, and I thank Denmark's continued commitment to this cause," adds Ms Ali Ahmad.

In November 2020, the FFS mandate was extended to 2023 with a strengthened focus on productive sectors such as agriculture, promoting sustainable livelihood and employment opportunities. In addition to mainstreaming human rights principles, environmental sustainability, conflict sensitivity and gender equality in all sectors of work.



The review and validation workshop on UN Iraq's UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) was held in Baghdad

Baghdad, 13 June 2021 – Today, the review and validation workshop on UN Iraq's UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) was held with the Government of Iraq, UNCT and key stakeholders in the country including development partners, national and international NGOs, academia, civil society, youth, and private sector. UNSDCF is a core instrument for providing a coherent, strategic direction for UN development activities by all UN entities at country level. The Resident Coordinator for Iraq Ms. Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano led the discussion with representatives from

UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, UN-Women, IOM, OHCHR and the World Bank to highlight the suggestions made during the Consultative Workshop in April.

Those were incorporated into the updated UNSDCF. The joint UN-Government strategy will be endorsed and signed in July.



The story of Abu Suhaib and his family

Mosul, 14 June 2021 - Since the liberation of Mosul in 2017, UNESCO has consistently sought to support the residents of the Old City and to bring life back to its neighborhoods. Abu Suhaib is a 56 year old resident of the Al-Nuri Mosque Area in the Old City. The house where he lived with his family of five was severely damaged during the fighting that accompanied the city's liberation. Abu Suhaib and his family are one of the beneficiaries of UNESCO's "Reviving the Mosul and Basra Old Cities" project generously funded by the European Union, as part of flagship

initiative "Revive the Spirit of Mosul". His house is being restored with attention to its traditional design and its beautiful architectural features. Nearby public spaces and alleys are also being restored and improved, and public lighting installed. Joy and appreciation were circulating in the old serpentine alleyways of the neighborhoods and the happiness of Abu Suhaib and his sons was palpable. "Thank you, UNESCO" were the words coming from their mouths ... and then there were other voices wishing that UNESCO would extend its intervention and recover other parts of the Old City

in a spirit of hope for a bright, better future.



Ministry of Planning, UNFPA, present the Population Analysis Report 2020

Baghdad, 15 June 2021 – The Ministry of Planning and UNFPA presented on 14 June the findings and recommendations of the Population Analysis Report 2020 during a workshop entitled "Population Policies for Sustainable Development". The Population Analysis study, which was conducted by the Directorate General of Human Development of the Ministry of Planning, with support from UNFPA and Sweden, assessed the demographic and social changes that took place since adopting the population policy in 2014. This study paves the way for a revised population policy. Today in Iraq, 60% of the population is formed of young people under 25. It means that 57% of people are capable of contributing effectively to the



economic development of Iraq. Whether demographic changes can be used for the success and sustainability of country development is determined by implementing effective population policies that are rights-based, evidence-informed and gender-responsive. Speaking at the event, the Minister of Planning, Dr Khalid Battal Al-Najm, highlighted that in the past

demographic indicators showed a significant population growth as a result of the high fertility rates in the country; however, presently, the fertility rate went down. The population growth has led to an increase in the number of young people and growth in the labour force. This, however, has led to an inability to meet the population, especially youth's needs

Ministry of Planning, UNFPA, present the Population Analysis Report 2020 *(continued)*

for job opportunities and quality and sustainable lives. He also emphasized the importance of updated population data that should come from the population census.

For her part, UNFPA Representative, Dr Rita Columbia, said: "A people-centred population policy will support the country in its aspiration for peace and prosperity and become an accelerator for achieving Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. This is the right time for Iraq to increase the investment in human capital, focusing on young people who will lead the country towards sustainable development and peace. UNFPA will

continue supporting and working together with the Ministry of Planning, the Ministry of Youth & Sports, and line ministries to move forward the youth agenda and strive for gender equality and social cohesion in order to fulfil Iraq's commitments made at the 25th anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development, held in Nairobi in November 2019."

The event was attended by the Minister of Planning, Dr Khalid Battal Al-Najm, the Minister of Youth & Sports, Mr Adnan Darjal, a representative from the Department of International Organisations and Conferences, the

UNFPA Representative, Dr Rita Columbia, and population experts. The inaugural session was followed by a panel discussion among experts who discussed the revision and update of the population policy, strengthening the role of the National Population Policies Committee, the population policy and development agenda in Iraq, as well as mainstreaming the population dynamics in the local plans. The meeting adopted a roadmap for the revision and update of the population policy document led by the Directorate of Human Development at the Ministry of Planning.

Hearing the voices of Iraqi farmers



With the inception of the SAAVI project, efforts to promote sustainable economic development pick up pace in Iraq.

Baghdad, 15 June 2021 - After decades of conflict, Iraq needs a clear roadmap for building a sustainable and inclusive model of economic growth. The stakes are high. As COVID-19 and global economic turmoil hit an economy that mostly relied on oil revenue, the population is in dire need of new employment opportunities in alternative economic sectors. In the ruins of West Mosul, a conflict-affected region, a group of farmers from

surrounding rural areas gathered in the International Organization for Migration community centre to share their stories with experts from the International Trade Centre.

"I used to produce beautiful tomatoes, but we have less and less rain these days, and we are not trained on the use of modern irrigation techniques," a farmer from Sinjar valley said, highlighting that security issues are compounded by climatic challenges.

Another participant added: "I have started a cheese and dairy products factory, but without proper cold storage it is hard to make my business work. I

also struggle to find trained workers while I have various vacant positions". While unemployment is rife in Iraq, technical training and education need to be better aligned with the requirements of the private sector. Participants agreed that beyond life-saving emergency assistance, Iraqis increasingly need dedicated technical assistance to rebuild the economy and harness the power of trade to build lasting peace.

Meeting with local farmers and entrepreneurs running small and medium enterprises, was instrumental to ensuring that their views are taken into consideration in the design of an impactful assistance programme, implemented with the financial support of the European Union.

About SAAVI

Strengthening the agriculture and agri-food value chain and improving trade policy in Iraq (SAAVI) is a project funded by the European Union (EU) and implemented by the International Trade Centre (ITC). SAAVI contributes to inclusive economic growth and job creation, particularly for youth, by improving the competitiveness of Iraq's agriculture and supporting trade development in the country.

by ITC News

IOM supports the economic recovery in Anbar

Anbar, 15 June 2021 - To support the economic situation in Anbar Governorate, the IOM Iraq, in collaboration with the Municipality of Al-Amiriya District, rehabilitated eight commercial shops. The municipality of Al-Amiriya is renting these shops at nominal prices to the beneficiaries

inside Al-Amiriyah.

The project aims at providing 16 job opportunities, in addition to the broader positive impact on the local labor market and the economic recovery within the region.

This project was supported by the German Development Bank (KfW)



IOM engaged to provide needed financial and technical support to SMEs in agricultural value chains and the private sector

Baghdad, 16 June 2021 - IOM Iraq, in close coordination with EU International Partnerships and the Ministry of Displacement and Migration, held a workshop in Baghdad to launch an EU-funded project titled "Integrated Support to Job Creation in Iraq through Agri-Business Value Chain Development and Financial Inclusion."

The workshop brought together representatives from state agencies, international organizations and industry leaders for a presentation of the project, a panel discussion on job creation in agricultural value chains and the first meeting of the project's

steering committee.

This four-year initiative builds on IOM's experience supporting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to complement the work of the

Government of Iraq and other international partners to provide needed financial and technical support to SMEs in agricultural value chains and the private sector.



FAO workshop on introducing innovative technologies for sustainable livestock feeding through the utilization of molasses and green fodder cultivation



Erbil, 17 June 2021 - The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in Iraq conducted a Training of Trainers workshop in Erbil for 26 agricultural extension staff from Ninewa Agriculture Directorate under the EU-funded project entitled: "Livelihood Support for Returnee Farmers and Rural and Peri-Urban Communities in Ninewa Governorate, Iraq". The training was aimed at MOA livestock extension officers to improve their knowledge on the introduction of cultivation fodder crops and better utilization of agri-industrial by-products (sugar molasses, date residues and feed blocks) to improve their livestock productivity.

The workshop adopted an interactive and participatory approach showing new management practices and modern techniques that would allow the trainees to train directly 4000 livestock breeders in the field on these techniques in order to implement them.

The workshop was held earlier this week in the presence of Dr. Salah Al-Hajj Hassan, FAO Representative in Iraq, and Dr. Rabie Youssef Elias, Director of Ninewa Agriculture, on his

first official visit to attend this event.

Dr. Rabie, during his speech praised the important role played by the FAO through implementing work and field interventions on the ground. He praised the collaboration with the Directorate and the local administration in Ninewa. He was keen on the successful development of the livestock sector.

Dr. Kayouli, FAO International Livestock Value Chain Expert overseeing the training, pointed out that molasses is worldwide used as an energy source for livestock feeding systems. This is feed supplement, appetizer to improve intake of poor quality roughage. The molasses is locally produced by a functioning sugar refining factory in Babil Governorate with monthly production of 1,250 tons of sugar molasses. Dr. Kayouli sees opportunities for the use of the molasses, which is currently being exported (95%), as farmers and extension staff are not aware of its importance for livestock feeding due to lack of training and knowledge.

Dr. Kayouli emphasized the importance of introducing modern technologies to make a paradigm shift (qualitative leap)

to improve livestock productivity, which encourages local production to increase dairy and meat production while mitigating the impact of drought observed in Ninewa this year. He added that FAO, in cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture, will soon distribute sugar molasses to livestock breeders in Ninewa Governorate through purchasing 1,000 tons of molasses from local markets, which it is already planned to start distribution by next week to the 4000 livestock breeders including 40% women livestock producers involved with traditional home processing dairy products.

Dr. Salah stated that the EU funding combined with the expertise provided by FAO and the MOA was in an excellent position to promote sustainable livestock feeding system in Ninewa. He mentioned that the project had also granted fodder seeds (ryegrass - jet - mixture of barley and alfalfa) to 750 farmers who cultivated a total of 2000 donum (500ha). He praised the project team for having successfully introduced nutritious green fodder to crops farmers and livestock breeders by showing the benefits in increased milk production and live weight of animals, as well as improved animal health.

It is noteworthy that the workshop dealt with many other topics such as presentation of the results related to summer fodder crops (Sudanese sorghum and Alfalfa). The workshop session was also dedicated to logistical preparation for inputs to the beneficiaries. A distribution ceremony is scheduled for June 30, 2021 to launch the distribution of sugar molasses and diary equipment.

A vegetable market to support the local economy and enhance livelihood opportunities

Diyala, 20 June 2021 - A delegation from IOM Iraq met with Mr. Abdul-Jabbar Al-Obaidi, director of Al-Adhaim sub-district, at the district headquarters in Diyala Governorate to discuss the progress of the construction of a vegetable market to support the local economy and enhance livelihood opportunities for the

area's returnees. The delegation performed a field visit, noting significant developments in the construction process. The delegation announced that vegetable market will open in the near future.

The establishment of this vegetable market is funded by KfW German Development Bank.



Switzerland helps WFP provide critical food assistance

Baghdad, 22 June 2021 - The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) has today welcomed a US\$1.1 million contribution from the Government of Switzerland that will help WFP provide monthly food assistance to hundreds of thousands of internally displaced people (IDPs), Syrian refugees living in Iraq as well as strengthen people's resilience.

As well as meeting the most vulnerable's urgent food needs, Switzerland's contribution will also fund the innovative 'Urban Livelihoods' projects. Under the initiative, WFP provides support and training for 135,000 vulnerable people to help them create and sustain long-term incomes through starting small businesses, creating job opportunities, so they can start working again amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

"The pandemic continues to have an impact on the global economy and Iraq is no exception. The devaluation of the Iraqi Dinar also pushed food prices up," says Abdirahman Meygag, WFP

Representative in Iraq. "Switzerland's contribution is timely. The funding is also helping strengthen urban families' ability to generate sustainable incomes, while not forgetting the families in crisis who are unable to return home yet."

Each month, WFP provides monthly food assistance to displaced families and refugees, which is even more vital during the difficult times because of the pandemic.

"Through the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), Switzerland is committed to support vulnerable displaced families that continue to be affected negatively by the pandemic," says Lukas Gasser, Ambassador of Switzerland to the Republic of Iraq. "This contribution is a step closer to meet Switzerland's priority in Iraq of meeting the most urgent needs of IDPs and to find a durable solution for displaced affected persons."

Most of WFP's food assistance is provided in the form of mobile money

transfers, and electronic vouchers, which enable families to purchase the food they need from markets. This year, WFP raised the monthly cash assistance amount for IDPs and refugee families assisted. For sudden displacements or urgent needs, WFP also provides ready-to-eat food packages to support families before they can access a market.

"Switzerland is a long-term partner of WFP, whose steadfast support for years has enabled us to reach families in Iraq in need of urgent humanitarian assistance," Meygag added.



Norway reaffirms its partnership with US\$8.3 million contribution for stabilization in Iraq

Baghdad, 24 June 2021 - The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Iraq welcomes a NOK 70 million (US\$8.3 million) contribution from the Government of Norway to its flagship Funding Facility for Stabilization (FFS). This critical support will focus on stabilizing the five governorates liberated from the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) to facilitate the safe and dignified return of displaced Iraqis, lay the groundwork for recovery and safeguard communities from the resurgence of violent extremism.

This is Norway's thirteenth contribution to FFS since 2015, bringing its total support to US\$ 64.6 million. Norway is the fifth-largest contributor among the Facility's 28 funding partners. To date, FFS has

supported over 13 million Iraqis in areas liberated from ISIL with improved access to essential services.

"The support from Norway comes at a critical period in Iraq's journey to rebuild. Especially, to address the urgent remaining stabilization needs towards the dignified return of Iraq's remaining 1.2 million internally displaced people, including the hardest-to-return populations," says UNDP Resident Representative Zena Ali Ahmad.

"With the generous support of donors like Norway and in partnership with the Government of Iraq, UNDP has completed more than 2,831 critical stabilization projects across the liberated areas. Looking ahead, we are focusing on priority locations and sectors, working toward durable



solutions to safeguard the hard-won stabilization gains made since 2015," she adds.

In 2021, FFS is placing greater emphasis on promoting sustainable livelihood and employment opportunities by rehabilitating supportive infrastructure for productive sectors, such as agriculture and small industries.

Italy renews its commitment to Iraq's stabilization with a new US\$2.4 million contribution



Baghdad, 27 June 2021 – The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Italy, represented by the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS), is supporting the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) with an additional EUR 2 million (US\$2.4 million) to assist communities affected by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

Italy's contribution will be channelled

through UNDP's Funding Facility for Stabilization (FFS), which implements fast-track initiatives in areas liberated from ISIL. Italy has generously provided more than US\$18 million, since the Facility was set up in 2015 with the objective of returning Internally Displaced Iraqis to their homes.

“We appreciate this timely support from Italy. Thanks to our partners, the FFS can continue its work to improve

conditions in the Liberated Areas and assist those who remain displaced to come home in safety and with dignity,” says UNDP Resident Representative Zena Ali Ahmad.

“With this important contribution Italy reaffirms its commitment to support displaced return to their communities to rebuild their lives,” adds Ms Ali-Ahmad.

The Ambassador of Italy to Baghdad, Bruno Pasquino, commended the additional contribution of the Italian Government as another concrete step towards a more stable, secure and safe Iraq. “This initiative is in line with the priorities of the Italian cooperation towards improving gender equality and contributing to conflict prevention and mitigation, » says AICS Amman Director Michele Morana. “The Italian government fully supports the stabilization process in Iraq, by contributing to create better conditions for a sustainable and dignified return of displaced persons to their homes and reintegration into their communities, and effectively supporting their safety and security».

With the support of 27 partners and the Government of Iraq, the FFS has completed over 2,831 projects in areas liberated from ISIL, benefitting more than 13 million Iraqis with improved basic services, education, health and infrastructure. It has assisted 4.8 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) to return home.



Baghdad, 5 June 2021 - UN Habitat's Executive Director, Ms. Maimunah Sharif, met with Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, Special Representative for Iraq of the United Nations Secretary General (SRSG), to express gratitude for the contributions and invaluable support to improve the stability and prosperity for the people of Iraq. In the meeting, they discussed efforts to contribute to recovery, reconstruction, development, peacebuilding and reconciliation to meet the needs of all Iraqis, including IDPs, women, youth, children, displaced persons, and persons belonging to ethnic and religious minorities, and deliver essential and basic services.



Baghdad, 5 June 2021 - UN-Habitat's Executive Director, Ms. Maimunah Sharif, met with Ms. Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano, Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Iraq (DSRSG), to discuss how UN-Habitat projects in Iraq are aligned with and contribute to the United Nations Sustainable Development Framework (UNSDCF) and UN-Habitat's Strategic Plan 2020-2023. In her meeting with DSRSG, the ED appreciated her support in advocating for more sustainable and livable cities - including exploring greener construction materials and the potential of digital technology to adequately mitigate the effects of climate change in Iraq.



Baghdad, 06 June 2021 - This World Environment Day, UN Habitat's Executive Director Maimunah Sharif met with key stakeholders in Iraq including officials from the Salah-al-Din and Kirkuk Governates with whom UN-Habitat signed a number of Memorandum of Understandings (MoU), marking a chapter of renewed collaboration and technical support for achieving integrated and sustainable urbanization in Iraq. ED's meetings with government officials pay head towards the shared intent to build more inclusive and greener cities in Iraq, in line with UN key messages on 'Environmental Value of Sustainable Urbanization.' According to the World Cities Report (2020), from an environmental perspective, sustainable urbanization can only be realized when the realities of the vulnerable groups are acknowledged, and their needs are prioritized.



Baghdad, 7 June 2021 - While visiting Baghdad, the UN-Habitat's Executive Director (ED), Maimunah Sharif, met with the Governor of Anbar, Mr. Ali Al-Dulaimi and witnessed the signing ceremony of the MOU concerning by the Governor of Anbar and the Regional Representative of Arab States (ROAS) Dr. Erfan Ali on the future work and cooperation between the two parties to improve lives for the people of Anbar. The ED emphasized the importance of the collaboration with the governorate regarding key messages in "The New Urban Agenda" that specifies that local governments are key agents of change for achieving transformative commitments. UN-Habitat's collaborative effort with the Governorate will lead to sharing of knowledge, experience, and practices concerning climate change, urban sustainability, and resilience.

UN-Habitat's Executive Director meets with the Japanese Ambassador to Iraq to express her appreciation for the longstanding partnership between Japan and UN-Habitat Iraq



Baghdad, 7 June 2021 - UN-Habitat's Executive Director (ED), Mrs. Maimunah Sharif, met with Ambassador Suzuki Kotaro, Japan's Ambassador to Iraq and thanked the Government of Japan for its longstanding partnership and continued trust in UN-Habitat's initiatives.

The partnership between the Government of Japan and UN-Habitat in Iraq dates back to 2004. Between then and 2008, UN-Habitat has implemented several projects with Japanese funding, including rehabilitating damaged houses and public infrastructures such as schools, establishing vocational training schools, and installing new water and sanitation facilities. Japan has categorically been a long-standing partner and donor in major rebuilding projects.

In his meeting with the ED, the Japanese Ambassador Suzuki said: "Humans cannot start to live without a shelter. Not only a decent home, but

essential supply of water, sanitation and electricity; we also need to earn money for livelihood.

"The people in that region are still suffering from lack of all these, on top of communal and safety concerns.

"True to its name, UN-Habitat's integrated approach give consideration to this, caring for real people's life. It is in line with the notion of "human security" envisaged in Japan's assistance policy.

"It is with trust and good wishes of Japanese people to Iraqi people in plight, that Japan decided to finance these projects. UN-Habitat, with its local and global achievements, is a greatly reliable partner in these projects."

Presently, UN-Habitat is the only organization in Iraq constructing low-cost houses for Internally Displaced Person (IDPs). In her meeting with the Ambassador, the ED enthusiastically acknowledged and appreciated the role of Japanese funding in UN-Habitat's urban-recovery initiatives. The ED also thanked the Japanese Government for extending emergency support towards returnees in the face of a global pandemic.

Since the Japanese Fiscal Year 2014, the Government of Japan has provided more than USD 56 million to UN-Habitat (Iraq). Japan is currently

funding two ongoing projects, namely: "Support to Reconstruction and Peace-building of Liberated Cities in Iraq – Phase III (FY2019 project)" and "Emergency Support to Returnees in Iraq after the Outbreak of COVID-19 (FY2020 project)". These projects have massively contributed to social stabilization and UN's peace-building efforts in Iraq. Apart from discussing the existing projects, the prospects of launching new ones in the future were also discussed in ED's meeting with the Ambassador.

Both the Japanese Ambassador and the ED recognized that the main challenge faced by UN-Habitat today is the influx of IDPs. By 2017, the number of people returning to their homes has surpassed the number of people displaced in Iraq. However, the damage to their houses is one of the main obstacles preventing many IDPs from returning. Therefore, it was mutually agreed in the meeting that solving the housing crisis in liberated cities is an urgent need, not only for the displaced persons but also for communities who have been bearing the heavy burden of hosting many IDPs for more than three years.

The meeting strengthened the commitment of both parties to further work for incorporating sustainable and context-based practices in the liberated cities of Iraq.

UN-Habitat Executive Director meets with the US Ambassador to Iraq to discuss on-going partnership to support the land rights of

Baghdad, 7 June 2021 - UN-Habitat's Executive Director (ED), Mrs. Maimunah Sharif, met with Ambassador Matthew H. Tueller, the United States' Ambassador to Iraq, and thanked the US Government for its longstanding partnership and continued trust in UN-Habitat's initiatives.

The United States is one of the main donors to UN-Habitat focusing on Housing, Land, and Property (HLP) rights in Iraq, with a particular focus on protecting the property rights of minorities.

"The United States greatly values its partnership with UN-Habitat," said Ambassador Tueller during his meeting with the ED. "UN-Habitat has made truly commendable progress in many areas, and especially in addressing housing, land, and property rights of the displaced and other vulnerable populations," he added.

UN-Habitat Iraq Program is currently implementing a three-year program titled "Support to Housing, Land and Property Rights for IDPs in Nineveh."



The program's overall goal is to stabilize Iraq by promoting safe, voluntary, dignified, and sustainable returns and reintegration in the liberated areas in Nineveh, northern Iraq. The program is particularly focused on vulnerable IDPs from minority groups, particularly Yazidis, whose registration for housing, land and property (HLP) rights has been banned due to discriminatory practices in Iraq.

To counter the discrimination against the Yazidi minority, UN-Habitat is registering and mapping the land claims of Yazidi returnees, holding community consultation meetings to

help verify their claims among themselves, and issuing Occupancy Certificates endorsed by federal, local authorities, and community representatives. As a result of UN-Habitat's continuous effort, more than 9,000 Occupancy Certificates have been distributed to Yazidi returnees to date.

"The support from the US government has always been crucial to UN-Habitat's Housing, Land and Property (HLP) rights initiative in Iraq. We are confident that the process of endorsement of land decree and the recognition of the Certificates of Occupancy is critical to ensure sustainable return of Yazidis," said the ED.

UN-Habitat hopes to continue its partnership with the U.S. Department of State to support the protection of HLP rights for the Yazidi minority in Iraq and to complete the last stage towards formal registration of Occupancy Certificates. It is expected that the Iraqi government will formally recognize their HLP rights by legal decree.

UN-Habitat Executive Director discusses future initiatives with Government Officials during her first visit to Iraq

Baghdad, 8 June 2021 - UN Habitat's Executive Director, Maimunah Mohd Sharif, has visited Iraq for the first time and called for all levels of the Government to work together on urban sustainability, resilience and climate change.

The Executive Director met with Mr. Kahtan Taha, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, to express her deepest appreciation for all the support the Iraq government have provided to UN-Habitat.

In this meeting, the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs said: "I am glad to meet today the USG and the ED of UN-Habitat and learn about UN-Habitat Programme in Iraq, particularly since Iraq needs more support to the reconstruction efforts of housing and infrastructure to ensure sustainable return of IDPs."

The Executive Director also met with the Governor of Anbar, the Minister of Planning (MoP) of Iraq, the Minister of Justice (MoJ), and the Minister of Finance (MoF), in separate meetings.

In the meeting with the Governor of Anbar, the ED witnessed the signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to further cement the partnership between the two parties and improve

lives for the people of Iraq.

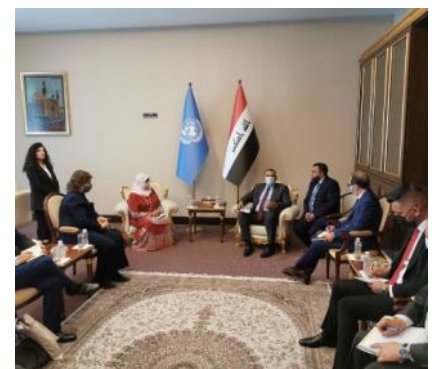
The Executive Director also referred to the numerous urban recovery and reconstruction projects that UN-Habitat has implemented so far in the recently liberated areas and emphasized how the success of its future reconstruction programmes is contingent on the strong support from the Iraqi Government and its Ministries, and encouraged them to coordinate closely to amplify the impact of urban recovery initiatives.

A matter critical to UN-Habitat's Iraq Programme was discussed in both her meetings with the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of Justice, as the Executive Director requested their support for the formal recognition by the Government of Housing, Land, and Property (HLP) rights of Yazidis in Sinjar. Since 2017, UN-Habitat has been working with the Government of Iraq to endorse a decree to officially recognize the HLP rights of the Yazidi minority in Sinjar. So far, UN-Habitat has distributed more than 9,000 Occupancy Certificates to Yazidi returnees.

The passing of the legal decree granting Yazidi land rights would represent a significant triumph for both

the Government of Iraq and UN-Habitat as this would be the first time in modern history that occupancy rights for the Yazidi minority in Sinjar are formally recognized, thereby providing them with legal property rights. Moreover, the decree is in line with the recent agreement between the Federal Government and the Kurdistan Region Government to work collaboratively on building peace and stability in Sinjar.

Finally, the Executive Director requested a concerted effort by MoP, MoF and local authorities towards knowledge sharing on urban sustainability, resilience and climate change.



Local authorities in Heet celebrate the handover of area-based and complementary projects and activities completed by UN-Habitat with funding from the European Union and Alwaleed Philanthropies



Heet, Iraq, 9 June 2021 - More than three years after the official end of the ousting of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), establishing durable solutions for displaced families remains critical. Damaged and destroyed houses and the lack of basic services remain some of the main obstacles preventing the sustainable return of displaced persons to their hometowns and communities.

The absence of appropriate housing, jobs, and basic services such as water, sanitation, schools, as well as safe public spaces for children, means that displaced families face challenges to returning home. This has been further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, during which many people lost jobs, and schools were closed, meaning that families had to keep children at home.

On 8 June 2021, UN-Habitat brought together MP Sheikh Adil Khamis Al-Mahlawi, representatives from the Governor of Anbar's office, and representatives from Heet as well as Ms. Maimunah Modh Sharif, Executive Director of United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), and Ms. Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano, Deputy Special Representative, Resident Coordinator, Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, to celebrate the completion and tangible impact of these activities on the community of Al Baker and to inaugurate the newly created Al-Nejoom park, funded by the European Union. This is the first visit of the UN-Habitat Executive Director to Iraq.

MP Sheikh Adil Khamis Al-Mahlawi

opened the ceremony by saying "I extend my thanks and gratitude to the leadership of this programme and the donors [Alwaleed Philanthropies and the European Union], who made us happy and brought us together today in Al-Nejoom Park in Al-Bakr neighborhood in Heet district ... to contribute to the opening ceremony of this park to be a place of recreation and a landmark in this area. We are looking forward to more construction projects and providing services...and let's work together for this purpose."

With the aim to encourage the sustainable return of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and enhance living conditions and livelihoods in conflict-affected governorates, in 2019 the European Union partnered with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UN-Habitat to implement local recovery projects in five targeted communities, including the town of Heet.

Ambassador of the EU to Iraq, H.E. Martin Huth, said, "ensuring better services to the displaced population in Anbar, is yet another good example of the EU's strong commitment to support local communities and local authorities in shaping a more inclusive and accountable development for Iraq. All the more we are pleased that activities were completed notwithstanding the difficult times during the COVID-19 pandemic. The recovery challenges affecting Iraqi communities three years after the defeat of ISIL still persist. The European Union will continue its partnership with UN-Habitat, UNDP

and the Iraqi local authorities for rebuilding healthier spaces for communities, ensuring better access to services, and continue to contribute to the long-term stability and social development of the country."

Through the implementation of a first set of impactful rehabilitation projects on housing, water supply and open spaces funded by the European Union, UN-Habitat managed to gain a strong foothold in the area of Al Baker West, gain the trust of the community and establish an excellent relationship with the authorities of Heet.

"I am glad to be here today and proud to see the results of UN-Habitat's area based approach implemented in Heet that has focused on and contributed to sustainable returns of IDPs," said Ms. Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano: Deputy Special Representative, Resident Coordinator, Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq during her statement.

This helped to secure in mid-2020 another development partnership with Alwaleed Philanthropies focused on complementary activities aimed at mitigating COVID-19 transmission and enhancing community resilience in Al Baker East.

"We are happy to see that our project has been completed in the town of Heet, and that residents are finally returning to their homes establishing their presence there. We thank our partners at the UN-Habitat for their work and dedication throughout this process. Today, with more than one billion people living in slums and 1.6 billion people living in inadequate housing units, it is our responsibility to ensure housing rights for all; home is a fundamental and basic human necessity," said Her Royal Highness Princess Lamia Bint Majed Saud AlSaud, the Secretary General and member of the Board of Trustees at Alwaleed Philanthropies.

Within these two projects combined, UN-Habitat has rehabilitated 180 war-damage houses; renovated a primary school; created a new park and two sports facilities; upgraded and extended potable networks serving over 600 houses and 4,125 people; rehabilitated two Water Treatment Plants; upgraded seven health facilities, including Heet's General Hospital, to protect some 130,000 people among health personnel and community members in the current

Local authorities in Heet celebrate the handover of area-based and complementary projects... *(continued)*

pandemic crisis; created over 6,500 working days for Heet residents in construction, civil works and landscaping; organised several sports events; conducted a planting campaign with a local volunteer group; provided vocational training for 120 unemployed youth; and engaged Iraq contractors, community groups and local NGOs in creating opportunities for synergies between projects, job opportunities, and capacity building.

Ms. Maimunah Modh Sharif, Executive Director of UN-Habitat said, “we very much look forward to continuing to work closely with our counterparts in Anbar, specifically the Governor’s office, the Heet Mayor’s office, the relevant Directorates and Municipality and count on your support to ensure success and sustainability of these very important projects that highlight the importance of linking humanitarian-development-peacebuilding activities to sustain peace in the long-term.” Mrs. Sharif closed her statement by saying, “it is my first visit to Iraq, and I can feel the warmth, and the warm heart of the Heet community.”

The result of the projects has not only

provided improved living conditions and access to basic infrastructure, but residents have increased sense of dignity, safety and security.

Female headed households specifically highlighted the importance of solid walls and gates to provide them a sense of safety and security for them and their children, who now have a safe space to go and play, and just ‘be’ children.

Most importantly, the projects have contributed to nurturing even stronger ties between the Anbar Governor’s office and local authorities in Heet, specifically the Mayor’s office, the relevant Directorates, and the Municipality, to ensure the long-term sustainability of its planned initiatives with the objective to reach the most vulnerable people.

Anbar Chief of Governor’s Advisors, Engr. Jasim Mohammed Al-Halbousi, said “UN-Habitat was present in the beginnings of liberation, as it had a role in restoring stability and enabling returnee families by securing jobs and employing young people, which had an impact on reviving the economic situation of those areas. The local

government took upon itself the responsibility of restoring stability, returning the displaced, and securing the minimum services as soon as possible, but because of the lack of financial allocations, it was necessary to search for international partners, most notably UN-Habitat. The decision was to maintain cooperation and invest their expertise in this field, and we succeeded in this endeavour and today we have reaped the fruits of this success by opening these projects”.

“Today we have attended a great ceremony conducted by UN-Habitat for the handover of Al-Nejoom Park in west Al-Baker Neighbourhood and the project to support COVID-19 mitigation in east Al-Baker. Al-Baker neighbourhood was greatly affected by ISIS terrorist activities and as such, these projects made a magnificent imprint on the community. I would like to thank and appreciate the work of the heroes who put all their efforts towards implementing these two projects to return life to this neighbourhood,” said Mr. Muhannad Zbar Al-Obaidi, Mayor of Heet.

UN-Habitat Executive Director meets with senior Government officials in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq to discuss on-going and future urban development initiatives

Erbil, 11 June 2021 - UN-Habitat’s Executive Director (ED), Maimunah Mohd Sharif, met with H.E. Mr. Sasan Awni, Minister of Municipalities and Tourism of Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), thanking the KRG for its tireless rebuilding efforts and discussed future collaboration opportunities.

H.E. Mr. Awni acknowledged UN-Habitat’s engagement since 2014 in humanitarian and early urban-recovery efforts in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR-I), supporting internally displaced persons (IDPs) through shelter provision and reconstruction efforts. Mrs. Sharif emphasized how in the past three years, the agency has shifted its focus on supporting the return of displaced Iraqi to their areas of origin. While it will continue to provide development assistance in liberated governorates, in the years to come UN-Habitat will be initiating more normative and technical programs. She spoke about the need to raise the attention of donors towards the need to strengthen urban planning capacities

within the Ministry of Municipalities and Tourism so that they can effectively perform their day-to-day while planning for a more sustainable and more equitable urban future.

During her discussion with Mr. Daban Shadala, Deputy Head of Department of Foreign Relations (DFR), Mrs. Sharif exchanged thoughts on water management issues affecting the region, sustainable returns of displaced persons and the importance of cultural tolerance. They agreed that launching

capacity development initiatives concurrently with UN-Habitat’s urban recovery projects can make development efforts more sustainable and durable.

In her meeting with H.E. Mr. Zagros Fatah, Deputy Minister of KRG’s Ministry of Planning (MOP), Mrs. Sharif acknowledged the excellent level of collaboration between MOP and UN-Habitat and the past co-financing of three successful projects in the region. She was particularly glad to hear about



UN-Habitat Executive Director meets with senior Government officials in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq... *(continued)*

the Ministry's renewed interest in the Building Codes that were jointly developed in 2018 to enhance climate change considerations and energy consumption. They then discussed the opportunity to work jointly on the drafting of a Regional Spatial Plan and the establishment of an Urban Observatory in KR-I to monitor and analyse urban data and trends.

In his conversation with the Executive Director, Mr. Zagros Fatah stated the importance of being able to provide affordable housing to the most vulnerable members of society by attracting private sector investments. He was particularly interested in Mrs. Sharif's experience as former Mayor of

the City Council of Penang Island, Malaysia, in establishing digitisation systems for land management, building control and revenue generation.

After a brief tour of the Citadel of Erbil, Mrs. Sharif then visited the neighbourhood of Kurani Ainkawa where UN-Habitat and UNDP, in 2010-11, led an ambitious urban upgrading project in partnership with the KRG. In the Community Centre that was inaugurated in 2016, Mrs. Sharif met with H.E. Mr. Omed Khoshnaw, Governor of Erbil, who recognised the truly transformational value of this project and expressed his hope that such interventions can be replicated in other areas. They discussed building



capacity opportunities in urban planning and data analysis. Mr. Massoud Karash, Deputy Governor of Erbil, voiced his concern for the lack of water and electricity that is currently affecting this region, stressing the need for an integrated approach to the provision of basic services in urban and rural areas.

UNFPA Deputy Executive Director and UNFPA Regional Director for the Arab States arrive in Iraq

Baghdad, 18 June 2021 - The United Nations Assistant Secretary-General (ASG) and United Nations Population Fund Deputy Executive Director (DED), Management, Mr Ib Petersen, and UNFPA Regional Director (RD) for the Arabic States, Dr Luay Shabaneh, started today a five-day visit to Iraq.

During the visit, Mr Petersen and Dr Shabaneh will focus on the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, which is also a focus of the UNFPA country programme 2020-2024 and the Iraqi national priorities. The high-level UNFPA officials will discuss with the Government, civil

society organisations and partners in Baghdad and Erbil how UNFPA can further support the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government to achieve the Agenda 2030 and meet Iraq's commitments made at the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD 25) in Nairobi on November 2019.

"I am delighted to be in Iraq as part of my field visit to the Middle East. I look forward to hearing from government officials and civil society representatives how UNFPA can increase its support during the country's recovery period after years of



humanitarian crises to ensure that Iraq meets the goals of the Decade of Action," said Mr Petersen from the Baghdad Airport.

High level UNFPA delegation meets programme beneficiaries

Baghdad, 21 June 2021 - United Nations Assistant Secretary-General and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Deputy Executive Director, Mr. Ib Petersen, and UNFPA Regional Director for the Arab States, Dr. Luay Shabaneh, visited Iraq.

In Baghdad they met with the Deputy Special Representative for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance of the United Nations Secretary-General, Ms. Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir, thanked her for supporting the anti-domestic violence law and discussed the political environment affecting women's rights and their role in families and society at large.

In a meeting with the United Nations Iraq Country Team they were briefed about various programmes the United Nations is working in Iraq and discussed strengthened collaboration among agencies.

"Youth is key force in the peace building processes and community dialogues. You are the ones who can promote social cohesion and prevent violence. You are the ones who can accelerate change in society and build a prosperous Iraq," UNASG Petersen, said to youth representatives he met.

"We thank the international community for their continuous trust in UNFPA. Because of your support, more women and young people in Iraq can enjoy quality sexual and reproductive health rights, be protected from domestic violence and have development opportunities," added Mr. Petersen.

UNFPA officials also visited a women center where UNFPA supports the promotion of gender equality and women empowerment to lead a transformative change in their communities through life skills activities and awareness sessions on women rights.



Women, especially pregnant women, need uninterrupted access to reproductive health services. UNFPA clinics provide free consultation and treatment for women and girls. During a visit to one of such clinics UNFPA Officials were briefed by health workers on challenges faced while serving the most vulnerable.

UNFPA Deputy Executive Director meets President and Speaker of Iraq

Baghdad, 21 June 2021 - The UN Assistant Secretary General and UNFPA Deputy Executive Director, Mr Ib Petersen, UNFPA Regional Director for the Arab States, Dr Luay Shabaneh, and UNFPA Representative to Iraq, Dr Rita Columbia, visited on 20 June, the President of the Republic of Iraq, Mr Barham Salim and the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Mohammed al-Halbousi.

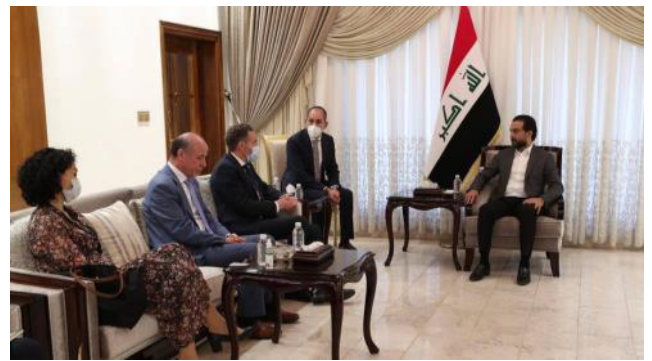
During their meeting with the President, Mr Petersen discussed the importance of people-centred and evidence-based population policies to

achieve sustainable development, emphasising the need to conduct the Population and Housing Census for Iraq. He reiterated UNFPA support and advocacy for women and youth rights, and commitment to working with the government of Iraq, the civil society and the international community to empower women and girls through education, especially education related to reproductive rights, so they can contribute effectively to change within their communities.

For his part, Mr Salih called for further

investment in youth as the driving force for change and development in Iraq and for the protection of women from gender-based violence.

With the Speaker al-Halbousi, Mr Petersen raised an issue of prevention of gender-based violence as a foundation for healthy families and communities. He also stressed the need for further improving legislation and policies related to GBV including protection of women and children. The Speaker reaffirmed his support to eliminating all forms of violence in the Iraqi society, especially against women.



UNFPA Deputy Executive Director, Kurdistan Region's Prime Minister discuss census, population development and women rights

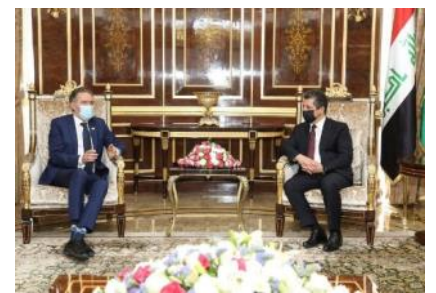
Erbil, 22 June 2021 - The UN Assistant Secretary General and UNFPA Deputy Executive Director, Mr Ib Petersen, UNFPA Regional Director for the Arab States, Dr Luay Shabaneh, and UNFPA Representative to Iraq, Dr Rita Columbia, visited on 21 June the Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government, Mr Masrour Barzani, in attendance of the Minister of Planning, Dr Dara Rasheed and the Head of the Department of Foreign Relations, Mr Safeen Dizayee.

During the meeting, Mr Petersen and Mr Barzani talked about the cooperation between UNFPA and the Kurdistan Regional Government in the

areas of population data, prevention of gender-based violence, and youth participation. The dialogue also focused on the UNFPA technical support for the Population and Housing Census and population analysis.

The two officials discussed the issue of women shelters in the Kurdistan Region and how to strengthen the referral mechanisms through the judicial court.

Mr Petersen thanked the Kurdistan Regional Government for the partnership with UNFPA on women and youth-related interventions, emphasised the need for reliable data to ensure the development and



implementation of people-centred policies based on evidence.

For his part, Prime Minister Barzani reiterated his government's support to UNFPA programmes and interventions in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

The results of the Population Dynamics report on the Kurdistan Region launched in Erbil

Erbil, 24 June 2021 - Ministry of Planning at Kurdistan Regional government, with technical support from UNFPA, launched the results of the Population Dynamics report on the Kurdistan Region. The report focuses on demographic changes and means to implement effective population policies

in a right-based, evidence-informed and gender responsive manner. The event was attended by the Minister of Planning, Dr Dara Rasheed, UNFPA Deputy Executive Director, Ib Petersen, and UNFPA Regional Director for the Arab States, Dr Luay Shabaneh.



UNODC meeting on “Challenges of combating money laundering and terrorist financing in the Iraqi judiciary”

Baghdad, 19 May 2021 - Aiming to enhance the internal coordination and increase the number of Anti-Money Laundering (AML)/ Counter Financing of Terrorism (CFT) prosecutions and convictions in Iraq, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) held a high-level strategic meeting for representatives of the Iraqi Financial Intelligence Unit and the Judiciary of Iraq on the 19th of May 2021. This high-level meeting is part of two UNODC Projects, namely “Strengthening Iraqi Institutions to Counter Financing of Terrorism,” and “Responding to violent extremism and terrorism” funded by the Federal Government of Germany and the Government of Japan..

Senior level participation from relevant Iraqi institutions included: Munther Ibrahim Hussein Al-Khazali, Member of the Federal Court of Cassation; Ammar Hamad Khalaf Al-Ithawi, Deputy Governor of the Central Bank of Iraq; Karim Khasbak, President of



the Iraqi State Council; and Nizar Nasser Hussain, Director General of the Anti-Money Laundering and Terrorism Financing Office. The meeting also gathered representatives from the Office of Combating Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing, Central Bank of Iraq, State Council, Appeals Court and Investigation Court. Senior judges and relevant senior officials from Egypt, Lebanon and

United Arab Emirates joined the meeting in which they provided an interactive platform for participants to enlist the current challenges related to investigations, prosecution and adjudication of money laundering and terrorism financing offences in Iraq as well as highlight the needed efforts for strengthening international cooperation in money laundering and terrorism financing offences.

Fostering justice to curb corruption in Iraq: €15 million project supports transparency and accountability across state institutions

Baghdad, 24 May 2021 – A EUR 15 million initiative aimed at curbing corruption in Iraq and bolstering transparency and public accountability has been launched today in partnership between the European Union Delegation to Iraq, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and Iraqi federal and Kurdistan state institutions.

The project, entitled Support to justice initiatives curbing corruption and promoting commercial dispute resolution, builds on Iraq’s national efforts to improve transparency and accountability across state institutions and supports Iraq to deliver to its national and international commitments with regard to the fight against corruption. It aims to improve the country’s legislative and strategic framework for combatting corruption, supports the justice sector to better process corruption offences, and fosters the development of commercial courts and arbitration mechanisms. It will also empower Iraqi civil society to take a more active role.

Overall, this project enhances Iraq’s compliance with the United Nations Convention against Corruption, ratified in 2008, and contributes to creating a more conducive environment for attracting economic investments.



Critically, the project leads to an improved citizen-state relationship, transparency and public awareness.

Activities under the project include notably support to Iraqi institutions to revise national anti-corruption laws, promoting their alignment with international standards and the provision of specialized on-demand training and mentorship opportunities for corruption investigators and integrity judges.

The project builds on a close collaboration with a number of federal and KRI state institutions, including the Higher Judicial Council and Judicial Council of the Kurdistan Region; Federal and Regional Commissions of Integrity; Council of

Representatives and House of Representatives of Kurdistan Region; Federal and Regional Prime Minister Offices, as well as Iraqi civil society organizations.

The Ambassador of the European Union to Iraq, H.E. Martin Huth, stresses that “the fight against corruption requires a joint and united effort, from the Iraqi government, state institutions, and an ever vigilant and watchful Iraqi society. With the launch of this important initiative, the EU offers critical support to Iraqi state institutions mandated in the integrity domain. This project helps Iraq deliver on its own national and international commitments and respond to the clear expectations of Iraqi citizens to rid Iraq

Fostering justice to curb corruption in Iraq: €15 million project supports transparency... *(continued)*

of the plague of corruption. I look forward to seeing a continued strong political will, national ownership and joint steering of this initiative for the benefit of Iraq and its people.”

“The Iraqi people have taken to the streets to demand action against corruption” says Resident Representative of UNDP Iraq, Zena Ali Ahmad. Their voices are louder than ever and should no longer be ignored.

By strengthening transparency and public accountability through robust anti-corruption reforms, we aim to increase access to the rule of law and restore the public’s confidence in the institutions that serve them.

“We are extremely grateful to our longstanding partner the EU, who has taken a bold commitment to supporting one of the most complex and challenging undertakings in Iraq, and

to our partners across the Iraqi and Kurdish Region state institutions for entrusting UNDP to lead this effort,” she adds.

More information can be found on the project fact sheet at https://www.iq.undp.org/content/iraq/en/home/library/democratic_governance/fostering-justice-to-curb-corruption-in-iraq.html

UNCTAD and Iraq sign deal to modernize customs procedures

The ASYCUDA system is expected to be a game-changer in customs processing in Iraq and improve ease of doing business in the country.

Baghdad, 27 May 2021 - UNCTAD and Iraq signed an agreement on 27 May to help the country modernize and automate its customs procedures.

Acting UNCTAD head Isabelle Durant and Iraq’s finance minister Ali Abdul Ameer Allawi inked the deal to implement a project that will promote trade and development in Iraq.

“The agreement that we are signing today signals the beginning of one of the most ambitious projects in the region,” Ms. Durant said.

She said the project would place Iraq among the most advanced countries in the region in modernizing and automizing customs and improving its international business ratings.

ASYCUDA to reform customs clearance The project will involve the implementation of UNCTAD’s Automated System for Customs Data (ASYCUDA) to reform and automate the customs clearance process.

The latest version, ASYCUDAWorld, uses and takes advantage of the latest open and web-based technology.

The project will also build a single window for international trade to facilitate compliance with import and export requirements.

This would lessen the cost and streamline the process at border control, reducing barriers to international trade.

Based on the ASYCUDA experience in other countries, Ms. Durant said, it is likely that customs revenues in Iraq will increase and that the release time at the border will be halved through the project.

“More customs revenue will mean more means for spending and investment, and hence more support for the people of Iraq,” she said.

Committed to international standards Minister Allawi said the Iraqi government is committed to ensuring its processes and procedures are automated in line with the best international standards.

“We selected ASYCUDA after a rigorous selection process,” Mr. Allawi said, “because the system has been implemented in nearly 100 countries and shown excellent results in all aspects of customs management and procedures.”

He said the system would dramatically improve the operations of the Iraqi customs authority and help reduce or eliminate many of the problems confronting the country’s international trade.

“Of course, the opportunities for corruption, extortion and malfeasance will also be radically reduced,” Mr. Allawi said.

He said increased revenues due to automation of customs operations would enable Iraq to plug gaps in finances for development. “Currently Iraq is losing a huge amount in uncollected customs revenue,” he said.

The system would generate timely, accurate and valuable data and information to support government

planning, said director-general of the Iraqi customs authority, Sadiq Howeidi Abbas.

Improving ease of doing business

The customs project is also expected to improve ease of doing business in Iraq.

It will speed up customs clearance through the computerization and simplification of procedures, minimizing administrative costs to the business community and the Iraqi economy.

UNCTAD’s technology and logistics director, Shamika N. Sirimanne, said the project would be important for the economic development of Iraq.

“It will boost the efficiency of government services for trade and advance national digitalization strategies through introducing e-declarations and e-payments,” she said. The project would bolster the implementation of economic reforms in Iraq and the government’s efforts to revive the country’s economy, make it more competitive and less dependent on oil revenues.

Ms. Sirimanne said Iraq would also benefit from the transfer of technology and skills as part of the project’s capacity-building activities.



United States, Canada and IOM support Government of Iraq with technology for stronger border management

Baghdad, 13 June 2021 — During a ceremony held on 13 June 2021, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) provided Iraq's Ministry of Interior (MoI) with four Mobile Border Processing Units (MBPU) equipped with metal detectors, radios, binoculars, IT equipment and the IOM-developed Migration Information and Data Analysis System (MIDAS). This system is a high-quality, cost-effective and fully customizable border management information system that will allow the MoI to collect, process, store and analyse traveller information in real time and across an entire border network.

The delivery of these technologies, made possible with support from the governments of the United States and Canada, is a key component of two ongoing IOM projects to assist the Government of Iraq (GoI) with implementing a comprehensive border management plan to facilitate safe, orderly and regular migration in order to pave the way for sustainable security.

"The transfer of MIDAS-outfitted equipment marks the first time this technology is being made operational in Iraq," said IOM Iraq Chief of Mission Gerard Waite. "This is a pivotal moment in IOM's support for the Government of Iraq and Iraqi national security, and we are grateful for the generous contributions of the governments of the United States and Canada, which have made this milestone possible."

The two projects target Iraq's highly porous border with Syria, where border controls have been adversely impacted by years of war and sanctions. The crisis caused by the Islamic State (or Daesh), difficult security conditions and challenges with the federal budget have

left border communities without the tools and capabilities they need to address security concerns.

The delivery of this equipment is part of a broader effort to enhance border security, including the implementation of infrastructure modernization, community-based dialogue and problem-solving platforms and capacity building for law enforcement and border guards. This approach will help to enhance the technical capacity of the Government of Iraq to receive, screen and respond to migrants coming from Syria and leaving Iraq. It also strengthens the ability of Iraqi institutions, officials and communities to cooperatively identify and resolve border security issues.

The GoI and partners – including the Border Points Commission, provincial and local governments, local civil society organizations and other entities – have been involved at every stage of the project, including planning, design and implementation, to support an integrated border management approach that is sustainable, as well as responsive to the needs of border communities.

"I am pleased that the Government of

the United States of America, through its support to the IOM, has worked to continuously improve the capacity of the Interior Ministry's Border Guard Security Forces," said U.S. Ambassador Matthew Tueller. "The initiative we are celebrating today is part of an ongoing effort by the United States to help Iraq enhance its border controls and screening capabilities at the Al Qaim border crossing checkpoint in Anbar Province, as well as at the informal port-of-entry at Fao in Ninewa province. The MIDAS screening equipment we are handing over today, in addition to radios, night vision devices and vehicles, will strengthen the Border Guard Security Forces interdiction and screening capabilities at critical points along the Iraq-Syria border," he added.

"Canada is pleased to support the Ministry of Interior and IOM's efforts to enhance security along Iraq's border with Syria," said Canadian Ambassador Ulric Shannon. "This partnership is an important component of Canada's broader engagement in Iraq, which aims to reinforce stability and promote the enduring defeat of Daesh."



UNDP Iraq supports the National Security Advisory / the National Committee on the implementation of the "Strategy for Combating and Preventing Violent Extremism in Iraq"

Erbil, 14 June 2021 – On 11 June, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Iraq and the National Committee on the Implementation of the Strategy to Combat Violent Extremism at the National Security Advisory launched a four-day workshop on the role of the assigned teams and committees at the presidency, parliament, and prime

ministry offices and at the governorates in implementing the strategy to Combat Violent Extremism in Iraq.

The workshop, facilitated by experts from the national committee and UNDP international experts, aimed at presenting the national strategy to combat violent extremism and its implementation plan, discussing the responsibilities of the central teams

and governorates committees in implementing the strategy and developing action plans at the local level. Participants were also engaged in sessions highlighting regional and international comparative experiences with focus on the role of local government and community members, including women, in combating violent extremism.

UNDP Iraq supports the National Security Advisory... *(continued)*

UNDP Iraq Resident Representative Zena Ali Ahmad states, “Sustainable solutions to violent extremism require an integrated holistic approach that focuses on unity and cohesion in society and strengthening governance at local levels. Our workshop with representatives from the national committee sets the stage for a partnership conducive to preventing violent extremism in Iraq.”

Ali Abdullah Albedeiri, chairman of the National Committee on the Implementation of the Strategy to Combat Violent Extremism in Iraq, states, “This workshop is timely and important to engage the local authorities in the implementation of the strategy which requires integrated and coordinated national and international efforts and the buy in from the community and local

government.”

Additional specialized sessions will follow, targeting other 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 Social Cohesion Programme to promote stronger, peaceful, and more cohesive communities in all areas of Iraq.



Policing for the people: new initiative to boost local police services in Iraq

Baghdad, 21 June 2021 – Police stations across Iraq will become more service-oriented and will better respond to the needs of citizens thanks to a new initiative between the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Iraq and the Ministry of Interior (MoI), generously funded by the governments of Canada, Germany, and the Netherlands.

The Model Police Station Pilot establishes a policing model that increases trust between citizens and local police, restores responsive, effective, and accountable local police services that are accessible to both men and women. It incorporates recommendations and priorities from Iraq’s Local Police Service RoadMap launched in November 2019 and reflects the results of assessments that address challenges within the existing system.

The Pilot has a strong focus on crime management, police-community relations and gender responsive policing, including investigating the presence and role of female police officers in Iraq, as well as increased accessibility to local police stations by women, girls, and youth from minority ethnic groups. The Model Police Station ‘design outline’ has been developed in consultation with the MoI to inform what a Police Station in Iraq should look like. Recommendations from the pilot will be trialed across six police stations in Anbar, Baghdad, Basra, and Ninewa governorates.

This initiative compliments a series of

trainings that have been delivered with UNDP’s support over several years, including improving the effectiveness of local police for mid-level managers in the Iraqi local police, basic leadership training, and criminal investigation.

“I welcome the model police station pilot initiative implemented in partnership between UNDP and MoI. This initiative is essential to advance the local policing in post-Daesh Iraq. The model police station initiative complements the ongoing support that is already provided by UNDP to strengthen local policing in Iraq, including specialised trainings, development of the Local Police Service Road Map and Standard Operating Procedures for Criminal Investigation. This initiative is another milestone for the UNDP and MoI partnership, to further improve local policing services to local communities. This is essential for Iraq’s long-term stability and development.” says Deputy Minister of Interior for Police Affairs, Lieutenant General Emad Mohammed.

“As Iraq recovers from the ISIL conflict, now is the time to implement a new local police approach that is more citizen-responsive, and service-orientated, and addresses the needs of women and girls, both inside the police service, and within communities..” says Resident Representative of UNDP Iraq, Zena Ali Ahmad.

“UNDP is committed to working alongside the Ministry of Interior to ensure the recommendations made under this pilot – such as increasing the number of female police officers and improving access to vulnerable women – are implemented as soon as possible,” she adds.

The Model Police Station Pilot was supported by the governments of Canada, Germany, and the Netherlands.

Available documents:

Executive Summary: Model Police Station Pilot <https://bit.ly/35GOJge>

Policy Brief: Gender assessment, Model Police Station Pilot <https://bit.ly/3zHnAI3>



Directorate for Mine Action: a joint technical meeting with UNMAS, EU and French Embassy via virtual format

Baghdad, 5 May 2021 - The Directorate for Mine Action (DMA) held today a joint virtual technical meeting with UNMAS, European Union (EU) and French Embassy.

At the meeting attended by the Director General of DMA, Eng. Dhafir Mahmood, director of UNMAS in Iraq, Mr. Pehr Lodhammer, the Charge d' Affairs of EU, Mr. Jaun Birnard Blufan, as well as the deputy head of the French Embassy in Baghdad, Mr.

Jean-Noël Bonniou, and a representative from the Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the details of the announcement of the European Union grant for mine action in Iraq were discussed. The grant will fund explosive risks management, technical support, explosive ordnance risk education, as well as the launch of sub-working group of risks management and gender mainstreaming.



Field visit to Najaf to assess the state of mine action in the Governorate

Al Najaf, 10 June 2021 – Head of UNMAS Iraq, Pehr Lodhammar, accompanied the Director General of the Directorate for Mine Action (DMA) on a field visit to Al-Najaf governorate to look at the state of mine action in the governorate and to meet its governor, Mr. Luay Al-Yasiri.

During the visit the technical staff gave a presentation on the reality of mine action in the governorate in terms of contamination rates, their levels and the most important obstacles and

challenges that face the implementation of the activities of

national mine action program in the governorate.



Australia's provides additional funding to support UNMAS new partnership model and gender mainstreaming activities in Iraq

Baghdad, 21 June 2021 – The United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) in Iraq welcomes an additional contribution of AUD 3,000,000 million (approximately USD 2,295,333 million) from the Government of Australia to further enable stabilization and humanitarian efforts through mine action in retaken areas of Iraq. This brings the current five-year contribution from Australia to a total of AUD 21 million (approximately USD 11,574,143 million).

More than three years after the Government of Iraq declared victory over the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), their presence continues to linger – particularly through the thousands of explosive ordnance left behind in the wake of their loss. These explosive devices were intended to heavily injure, maim, and kill civilians as a way of destabilizing the country.

In this regard, UNMAS has adapted its strategy to ensure optimum and sustainable support to the Government of Iraq, particularly through the focus of its assistance to sustainable national

capacity inclusive of national authorities and national operators. As part of this strategy, UNMAS rolled out a new partnership model bringing together international mine action organizations with local NGOs, paving the way for national ownership and localization of the mine action response in Iraq.

In addition, UNMAS is also advocating for gender mainstreaming and equal opportunity across all its activities and within the overall mine action sector in Iraq. This means that UNMAS encourages the hiring and training of capable women and men from impacted communities to deliver explosive hazard management and explosive ordnance risk education and through this providing critical livelihood opportunities to vulnerable communities.

“Explosive ordnance and remnants of war pose ongoing protection risks to Iraqi communities and hamper the conflict recovery efforts” said Ms Paula Ganly, the Australian Ambassador to Iraq. “Australia is pleased to continue

our long-standing partnership with UNMAS in supporting the national authorities and their important efforts in helping conflict-affected communities recover and build resilience in a safe and stable environment.”

“Ever since UNMAS commenced its activities in Iraq, Australia has remained a steadfast supporter of mine action, playing a pivotal role in the continuation of this life-saving work in-country. This work not only enables rehabilitation and reconstruction activities, but also provides employment opportunities for vulnerable communities, thereby contributing to the reinvigoration of the local economy as well as saving lives in the process.” said Mr. Pehr Lodhammer, UNMAS Senior Programme Manager in Iraq.



Kirkuk Cancer Center marks World Health Day with public-private partnership

Kirkuk, 7 April 2021 - World Health Day is celebrated on 7 April each year. The theme for 2021 is Building a fairer, healthier world. The COVID-19 pandemic revealed that some people live healthier lives with better access to services than others. COVID-19 hit everyone, but the impact has been the hardest on those who were already vulnerable, more exposed, more likely to experience its adverse consequences and less likely have access to care. This holds in particular for the young patients at the Kirkuk Center for Oncology and Hematology, locally known as the 'Kirkuk Cancer Center'. On this World Health Day, the Kirkuk Cancer Center received a new building from private donors. The new hospital was built in compliance with Iraqi medical standards and, as such, is a huge improvement. Dr. Niaz, invited the Department of Health, UNAMI Development Support Office (DSO) and UNAMI-Medical for a special pre-opening tour to see the dire health situation in Kirkuk.

Due to oil pollution, Kirkuk suffers from increases in cancer patients. The Center expects about 5000 cancer patients in 2021, this is up from 3000 in 2020. There is also a significant rise in kids with leukemia. About 70% of the patients are women and children, who cannot afford medical care

anywhere else.

To make matters worse, COVID-19 is a co-morbidity for cancer patients. For healthy people, the coronavirus is certainly dangerous, but with the proper precautions, not immediately life-threatening. However, for immunocompromised people, children with cancer, COVID-19 is extremely threatening because chemotherapy weakens the immune system, rendering cancer survivors unable to fight off the virus.

Dr. Niaz's vision is to transform the Kirkuk Cancer Center from a hospice, where people come to die, into a treatment center, where people come to live. To acquire the much-needed medical equipment, the Kirkuk Cancer Center has proposed a public-private partnership to the Government, the North Oil Company, Korek, Zain, Philips, the Red Crescent and the UN in Iraq.

Due to recent declines in oil prices, the Government of Kirkuk only provides matching funds from its petro-dollar account. Thus, this potential public-private partnership would enable private sector partners to provide technology and innovation to improve operational efficiency. The public sector would provide long-term incentives to care and act as guarantor for patients without health insurance. The UN could ensure that no one is left behind. DSO facilitated assessment missions for UNFPA, WHO, donors and several NGOs. With expertise from UNAMI-Medical and the Philips Foundation, a concept note was developed, recently honored as a best practice in a comparative study by the Academic Council for the United Nations. Dr. Niaz hopes that all this international attention will unleash the much-needed support for the transformation of the Kirkuk Cancer Center.



Global shortage of 900,000 midwives threatens women's lives and health, new report shows

Erbil, Iraq/United Nations, New York, 5 May 2021 – “A 35-year old pregnant woman came to our clinic with abdominal pain,” recalled Hawrin Yousif, a 27-year-old midwife in the Khazir displacement camp in the Kurdistan Region of northern Iraq. “After conducting a medical check-up, I understood that she had been going through early labour for the last five hours and urgently needed to be taken to the maternity hospital in Erbil.”

An ambulance raced them to the hospital, but the woman's labour was progressing too quickly.

“The mother was so scared and she kept begging me to bring her baby to life safely: ‘Don't let him die’,” Ms. Yousif said. “My heart was beating fast. I knew that these lives were at risk.”

With quick action, she was able to deliver the baby safely. But many women and newborns are not so lucky. The world is facing a shortage of about

900,000 midwives, according to a new report published by UNFPA, the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Confederation of Midwives (ICM) and partners. The COVID-19 crisis has only exacerbated these problems, with the health needs of women and newborns overshadowed by the pandemic response and midwives being deployed to other health services.

Time to prioritize women's needs and skills

The global midwifery workforce now stands at 1.9 million, about two thirds of what is needed, according to the report, titled the State of World's Midwifery 2021.

Gender inequality is one of the drivers of the enormous midwife shortage. The chronic under-investment in midwifery highlights how the needs of women, and the skills of a mostly female workforce, are often neglected by

policymakers and health systems.

And results are too often tragic, taking the form of ill health, maternal and newborn death, injury or stillbirth. Fully supporting midwifery, on the other hand, could avert 67 per cent of maternal deaths, 64 per cent of newborn deaths and 65 per cent of stillbirths, saving an estimated 4.3 million lives per year, according to an



Global shortage of 900,000 midwives threatens women's lives and health, new report shows *(continued)*

analysis conducted for this report.

"It's time for governments to acknowledge the evidence surrounding the life-promoting, life-saving impact of midwife-led care," said Dr. Franka Cadée, ICM's president.

Midwives as advocates for women
Midwives do not only deliver babies. They provide a range of sexual and reproductive health services, as well as antenatal, postpartum and neonatal care. They can also serve as powerful advocates of respectful care and women's rights.

"A capable, well-trained midwife can have an enormous impact on childbearing women and their families – an impact often passed on from one generation to the next," said UNFPA Executive Director Dr. Natalia Kanem. Yet midwives face persistent gender

discrimination that prevents them from achieving professional autonomy and leadership roles. They also endure gendered disparities in pay and career growth, affecting retention.

Impact of COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly reduced the midwifery workforce. In many places, midwives report they have not received sufficient personal protective equipment. Yet midwifery personnel have overwhelmingly continued to deliver babies and care despite the health system strains and personal risks to their health.

"The biggest challenge was to convince women and girls to wear masks and comply with the COVID-19 preventative measures," Ms. Yousif told UNFPA, which supports her

reproductive health facility with funding from Canada and Sweden. "We were determined to help them stay safe and healthy. My colleagues and I went door-to-door visiting families and explaining to them why it was necessary to abide by the preventive measures."

"We must learn the lessons the pandemic is teaching us," said WHO Director-General Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, "by implementing policies and making investments that deliver better support and protection for midwives and other health workers."

In addition to calling for investments in education and training, the report highlights the need to improve the working environment for midwives and to include them in policymaking and leadership roles.

IOM Iraq continues to strengthen public health infrastructure

Baghdad, 31 May 2021 - Years of conflict and sanctions have left Iraq's healthcare system struggling to meet the healthcare needs of its population. The threat of COVID-19 is amplified in camp settings, where residents with limited access to healthcare services live in close proximity to one another. In April 2021, three active COVID-19 cases were detected in Jeddah 5 Camp. IOM Iraq's Migration Health Unit quickly mobilized to respond, notifying camp management and dispatching a mobile team of nurses and other healthcare workers to treat the infections and prevent further spread. The team performed daily health checks on the three infected

individuals, providing them language-appropriate medical information and distributing personal protective equipment (PPE).

Consistent with its emphasis on the importance of an informed populace for positive health outcomes, MHU equipped the families of the infected individuals with education about COVID-19 and best methods in its treatment and prevention.

These successful response efforts were made possible with support from USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance.

IOM Iraq continues to leverage its wide network of staff and offices across the country to strengthen public health

infrastructure and develop short, medium- and long-term recovery and response plans in coordination with international, governmental and local actors.



WHO Iraq supported Erbil Department of Health to strengthen the medical services and save more lives

Erbil, 2 June 2021 - WHO Iraq supported Erbil Department of Health (DoH) with a shipment to strengthen the medical services and save more lives. The shipment consisted of personal protective measures, life-saving medical supplies and equipment worth over \$88,000. This support would not have been possible without the generous contribution of the People and Government of Kuwait, BHA, the people and Government of Germany, ECHO, and BPRM.



Circular solution to Mosul's conflict debris launched



Baghdad/Geneva, 4 May 2021 - Mosul – Iraq's second largest city – suffered massive devastation during the conflict with the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). An estimated 7-8 million tonnes of debris was created by the fighting, mainly in the Old City on the banks of the Tigris River. To deal with this huge debris challenge, the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) are joining forces with Mosul Municipality – with the support of Japan – to establish the city's first debris recycling center.

In the conflict's immediate aftermath, clean-up campaigns cleared hundreds of thousands of tons of debris blocking streets to allow residents access to their homes and businesses, and enable rehabilitation of critical infrastructure such as hospitals, schools and water treatment plants.

The cleared debris, however, was often dumped in an uncontrolled manner in open spaces, gullies and strewn along roadsides for lack of designated disposal sites, creating problems in this city where land is a premium. Furthermore, much of the debris remains locked in damaged buildings which will require complex explosive hazard clearance and demolition and will take many years to release.

“By processing the rubble to produce

quality materials that can be used in reconstruction efforts, creating much needed job opportunities for returnees and cleaning-up the urban environment, this initiative practically illustrates how humanitarian needs and sustainable development goals can be addressed in a joint manner,” said Dr. Jassim Humadi, Iraq's Deputy Environment Minister. “We are very grateful to the Government of Japan for their support in helping turn the debris problem in Mosul into a means of positive change.”

The project builds upon lessons learned and best practices gathered under debris recycling pilots implemented jointly by IOM and UNEP in Mosul and Kirkuk. Where conventional practice had been to clear and dump the debris, this new initiative will concentrate on reusing the recycled aggregate for reconstruction.

“Material testing results confirming that the recycled aggregate complies with Iraq's standards for road construction should also help pave the way for embedding circular economy principles in dealing with routine construction and demolition waste, thereby promoting a ‘building back better’ approach to crisis recovery,” said Gary Lewis, Director of UNEP's Disasters and Conflicts Branch.

In the destroyed village of Buwaiter, where the pilot debris recycling project

in Kirkuk was implemented, “unemployed youth with no work opportunities benefited immensely,” said Salal.

Othman, who guards the recycling site and used the crushed gravel to pave the area in front of his house, which is typically impassable during the rains.

“Young people in our village view debris recycling as a golden chance in terms of job creation, which additionally, by clearing the rubble, is allowing us to return and rebuild our homes,” added Mijbel Mar'i, a 24-year-old day labourer.

Remarking on the debris recycling in Buwaiter, Hassan Al-Jubouri, the head of Multaqa sub-district, described it as “an excellent step to dispose of huge volumes of debris while simultaneously employing people,” adding that “with this project, in addition to removing the debris we now have the possibility to reuse it. And given that many rural roads in our sub-district need surfacing, the crushed materials are ideal for this end.”

“Japan has provided over USD 500 million as humanitarian assistance to the people affected by the crisis since 2014. Additionally, Japan decided this year to provide a new assistance package to Iraq, amounting to USD 50 million, including this project by UNEP,” said Japan's Ambassador to Iraq, His Excellency Mr. Kotaro Suzuki. “I commend UNEP's initiative together with IOM on recycling debris which cleans up the urban environment and produces materials for road construction as well as creating job opportunities for unemployed youth.”

“In Japan, after the earthquakes, people mourned their loss and started to clean up the debris which was all that was left of their homes and memories of loved ones. Our fathers' generation did the same in scorched cities after the war, to rebuild towns for their people, for their future children,” he added. “We want to assist people in Mosul and Kirkuk in their efforts to revive their towns, rebuild their lives once again.”

World Food Programme (WFP) reaffirms its commitment to support families affected by low water levels in Iraq

Baghdad, 17 June 2021 - On today's Desertification and Drought Day, the World Food Programme (WFP) reaffirms its commitment to support families affected by low water levels in Iraq. WFP's analysis reveals that

rainfall in 2021 has been characterised by below average conditions, particularly in the northern governorates and Kurdistan Region. This could impact upon the final yield of the two major crops: wheat and

barley. Together with partners including FAO, OCHA, UNICEF, and IOM, WFP continues to monitor the situation closely, to best respond to people's needs.

Iraq reaffirms commitment to climate action under the Paris Agreement

Erbil, 03 June 2021 - Iraq, through the Iraqi Ministry of Health and Environment, with the support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Iraq, has renewed its commitment to combating climate change by finalizing the final draft of its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) document to the Paris Agreement, and including commitments on reducing greenhouse gases emissions.

A vote was taken unanimously by representatives of the relevant ministries on the draft NDC – a global commitment to reducing national emissions and adapting to the impacts of climate change – to endorse its submission to the Iraqi Council of Ministers for final approval. Upon approval, it will be submitted to the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

One of the most critical targets in the final draft relates to Iraq's mitigation of greenhouse gases. It commits to implementing its nationally determined contributions from 2021 until 2030, leading to a 1-2% reduction of its emissions.

Discussions took place this week during a consultation workshop in Erbil, attended by representatives of the Ministry of Health and Environment, represented by the Technical Deputy Minister for Environmental Affairs, Dr. Jassem Al-Falahi, and the Administrative and Financial Deputy

Minister, Dr. Kamran Ali Hassan, as well as Mr. Abdul Rahman Siddiq, Head of the Protection Authority and improving the environment in the Kurdistan region, and representatives from Kurdistan Region and the federal Ministries such as Ministry of Planning, Ministry of Electricity, and Ministry of Oil, the private sector, and civil society organizations.

In his speech during the announcement, the Technical Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Health and Environment, Dr. Jassim Al-Falahi: "In the name of Allah, and in the name of Iraq, I announce the approval of the Nationally Determined Contributions Document by the Iraqi National Team unanimously. I congratulate our people and our coming generations with this document, which is a roadmap towards the future. Only dreamers achieve results. All towards a sustainable, green Iraq."

"Iraq faces many challenges posed by climate change, including increased temperatures, drought, and increase in sand and dust storms and related disaster shocks, all which create barriers to progressing development efforts in the country. UNDP appreciates the great efforts made by the Iraqi government to address these challenges, since joining the climate change agreement in 2009," says Resident Representative of UNDP in Iraq, Zena Ali Ahmad.

"To enhance these efforts and effectively promote the adaptation and

resilience of the Iraqi people, UNDP Iraq has supported the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Region to develop NDCs that promote a green economy in Iraq. The final outputs from this workshop will contribute to Iraq's commitment to climate action and will serve as policy overall climate change in the country. UNDP will continue to support these efforts as the policies are implemented over the coming years," she adds.

The NDC document is one of the most important documents that are intended to draw the shape of economic change in the world by the inclusion of the concept of green economy, focusing on renewable energies and clean mechanisms, and trying not to exceed the rate of global temperature 1.5 °C above the mean of the global temperature before the industrial revolution. Iraq NDC will attract new investment opportunities and provide more engagement for private sector in the Climate Change field.



A new era - with ambitious climate goals, Iraq sets itself on a new path

Baghdad, 10 May 2021 - At its height in 2014, the Islamic State occupied large swathes of Iraq. Shops and factories closed; fields dried up. Towns and cities were left in ruins by fighting and airstrikes. 5.8 million people fled their homes.

ISIS may have been driven out of Iraq, but the country continues to grapple with the scars of decades of war and political instability, including this fight against ISIS. As of today, more than 1.2 million people are yet to return home. Almost 1 in 5 Iraqis live below the national poverty line. Dependence on oil has left the country vulnerable to economic shocks. COVID-19 has added another layer of hardship upon many households.

It is in this context that another

unfolding crisis is threatening to derail the nation's recovery and development: climate change.

Iraq faces many challenges as a result, including increasing temperatures, declining rainfall, salinity, and more frequent sand and dust storms. In fact, Iraq is classified as the fifth most vulnerable country in the world. Decreased water and food availability, as well as extreme temperatures, are expected to negatively affect food, water, social and health security.

Recent years have seen an increase in temperatures above 55 degree Celsius in parts of Iraq, more intense and frequent drought spells, a decrease in the precipitation level by 50%, and higher evaporation rates.

54% of the country's land is under

serious threat of land degradation and desertification. Approximately 40 percent of agriculture is rain-fed with around 7 million people affected by drought and being at high risks of displacement. For instance, rice farmlands have been declining to almost zero in recent years due to drought and lack of water. The top soil is fragile because of the protracted conflict, war and lack of land cover which makes it extremely vulnerable to drought and erosion. This can lead to sand/dust storms that pose significant threat to human health and cause massive economic losses, locally and regionally.

Igniting tensions and disrupting livelihoods, the impacts threaten to undermine efforts to restore peace and

A new era - with ambitious climate goals, Iraq sets itself on a new path *(continued)*



prosperity across the country. Among the most vulnerable are the rural poor, women, and children.

The Iraqi government has recognized the need to adapt and transition to a lower-carbon economy. In 2015, the country's first national climate pledges (known as a Nationally Determined Contribution - or INDC) were presented to the international community.

The goals looked at how to build resilience to the changing environment. They also included a vision for scaling up energy efficiency and renewable energy, as well as instituting more sustainable practices in the transport, oil and gas, waste, building, and land management sectors.

In 2015, Iraq set a target of reducing carbon emissions by 14 percent between 2020 and 2035 (relative to business-as-usual) – an ambitious goal given Iraq's reliance on fossil fuels and the other challenges facing the country.

Taking action

In spite of ongoing fragility, with the backing of international partners such as the UN Development Programme, the Global Environment Facility, the Green Climate Fund, the European Union, USAID, and Sweden, Iraq is making progress in transitioning to cleaner sources of energy.

The Ministry of Oil has begun implementation of a liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) project by constructing stations and modifying cars to become hybrid, to enable a gradual shift in the transportation fleet towards using cleaner fuels. Transition to LPG for electric power generation is expected to cut emissions significantly. Associated gas investment projects are also forthcoming. The Ministry of Trade have removed tax and other customs fees from electric and hybrid vehicles, to promote transition to low-carbon transport, renewable energy and environmentally-friendly technologies. Solar power remains in its infancy, but the government is taking steps to increase its uptake, including the

drafting of a Renewable Energy Law, various incentive schemes, and efforts to attract private sector investment.

A National Adaptation Plan and technology need assessment are evolving. The government has also been strengthening enabling environments to pursue energy efficiency in the capital Baghdad.

In building resilience, emphasis has been placed on the nation's most vulnerable communities, including in the Al Hawizeh marshlands. Here, ecotourism initiatives are creating jobs for youth and vulnerable women who are disproportionately affected by climate change. Photo: UNDP Iraq

In January 2021, Iraq's President approved the country's accession to the Paris Agreement.

"I have the honor to announce that, on 22 September 2020, Iraq's Parliament voted to accede to the Paris Climate Agreement. Iraq is heading into a new era, planning on a paradigm shift toward more economic diversity. This includes support for renewable energies and access to environmentally friendly technologies, as well as helping the most vulnerable parts of our society and the most vulnerable regions," said Barham Salih, President of the Iraqi Republic at the UN Climate Ambition Summit 2020.

With UNDP support, the Iraqi government has been stepping up the use of solar power, including building awareness within the government, private sector, and civil society. Pilot rooftop solar systems have been installed across the country, including in Najaf and Baghdad, and a solar park opened in Duhok.

Raising ambition

With support under UNDP's Climate Promise, Iraq has been revising its climate pledges for this decade. It has been a consultative process, bringing together policymakers, the private sector, NGOs, youth, and women, to build consensus regarding the NDC revision. In fact, with 40 percent of

participants being women from diverse sectors, the role of women has been very prominent.

Women have played a key role in determining Iraq's path for climate action and over the past year have accounted for more than 40 percent of participants in meetings and consultations, in many cases leading the process.

The country's updated climate goals, or NDCs, expected to be announced in the coming months, will include new greenhouse gases such as CO₂, methane and nitrous oxide, with concrete decarbonization measures across seven sectors - including oil and gas, energy, industries, trade, agriculture, transport, and waste management. The revised NDC will also outline how Iraq will measure, report on, and verify their efforts to reduce emissions. Finally, it will also set out concrete measures to address climate-related risks while building resilience across vulnerable sectors from agriculture and water, to health and waste management.

Looking ahead

Iraq remains a fragile, post-conflict country in which millions remain in need of humanitarian and development assistance. The revised NDC makes the linkages between fragility / crisis and climate security very clear. Wars and protracted conflicts over the last decades which have reversed development gains and contributed to making the country as one of the world's most climate hotspots. Hence, the latest climate pledge will include key adaptation measures, including building resilience of ecosystems, including across the water and agriculture sectors, through actions to combat land degradation, rehabilitation of degraded biodiversity and ecosystems through nature-based solutions.

Much work remains to be done, but armed with hope and ambition, and with support from the international community, a brighter future beckons.

In the words of the Iraqi President at last year's UN Climate Ambition Summit, Iraq is heading into a new era. UNDP's Climate Promise is supporting 118 countries including Iraq to enhance their Nationally Determined Contributions under the global Paris Agreement. Delivered in collaboration with a wide variety of partners, it is the world's largest offer of support for the enhancement of climate pledges.

By UNDP Climate

New report from the International Trade Centre: Climate change risks and opportunities in Iraqi agrifood value chains

Baghdad, 06 June 2021 – The International Trade Centre in Baghdad has recently published a new report “Climate change risks and opportunities in Iraqi agrifood value chains”. Here is the executive summary:

Located in the eastern part of Western Asia, the Republic of Iraq falls in a region encompassing the Mesopotamian alluvial plain of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, the north-western side of the Zagros Mountains and the eastern end of the Syrian Desert. While most of Iraq has a hot, arid, subtropical climate, the country hosts five agro-ecological zones with varied climatic conditions, making it suitable for the production of several crops, predominantly cereals, palm dates and vegetables. Home to some of the world's most fertile land and where modern agriculture originated and developed, Iraq faces the severe threat of climate change, presenting challenges for agricultural production, economic resilience and competitiveness.

Strengthening the Agriculture and Agrifood Value Chain and Improving Trade Policy in Iraq (SAAVI) is a €22.5 million project funded by the European Union (EU) and implemented by the International Trade Centre (ITC). SAAVI contributes to inclusive economic growth and job creation, particularly for the youth, by improving Iraq's agriculture competitiveness and supporting trade development in the country. Started in November 2020, the project forms part of the overall EU special measure for supporting employment creation and improving economic governance in Iraq.

SAAVI aims to improve livelihoods by strengthening value chains in domestic and regional markets, creating jobs and upskilling young entrepreneurs, and enhancing competitiveness of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) and farmers participating in agrifood supply chains. MSMEs, in particular, have the potential of becoming a key driver for employment creation and contributing to greater resilience of the Iraqi economy in the face of current daunting challenges.

Through the SAAVI project, ITC is working with the Government of Iraq to implement practical solutions that allow to “build back better” after the COVID-19 pandemic, ensuring a green recovery in which the agribusiness sector is called to play a crucial role.

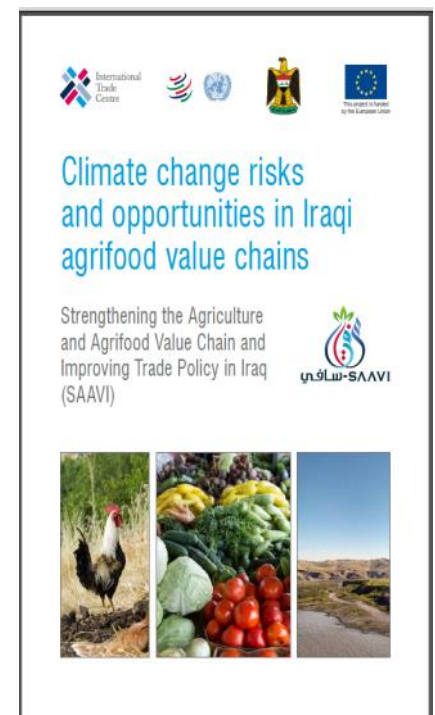
In this context, a Climate and Environment Risk Assessment (CERA) was conducted during the inception phase with the objective of mapping key climate and environmental risks affecting the tomato and animal products (eggs, chicken meat and dairy) value chains, and quantifying their impacts over time on sector competitiveness. The assessment identifies market opportunities arising in environmental markets, as well as obstacles to and practices in resilience-building by local farmers and MSMEs. The report presents key insights and knowledge generated by the assessment, based on a mixed approach combining original analysis, data-driven country benchmarking and literature reviews.

It consolidates key findings into an easy-to-read format and makes them available to decision-makers, in order to inform policy-making, future field

research and capacity building.

Facilitating engagement of Iraqi MSMEs in building green, climate-resilient value chains from ‘farm to fork’ is a difficult undertaking. Entry points need to be identified that offer clear actionable measures not only at the farm level, but also at the processing and marketing stages. This report highlights solutions developed locally by entrepreneurs to take action on climate change with a specific focus on vegetables and animal products, and by geographic region (Northern rain-fed areas and Central / Southern irrigated production areas).

For the full report please go to <https://bit.ly/34YQYLr>



Converting a desert into an oasis

On World Desertification Day, read how residents of Haditha are coming together to transform their desert into an oasis.

Baghdad, 17 June 2021 - Located about 240 kilometers northwest of Baghdad, a quaint city with panoramic views of the desert sits on both sides of the Euphrates River. With over 46,000 residents, Haditha is one of seven major cities in the Anbar governorate. During the war with the Islamic State and the Levant (ISIL), six of those cities were taken by ISIL except for Haditha and a handful of surrounding vil-lages. Unfortunately, due to the fighting, farmers were forced to flee

their homes and abandon their cultivated land.

"We used to have olive trees and different types of vegetables growing. But people were forced to leave all of this behind," says Mabrook Mhedy, Mayor of Haditha. "When people returned home, they were met with absolute devastation. They found most of their land burnt, and as a result lost their main source of livelihoods." Coupled with the impact of climate change, the land in Haditha is now highly susceptible to desertification.

Four years since the liberation from ISIL, the residents of Haditha are more determined than ever to revive their

once prosperous land. For this reason, UNDP, through the Funding Facility for Stabilization in partnership with the Department of Agriculture in Anbar, launched a project to employ 100 residents of Haditha for three months to support the planting and cultivation of an oasis. Through the project, saplings were supplied to support the cultivation of over 250 hectares of desert in Haditha.

"Having always lived along the Euphrates, we are a community of farmers by lifestyle," says Zahra Ghazal, 47, who was employed through the project. Along with her husband and two children, she escaped to Egypt

Converting a desert into an oasis *(continued)*

when the fighting broke out in 2014. They both worked as daily wagers in construction and housekeeping to make ends meet and fund their children's education.

"We returned home to go back to what we love doing, which is farming and cultivation," Zahra explains. After being displaced for over five years, they were finally able to return home but like many others, were met with scenes of devastation and ruin. "Through my earnings from this opportunity, I have been able to save money to rebuild my house, create a small greenhouse in our backyard and purchase saplings," she adds.

Over 23 percent of the people employed under the project were women. While Zahra was well-versed in farming, it was the first time her childhood friend and mother-of-six, Bashaar Mudhaffar, 45, was exposed to it. "I learned how to work with seeds, fertilizers and saplings. Farming was always seen as a male-dominated space. But this opportunity opened my eyes to the



keen to translate her new skills into starting a small nursery and supplying saplings to larger farms in the area. "I used my earnings to purchase seeds and experiment with them at home. As a result, I now have 50 saplings that I plant to the market and sell," she adds. In addition to creating short-term employment opportunities, UNDP also provided cucumber, olives, pistachios, aloe vera and date palm saplings, along

proud of how the residents of Haditha have shown resilience and determination in bringing the desert back to life. "People now work together to improve each other's livelihoods while also reviving our land back to what it was before the war," he adds.

In addition, UNDP supported the local irrigation system by establishing a water connection running over five kilometers from the river to the oasis, along with water pumps and drip irrigation technology. "Our access to water from the might of the Euphrates is our community's biggest strength. Without it, we would have not been able to get this far," Sami says. "The water pipes were destroyed during the war, so restoring the supply was an essential step to get us back on our feet."

Before ISIL, the entire desert only contained 50,000 olive trees managed by 60 workers every day. Today, the desert has transformed into an oasis haven with over 250,000 saplings being cultivated every two hectares. Sami wants to use this as an example to encourage more farming across the country. "We have already started harvesting cucumbers. By September this year, Haditha will be booming with olives, dates, and pistachios," excitedly shares Sami. The Department of Agriculture is working toward hiring 30 permanent employees to maintain and grow the oasis and ensure its longevity. In the future, Sami plans to educate residents of Haditha on sustainable farming practices with the goal of skilling and encouraging livelihood opportunities. "We are on track to pick up from we left off, as long we set aside our differences and work as a community towards our shared vision."



possibility that women can do this too. We received clear instruction and guidance from the experts in the Department of Agriculture which was really helpful," Bashaar says.

For both the enterprising women the project serves as a stepping stone to secure more sustainable employment opportunities. For instance, Bashaar is

with organic fertilizers. They were grown in makeshift greenhouses and then planted. "We started with 50 olive tree saplings. Today, at the end of the three months we have over 500,000 saplings growing in the greenhouses," explains Sami Hussein, Manager at the Department of Agriculture in Anbar.

Passionate about farming, Sami is



The Haditha oasis project was made possible thanks to generous support from the Government of Canada.

FAO consultative workshop on Climate change

Najaf, 23-24 June 2021 - The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) conducted a two days consultative workshop in coordination with the Ministry of Health and Environment and other line ministries as part of the formulation process of the GCF funded project: Strengthening climate resilience of vulnerable agriculture livelihoods in Iraq's rural communities. Representatives from the local governments of Najaf, Karbala and Muthanna, officials from the ministries of Health and Environment, Agriculture, Water Resources, Planning, farmers associations, academia, private sector and large number of FAO experts from the HQ and the regional offices attended the event.

FAO Representative in Iraq, Dr Salah ElHajjHassan, confirmed during the workshop FAO commitments to support the rural communities and national authorities to enhance the climate resilience through the introduction of climate adaptive technologies and farming practices to increase water availability at the farm level and enhance water productivity in the



governorates of Muthanna, Najaf and Karbala, he also highlighting that this process is in line with the agency new framework and to support government efforts to scale up food and water security.

The Undersecretary of the Ministry of Health and Environment, Dr. Jassim Abdel Aziz, confirmed the Ministry support to tackle the root causes and barriers to climate change adaptation in Iraq.

Najaf Deputy Governor, Karbala Governor, and the Deputy Governor of Muthanna appreciated the initiative and confirmed the commitment of the

local governments to ease the formulation and implementation of the project.

Overall, the project will contribute to strengthen climate change resilience of farming communities against climate induced water scarcity in the governorates of Najaf, Karbala and Muthanna; additionally, it will reduce climate change adaptation deficit of farming communities and increase water productivity; it will also contribute to scaling-up climate change adaptation into key national water management policy frameworks and mainstreaming it across stakeholder.

Culture

UNESCO enhances cooperation with HCECR for the safeguarding of Erbil Citadel World Heritage Site

Erbil, 10 May 2021 - UNESCO Iraq's Head of Culture, Junaid Sorosh-Wali, met with H.E. Omed Khoshnaw, Governor of Erbil, in the presence of Mr. Nehad Qoja, Head of High Commission for Erbil Citadel Revitalization (HCECR), to discuss enhanced cooperation with HCECR for the safeguarding of Erbil Citadel World Heritage Site and the implementation of UNESCO's ongoing project "Support to Livelihoods Through Cultural Heritage Development", generously supported by the EU Madad Fund.



UNESCO has started the work on architectural assessment of Al Ashar Canal in Basra Old City

Basra, 6 June 2021 - UNESCO, in close cooperation with the local authorities, has started the work on architectural assessment of Al Ashar Canal in Basra Old City, as part of the project "Reviving Mosul and Basra Old Cities" generously funded by the EU! Upon completion of this assessment

stretching from the Old Court Bridge to the Nadhran Bridge on Ashar Canal, a detailed urban conservation and rehabilitation project of the canal banks and of the public space related to the canal will be developed and executed.



UNESCO is providing training to more than 32 youth in heritage reconstruction

Mosul, 11 May 2021 - Thanks to a European Union funded project “Reviving Mosul and Basra Old Cities”, UNESCO is providing trainings to more than 32 youth, like Murtada, in carpentry focusing on Shanasheel to use their skill in its planned rehabilitation of historic Shanasheel houses in Basra old city.

Hajar, Shahad, Sarah, Mohammed and Saif have been trained by UNESCO to carry out restoration and repair of Moslawi Farsh (Alabaster) to revive the physical heritage of the Old City of Mosul. In addition to providing technical skills, UNESCO’s training empowers women and men to better understand and address social challenges through education and onsite work experience. Referring to his work in rebuilding heritage houses alongside the UNESCO engineers and contractors, Saif Khalid explains ‘Today we are working side by side UNESCO to rebuild our city’.

Amna Dawood, a 27-year-old from

Mosul, gained onsite work experience and training in heritage reconstruction, where she learned from a UNESCO senior site engineer.

Participating in on-the-job training at UNESCO project sites is one of the most beautiful and important opportunities in my career, an opportunity where I did not only learn about my possible future career, but got to know myself and my abilities’, says Amna.

TVET Education is a useful tool in encouraging more women to be economically and socially empowered, enhancing their role in national development.

Through this project women like Shaimaa Atheer Hamid are receiving on-the-job training for skills such as the repair of traditional alabaster and electrical wiring installation, trades that women are traditionally underrepresented.



Investing in youth by integrating vocational training and apprenticeship opportunities

Baghdad, 17 May 2021 - As an integral component of its area-based urban recovery programme in Mosul, Heet and Yathrib funded by the European Union, UN-Habitat has enrolled 400 unemployed youth in a set of hands-on vocational training courses designed in partnership with the Vocational Training Centres (VTCs) and Rebuild Iraq Recruitment Program (RIRP). Expert trainees delivered courses in concrete formworks, electrical works, sanitary and plumbing works, plastering, painting, tiling, welding, making of doors and windows, installation of false ceiling, making and installation of window blinds, operating

computer controlled metal cutting machines, installation of solar panels and solar water heaters.

In a related activity, UN-Habitat is delivering vocational training for 100 unemployed returnees in Sinjar in partnership with a Japanese NGO, Peace Winds Japan (PWJ) for the project titled “Support to Reconstruction and Peacebuilding of Liberated Cities in Iraq – Phase III” funded by the Government of Japan. Twenty-five youth completed the first cycle of the training courses (15 days) offered to aspiring builders and electricians.



29 school principals from Ninewa trained on PVE-E

Baghdad, 23 May 2021 - With support from UNESCO, the Ministry of Education trained 29 School Principals (14 females) on the content of Prevention of Violence Extremism through Education (PVE-E).

The workshop was led by UNESCO-trained master trainers from the General Directorate of Education of Ninewa. The 2 days training workshop equipped the school administrators and principals with knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for them to support

for teachers to implement play-based and other related activities in their classrooms to cultivate resilience

against the drivers of violent extremism and build sustainable peace in their communities.



UNESCO launches a special project to support vocational education in Karbala



Karbala, 31 May 2021 - UNESCO Iraq delegation visited Karbala, where they met with the governor and the United Nations Development Programme Office in the governorate. The purpose of the visit was to launch a

special project to support vocational education in the governorate and link education curriculum with the needs of the labor market, focusing on supporting the tourism sector in line with local government priorities in the

governorate.

The project will continue for three years with the support of the European Union and will work on:

- Building the capacity of the Ministry of Education and vocational schools staff in quality assurance.
- Establishment of a sectoral council for hospitality and tourism sector in the governorate to improve links with educational and vocational institutes.
- Conducting a labour market survey for skills needs for the private sector.
- Writing new competency-based curriculum for the hospitality sector.
- Building teacher s' abilities to enable them to use new curriculum.
- Developing practical training facilities at vocational school.
- Establish a professional development center in school to help graduates get jobs.

21 refugees receive UNESCO Qualification Passport (UQP) which will enable them to access equitable formal higher education

Baghdad, 3 June 2021 - The Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MoHESR) with support from UNESCO Regional Bureau for Education for Arab States in Beirut and UNESCO Iraq Office held the “Higher Education in Iraq: Opportunities for Partnerships” conference in Baghdad, Iraq.

H.E. Dr. Nabil Kadhim, Minister for MoHESR and UNESCO Representative to UNESCO Iraq Mr. Paolo Fontani opened the conference in the presence of representatives from the MoHESR, UNHCR Representative to Iraq, Universities, and international and bilateral development partners, and experts in higher education that deliberated on the strategic directions and innovations in higher education in Iraq and opportunities for partnerships and international cooperation in higher education Iraq.

During the Conference, the MoHESR organized a ceremony to award the UNESCO Qualifications Passport



(UQP) to Syrian refugee candidates who successfully established their Secondary school graduation.

The pilot of the UQP in Iraq—the first pilot in the Middle East region—represents an innovative response to the challenges that refugees and asylum seekers face when trying to access inclusive and equitable formal higher education in their country or asylum. Specifically: the challenge of certifying and equalizing secondary school certificates that may have been

lost during flight.

Higher education accords young refugees the tools to pursue sustainable futures, to the benefit of host communities, students, and institutions. The UQP opens those doors.

Over a few short months, the MoHESR, UNESCO, UNHCR, and NOKUT organization worked in close collaboration to identify refugee students through existing community-based structures, conduct UQP interviews by credential evaluators, and finalize the selection process. A significant amount of work, with rich rewards.

Together with UNESCO, UNHCR looks forward to further collaboration with the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research and with universities interested in providing scholarships to refugee students in Iraq and supporting their growth.

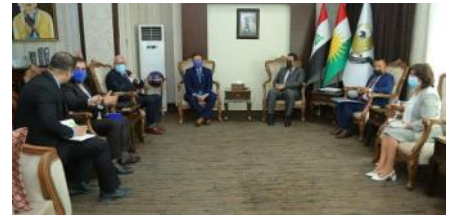


KR Ministry of Education receives UNESCO delegation

Erbil, 3 June 2021 - In the presence of General Director of Secondary and Vocational Education, KRG Education Minister, Alan Hama Saeed, received a UNESCO delegation headed by Head of Education Unit, Santush Katri.

In a meeting, bilateral cooperation and coordination as well as development of

secondary and vocational education in Kurdistan Region were discussed. On his part, the minister expressed his ministry's support to UNESCO for further enhancing relations and providing services in all areas particularly in education sector.



UNESCO, with the generous EU support, distribute textbooks in Barkhudan secondary school in Arbad camp in Sulaymaniyah

Sulaymaniyah, 7 June 2021 - UNESCO, with the generous support of the European Union, distribute textbooks in Barkhudan secondary school in Arbad camp in Sulaymaniyah, KRI, to better prepare for their final examinations for the current academic year. The "Access to inclusive quality primary and secondary education for IDPs, returnees, remainees and refugees in crisis affected areas in Iraq" project is funded by the EU and implemented by UNESCO.



UNESCO strengthens MoE Iraq's capacities in online distance learning to respond to COVID-19

Baghdad, 13 June 2021 - The closure of schools and disruption to learning brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic have highlighted the need to utilize online and distance modes of learning to promote learning continuity. Distance learning, known synonymously as online learning or e-learning, serves as a critical tool in the response to the interruption of educational service provision. Providing training in distance learning methodologies also recognises the increasing role that technology can and will play in improving quality and access to education. To facilitate this new mode of learning, teachers need to be equipped with the appropriate skills and knowledge and supported to adapt to new learning settings.

To equip the teachers with ICT and online distance learning competencies, UNESCO, with funding from the European Union, and with technical support from the Regional Bureau for Education for Arab States in Beirut has developed training materials and trained 30 Master Trainers from the Ministry of Education and General Directorates of Education in Rasafa 3, Basra, Qadissiyah and Thi Qar on ICT based Online Distance Learning.

Following this workshop, UNICEF will cascade the training through the Master Trainers to 4,000 teachers in the 4 target governorates (Rasafa 3,

Basra, Qadissiyah and Thi Qar).

The distance learning training responds to the direct request from HE the Minister of Education for training on distance learning for teachers in Iraq, and builds on materials developed to support COVID-19 regional responses by the UNESCO Regional Bureau for Education in the Arab States.

This initiative is part of the EU funded "System building and capacity strengthening for the Ministry of Education and its Directorates of Education" project. The project forms part of UNESCO and UNICEF's wider effort to support systems building and capacity strengthening for the Ministry of Education and its governorate-level Directorates of Education, reinforcing the joint commitment of EU, UNESCO and UNICEF to supporting improved learning outcomes and equitable and

inclusive education for all girls and boys in Iraq.

The training, delivered virtually over two weeks to the cohort of Master Trainers, comprised of 5 core Modules: (i) Teaching online (ii) The essentials of remote learning (iii) Blended learning and flipped instruction, (iv) Assessment in online distance education and (v) Content creation, with a sixth Module introduced 'Kodrat'; the UNESCO online platform serving as a resource for distance learning for teachers, in Arabic, launched in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Subsequently trainers received additional sessions on how to deliver interactive and engaging training for teachers online, learning how to model learner-centred best practices.

The group of Master Trainers welcomed the interactive online training opportunity; speaking at the conclusion of the final training session, Dr. Shroq Bashar, Deputy Director General at the General Directorate of Preparation, Training and Educational Development commented "E-learning and training is one of the most important forms of education at the present time as it has opened local and international educational outlets, as well as saving time, effort and cost through the use of interactive programs and digital content that was absent from the educational institution in Iraq".



UNESCO has completed the training of Master Trainers from the Ministry of Education and the General Directorate of Education at Rasafa 3 on the Education Management Information System



Baghdad, 17 June 2021 - As part of the EU-funded “Education Management Information System for Quality Education in Iraq”, UNESCO has developed a purpose-built EMIS for Iraq. In partnership with UNICEF, the EMIS will be rolled out across 9 General Directorates of Education (GDoE) during 2021 - 2023.

The EMIS collects, organizes and stores education data, processes, analyses, and generates reports and educational indicators and makes it easily accessible to stakeholders at all levels of the sector, from Ministry-level planning experts, to directorates, to teachers and school administrators. The EMIS also serves as a daily operations tool for schools to manage data related to students, teachers, employees, facilities, and assets in real time. Such valuable information will facilitate strategic decision-making, policy formulation and budgeting, and routine management at the district and school levels, helping educational planners at the ministry, directorates, and schools to better manage education service delivery and improve the quality of learning in Iraq.

A functional EMIS system requires the

capacity to manage and use its capabilities and robust mechanisms to support the end-users. As part of the EMIS development process, a core Team of Master Trainers from the MoE and Rasaf 3 have received a 3 week training on the maintenance and day-to-day use of the system, to respond to different needs and best practices. These Master Trainers will lead the EMIS trainings at the level of schools that will start on 20 June 2021. In addition, to provide support to the end-users (schools) an EMIS Call Center has been established at the MoE and 3 support analysts from the call center are trained to provide remote support to school-level users.

Following this training, the Master Trainers with UNESCO and UNICEF support will conduct school level trainings in the schools across GDoE at Rasafa 3. The GDoE at Rasafa 3 and all schools have been equipped with laptops provided through the project.

The commencement of this training marks a critical milestone as it is a key step to ensuring Iraqi ownership and sustainability of the EMIS, empowering stakeholders to use and maintain the system according to their needs and

preparing Ministry users for the eventual technology transfer.

Speaking at the opening of the training workshop, the Chief of Education for UNESCO, Mr. Santosh Khatri said “The availability of quality, relevant education data is pre-requisite for government’s ability to improve education through evidence-based policy making at the central and governorate administration level, and to empower the teachers and administrators at school level to make informed decisions quickly and effectively.”

Attending the training, the Director General for Educational Planning (Ministry of Education), Mr. Safaa Younis, said “The Education management information system will provide data and information to decision makers and enable them to analyze, draw conclusions and identify strengths and weaknesses in the educational system, in order to correct the path and control remotely”.

Appreciating the ongoing efforts in strengthening of Iraq’s education systems, Head of Cooperation of European Union Delegation to Iraq, Ms. Barbara Egger said “The new Education Management Information System will set the foundation for an improved quality of education. The availability of up to date and accurate data for decision makers and school administrators will improve the planning, monitoring and quality delivery of the learning process. We appreciate the commitment from Ministry of Education in adopting the system and equally the dedication from the trainees during the last couple of weeks. We will continue to work together with Ministry of Education and our partners at UNESCO and UNICEF to support the implementation and the roll-out of the system across the country”.

UNESCO and Ministry of Education train Master Trainers from Al Anbar and Ninewa on PVE-E

Baghdad, 24 June 2021 - UNESCO trained 51 Master Trainers (21 female) from Al Anbar and Ninewa Governorates on Preventing Violent Extremism through Education (PVE-E). The weeklong training workshop organized together with the Ministry of Education cultivated trainers’ skills

necessary to help teachers, parents, principals, and other administrators implement the proposed play-based activities to foster resilience against the drivers of violent extremism in their homes, classrooms, school environments and the wider community.



UNESCO celebrates the inauguration of four new training facilities at the Vocational Training Center in Mosul



Mosul, 28 June 2021 - Within the "Revival Mosul and Basra Old Cities" project, funded by the European Union, and in the presence of the Governor of Nineveh, Mr. Najm al-Jubouri, the Mayor of Mosul, Zouhair Al Araj, Officer-in-Charge and Head of Culture at the UNESCO Office in Iraq, Mr. Junaid Sorosh-Wali, Consul General of the Republic of Korea, Mr. Choi Kwang Jin, and Director of the Department of Labor and Vocational Training, Ms. Mithaq Talib, UNESCO celebrates the inauguration of new training facilities at the Vocational Training Center in Mosul.

In his opening remarks, Mr. Najm al-Jubouri, Governor of Nineveh, welcomed the participants at the Department of Labour and Vocational Training in Mosul, and said "On this occasion, we thank UNESCO and the European Union, which funded these training workshops, and we hope in the future that new areas will be opened in addition to the field of construction, which is now being focused on in order to involve young people in the reconstruction process, as well as targeting the neediest youth who will engage in the fields of work needed by the labour market".

Ms. Barbara Egger, Head of Cooperation for the European Union in Iraq confirmed that "the European Union will continue support Mosul stabilization and reconstruction process. However, we believe that the recovery process should be led and implemented by the Mosulawi themselves. Mosul youth should be empowered to lead the economic and social reforms in the governorate. The EU supports several initiatives in Mosul for this specific purpose. I am

pleased to see the expansion of this vocational centre. It is particularly important to provide specialized training in construction techniques to young Mouslawis to rebuild their city. I am equally delighted to see young Mouslawis enrolled in the training courses and I am looking forward to these Mouslawis graduate and join the job market."

In his welcoming remarks Mr. Sorosh-Wali said, "I am delighted to see more than 200, including 25 female, TVET trainees attending the UNESCO-run construction courses here to gain the skills that will enable them to access the labour market and find jobs. I am also happy to see another 115 trainees (8 female) attending courses at Nineveh Vocational School at the same time, also supported by UNESCO. As UNESCO, we believe that today, more than ever, young men and women are change makers, building a new reality for themselves and their communities. Young people around the world are driving social change and innovation, respecting their human rights and fundamental freedoms, and looking for new opportunities to learn and work together for a better future."

He added, "I am pleased to be here at the Vocational Training Center in Mosul today and to see the progress of the UNESCO project especially by increasing the center's capacity to host 100 additional new trainees by rebuilding 4 training rooms. I am also interested in hearing the opinions of the trainees who will share their success stories." And plans for them after they graduate!"

Through the project, UNESCO is working to provide vocational training in construction to 1,550 vulnerable

youth trainees in Mosul and Basra, providing real opportunities for the social and economic development of the community. Increasing access to and achievement of TVET is fundamental to ensuring more equitable access to better living conditions, increasingly specialized and better-paid jobs, a more sustainable environment as well as more sustainable economic and social development.

In an interview with Mr. Bilal Al-Hamaydah, the Project Officer, he said, "TVET is one of UNESCO's priorities in Iraq. As the lead agency for the reform of the TVET sector in Iraq, UNESCO continues to support the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, the Ministry of Education and Social Affairs and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor in Iraq. Implementation of Sustainable Development Goals 4, 8 and 11, which emphasize an increase in the number of young people with relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship".

He emphasized that the project, generously funded by the European Union, aims to provide income generation opportunities for young job-seekers and returnees in the Old City of Mosul through the reconstruction and rehabilitation of the historic urban landscape. The added value of the project is the combination of intensive employment schemes, restoration, rehabilitation and reconstruction of demolished and damaged homes and buildings in the old town. So far, 244 VTC graduates have joined the worksites of 44 heritage houses under reconstruction in the Old City of Mosul. Ms. Mithaq Taleb, Director of the Department of Labor and Vocational Training in Nineveh Governorate, said, "I really hope that this project will enhance local ownership and self-reliance and provide direct alternatives to young people, making them less vulnerable to extremism. The employment created through reconstruction and urban renewal processes will benefit the local economy, while promoting resilience, cultural identity and social cohesion. "The targeted activities of the project, with a focus on engaging young men and women, will contribute positively to changing people's lives through medium and long-term job opportunities with a time period that exceeds the immediate time frame of the proposed project," she added.

Government, UN launch 2030 National Youth Vision, reiterate commitment to Youth Development and Empowerment

Baghdad, 10 May 2021 - The Ministry of Youth and Sports in the Federal Government launched the 2030 National Youth Vision. The Vision was put in place in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture and Youth in the Kurdistan Regional Government, with technical support from UNFPA and UNICEF, and funding from Sweden, through the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida).

The National Youth Vision is a youth-oriented, human rights-based and multi-sectoral roadmap for empowering young people in Iraq and creating opportunities for them, considering the demographic dividend with 20% of the population being aged from 15 to 24 and 41% aged from 10 to 30 years.

The National Youth Vision is the outcome of countrywide discussions between the relevant ministries, stakeholders, and young people. It will guide sectoral strategies on the comprehensive development of youth, creating opportunities for elevating their health, psychological, social,

cultural and economic status and enabling young people to be included in decision-making socially, economically and politically.

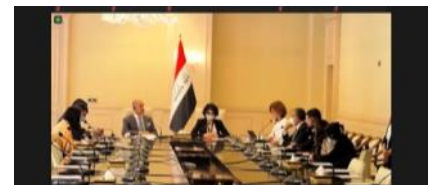
Speaking at the launch, the Minister of Youth and Sports, Dr Adnan Al-Darjal, said: “The vision, with its fourteen thematic areas, represents the concerns, problems, and aspirations of young people revealed through the National Youth Survey. The vision was based on real and factual data that tens of researchers and experts identified in all governorates.”

“Any youth project that does not include youth in its core will not have the desired outcome because young people are the main component of every youth-based businesses and projects. We plan to present the vision to the Council of Ministers soon as it is a national document. We urge partners in the Government to adopt the policies governed by the vision and consider allocating fiscal budgets for them a necessity,” he added.

For her part, UNFPA representative, Dr Rita Columbia, emphasised: “The

2030 National Youth Vision is an important document as it will facilitate comprehensive youth development in Iraq, and ensure that the country benefits from its demographic dividend. The Vision particularly highlights a focus on girls and young women who, if and when supported, can play a significant role in Iraq’s sustainable development. I thank both ministries for endorsing a Youth Vision that, with proper implementation, can harness the huge potential of youth in Iraq and contribute to the peace and prosperity of the country”.

UNICEF Deputy Representative, Dr Paula Bulancea, said: “Young people in Iraq are diverse, creative, and dynamic. When provided with the support and resources that they need, they can support their communities. Today, with



Asiacell and UNDP Iraq join efforts to support youth employment and entrepreneurs

Sulaymaniyah, 30 May 2021 – Following its commitment to boosting youth employment and strengthening Iraq’s Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), Asiacell today signed a two-year Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Iraq.

The MoU commits the leading telecommunications company and the UNDP Iraq to work together on several initiatives, including supporting young entrepreneurs and start-ups in developing innovative solutions to local challenges alongside UNDP Iraq’s Accelerator Labs; Also supporting an online platform designed to connect entrepreneurs with potential investors; and promoting opportunities for long-term, sustainable youth employment. Youth-led efforts tackling the COVID-19 pandemic will also be covered under the MoU, with a particular focus on the awareness-raising platform Corona in Iraq (<https://stayhome.iq/>).

“Through their passion, creativity, innovation and entrepreneurial spirit, young Iraqis today are the agents of change and have the potential to build

a resilient and inclusive Iraq – particularly as the country moves on from multiple crises, including the ISIL conflict, the economic difficulties due to declining oil prices, and the COVID-19 pandemic. Today we are proud to partner with Asiacell to nurture young talent, but also help secure the future of Iraqi youth by providing long-term employment training and support,” says Resident Representative of UNDP Iraq, Zena Ali Ahmad.

“Partnering with the UNDP is a valuable addition to our continuous programmes, which will yield a positive impact on the Iraqi youth. The many challenges entrepreneurs face does not end with the successful founding of a company around a product or a service in Iraq. The Iraqi unfertile technology business ecosystem coupled with the pandemic has made the transition from science to sales even more complex for start-up companies that launched before March 2020, as markets, funding sources, and priorities have shifted. We are full of confidence that this new set of initiatives we are working on right now will have an immeasurable positive effect on the Iraqi economy.”

says Managing Director & Chief Executive Officer of Asiacell, Amer Al-Sunna.

The MoU was developed based on the recommendation of the solid study of Iraq’s economic recovery from COVID-19 to expand social security coverage for vulnerable groups, increase revenue generation from partners like Asiacell to fund key development programmes, and allocate more resources to develop the private sector.



UNESCO inaugurates the CreativeSpace on the occasion of the NinevArt programme launch in Mosul

Mosul, 25 June 2021 - UNESCO was delighted to inaugurate the CreativeSpace on the occasion of the NinevArt programme launch in partnership with The Station in Mosul. The CreativeSpace will serve as a hub for Moslawi young artists to express themselves creatively, exhibit and sell their work, organize cultural events, met with creative entrepreneurs, artists and musicians, collaborate, exchange, share, network, develop their capacity, and hence, improve accessibility to arts and contribute to

appreciation of Mosul's cultural diversity and creativity among the wider audience and to revive the cultural life in Mosul.

Mr. Junaid Soroush, Head of the Cultural Program at the UNESCO in Iraq, giving his words: "The recent events in Mosul reduced the opportunities for young people to express their art, creativity and talents, to support youth, culture and heritage, and to revive artistic and cultural events in Mosul. An important part of Mosul's responsibility was to support



the station in building this creative and artistic edifice in Mosul, through the UNESCO program Revitalization of Old Mosul."

Timeline

UN Iraq Special Representative Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert sends warmest wishes to Iraqis on Eid-ul-Fitr

Baghdad, 12 May 2021 - Eid-ul-Fitr is a joyous occasion marking the end of the holy month of Ramadan. This year, public celebrations and outings will once again be subdued due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the curfews imposed in the country.

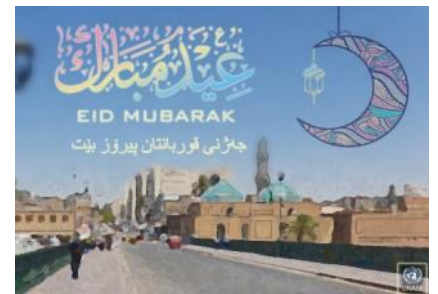
Nevertheless, despite these difficult circumstances, I am hopeful that the blessings of Eid-ul-Fitr will bring renewed optimism for better days

ahead.

In Iraq, and globally, we are in the midst of an important COVID-19 vaccination drive. We will only be safe once everyone is safe.

As you celebrate this blessed occasion within the confines of your homes, I convey my best wishes to you and your loved ones.

Eid Mubarak.



Revive the Spirit of Mosul exhibition at the Biennale Architettura 2021



Venice, Italy, 23 May 2021 - UNESCO, the Government of Iraq and the Ministry of Culture and Youth of United Arab Emirates, present an exhibition on the ongoing project, Revive the Spirit of Mosul, to restore the ancient Iraqi city's multicultural landmarks and way of life as a collateral event (side event) at the 17th International Architecture Exhibition, the Venice Biennale, which is open to the public from 22 May to 21 November 2021.

Her Excellency Noura Al Kaabi, Minister of Culture and Youth of the United Arab Emirates, and Audrey

Azoulay, Director-General of UNESCO, together with Dr. Saad Kambash, the President of Sunni Endowment of Iraq opened the exhibition on 21 May 2021.

Revive the spirit of Mosul exhibition presents the ancient city's millennial tradition of peaceful co-existence and casts light on the resilience of diverse communities in the face of traumatic events. In doing so the exhibition reflects on the question posed by the 17th Biennial of Architecture, curated by Hashim Sarkis: How Will We Live Together? It showcases, chronologically, the narratives of the city's recent history and projections for the future in four rooms dedicated to the themes of destruction, liberation, action and future, which features actions taken by UNESCO, notably the reconstruction of the Al-Nouri Mosque complex. The exhibition is curated and designed by 2050+ and produced and installed by ALTOFRAGILE.

The reconstruction of the Al-Nouri Complex, an emblematic component of the Revive the Spirit of Mosul initiative, was the object of an architectural competition whose winning design and



runner-ups were announced on 15 April at the National Museum in Baghdad.

In February 2018, the Director-General of UNESCO, Audrey Azoulay, launched "Revive the Spirit of Mosul," one of the Organization's largest operations in recent years. Central to this initiative is the project to rebuild Mosul's historical landmarks. Funded by the United Arab Emirates, the \$50 million project also aims to help revive the city's cultural life and diversity. In synergy with this large-scale project, UNESCO is also rehabilitating a number of historic houses in the Old City of Mosul with the support of the European Union.