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In his address to the 9th Sulaimani Forum, Dr. Mohamed Al Hassan urges Iraqis to preserve unity



Sulaymaniyah, 16 April 2025 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq

and Head of UNAMI, Dr. Mohamed Al Hassan, addresses today the 9th Sulaimani Forum in the city of

Sulaymaniyah, Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

“Our message to you in Iraq is to preserve national unity, distance yourselves from differences, division and discord and gather around your sincere leaders who are seeking to transfer this country to a new safe stage filled with stability, hope, and existence for all. We need to reject exclusionary sectarian projects, some of which are internal and some may be external and respect the components, all components, which reflect the rich, diverse and ancient history of this country and to move forward steadily towards the future to a country of institutions, law, competencies and rule of law where there is no fear or infringement on the rights and dignity of any Iraqi citizen.”

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Recognition of Yazidi Land Ownership in Sinjar a historic achievement underscoring UN and Iraqi joint efforts

Sinjar, 14 April 2025 - In a landmark ceremony held at the Sinjar Municipal Directorate, the Governorate of Ninewa, Municipality of Sinjar, Real Estate Registration Department authorities launched the distribution of 1,338 ownership letters and issued approximately 100 title deeds to Yazidi residents in Dugrey and Tel Uzair Mujama'at. The Yazidis receiving these title deeds are being officially recognized as landowners for the first time in generations.

This unprecedented, large-scale issuance of title deeds is a diligent response to the implementation of Resolution No. 227, approved by the Iraqi Council of Ministers in March 2025. Without the regulation, beneficiaries were faced with a fee of 20,000 Iraqi Dinars per square meter to obtain their title deeds, amounting to approximately USD 6,000 per household.

UN-Habitat has been actively advocating for the full waiver of



payment for beneficiaries, aligning with the Prime Minister's intention to avoid placing any financial burden on them. The recently announced Council of Ministers' Resolution is a breakthrough, granting full waiver of all payments for title deeds in Yazidi communities in Sinjar and Ba'aj, and establishing a 60-day timeline for immediate implementation.

Dr. Mohamed Al Hassan, the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, commended the accomplishment:

“The historic recognition of Yazidi land ownership in Sinjar marks a pivotal moment in our joint efforts towards justice and equality, and is proof of the Government of Iraq's commitment to the Yazidi community. This achievement is a tangible and solid example on advancing Durable Solutions, restoring dignity, identity, and hope to a community that has endured unimaginable hardships.”

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In this edition ...

United Nations Resident Coordinator for Iraq Isaczai attends the marking of the National Tolerance Day

Baghdad, 06 March 2025 - "Iraq's rich diversity is not just a legacy of its past but a cornerstone of its future, built on resilience, reconciliation, and coexistence. Tolerance and equality are not only moral imperatives but essential foundations for social cohesion and sustainable development," said the UN Resident Coordinator for Iraq, Ghulam Isaczai, while addressing the National Tolerance Day event in Baghdad, hosted by Iraq's National Security Advisor. He reaffirmed the UN's commitment to supporting these values in Iraq.

More on page 4.

Towards a more inclusive, stronger society, UN highlights the role of women in Iraq of the future

Baghdad, 15 March 2025 - The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, Mr. Claudio Cordone, attended the "Iraqi Women and Civil Society Forum: Leadership and Influence: A Future towards Sustainability and Innovation" forum in Baghdad today.

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UNESCO discusses the establishment of a civil alliance for social media in Iraq

Baghdad, 13 March 2025 - As part of the Social Media for Peace project, funded by the European Union, the UNESCO Iraq Office organized a specialized workshop titled "Establishing a Civil Coalition for Social Media in Iraq." The event brought together representatives from civil society organizations, media institutions, and academic circles across Iraq to explore the formation of a structured alliance dedicated to promoting responsible digital media practices.

More on page 26.

New National Housing Policy to bridge Iraq's housing affordability gap with green and sustainable solutions

Baghdad, 27 February 2025 - The European Union remains committed to supporting Iraq in developing affordable, adequate, and sustainable housing solutions. As part of this commitment, the EU-funded Building Equitable and Inclusive Transformation (BEIT) project is playing a key role in advancing Iraq's National Housing Policy.

More on page 32.

Visit of Under-Secretary-General for Operational Support Khare to Iraq, 18-21 April 2025

Baghdad, 21 April 2025 - The Under-Secretary-General for Operational Support, Mr. Atul Khare, visited Iraq from 18 to 21 April 2025 in the context of the upcoming drawdown and transition of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), followed by a period of in-situ liquidation as mandated by Security Council Resolution 2732 (2024), to determine the nature and extent of Headquarters support to these processes.

More on page 81.

FAO showcases climate-smart solutions and local success stories at Baghdad's 16th Agricultural Week exhibition

Baghdad, 21 April 2025 - Under the patronage of H.E. the Prime Minister of the Republic of Iraq Mr. Mohammad Shiaa Al Sudani, represented by His Excellency the Minister of Agriculture, Dr. Abbas Jabr Al-Maliki, and in close partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) concluded its participation in the 16th Agricultural Week held at the Baghdad International Fair from 15 to 20 April 2025.

More on page 46.

Women leading the way in community policing

Baghdad, 05 March 2025 - Major Aseel Abd Alwhab, dressed in a navy-blue uniform adorned with a white aiguillette, salutes a colonel of the community policing (CP) force, in Baghdad, before stepping inside the office to begin her day.

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

In his address to the 9th Sulaimani Forum, Dr. Mohamed Al Hassan urges Iraqis to preserve unity

Sulaymaniyah, 16 April 2025 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of UNAMI, Dr. Mohamed Al Hassan, addresses today the 9th Sulaimani Forum in the city of Sulaymaniyah, Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

Here is the full text of his speech:

“Excellency Prime Minister Mohamed Shia Al-Sudani

Excellency President of the Kurdistan Region Nechirvan Barzani
Excellency Dr. Barham Salih
Chairman of the Board of Directors of the University

Mr. Ammar Al-Hakim,

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen

Dear brother Bafel Talabani

Greetings,

I join you in (Sulaymaniyah Forum) on behalf of the United Nations Secretary-General, who thanks you for this invitation wishing you a fruitful, constructive, and in-depth discussions and dialogue on the situation in the Middle East and on Iraq present and future.

I would like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation to the sponsors and local partners for Sulaymaniyah Forum, in particular, His Excellency Dr. Barham Salih as well as Dr. Bilal, for facilitations that shall contribute to and facilitate participation in the Forum in the arms of this beautiful, historical and hospitable city: Sulaymaniyah. I would like here to express my admiration of the quote by Mr. Hoshiyar Zebari that this forum is the Davos of the Middle East.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In the Middle East, we have a recurring habit of beginning speeches by declaring that the times we live in are unprecedented, but the past few years were difficult in the Middle East region and on the people of the whole region in all sense of the word unfortunately. This leads us to ask three questions: First: Why is that? Second: Is there a peculiarity about the Middle East that makes it different from other parts of the world? And the most important and significant question: is there a chance to change such a reality towards a secure and stable Middle East? We are not in the right time or place to answer these questions, despite their importance.



I will say in English what I want to mention here:

(The people of the Middle East are tired of conflicts, the countries and people of the Middle East are tired of the conflicts and the endless cycle of violence, the likes of which are rarely found in our contemporary history. Is it not time for the people of the Middle East region to enjoy security, peace, and stability like other people in the world?).

Here we are not referring to the Palestinian cause only, but to more than four centuries of foreign occupation, external interference and injustice that exhausted people and created a reality that made people unfortunately live with such bad conditions and even to accept them. They lost hope in emerging from this whirlwind. A few years ago, we watched our children, the children of Iraq and Gaza killed in view of everyone on TV screens and via social media platforms as we have seen our women and daughters from certain components, especially Yazidis, sold as commodities at the hands of extremist gangs. This is not acceptable; all of this is a source of frustration and kills the hope and ambitions of nations in the Middle East region. It is time for the concerted efforts of the sincere to create a new reality filled with hope, a future that unleashes the enormous capabilities, and there are enormous capabilities within the people of the Middle East, especially in Iraq: the beacon of human civilization.

Iraq, like other countries in the Middle East, has had its share of crises and conflicts because of internal and external projects.

Our message to you in Iraq is to

preserve national unity, distance yourselves from differences, division and discord and gather around your sincere leaders who are seeking to transfer this country to a new safe stage filled with stability, hope, and existence for all. We need to reject exclusionary sectarian projects, some of which are internal and some may be external and respect the components, all components, which reflect the rich, diverse and ancient history of this country and to move forward steadily towards the future to a country of institutions, law, competencies and rule of law where there is no fear or infringement on the rights and dignity of any Iraqi citizen.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Change is the norm of the universe, and Iraq, throughout history, has witnessed several transformations and changes, but with your hands you can make these changes positive and limit their negative effects on Iraq and its people.

Today the Prime Minister spoke frankly that Iraq is embarking on bold reforms. This is an important point for which I applaud you, your excellency. The Prime Minister also indicated the need to put forward the national priorities.

I have no doubt that Iraq is before a great opportunity to restore its historic role in the Middle East and there is nothing to stop that. Iraq is unique with its components, location, resources, ambitions of its leaders and with its people. It is time for Iraq to set national lines for a future that serves Iraqis in the first place and keeps this country away from regional and international tensions. Such a national project has started to take shape, and we hope that it will continue. Iraq today is different from Iraq years ago. Therefore, there is a need to preserve

In his address to the 9th Sulaimani Forum ... (continued)



these gains. Many issues are at stake, and countries are exposed to challenges, but with the abilities of its leaders, with solidarity between the leadership and people these matters, and these challenges can be firmly faced. I point out that we cannot risk all these gains after all the sacrifices of the Iraqi people. The UN was part of this path and part of those sacrifices. I would like to proudly note that UNAMI's mission will come to an end this year. Iraq has moved to a phase where it does not require such a mission but needs services by specialized agencies. We are partners with the Iraqi government in that. This

is a point that I would like to fully emphasize. Although we are concluding our political mission here in Iraq, Iraq's march continues and we are confident that Iraqis, all Iraqis, will continue to walk on the path of building peace and sustainable development and consolidate the pillars of the state of law to serve Iraq and Iraqi people first and foremost.

We should not forget that Iraq is heading towards a constitutional entitlement this year, which is the elections scheduled for next November, an entitlement that we are all working to make successful and to come out in the best possible and successful way.

Iraq's success in this entitlement is important to consolidate the process of development and reform.

In conclusion, would like to stress that Iraq not only needs the stability in the region, but the stability of the region needs an effective, reconciled, open and solid Iraq to paly its natural role in establishing a new regional order based on cooperation, development, good neighborliness, security and stability for all.

Please allow me before I conclude to mention that I have received this book from my friend and brother, Cardinal Louise Raphael Sacco, and as I browsed through, I found a reference that says "Today we have no future unless we live together in harmony and work as partners in humanity and in the country to find sustainable solutions through dialogue and understanding. We must boldly and openly affirm what we have in common and acknowledge our differences on the basis that God created us differently to love and cooperate". Before I conclude, I would like to pay sincere tribute to a leader who is not among us today and for whom I have great respect, leader Massoud Barzani. Thank you"

Social Cohesion

United Nations Resident Coordinator for Iraq Isaczai attends the marking of the National Tolerance Day

Baghdad, 06 March 2025 - "Iraq's rich diversity is not just a legacy of its past but a cornerstone of its future, built on resilience, reconciliation, and coexistence. Tolerance and equality are not only moral imperatives but essential foundations for social cohesion and sustainable development," said the UN Resident Coordinator for Iraq, Ghulam Isaczai, while addressing the National Tolerance Day event in Baghdad, hosted by Iraq's National Security Advisor. He reaffirmed the UN's commitment to supporting these values in Iraq.

Here is the full text of his speech:

"Your Excellencies,
National Security Advisor Mr. Qasim al-Araji,
Human Rights Affairs Advisor Dr. Zidane Khalaf,
Distinguished guests,
Good morning, and may the peace, mercy, and blessings of God be upon you.

It is an honor to represent the United Nations today on behalf of Dr.



Mohammed Al-Hassan, who had wished to be here but is unfortunately out of the country. It is also a great privilege for me to stand before this esteemed gathering; leaders from diverse backgrounds who embody Iraq's rich and vibrant social fabric. I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to His Excellency Mr. Qasim al-Araji for hosting this important event, which

reaffirms our shared commitment to tolerance, coexistence, and unity.

Iraq is the land of civilizations, where religions, traditions, and cultures have coexisted side by side for centuries. This diversity is not merely a reflection of Iraq's past but a fundamental pillar of its future. True strength lies not in uniformity but in the ability to embrace differences, foster dialogue, and build a

United Nations Resident Coordinator for Iraq attends the marking of the National Tolerance Day *(continued)*

society where everyone feels safe, valued, and respected.

The challenges Iraq has faced over the past decades have tested the bonds of unity among its people, but at the same time they demonstrated the resilience of its citizens. Iraqis have time and again proven their ability to overcome divisions, reject hatred, and choose the path of reconciliation. Today, more than ever, we must continue working toward a society built on respect, where diversity is a source of strength rather than a cause for division.

Tolerance is not merely the absence of conflict; it is a conscious choice to understand, accept, and coexist. It requires all of us - leaders, institutions,

and communities - to cultivate an environment based on mutual respect. It also means ensuring the rights of all citizens, regardless of their religion or ethnicity, and guaranteeing that no one is marginalized.

Tolerance and equality are not just moral imperatives; they are also essential drivers of sustainable development. Societies that embrace diversity and inclusivity build stronger economies, more resilient communities, and a foundation for lasting peace. Without tolerance, social cohesion cannot be achieved, and without equality, true development remains out of reach. Iraq's progress toward achieving the Sustainable Development

Goals is closely linked to its ability to ensure equal opportunities for all individuals, regardless of their backgrounds, so they can contribute to and benefit from the country's prosperity.

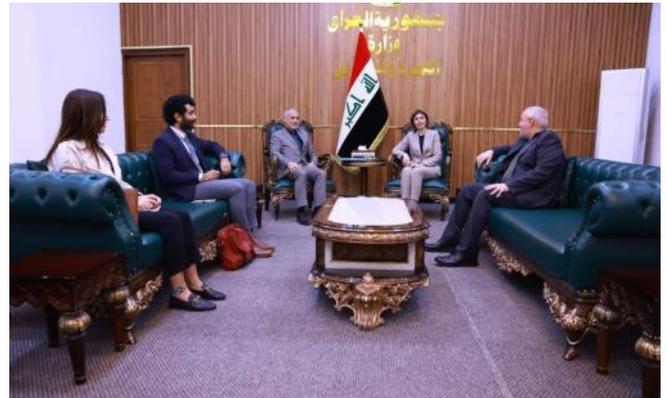
The United Nations reaffirms its unwavering commitment to supporting Iraq in fostering inclusive dialogue, strengthening social cohesion, and advancing policies that uphold the principles of equality and justice for all. We stand with you in building a peaceful and prosperous Iraq - one in which every individual has the opportunity to contribute to its progress.

Thank you."

Political Consultations



Baghdad, 03 March 2025 - The UN Resident Coordinator Mr. **Ghulam Isaczai** and UNICEF Iraq Representative, **Sandra Lattouf**, met with H.E. **Judge Faiq Zidan** to discuss the Supreme Judicial Council's support in addressing challenges related to the return and reintegration of returnees from Al-Hol and IDPs.



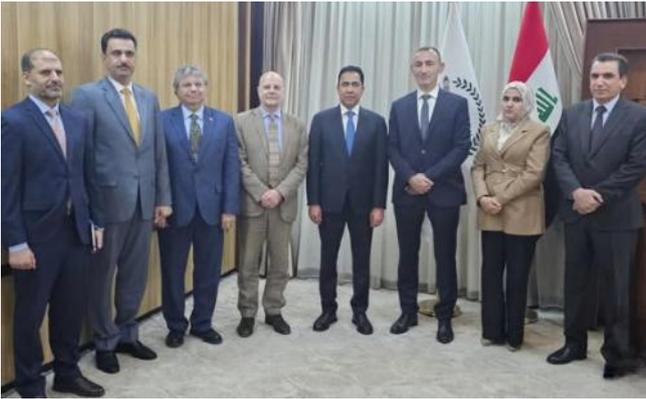
Baghdad, 3 March 2025 - The UN Resident Coordinator Mr. **Ghulam Isaczai** met with the Minister of Migration and Displaced, Ms. **Evan Faiq Jabro**, to discuss challenges in returning Iraqi nationals from Northeast Syria and ways to enhance their reintegration.



Baghdad, 06 March 2025 - Today, the United Nations Resident Coordinator for Iraq, Mr. **Ghulam Isaczai**, met with Iraq's National Security Advisor, Mr. **Qasim al-Araji**, at the UN Headquarters in Baghdad. The meeting, held on the sidelines of a session of the 'Steering Committee for the ONE UN Plan,' focused on enhancing cooperation between the UN and Iraq.



Baghdad, 17 March 2025 - A moment of silence and remembrance at a ceremony today in Baghdad hosted by the President of the Republic of Iraq, **Mr. Abdel Latif Jamal Rashid**, to commemorate the Halabja chemical weapons attack of 16 March 1988, and to pay respects to the victims. The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, **Mr. Claudio Cordone**, was among the diplomats who attended the ceremony at the Presidential palace in Baghdad. Photos courtesy of Presidency Media Office.



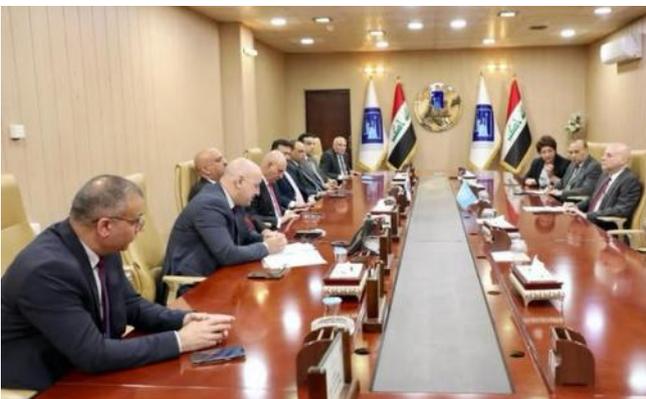
Mosul, 18 March 2025 – The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, **Mr. Claudio Cordone**: “Meeting in Mosul with Ninewah Governor **Abdul Qader Al-Dakhil**. Congratulated him on new projects recently announced in the Governorate including in Sinjar. Thanked him for his cooperation and support as UNAMI closes its office in Mosul while the UN will continue its work.”



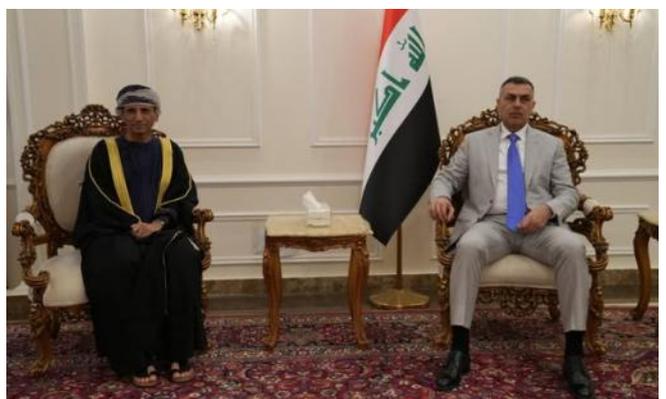
Baghdad, 25 March 2025 - The Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General and Head of UNAMI, **Dr. Mohamed Al Hassan**, held a telephone conversation with the Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, **Mr. Masrour Barzani**, to extend his congratulations on the occasion of Nowruz. During the call, they also discussed the situation in Iraq and the broader region.



Mosul, 18 March 2025 – The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, **Mr. Claudio Cordone**: "Visiting the nearly completed **al-Nouri Mosque** and its newly rebuilt Hadba minaret in Mosul. Great reconstruction project involving Iraq, the UAE and UNESCO, and the world answer to the cultural crimes of Daesh. Also visiting in Mosul **the Tahera Church**, restored after the destruction in the fight against Daesh. Another accomplishment of the cooperation between Iraq, the UAE and UNESCO Iraq."



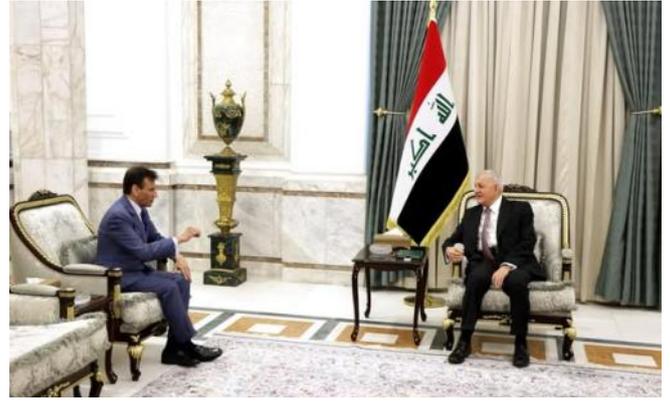
Baghdad, 08 April 2025 – The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, **Mr. Claudio Cordone**: “Meeting today with IHEC Chair Judge **Omar Mohammed** and the IHEC Board of Commissioners to discuss issues relating to the preparations for the 2025 Council of Representatives elections, due this November, and UNAMI’s support.”



Basra, 10 April 2025 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of UNAMI, **Dr. Mohamed Al Hassan** visited Basra Governorate today, where he met with Governor **Mr. Asaad Al Eidani**. They discussed the general situation in the Governorate and the work of UN agencies in supporting development efforts in the area.



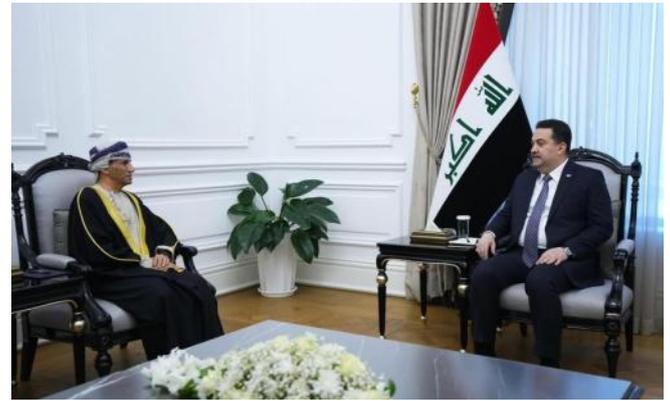
Baghdad, 10 April 2025 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of UNAMI **Dr. Mohamed Al Hassan** joined the Minister of Youth and Sports **Dr. Ahmed Al-Mubarqaa** at Baghdad's Shaab International Stadium tonight to watch the Al-Quwa Al-Jawiya and Al-Zawraa football teams face off in the Iraq Stars League.



Baghdad, 13 April 2025 - His Excellency the President of the Republic of Iraq, **Dr. Abdul Latif Jamal Rashid**, received today the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of UNAMI, **Dr. Mohamed Al Hassan**. They discussed the general situation in Iraq and the region as well as enhancing the ongoing cooperation between Iraq and the United Nations in various fields, particularly on sustainable development, in the interest of the Iraqi people and the prosperity of the country.
Photo courtesy of the Media Office of the Iraqi Presidency.



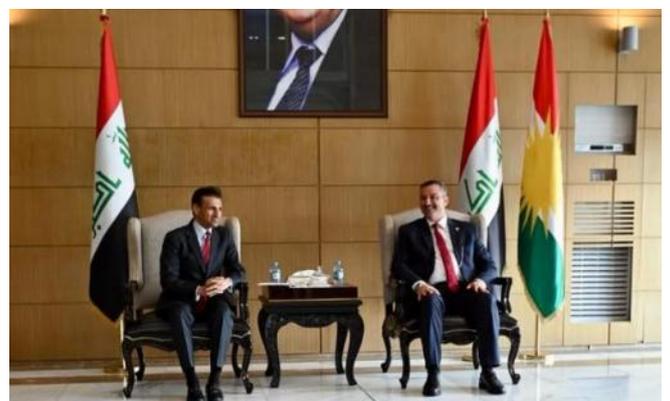
Baghdad, 13 April 2025 - Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of UNAMI, **Dr. Mohamed Al Hassan**, met today with athlete **Tiba Fahem**, one of the female boxing stars of Iraq. Representing Iraq in international competitions is an achievement for her and the country and is proof of what determined Iraqi women can achieve. We wish her more success and emphasize our support for Iraqi women in various fields, especially in sports.



Baghdad, 14 April 2025 - Prime Minister **Mohammed Shia al-Sudani** today received the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of UNAMI, **Dr. Mohamed Al Hassan**. The meeting discussed the general situation in Iraq and the region, emphasizing the role of the United Nations in supporting Iraq, continuing and enhancing cooperation in various fields in the post-UNAMI phase.



Sulaymaniyah, 15 April 2025 - The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), **Dr. Mohamed Al Hassan**, today visited former Iraqi President **Dr. Barham Salih** to offer his condolences on the passing of his brother. The visit was an opportunity to discuss the general situation in the country.



Sulaymaniyah, 15 April 2025 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), **Dr. Mohamed Al Hassan**, today met with the Governor of Sulaymaniyah, **Dr. Haval Abubaker**, upon his arrival in the governorate in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. During the meeting, the Governor provided an overview of the governorate's rich history and development achievements.



Sulaymaniyah, 16 April 2025 - First Lady Ms. Shanaz Ibrahim Ahmed received today in Sulaymaniyah the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of UNAMI, **Dr. Mohamed Al Hassan**.



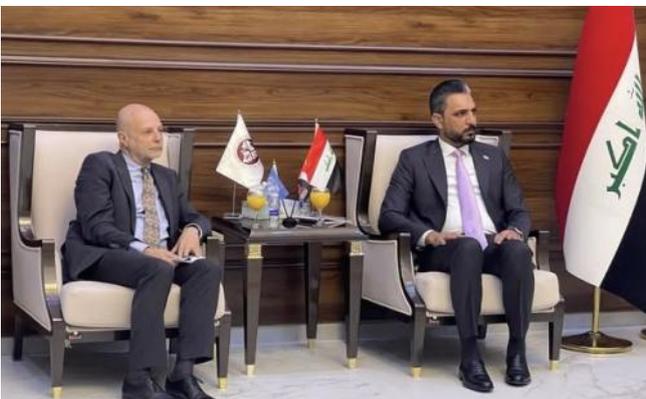
Sulaymaniyah, 16 April 2025 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of UNAMI, **Dr. Mohamed Al Hassan**, met today with **Mr. Hoshiyar Zebari**, member of the Political Bureau of the Kurdistan Democratic Party, on the sidelines of the Sulaymaniyah Forum 2025. They discussed the general situation in Iraq, including the Kurdistan Region.



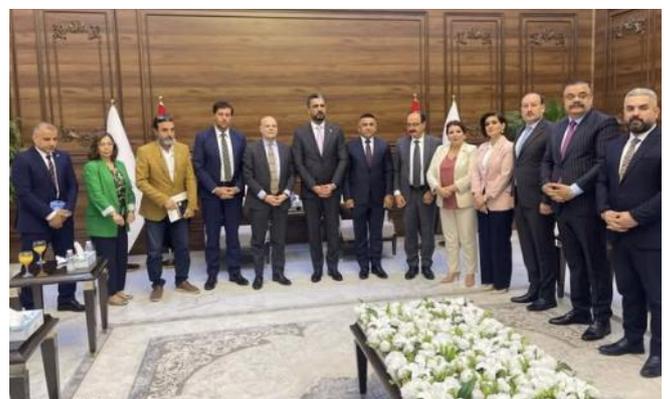
Sulaymaniyah, 17 April 2025 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of UNAMI, **Dr. Mohamed Al Hassan**, met today with **Dr. Comfort Ero**, President and CEO of Crisis Group. They discussed the general situation in the region and Iraq.



Sulaymaniyah, 19 April 2025 - **Bestoon Khalid**, Executive producer and host of Bestoon Talk at Rudaw Kurdish: "It was a great honor and pleasure to host H.E. **Dr. Mohamed Al Hassan** of UNIraq on #BestoonTalk at the American University of Iraq, Sulaimani! Stay tuned for a very special episode of the show on Rudaw Kurdish coming soon..."
Source and photo: Bestoon



Kirkuk, 29 April 2025 - Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, Mr. **Claudio Cordone**: "Meeting with the President of Kirkuk Governorate's Council **Muhammad al-Hafith** and Council members to thank them for the local government's support. UNAMI is closing its Kirkuk office tomorrow but will continue implementing its mandate until the end of the year."



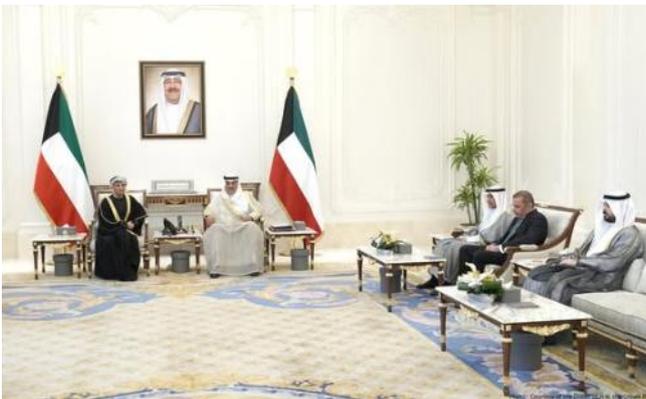
Kirkuk, 29 April 2025 - Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, Mr. **Claudio Cordone**: "Participating in a positive discussion between civil society, local government and UNAMI today in Kirkuk on supporting political participation of women and youth."



Kuwait City, 03 March 2025 - Acting Kuwaiti Prime Minister and Minister of Interior, **Sheikh Fahad Yusuf Saud Al-Sabah**, received today, the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), **Dr. Mohamed Al Hassan**. They discussed issues of mutual interest, with the Special Representative commending Kuwait and Iraq for their commitment to strengthening brotherly relations and enhancing cooperation in a manner that serves the shared interests of both nations.
Photo courtesy of the Kuwait Interior Ministry.



New York, 18 March 2025 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of UNAMI, **Dr. Mohamed Al Hassan**, met today with the **ambassadors of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries** at the Permanent Mission of the State of Kuwait to the United Nations in New York.
The meeting discussed the general situation and matters of mutual interest, reaffirming support for the constructive efforts undertaken by the Special Representative and UNAMI in supporting Iraq across various fields and ways in which the GCC could contribute to these efforts.
Photo courtesy of the Kuwait Permanent Mission to the UN.



Kuwait City, 8 April 2025 - His Highness the **Crown Prince of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah** received today the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), **Dr. Mohamed Al Hassan**, on the occasion of his visit to Kuwait. Dr. Al Hassan conveyed the greetings of Secretary-General António Guterres to the Amir and the Crown Prince of Kuwait as well as a message from the Secretary-General to the Kuwaiti leadership about regional developments. In addition, they discussed issues of common interest, including strengthening cooperation between the State of Kuwait and the Republic of Iraq in line with UNAMI's mandate from the UN Security Council.

Photo courtesy of the Diwan of H.H. the Crown Prince - State of Kuwait.



Manama, Bahrain, 30 April 2025 - **Dr. Abdullatif bin Rashid Al Zayani**, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Bahrain, received today in Manama, **Dr. Mohamed Al Hassan**, Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). They discussed regional developments, prospect of cooperation between the Kingdom of Bahrain and the United Nations and its various agencies, as well as matters of common interests.

Photo courtesy of Bahrain MOFA.

Security

UNAMI expresses concern at reports of attacks on Syrian workers in Iraq, welcomes the Iraqi Government's immediate and urgent actions

Baghdad, 13 March 2025 - Reports circulating of attacks against Syrian workers in Iraq are of grave concern to the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI).

UNAMI welcomes the unequivocal condemnation of such attacks by Prime Minister Mr. Mohammed Shia Al-

Sudani and commends the Iraqi Government's decision to set up a specialized security team to pursue the perpetrators of such attacks, which infringe on human dignity as well as human rights and violate the applicable Iraqi laws.

The United Nations Assistance Mission

for Iraq (UNAMI) calls on all to abide by the law, exercise wisdom, stay away from hate speech and maintain stability within a secure Iraq that is reconciled with itself and its surrounding.



UNAMI strongly condemns attack on Assyrian Christians in Duhok

Baghdad, 03 April 2025 – The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) strongly condemns the attack that took place on 1 April 2025, targeting a gathering of Assyrian Christians in Duhok, in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, during their celebration of “Akitu”, the Assyrian-Babylonian New Year. The attack resulted in two people being seriously injured and disrupted what was meant to be a peaceful and joyful religious

celebration.

The Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of UNAMI, Dr. Mohamed Al Hassan, praised the swift and effective response by Iraqi authorities, which led to the immediate apprehension of the perpetrator. He also expressed his strong condemnation of this criminal act, which threatens the spirit of coexistence and tolerance that Iraqis and the Iraqi authorities have worked

diligently to rebuild and preserve. He called on the authorities to ensure those responsible are held accountable. “As we express our solidarity with the Assyrian Christian community during these difficult times. We emphasize that religious and ethnic diversity is a cornerstone of Iraq’s social fabric and must always be safeguarded as an essential element of a stable and inclusive Iraq,” Dr. Al Hassan added.

Women Empowerment

Empowered dreams: a journey of strength and success

Baghdad, 21 February 2025 - Amina, Zeri, and Khalida were not just entrepreneurs—they were resilient women who had faced profound social and economic challenges before realizing their dreams. In Sinuni, a town where opportunities for women were historically limited, the idea of launching a women’s fitness project seemed like an impossible dream. These three women encountered numerous barriers, from societal constraints that often rejected women’s participation in both sports and business management, to technical, administrative, and financial hurdles that made implementing their project seem insurmountable.

Before joining the “Community Security and Integration (CSIP)” project, they lacked not only practical training in business management but also had little knowledge of key areas such as financial planning, marketing, and the essential skills for running a sustainable initiative. They also faced severe financial limitations, struggling to secure the funds necessary to purchase equipment and create a suitable environment for women’s fitness activities. Despite these immense challenges, they never abandoned their ambition to make a difference.

Thanks to the vocational training program offered by the Aid Gate Organization in partnership with the

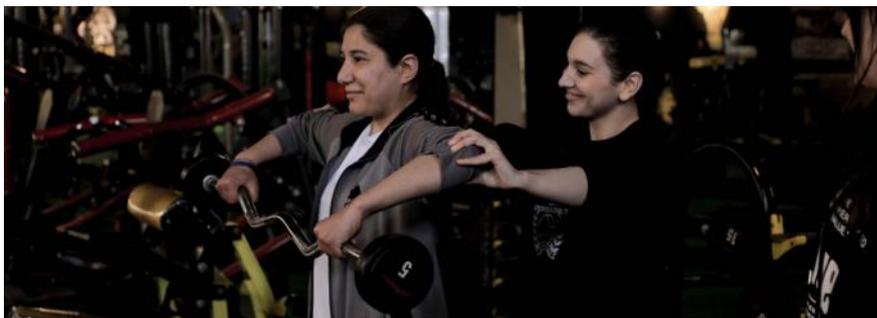


United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and with the generous support of the Government of Denmark, they were granted a golden opportunity to acquire crucial skills—not only in fitness training but also in small business management, negotiation, and effective communication within the local community. This support did more than help them overcome obstacles; it instilled in them the confidence to launch the first-ever women-only gym in Sinuni, coupled with a shop dedicated to selling sports gear and equipment.

Today, their gym stands as more than just a fitness space; it has become a symbol of women’s empowerment, sparking a shift in societal perceptions of women’s roles in the economy. Their

success has inspired others and opened doors to dreams beyond Sinuni. Amina, Zeri, and Khalida now aim to expand their project to new areas, spreading a message of strength, health, and solidarity among the women of their community.

They reflect on their journey, saying: “Before joining the project, we didn’t know how to run a business or create a financial plan. The training we received truly transformed everything. We faced many challenges, especially regarding society’s acceptance of a women-only gym, but with the support of the project, we managed to overcome them. Not only did we learn fitness skills, but we also gained expertise in negotiation, community engagement, and business management. The Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) sessions were crucial in building our confidence and helping us manage stress, making us more resilient and determined. With the financial support and equipment provided by the project, we were able to turn our idea into reality and achieve financial independence. This experience has shown us—and others—that women can achieve their dreams, no matter the obstacles they face.”



Towards a more inclusive, stronger society, UN highlights the role of women in Iraq of the future

Baghdad, 15 March 2025 - The Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, Mr. Claudio Cordone, attended the "Iraqi Women and Civil Society Forum: Leadership and Influence: A Future towards Sustainability and Innovation" forum in Baghdad today.

The event was hosted by Sara Ayad Allawi, Adviser on civil society organizations to His Excellency Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani. Also in attendance was the former Prime Minister Mr. Ayad Allawi.

In an address, DSRSG Cordone highlighted the importance of the gathering, saying "your voices as civil society representatives and initiatives such as this forum are of critical importance".

He added that the United Nations strongly appreciates and supports the work of civil society towards protecting and promoting women's rights and reinforcing the role of women in public life.

Mr. Cordone also recognized the achievements made by women in Iraq in seeking equal rights and equal participation in the country's public life, highlighting challenges and opportunities and emphasizing continued UN support.

"I believe we all agree that everyone will gain from promoting women's rights and their political participation in Iraq, as the country continues to build its own path towards a more inclusive, stronger society."

Here is the full text of DSRSG Cordone's remarks:

"His Excellency former Prime Minister Ayad Allawi,
Adviser Sara Allawi,
Distinguished participants,

I thank the organizers of this forum for their invitation, and I am honored to participate, on behalf of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General Mohamed Al Hassan, in this important event. Your voices as civil society representatives and initiatives such as this forum are of critical importance. The debate this evening is a great opportunity to freely exchange views, compare experiences and develop concrete recommendations for the way forward towards these noble goals.

The United Nations in Iraq, represented by UNAMI as well as



relevant agencies, funds and programmes, strongly appreciates and supports the work of civil society towards protecting and promoting women's rights, and reinforcing the role of women in public life.

The specific mandate of UNAMI until its departure in December 2025 is to promote the human rights of women and their full, equal, meaningful and safe participation in the elections.

We commend the efforts on behalf of women's empowerment undertaken by successive Iraqi governments, including Prime Minister Allawi's government, as well as the current government of Prime Minister Muhammad Shia al-Sudani. The National Strategy for Iraqi Women (2023-2030) sets a vision for equality, while the Iraq National Action Plan on UN Security Council resolution 1325 reinforces women's roles in peace and security. I would also like to specifically welcome the recent establishment of the High Council for Women Affairs and the Higher Committee to Support Women's Political Participation.

We work closely with these and other institutions, including Ministries, the National Directorate for Iraqi Women, the Independent High Electoral Commission, the Prime Minister's Advisers, and the Council of Representatives.

UNAMI of course also works with, and benefits from the advice of, civil society organizations, who often find themselves facing social and other challenges, and deserve our recognition and appreciation. I wish to pay a special tribute to those women who have survived indescribable crimes at the hands of terrorist organizations, and all women who every day fight to

overcome prejudice, discrimination and violence, whether at work, at home or in public life. All play a key role towards building a sustainable future where women are empowered and genuinely treated as equal to men.

The agenda of work to build such a future is extensive. At the legislative level, let me mention, for example, the draft law on domestic violence that still awaits to be passed, as well as the new code to be drafted in accordance with the amended law on personal status. We hope these legislative initiatives will be in line with Iraq's international human rights commitments, so as to effectively contribute to the affirmation of women's rights in Iraq.

Enhancing women's political participation is another important goal. In the 2023 Governorate Council elections, women won 76 out of 285 seats, slightly surpassing the minimum 25 per cent quota – a quota supported at the time of the drafting of the Constitution by Prime Minister Allawi. While that was an important achievement, unfortunately no woman became governor, deputy governor or chair of governorate councils. This highlights the need for more work to ensure that women are integrated into the decision-making processes and structures.

We also look forward to more efforts to promote women's participation, as voters and candidates, in the context of the forthcoming elections for the Council of Representatives. Let me stress here that political parties also have a key role in this regard, by taking measures to ensure that women can achieve leadership positions in their parties and receive effective support in their electoral campaign.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In conclusion, I wish to recognize the

Towards a more inclusive, stronger society, UN highlights the role of women in Iraq of the future *(continued)*

achievements so far made by women in Iraq in seeking equal rights and equal participation in the country's public life. The road ahead is full of challenges but also great opportunities. The United Nations in Iraq will continue to

support these efforts.

I believe we will agree that everyone will gain from promoting women's rights and their political participation in Iraq, as the country continues to build its own path towards a more

inclusive, stronger society.

Once again, I thank you for the invitation and look forward to the discussion this evening.

Thank you."

New Women's Protection Center opens in Diwaniyah with support from UNFPA and the Government of France

Diwaniyah, 08 April 2025 – A new Women's Protection Center has officially opened its doors in Diwaniyah today, supported by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and generously funded by the Government of France, in close collaboration with local authorities in Diwaniyah and the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers – Iraqi Women's Department. This center marks a significant step forward in creating a safer environment for women and girls affected by violence. The center will serve as a safe space and provide comprehensive services for survivors, including psychosocial support, legal assistance, and reintegration services. This initiative is part of UNFPA's broader effort to strengthen protection mechanisms across Iraq. Similar centers have already been rehabilitated and equipped in Ninewa, Kirkuk, and Anbar in partnership with local authorities and donor support.

"Combating violence against women is a priority. I am pleased and proud that France is supporting this project



alongside the United Nations. This shelter will provide a safe space where survivors can begin to rebuild their lives, and finally think about the future with hope and clarity," Patrick Durrell, French Ambassador to Iraq stated.

Ms. Hind Jalal, UNFPA Representative in Iraq, stated: "This center stands as a testament to our shared commitment to ensuring that every woman and girl in Diwaniyah, and across Iraq, lives free from fear and violence. We are grateful

to our partners in the Government of France and the local authorities of Diwaniyah for their continued support of this essential vision."

UNFPA reaffirmed its commitment to working with partners toward strengthening the legal framework needed to ensure the long-term sustainability and effectiveness of such centers, ensuring that survivors of violence receive the comprehensive protection and support they deserve.

UNFPA and German delegation visit Women's Protection Center in Anbar, reaffirming continued commitment to women's empowerment in Iraq



Anbar, 10 April 2025 — As part of its ongoing efforts to support women's protection and empowerment in Iraq,

the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), alongside a delegation from the German Federal Foreign Office,

visited the Women's Protection Center in Anbar. The visit aimed to follow up on the center's progress and highlight continued international support for services dedicated to vulnerable women and girls.

The delegation included Ms. Anka Feldhusen, Director for Crisis Prevention and Stabilisation in the German Federal Foreign Office, whose presence underscores Germany's long-standing support for women's rights and stabilization efforts in Iraq.

"Women are half of every society, and they are extremely important and indispensable for social cohesion, but also for issues of security. Germany has been supporting projects where we are trying to empower women in societies

UNFPA and German delegation visit Women's Protection Center in Anbar, reaffirming continued commitment to women's empowerment in Iraq *(continued)*

all over the world, not only in Iraq, but we are very proud that we could support a few projects here where women and the Iraqi society will benefit directly."

UNFPA, in partnership with the Government of Iraq, local authorities, and international donors, particularly the Government of Germany and the Government of France, has been working to expand access to protection, psychosocial support, and legal aid for survivors of violence across the country.

UNFPA currently supports a network of women's protection centers in several governorates, including Anbar, Kirkuk, Ninewa, Diwanya and Baghdad, serving thousands of women and girls.

"Our visit today reaffirms our shared commitment with the German government to ensure that women in Iraq have access to safe spaces, quality services, and opportunities for empowerment," said Ms. Hind Jalal, UNFPA Representative in Iraq. "We are also advocating for the adoption of

a national legal framework to ensure the sustainability of these services, and we count on local authorities to support this vision."

UNFPA expressed gratitude to the local authorities in Anbar for providing the land and for their strong partnership. The organization remains committed to mobilizing additional resources and building the capacity of center staff to ensure the highest standards of service delivery.

Women's Days

SRSG for Iraq and Head of UNAMI's message on Iraqi Women's Day

Baghdad, 3 March 2025 – "On behalf of the United Nations in Iraq, we are honored to extend our warmest congratulations and best wishes to the Iraqi people on the occasion of Iraqi Women's Day.

As we commend the roles that Iraqi women have played and continue to play, as well as the sacrifices they have made throughout history, we take this opportunity to praise their pivotal role and contributions in defending rights,

promoting social justice, and maintaining social cohesion.

We also highly value the sincere efforts of the Iraqi government in launching the National Strategic Plan for Iraqi Women (2023-2030), establishing the High Council for Women's Affairs and the Higher Committee on Support for Women's Political Participation, and introducing development and empowerment programs for women across various sectors. We call on the

Government and people of Iraq to protect and build upon the achievements and progress made, for the best interest of the country.

Iraqi women have long been, and continue to be, an inspiring example for women around the world. We look forward to their increased participation across all sectors, as part of their noble and honorable role in fostering the stability, advancement, and prosperity of Iraq."

UNAMI on X

Baghdad, 03 March 2025 - Mr. Ghulam Mohammad Isaczai, Deputy SRSG, Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq's message on the occasion of the Iraqi Women's Day:

"Every day, Iraqi women carry immense responsibilities, and overcome challenges – yet they continue to lead, build, and inspire. Whether as mothers, professionals, caregivers, or changemakers, their strength and resilience shape a bright future for their families, communities, and the entire country.

Today, on Iraqi women's day, we celebrate their determination, honor their achievements, and stand with them in their journey.

The UN in Iraq remains committed to supporting every woman and girl in Iraq – to lead, to thrive, and to create the future they deserve"

UNICEF on X

Baghdad, 03 March 2025 - Ms. Sandra Lattouf, UNICEF Representative in Iraq:

"Happy Iraqi Women's Day! Today, we celebrate you – your strength, resilience, and right to education, protection, leadership, and opportunity."

UNDP on X

Baghdad, 03 March 2025 - Resident Representative of UNDP Iraq, Auke Lootsma: "On #IraqiWomensDay, we celebrate the resilience, strength, and invaluable contributions of Iraqi women in every sphere of life. Their leadership is key to building a more inclusive and prosperous future for Iraq. Let's continue to support and empower them."

UNFPA on X

Baghdad, 03 March 2025 - On #IraqiWomensDay, we're working with the Iraqi government to strengthen the legal framework for women's protection centers, ensuring a safe environment for survivors.

The Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights (IHCHR) marks the National Day of Iraqi Women



Baghdad, 05 March 2025 – Today, the Head of UNAMI Human Rights Office, Mr. Rupert White, was welcomed to an event organized by the Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights (IHCHR) to mark the National Day of Iraqi Women. The event took place under the auspices of the Advisor to the IHCHR, Mr Saad Al-Abdali, and was attended by officials from government ministries and departments, as well as representatives of civil society organisations and women's rights groups.

Speaking at the event Mr. White highlighted the invaluable contributions made by Iraqi women to ensuring the country's progress and development, and re-affirmed UNAMI's commitment to supporting Iraq's efforts to achieve women's equal participation across all political, economic, social and cultural spheres.

"We should acknowledge and celebrate those women and girls who, by demanding their rights, have sought to make Iraq more just, more prosperous, and more resilient."

Here is the full text of Mr. White's remarks at this event:

"Excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, Thank you for the opportunity to be with you here today for this important event to mark the National Day of Iraqi Women.

Today, we recognize the invaluable contributions of Iraqi women to this country's progress and development. We also acknowledge and celebrate those women and girls who, by demanding their rights, have sought to make Iraq more just, more prosperous, and more resilient.

Iraq has taken many important steps towards expanding opportunities for women and girls, notably through the implementation of the National Strategy for Iraqi Women and the National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security.

Building on these achievements, UNAMI looks forward to supporting Iraq's efforts to achieve women's equal participation across all economic, social and cultural spheres, to strengthen

women's political representation in the upcoming Council of Representatives elections, and ensure that women across the country fully enjoy their human rights.

Unfortunately, challenges persist and many women and girls in Iraq continue to face obstacles to fully accessing their rights, including discriminatory laws, impunity for domestic violence, and unequal access to social, economic, and political opportunities.

Women's Rights are not merely abstract ideas. The international human rights standards that Iraq has committed to uphold to prevent discrimination against women provides a vital normative framework that protects against abuses, violations and other harms, ensuring everyone, everywhere can live in dignity and respect.

Upholding, and promoting women's rights isn't only about addressing present injustices, it's about encouraging all of us to join together to create a fairer and more equal future.

I would like to take this opportunity to express thanks to the Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights for hosting this important event. Their commitment to human rights continues to be instrumental in advancing the agenda for women's rights in Iraq.

As we celebrate today, let us also reaffirm our commitment to accelerating progress—ensuring that every woman and girl in Iraq has equal opportunities and creating a society where all women can live free from fear, oppression, and inequality.

The United Nations stands firmly with Iraq, and with Iraqi women, in achieving these goals. Together, we will build a future where women are not only part of the conversation but are leading it—shaping Iraq's future for generations to come.

Thank you."

UNAMI Human Rights Office organizes a Roundtable discussion to commemorate International Women's Day 2025

Erbil, 06 March 2025 – The Human Rights Office of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) organized a Roundtable discussion in Erbil to commemorate International Women's Day 2025. The event was attended by 18 participants (11 women and 7 men) representing the Kurdistan Regional Government, civil society, the

Independent Human Rights Commission-KRI, UN WOMEN and UNFPA. Participants renewed commitment to protecting women's rights under this year's theme "FOR ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS: RIGHTS. EQUALITY. EMPOWERMENT" and discussed achievements, challenges and measures necessary to accelerate

progress in realizing the true potential of women and girls and in enhancing their meaningful participation in all spheres of life, including education, health, governance, and decision-making.

Participants emphasized the importance of strengthening the rule of law and justice sector's institutions to

UNAMI Human Rights Office organizes a roundtable discussion to commemorate International Women's Day 2025 (continued)

protect women from violence and to ensure accountability. They also discussed the need for enhancing women's role in promoting social cohesion and peaceful co-existence, countering hate speech against women and placing special emphasis on the protection of women from Iraqi societal components and their socio-economic upliftment.

The event offered an opportunity to strengthen collaboration and dialogue amongst key stakeholders to enhance collective efforts for the empowerment of women and girls in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.



United Nations in Iraq statement on International Women's Day 2025

Baghdad, 08 March 2025 - This year's International Women's Day global theme, "For All Women and Girls: Accelerate Progress. Rights. Equality. Empowerment.", underscores the opportunity to build a society where every woman and girl can thrive, contribute, and lead—free to pursue their aspirations with dignity, security, and equal opportunities.

As we celebrate International Women's Day 2025, we honor the pivotal role of Iraqi women. Throughout history, women in Iraq have shaped the nation's identity, and enriched its culture with their resilience, determination, sacrifices and remarkable achievements.

Iraq has made notable progress towards the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 5 on

realizing equality between women and men and empowering all women and girls. The quotas for women's political participation have been met and the Government of Iraq has adopted comprehensive and ambitious frameworks to empower women, including the National Strategy for Iraqi Women and will soon launch its Third National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security.

Much progress and many achievements have been realized in Iraq, however, more work is on the way including on legislation that will provide further protection to Iraqi women against violence, increase women's participation in the labor force and pave the way for greater participation and representation for women in decision making institutions at all

sectors. In this regard, we call on the relevant institutions in Iraqi to protect and maintain these gains, especially in women's political participation, including in the upcoming Council of Representative Elections.

The United Nations will provide all required support to Iraqi institutions, in line with international framework, to, advance women's and girls' rights, ensure their protection and empowerment, and amplify their voices in contributing to shaping the nation's future.

On this day, we celebrate the momentum gained and encourage all stakeholders to build on this foundation, driving forward a future where every woman and girl in Iraq thrives with strength, resilience and boundless opportunities.

"When women lead, Iraq prospers"

Baghdad, 08 March 2025 – UN Women Representative in Iraq, Ajay Madiwale's message on International Women's Day:

"Today, on International Women's Day, we honor the hard-fought progress that women and girls have achieved across the world. There are more girls in school than any time in history. More women are breaking barriers, rising to power and reshaping the world of work. In Iraq, women's political participation has grown, surpassing the constitutional quota in many cases, and Iraqi women have been at the forefront of building peace and maintaining

stability in the country. In that regard, Iraq has just launched its Third National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security, and the first National Women's Mediator Network in the Arab States Region. However, there is more work to do, we must address the barriers to economic opportunities that women face and ensure their legal protection. The historic gains of Iraqi women should be maintained.

UN Women stands firm in its commitment to supporting Iraq in advancing women's rights, working alongside the National Directorate for Iraqi Women and the High Council for

Women and Development in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Together with Iraq's vibrant women-led civil society, we aim to drive forward policies that strengthen women's leadership, economic empowerment, and protection.

When women lead, Iraq prospers. Happy International Women's Day!"



UNFPA on X

Baghdad, 19 March 2025 - Iraq may be moving toward development, but IDPs and refugees still need critical support. UNFPA continues its work, ensuring displaced women have access to education, healthcare, and protection. This #IWD2025, we celebrated their strength with impactful activities!

WHO EMRO on X

Baghdad, 08 March 2025 - This #InternationalWomensDay, we celebrate the women who make up 67% of the global health workforce—from emergency responders to everyday caregivers, they are the heart of our health systems. Women power a \$9.8 trillion global health economy, and in the Eastern Mediterranean Region, the health sector represents the largest share of women's employment. Investing in their empowerment means healthier communities, economic growth, and progress toward the SDGs.

FAO marks International Women's Day in Iraq

Baghdad, 08 March 2025 - In the presence of the Minister of Agriculture, Dr. Abbas Jabr Al-Maliki, participants in the workshop under the "Climate Wise Women" initiative were honored today in recognition of their key role in climate-smart agriculture. Also, their contribution to helping rural communities adapt to the impacts of climate change were addressed. The event was attended by representatives from the Women's Empowerment Department and Ministry of Agriculture, reaffirming the importance of partnerships in supporting rural women and strengthening their role. The Minister of Agriculture reaffirmed the ministry's commitment to supporting the initiative and

empowering women in climate-smart agriculture, commending the efforts of the Food and Agriculture Organization

of the United Nations (FAO) in strengthening the resilience of rural women.



Championing women's rights in Iraq

A conversation with Mrs. Dhefah Al-Jarah, President of the Iraqi Foundation for Democracy and Human Rights Reinforcement

Baghdad, 08 March 2025 - For International Women's Day 2025, UN Women Iraq sat down with Dhefah Al-Jarah, President of the Iraqi Foundation For Democracy and Human Rights Reinforcement, Board of directors' member of Ain Network for election observations, member and representative of civil society organizations of the high committee for supporting women politically, board of directors' members of the Iraqi network for human rights and member of human rights trainers league, to discuss her journey in advancing women's rights, justice, and leadership in Iraq.

From breaking barriers to creating lasting impact, Al-Jarah shares her insights on empowering women and shaping a more just and inclusive society.

Tell us about the Iraqi Foundation for Democracy and Human Rights

Reinforcement and its role in promoting women's rights in Iraq?

The Iraqi Foundation is an institution dedicated to promoting democracy and human rights, with a special focus on women's rights. For many years, we have been working on women's empowerment programs and designing training initiatives. In addition, supporting the legislation that protects women's rights and promotes their

participation in political and economic field. Our mission revolves around achieving justice between women and men and enhancing women's role to become an active key factor to community development. We focus on providing technical support, building capacity, and raising awareness on women's rights.

What does International Women's Day mean to you and your foundation?



Championing women's rights in Iraq *(continued)*



International Women's Day is an occasion to remind the world of the importance of justice and the enhancing women's role. For us, it is a day to honor women and girls' achievements and to reaffirm our commitment to continue working towards achieving the full justice we aspire to and strive for.

What drives your passion for women's empowerment, and can you share an example of how your work has made a difference?

A deep belief in women's ability to drive positive change has been the driving force behind my work. Women are not just part of the solution—they are the solution. Recognizing the challenges they face, from violence to discrimination, has motivated our team to develop practical solutions that empower and uplift them. Empowering women is essential to building a strong and stable society.

One of our most impactful initiatives is a training program focused on politically empowering young women. As part of this effort, we launched an interactive map to monitor violations against female candidates during elections, providing a platform for them

to speak up and demand accountability. This initiative has led to real change—several of our trainees successfully won parliamentary and provincial council seats, proving that when women are given the tools and support they need, they rise to leadership. Our success would not have been possible without the support of the government, High Council of Women and the National Directorate for Iraqi Women and the Political Women's Support Committee, who have been key partners in this journey.

What are the biggest challenges for women in Iraq today?

After many years, I can say that the nature and extent of challenges have decreased significantly compared to before. However, challenges remain, some of the most challenges are the limited educational and economic opportunities, as well as societal customs and traditions. The foundation is committed to address these challenges through awareness programs, trainings, and supporting legislations that strengthens women's rights.

What key steps should be taken to strengthen women's participation and

rights in Iraq?

Collaboration between civil society, the government, and the international community is essential to overcoming the challenges faced by women in Iraq. By working together, we can support legislation that upholds justice, secure funding for women's empowerment programs, and raise awareness of the critical role women play in all aspects of society. Joint efforts are key to achieving tangible and lasting results.

While the quota system has increased women's representation in parliament, there is still a pressing need to enhance their participation in senior leadership positions and ensure they have a meaningful role in decision-making. We advocate for stronger legal protections for women's rights, greater investment in economic empowerment initiatives, and improved access to education and healthcare for women and girls. Additionally, it is crucial to create a safe environment free from violence and to promote societal awareness of the importance of women's active participation in all fields.

What advice do you have for young women aspiring to be leaders in Iraq?

My constant advice to ambitious young women is to believe in their abilities and not be afraid of challenges. Education and continuous learning are the keys to achieve success. Additionally, benefiting from the experiences of pioneering women who have preceded them in this journey, and fostering intergenerational dialogue, are essential for building a better future. It is also important to strengthen connections, build networks, and the mutual support among women across various fields. Be a voice for change and work together to achieve justice, do not hesitate to demand your rights and create opportunities for yourselves and others. In short, be a support to one another.

Women leading the way in community policing

Baghdad, 05 March 2025 - Major Aseel Abd Alwhab, dressed in a navy-blue uniform adorned with a white aiguillette, salutes a colonel of the community policing (CP) force, in Baghdad, before stepping inside the office to begin her day.

First on her schedule: a meeting with her team and the manager to review cases reported through the central national hotline of the Ministry of Interior. Once tasks are assigned, she then heads to the field to meet

potential victims and find solutions. Often, the day wraps up with an awareness-raising session on community policing at a university or market.

The CP model in Iraq is a cornerstone in restoring trust between local community members and police officers, who serve as primary security providers after years of conflicts. Officers work closely with communities to build trust, prevent crime, and address social issues before they

escalate.

"My work reflects my life philosophy – to serve the community. I am proud to help people," shares Major Aseel.

Aseel joined the department – now a directorate – in 2018 as a captain, right after earning her master's degree. Despite coming from a military family – her father and siblings serve at the Ministry of Defense – her career choice came as a surprise to them. At the time, it was uncommon for a woman to join law enforcement.

Women leading the way in community policing *(continued)*

“My brother was first to learn that I had been accepted. He was in shock. I was the only woman in our circle who was going to become a police officer. They were worried about reactions from the communities,” recalls Aseel. Now, Now, they are proud of her and her work.

Indeed, the trend has changed and, currently, there are over 100 women who serve a community police staff across 14 governorates in Iraq. With CP department’s recent upgrade to a directorate under the Ministry of Interior, more women will be recruited, strengthening their role in law enforcement.

Aseel is pleased to see the trend of more women joining community policing and is often approached by girls attending her awareness-raising sessions, who are keen to follow her footsteps. Still, she remembers the challenges of establishing herself at the beginning of her career — initial skepticism and competitiveness from male colleagues and distrust from community members.

“Now my male colleagues ask me for support with some cases, and I see how the attitude in the community has changed as they see results and resolved cases. We’ve proven that more women are needed in law enforcement,” she adds.

Every day, Aseel works with cases of domestic violence, online blackmailing, taking pride in helping women and children, advocating for their rights. Helping families find peace is her greatest reward. At home, she draws strength from her husband’s encouragement and two children. “My



husband supports me and wants to see me advance in my career. Like many women, I’ve worked hard to balance my personal and professional life—it’s not easy, but it’s worth it.”

“Iraqi women are superwomen,” echoes Nasreen, a community police member at a different branch. “I’ve found myself in this work – it’s very gratifying.”

Both Aseel and Nesreen are confident that having more women police officers helps create more trust, especially when they manage sensitive cases.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Iraq has supported the development of the CP Women’s Empowerment and Protection Plan for 2023 and 2024, as well as CP strategic plan for 2024-2026. Supported by the Government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, IOM will continue working with the Government of Iraq towards CP women’s empowerment and strengthening community policing for safe and more secure societies.

Background information:

IOM has provided a comprehensive suite of technical assistance to the Government of Iraq since 2012 through capacity building initiatives, community engagement programming, alongside equipment delivery and infrastructure development to expand the CP model to areas of strategic importance.

Cooperation between IOM and the Ministry of Interior, a primary partner of IOM, is institutionalized through a long-standing Memorandum of Understanding signed in 2015 and renewed in 2017. IOM’s CP programming contributes to the objectives of key policy frameworks for the Ministry of Interior, including the Local Police Service Road Map, Iraq’s National Security Strategy and the National Strategy for Security Sector Reform for 2024-2032.

By Olga Borzenkova, IOM

Rebuilding hope: Salima and Salha’s journey from loss to strength

Anbar, 14 March 2025 - Salima Ahmed Adwan and her older sister, Salha, are originally from Baghdadi in Anbar. For years, they lived a simple yet fulfilling life, deeply rooted in their community. Salima had always dreamed of running her own shop—a small but vibrant space where neighbors could gather, exchange stories, and pick up the little things that made a house feel like home. And for a while, she had that. She built it with care, right next to her house, filling the shelves with goods and the air with warmth.

The terror of ISIL

In 2014, ISIL forced them to flee, ripping them away from the life they had built. They left everything



behind—family heirlooms, familiar streets, the warmth of neighbors who felt like family. What came next was a

blur of displacement and survival. Their first stop was Al-Hol camp, a place they now call a nightmare. There

Rebuilding hope: Salima and Salha's journey from loss to strength *(continued)*

was never enough — never enough money, never enough food, never enough warmth in the bitter cold of winter, or shade from the relentless summer heat. Nights stretched on with little sleep, the weight of uncertainty pressing heavy on their chests. Safety was always a question mark. Who could they trust? Would they make it through another day?

Then came a chance to move to Al Amal Center, a place that, for the first time in years, offered a glimmer of stability. It wasn't home, not yet, but life felt a little easier. There was more support, a sense of structure, and for the first time in a long while, they could breathe.

It's not just about surviving anymore. It's about finding their way back to something that feels like "living".

Starting over

Today, they run a small store once again, this time with the help of Salima's son and brother. The men take on many of the responsibilities—managing the shop in the evenings, traveling to buy stock, and stepping in when Salima and Salha need rest. Salha, now 58, struggles with health issues that make it difficult to move around, so Salima, at 42, shoulders most of the daily work.

It's not the shop they once had, but it's theirs. A new beginning, built from resilience and the quiet determination to reclaim what was taken from them not so long ago.

A small convenience store with a Pepsi fridge, shelves of snacks, and a cluttered interior.

Their neighborhood shop in Anbar, frequented by the local community.

For Salima and Salha, rebuilding wasn't just about opening a shop — it was about finding themselves again.

Empowerment after the storm

Through business training, they learned more than just how to sell goods. They discovered how to understand their customers, how to stock what the community needed, and how to market their products. These skills didn't just help their business; they gave them something even more precious — hope.

But the journey wasn't only about learning how to run a shop. The pain of the past still lingered, heavy and unspoken. The memories of loss, of everything that had been taken from them, sometimes felt like a weight too difficult to carry.

That's where the mental health support made all the difference. It helped them

face their grief, their fears, and the quiet moments of sadness that once felt overwhelming. With time and care, something shifted. They felt lighter. They began opening up—not just to each other, but to the people around them.

For the first time in years, the pain wasn't something they had to hide. It became something they could share, something they could heal from—together.

Editor's Note

The RISE project is a joint project funded by the EU to the tune of Euro 5 million and implemented by UNDP and UNICEF. It aims to address the reintegration needs of vulnerable children, young persons, adults, and other stigmatized groups such as families with perceived ISIL-affiliation returning to Iraq from NES, as well as of conflict-affected host community members. Through targeted business training, financial support, and mental health services that were implemented by UNDP in partnership with Welthungerhilfe (WHH), RISE helps individuals like Salima and Salha reclaim their independence and rebuild their lives with dignity.

Iman: spreading baking sweetness in Mosul

Mosul, 02 March 2025 - Today's story comes from Mosul, where Iman turned her passion into a thriving business. She never imagined that the plans she made long ago would become reality or that her love for sweets and cakes would one day provide income for her and her family. A mother of four and a high school graduate turned her passion for making sweets into an inspiring success story.

Life under ISIL

When ISIL entered Mosul, Iman and her family remained at home, enduring fear and destruction. During this dark

time, she lost her 24-year-old sister in an explosion, leaving behind two children.

The days were filled with despair, but as time passed, hope slowly returned, and life in the city began to emerge.

The beginning of the dream

Through the Building Resilience Through Employment Promotion (BREP) programme of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) - generously funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) through the German Development

Bank (KfW), many young people have been trained in northern Iraq in different fields, including sustainable energy projects, the food industry, solar energy, green construction, and repairing hybrid and electric cars

Iman is one of the beneficiaries of the "Pastry Industry Training" project within the BREP programme, which is implemented in partnership with the Human Appeal organization for 45 days. Iman has trained well through the training courses in pastry and confectionery in Mosul, and today she has become a chef's assistant.

After completing the training course, Iman was able to launch her home-based pastry business (@Donuts_Nawara). Despite the financial challenges, she insisted on continuing. She received moral support from her family and husband. Today, she makes an income of 300,000 to 400,000 Iraqi dinars monthly.

Today, her sisters are helping her run the business. However, her ambition does not stop there. She remains determined to transition from home-based work to owning a pastry shop, creating job opportunities for other



Iman: spreading baking sweetness in Mosul *(continued)*

women in her community. She plans to open her own shop and prove that resilience and dedication can lead to success.

About the project

Iraq's ongoing conflicts have severely impacted its socio-economic and security conditions, with the ISIL crisis causing mass displacement. Since 2015,

efforts to restore services have enabled many to return home. The BREP programme strengthens resilience by providing economic empowerment and rebuilding homes, focusing on Anbar, Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninewa, and Salah Al-Din. It creates employment, enhances skills in construction and agriculture, and supports small and medium

enterprises (SMEs). To date, over 5,500 young people in Iraq have been trained in various fields through the programme.

By Sally B. Al Bahri, Partnerships and Communications Analyst, UNDP Iraq

UN Volunteers: Inspiring change in Iraq, one girl at a time

Baghdad, 05 March 2025 - In the lead up to International Women's Day, we shine a spotlight on UN Volunteers around the globe who contribute to Sustainable Development Goal 5—gender equality. Among them are volunteers with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) supporting girls and young women across Iraq with new skills and opportunities. These volunteers serve under a common goal—opening doors for the next generation so girls have the tools and confidence to succeed.

Seven of the nine UN Volunteers who serve with UNICEF in Iraq are women. Their roles include Communications, Human Resources, Resource Mobilization, and Youth Engagement. Four of these women are part of Young Arab Women Talents initiative. Started in 2022, this partnership between UNICEF and UNV creates leadership opportunities for young women in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region.

Daniah Al-Najafi is a UN Volunteer Youth Engagement Officer under this initiative. She supports girls in building cutting-edge skills by connecting them to programmes such as U-Report and Learning Passport. And by joining, girls are able to acquire digital skills, find suitable platforms to speak up and take on more proactive

roles in their communities.

"I empower young people — especially girls — through digital engagement, leadership programmes, and advocacy," shares Daniah. She teams up with youth groups, the local government and communities to bring this all to fruition.

Another UN Volunteer, Shahad Butrus Bulbul is a Communication Officer. Her work centers on storytelling through which she brings the needs and aspirations of girls in education, health, and protection to the fore.

My work amplifies the voices of girls, challenges stereotypes, and helps create opportunities for them to lead change in their communities." Shahad Butrus Bulbul, UN Volunteer Communications Officer with UNICEF. Young women volunteers are bridging the gap between Iraqi communities and

UNICEF programmes, and empowering girls by being role models. Their presence strengthens advocacy, fosters trust, and ensures that every young woman and girl has the opportunity to thrive." Israa Al-Juboori, UNICEF's Youth and Adolescent Development Specialist.

UN Volunteers inspire change on the ground, one girl at a time. As International Women's Day approaches, their message gives motivation to many. "Every girl deserves the chance to learn, lead, and shape her future," says Daniah aspiring for girls to have their voices heard, skills valued, and their dreams with no limits. "I call for us all to break those barriers, stand strong, and build a world where every woman and girl has the chance to dream big and live fully," concludes Shahad.



The law speaks loudest when it includes us all

An interview with Judge Taghreed Abdulmajeed Nasir

Baghdad, 10 March 2025 - Over the past two decades, Iraq has made significant strides in increasing women's representation in the judiciary. In 2003, there were only about six women judges in the country, a number that has since grown to over 110. Yet, challenges to achieving full inclusivity in Iraq's judiciary persist. Women judges play a crucial role in ensuring that judicial decisions reflect the diverse voices of Iraqi society and

uphold justice in an inclusive and representative manner.

As part of its efforts to strengthen Iraq's judicial system, UNDP has been working closely with the Supreme Judicial Council under its Anti-Corruption and Arbitration Initiatives, funded by the European Union. These initiatives aim to modernize and enhance the judiciary, supporting Iraq's broader transition efforts. A key figure in these reforms has been Judge Taghreed, whose leadership and dedication have been instrumental in driving change within the judiciary.

On the occasion of the International Day of Women Judges, we spoke with Judge Taghreed Abdulmajeed Nasir about her journey to the bench, the challenges she has overcome, and the achievements she takes pride in as a woman judge.

A Childhood Dream Turns into a Lifelong Mission

Can you share your journey to becoming a judge? What inspired you to pursue a career in the judiciary?

From a young age, I was deeply passionate about justice and driven by a strong desire to make a real

The law speaks loudest when it includes us all *(continued)*

difference in society. During my early years at the Faculty of Law, I realized that justice is not just about legal texts—it requires people with the ability to apply the law fairly and impartially. This belief became even stronger as I recognized the need for more women in the judiciary.

Throughout my journey, I was inspired by the strong women role models I encountered—whether university professors or pioneering women judges who broke barriers in our society. I felt a deep sense of responsibility, not only towards upholding the law but also towards advocating for marginalized and vulnerable groups. The path was not without challenges, but my belief in the role of the judiciary gave me the strength.

Was there a specific moment in your career when you realized the significant impact of your role as a judge?

There have been many moments that reaffirmed the importance of having women in the judiciary, but one that stands out is when I presided over particularly complex cases requiring deep analysis and judgment.

Issuing a ruling based on law and justice, and witnessing its direct impact in restoring rights to those who had been wronged, reinforced my deep sense of responsibility. Each fair ruling has the potential to change a person's life, and that realization continues to drive my commitment to impartiality and integrity.

The Need for More Women in the Judiciary

Why do you think it is important to have more women in the judiciary? How does their presence contribute to a more just and equitable legal system?

The inclusion of women in the judiciary is not just about representation; it is essential for a balanced and fair legal system. Women judges bring unique perspectives, shaped by their understanding of the challenges that women and marginalized groups face. This ensures that judicial decisions are more inclusive and reflective of society as a whole.

Additionally, diversity in the judiciary enhances public trust in the legal system. When citizens see that the courts reflect their diverse realities, they are more likely to seek justice without fear or hesitation. This is especially true in cases related to women's rights, family law,



and violence against women, where the presence of women judges encourages more women to come forward.

Encouraging more women to enter the judiciary is not just a step toward equality, it is a step toward a more just legal system.

What needs to change to improve the representation of women in the Iraqi judicial system?

Achieving greater representation of women in the Iraqi judiciary requires action on multiple fronts. The judiciary is often seen as a male-dominated field. Public awareness campaigns, educational curricula, and media initiatives should highlight the critical role of women in the judiciary. We should provide access to legal and leadership training for women aspiring to become judges that equip them with the skills and confidence to succeed. Additionally, associations like the Iraqi Women Judges Association can play a pivotal role in supporting women judges, advocating for their rights, and creating mentorship opportunities.

Facing Inequality and Paving the Way for Others

Have you faced inequality in your career as a woman? How did you deal with these situations?

Like many women in traditionally male-dominated fields, I have encountered various forms of inequality. There were moments when my ability to handle complex and sensitive cases was questioned simply because I was a woman. Opportunities for leadership positions were also more available to men, often due to informal networks or societal norms.

However, I was fortunate to have the support of the Supreme Judicial

Council, which played a key role in empowering women judges. I chose to let my work speak for itself, focusing on professionalism, dedication, and the quality of my decisions.

Additionally, I found strength in solidarity. My women colleagues and I supported each other, exchanged experiences, and encouraged one another to persevere. Over time, these collective efforts have contributed to shifting perceptions and paving the way for more women to rise in the judiciary.

Balancing professional and personal responsibilities was another challenge. However, with strong organizational skills, family support, and a network of supportive colleagues, I was able to navigate these demands successfully.

Ultimately, every challenge I faced was not just a personal test but a step toward opening doors for future generations of women judges. Today, I take pride in mentoring and supporting young women entering the legal field, ensuring they too can overcome barriers and make a lasting impact.

What message do you want to convey to young women and girls who aspire to pursue careers in law and justice?

To every young woman aspiring to enter the legal and judicial field: believe in yourself and your abilities. Do not let obstacles or societal norms deter you from your ambitions.

The path may be challenging, especially in societies where the judiciary is still seen as a male-dominated field. But your knowledge and dedication can break any barrier. Surround yourself with mentors, seek out opportunities to grow, and never be afraid to demand your rights.

Most importantly, always remember that the law exists to protect you, and your presence in the field of justice is a step toward building a fairer and more equal society for all.

UNAMI Fiji Guard Unit celebrates International Women's Day



Baghdad, 26 March 2025 - The Fiji Guard Unit (FGU) in UNAMI marked International Women's Day on 8 March 2025 at the UNAMI Tamimi Camp in Baghdad, Iraq, with a day filled with celebration, reflection, and unity. The event highlighted the remarkable contributions of women in peacekeeping, paying special tribute to the 22 women currently serving within the FGU.

Chief Guest Ms. Kristine Downey, UNAMI Office of the Chief of Staff, delivered an inspiring address, commending Fiji's unwavering commitment to global peacekeeping over the past five decades. Drawing from her own experiences as a woman

navigating a male-dominated environment, she acknowledged the resilience, sacrifices, and invaluable contributions of the Fijian women peacekeepers.

The day commenced with a spirited Sports Parade, led by Regimental Sergeant Major (RSM) Warrant Officer Class One (WO1) Wara, and was attended by the Contingent Commander (CONTICO) and Commanding Officer (CO) Lieutenant Colonel Naivalu.

In the afternoon, Ms. Downey was welcomed by an impressive all-female Quarter Guard, led by Sergeant Matanisigadrau. She inspected the guards, recognizing their

professionalism and discipline, before joining the contingent for an evening of camaraderie and cultural exchange. The dinner, prepared by the FGU, provided an opportunity for the women to introduce themselves, share their personal experiences, and discuss the challenges and triumphs they've faced in the mission area.

Lieutenant Colonel Naivalu thanked Ms. Downey for accepting the FGU's invitation and presented her with a memento from the Republic of Fiji Military Forces (RFMF) as a token of appreciation. He also commended all the women for their positive contributions to the mission, acknowledging their vital role in promoting peace and stability.

The celebration concluded with a powerful collective agreement: women have the power to drive positive change wherever they serve. Echoing the sentiment that women "hold up half the sky," the FGU emphasized the importance of fostering a supportive and empowering environment for all.

This year's International Women's Day served as a reminder of the strength, resilience, and unwavering spirit of women in peacekeeping — and the continued commitment to accelerating progress through unity and empowerment.

Advancing Maryam Jawad: from life's challenges to a thriving business

Baghdad, 10 March 2025 - On International Women's Day, we celebrate the women of Iraq who have overcome challenges and become symbols of resilience and success. Among them shines the story of Maryam Jawad, a rural woman who turned her dream into reality, establishing a thriving business despite all obstacles.

Maryam's beginnings were no different from those of many rural Iraqi women, but she chose to make her story extraordinary. Facing life's challenges, she paved her own path, reviving a childhood dream that began among the marshes of southern Iraq. Growing up in her family, she absorbed the rich heritage of the marshlands, gaining valuable rural life skills, including buffalo breeding and dairy production. After getting married and moving to Al-Madina District, she faced difficult living conditions. However, her passion remained alive. With limited options before her, she made a bold decision— not to retreat, but to embark on a new

journey. Carrying her dream with her, she reshaped it with greater determination and a stronger will.

Maryam started her journey with the simplest resources, producing only five kilograms of dairy products and selling them in nearby markets. Over time, her business expanded, and her daily production increased, earning her a loyal customer base that trusted her and the quality of her products.

Her journey was not without challenges. When a team from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the

United Nations (FAO) visited her, they identified one of the biggest obstacles to her growth: she had no permanent workspace. Operating from a rented home-made expansion nearly impossible. Yet, giving up was never an option.

Encouraged and supported by the FAO team and backed by her family, she took a significant step by purchasing a piece of land in Nahr Al-Saqiya village to establish a permanent center for her business. This was made possible under a European Union-funded project to



Maryam Jawad: from life's challenges to a thriving business *(continued)*

enhance the resilience of agrifood systems in southern Iraq, implemented in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture. The FAO team closely oversaw every stage of the project, ensuring the center's successful construction and full outfitting with modern equipment. This was part of the EU-funded project to enhance the resilience of agri-food systems in southern Iraq, implemented in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture. With this support, Maryam was able to boost productivity and elevate product quality, transforming her dream into a thriving reality.

"The FAO's intervention provided me with comprehensive support on all levels, helping me achieve success," said Maryam.

Alongside the construction and equipping of the center, Maryam participated in a series of hands-on training sessions led by FAO experts. These trainings covered essential techniques for milk testing, transportation, preservation, and dairy product manufacturing and marketing. Additionally, she learned how to produce new dairy varieties previously

uncommon in Iraq, such as mozzarella and ricotta cheese, while also refining the production methods of traditional dairy products.

The opening of the center was not just a personal achievement but a milestone for growth and a testament to Maryam's expanding impact on the community. Her business flourished, and today, she produces 500 kilograms of dairy products daily—a remarkable leap from her humble beginnings.

Her products have now reached various regions of Basra and even found customers in Kuwait.

Thanks to the high quality of her products, achieved through meticulous milk testing processes, Maryam has received offers from local ice cream manufacturers to supply them with milk. This new opportunity paves the way for further growth and expansion.

Yet, her success was never limited to production alone—she was committed to empowering other women by training them in dairy production and creating job opportunities within her community. Today, she runs her center alongside her husband and oversees a team of 11 female workers, with an unwavering ambition to further develop

her business and expand its reach.

Her success gained widespread recognition. Maryam was honored at the 15th edition of the International Agricultural Exhibition in Baghdad and was selected to represent Iraq at the FAO Near East and North Africa Regional Office's World Food Day event in Cairo in October 2024. There, she shared her journey with the audience, illustrating how she transformed challenges into opportunities and showcasing samples of her products.

On International Women's Day 2025: Accelerating Progress for All Women and Girls

Maryam Jawad's journey perfectly embodies the theme of International Women's Day 2025: "For ALL Women and Girls: Accelerate Progress. Rights. Equality. Empowerment." Her success extends beyond her personal venture, serving as a stepping stone toward greater achievements for women in Iraq and beyond, across various levels.

Today, Maryam's rural dairy center stands as a symbol of perseverance and success—a testament that dreams never die but instead await those who revive them with passion and an unbreakable will.

UNSCR 1325

Strategic dialogue in Baghdad highlights Iraq's Third National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security

Baghdad, 15 April 2025 – In a significant event of joint commitment to enhance women rights and inclusive peacebuilding, UN Women and the National Directorate for Iraqi Women (NDIW) co-hosted a high-level strategic dialogue to officially present Iraq's Third National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (WPS). The event convened key stakeholders from government ministries and entities, civil society organizations, and the international and diplomatic community to advance the implementation of the WPS agenda in Iraq.

The Third National Action Plan reflects Iraq's sustained commitment to fulfilling the objectives of UNSCR1325 and subsequent WPS resolutions. It builds on the achievements of the first and second NAPs while addressing emerging challenges and prioritizing the meaningful inclusion of women in peacebuilding, conflict prevention, and post-conflict recovery processes.

Dr. Yusra Kareem Mohsin, Director General of the NDIW, opened the event with a remarkable speech stating



"What distinguishes this plan is that it is not only national in its formulation but also collaborative in its implementation. It seeks to integrate the efforts of security ministries, supporting ministries, and local institutions in cooperation with international partners and civil society organizations." Mr. Ajay Madiwale, UN

Women Representative for Iraq addressed the importance of continued efforts of advancing women, peace and security agenda "Now is the time to move from commitment to delivery, from promise to progress. Let this Third National Action Plan be a turning point where collective action leads to meaningful change in the lives of Iraqi women and girls.

The event featured a comprehensive presentation of the Third NAP by the NDIW, highlighting key pillars, goals, and mechanisms for accountability and coordination. This was followed by a focused discussion on the role of government entities in translating the plan into actionable policies and programs, and the vital contributions of civil society organizations, especially women's rights groups, in monitoring, implementing, and shaping the plan. This event marked a renewed momentum in Iraq's Women, Peace and Security agenda, reaffirming the shared responsibility of all actors to ensure the plan's successful implementation and long-term sustainability.

UNAMI Human Rights Office organizes a dialogue on freedom of expression and the protection of journalists in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq



Erbil, 07 April 2025 – The Human Rights Office of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) organized a Dialogue on Freedom of Expression and the Protection of Journalists in the Kurdistan Region of

Iraq. The event was attended by representatives of journalists' organizations, media regulatory bodies, civil society, and the Independent Human Rights Commission-KRI. Participants discussed key concerns,

issues and challenges facing journalists and media workers and limitations on their ability to perform their professional responsibilities without undue restrictions on the right to freedom of expression.

The effective implementation of the 'Press Law in the Kurdistan Region' (Law No 35 of 2007) and the role of the judiciary in protecting journalists from restrictions such as preventing media coverage, arrests and detentions, and due process of the law featured as a key measure to enhance the protection of freedom of expression in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

Participants emphasized the importance of strengthening dialogue among key stakeholders including security forces to promote respect for freedom of expression and enhance the protection for journalists and media workers, including legislative measures, to strengthen the civic and democratic space in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

UNAMI Human Rights Office organizes a dialogue on countering hate speech in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq

Erbil, 8 April 2025 – The Human Rights Office of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) organized a Dialogue on Countering Hate Speech in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. The event was attended by 18 participants (five women and 13 men) representing the Kurdistan Regional Government, civil society, the Independent Human Rights Commission-KRI, and UNAMI Gender Unit. Noting the importance of addressing the issue of hate speech to promote social cohesion and peaceful coexistence, participants highlighted the need for a specific legislation as a legal measure to counter hate speech while ensuring the protection for freedom of expression.

Discussions also focused on the role of media/social media, perspectives of



ethnic and religious societal components and the importance of protecting women from hate speech particularly that targets women candidates during elections and women in the public sphere.

The event offered an opportunity to strengthen collaboration and dialogue amongst key stakeholders to enhance collective efforts through legislative and policy measures to counter hate speech in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

UNAMI statement on the death of an Iraqi in detention in Baghdad

Baghdad, 8 April 2025 - The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) is following closely the case of an Iraqi national who died in unclear circumstances after being detained in Baghdad.

The Mission is deeply concerned about reports the victim suffered from

traumatic injuries during detention and was transferred to hospital where he died on 7 April, 10 days after having been taken into custody and held in a police station first and then in a detention centre.

UNAMI notes the authorities' decision to investigate the case. The Mission

emphasizes the importance of conducting a fair, transparent, and independent investigation that leads to accountability for those responsible for human rights abuses, and the adoption of measures and procedures to prevent their recurrence.

Integrating a human rights-based approach into anti-corruption efforts

Kirkuk, 16 April 2025 – The Federal Commission of Integrity (CoI) and UNAMI Human Rights Office, in cooperation with the Kirkuk Provincial Council, held the third of five one-day dialogue sessions across Iraq on integrating a human rights-based approach into anti-corruption efforts.

Today's event in Kirkuk brought together 36 participants, including journalists, defense lawyers, CoI staff and 28 representatives of civil society organizations. Discussions focused on the connection between corruption and human rights violations, emphasizing the need for collaborative strategies to prevent and combat corruption while promoting human rights, including



economic, social, and cultural rights. Participants also explored challenges in ensuring a safe and enabling environment for human rights

defenders, journalists, anti-corruption activists and whistleblowers, recognizing their crucial role in tackling corruption.

UNAMI Human Rights Office organizes a dialogue on the linkages between corruption and human rights violations

Basra, 29 April 2025 - UNAMI Human Rights Office jointly with the Federal Commission of Integrity (CoI) organized a one-day dialogue to discuss the linkages between corruption and human rights violations and the need for collaborative approaches, including with relevant authorities, to prevent and combat corruption and promote human rights, including economic, social and cultural rights. The dialogue was attended by representatives of civil society organizations, journalists, defense lawyers and officials from the Commission of Integrity on the human rights-based approach to anti-corruption efforts in Iraq.

Participants also discussed the challenges in maintaining a safe and enabling environment that allows human rights defenders, journalists,



defence lawyers, anti-corruption activists and whistleblowers to support the efforts of the authorities to prevent corruption and protect human rights. This dialogue was the fourth in a series

of five similar events organized in different governorates across Iraq, and brought together 32 participants (13 women and 19 men) from Basra governorate.

Freedom of Expression

UNESCO holds a meeting at the High Judicial Council to support the “Social Media for Peace” (SM4P) project

Baghdad, 27 February 2025 - The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) convened a high-level meeting today at the High Judicial Council, bringing together government institutions and independent bodies to discuss and endorse its newly launched “Social Media for Peace” (SM4P) project, funded by the European Union.

The meeting, held at the Judicial Development Institute, was inaugurated by Judge Amer Hassan, Head of the Publishing and Media

Court. Discussions focused on the project's objectives and implementation mechanisms, including the establishment of a national task force comprising government institutions, a civil coalition of NGOs, and social media activists. This initiative aims to promote responsible media practices and foster a culture of peace.

During the meeting, Ahmed Al-Tayyar, Deputy Head of the Iraqi National Security Service, and Saad Maan, Head of the Security Media Committee, delivered presentations highlighting

the importance of collaboration between media and security institutions in strengthening societal stability.

The meeting gathered representatives from the Human Rights Commission, the Communications and Media Commission, the Ministry of Interior, the University of Baghdad, the Prime Minister's Office for Artificial Intelligence Affairs, the Baghdad Municipality, the Ministry of Justice, and other key stakeholders.

UNESCO discusses the establishment of a civil alliance for social media in Iraq



Baghdad, 13 March 2025 – As part of the Social Media for Peace project, funded by the European Union, the UNESCO Iraq Office organized a specialized workshop titled "Establishing a Civil Coalition for Social Media in Iraq." The event brought together representatives from civil society organizations, media institutions, and academic circles across Iraq to explore the formation of a structured alliance dedicated to promoting responsible digital media practices.

The workshop aimed to empower civil society in safeguarding freedom of expression, combating disinformation, and countering hate speech. It sought to lay the foundation for a sustainable coalition that upholds ethical standards in Iraq's digital media landscape while aligning with international digital governance principles. Participants examined the role of civil alliances in shaping the evolving media ecosystem, drawing on global best practices in content regulation and disinformation management. Discussions also covered

key mechanisms for digital governance, sustainable alliance management, and the implications of global content moderation policies on Iraq's media landscape. Additionally, the workshop highlighted opportunities for collaboration between civil society and academic institutions to advance digital literacy and responsible online engagement.

During the deliberations, participants were surveyed on their perspectives regarding the alliance's formation, with the majority expressing strong support. However, differing views emerged on the impact of content moderation policies on freedom of expression. By the end of the workshop, participants outlined several strategic recommendations, including establishing a follow-up committee to oversee the implementation of workshop outcomes, developing a clear organizational framework for membership and governance to ensure the alliance's independence from political influence, launching a unified digital platform for awareness

campaigns and disinformation monitoring, and strengthening partnerships with governmental and judicial institutions to foster a more transparent and accountable media environment.

Regarding membership criteria, participants agreed on stringent standards to uphold freedom of expression and human rights in line with international frameworks. Membership will be limited to individuals and organizations unaffiliated with political or partisan activities to maintain the alliance's neutrality. Members must also adhere to a professional code of ethics governing digital media practices, with a background in digital journalism, media governance, or related fields required to ensure diverse expertise within the alliance.

Despite strong enthusiasm for the initiative, participants acknowledged key challenges, including limited digital literacy, funding constraints, and the absence of clear regulatory frameworks for digital media in Iraq. In response, the UNESCO Iraq Office reaffirmed its commitment to supporting the initiative through specialized training programs and facilitating collaboration between civil society and global digital platforms to enhance transparency and accountability in the media sector.

This workshop marks a significant step toward establishing a national framework for digital media governance in Iraq, with the envisioned alliance expected to play a pivotal role in safeguarding freedom of expression, countering misinformation, and empowering journalists and content creators to foster a more ethical and professional media ecosystem.

UNESCO organizes first dialogues towards building multistakeholder cooperation to tackle the spread of harmful content online in Iraq

Baghdad, 21 March 2025 - UNESCO brought together over 100 representatives from civil society, digital content creators and influencers, technology and digital experts, and human rights advocates, to exchange perspectives and start shaping a collaborative mechanism to jointly address the spread and impact of harmful content circulating online.

"Building effective solutions to local challenges of harmful content online, in

particular hate speech and disinformation, requires collective expertise and collaboration among local actors. These workshops marked an important first step in opening a space for dialogue and fostering such cooperation," said Dhea Subhee, Project Officer at the UNESCO Iraq Office.

The two workshops organized on 14 and 19 March in Baghdad were a part of preparatory activities leading up to the official launch of the Social Media 4

Peace project, which is implemented by UNESCO and supported by the European Union Foreign Policy Instrument (FPI). One of the cornerstones of the project is to establish a multistakeholder cooperation mechanism at the national level aimed at pooling local expertise and jointly work towards context-driven and human rights-based governance systems of harmful content on digital platforms.

UNESCO organizes first dialogues ... (continued)



The discussions focused on identifying interests and potential pathways for long-term cooperation, as well as the gaps and needs for strengthening local capacities to engage with social media platforms on content moderation policies. Digital content creators and influencers attending the workshops highlighted the need for training on identifying and responding to hate speech, as well as understanding the international frameworks and

standards governing online content. The representatives of civil society stressed the importance of transparent and inclusive selection processes to ensure that cooperation is built on fair ground and enables balanced and effective representation within the project. The gathering was also attended by representative of the Human Rights Commission who expressed their full support for the project's various

components, recognizing it as a cornerstone for promoting peace narratives and addressing challenges of online content in Iraq.

As the project moves forward, UNESCO will continue building the capacities of local actors to tackle challenges of online harmful content together through evidence-based and human rights approach. For this reason, the project will conduct a comprehensive research at the national level to map out the root-causes, scale, and impact of harmful content online, as well as the to assess the effectiveness of the existing tools to address it, including legal, regulatory, and self-regulatory frameworks, policies, initiatives, and tech-solutions, creating a basis for informed local actions.

The project "Social Media 4 Peace," a partnership between UNESCO and the European Union, started its pilot phase in 2021 in Kenya, Indonesia, Colombia and Bosnia and Herzegovina; and in 2025 expanded to Iraq, Kyrgyzstan, and South Africa.

UNAMI Human Rights Office jointly with IHCHR organizes a dialogue session on the legal and regulatory framework governing

Baghdad, 26 April 2025 – UNAMI Human Rights Office jointly with the Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights (IHCHR) organised a dialogue session on the legal and regulatory framework governing the right to freedom of expression in Iraq. Participants included representatives from the judiciary, media regulatory authorities, journalists, defence lawyers and civil society representatives.

The event, which was attended by 32 participants (7 women, 25 men), aimed to enhance participants' understanding of the national and international legal standards, including laws prohibiting defamation and hate speech. The event also aimed to encourage constructive

engagement between media professionals and judicial and other regulatory authorities to help address ongoing challenges in protecting the right to freedom of expression whilst

respecting the rights of others. This dialogue was the latest in a series of consultative discussions with stakeholders facilitated by UNAMI HRO in Baghdad and Basra.



UNHCR on X

Baghdad, 15 April 2025 – "Social cohesion and tolerance are the pillars of a strong, inclusive society. Through UNHCR supported programmes in Sulaymaniyah, children from diverse backgrounds, including refugees are coming together to explore what these values mean to them.



First meeting of the Advisory Committee of the Iraqi National Network of employers for the empowerment and employment of persons with disabilities

Baghdad, 27 April 2025 - The first meeting of the Advisory Committee of the Iraqi National Network for Employers Interested in Empowering and Employing People with Disabilities was held at the headquarters of the Iraqi Federation of Industries. The network was launched in December 2024 through a collaboration between the Iraqi Federation of Industries and the International Labour Organization (ILO), under the framework of the project "Towards more and better employment through enhanced support to private sectors in southern Iraq – with a focus on green business," funded by the Italian government through the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation, and it is a part of Team Europe Initiative for Iraq "TAUFIQ initiative".

The meeting was attended by the Minister of Labour and Social Affairs, the Advisor to the Prime Minister for Youth Affairs, the ILO Country Coordinator in Iraq, in addition to members of the Advisory Committee representing various governmental ministries and agencies, private sector companies, local government representatives, employers' representatives, trade unions, worker unions, the Central Bank of Iraq, financial institutions, and civil society organizations concerned with people with disabilities.

The meeting focused on introducing the Advisory Committee to the objectives, governance structure, and main tasks of the Iraqi National Network, discussing its linkage with the ILO's Global Business and Disability Network, and agreeing on defining the role of the Advisory Committee, its operational mechanisms, and ensuring the application of effective governance principles.

During the meeting, the Minister of Labour and Social Affairs, Mr. Ahmed Al-Asadi, stated that the meeting represents an important step in the Iraqi government's strategy to enhance inclusive work environments. He emphasized that the Ministry of Labour is committed to working with the private sector and people with disabilities through the Disability Care and Special Needs Authority, by enforcing laws and regulations that have been legislated or amended to increase the



employment rate of people with disabilities in the private sector. He added that the Cabinet would work on passing a tax exemption law to encourage employers to hire people with disabilities.

The President of the Iraqi Federation of Industries, Mr. Adel Akab, emphasized the importance of establishing the Iraqi National Network. He explained that the network has become a vital platform for companies wishing to adopt inclusive practices. He also highlighted that the Federation took on the responsibility of ensuring the network's continuity from the beginning by establishing a division within the Federation to manage the network's work and the Advisory Committee that represents all stakeholders to ensure the network's sustainability. He confirmed that the network's membership would include employers from various sectors interested in employing people with disabilities.

Dr. Qassem Al-Dalmi, Advisor to the Prime Minister for Youth Affairs, emphasized the necessity of defining practical mechanisms to improve the committee's work, notably integrating issues of people with disabilities into national sustainable development plans. This would involve obligating all ministries to include disability integration indicators in their annual plans. He stressed the importance of sound planning and the development of clear strategies to improve the conditions of people with disabilities and enhance their living standards.

Maha Katta, the ILO Country Coordinator in Iraq, confirmed that the establishment of the network

represents a starting point for supporting the effective inclusion of people with disabilities in the labour market. She explained that the Iraqi National Network represents a pioneering experience that will succeed through the efforts of all parties, particularly the Advisory Committee. She expressed hope that the committee would play a pivotal role in guiding the network, advising on its development, advocating for the rights of people with disabilities, fostering collaboration between the private and public sectors, and following up on progress in implementing policies related to the employment of people with disabilities. In this context, Ms. Amaal Bani Awwad, Project Manager at the ILO, gave a detailed presentation outlining how the ILO's Global Business and Disability Network supports national networks, including the Iraqi National Network. She also presented a proposal for the operational mechanisms of the Advisory Committee and its subcommittees, including role distribution, ensuring effective coordination, and enhancing the contribution of various stakeholders to achieve common goals.

The meeting resulted in an agreement on defining the tasks and operational mechanisms of the Advisory Committee for the Iraqi National Network for Employers Interested in Empowering and Employing People with Disabilities, in addition to adopting the formation of the committee and the establishment of subcommittees derived from it.

The Advisory Committee Chairperson and their two deputies were elected, along with the heads of the subcommittees specialized in communication and media, program management, and training and

First meeting of the Advisory Committee of the Iraqi National Network of employers ... (continued)

employment. These subcommittees will lead the technical work of the network, support the implementation of activities, and ensure that the goals outlined in a clear, measurable action plan are achieved, based on transparency and coordinated efforts. All participants agreed that continued cooperation between government entities and the private sector is a key factor in ensuring the achievement of the network's goals and enhancing the provision of decent job opportunities for

people with disabilities.

The Iraqi National Network for Employers Interested in Empowering and Employing People with Disabilities aims to raise awareness of the importance of inclusive work environments for people with disabilities, provide technical support to companies in creating suitable environments, coordinate with government entities to obtain incentives and facilitation, organize training and rehabilitation programs to

adopt inclusive practices, and provide job opportunities by linking employers with job-seeking individuals with disabilities, in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. This initiative is an essential part of the ILO's project "Towards more and better employment through enhanced support to private sectors in southern Iraq – with a focus on green business," funded by the Italian government through the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation.

Migrations

Migrants at risk: UNODC builds official awareness on irregular migration and migrant smuggling in Iraq

Erbil, 23 February 2025 – From 21 to 23 February 2025, a national workshop on awareness of the risks associated with irregular migration, as well as a Training of Trainers (ToT), were held for the Ministry of Displacement and Migration (MoDM) and joint coordination committees of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

Facilitated by UNODC under the EU-funded GLO.ACT (PROTECT) project, the training aimed to enhance officials' understanding of irregular migration and migrant smuggling and build their knowledge on legislative frameworks, national strategies, international agreements, and potential avenues for cooperation.

The workshop included a comprehensive Training of Trainers (ToT) programme to ensure long-term impact and institutional integration. Participants developed essential training techniques, communication strategies, and instructional methodologies. Through intensive case studies and collaborative exercises, officers gained practical skills to identify migration risks, respond to migrant smuggling operations, and effectively manage complex criminal investigations.

The workshop included a representative who had lost a family member during an irregular migration journey, bringing a powerful personal perspective to the discussions about the real human costs and tragic consequences of dangerous migration pathways. In addition, the training brought together key stakeholders from across Iraq, including representatives from the Ministry of Migration and Displaced Persons, the Kurdistan Regional Government's Joint Crisis



Coordination Centre, the Prime Minister's Office, State Council, and Ministry of Interior.

The Human Rights Office of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq also joined, highlighting the collaborative approach between government bodies and international organizations to address this critical issue.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) is implementing the European Union-(EU) funded PROTECT initiative within the framework of GLO.ACT across Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, and Tajikistan. This initiative also addresses challenges in the broader Central Asia region, including the Kyrgyz Republic, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan, with a primary focus on enhancing the effectiveness of responses to trafficking in persons (TIP) and smuggling of migrants (SOM), particularly in relation to criminal justice. Meanwhile, the

International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) is responsible for implementing the PROTECT initiative in Afghanistan (specifically through virtual MRC Afghanistan), Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Pakistan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. Their primary objectives include improving gender-sensitive and rights-based migration governance at the national level and establishing Migrant Resource Centres (MRCs).

The project is funded by the European Union.





Baghdad, 06 March 2025 - The Steering Committee for the ONE UN Plan for return of Iraqis from NE Syria met today at UN Headquarters in Baghdad with participation of NSA **Qassim Al-Araji**, MoMD officials and international partners. Discussions focused on intensifying support for the Iraqi Government to accelerate the return and rehabilitation of returnees.



Baghdad, 29 April 2025 - The ONE UN Plan Steering Committee, chaired by UN Resident Coordinator for Iraq, **Ghulam Isaczai**, reviewed implementation progress and advocacy priorities. The meeting reaffirmed strong collaboration between the UN and the donor community in support of the Government of Iraq's efforts to accelerate the return of Iraqi nationals from Northeast Syria.

Introducing Verify Plus to enhance refugee protection!

Baghdad, 28 April 2025 - UNHCR Verify Plus is a free mobile application designed to help authorities verify the authenticity of ID documents issued by UNHCR to refugees and asylum seekers.

By scanning the QR code on refugee and asylum seeker certificates, it confirms that individuals are officially registered with UNHCR and entitled to international protection.

This week, we conducted a workshop in Baghdad with Government and authorities to introduce the numerous benefits of Verify Plus.

The application will soon be rolled out and utilized by legal authorities across Iraq with the aim of preventing the detention of refugees and asylum seekers who hold valid UNHCR certificates.



Humanitarian

UN Women Representative visits Al-Amal Rehabilitation Centre to support empowerment of returnee women

Mosul, 03 March 2025 – UN Women Representative for Iraq Ajay Madiwale visited Al-Amal Rehabilitation Centre to observe the progress of an ongoing initiative aimed at empowering 400 returnee women in Nineveh Governorate through sustainable training in green practices. This initiative is being implemented in coordination with the Ministry Of Migration And Displacement in Nineveh, in partnership with United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and through Zhian Health Organization.

The program provides women with the skills and knowledge required to cultivate high-value crops, including pistachios, pomegranates, figs, and olives. By engaging in hands-on agricultural training, the participants are learning eco-friendly farming techniques that promote sustainable



livelihoods and economic independence. During the visit, Mr. Madiwale engaged with 22 returnee women participating in the On-the-Job Practical Training, a comprehensive eight-day training program led by

agricultural specialists. The women demonstrated remarkable enthusiasm, showcasing their commitment to applying environmentally sustainable farming practices that enhance their economic opportunities.

UN Women Representative visits Al-Amal Rehabilitation Centre to support empowerment of returnee women *(continued)*

Furthermore, UN Women visited the Protection and Psychosocial Support Centre, where a jewelry-making workshop was being conducted for adolescent girls aged 10 to 16. This initiative not only encourages creativity but also provides psychosocial support, fostering resilience and confidence

among young girls.

During his visit, Madiwale underscored the significance of such programs in promoting the economic independence and social reintegration of returnee women. He stated, "Empowering women through sustainable agriculture and vocational training is essential to

building resilient communities. The enthusiasm and commitment displayed by these women reflect the positive impact of our collaboration with UNFPA in creating lasting opportunities for growth and self-reliance."

Women-run vet clinic spreads empathy toward animals

Dohuk, 06 March 2025 – One of Dr. Sanaa Salim Muhammed's earliest memories takes place in her family's barn where she watched her mother affectionately care for the cows raised by her family. She remembers her mother sleeping beside the heifers each night, diligently washing them and giving them massages when they gave birth.

When Dr. Sanaa entered her final year of high school, she knew she wanted to dedicate her career to helping animals. She enrolled in the agriculture department at her university and later changed to veterinary science school.

"I was very interested in this field, but it was very hard, as there was no one around with such experience. I didn't care how long it would take to complete the studies; I knew one day I would open my own clinic where people could bring their animals for special treatment," adds Dr. Sanaa.

Six years after she graduated, that day came, and Dr. Sanaa opened her first establishment - a small shop in Dohuk that sold pet food and medicine. But the lack of veterinary services in the area meant that customers would ask her to treat their pets at her shop too.

Dr. Sanaa tried her best to treat the animals in the back of her shop in a small isolation space, but it quickly became overcrowded. Two years ago, Dr. Sanaa heard about an opportunity for business owners to receive seed funding from the International

Organization for Migration's (IOM) Enterprise Development Fund.

After securing the EDF grant and adding her savings, she moved her business out of the 30-meter square shop to a 300-meter square clinic. She purchased incubation machines, machines for washing pets and furniture, and she renovated the space to add more rooms for isolation and treatment.

"IOM supported me, but what I appreciated most was the motivation I received through mentorship, trainings and follow ups," she shares.

Dr. Sanaa now employs 12 women to help her run the clinic. Her team includes four veterinary doctors who treat, vaccinate and rehabilitate animals; four staff who offer grooming services and sell medicine, food and other products; and four daily wage workers.

Since opening her clinic's doors in October of 2023, Sanaa has seen demand for her services soar. In the first four months, her clinic treated 200 pets in total but since February of 2024, the clinic has treated approximately 200 pets monthly.

For Dr. Sanaa, educating the community about how to care for their pets, or animals they see on the streets, is a crucial part of her work.

"The other day a young girl in fourth grade came in and told me she wants to be a veterinarian like me when she grows up. So, I know I'm having an impact on my community."

Dr. Sanaa has received support through the IOM's Enterprise Development Fund with the support of the Government of Finland.

By Angela Wells, IOM



Refugee athletes are kicking off Ramadan in a special way!

Duhok, 04 March 2025 - With support from UNHCR and partners, refugees in Domiz camp are hosting an exciting football tournament!

58 teams from across Duhok are set to compete and through sport this month!



Grazie della visita!

Baghdad, 20 March 2025 - Yesterday, UNHCR welcomed the Italian Ambassador to Iraq, H.E. Niccolo Fontana at Baherka Centre, where alongside the Government, UNHCR provides refugees with registration, legal aid, and protection services. Thank you, Italy for supporting UNHCR programmes.



Rehabilitation of 108 houses in Kania Abdi and Kani Sarek villages in Sinjar district enables 766 returning residents to rebuild their lives

Sinjar, 29 March 2025 - The recent rehabilitation of 108 houses in Kania Abdi and Kani Sarek villages in Sinjar district has enabled 766 returning residents to rebuild their lives in safe communities with adequate housing, urban infrastructure, and secure tenure.

By rehabilitating houses and essential infrastructure within community ranges, UN-Habitat and KOICA are not only helping displaced populations in Sinjar rebuild their lives but also re-establish community bonds and a sense of belonging that were lost during prolonged displacement.

Over the past three years, this collaboration has provided 308 homes for 2,347 displaced people in Iraq, supplied potable water to 3,407

individuals, and rehabilitated drainage networks benefiting 19,267 residents of Sinjar. Additionally, it installed handwashing trailers for 2,250 people and issued occupancy certificates for

4,003 individuals.

These efforts are creating sustainable conditions for communities to thrive together, building unity and resilience for a better urban future.



UNHCR on X

Erbil, 06 April 2025 - Thanks to EU Humanitarian Aid, UNHCR is able to provide refugees and asylum-seekers in Iraq with registration and legal assistance enhancing their protection. On 6 April, the delegation visited Baherka Registration Centre in Erbil to meet refugees accessing these services.

Stabilization and Development

New National Housing Policy to bridge Iraq's housing affordability gap with green and sustainable solutions

Baghdad, 27 February 2025 - The European Union remains committed to supporting Iraq in developing affordable, adequate, and sustainable housing solutions. As part of this commitment, the EU-funded Building Equitable and Inclusive Transformation (BEIT) project is playing a key role in advancing Iraq's National Housing Policy.

To drive this initiative forward, the Ministry of Construction and Housing, in collaboration with UN-Habitat, hosted a two-day workshop in Baghdad on 26–27 February 2025. The event

brought together Iraqi national authorities and technical teams from key departments, including the Ministry of Planning, the Ministry of Construction and Housing, the Housing Directorate, the Urban Planning Directorate, and the Housing Training and Development Centre. Participants analysed past housing policies, identified existing gaps, and worked together to establish a comprehensive framework for the new National Housing Policy.

Representing the European Union Delegation to Iraq at the workshop, Dr.

Lennart Deridder, Head of the Cooperation Section, was joined by Mr. Ali Al-Naseri, the Programme Manager overseeing the BEIT project, further reaffirming the EU's commitment to working collaboratively with Iraq to bridge the housing affordability gap and develop sustainable urban solutions.

Iraq faces significant housing challenges driven by population growth, rapid urbanization, and rising land and construction costs. In response, the government is formulating a National Housing Policy

New National Housing Policy to bridge Iraq's housing affordability gap with green and sustainable solutions *(continued)*



that prioritizes green and sustainable solutions, ensuring all Iraqis have access to safe, adequate, and affordable housing. This initiative not only addresses immediate housing needs but also contributes to the country's broader goals of equitable growth, urban resilience, and sustainable development.

By aligning with international best practices while addressing Iraq's unique housing context, the proposed policy framework represents a crucial step toward fostering inclusive and sustainable urban development.

The importance of the initiative was emphasised by Mr. Lennart Deridder, Head of Cooperation Section, Delegation of the European Union to Iraq, in his opening remarks: "Based on recent census data, almost 25% of Iraq's population is between the ages of five and fourteen. This highlights the urgent need to address the existing housing shortage and accommodate the growing demand over the next decade. Every Iraqi family deserves to live in a safe and decent home with access to essential utilities such as electricity, water, and other basic services. Additionally, they should also have the opportunity to enjoy open spaces, breathe fresh air, and spend quality time outdoors in safe and well-planned environments. Today's National Housing Policy Workshop marks a pivotal step toward achieving this vision. Together, we will refine the policy framework, integrate green and sustainable practices, and work towards building a resilient, inclusive housing ecosystem. This, in turn, will serve as a catalyst for sustainable economic growth, job creation, and social inclusion in Iraq."

Mr. Mohammed Haider Al-Sakiny,

Director General of the Planning and Follow-up Department at the Ministry of Construction, Housing & Public Municipalities, highlighted the Ministry's commitment to the shared challenge of developing and implementing a comprehensive policy that effectively addresses Iraq's current housing challenges: "It is necessary to prepare a new National Housing Policy that includes clear, executable and realistic steps, and which is derived from the reality of the current situation. Implementation must be both comprehensive and sustainable, and it is important to emphasise that achieving the aims of the new housing policy is a shared responsibility that falls on government, the private sector and society, to reach the desired goals.

During the workshop, the Ministry of Planning, the BEIT project's primary government counterpart, underlined the importance of integrating housing into national urban policies. "The Iraqi National Development Plan 2024–2028 sets a strategic roadmap for economic growth, infrastructure development, and housing reform. With a focus on investing in human capital, diversifying the economy, and modernizing urban planning, the plan addresses key challenges such as housing shortages, spatial development gaps, and service disparities. The new National Housing Policy will support sustainable housing solutions, helping the government improve living standards, reduce urban-rural inequalities, and drive national prosperity", stated Dr. Mohammed Mohsen Al-Sayed, Director General of the Department of Regional and Local Development, Ministry of Planning.

The new policy will prioritise the right to adequate housing while addressing

the specific housing issues Iraq faces such as the need for improved land management and infrastructure policies, more affordable housing solutions, and enhanced building materials and technologies. Recognising Iraq's growing climate challenges, the policy will also incorporate principles of green housing to support sustainable urban development.

Under the BEIT programme, UN-Habitat will continue to focus on supporting the Government of Iraq in addressing the country's housing challenges by reviewing existing legislation, exploring new affordable housing finance models, providing capacity building and technical assistance, and building demonstration green social housing units in two pilot locations.

UN-Habitat's "Housing at the Centre" approach positions housing as a fundamental human right and an integral part of national and local urbanization strategies. These principles, which are also enshrined in Iraq's constitution, will be reflected in the new National Housing Policy. "This joint effort aims to put housing at the centre of policy dialogue in Iraq highlighting its potential as a significant driver of socio-economic growth and job creation. Through the BEIT project, we are promoting the creation of decent jobs, building institutional capacity, strengthening housing sector value chains, and promoting green solutions to foster resilience and deliver sustainable housing solutions." said Muslim Qazimi, Head of UN-Habitat Iraq. Promoting access to adequate housing for all, along with essential urban services such as clean water, sanitation, electricity, transportation, and economic opportunities, will contribute to more inclusive and sustainable urban growth.

The Building Equitable and Inclusive Transformation (BEIT), an European Union -funded initiative, is a joint effort by UN-Habitat, the International Labour Organization, and the International Trade Centre. The programme aims to drive economic growth by creating decent job opportunities through advancing Iraq's affordable and sustainable housing initiatives and strengthening the construction sector.

Engraving her mark on society

Mosul, 06 March 2025 – The daughter of a gold merchant, Nagham Thaeer has been crafting metals into art since she was a young girl.

“The love of gold and jewelry is in my genes,” says Nagham from the storefront of a commercial centre in Mosul where she sells the jewelry of her brand, Elixir.

Ten years ago, when Daesh occupied Mosul, freedoms of movement and expression for women were severely thwarted, and countless women experienced violence and subjugation. Nagham and her sisters had no choice but to retreat indoors, and Nagham’s hobby became her refuge from the chaos.

“Making jewelry was my way of staying safe from what was happening in the external world while still growing and developing myself at home,” she said.

Once the city became secure and women began to venture out again, Nagham emerged with a big dream to create the first women run jewelry enterprise in Mosul.

“The goldsmith business is controlled by men, so it’s been challenging to break into the market, but I’ve insisted on moving ahead to make my business a reality,” said Nagham.

She launched Elixir’s jewelry store and workshop with one vision in mind: to turn their customers’ imaginations into jewelry pieces that can be passed on for generations.

“Alchemists used to believe that metals could be transformed into gold and live on forever. The word elixir reflects the sentiment of immortality,” said Nagham.

“The jewelry we make is customized to the ideas and imaginations of our customers and crafted in our own special style that highlights Iraq’s history and modern-day culture,” added Nagham’s sister, Alaa, who helps her run the business.

Most of Elixir’s pieces are custom made for each client – featuring designs their team carves onto gold-plated copper or silver.

The brand sets itself apart from its competitors by integrating the ancient cuneiform text – one of the world’s first written languages, believed by historians to have been engraved in Iraq’s caves in approximately 3,200 BC – in many of its pieces.

Nagham hired an ancient language expert to teach Elixir’s designers how



to write and eventually carve words of significance within their jewelry pieces. This is one part of the three-month training course in jewelry making techniques and customer service skills that she and her sister offer to her new hires – all of whom are women.

“Women have less job opportunities in Mosul compared to men, so I wanted to give women a better chance,” she said, adding that dozens of women expressed their interest to join her company after she shared the opportunity on social media.

“We even received interest from trained doctors or dentists, but we wanted to invest in women who hadn’t been able to finish their studies. A few of our designers have been through traumatic experiences, we are helping them to start a new chapter in their lives,” said Nagham.

“One woman once told me, ‘I’ve learned my power from you.’ So, I believe this business is changing these women’s lives for the better,” she added.

Nagham and Alaa know their business is opening doors that were typically closed to women in their society.

“Many families have forbidden women from working in the private sector, so we bring the families of our trainees to the workshop. After they see the atmosphere we created, most give their green light,” said Nagham.

“There is more acceptance for working women in Mosul. We are part of changing this mindset.”

Zainab is one of the women on the Elixir team whose new-found skills and confidence are paving the way for her future.

“When I applied, I didn’t have any

work experience, and I was going through a divorce; it was a difficult time of my life. I was afraid in the beginning, but step by step I learned to participate and move ahead. I’m now ready to confront any challenges that may come,” said Zainab.

“We are not just working here to make jewelry; we are committed to supporting other women to become designers. We believe that as women, we can achieve anything if we are brave and go for our dreams,” added Alaa.

One of Nagham and Alaa’s biggest dreams is to bring Elixir to customers internationally, and they are well on their way. They have already showcased their designs at international exhibitions in Dubai and Paris.

Nagham attributes much of her success to the support she receives her father – who handed down his knowledge in metal working and has been a constant source of support.

“Perhaps with other fathers, the situation would be different, but mine encourages me to move forward and develop myself. My father is my main source of confidence,” said Nagham.

With support from the International Organization for Migration’s (IOM) Enterprise Development Fund and the German Development Bank (KfW), the Elixir Jewelry team is on their way to reaching new heights.

The fund provided Nagham with business development courses where she learned skills in budgeting, business planning and marketing. She also received an investment that she used to purchase metal cutting and welding devices, and hire more women who are keeping the Elixir brand alive.

By Angela Wells, IOM

Rebuilding hope: Khawla's journey from displacement to reintegration



Baghdad, 09 March 2025 - In the heart of Salah al-Din Governorate, amidst the ruins of war and the scars of displacement, stands Khawla Saleh, a 35-year-old woman who has endured a harrowing journey from loss to hope.

Fleeing to safety

She had no choice when she was forced to flee Baiji with her husband, a member of ISIS, and their children, leaving behind everything she had ever known. As battles raged and airstrikes intensified, she found herself in the city of Al-Qaim, where she sold all her gold to pay smugglers for passage to Al-Hol Camp in Syria in 2016, hoping to

survive. Inside the camp's confines, she gave birth to three children, who grew up without any official documents proving their identity. Then, in 2021, her life changed when her husband passed away, and with his death, the chains that had bound her for years were finally broken.

Her difficult journey home

In 2022, Khawla returned to her homeland. But home was not as she had left it. Her house had been reduced to blackened walls and a missing roof, offering no protection from the bitter cold of winter or the scorching summer heat. She pointed to a cramped room,

barely livable, and said, "Here, we endured the hardest days. Hunger, cold, fear... all we had was patience."

Amidst this suffering, hope emerged. With support from the United Nations Development Programme and through the "CRRISA" project under the Social Cohesion Programme, her home was restored. Today, Khawla stands in her rebuilt home, smiling for the first time in years: "I am grateful to everyone who helped me. Now, my children go to school, we have a roof over our heads, and even my parents, who lost their home, are living with me."

Dreaming and working for a better life

But her ambitions do not stop here. Despite her improved circumstances, she continues to seek a way to support her family. With determination and resilience, she says, "I want to start my own business. I don't want to rely on the assistance I receive from neighbors—I want to be self-sufficient." As we left Khawla's home, it was no longer just a repaired house but a life rebuilt. The once-blackened walls had turned pristine white, the once-cold space had become warm, reflecting a new light for her and her children's future. And through it all, her smile remained a living testament to resilience and the reality that returning home is not just a step, but the beginning of a new life.

UN-Habitat's nature-based rehabilitation of agricultural infrastructure in Southern Iraq is delivering results, backed by scientific evidence

Basra, 10 March 2025 - A recently published article in the International Journal of Development Research highlights how irrigation systems, tree planting, and vegetation restoration in designated Sand and Dust Storm (SDS) hotspot areas are already considered success stories, even before project completion.

The revitalization of agricultural land through biological shelterbelts is a key component.

The implementation of the project "Improved Resilience to Transboundary Sand and Dust Storms in Kuwait and Southern Iraq", funded by the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED), integrates sustainable land-use management and ecosystem restoration to rehabilitate landscapes, reverse desertification, and reduce the impact of sand and dust storms.

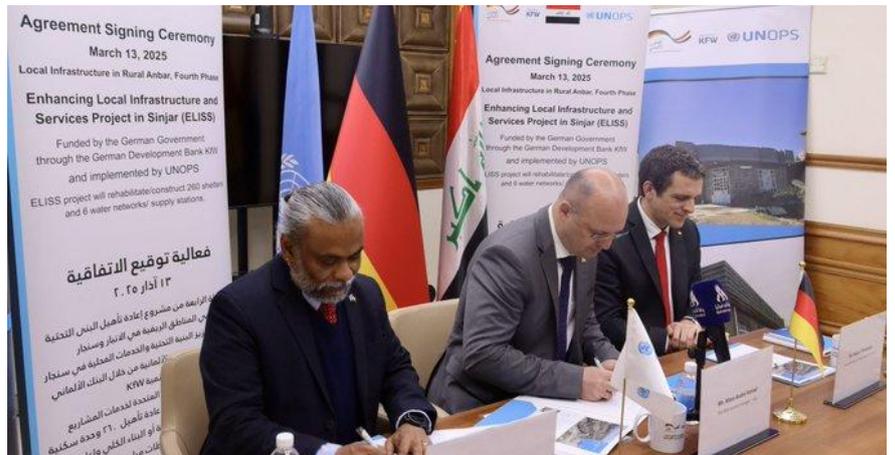


UNOPS and Germany/KfW sign a new agreement in support of local communities in Sinjar, Iraq

Baghdad, 13 March 2025 – Representatives of the German embassy in Iraq, the KfW Development Bank and UNOPS convened to celebrate the signing of the new “Enhancing Local Infrastructure and Services in Sinjar” project in support of the conflict-affected communities in Sinjar and enhance access to critical services.

With the support from the German Government, through the KfW Development Bank, UNOPS will rehabilitate war-damaged shelters and infrastructure such as water stations as well as provide capacity building training to relevant stakeholders in Sinjar. To contribute even more responsibility to Iraq’s context, stakeholders will involve intensely women during the implementation process, and whenever possible, also include climate-friendly components to the designs.

Roland Westebbe, Chargé d’Affaires of the German Embassy in Iraq said: “The new project marks an important milestone in the highly successful cooperation between the German and Iraqi governments. I am pleased that this strong partnership has endured for the past five years and throughout the three phases of the “Local Infrastructure in Rural Anbar” project. I hope to have the opportunity to witness firsthand the progress and achievements of this project,



supporting the Iraqi people as they rebuild their lives.”

Marc-Andre Hensel, Director of KfW in Iraq stated: “In 2020 we started our collaboration with UNOPS, signing the first financing agreement for the “Local Infrastructure in Rural Anbar” project. It is great to see that the project has been a success, despite all the challenges. Many rural areas in Iraq still lag behind and it is quite obvious in Sinjar which is possibly one of those areas that are least developed in Iraq overall and are in need of a lot of support. This project is about helping people to return from the camps and from displacement back to their original places and to have a place to start from.”

“Today marks another significant

milestone in UNOPS partnership with the German Government and KfW Development Bank, underlining our common commitment to sustainable development in conflict-affected areas.” said Anil Chandrika, UNOPS Country Manager in Iraq. “Building on the successes of previous LIRA projects in Anbar and Ninewa, the new intervention will enhance the living standards of community members, fostering their resilience, especially in the hard-hit district of Sinjar.” he added.

The project intends to contribute to SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation, SDG 7: Affordable and Clean Energy, SDG 9: Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure, and SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities.

Congratulations to the Zubair Alliance

Basra, 22 March 2025 - The Zubair Alliance was officially formed under the SAAVI project, marking a significant step toward strengthening agricultural cooperation in Basra Governorate. This achievement was achieved through an organized process characterized by credibility,

transparency, and alignment with the needs of the broader agricultural community.

The formalization process took two months and involved several key steps. It began with coordination with the General Farmers Association, followed by engagement with the Zubair

Association in Basra. To ensure compliance with legal frameworks, the alliance members' data was verified against the association's records, and field visits were conducted to confirm that all members owned agricultural land. A series of meetings between the alliance leadership and the association led to the development of a shared vision, resulting in a strategic plan.

Formalizing the alliance offers several advantages. It enhances credibility, expands networking opportunities, and provides access to shared resources such as training, funding, and market updates. It also strengthens the alliance's collective voice in advocacy, enabling it to influence agricultural policies and practices.

SAAVI is a project funded by the European Union and implemented by the International Trade Centre in partnership with the Norwegian Refugee Council.



UN-Habitat and the Government of Japan expand efforts to support returnees in Northern Iraq



Erbil, 01 April 2025 – UN-Habitat and the Government of Japan are pleased to announce the expansion of their collaborative efforts to support returnees and the most vulnerable people in Northern Iraq in close coordination with the Government of Iraq. With a new contribution from the Government of Japan to the Japan Village Project in Mosul, an additional 24 families will receive social housing units, increasing the village's capacity to accommodate a total of 500 returnees in Ninewa Governorate. The initiative will continue to enhance the living conditions in the Rajm Hadeed Neighbourhood and its surroundings, thanks to the ongoing collaboration with Japanese and local private entities, such as TOYOTA Iraq and Sardar Group, under the Public-Private Partnerships. These entities are contributing to the complex by improving water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) facilities, and establishing community resources such as a library, public toilets and a multi-purpose sports court illuminated by solar panel streetlights. Furthermore, new awareness-raising activities will be conducted to better prepare 1,000 returnees for the effects of climate change in the region.

The vocational training component will

also be expanded to replicate the successful initiative of providing training in construction and green economy industries to another 100 unemployed youth. Trainees will be granted work opportunities to apply their newly acquired skills while contributing to the construction of the housing complex and urban public infrastructure. This approach enhances their job prospects, enables them to support their families, and allows them to be part of community improvements. One of the first 100 beneficiaries of the Japan Village Project's vocational training is Samer Hassan Muhsen, a 40-year-old father of five and Mosuli returnee. Originally holding a computer diploma, Samer embraced the carpentry training programme and is now contributing to rebuilding the city and supporting the return of other families. He shares, "The training was an exciting opportunity to acquire new skills while contributing to a project that benefits my family and my community. With the skills and experience I have gained, I feel confident about opening my own business in the future and offering training to young people seeking new opportunities."

Since the Japanese Fiscal Year of 2004, the Government of Japan has been one

of the biggest partners in UN-Habitat's Iraq Programme, supporting critical initiatives to rebuild communities and strengthen resilience. The Japan Village is the second Social Housing Complex following the successful completion of Bab Sinjar Housing Complex built in Mosul as a result of this longstanding cooperation. Upon its completion, the project will have benefited over 3,000 returnees, providing them with access to adequate housing and improved living conditions, thus helping them close the displacement chapter of their lives.

"The Government of Japan will continuously support the efforts of the Government of Iraq in rebuilding communities and improving the lives of returnees in Iraq. The Japan Village Project, in partnership with UN-Habitat combined with great support by Japanese companies, exemplifies resilience and sustainable development, combining housing, public services, economic growth, and well-being," emphasized His Excellency Mr. Akira Endo, the Ambassador of Japan to Iraq.

Muslim Qazimi, Head of UN-Habitat Iraq, highlighted the broader impact of this collaboration: "The expansion of the Japan Village Project, which will now extend its benefits to returnees from Mosul, represents a broader understanding and embracing of UN-Habitat's mandate, beyond just our efforts. By promoting "Housing at the Centre" approach, we are making urban development a catalyst for opportunities. It is impressive to observe how this project is attracting interest from multiple levels of partners, both public and private, who share our committed to provide a better urban future for returnees in Iraq."

The Japan Village Project is indeed serving as a hub for attracting stakeholders interested in cooperation. The ongoing public-private partnerships showcase a shared commitment to addressing the urgent housing needs of displaced families while supporting the government of Iraq and local authorities in launching a comprehensive approach to community-oriented sustainable urban development. By aligning economic empowerment, environmentally conscious practices, and well-being concepts at its core, the project contributes to a safer, more stable, and sustainable urban future for all involved.



The informal settlement of Jurf Al Melah in Shatt Al Arab District, Basra, is greener thanks to wise water usage

Basra, 28 March 2025 - 1,700 trees were planted throughout the 12,000 square meter Al Ghadeer Park, built by UN-Habitat in collaboration with the European Union in Iraq. The park features a drip irrigation system suitable for Basra's arid climate and water-scarce conditions. Underground concrete water tanks prevent water loss due to high temperatures and direct solar incidence, and protect the water from pollutants and debris, ensuring clean and fresh water to keep the trees healthy all year long and the community fresher.



Fresh solutions: youth tackle tomato waste in Iraq

Mosul, 04 April 2025 - (ITC News) The story of NABU: From hackathon winners to local agricultural innovators When Zaid, a veterinarian and university lecturer, decided to enter a hackathon to dream up innovations in agriculture, he turned to the past to find a name for his team. He chose the name NABU to honour the ancient Mesopotamian deity, revered as the god of wisdom, agricultural prosperity and abundant harvests. With this inspiration, the team was determined to tackle a pressing issue facing farmers in the Ninewa region of Iraq: tomato waste.

'We wanted to address the massive food waste during peak tomato seasons, where farmers often discard excess tomatoes,' said Zaid. 'Our goal was to transform these surplus tomatoes into valuable products.'

A meeting of minds at the hackathon

The team's journey began at the EU-funded hackathon in February, where they came together to create something that could solve a real-world problem. 'Some of us had backgrounds in agriculture, while others were involved in different initiatives, but the hackathon was where it all clicked,' said Isen, a team member with deep agricultural roots. It was here that NABU's core idea took shape: turning surplus tomatoes into dried food products.

The products they envisioned included dried tomato slices, tomato powders, and tomatoes preserved in olive oil—natural products that could be sold locally and eventually internationally. We were inspired to create value-added products that could provide both a sustainable solution for farmers and a nutritious option for consumers.

Turning vision into reality

During the hackathon, the team refined

their idea and expanded it.

'We realized that drying wasn't enough—we needed to add more value,' said Zaid. 'That's when we introduced different forms of tomato powder and even began to explore the potential health benefits of tomatoes, like extracting lycopene, known for its anti-aging and anti-cancer properties.' Collaboration during the event was crucial.

By the end of the competition, NABU had refined a business model that set them on the path to becoming local food innovators.

Expanding the vision: Rabiyan, the local brand

After winning first place and receiving a grant of 2.5 million Iraqi dinars (about \$1,900), NABU began investing in product development.

'We used the grant to scale our production process, making sure our products were fully packaged and ready for the market,' said Saja, who has a degree in physics and was instrumental in turning the vision into a tangible product. 'We're actively looking for additional funding to grow our business and increase our reach,' Isen added.

Their brand, Rabiyan, was named after a region in Mosul known for its high

tomato production. 'Rabiyan is synonymous with tomatoes in our community,' said Zaid. 'By naming our brand after this place, we wanted to highlight the local nature of our products.'

The team has been working on building customer trust in their products, especially since dried tomato products are new to the Iraqi market.

'People are interested, but we need to work harder to convince them that our product is of the highest quality,' Huda said. They have been using social media, local exhibitions, and even offering free samples to increase awareness and customer confidence.

Looking ahead, NABU aims to expand the Rabiyan brand across Iraq and into Gulf countries, with a focus on markets such as Saudi Arabia, where demand for high-quality, locally produced products is steadily increasing.

'We started with just one tomato,' said Huda. 'Now we have four products—and we're just getting started.'

The agricultural hackathon was organized by the International Trade Centre in partnership with Mosul Space under the EU-funded SAAVI project.



Recognition of Yazidi land ownership in Sinjar a historic achievement underscoring UN and Iraqi joint efforts



Sinjar, 14 April 2025 - In a landmark ceremony held at the Sinjar Municipal Directorate, the Governorate of Ninewa, Municipality of Sinjar, Real Estate Registration Department authorities launched the distribution of 1,338 ownership letters and issued approximately 100 title deeds to Yazidi residents in Dugrey and Tel Uzair Mujama'at. The Yazidis receiving these title deeds are being officially recognized as landowners for the first time in generations.

This unprecedented, large-scale issuance of title deeds is a diligent

response to the implementation of Resolution No. 227, approved by the Iraqi Council of Ministers in March 2025. Without the regulation, beneficiaries were faced with a fee of 20,000 Iraqi Dinars per square meter to obtain their title deeds, amounting to approximately USD 6,000 per household.

UN-Habitat has been actively advocating for the full waiver of payment for beneficiaries, aligning with the Prime Minister's intention to avoid placing any financial burden on them. The recently announced Council of Ministers' Resolution is a breakthrough, granting full waiver of all payments for title deeds in Yazidi communities in Sinjar and Ba'aj, and establishing a 60-day timeline for immediate implementation.

Dr. Mohamed Al Hassan, the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, commended the accomplishment: "The historic recognition of Yazidi land ownership in Sinjar marks a pivotal moment in our joint efforts towards justice and equality, and is proof of the Government of Iraq's commitment to the Yazidi community. This achievement is a tangible and solid example on advancing Durable Solutions, restoring dignity, identity, and hope to a community that has

endured unimaginable hardships."

He added: "By officially recognizing their land rights and waiving all associated burden costs, we are reaffirming the joint commitment of the United Nations and Iraq to the Yazidi people and their rightful place in Iraq's future."

This milestone would not have been possible without the sustained efforts of UN-Habitat, whose work has been instrumental in advancing housing, land, and property rights for vulnerable communities.

Over a decade of dedicated efforts by UN-Habitat and its partners advocating for housing, land, and property rights have involved high-level dialogues, policy development, and on-the-ground support to ensure that the Yazidi people can access their rights. UN-Habitat has supported 103,091 individuals (44.85% women/55.15% man) with the issuance of 18,218 land occupancy certificates, which are now recognized and accepted as evidence for title deeds.

In the coming months, it is expected that all ownership letters will be distributed and upgraded to title deeds. Building on this success, more land occupancy certificates issued by UN-Habitat will also be upgraded to title deeds, further solidifying the rights of Yazidi landowners.

Qazimi: "By officially recognizing Yazidi land ownership rights and waiving all associated costs, we are not only restoring their rights but also paving the way for a future where they can live with dignity."

Baghdad, 17 April 2025 - The recent recognition of Yazidi land ownership in Sinjar is one of those rare moments when we have the opportunity to witness history unfolding before our eyes. UN-Habitat Iraq has been working closely with the Iraqi government to make this a reality for nearly a decade, with the support of partners from all over the world, and we are honoured to have our long-term contributions and partnership acknowledged in this historic moment for Iraq and the Yazidi people.

"By officially recognizing Yazidi land ownership rights and waiving all associated costs, we are not only restoring their rights but also paving the way for a future where they can live with dignity. This milestone is a

significant step towards justice and equality, and it underscores our commitment to building a brighter,

more inclusive future for all Iraqis." - Muslim Qazimi | Head of UN-Habitat Iraq



The Japan Village Project in Iraq implemented by UN Habitat Iraq Programme presented as one of the best practices



地元企業や大学との連携強化 国連ハビタット福岡本部がセミナー開催

Fukuoka, Japan, 24 April 2025 - In April, UN-Habitat Regional Office for

Asia and the Pacific (Fukuoka) hosted launching events of Platform in Tokyo

and Fukuoka aiming at strengthening partnership with Japanese private sector and academia. During the events the ongoing Japan Village Project in Iraq partnering the Japanese private entities such as TOYOTA, Sumitomo Corporation, and TOTO, funded by the Government of Japan, and implemented by Iraq Programme was presented to the participants as one of the best practices.

Iraq Programme will continuously be committed to support peacebuilding towards the durable solutions in Iraq partnering the Government of Iraq, Government of Japan, and Japanese private sector.

Dijlat Al-Khair Alliance: cultivating change in Iraq

Mosul, 30 April 2025 – (ITC News) By embracing modern techniques like solar power and greenhouse farming, the farmers of Dijlat Al-Khair are rewriting the rules of agriculture in Mosul.

In the heart of Al-Hamidat, west of Mosul, three determined farmers – Nashwan, Zaid, and Thair – joined forces under the Dijlat Al-Khair alliance. They set out to transform not only their own agricultural practices but the future of farming in their region. Through resilience, innovation, and collaboration, their journey stands as a powerful testament to how community-led initiatives and development programs like SAAVI can create lasting impact.

Rooted in tradition

Nashwan, a farmer with over two decades of experience, comes from a long lineage of wheat growers. Despite their deep-rooted connection to the land, Nashwan and his peers were facing increasing challenges due to outdated techniques, unpredictable yields, and limited access to resources. Like many farmers in the region, their potential was capped not by lack of will, but by lack of support and knowledge.

That changed when they joined the SAAVI project. Nashwan recalls: 'Before we joined SAAVI, we faced many challenges. One of the biggest issues was the lack of knowledge and experience, especially when it came to modern farming techniques. We didn't have anyone to guide us or share their experiences with us. But once we got involved with SAAVI, things started to change. We learned a lot, particularly about irrigation, solar energy, and the importance of sharing knowledge with others.'

The SAAVI workshops empowered them to think collaboratively, creating WhatsApp groups for sharing insights and coordinating market deliveries.

Investing in a sustainable future

One of the alliance's most transformative decisions was to invest in solar energy. Sparked by a feasibility study in 2020, they installed solar panels in 2022 to reduce their reliance on costly fuel. The results were immediate and dramatic: not only did energy costs plummet, but farm operations became more stable, particularly in the sweltering summer months when electricity is vital.

The alliance also used their block grant funds provided by SAAVI to build greenhouses. These structures proved essential, especially in extending the growing season for tomatoes and strawberries. Now, they can offer fresh produce when others can't – allowing them to meet off-season demand and fetch premium prices.

By adopting modern irrigation lines, upgrading infrastructure, and standardizing quality for large buyers,

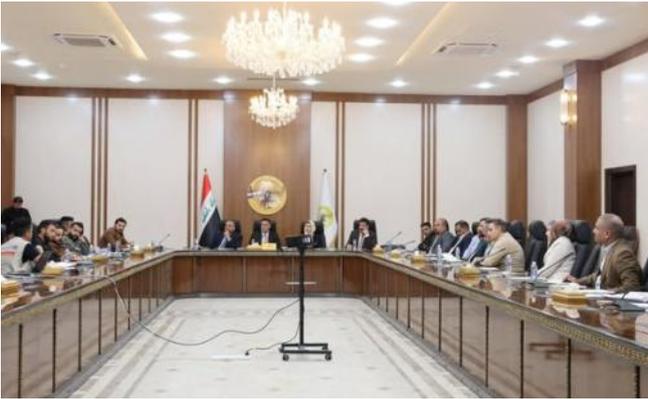
A vision for tomorrow

Looking ahead, the alliance is focused on sustaining the improvements made through SAAVI. They plan to expand their use of plastic crop covers, formalize farming organizations, and promote food security by increasing local production. They are pushing for formal registration of their operations, with aspirations of forming a company that spans across Iraq and opens pathways for export. They see the value in the By Iraqi Hands label—viewing it as a gateway to international markets.

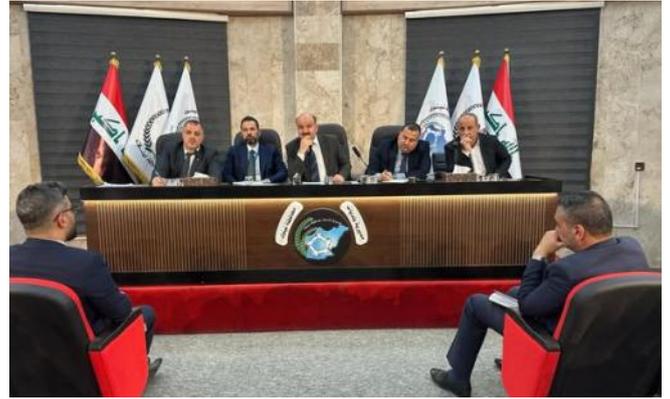
Dijlat Al-Khair's story is one of transformation—from traditional farming to a thriving, sustainable alliance rooted in knowledge-sharing and innovation. In a region shaped by resilience, their journey is building hope for a more food-secure, empowered Iraq.

The Dijlat Al-Khair Alliance today counts 152 farmer members and is one of 15 agribusiness alliances established by the SAAVI project, funded by the European Union, and implemented by the International Trade Centre (ITC) in partnership with the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC).





Salah al-Din, 16 April 2025 - Today, the Joint Coordination Forum (JCF) in Salah al-Din convened its monthly meeting, bringing together representatives from the Government, UN, and NGOs to discuss key priorities: launching Durable Solutions plan for the eastern region, addressing challenges in project implementation and improving coordination on civil documentation procedures.



Ninewa, 28 April 2025 - The 10th Ninewa Joint Coordination Forum (JCF) convened today to discuss priority needs in Ninewa Governorate, including school rehabilitation and the recovery of Sinjar villages to support the voluntary return of IDPs. The meeting, which brought together representatives from the local government, United Nations and NGOs, also discussed the impact of funding changes.



Diyala, 29 April 2025 - Today, the Joint Coordination Forum (JCF) in Diyala convened to discuss key priorities for Diyala Governorate, including the impacts of climate change, environmental pollution, water inflows to the Diyala and Tigris rivers, and dam storage levels. The meeting, attended by representatives from the government, the United Nations, and NGOs, also addressed organizational programmes and anticipated challenges for 2025.

Agriculture

President Rashid meets FAO Head to boost Iraq's Food Security

Cairo, 04 March 2025 - In a significant move to enhance Iraq's agricultural sector, President of the Republic Abdul Latif Jamal Rashid met with Kyan Akram Jaf, Head of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), on the sidelines of the Extraordinary Arab Summit.



Strengthening the date palm value chain in Basra!

Basra, 06 March 2025 - As the pollination season begins, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture and with support from European Union in Iraq, is empowering farmers by distributing Date Palm Pollinator Dispensers. This initiative: enhances efficiency;

reduces production costs; and boosts productivity.

Palm Pollinator dispensers allow farmers to pollinate more trees daily without climbing; ensure higher yields; provide safer operations, and support sustainable farming and Iraq's agricultural future.



Her story, our future: women of Al-Qataniya



Sinjar, 05 March 2025 - When Dunya hears the hum of hair clippers in her salon, she thinks of survival.

She was just 13 when ISIL militants stormed her village. One moment, she was a carefree child, the next, she was running for her life. Four days in the mountains of Sinjar, without food or water, before she and her family finally found refuge in a displacement camp. The years blurred together — surviving, waiting, hoping.

Now, at 24, she has built something entirely her own. A salon, buzzing with life, where women come not just for haircuts but for something deeper—a sense of normalcy, of joy, of reclaiming themselves.

“The first day I opened my salon, I felt hope again,” Dunya says, her eyes bright with quiet determination. With the support of UNDP and Nadia’s Initiative, she received business training, a grant, and the confidence to start her own small business. Today, she is a breadwinner for her family, a businesswoman, and a symbol of resilience.

“We can’t change the past,” she says, “but we can build our future.”

Najoua’s Harvest of Strength

Najoua still remembers the moment she let go.

She was 16 when ISIL came. She had clutched her blind mother’s hand as they ran, guiding her through the chaos, desperate to keep her safe. For

eight nights, they stayed in the mountains, cold, hungry, and afraid. When the time came to escape, her two elderly aunts couldn’t make the journey down. She had to leave them behind.

“I felt like it was the end of the world,” she says.

But it wasn’t.

Now, at 26, Najoua is rebuilding. She is married, raising three children, and working on her father-in-law’s farm. Through UNDP’s training, she learned modern farming techniques, how to use drip irrigation, and how to turn her labor into a livelihood.

“Farming taught me patience and strength,” she says. “When I see healthy crops, I know we are growing not just food, but hope.”

Her farm now sustains three families. And every morning, as she walks through the green fields, she remembers that no matter what was taken from her, she still has the power to create.

Laila’s Thread of Hope

Laila sews in silence, her needle stitching together more than just fabric—she is sewing a future.

When ISIL came, her father and brother disappeared. She, her mother, and sisters fled to a displacement camp in Duhok. Then, in 2019, another heartbreak—her mother and younger sisters were granted asylum in France. She has not seen them since.

“The first week after they left, I couldn’t sleep. The silence was too loud.”

Left behind with her brothers, Laila had no choice but to be strong. She found vocational training in sewing and business development, a program designed to help displaced women build their futures. She learned how to make dresses, take orders, and manage a business.

Now, she dreams of opening her own sewing workshop. “I don’t want my past to define me,” she says. “This is my way forward.”

Hana’s Fabric of Resilience

Hana was nine years old when she lost everything.

Her childhood ended the night her family fled to the mountains. Two days without sleep, her tiny hands clutching her mother’s dress, terrified that the danger was closing in.

They made it to a camp in Duhok, but survival came at a cost. Eight years of waiting, of longing for a home that no longer existed. When they finally returned to Al-Qataniya, what greeted them was devastation. Their house was rubble, their neighborhood a ghost town.

But Hana refused to give up.

She joined a vocational training program, learning fabric and textiles, preparing to open her own shop. Every stitch is a statement: We are still here. We will rebuild.

“The market is coming back,” she says. “Shops are opening, people are returning. I want to be part of that.”

The Unbreakable Women of Al-Qataniya

The women of Al-Qataniya have survived the unimaginable. They have lost homes, family members, entire pieces of their past. And yet, they rise. Through small businesses, farming, and vocational training, they are taking back control of their lives. They are mothers, daughters, entrepreneurs, and survivors. They are the beating heart of a community that is finding its way home.

This International Women’s Day, we honor them—not just for surviving, but for thriving. For choosing to build when everything was taken. For choosing to dream when hope seemed impossible.

For proving that no war, no displacement, no loss can ever silence the strength of a woman determined to rebuild.

By Christine Domingo Cool, Team Lead, Partnerships, Advocacy and Communications Team (PACT), UNDP



Roots of change: Ibrahim's journey to reclaim life and land



Sinjar, 06 March 2025 - Ibrahim Haji, a 50-year-old farmer from Sinuni, Sinjar, knew loss all too well. In 2014, when ISIS swept through the region, he lost everything: his home, his livelihood, and his sense of security. The destruction was not just physical; it cut deep emotionally, leaving Ibrahim withdrawn and struggling to see a path forward. His once-thriving agricultural life was reduced to memories, and rebuilding seemed impossible.

But then, an unexpected opportunity appeared. When the Community Security and Integration Process (CSIP) project was launched, Ibrahim saw a glimmer of hope. Determined to turn his life around, he eagerly joined the vocational training program focused on modern farming techniques and sustainable agriculture. The training offered him more than just

new skills — it gave him the chance to rebuild his spirit.

Ibrahim immersed himself in the 50-day program, learning vital techniques in herb cultivation, soil rehabilitation, and combating desertification with drought-resistant crops and water-efficient irrigation systems. He also took part in psychosocial support sessions that helped him regain confidence and learn to manage stress,

reconnecting with his community in ways he hadn't thought possible.

With new skills in hand, Ibrahim established a small herb farm near his home, growing local plants that thrive in the arid conditions of Sinuni. Not only did this provide a steady income for his family, but it also contributed to soil restoration and the fight against desertification in the region. Inspired by his own transformation, Ibrahim became an advocate for sustainable agriculture, encouraging others to adopt eco-friendly practices.

Looking back on his journey, Ibrahim reflects, "This training didn't just teach me how to grow plants—it helped me grow as a person. I'm proud to be part of something bigger, helping restore our land and bringing hope to my family and neighbors."

Ibrahim's success story is a powerful reminder of resilience and the power of opportunity. Thanks to Aid Gate Organization (AGO) and support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Ibrahim has transformed his life and become a beacon of hope for his community.



Empowering rural women and enhancing their capacity to adapt to climate change

Najaf, 07 March 2025 - Under the patronage of the Minister of Agriculture, Dr. Abbas Jabbar Al-Maliki, and under the Climate Wise Women Initiative, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, local government in Najaf, and support from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), launched today a training workshop for local facilitators. The initiative aims to empower rural women and enhance their capacity to adapt to climate change.

The opening ceremony was attended by FAO Iraq Representative, Dr. Salah El Hajj Hassan, Directors of Agriculture and Water Resources in Najaf, and representatives from the Iraqi Women's



Empowerment Directorate of the Council of Ministers and the Ministry of Agriculture, reaffirming the importance of supporting rural women in Iraq.

In this workshop, Master Trainers who

previously received training in Basra will transfer their expertise to local facilitators and agricultural engineers to support rural communities and promote the adoption of climate-smart agricultural practices.

FAO on X

Baghdad, 14 March 2025 - The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) applauds the decision of the High Water Committee, chaired by Prime Minister Mr. Mohammed S. Al-Sudani, to encourage farmers to adopt smart agricultural practices in rice cultivation to enhance water efficiency. The decision aligns with the efforts of FAO, the Ministries of Water Resources, Agriculture, Environment, and local entities to promote sustainable solutions as part of the Swedish International Development Agency (Sida)-funded project. It reaffirms the Iraqi government's commitment to scaling up innovation, boosting water resource efficiency, and strengthening food security.

A 5 day training workshop on Irrigation Performance Assessment Tool held in Basra

Basra, 20 April 2025 - As part of synergizing between WaPOR project for monitoring land and water productivity through remote sensing, with Sida project to enhance climate resilience of vulnerable agriculture households in Southern Iraq, FAO held a 5 day

training workshop on Irrigation Performance Assessment Tool.

The workshop delivered advanced training on the WaPOR platform, covering: irrigation performance assessment; evapotranspiration monitoring, yield and productivity

analysis; and soil and crop issue diagnosis.

It emphasized knowledge transfer for sustainable resource management.

This workshop addresses recommendations from the Diwani Order Committee chair by the Prime Minister on agricultural fact-finding, emphasizing the need to develop remote sensing capabilities in key ministries using satellite imagery and geospatial data for evidence-based decision-making.

It was opened by Salah ElHajj Hassan, FAOR and Dr. Abdulbasit Amin, Head of the Statistics Dep., at the MoAWR in Kurdistan region.

Experts from Baghdad, Maysan, Dhi Qar & Erbil attended, representing the Ministries of Agriculture, Water Resources, Environment, Commission of Statistics & GIS & University of Mosul



FAO and the Agriculture College host an educational field day for senior and postgraduate students

Basra, 22 April 2025 - To strengthen collaboration between academia and international organizations, FAO partnered with the Agriculture College at the University of Basra to host an educational field day for senior and postgraduate students.

The event occurred on palm farms in Safwan region, providing hands-on learning in real-world settings.

Students toured palm farms, gaining insights into modern farming protocols developed by the college with FAO and local farmers. Topics included: preparing liquid fertilizers; producing biofertilizers; using rice husks to purify

water, reduce salinity, and enhance soil health.

The field day featured inspiring exchanges with local farmers, who showcased: sustainable farming

through date palm cultivation, recycling plant and date residues to boost productivity and reduce waste, real stories linking science, sustainability, and community.



Six major Iraqi retailers meet to form long-term partnerships with SAAVI's agribusiness alliances

Baghdad, 28 March 2025 - Congratulations to International Trade Center's SAAVI partners!

With Eid al-Fitr just around the corner, ITC is excited to share some great news!

Last week, six major Iraqi retailers met

to form long-term partnerships with SAAVI's agribusiness alliances. These fruitful discussions resulted in the signing of 24 contracts, strengthening the essential link between farmers and retailers.

Thanks to funding from the European

Union, this milestone represents an important step toward a more resilient and sustainable agricultural sector.

We extend our sincere thanks to our funder, our NRC partners, and the retailers who contributed to this success!

Developing the tomato value chain in Southern Iraq

Basra, 26 March 2025 - Supported by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Ministry of Agriculture, and European Union in Iraq funding, farmers are now



harvesting new varieties of high-quality tomatoes grown in greenhouses — a significant step toward more sustainable and productive farming. Growing new tomato varieties in

greenhouses is part of ongoing efforts to develop tomato value chain in southern Iraq through smart agriculture practices.

Why it matters:

- ✓ Higher productivity & quality
- ✓ Better marketing opportunities
- ✓ Improved flavor, size, uniformity & shelf life.

Small intervention, huge impact!

Farmers shifted from traditional 30kg boxes to 5kg carton boxes — significantly enhancing marketing potential.

- ✓ Improved quality and shelf life
- ✓ Higher market value
- ✓ Reduced costs and waste
- ✓ Increased farmers' income.

Training and supplying innovative tools together make the difference!

Basra, 27 March 2025 - With support from the European Union in Iraq, and in partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) is building on its efforts in Basra — now training date palm farmers on how to effectively and safely use the pollination devices they've received. This practical training empowers farmers to:

- Confidently use modern tools in their daily work
- Improve farm practices through new techniques

- Share knowledge within their communities
- Maximize the impact of the

equipment provided

A step forward for sustainable palm cultivation in Iraq.



FAO Iraq team conducted a follow-up mission in Sulaymaniyah related to Seedbank Project

Sulaymaniyah, 10 April 2025 - As part of ongoing cooperation on the Gene Bank initiative (Seedbank), funded by the European Union in Iraq, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Iraq team conducted a follow-up mission in

Sulaymaniyah.

The team reviewed nursery rehabilitation at Hawari Shar Park, discussed upcoming Seedbank construction, and assessed staff training efforts with the Technical Committee and local partners. FAO

Iraq acknowledges and extends its sincere thanks to local and national partners, as well as the European Union in Iraq, for their continued cooperation and support in preserving Iraq's plant genetic resources.

The Government of Iraq and FAO: expanding adoption of climate-smart agriculture in rice cultivation

Najaf, 14 April 2025 - As part of the project to strengthen the climate resilience of farming households in southern Iraq, funded by Sida - Styrelsen för Internationellt Utvecklingssamarbetemarbete (Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency), a planning consultation was held at the Al Mishkhab Rice Research Station – Najaf, to discuss scaling up successful field models.

The Ministries of Agriculture, Water

Resources, Environment, the Najaf Agriculture Directorate, and the Directorate of Agricultural Extension and Training reviewed progress and discussed technical aspects such as site selection, seedling and seed supply, agricultural research, and training and extension programmes.

The meeting concluded with recommendations to be submitted to relevant authorities for official endorsement and implementation in the coming weeks.

FAO reaffirmed its commitment to supporting farmers through innovation and collaboration to build more climate-resilient rural livelihoods.



FAO showcases climate-smart solutions and local success stories at Baghdad's 16th Agricultural Week exhibition

Baghdad, 21 April 2025 – Under the patronage of H.E the Prime Minister of the Republic of Iraq Mr. Mohammad Shiaa Al Sudani, represented by His Excellency the Minister of Agriculture, Dr. Abbas Jabr Al-Maliki, and in close partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) concluded its participation in the 16th Agricultural Week held at the Baghdad International Fair from 15 to 20 April 2025.

Held under the theme “Supporting Agriculture for a Sustainable Future”, this year’s edition of the fair focused on agricultural mechanization, production, food industries, and packaging technologies, bringing attention to the critical role of innovation and modern tools in strengthening Iraq’s agri-food systems.

FAO’s contribution to the fair reflected this theme by highlighting the Organization’s work in advancing climate-smart agriculture, innovation, and rural resilience. At its booth, FAO showcased tangible results from the use of modern and sustainable agricultural technologies, equipment, and techniques applied in farmer training. The booth also featured high-quality local products developed by partners through value chain development programmes, providing them with increased visibility and marketing opportunities.

These achievements were made possible through FAO-led interventions implemented in close collaboration with governmental partners, and with the generous support of partners including the European Union, Global Affairs Canada (GAC), the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), the Governments of Norway and the



Netherlands, and the Global Environment Facility (GEF).

“FAO’s presence at the 16th Agricultural Week reflects our deep commitment to supporting Iraq’s agricultural transformation. Through our strong collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and with the valuable support of our donors, we are helping to build resilient livelihoods, strengthen value chains, and promote innovation that serves both people and planet. I also take this opportunity to congratulate His

modern agricultural solutions that meet the needs of today and tomorrow, and we are proud of this strategic partnership,” said H.E. Dr. Abbas Jabr Al-Maliki.

During his visit, H.E. Dr. Abbas Jabr Al-Maliki also honored FAO with the Shield of Creativity and Excellence in recognition of the Organization’s outstanding participation in the fair.

Throughout the week, the FAO booth attracted around 3000 visitors from a wide array of sectors, particularly agriculture students and recent



Excellency the Minister of Agriculture and the organizers for the success of this 16th edition,” said Salah El Hajj Hassan, FAO Representative in Iraq.

The fair also featured a visit to the FAO booth by H.E. Dr. Abbas Jabr Al-Maliki, Minister of Agriculture, who interacted with the producers and partners. The Minister praised the quality of the showcased products and acknowledged FAO’s contributions in advancing the agriculture sector in Iraq.

“The partnership between the Ministry of Agriculture and FAO is a model of effective cooperation. We highly value FAO’s efforts in empowering farmers, supporting rural communities, and introducing

graduates, government officials, diplomats, and members of the farming community. The booth served as a platform for dialogue, learning, and visibility for beneficiaries’ efforts.

FAO remains fully committed to supporting Iraq in building a sustainable agriculture sector—placing the empowerment of youth, women, and vulnerable rural populations at the heart of its interventions.

This initiative directly contributes to the achievement of several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), and SDG 13 (Climate Action)—advancing a more resilient, inclusive, and sustainable agricultural future for Iraq.

Building entrepreneurial skills to support MSMEs and job creation in Iraq



Erbil, 26 February 2025 - (ILO News) Funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS), the International Labour Organization (ILO) supports the development of existing micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) and aspiring entrepreneurs in Iraq through entrepreneurial skills training. The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, supports this training through "Promoting Employment and Employability among Refugees, IDPs and Host Communities focusing on Women, PWDs, and Youths in Northern Iraq" partnership; Italy also provides funding to this programme through the project "Towards more and better employment through enhanced to private sectors in southern Iraq – with a focus on green business".

Under this initiative, selected trainees from the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MoLSA) in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI), the Central Bank of Iraq, the Chamber of Industries, universities, the Directorates of Youth and Sport, directorates of private sector development in the Ministry of Trade (MoT), banks, and non-governmental

organisations (NGOs) have received the "Start and Improve Your Business (SIYB)" training by the ILO. This advanced entrepreneurship and business management training provides participants with the skills to sustainably support existing and potential entrepreneurs under these two projects in the north and south of Iraq.

The training aims to provide entrepreneurs with quality support services that will allow them to start or enhance the performance of businesses and, in turn, create employment opportunities for refugees, IDPs, and host communities.

SIYB is a comprehensive set of training materials and tools for MSMEs and potential entrepreneurs to help them develop and strengthen their management skills. It is structured into three separate training packages that are designed to respond to the progressive stages of business development, including "Generate Your Business Idea," "Start Your Business," and "Improve Your Business."

In Iraq, the global training package was adapted to the context, including sector-specific exercises and case studies, and embarked on adapting SIYB material to reflect regional and national legal, economic, and cultural

aspects, including linguistic differences. As a result, SIYB is now available in Arabic, Kurdish (Sorani and Badini dialect) languages to ensure widespread outreach in Iraq.

As part of the programme's activities, a 10-day Training of Trainers (ToT) workshop took place in Erbil to build the capacity of 41 trainers on the programme. Following the completion of the ToT's workshop, each trainer will train the different SIYB's training packages on the entire programme by conducting Trainings of Entrepreneurs and Trainings of Potential Entrepreneurs to fulfil their requirements as certified trainers under the coaching of the SIYB Master trainers. This will also be complemented with follow-up and consultation services for the targeted MSMEs and potential entrepreneurs.

"The Training of Trainers' methodology will ensure the sustainability of the programme in the longer-term, by creating a capable pool of national trainers from different partners, who will continue to deliver this package to potential and existing entrepreneurs beyond the project's duration. This initiative is part of the Iraq Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP) which focuses on private sector development to create more and better jobs for all" said Maha Kattaa, ILO Country Coordinator in Iraq.

The SIYB programme has been introduced in over 100 countries and adapted to meet specific national and regional needs. In Iraq, the ILO has rolled out the package through various projects that have introduced the training to national Business Development Services (BDS) providers and which support youth women, refugees, IDPs, and vulnerable host community members who are interested in setting up their own small business or improving existing ones.

Cooperatives and social solidarity economy boost in Iraq

Baghdad, 01 March 2025 - To enhance social solidarity economy (SSE) enterprises and support cooperative work, the ILO, under the PROSPECTS Iraq project, organized two key workshops from February 24 to 28. These workshops focused on empowering cooperatives in the agricultural and handicraft sectors across Iraq:

- Nineveh Governorate: Bee and handicraft cooperative associations
- Kurdistan Region: Awder Agricultural Association, a 176-member SSE entity

supporting farmers' groups, informal agricultural associations, and cooperatives

The workshops aimed to:

- Strengthen cooperative governance in line with SSE principles
- Develop sustainable business plans and economic strategies
- Guide groups through legal frameworks and registration processes
- Enhance financial transparency and member engagement

With support from ILO COOP/SSE,

Awder revised its bylaws and set a long-term action plan for economic sustainability. The next steps include capacity-building, policy advocacy, and designing agricultural economic projects to ensure long-term viability.

This initiative is part of ILO's broader commitment to advancing decent work and sustainable development through SSE in Iraq.



Five years of promoting decent work in Iraq: a journey of resilience, partnership and progress

ILO Country Coordinator for Iraq Maha Kattaa reflects of five years of ILO work to strengthen employment, social protection and economic opportunities for towards a sustainable future in Iraq.

Baghdad, 07 March 2025 - Five years ago, I arrived in Iraq to reinstate ILO presence with a deep sense of purpose, but also with the awareness that the road ahead would not be easy. I remember My first 100 days - the uncertainty, the security restrictions, the challenge of setting up a new office, and the weight of meeting high expectations. The journey from those early days to where we stand now has been one of resilience, learning and impact.

When I first arrived, Iraq was at a crossroads. Years of conflict had taken their toll on the labour market. Youth unemployment was high, social protection was limited, and many workers, especially in the informal sector, were extremely vulnerable. There was an urgent need for policies that could transition the country from crisis response to sustainable development. That was the daunting challenge before us: How do we help rebuild Iraq's labour market in a way that promotes social justice, decent work and dignity for all?

Today, as I reflect on the past five years of promoting decent work in Iraq, I see not just challenges but incredible progress and achievements made possible by the commitment of Iraq's government and social partners, and the resilience of its people.

Building a strong foundation: The ILO's first office in Iraq

One of our initial milestones in 2020 was establishing the ILO's first coordination office in Baghdad. The office was not just a physical space; it was a symbol of our long-term commitment to Iraq's workforce. It allowed us to work more closely with government institutions, employers and workers to address the country's most pressing labour market challenges. We supported our constituents and partners to launch Iraq's first-ever Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP) 2019-2024, a strategic roadmap that prioritized job creation and economic development, strengthening social protection and labour rights, and promoting social dialogue and fair labour governance.



This framework has guided everything the ILO has done in Iraq since.

Milestone achievements: transforming Iraq's labour market

One of the proudest moments in this journey was the passing of Iraq's Social Security and Pensions Law No. 18 – a landmark reform that expanded coverage to informal workers and strengthened protections for Iraq's workforce. This was a collective achievement, made possible by years of advocacy, technical support and policy dialogue by Iraq's government and worker and employer representatives, with the dedicated support of the ILO. Today, workers have access to better social security, towards ensuring that no one is left behind. To complement this, a national awareness campaign was launched to educate workers and employers on their rights and responsibilities under the new law, making social protection a reality, not just a policy.

In a country where unemployment remains high, investing in skills and employment programmes was critical. The ILO worked closely with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA), Ministry of Planning, Ministry of Youth, the Higher Council for Youth and other

stakeholders to introduce various initiatives, including skills training, green jobs and entrepreneurship and access to finance programmes. We also initiated a targeted public works programmes that created thousands of temporary jobs in specific governorates while rebuilding critical infrastructure, turning employment into a tool for both economic recovery and social stability. I am proud to relate that these initiatives among others helped decrease the unemployment rate from 16.5% in 2021 to 13.5% in 2024.

Through the ILO's various programmes and initiatives, we focused on creating job opportunities for internally displaced persons (IDPs), Syrian refugees, and host communities. For me, the most powerful moments have been visiting these projects and seeing firsthand the impact of decent work on people's lives: a young woman starting her own business, a refugee securing stable employment, a father finding dignity through work after years of displacement.

From the beginning of the ILO's renewed journey in Iraq, we knew that sustainable progress requires strong institutions. We have worked closely with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, trade unions, and employer organizations to strengthen labour inspection systems, workplace safety



Five years of promoting decent work in Iraq: A journey of resilience, partnership and progress *(continued)*



standards, and social dialogue. Through training labour inspectors and social partners, we have helped Iraq move closer to international labour standards and ensured that decent work is not just a goal but a daily reality for many workers across the country.

Scaling up: From hundreds of thousands to \$90 Million in funding

In the early days of the ILO's renewed presence in Iraq, funding for our work in the country was modest; the few hundred thousand dollars were barely enough to cover operational costs and small-scale initiatives. However, through strategic partnerships, evidence-based advocacy and demonstrated impact, we gained the trust of donors and development partners. Today, we have mobilized over US \$90 million in funding, supporting large-scale employment,

social protection and labour market governance programmes across the country. This funding has allowed us to scale up interventions, increase support to national partners, reach more beneficiaries and create systemic change.

Establishing the Operations Support Unit OSU: A backbone for delivery

As our portfolio expanded, so did the need for a strong operational backbone. In response, we established the Operations Support Unit (OSU), a dedicated back-office structure that ensures the smooth implementation of all our projects in Iraq. This has significantly improved our ability to deliver impact at scale, ensuring that every dollar invested translates into meaningful change for Iraq's workers and businesses.

Lessons learned and the road ahead

Five years in Iraq have taught me many lessons about resilience, about the power of partnerships, and about the ability of people to rebuild even in the toughest of circumstances.

As we look ahead, there is still much to do. Youth unemployment remains a challenge, women's labour force participation is low, and the informal sector continues to grow. But I remain optimistic because I have seen what is possible when the right policies, partnerships and political will come together.

The past five years have shown us that change is possible, but it requires persistence, trust and commitment from all stakeholders.

When I think back to my first meetings

in Baghdad, where I was told that my presence here would be challenging, I can't help but smile. Because, yes, it was challenging - but it was also rewarding beyond measure. I have had the privilege of working alongside some of the most dedicated government officials, trade unionists, employer representatives, business leaders and community advocates I have ever met. Their passion and determination to improve Iraq's labour market have been the driving force behind everything the ILO has accomplished in the country.

Above all, I am grateful for the resilience of Iraq's workers: the men and women who, despite the difficulties, show up every day to build a better future for their families and their country. They are at the heart of this journey.

Finally, I must acknowledge that none of the progress made in Iraq over the past five years would have been possible without the dedication, expertise and resilience of the ILO team. From policy development to field implementation, they have been at the centre of every initiative, advising, coordinating, training and advocating for decent work and social justice.

So, as we step into the next phase of our work in Iraq, I do so with renewed energy and a deep sense of purpose. Because I know that, together, we can continue to make decent work a reality for all.

By Maha Kattaa- ILO Country Coordinator in Iraq.

ILO concludes a series of training workshops as part of the national awareness campaign on social security in Iraq and Kurdistan

Erbil, 06 March 2025 - The ILO concluded a series of training workshops as part of the National Awareness Campaign on Social Security in Iraq and Kurdistan, bringing together around 80 participants, including representatives from MoLSA, trade unions, chambers of commerce, media professionals, and information departments in the Kurdistan Region. Launched in November 2024 in collaboration with Lapis Agency, the campaign developed outreach materials and a communication strategy in coordination with social partners. Thousands of posters and leaflets have been produced and will be distributed strategically to ensure maximum outreach. Media

teams in Baghdad and the Kurdistan Region were also trained to sustain awareness efforts.

The dissemination strategy builds on an ILO-led study identifying the most widely used media channels among the target audience. To maximize impact, the campaign will leverage television, social media platforms, and other communication outlets. To ensure sustainability, all campaign materials will be made accessible online, and stakeholder groups have been established to oversee progress and long-term outreach.

This initiative is part of the broader ILO-led efforts under the EU-supported Joint Social Protection Programme in Iraq, implemented in collaboration with



UNICEF and WFP. The programme aims to accelerate social security reforms and strengthen policy frameworks to foster inclusive economic growth and promote decent work in Iraq.

National symposium on enhancing women's participation in the labour market



Baghdad, 08 March 2025 - Today, the International Labour Organization organized a national symposium on social dialogue to enhance women's participation in the labour market in Iraq.

The symposium witnessed broad participation from national officials from the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, representatives of workers' and employers' organizations, civil society organizations, and academics. Participants discussed the challenges hindering women's participation in the labour market, highlighting economic and social factors, working conditions, and legal frameworks that may pose

obstacles to women's integration into the workforce.

Ms. Huda Sajad, Deputy Minister of Labor and Social Affairs, emphasized that Iraq's legislative framework is conducive to women's entry into the labour market, particularly with the Labor Law No. 37 of 2015, which provides protections and benefits for women. She also highlighted the Social Security and Pension Law for Workers No. 18 of 2023, which expanded social security coverage to all workers, including the self-employed. Additionally, she stressed the need to review certain regulations regarding income-generating soft loans and called

for redefining the concept of projects to include women working from home so they can benefit from these loans.

Dr. Maha Kattaa, ILO Country Coordinator, underscored the importance of developing policies, programs, and legislation aimed at enhancing women's participation in the labour market. She advocated for leveraging international labour standards and best national and international practices to ensure gender equality and decent work opportunities for all.

During the symposium, participants exchanged views on ways to address challenges faced by women in the labour market in Iraq through social dialogue between government entities, workers' organizations, employers' organizations, and civil society groups specializing in women's issues. The discussions also led to key recommendations aimed at strengthening women's role in the workforce.

This symposium is part of the ILO's "Building Equitable and Inclusive Transformation (#BEIT)" project, funded by the European Union. It is part of broader efforts to support national policies aimed at achieving gender equality and promoting decent work, contributing to a more inclusive and sustainable labour market in Iraq.

Iraq completes first TRANSFORM application

Baghdad, 19 March 2025 - The first-ever application of the TRANSFORM initiative in Iraq has successfully concluded with the final training held on 23-27 February 2025 for 24 representatives of the Supreme Youth Council.

Since its launch in September 2024, more than 120 social protection practitioners from government institutions, workers' and employers' organizations, and civil society across Federal Iraq and the Kurdistan Region have embarked on an immersive learning journey to enhance rights-based social protection.

Participants explored key areas like legal frameworks, governance, and policy implementation using TRANSFORM's experiential learning approach. Through interactive discussions and practical exercises, they developed the critical thinking and leadership skills needed to drive real change in Iraq's social protection agenda.



Co-organized by the ILO, UNICEF and WFP, under the EU-funded Joint Social Protection Programme, this initiative equipped participants with essential tools to tackle poverty and inequality through stronger national social protection systems.

What's next? The movement continues! By fostering in-country expertise and

leadership, TRANSFORM is paving the way for long-term improvements in Iraq's social protection landscape. As national capacity grows, future TRANSFORM application in Iraq may focus on Monitoring & Evaluation and Shock-Responsive Social Protection, ensuring even more targeted and impactful reforms.

Iftar organized to introduce the features of the Social Security Law for workers and its implementation mechanisms

Baghdad, 24 March 2025 - Continuing the efforts of the International Labour Organization (ILO) to raise awareness about the new Pension and Social Security Law No. 18 of 2023 and highlight its benefits, and as a result of the ongoing collaboration with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, with support from the European Union through the joint social protection program with UNICEF and the World Food Programme, the ILO in Iraq and Bayt Al-Hikma organized a Ramadan evening on Monday, March 24, 2025, to

introduce the features of the Social Security Law for workers and its implementation mechanisms.

The event included an Iftar banquet and cultural activities, such as competitions with prizes and artistic performances, aiming to emphasize the importance of joining the social security system and its role in protecting workers and their families while ensuring a more stable future.

The new Social Security Law represents a significant step towards strengthening social justice, as it contributes to providing comprehensive

insurance coverage for all workers covered under its provisions, thereby enhancing social protection in Iraq.



Job creation and economic empowerment

Baghdad, 25 March 2025 - Decent work is the foundation of economic resilience and social inclusion. Under the PROSPECTS project, the International Labour Organization (ILO) is committed to creating sustainable job opportunities in Akre District through its Employment-Intensive Investment Programme (EIIP), in coordination with UNHCR. This initiative is providing meaningful employment for Syrian refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and host communities, helping them achieve financial independence and rebuild their lives. By integrating job creation with sustainable

infrastructure development, we empower communities, strengthen local

economies, and foster long-term stability.



ILO, UNICEF and WFP with the European Union through the joint social protection program organize the Social Security Football Tournament

Baghdad, 26 March 2025 - As part of the efforts of the International Labour Organization (#ILO) and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs to promote the new Pension and Social Security Law No. 18 of 2023 and raise awareness about its benefits, and with support from the European Union through the joint social protection program with UNICEF and the World

Food Programme, the Social Security Football Tournament concluded on Wednesday, March 26, 2025.

The tournament, held in Sadr City from 17-26 March 2025, aimed to engage local youth and workers while introducing them to the concept and benefits of the Pension and Social Security Law. It also served as a platform for the Social Security

Directorate team to offer consultations, address challenges faced by workers in registering for social security, and identify ways to enhance workers' inclusion, particularly in the informal sector and various economic activities.

In addition to raising awareness about social security with the participation of former international players from the Iraqi national team, the tournament featured interactive activities that helped correct workers' misconceptions about social security and clarify its differences from other social protection systems.

The law aims to expand social security coverage to include a broader range of workers, safeguard their rights, and facilitate the transition to a formal economy, ultimately contributing to Iraq's economic and social development.



Minister of Labour and the International Labour Organization discuss joint programmes and highlight the role of sports in promoting social security awareness



Baghdad, 16 April 2025 - Today, H.E. Mr. Ahmed Al-Asadi, Minister of Labour and Social Affairs, met with a delegation from the International Labour Organization (ILO) headed by Dr. Maha Kattaa, ILO Country Coordinator in Iraq. The meeting was attended by the Director General of the Ministry's Department of Media and Public Relations, and the Director General of the National Center for Occupational Safety and Health, as well as several former stars of Iraq's national football team.

The meeting included a review of the activities implemented under the National Decent Work Programme and discussions on the ongoing preparations for the second phase of

the programme for the period 2025–2029. This upcoming phase aims to align with Iraq's development priorities and its commitment to promoting decent work for all.

Both sides discussed ways to strengthen labour market governance and develop national legislation related to labour, occupational safety and health (OSH), and trade union organization. The discussion also addressed the expansion of social security coverage and raising awareness about the new Labour Retirement and Social Security Law.

Minister Al-Asadi emphasized that sports, especially football, are an effective communication tool for raising public awareness, particularly among

youth. He underscored the importance of involving national sports figures in social awareness campaigns to promote a culture of social security and encourage citizens to register in the social security system, reducing reliance on public sector jobs.

The former national team players present at the meeting expressed their willingness to contribute to sporting events that incorporate awareness messages about workers' rights and social security. They also supported the idea of leveraging sports occasions and matches as platforms to spread these messages.

At the conclusion of the meeting, the Minister praised the ILO's continued technical support in developing labour-related legislation and policies that promote rights at work. He also expressed his appreciation for the ILO's positive engagement with the Ministry's proposal to use sports as a tool for awareness and development. In recognition of their valuable contributions, the Minister presented commemorative shields to the ILO delegation and former football stars.

Dr. Maha Kattaa reaffirmed the ILO's readiness to continue its constructive collaboration with the Ministry, workers' organizations, and employers' organizations to achieve the goals of the Decent Work Programme and advance Iraq's economic and social development.

Iraq holds first National Conference on occupational heat stress in response to climate change challenges

Baghdad, 24 April 2025 - As part of the Building Equitable and Inclusive Transformation (BEIT) project funded by the European Union, the International Labour Organization (ILO), in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and social partners from workers' and employers' organizations, held the first national conference on occupational heat stress. The event aimed to discuss the impacts of climate change on the work environment and explore ways to protect workers in Iraq from the increasing risks of heat stress.

The conference brought together high-level officials from the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the Ministry of Planning, the Ministry of Construction, Housing, Municipalities and Public Works, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Environment,



and several other relevant ministries. Also in attendance were members of the Parliamentary Labour and Civil Society Committee, workers' and employers' organizations, several international organizations, and

national experts.

In his opening remarks, Mr. Ahmed Al-Asadi, Minister of Labour and Social Affairs, stated: "Heat stress is no longer just a passing health condition. It has become a real occupational hazard that

Iraq holds first National Conference on occupational heat stress in response to climate change challenges *(continued)*

threatens the lives of thousands of workers, impacts their productivity, contributes to an increase in occupational accidents, and burdens the national economy with additional costs in terms of treatment, care, and human losses." He emphasized, "Our full commitment to adopting realistic and practical policies and procedures that enhance the ability of state institutions and employers to adapt to these challenges, through the development of national legislation."

Meanwhile, Mr. Lennart Deridder, Head of Cooperation at the European Union Delegation to Iraq, noted in his address: "Iraq is facing some of the most severe climate impacts globally. Rising temperatures, persistent drought, and frequent heatwaves are jeopardizing worker safety and the country's broader development objectives. Every Iraqi worker deserves access to a safe working environment, decent employment, and fair compensation. This is not only a matter of human dignity, but also fundamental to sustainable development and long-term economic growth. The European Union reaffirms its strong and

enduring partnership with the Government of Iraq and all national stakeholders in the pursuit of decent work, environmental sustainability, and social justice."

In the same context, Dr. Maha Kattaa, the ILO Country Coordinator in Iraq, stated: "We at the ILO are working with our partners in Iraq to ensure that climate adaptation becomes a fundamental part of occupational safety and health policies. This conference marks an important beginning for an inclusive national dialogue grounded in international standards, promoting climate justice in the workplace, and driving the development of practical and comprehensive policies."

The conference featured several technical presentations on the topic of heat stress and its impact on workers' health, safety, and decent work overall. ILO reports indicate that no less than 71% of the global working population is exposed to excessive heat, resulting in an estimated 22.85 million injuries and 18,970 deaths annually. The ILO has called for the adoption of relevant international labour standards, particularly the Occupational Safety

and Health Convention, 1981 (No. 155), and the Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 2006 (No. 187), as the foundation for developing national frameworks.

The conference concluded with key recommendations, most notably: accelerating the development of comprehensive national programs to address occupational heat stress; updating legislation and procedures on occupational safety and health; and intensifying training, inspections, and field awareness efforts.

This conference is part of the activities under the "Building Equitable and Inclusive Transformation (BEIT)" project is an EU-funded initiative jointly undertaken by UN-Habitat, the International Labour Organization, and the International Trade Centre. The programme aims to drive economic growth by creating decent job opportunities, advancing Iraq's affordable and sustainable housing initiatives and strengthening the construction sector.

Big day for Small and Medium Enterprises in Iraq!

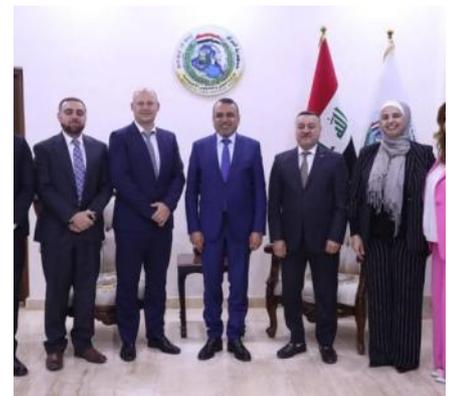
Baghdad, 29 April 2025 - Today, the ILO and KfW celebrated a major milestone for Iraqi SMEs alongside the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Ministry of Planning, Central Bank of Iraq, Iraqi Company for Banking Guarantees, Iraqi Private Banks League, Participating Financial Institutions, Iraqi Federation of Industries, Chambers of Commerce, and UN agencies.

KfW announced an additional €20 million to expand the ILO's SME financing project bringing its total

investment to €40 million over 5 years! This funding will help empower youth, women, and entrepreneurs all over Iraq.

The day also marked the launch of a new partnership with leading Iraqi banks and the first Steering Committee meeting of the SME Development Project.

Together, we're unlocking opportunities, creating decent jobs, and driving inclusive private sector growth across Iraq!



Security Sector Reform

Women in community policing help foster trust

Baghdad, 26 March 2025 - Women in community policing help foster trust and effectively handle sensitive cases, contributing to safer communities.

IOM and The Netherlands Embassy in Iraq remain committed to supporting the Government of Iraq in promoting women's empowerment and strengthening community policing for secure societies.

Lieutenant Colonel Basma Muzal, Director of Women's Division at the Community Police Directorate: "Women in community policing have a significant impact on society. Through their dedication, solving cases, and supporting women, they empower communities. Every success in addressing women's concerns is an act of empowerment in itself."



Safe future starts here: UNMAS and UNICEF call for urgent action to protect Iraq's children from landmine threats



Baghdad, 4 April 2025 – Landmines and explosive remnants of war continue to endanger lives in Iraq, with children among the most vulnerable. Over the past five years, at least 314, children have been killed or injured by explosive ordnance, according to United Nations official reports.

“The mission of the United Nations Mine Action Service in Iraq is to promote safety and to provide opportunities for stability and sustainable development. UNMAS will

continue to support the Government of Iraq and the Directorate for Mine Action in addressing the explosive ordnance contamination and will spare no effort to pave the way for a safe and dignified return of Iraqi displaced people and productive use of the land,” said Mr. Pehr Lodhammar, Chief of Mine Action Programme of UNMAS in Iraq.

Despite concerted efforts by national and international organizations, Iraq still faces significant dangers from

explosive ordnance. More than 2,700 square kilometers of land remain contaminated, threatening lives, hampering economic growth, limiting safe access to education and livelihoods, and preventing displaced communities from returning home safely.

Ms. Sandra Lattouf, UNICEF Representative in Iraq emphasized the urgent need for action: “Every child has the right to a safe and secure childhood—free from the threat of landmines and explosive remnants of war. These hidden dangers not only endanger lives but also deprive children of their rights to play, learn, and thrive.”

On the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action, UNMAS and UNICEF call for urgent action to protect the lives of Iraq’s most vulnerable populations, especially children, from the deadly threats posed by landmines. They reaffirm their commitment to working alongside the Government of Iraq to accelerate mine action efforts, expand risk education programmes, and strengthen protective measures — ensuring a safer, more secure future for Iraq’s children.

The impact of UNMAS activities in Iraq in 2024

Baghdad, 04 April 2025 - On the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action, we highlight the impact of UNMAS activities in Iraq in 2024.

From 1 January to 31 December 2024: Removed 2,576 explosive remnants of war (ERW), 87 improvised explosive devices (IED), four IED main charges, and 916 victim-operated improvised explosive devices (VOIED) in Ninewa governorate. Conducted 22 clearance tasks enabling rehabilitation and resumption of livelihood activities, and humanitarian actors to move forward with urgent lifesaving interventions.

218 police officers, including 31 women, were trained to be able to identify, mark and report explosive ordnance (EO). Four Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV) / Drone training courses, two Global Positioning System (GPS) training courses, one Ammunition Classification and Destruction training course, one Detectors course, four Awareness on the Dangers of Explosives (UXO - Mines - IED’s) courses, one Explosive Ordnance Disposal/ Improvised Explosive Device Disposal (EOD/IEDD) training course, one Train-the-Trainers (T3) EOD,



IEDD, one T3 GPS training course, and two of T3 Explosive Awareness training courses.

Explosive Ordnance Risk Education (EORE) sessions were delivered to 16,112 people in affected communities near areas with ongoing clearance operations. 47 humanitarian workers were trained to recognize and behave

safely in the presence of EO while working in high-risk environments.

ABOUT

Iraq is one of the most EO-contaminated countries in the world. It has approximately 2,733 square kilometers of recorded contaminated areas, including extensive and complex contamination in areas retaken from the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

According to existing national mine action data, about 26 percent of EO contamination is found in agricultural areas - preventing productive use of the land for livelihood activities; another 20 percent is found in infrastructure - hampering reconstruction efforts and access to infrastructure for services and economic opportunities; with an additional 19 percent found in roads, challenging interconnectivity in the country, and 22 percent of the contamination is blocking access to water resources.

Continued clearance of residential and agricultural areas is an important contributor and enabler for sustainable returns and development and supports broader humanitarian objectives.

WHO Iraq is advancing the digital transformation of reproductive health logistics

Baghdad, 16 March 2025 - Aligned with WHO's mandate to strengthen health systems, WHO Iraq is advancing the digital transformation of reproductive health logistics through a capacity-building on DHIS2 integration. This initiative aims to enhance supply chain management for the Family Planning Program, ensuring more efficient and data-driven service delivery.

During his visit on March 15, 2025, Dr. Ali Ardalan, WHO Acting

Representative in Iraq, reaffirmed WHO's commitment to digital health solutions. "Strengthening data-driven supply chain management is not just about efficiency—it is about ensuring every woman has access to essential reproductive health services when and where they need them," he stated. With over 100 participants actively engaged, this initiative represents a key step toward a more resilient, efficient, and digitally enabled healthcare system in Iraq.



UNHCR on X

Baghdad, 07 April 2025 - UNHCR has invested significantly in Iraq's health system, so that it is able to care for refugees and Iraqis equally with: construction of 4 new primary healthcare clinics that serve 200,000+ people; supplying medical equipment; renovating laboratories.

Joint statement by the Ministry of Health and the World Health Organization in Iraq on the occasion of the World Health Day 2025

Baghdad, 10 April 2025 - As we celebrate World Health Day, which coincides with the founding anniversary of the World Health Organization under the theme "Healthy Beginnings, Hopeful Futures", the Ministry of Health reaffirms its partnership with WHO through its commitment to improving public health by providing comprehensive primary, secondary, and specialized healthcare services.

In the area of health insurance, the Ministry has made a significant leap by endorsing and initially implementing the Health Insurance Law in Baghdad as a pilot step. In 2023, 300,000 individuals were covered in the first phase through 23 public institutions. In 2024, the number expanded to 776,000 insured individuals through 27 public institutions, along with the inclusion of private healthcare facilities under the law.

The Ministry has achieved qualitative milestones across multiple health areas, including the establishment and rehabilitation of health institutions:

1. Opening of 15 new public hospitals (general and specialized), 184 wards, operating theaters, and clinics, 116 primary health care centers and homes, and 82 popular medical clinics across Iraq.
2. Opening of over 43 specialized centers within two years, including centers for dialysis, cancer, diabetes, endocrinology, tuberculosis,

hematology, dental care, and prosthetics manufacturing and supply.

3. Rehabilitation and expansion of 164 hospitals, 21 specialized health centers, 86 primary care centers, and 28 ongoing health projects across provinces, with high completion rates expected to launch soon.

4. 385 new health projects are currently underway across Baghdad and other provinces, most of which are nearing completion.

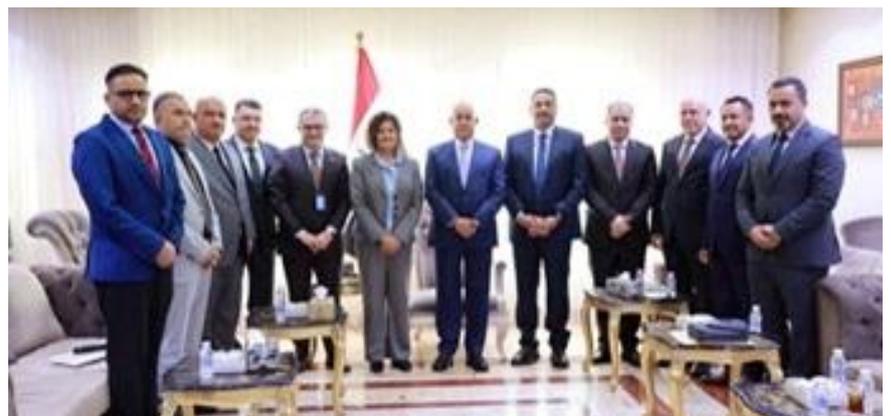
5. Establishment of 3 new health sectors, 39 main centers, and 40 satellite centers for primary health care.

In developing primary healthcare services across Baghdad and other provinces, the Ministry has achieved the following:

- Converted 48 health centers to adopt the Family Health approach
- Activated 56 multidisciplinary

health centers

- Offered family planning services at 127 outlets, including 8 centers of excellence
- Delivered early childhood development services at 709 primary health centers
- Established 160 monitoring sites for antimicrobial consumption in government institutions
- Expanded elder-friendly health centers by 75.2%
- Opened 26 geriatric clinics in public hospitals
- Provided mobile clinic services to remote areas through 68 mobile clinics
- Increased the number of neonatal screening centers to 1,090
- Launched and equipped school health units in 187 schools across Iraq
- Implemented two national campaigns to screen students and



Joint statement by the Ministry of Health and the World Health Organization in Iraq on the occasion of the World Health Day 2025

assess school environments in 2023 and 2024

- Conducted a national measles-rubella vaccination campaign in 2024 with government support
- Performed a national screening of detention centers for tuberculosis and HIV
- Rolled out the electronic health governance system (DHIS2) across 1,848 health institutions

Iraq has also earned several national and international recognitions, including:

- Declaration of Iraq as free from trachoma
 - Transitioning from GPEI (Global Polio Eradication Initiative) support to national ownership, becoming the first country in the Eastern Mediterranean Region and globally to do so
 - Gaining international accreditation for its Field Epidemiology Training Program (FETP) at both advanced and intermediate levels, becoming the first country worldwide to receive dual accreditation
 - Joining the Alliance for Transformative Action on Climate and Health (ATACH)
 - Receiving accreditation for several national laboratories, including microbiology, clinical chemistry, measles and rubella, influenza, polio, bacteriology, and newborn screening labs within the Central Public Health Laboratory
- The Ministry continues to provide preventive services for communicable diseases, public health inspections, and health education and promotion across all primary healthcare centers.



Regarding modern hospital management, the Ministry has advanced by contracting international expert companies to manage 7 modern hospitals, including:

- Al-Shaab Hospital (Baghdad)
- Imam Al-Sadiq Hospital (Babil)
- Al-Sayyab Hospital (Basra)
- Imam Al-Hassan Al-Mujtaba Hospital (Karbala)
- Martyr Al-Hakim Hospital (Maysan)
- Al-Najaf Al-Ashraf Hospital (Najaf)
- Al-Nasiriyah Hospital (Dhi Qar)

Iraq has also made significant progress in maternal, neonatal, and child health between 2018–2023. National health indicators have shown tangible improvements, such as:

- Reduction of maternal mortality to 29.6 per 100,000 live births
- Neonatal mortality down to 10.5 per 1,000
- Under-five mortality down to 19.7 per 1,000 live births
- Mortality from noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) between ages 30–70 reduced to 2.7
- Mortality from tuberculosis

decreased by 50% compared to 2015. Additionally, Iraq has maintained:

- Elimination of local malaria, polio, and schistosomiasis cases
- Further actions taken by the Ministry include:
- Expanding maternal and neonatal services in remote and conflict-affected areas
 - Increasing national investment in reproductive, maternal, and child health programs
 - Developing and implementing a comprehensive national strategy under the Universal Health Coverage framework
 - Launching digital tools to monitor pregnancy and child health
 - Strengthening community awareness, and partnerships with civil society and local stakeholders
- With support from the World Health Organization and partners, Iraq is also working on:
- Strengthening health information and early warning systems
 - Enhancing the capacity and protection of health workers
 - Developing strategies to address climate change, mental health, antimicrobial resistance, and emergency preparedness.



Baghdad, 14 April 2025 - Dr. Jamela Al-Raiby presented her credentials as the newly appointed World Health Organization (WHO) Representative in Iraq during an official meeting with Mr. Ammar Dawood, Chief of the Protocol Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The meeting provided an opportunity to reaffirm WHO's commitment to supporting Iraq's health priorities and to discuss avenues for enhancing strategic collaboration between WHO and the Government of Iraq.

WHO on X

Baghdad, 26 April 2025 - "On the occasion of World Health Day 2025, invitees shared their hopes and commitments for a healthier Iraq by adding personal messages to the Wishes Wall - a collective reflection of our shared vision for Healthy Beginnings and Hopeful Futures."

Mr. Ghulam Mohammad Isaczai, Deputy SRS, Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq attends commemoration of the World Health Day 2025

Baghdad, 24 April 2025 - Addressing a celebration on the World Health Day, UN Resident Coordinator for Iraq, Ghulam Isaczai, commended Iraq's progress in healthcare, reflected in a significant reduction in maternal and child mortality. He reaffirmed the UN's commitment to advancing Sustainable Development health goals through the Cooperation Framework, while recognizing WHO's vital support in strengthening national capacities and ensuring quality healthcare for all. Here is the full text of his opening remarks:

"Your Excellency, Dr. Saleh Al-Hasnawi, Minister of Health of the Republic of Iraq,
Your Excellencies, Ambassadors and Heads of Mission,
Representatives of the Government of Iraq and partner ministries,
Colleagues from the United Nations and international organizations,
Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,
It is both an honour and a privilege to join you today in commemorating World Health Day an occasion that not only marks the founding of the World Health Organization in 1948 but also serves as an annual call to action to uphold our shared commitment to advancing public health for all.

This year's theme, "Healthy Beginnings, Hopeful Futures," is especially timely for Iraq. It underscores the critical importance of investing in maternal, newborn, and child health as the cornerstone of sustainable development and resilient societies.

For over 75 years, the World Health



Organization has stood with nations in both peace and crisis. From coordinating global responses to cholera, Ebola, and most recently COVID-19, to supporting national immunization campaigns, rebuilding health systems in fragile settings, and setting evidence-based public health standards, WHO has been a steadfast partner in protecting lives and advancing health equity.

In Iraq, WHO continues to work in close partnership with the Ministry of Health and national institutions strengthening emergency preparedness, supporting response mechanisms, promoting public health, and advancing health systems reform.

Today, we also celebrate Iraq's remarkable progress, led by the Ministry of Health and supported by a broad coalition of national and international partners. Among the milestones:

The phased implementation of the Health Insurance Law, now covering over 776,000 individuals, is helping

to realize the vision of universal health coverage.

The expansion of Iraq's health infrastructure and upgraded services across the country is improving access to quality care at every level.

Innovative service delivery models including mobile clinics, family health centers, and school health units are extending the reach of essential services to remote and underserved areas, embodying Iraq's commitment to equity and inclusivity.

And the impact is clear:

Maternal mortality has decreased to 29.6 per 100,000 live births.

Neonatal mortality has fallen to 10.5 per 1,000 live births.

Under-five mortality is now 19.7 per 1,000 live births.

These are more than statistics they represent lives saved, families supported, and a health system on the path to resilience.

We also commend Iraq's leadership in public health, validated by the World Health Organization through the following key milestones:

Being officially declared trachoma-free, Becoming the first country globally to transition from the Global Polio Eradication - Initiative to full national ownership.

Achieving dual international accreditation for its Field Epidemiology Training Program.

On behalf of the United Nations family in Iraq, we reaffirm our steadfast support for Iraq's health agenda. Our collaboration is aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals and the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, currently under final review with the



Mr. Ghulam Mohammad Isaczai, Deputy SRSO, Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq attends commemoration of the World Health Day 2025 *(continued)*

Government ensuring that our collective efforts are strategic, coordinated, and focused on results, especially for women, children, and the most vulnerable.

Looking ahead, allow me to underscore three strategic priorities for our continued partnership:

Prioritize equity and inclusivity ensuring that all Iraqis, especially those in remote, underserved, and crisis-affected areas, have access to essential health services.

Invest in the health workforce and community engagement strengthening local leadership, partnerships with civil society, and trust in public institutions. Integrate health and climate action by building climate-resilient health systems capable of anticipating, preparing for, and responding to the growing health risks of climate change.

Your Excellency, distinguished colleagues,

Today we celebrate achievements but more importantly, we look toward the

opportunities that lie ahead. On behalf of WHO and the broader UN system, I extend our deepest appreciation to the Ministry of Health and to all our national and international partners. Your leadership, commitment, and collaboration are crucial to ensuring that every child born in Iraq is welcomed into a health system that protects their well-being and opens the door to a hopeful, healthy future.

Thank you.”

Family PLanning



Baghdad, 10 March 2025 - Ms. Hind Jalal, UNFPA Representative in Iraq: “Strengthening cooperation for Iraq’s development! Discussions with Chargé d’Affaires, **Mr. Roland Westebbe**, at the German Embassy in Baghdad highlighted future collaboration opportunities, the importance of data-driven policies, and UNFPA’s ongoing efforts to support Iraqi communities.” Germany has been a significant contributor to Iraq’s development and funds several impactful programs with UNFPA, focusing on advancing sexual and reproductive health and rights globally.



Baghdad, 14 March 2025 - The private sector is a key partner in women’s empowerment! Through UNFPA’s collaboration with IOM Iraq and Makers of Baghdad, we have strengthened a supportive environment for women entrepreneurs, including women with disabilities.



Baghdad, 26 March 2025 - Ms. Hind Jalal, UNFPA Representative in Iraq: “With **KOICA**, we continue working to end violence against women and girls in Iraq. Our partnership ensures stronger protection and greater support for survivors. We look forward to continued collaboration for even greater impact!”



Baghdad, 08 April 2025 - Ms. Hind Jalal, UNFPA Representative in Iraq: “Thrilled to meet with the Ambassador of Japan in Iraq, **Mr. Akira Endo**. Japan invaluable support to UNFPA Iraq is crucial in advancing Reproductive Health across the country. We deeply appreciate their continued commitment to ensuring access to essential services for all.”

A new chapter begins with the launch of the 2025–2029 UNFPA Country Programme

Baghdad, 08 April 2025 - A new chapter begins with the launch of the 2025–2029 Country Programme. With partners from government, donors, UN agencies and civil society, we reviewed achievements from previous Programme & launched our new vision for 2025–2029. From service delivery to systems strengthening, our focus is on building resilience and lasting change.

Hind Jalal, UNFPA Resident Representative Iraq: "UNFPA-Iraq organized a successful consultation to present our newly adopted Country Program Document CPD 2025-2029 to our incredible partners in Iraq. Chaired by the Deputy Minister of Planning, and included representatives from the Government, donors, Civil Society Organizations and implementing partners. Thank you for your vital contributions!"



Japan and UNFPA inaugurate new Maternal and Child Health facilities in Diwaniyah

Diwaniyah, 13 April 2025 – The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), with support from the Government of Japan and local authorities in Al-Diwanya Governorate, celebrated today the inauguration of the rehabilitated maternity ward and newly established Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) at the Diwaniyah Specialized Maternity Hospital. This achievement is part of a Japan-funded project aimed at improving access to reproductive health services and providing life-saving care for mothers and newborns.

H.E. Akira Endo, Ambassador of Japan to Iraq, commented: "The Government of Japan is proud to support this vital project, which enhances reproductive health services in Diwaniyah. Our commitment to Iraq's future includes investing in the wellbeing of women and youth and strengthening healthcare infrastructure. We believe this project will make a tangible difference in the lives of thousands of Iraqi families."

This project is part of the strong and active partnership between UNFPA and the Government of Iraq,

represented by the Ministry of Health, which aims to enhance the quality and sustainability of reproductive health services across the country.

Ms. Hind Jalal, UNFPA Representative to Iraq, stated: "We are pleased today to inaugurate this milestone in partnership with the local authorities and with the generous support of the Government of Japan. The rehabilitation of the maternity ward and the establishment of the NICU at Diwaniyah Maternity Teaching Hospital will allow the provision of specialized services that save lives. We deeply appreciate our strategic partnership with Japan, whose unwavering support has made this vision a reality."

This intervention is part of UNFPA's ongoing efforts to expand access to lifesaving reproductive health services in Iraq. We will continue to invest in systems, services, and partnerships that protect the health and future of women and newborns.

It is worth mentioning that UNFPA has supported two additional projects in Diwaniyah Governorate through different sources of funding: the Center of Excellence for reproductive health and the Women's Shelter. These efforts reflect UNFPA's comprehensive and sustained commitment to strengthening protection and health services for women and girls in the area.



UNFPA on X

Baghdad, 14 April 2025 - UNFPA kicked off the first Steering Committee meeting for the 2025 Demographic Transition of Iraq Project (DTIP), reaffirming its commitment to improving reproductive health in Iraq. Thank you to the Government of the United Kingdom and the Ministry of Health for their continued partnership.



UNEP on X

Baghdad, 24 April 2024 - #GirlsInICT Day is a good reminder of why digital skills matter for all. We previously organized a basic computer course for displaced adolescent girls. A small step toward wider empowerment.

UNDP on X

Baghdad, 24 April 2025 — This #GirlsInICT Day is a reminder to break down barriers and inspire more young women and girls to follow their dreams and pursue careers in information and communications technology. Like if you agree!

Environment

FAO and partners continuous efforts to strengthening climate resilience in Iraq: "Climate Wise Women" initiative

Najaf, 9 March 2025 - Under the patronage of His Excellency, the Minister of Agriculture, Dr. Abbas Jabr Al-Maliki, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), in collaboration with Iraq's Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) and with the support of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), successfully concluded a three-day training under the "Climate Wise Women" Initiative in Najaf.

This initiative aligns with this year's United Nations theme for International Women's Day, "For ALL women and girls: Rights. Equality. Empowerment." highlighting the critical role of rural women as agents of change in addressing climate challenges. By equipping them with essential skills and necessary tools, FAO enhances their capacity to adapt to climate. The training brought together 47 participants, including CWW Master Trainers (MTs), local facilitators, FAO technical experts, and government representatives, reaffirming Iraq's commitment to women's leadership in sustainable agriculture and climate action.

H.E. Dr. Abbas Jabr Al-Maliki, Minister of Agriculture, emphasized

the importance of empowering women in rural communities, stating: "Rural women are at the heart of Iraq's agricultural sector. FAO's pioneering initiative, Climate Wise Women, which equips women with the skills and resources needed to build climate resilience, will strengthen Iraq's position both regionally and internationally. This initiative aims preliminary to empower 1,500 women to become rural leaders—an essential step in ensuring food security and supporting sustainable agricultural systems. The Ministry of Agriculture fully supports this initiative." Scaling Up FAO's Capacity-Building

Efforts – From Basra to Najaf

This training workshop is following the first one under "Climate Wise Women" initiative held in Basra, where CWW Master Trainers (MTs) initially received a TOT on climate-adaptive agricultural techniques. During this workshop, these trained women are now passing on their knowledge and acquired skills to local facilitators, ensuring the transfer of expertise and best practices at the community level. The participants engaged in in-depth discussions on climate-smart agriculture and climate change adaptation, covering key topics such as sustainable major value chains



FAO and partners continuous efforts to strengthening climate resilience in Iraq: "Climate Wise Women" initiative *(continued)*

development practices to improve income and food security, water-efficient agriculture for better irrigation and crop resilience, and early warning systems to enhance climate adaptation and risk reduction.

Additionally, the workshop included a review of field applications and practical interventions in climate-smart agriculture, making these tools and techniques available to trainees for the benefit of local communities. This approach fosters greater synergy between FAO's various interventions, ensuring alignment, integration, and sustainability of climate-smart agriculture initiatives across Iraq.

Dr. Salah El Hajj Hassan, FAO Representative in Iraq, highlighted FAO's commitment to women-focused and responsive approach in climate action, stating: "Women's empowerment in agriculture is fundamental to achieving climate resilience. Through this initiative, FAO

is strengthening rural women's capacity to implement climate-smart practices, aligning with our global efforts to build sustainable agri-food systems, leaving no one behind. The continuity of this training, from Basra to Najaf, is a testament to the long-term impact of FAO's capacity-building programs and their role in strengthening local expertise and ensuring sustainability."

El-Hajj Hassan emphasized the importance of partnerships with government entities, particularly the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Water Resources, and the Ministry of Environment. He also expressed his gratitude and appreciation to H.E. the Minister of Agriculture for supporting this initiative and to the Swedish government for providing the necessary support.

Marking International Women's Day – Women at the Forefront of Climate Action

Coinciding with the celebration of International Women's Day 2025, FAO and the Ministry of Agriculture, in the presence of H.E. the Minister of Agriculture, Dr. Abbas Jabr Al-Maliki, honored all participants of the "Climate Wise Women" workshop with commemorative shields, recognizing their role as leaders in climate adaptation and sustainable agriculture. Contributing to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The Climate Wise Women Initiative contributes to SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 13 (Climate Action), and SDG 15 (Life on Land), reinforcing FAO's commitment to sustainable and inclusive agricultural development in Iraq.

FAO, together with its partners, remains committed to supporting Iraq's rural communities, enhancing women's resilience, and fostering sustainable and climate-smart agricultural solutions for a food-secure future.

Lava's solar mission: empowering youth for a greener future



Erbil, 09 March 2025 - Fixing an electrical issue at home, installing a solar panel, or proposing sustainable solutions for her community—these are skills Lava Salih never imagined she would master. However, today, thanks to the Green Energy Training program, conducted in partnership with the Directorate of Labor and Vocational Training Center in Erbil and Hasar Organization, she is at the forefront of climate action and renewable energy initiatives in Qushtapa Camp, Erbil Governorate.

Lava, 22, was born in Hasaka Governorate, Syria. Amid the years of conflict, she and her family were forced to flee their homeland, finding refuge in Qushtapa Camp in Erbil, where they have lived since 2013. The eldest of seven siblings, she took on significant responsibilities from a young age. At

just 13, she helped care for her father, who battled Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS). For three years, she stood by his side, offering unwavering support until his passing. With his loss, Lava stepped up even further to care for her mother and younger siblings.

Determined to build a future for herself and her family, Lava pursued higher education and graduated with a degree in Statistics and Information from the College of Management and Economics. Alongside her studies, she participated in training programmes, volunteered, and even worked briefly as an accountant. But the Green Energy Training program was a different kind of opportunity that truly excited her and set her on a new path.

From Beginner to Solar Advocate

"I heard about the Green Energy Training in the camp and was so eager

to join," she said. "Before this training, I had no idea how solar system works, but now, I can install a solar panel myself."

Over 20 days, Lava and other young participants gained hands-on experience in solar energy. They installed solar systems five times—each one successful. The training also covered essential knowledge about electricity, empowering Lava to become more self-reliant at home.

With the growing demand for renewable energy solutions, Lava is optimistic about her future. "Not many people are familiar with solar energy, but companies and organizations are moving in this direction. This training will open doors for me."

Her message to other young people is simple: take action. "I advise all youth not to stay at home. Join trainings, gain new skills, and meet new people. It will help in life—100 percent," she adds.

With support from UNICEF and funding from the Government of the Netherlands, Lava and many other young people are not just preparing for employment—they are driving the transition to green energy. Their determination and innovation prove that when youth are empowered, they build brighter futures.

By Shahad Butrus Bulbul, UNICEF

Iraq and UN discuss the formation of Environment and Climate Change Advisory Group to tackle pollution and sustainability challenges



Baghdad, 11 March 2025 - The Iraqi Ministry of Environment and the United Nations discussed the formation of the Environment and Climate Change Advisory Group to address pressing environmental challenges, including air pollution in major Iraqi

cities. The Advisory Group will serve as a platform for coordinating national and international efforts, identifying environmental priorities, and enhancing global partnerships. The discussions took place during a meeting yesterday between the

Minister of Environment, Dr. Hallo Al-Askari, and the Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General, Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Ghulam Isaczai. The meeting was attended by representatives from various UN organizations, including the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and the World Food Programme (WFP), as well as a representative from the World Bank and other senior officials from the Ministry of Environment.

The Environment and Climate Change Advisory Group will include national international experts, academics from Iraqi universities and research institutes, youth representatives, as well as representatives from the Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of Environment, and other relevant institutions from both the public and private sectors.

Local organizations at the forefront of climate action

Basra, 25 March 2025 - In southern Iraq, where the adverse effects of climate change and environmental degradation are deepening vulnerabilities, a group of committed civil society organizations (CSOs) is rising to take on the challenge. Supported by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Iraq, through a UK's Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO)-funded project, these CSOs are spearheading innovative initiatives that educate, empower, and inspire communities to take climate action while building resilience and adaptability.

"Al-Zubair's once-fertile farmlands are now drying up, pushing farmers to abandon their livelihoods and migrate to urban areas," explains Zaid Abbas, Program Coordinator at the Al-Najah Center for Training and Development. The centre is a driving force in the fight against climate change in Basra's Al-Zubair district, a region on the frontlines of the environmental crisis.

"Our mission is clear: to spark awareness and deliver real, actionable solutions that make a difference." he adds.

These solutions equip communities with the knowledge and techniques to adapt to climate change effects such as low rainfall, reduced river water levels,



and soil salinity – which render farmland unusable, contaminate drinking water, and force costly alternatives like digging wells, disrupt livelihoods such as farming, livestock, and dairy production, reduce incomes and drive migration.

Zaid's organization trained 30 young environmental activists, empowering them to design and implement climate adaptation initiatives. One such project, Planting Hope, brought together 120 women for training sessions on climate change and sustainable practices.

"By equipping women with knowledge and skills in green practices, we are fostering long-term change that benefits everyone," Zaid notes.

IOM has partnered with seven local organizations across Iraq, including Zaid's organization, each addressing unique priorities—from empowering women and engaging youth to fostering climate-resilient livelihood programmes. Rooted in their communities, these organizations bring vital insights into local needs and expertise to deliver impactful, on-the-ground solutions.

In the Al-Chibayish District, home to Iraq's iconic marshes, Ali Hakim of the Ur Organization for Women and Children's Culture is working to support women impacted by the shrinking water levels in the marshes, a challenge that worsens dramatically during the summer months.

Local organizations at the forefront of climate action *(continued)*

“Women are key leaders in their communities,” Ali notes. “However, they are also among the most vulnerable to climate change. Many lose their livelihoods tied to farming, livestock, fishing, and dairy production. Economic strain often leads to family separation, domestic violence, and legal challenges. By equipping them with green skills, financial literacy, and legal support, we help them build resilience and secure their rights.”

To address this crisis, Ali’s organization established a centre providing legal, psychological, and social support to women. “Many women here are isolated and unaware of their rights. We offer free legal aid, helping them navigate legal issues such as divorce, inheritance, and applying for social welfare.”

Beyond legal aid, the organization introduced vocational training to help women develop alternative livelihoods, such as sewing and handicrafts made from natural materials sourced from the marshes. “Our goal is to preserve

these traditional practices while adapting to new realities,” Ali says.

The initiative has already benefited 500 women, equipping them with skills to support their families despite the environmental changes. Ali proudly shares, “For many people living in the marshes, we were the first organization to ever offer them assistance. Our work is vital for keeping communities together and making migration a choice.”

Recognizing the importance of collaboration, representatives from these organizations and others recently gathered in Basra to discuss climate change, share solutions, and explore strategies for integrating eco-friendly practices into their work. A visit to the marshlands provided firsthand insight into the environmental degradation affecting the region, reinforcing the urgency for climate action.

Through the joint initiatives of IOM, FCDO, and local CSOs, the progress is evident—from empowering women and youth to revitalizing ecosystems and

fostering sustainable development. As Zaid aptly puts it, “Greater investment in climate adaptation strategies is urgently needed, with a focus on protecting the well-being of communities in southern Iraq, safeguarding their livelihoods, and preventing further displacement.”

CSOs play a critical role in leading these efforts. As trusted members of their communities, they have an in-depth understanding of local needs, allowing them to design targeted solutions that are culturally appropriate and sustainable. Their grassroots approach ensures that climate adaptation strategies are not just a theory, but effective tools that create real, lasting change.

With continued collaboration, innovation, and global cooperation, these organizations are paving the way for a more resilient and sustainable future in Iraq.

By Ahmed Kaka | Senior Communications Assistant, IOM

Not all waste is waste!

Baghdad, 10 April 2025 - Not all waste is waste! The Kwashte Waste Sorting Plant, constructed by UNHCR and VNG IQ, is now transforming tons of organic waste into compost.

The waste sorting system helps to: remove harmful trash from compost; create cleaner, usable compost; and, protect the environment for refugees and locals.

This means less waste, healthier soil, and contributes to a more sustainable refugee hosting community.



Greening Iraq: climate-smart insulation to combat extreme heat



Baghdad, 19 March 2025 - Iraq’s ancient Hanging Gardens of Babylon inspired a modern solution to improve air quality, reduce temperatures, and

improve urban spaces.

In a region with soaring temperatures and limited green spaces, a team of passionate innovators came together to

make a difference. Yathrib Ali, Hozan Ahmed, and Dary Qaiz met by chance at the BEIT Green Home Hackathon. What started as a simple idea quickly evolved into a groundbreaking project to transform urban landscapes in Iraq.

From concept to reality

The idea for GVI (Green Insulation and Ventilation) was born from Yathrib Ali’s personal experiences.

‘I lived in a small apartment with no garden, no insulation, and poor ventilation,’ she said. ‘When I came to Mosul, I noticed the severe lack of green spaces and fresh air. My main goal was to increase green spaces and improve air quality.’

Her concept aimed to introduce vertical gardens that would improve air quality,

Greening Iraq: climate-smart insulation ... (continued)

reduce temperatures, and create more sustainable urban spaces. However, key elements were missing.

When she met Hozan and Dary at the hackathon, everything changed. Hozan, with his expertise in environmental science, proposed a crucial element—integrating piping systems to water the plants. Together, the team refined the concept, making it both sustainable and practical. What started as a simple doodle in Yathrib's notebook soon turned into a fully developed initiative.

An eco-friendly solution to combat extreme temperatures

Iraq faces extreme temperatures, with some areas becoming nearly uninhabitable during summer. Government infrastructure often struggles to provide sufficient cooling, leaving businesses and residents searching for alternative solutions. The GVI team's project addresses this challenge by implementing vertical gardens that not only beautify buildings but also lower indoor temperatures by 4–5°C.

Using copper pipes for durability, an automated irrigation system, and carefully selected plants—primarily jasmine—the team designed a self-sustaining model. The jasmine plants continuously bloom, require minimal maintenance, and naturally filter the air. To enhance sustainability, the irrigation system also reuses filtered sink water, making the project eco-

friendly and cost-effective.

I was inspired by Iraq's ancient Hanging Gardens of Babylon. Vertical gardens align with our cultural heritage and provide a practical solution for modern cities with limited space. In the future, we plan to expand by covering rooftops with greenery for insulation, but funding is currently a challenge.

A green solution spreading across the country

With limited funding but immense determination, the team implemented their first prototype at nursing home for men in Mosul, a building that struggled with unbearable heat. The results are promising. Not only is the greenery creating a more pleasant environment, but the project also will help reduce energy costs.

As soon as the first building was completed, another department in the same space requested the project for their own facility. Shortly after, a pharmaceutical warehouse in Duhok expressed interest in adopting the solution to regulate temperatures in its cosmetic storage area.

Encouraged by this growing demand, the team began expanding their reach.

Challenges and future aspirations

Despite their success, the GVI team faced numerous obstacles, particularly in securing funding. They carefully managed costs, ensuring their solution remained affordable at just \$7 per

square meter. Now, they are seeking partnerships with investors and organizations to scale their impact.

Their vision extends beyond vertical gardens. They plan to introduce rooftop insulation using plants and integrate solar power to make their systems fully self-sustaining.

Inspiring the Next generation

For aspiring innovators in Iraq, the GVI team offers simple yet powerful advice: 'Don't overthink—just do it. Identify a problem, find solutions, and take action.' They emphasize that with courage, persistence, and sustainable effort, any idea can become a reality. Their journey demonstrates how innovation can address pressing environmental challenges while fostering hope for a greener Iraq.

The BEIT Green Home Hackathon was organized in November 2024 in partnership with the Mosul Space business incubator, under the EU-funded project, Building Equitable and Inclusive Transformation (BEIT). This joint initiative by the International Trade Centre, UN-Habitat, and the International Labour Organization, aims to drive economic growth by creating decent job opportunities, advancing Iraq's affordable and sustainable housing sector, and strengthening the construction industry.

Iraq holds National Adaptation Plan (NAP) steering committee meeting in Erbil



Erbil, 19 April 2025 - The Iraqi Ministry of Environment, in partnership with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), convened a three-day meeting of the Steering Committee for the National Adaptation Plan (NAP) project in Erbil. The meeting brought together key

government stakeholders, technical experts, and representatives from relevant institutions.

Sessions included reviews of technical and financial progress, discussions of the three adaptation protocol reports, analysis of Iraq's Climate Vulnerability Index (CVI), and examination of the

adaptation options available in the country. The integration of climate adaptation concepts into school and university curricula was also highlighted.

Participants emphasized the importance of aligning the NAP document with the ongoing update of Iraq's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) to ensure they are jointly announced at COP30. They also discussed financial planning, preparation of the final NAP report in Arabic and English, and the incorporation of the grant into Iraq's 2025 national budget.

Key recommendations focused on strengthening coordination, sustaining institutional and financial support, and developing a coherent local implementation strategy for the post-2025 period.

United Nations in Iraq observes Earth Hour

Baghdad, 22 March 2025 – Tonight the United Nations in Iraq joined Earth Hour, a global show of solidarity with our planet.

Together, let's turn off the lights and turn the world towards a brighter future for all of us.



Little leaves, big change: from graduate to green entrepreneur in Iraq

Basra, 16 April 2025 – (ITC News) In the southern city of Basra, amidst the challenges of economic uncertainty and climate change, 31-year-old Noor Jawad Kadum is planting more than just greenery—she's growing opportunity, sustainability, and hope.

A graduate of Basra University's Agricultural College, Noor had always been passionate about the environment. But her vision extended beyond traditional agriculture. She dreamed of creating a business that would bring plants into people's homes to help mitigate the impacts of climate change and improve emotional well-being. But turning this vision into a business wasn't easy.

Igniting change through knowledge

Noor initially faced a familiar roadblock—lack of business knowledge, resources, and direction. Though her academic background gave her technical skills in agriculture, she didn't know how to start, manage, or promote a business. 'I had the idea, but I didn't have the tools to make it real,' says Noor.

This was set to change when she joined the International Trade Centre's training opportunities through its SAAVI Tadreeb programme. There, Noor learned essential entrepreneurial skills—from managing finances and calculating profits to marketing strategies and scaling operations. The training not only empowered her with knowledge but also gave her the confidence to launch her own nursery business.

Step by step with purpose

She started small, using a transportation stipend from the training to buy her first batch of plants. With no storefront, she stored them at

her family's home and began marketing through Instagram. Within two months, demand grew, and she rented a small space to officially launch her nursery. 'That was the first step—just starting. Then everything began to grow,' she explains.

SAAVI's technical support, trainings, and grant helped Noor expand her inventory, cover operational costs, and ensure reliable electricity for her plants. She didn't just stop at selling—she hired two employees, created eco-friendly plant packages, and even began supporting other entrepreneurs, who hadn't won the grant. Collaborating with local artisans, she includes their handmade products—like decorative candles—in her plant arrangements, offering unique gifts while helping peers reach new customers.

Seizing new opportunities

Noor's dedication and visibility caught the attention of a major construction company. Impressed by her work on Instagram and her professional service, they hired her as an in-house agricultural engineer, giving her another steady source of income.

But Noor's vision goes beyond business. Aware of Iraq's environmental challenges, she actively invests in sustainability initiatives, using a portion of her income to plant trees in her community and combat urban heat. She also involves locals in tree-planting campaigns, turning environmental responsibility into a shared mission.

Noor is creating jobs, mentoring fellow entrepreneurs, and greening her city—one plant at a time. 'If it weren't for SAAVI Tadreeb, I wouldn't be here,' she says. 'This programme changed my life—and I want others to know it's possible for them too. Just don't isolate yourself—join trainings, learn, and stay connected.'

Today, Noor stands as a symbol of what's possible when education meets opportunity. She's not just building a nursery—she's nurturing a greener, more empowered Iraq.

The SAAVI Tadreeb platform was developed under the European Union-funded SAAVI project, implemented by the International Trade Centre in partnership with the Norwegian Refugee Council.



Environment and Climate Change Policy Advisory Group discusses strategic priorities

Baghdad, 28 April 2025 - Today, the Environment and Climate Change Policy Advisory Group, co-chaired by Iraqi Minister of Environment H.E. Dr. Hallo Al-Askari and UN Resident Coordinator Ghulam Isaczai, discussed strategic priorities, including advancing the NDC process (efforts by each country to reduce national emissions), enhancing air quality monitoring, and scaling up UN-supported climate initiatives. The meeting, which took place at the UN HQ in Baghdad, brought together relevant Government representatives and UN agencies.



UNDP is convening dialogues on fair access to environmental and climate justice in Iraq

Baghdad, 30 April 2025 - UNDP is convening dialogues with expert civil society organizations to identify legal, regulatory, and institutional barriers preventing fair access to environmental and climate justice in Iraq. The findings will inform concrete reform recommendations, supporting institutions and shaping future interventions for a greener, more equitable future.



Earth Day

There is no plan(et) B!

Baghdad, 22 April 2024 — Earth Day message from the Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General, Resident Coordinator, Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Ghulam M. Isaczai:

“Today, on Earth Day, we are reminded of our shared responsibility to step up action to protect our planet, our only

home.

This urgency is especially visible in Iraq, one of the countries most impacted by climate change. From acute water shortages to shrinking farmland, the effects are already threatening the livelihoods of millions across the country.

The United Nations remains a committed partner to Iraq in its search

for sustainable solutions, whether in agriculture, clean water access, or renewable energy development.

There is no Plan(et) B. It is our collective duty to safeguard the environment and secure a healthier, sustainable future for the generations to come.”



“We are like the fish — if we leave the water, we will die.”



Thi Qar, 19 March 2025 - My name is Ali Al Ahwari, and I'm a climate activist and tour guide from the Mesopotamian marshes in Al Chibaysh. The marshes are not just my home — they're my identity, my heritage, and my future.

I started working as a local guide in 2008, showing journalists and tourists the beauty of the marshes and the challenges we face. Back then, the marshes were slowly recovering.

Buffalo herding, fishing, and reed harvesting were coming back to life, and it felt like hope was returning. I was part of the effort to document this revival, which eventually led to the marshes being recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2016. That was a proud moment for all of us.

But things have gotten harder. Climate change, drought, and the reduction of flow of water from Turkey and Iran have devastated the marshes. Water used to flow year-round, but now it's

only here in winter and early autumn.

For eight months of the year, the marshes are dry. This has destroyed our way of life. Fish production has dropped from 80 tons a day to almost nothing. Families are selling their buffalo because they can't afford feed or water. Many have left, migrating to cities or other regions where water is more reliable.

I've seen the impact firsthand. I used to raise buffalo, but I had to stop because I couldn't afford to care for them. It broke my heart. My father always said, "Buffalo are like my children." If I can't provide for them, I can't keep them. This is the reality for so many families here. We're losing not just our livelihoods but our connection to this land.

Despite all this, I've chosen to stay. The marshes are part of who I am. I'm proud of my Sumerian ancestry—this land has been home to my people for 7,000 years.

When tourists come, especially foreigners, and tell me how special this place is, it fills me with pride. They call it a "living heritage," and they're right. But we need more than admiration—we need action.

I've been working with organizations like the UN and local governments to bring attention to the crisis. In 2023, I went to COP28 in Dubai to share our story. My project, Voice of the Marshes to the World, was about showing the world how climate change and water scarcity are destroying this ecosystem. I've also been pushing for better water management within Iraq. Right now, the marshes are last in line for water allocations, after drinking water and agriculture. That needs to change.

My dream is to see the marshes thrive again. I want sustainable solutions—solar energy, small desalination plants, and alternative livelihoods like handicrafts and eco-tourism. I want the next generation to have a future here. But most of all, I want the world to understand that the marshes are not just a wetland—they're a way of life. If we lose them, we lose a part of ourselves.

I've thought about leaving, especially in 2018 when things were at their worst. But I can't. This is where I belong. The marshes are in my blood, and I'll keep fighting for them, no matter how hard it gets.

As the saying goes, "We are like the fish —if we leave the water, we will die".

By Ali Al Ahwari, 29, Al Chibaysh, Thi Qar, Iraq Translated from Arabic by Anjam Rasool, IOM

Navigating rivers and new cities: migration and water scarcity

Basra, Thi Qar, 19 March 2025 – Torrential rains and extreme floods of 2019 were followed by extended periods of drought and hardship for thousands of families in the southern governorates of Iraq. Sustenance farmers, fishermen and those with livestock – all had to abandon their ancestral way of life as the rivers and estuaries dried up, the marshes retreated from coastlines and livestock died from hunger and thirst. Entire families and neighborhoods relocated in search of jobs and stability. In 2020 alone, over 1,300 households had moved to urban areas of the governorates to secure better access to basic services and seek government assistance. The country's primary source of water – the Tigris and the Euphrates rivers – has been decreasing



at an unprecedented rate. Over the years, degradation of the quantity and quality of water has kept the risk of displacement high in southern Iraq.

Five years later, we meet with affected families in Basra and ThiQar to learn how they have been faring – those who hope to stay where they are for as long

Navigating rivers and new cities: migration and water scarcity *(continued)*

as possible; those who are considering moving; and those who made the difficult decision to move to urban areas.

Sukaina moved to Markaz Al-Basra neighborhood in Basra city in 2020, along with several families who were affected by water scarcity in the village of Nahr Al-Azz, in the Qurna district, Basra. Today at age 73, she dreams of the simple life of her village, where everything was plentiful and affordable.

"I wish it would rain again," she shares with us, seated among a group of women from the community in a neighbor's house. "Decades ago, during the rainy season, it would pour continuously for four-five days straight. We were annoyed with the rains because it forced us to stay indoors".

Sukaina's family of five could sustain themselves by farming on their land, raising livestock and crafting mats and furnishing from reeds. Climate change, rising temperatures and reduced rainfall eventually led to extended periods of droughts, where rivers dried up and there was no drinking water left. The farms were no longer yielding sufficient crops, and the livestock was dying out. Sukhaina and her family made the difficult decision to move closer to Basra city centre, where they had a better chance to earn a living and access basic services like healthcare and government welfare.

"Life in a big city like Basra is challenging, and it took us some time to adjust," shares Sukaina, "but at least we have better access to water and social welfare". Sukaina lives with her husband who is visually impaired, in an informal settlement alongside 150 families who moved to Basra city for similar reasons. And despite the challenges of the city, Sukaina will not return to her village. Her story is one of many thousands displaced due to the

long-term effects of water scarcity and climate change.

Two hours away, in the village of Nahar Al Saad, Al Islah in Thi Qar governorate, Hassan (43) and his family of eight are waiting for the water treatment plant to be functional again.

"Without water, there is no life," shares Hassan as his children play around him in his courtyard. "We were considering moving to another area to save my children from thirst and hardship. But with the new water treatment plant there is hope".

The Nahar Al Saad water treatment plant, rehabilitated by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Iraq, with support from the Foreign Commonwealth Development Office (UK), is about 60 per cent complete and will pump and treat water from the nearby river, bringing clean potable water to 530 households in the village. Once functional, the plant will provide 50m³ of water per hour and support the village in agriculture, livestock rearing and meet daily household needs to pre-drought levels. More importantly for Hassan's family, this will eliminate the expense of purchasing drinking water, which cost nearly 10 per cent of his monthly income.

Unfortunately, within the same district less than an hour away, Hassan's hope is met with another's heartache: Basim (52) grieves for the barren and dried up marshes, that were once his sole source of income and well-being.

"Life was beautiful, before," he shares. "I would wake up before dawn at 4am, and fish and hunt in the marshes until 11am. Then in the afternoon, I played football". Financially stable and content with his life, Basim never thought he would have to leave his village. However, water scarcity and lack of alternative livelihoods for his children

has him weighing the odds of sustaining this life.

"On the one hand, if we move to a new neighborhood, we will need to build new connections and relationships in our new community," says Basim. "But the next generation also needs a stable and beautiful life. This is why, I am considering leaving the village".

Sukhania, Hassan and Basim have never met each other, but their life stories are intricately linked, with common challenges related to water scarcity and shared histories of surviving and adapting to the effects of climate change in Iraq. IOM's Climate Emergency Tracking conducted by Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) in Iraq has recorded 28,379 families (170,274 individuals) displaced by drought between 2016 – 2024, in the 513 locations assessed across 12 governorates in central and southern Iraq.

Unless mitigated with extensive support to at-risk communities through better water infrastructure and increased access to potable water; displacement due to water scarcity and associated challenges will continue to rise, impacting community welfare, quality of life and health of displaced populations.

Since 2020, IOM has supported the Government of Iraq to improve access to safe water to over 1 million inhabitants in southern Iraq by constructing or rehabilitating over 100 water infrastructure projects; mobilized hundreds of community-led initiatives to address soil degradation due to water scarcity; and supported over 300 small and medium size agricultural enterprises to expand their businesses and be more resilient to the adverse effects of climate change in Iraq.

By Deepika Nath, photos and translations by Anjam, IOM

World Water Day message from the Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General, Resident Coordinator, Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Ghulam M. Isaczai

Baghdad, 22 March 2025 - "Iraq's water resources are severely impacted by climate change. As rivers shrink and the demand for water increases, millions already feel the strain. We must act now to protect and manage this vital resource so that every Iraqi has access to water—and with it, a more secure future. The UN is working

with the Government of Iraq and partners to address water scarcity, including through repairing water systems, upgrading irrigation, improving quality, promoting conservation, and more. This World Water Day, we reaffirm our commitment to supporting Iraq in achieving a water-secure future for all."



On World Water Day, the Directorate of Water and UNICEF call for immediate action to protect Iraq's water resources and ensure a safe future for children

Baghdad, 23 March 2025 – The General Directorate of Water and UNICEF call for the protection of Iraq's water resources and reaffirm their joint commitment to address the escalating water crisis and ensure access to water for every child and family.

"As we face increasing water scarcity, it is our responsibility to safeguard this valuable resource." Said Mr. Ammar Adel, Head of the National Water Team and Director of the General Directorate of Water. "The Directorate of Water has started implementing strategic and vital projects in coordination with the National Water Team and with support of UNICEF." He added.

"The projects include updating the master plans for water projects to improve services, adopting automated systems for water management to ensure fair distribution, and implementing innovative solutions for water supply by enhancing data collection and analysis. In addition to adopt the water safety plan to ensure safe drinking water for everyone and raise people awareness on water conservation." Said Mr. Adel.

Water crisis in Iraq is worsening due to rising temperatures, drought, and desertification, as Iraq is one of the most affected countries by climate change. Millions of Iraqis, especially children, face difficulties accessing clean water, due to declining river levels, which increases their risk of



malnutrition, diseases, and displacement.

UNICEF's efforts in Iraq, alongside the Directorate of Water, focus on addressing these challenges by working together to provide essential water and sanitation services, contributing to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 6: Clean Water and Sanitation.

"Our mission is to reach children in the most affected communities and ensure they have access to safe drinking water in a time of increasing water scarcity." Said Eng. Ali Ayoub, Head of UNICEF's Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene Program.

UNICEF work in partnership with the Ministry of Housing,

Construction, and Municipalities, and other sectoral ministries and UN agencies, to enhance access to sustainable water and sanitation services, through partnerships with public and private sectors, and work in diverse environments to support the water sector, to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and empower communities to live in a sustainable environment.

As we celebrate this important day, UNICEF Iraq and the General Directorate of Water stand together to secure water for future generations and support solutions that can adapt to climate change, in line with Goal 13 of the Sustainable Development Goals: Climate Action.

Enhancing water sector services in Iraq: meet Haider, a symbol of determination and hard work

Baghdad, 24 March 2025 - This is a story of ambition and hope, despite the harsh circumstances faced by our

hero. Meet Haider Faner, 32, a technology diploma graduate and a dedicated operator at the water project

in Dujail, located in the south of Salah al-Din Governorate. A government employee who suffers from polio in his right leg, Haider has found solace and purpose in his mission to provide water to the residents of his city.

"It is not easy at all, especially with my health condition and polio affecting my right side, but that didn't stop me from pursuing my dream and striving for a better future for myself and my city," Haider explains.

[Work challenges and Haider's determination](#)

Born in 1993, Haider contracted polio at a young age, but this did not prevent him from chasing his dreams. He was appointed as a pump worker in the



Enhancing water sector services in Iraq: meet Haider, a symbol of determination and hard work *(continued)*

water project. Although this profession demands a strong physical build and high technical skills, he has shown that determination and willpower can overcome any challenge. Haider has gained fame as a unique story in the city, working hard to facilitate water delivery to its residents despite his disability. He has received numerous letters of appreciation and honors for his outstanding work over the years from various government departments.

With UNDP Training

Haider was fortunate to attend a training course with his colleagues, sponsored by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), focusing on the operation of water stations. He considers this training crucial for his work: "I am very happy to have attended this training because it is at the heart of my work on the project." This was his first training with the program, which consisted of theoretical and practical components. During the training, Haider and his colleagues were taken to the water station for hands-on experience. Despite being disabled, he was the most active and understanding trainee. "There is nothing more inspiring than

being in a training course that addresses my work on the project," he adds.

Haider also recalls the difficult times during the ISIS conflict when residents had to fetch water directly from the Ishaqi River. Water was scarce, and the pumps were not available with the necessary technology, while the water was not sanitized due to a lack of purification materials. He reflects, "I felt a deep sadness seeing the destruction in our areas, but I knew we needed to rebuild and enhance development, not just for ourselves but for the community as a whole."

Today, Haider and his family are immensely proud of the difference he makes in helping people, especially as access to water has become easier, allowing agriculture to flourish with a variety of crops like oranges, pomegranates, grapes, vegetables, and tomatoes.

Haider expresses his appreciation for the training provided by the UNDP: "I feel greatly appreciated by the program for nominating me for the training. I am extremely grateful to UNDP for providing this opportunity to hone my skills and capabilities and see our

positive impact in the community." He also emphasized, "There is a need for more training in various technical fields, especially as projects expand and technology evolves."

Despite the challenges and lack of equipment and personnel in the workplace, Haider performs his duties at the water station efficiently and accurately. The training has added numerous concepts and skills, and he finds the materials very useful and focused.

He is a living example that willpower and determination can open doors to success for anyone, regardless of the challenges they face.

About the training

The United Nations Development Program seeks to provide all transformative possibilities for the Water Sector in Iraq. With generous support from the German government, the UNDP has launched capacity-building training programs in several sectors across five liberated governorates. These training courses ensure the sustainability of UNDP's rehabilitation efforts by equipping technical staff with the skills needed to successfully operate and maintain rehabilitated equipment through the Stabilization Fund. By developing these capabilities, employees like Haider have become more familiar with modern installation and maintenance techniques, helping to enhance service delivery in the governorate.

By Sally B. Al Bahri, Partnerships and Communications Analyst, UNDP Iraq



Solar high-reflective coating technology protects water tanks and helps conserve water

Baghdad, 30 April 2025 - The adoption of solar high-reflective coating technology to protect water tanks helps conserve water by reducing evaporation, avoiding wasting water and maintaining the integrity of reservoirs. Fifty-two water tanks at Bab Sinjar Social Housing Complex have been coated, and all tanks in the Japan Village Project will be covered upon completion of construction, thanks to UN-Habitat Iraq partnership with Sumitomo Corporation.



The third Steering Committee meeting for the "Restoring Mosul University Library" held in Baghdad



Baghdad, 13 March 2025 - UNESCO and its partners convened the third Steering Committee meeting for the "Restoring Mosul University Library" project at the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research in Baghdad.

The meeting was chaired by Professor Waheed Mahmoud Al Ibrahimi, President of Mosul University, on behalf of Professor Haydar Abed Dhahad, Deputy Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research for Scientific Research Affairs and Chair of the Steering Committee.

The meeting brought together representatives from the Italian

Embassy in Iraq, the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS), the Prime Minister's Advisory Council (PMAC), the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, the University of Mosul, UNESCO, and other key project partners.

Attendees reviewed the project's key achievements, discussed ongoing progress, and outlined the work plan for the upcoming phases, emphasizing the activities necessary to successfully meet the project's goals. The "Restoring Mosul University Library" project is a key component of UNESCO's "Reviving the Spirit of Mosul" initiative.

As part of UNESCO Iraq's ongoing

efforts to develop the Mosul University Library and restore its rich legacy of learning and culture, UNESCO is working closely with the library staff, providing hands-on training, mentoring, and technical support in the areas of Repair, Maintenance, Binding and Preservation of rare and old books and documents.

Additionally, a specialized training course was conducted earlier this month to introduce the library staff to different types of manuscripts and rare books, methods for handling them, and techniques for their repair and long-term preservation—contributing to the safeguarding of the university's documentary and intellectual heritage.

This initiative is being carried out in the framework of the "Restoring Mosul University Library" project, supported by the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS) and implemented in partnership with the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research and Mosul University.

Through this collaborative effort, UNESCO continues to strengthen the capacities of local professionals and contribute to the revival of one of Iraq's most important academic institutions.

Belgian Ambassador to Iraq visits UNESCO's project sites in Mosul

Mosul, 26 March 2025 - UNESCO welcomed the Belgian Ambassador to Iraq, H.E. Serge Dickschen, on a visit to Mosul. He toured historic houses restored with the generous support of the European Union and met families who have returned to their neighborhoods — a powerful sign of resilience and recovery.

As part of his visit he toured Al-Tahera Church in the heart of Mosul's Old City—an iconic site restored with funding from the United Arab Emirates. Today, the sound of church bells echoes again, harmonizing with the call to prayer from nearby mosques.



Forgotten spaces unearthed at Hammam Al Qala

Baghdad, 11 March 2025 - UNESCO's restoration, supported by the European Union, has revealed hidden rooms and lost spaces at Hammam Al Qala. Teams uncovered these treasures while removing rubble, offering a glimpse into the past. These newly discovered sections will be carefully preserved and woven into the restoration design, bringing this centuries-old landmark back to life.

UNESCO has finished the first phase of rubble removal at Hammam Al Qala. Tons

of debris cleared, key structures reinforced — reconstruction is on its way!



UNAMI on X

Baghdad, 18 April 2025 - Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General, Resident Coordinator, Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Ghulam M. Isaczai: "There's no better place to celebrate #WorldHeritageDay than Iraq—the cradle of civilization. From Ur to Babylon to Erbil Citadel, its cultural legacy is unmatched. I'm constantly inspired by Iraq's beauty, history, and diversity."



UNESCO on X

Mosul, 18 April 2025 - To mark the International Day for Monuments and Sites, UNESCO participated in a symposium titled "Disaster and Conflict Resilient Heritage," organized by Bytna Foundation in partnership with Al-Noor University and SBAH. The event focused on Mosul's recovery after conflict and brought together experts and local partners to discuss how to protect cultural heritage during crises.



UNAMI on X

Baghdad, 25 April 2025 - Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General, Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Ghulam Isaczai: "Today, I had the privilege to attend a music event organized by the Conservatory for Musical Studies to celebrate the Iraqi Maqam, recognized by UNESCO in 2008 as an intangible cultural heritage in need of preservation. The event featured several esteemed Iraqi artists."



Strengthening heritage conservation efforts in Basra

Basra, 29 April 2025 - At the University of Basra, UNESCO, with support from the European Union, officially launched a new lecture series dedicated to heritage conservation. The inaugural session was led by Dr. Assaad Seif, a distinguished archaeologist and heritage management expert affiliated with ICOMOS and ICAHM. Drawing on decades of experience in safeguarding cultural heritage in Lebanon and

beyond, Dr. Seif engaged officials, students, and experts in discussions on

global best practices to protect and promote Iraq's rich cultural legacy.



EU delegation visits UNESCO’s Project sites in Mosul

Mosul, 28 April 2025 - Today in Mosul, H.E. Mr. Thomas Seiler, Ambassador of the European Union to Iraq, visited two of the city's most iconic heritage landmarks: the Al-Nouri Complex and Al-Tahera Church, both rehabilitated by UNESCO with funding from the United Arab Emirates. The visit highlighted the ongoing efforts to restore Mosul’s rich cultural and religious heritage, bringing back symbols of resilience and coexistence at the heart of the Old City.



Equipping local experts with the tools and knowledge they need to protect Iraq’s cultural heritage

Erbil, 29 April 2025 – The training workshop “Strengthening Capacities for the Documentation and Conservation of World Heritage in Danger in Iraq”, funded by the

UNESCO/Netherlands Fund-in-Trust, has officially started! Following a recent assessment mission, a tailored capacity building programme has been developed by CRAterre

experts and is now underway at Erbil Citadel, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Eighteen local professionals from across Iraq are taking part in this hands-on training, which focuses on the documentation, damage assessment and conservation planning of ancient masonry and earthen architecture. The programme combines both theoretical and practical sessions at a carefully selected pilot site within the Citadel.

The aim of this initiative is to equip local experts with the tools and knowledge they need to protect Iraq’s cultural heritage.



Advancing heritage protection in Mosul

Mosul, 30 April 2025 - UNESCO, with support from the European Union, organized a new heritage conservation lecture at Northern Technical University in Mosul. Dr. Assaad Seif, a renowned archaeologist and heritage management expert (ICOMOS/ICAHM), together with the Mosul Heritage Foundation, led a session examining the emergence of global heritage organizations and the core principles behind protecting cultural sites. Drawing from his international experience, Dr. Seif

provided students, officials, and practitioners with valuable insights

into safeguarding Mosul’s cultural identity for future generations.



Charsteen Site in Dohuk reopens as a symbol of heritage and hope

Dohuk, 30 April 2025 - The Charsteen site in Dohuk has been beautifully upgraded and enhanced, celebrating the rich cultural and spiritual heritage of the region. Through the Madad Project, funded by the European Union and led by UNESCO, this transformation created work opportunities for both Syrian refugees and Iraqis, while preserving the site's

deep historical and natural significance.

With strong support from local authorities, Dohuk Governorate, the Department of Dohuk Antiquities and heritage, the ILO, and Wadi Association, Charsteen now stands as a vibrant symbol of resilience, community pride, and sustainable development, inviting visitors to

connect with the past while building a brighter future.



EU, UNESCO and UNICEF jointly mark National Teacher's Day in Iraq



Baghdad, 01 March 2025 - Today, on National Teacher's Day in Iraq - European Union, UNESCO and UNICEF jointly visited Al Razi School, which is supported under ITALEEM, the EU-funded UNESCO/UNICEF

project, within the General Directorate of Education in Baghdad Karkh 3. The Ministry of Education staff also joined and facilitated the visit.

During the visit, the EU Ambassador engaged with the students,

emphasizing the importance of education in shaping their future and reaffirming the EU's commitment to supporting education for Iraqi children. On this special occasion, UNESCO honored the dedication and hard work of teachers across Iraq, recognizing their vital role in empowering generations with knowledge and skills. Teachers are the backbone of education, inspiring young minds and paving the way for a brighter future. UNESCO remains committed to supporting educators and strengthening the education system in Iraq, ensuring quality learning opportunities for all. UNICEF also highlighted the importance of education and reiterated its continued support to ensure the right to education for all Iraqi children.

Calls room visit including interaction with students, students parliament and teachers held during the visit.

WFP on X

Baghdad, 13 March 2025 – School meals are essential for children's health and education. In Iraq, they help address food insecurity, malnutrition and educational gaps while boosting school attendance and local food systems. Investing in school feeding means investing in Iraq's future.

The World Food Programme (WFP) supports Iraq's Ministry of Education in strengthening the school feeding program for long-term sustainability. By building capacity and enhancing local implementation, enabling a fully government-led program in the future. Every child deserves a healthy school meal!

International School Meals Day is celebrated on the second Thursday of March every year.



Woven with hope: how Basima transformed her craft into a business

Baghdad, 06 March 2025 - Basima Shamo, a 38-year-old woman from the small town of Sinune, had always possessed a natural talent for creating beautiful handmade crafts. Growing up, she would spend hours weaving intricate baskets, embroidering textiles, and crafting decorative pieces using materials she found in her surroundings. Her creations were always met with admiration, but the reality of her life in Sinune—an area with few opportunities and limited resources—made it difficult to turn her passion into a sustainable livelihood.

One day, she heard about a vocational training program on handicrafts offered by the Aid Gate Organization in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), with the generous support of the Government of Denmark. The training



was a lifeline—a chance to gain the skills and knowledge she needed to transform her craft into a business. Without hesitation, she signed up.

During the training, Basima not only refined her skills, learning to craft

more intricate designs using locally available materials, but she also gained essential business management and marketing techniques. The program went beyond just technical training—it also included Mental Health and

Woven with hope: how Basima transformed her craft into a business *(continued)*

Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) sessions, which proved to be just as valuable. These sessions helped Basima rebuild her confidence, manage stress, and, perhaps most importantly, connect with other women who shared her dreams and struggles. The support and camaraderie she found among them ignited a new sense of hope.

With her newfound skills and knowledge, Basima took a bold step and opened her own small handicraft business right in the heart of Sinune. Her shop quickly became a local treasure, featuring a stunning array of handmade items: woven baskets, embroidered textiles, and decorative pieces that paid homage to the region's cultural heritage. By blending traditional techniques with modern designs, Basima's crafts gained popularity, not just within the town, but in surrounding areas as well.

What had once seemed like an impossible dream was now a thriving

business, providing Basima with a stable income and the ability to support her family. But her impact didn't stop there. As her business grew, Basima created job opportunities for other women in the community, offering them training and employment in her workshop. Her success became a beacon of hope for many.

Reflecting on her journey, Basima proudly shares, "This training changed my life. It gave me the confidence to pursue my dreams and the skills to make them a reality. Now, I'm not just supporting my family—I'm helping preserve our culture and inspiring others to do the same."

Basima's story is a powerful reminder of how vocational training can unlock hidden potential and transform lives. It is a testament to the incredible power of determination, community support, and the ability to turn passion into purpose. Today, Basima not only provides for her family, but she also

plays a vital role in preserving the cultural heritage of her region—one beautiful craft at a time.

It is worth noting that the handicraft vocational training program provided a range of vocational and business skills to the trainees preparing them for self-employment and entrepreneurship. These skills included professional gift wrapping, Fabric engraving to personalize gifts, decorating household items such as clocks and photo frames, creating models using wool threads, crafting and decorating traditional heritage items to preserve culture, and making wool rugs which is a valuable skill for home decor and sales. In addition to those vocational skills, the program also provided business skills to the trainees such as financial literacy, product pricing, profit and expense management, basic literacy training, marketing and customer engagement, and entrepreneurial skills for running small businesses.

UNHCR on X

Erbil, 19 March 2025 - Refugee children in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq can attend public schools, but many face setbacks in their education due to difficult living conditions. As a result, they often fall behind their peers. To support their learning journey, UNHCR provides catch-up classes, helping them adapt and transition smoothly into the national curriculum.



UNESCO Iraq Office conducted a three-week training workshop on the Education Management Information System (EMIS)

Baghdad, 20 March 2025 - UNESCO Iraq Office conducted a three-week training workshop on the Education Management Information System (EMIS) from 3 to 19 March 2025. The workshop brought together 15 Master Trainers (including seven women), call center/help desk staff, and system administration personnel from the Ministry of Education, the Literacy Commission, and iMMAP. Participants gained the knowledge and essential skills needed to effectively use EMIS and address troubleshooting issues raised by schools and the General Directorates of Education.

As a result, the Ministry of Education is now better equipped to train Master

Trainers and call center staff at the General Directorates of Education at the governorate level. The training also strengthened the Ministry's capacity to manage EMIS, set up the system,

launch the new academic year, update subjects per curriculum department guidelines, and implement necessary changes based on the General Directorate's new EMIS regulations.



UNESCO and Government of Italy sign €4 million agreement to improve access to inclusive, quality education in Southern Iraq



Baghdad, 02 April 2025 – The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS) have signed a new €4 million agreement to improve access to inclusive, quality education for vulnerable children in southern Iraq.

The three-year project, titled "Improving Access to Inclusive Quality Education in Southern Iraq," will be implemented across the Basra, Dhi Qar, and Maysan governorates. These regions have some of the highest rates of out-of-school children and face persistent challenges in educational

infrastructure and access.

Building on the successes of previous collaborations, the initiative will strengthen Iraq's efforts to achieve its National Education Strategy 2022–2031 and contribute directly to global commitments under Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly: SDG 4 – Quality Education; SDG 5 – Gender Equality; SDG 16 – Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions

"This project marks a new chapter in our longstanding partnership with AICS and the Government of Iraq," said Mr. Paolo Fontani, UNESCO Representative to Iraq. "Together, we aim to bring education to the most vulnerable, ensuring that no child is left behind."

The initiative builds on UNESCO's deep experience in supporting education reform in Iraq and will complement ongoing efforts, including the Teach for Future project and partnerships with private sector actors such as Eni, ensuring strong synergies and maximizing impact on the ground.

Third meeting of the Technical Education Council held at Northern Technical University

Erbil, 12 April 2025 – Today, the UNESCO TVET team, chaired by the Chief of Education Department Dr. Tap Raj, attended the Third Meeting of the Technical Education Council held at Northern Technical University. The meeting was chaired by Professor Dr. Haider Abdul-Dahd, Deputy Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, with the participation of presidents of 4 technical universities in federal Iraq, presidents of 3 polytechnic universities in the Kurdistan Region, the president of the University of Technology, and senior officials from the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research. The meeting discussed several critical topics related to the advancement of technical and vocational education in Iraq. These included:

- The third phase of the Technical and



Vocational Education and Training (TVET3) Project, implemented by UNESCO with funding from the European Union (2025–2027)

- The development and implementation of the Technical and

Vocational Qualification Framework (TVQF)

- The planned opening of postgraduate institutes at Al-Furat Al-Awsat Technical University
- The establishment of specialized technical institutes focusing on artificial intelligence

The UNESCO team presented the project's planned activities, developed in close consultation with national stakeholders and aligned with the National Education Strategy, emphasizing the importance of coordination for effective and timely implementation.



Iraq advances integration of climate adaptation into national education curricula with UN support

Baghdad, 15 April 2025 - As part of Iraq's ongoing efforts to strengthen its national response to climate change, the Ministry of Environment, in collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Green Climate Fund (GCF), organized a national training workshop on 14–15 April entitled “Integrating Climate Adaptation Concepts into Public Education Curricula.” The event saw active participation from the Ministries of Education and Higher Education and Scientific Research, as well as international organizations including UNICEF.

The workshop aimed to enhance the capacities of educational and academic staff to integrate climate adaptation into school and university curricula, in line with Iraq's commitments under the Paris Agreement and the UNFCCC.

In his opening remarks, Mr. Youssef Mueid, Director of the Climate Change Directorate at the Ministry of Environment, emphasized that integrating adaptation concepts in education is a national priority. Mr. Yasir Mohammed, Environmental Expert and UNEP Representative in

Iraq, also highlighted the vital role of education in preparing societies to face climate-related challenges.

This collaboration reflects UNEP's central role in supporting countries like Iraq to strengthen environmental and climate policy integration. UNEP provides technical guidance, capacity building, and facilitates the exchange of global knowledge to ensure that environmental concepts are effectively embedded in national education systems, contributing to the

achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

The workshop concluded with presentations of group work outcomes and a proposed action plan, including the formation of technical committees, development of educational materials, and future training sessions. Participants stressed the importance of continued collaboration between Government, academia, and civil society to mainstream climate education across Iraq.



The National Teacher's Capacity Professional Development (TCPD) framework validated at a workshop in Baghdad

Baghdad, 17 April 2025 - With funding from the European Union and within the framework of the ITALEEM Programme, the UNESCO Office in Iraq conducted a five-day workshop in Baghdad from 13–17 April 2025 to validate the National Teacher's Capacity Professional Development (TCPD) Framework. The workshop brought together 27 officials (10 female and 17 male) from the Ministries of Education in Baghdad and Erbil, reflecting a strong collaborative spirit toward building a more resilient and

inclusive education system in Iraq.

The TCPD framework is designed to enhance the quality of teaching and improve educational outcomes across the country. The framework ensures that all educators, including primary and secondary school teachers, have access to continuous, relevant, and research-based professional development. It also engages key stakeholders such as school leaders and policymakers to foster a supportive and cohesive environment for teachers' growth.



UNESCO conducts strategic visits to Erbil and Duhok Polytechnic Universities as part of TVET Reform Phase III implementation

Erbil, 20 April 2025 - As part of the ongoing implementation of the third phase of the EU-funded TVET reform initiative, “Green and Digital TVET for Enhancing Employability in Iraq,” the UNESCO TVET team, led by Dr. Tap Raj Pant, Chief of the Education Department, conducted key working visits to Erbil Polytechnic University

(EPU) and Duhok Polytechnic University (DPU) on 13 and 14 April 2025.

The visits aimed to strengthen communication and coordination between UNESCO and key Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions, ensuring the effective realization of the project's

goals.

During the meetings, participants reflected on lessons learned from the previous phase of the reform programme, “Job Creation Through Technical & Vocational Education System Strengthening & Labour Market Linkages.” The discussions served as a valuable forum for open

UNESCO conducts strategic visits to Erbil and Duhok Polytechnic Universities ... (continued)

dialogue, with EPU and DPU teams offering insightful feedback and practical recommendations for the upcoming implementation phase.

UNESCO expressed appreciation for the constructive input shared by both universities and reaffirmed its commitment to integrating these recommendations into the project's work plan. This collaborative approach underscores UNESCO's focus on aligning the TVET3 project with

national priorities while remaining responsive to the on-the-ground realities faced by Iraq's leading vocational institutions.

The third phase of the TVET reform project continues to advance efforts toward a greener, more digitally integrated education system that enhances employability and supports sustainable development across Iraq.



Unlocking Iraq's innovation potential through data: the iDATA local solution

Baghdad, 21 April 2025 - Data digitalization is of crucial importance in Iraq to driving informed policies and sustainable development. It enhances accessibility to data, enabling quick analysis for evidence-based decision-making. Moreover, it fosters transparency, bridges information gaps, and empowers stakeholders to address challenges in various sectors.

As part of its ongoing efforts to promote innovative responses to national challenges, the UNDP Accelerator Lab in Iraq supported the scale-up of the iDATA platform. The initiative aligns seamlessly with the Lab's mission to explore, test, and scale local solutions that directly respond to the country's most pressing development needs.

In the age of data, Iraq is taking a bold step forward through homegrown solutions that places data at the heart of innovation and development. The iDATA platform, powered by KAPITA Business Hub, is an Iraqi initiative aiming to revolutionize access to and use of data across both public and private sectors. This platform stands as a powerful testament to the capabilities of local solutions in addressing critical challenges, such as youth unemployment, ecosystem development, and education reform.

Bridging the Data Divide-iDATA

One of the most persistent barriers to innovation and growth in Iraq is the lack of accessible, reliable, and interactive data. Key sectors — including education, entrepreneurship, and digital transformation — often suffer from data scarcity, leaving stakeholders with limited visibility into the ecosystem's needs and opportunities. The iDATA platform directly addresses this gap by aggregating official data from the Iraqi

government and the World Bank and presenting it through intuitive, interactive dashboards.

Currently, the platform features six dashboards — including State Budget Dashboard, the Country Profile Dashboard, and the Digital Economy Actors Mapping in Iraq Dashboard. These tools already attract significant user engagement, with over 1,000 visitors in the first week of the beta launch.

A Data-Driven Vision for Iraq's Future The iDATA platform is more than just a digital tool — it is a transformative initiative with the potential to reshape Iraq's data and innovation landscape. By centralizing sectoral data and presenting it in a format that is accessible, Interactive and actionable; iDATA empowers policymakers, researchers, entrepreneurs, and citizens to make informed decisions. The UNDP-AccLab supported the development of two dashboards to further strengthen iDATA platform in providing accessible and interactive data:

The Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Dashboard: a dashboard that tracks

startup activities, investment trends, innovation hubs, co-working spaces, and regulatory frameworks. This dashboard is now a key resource for understanding and strengthening Iraq's startup environment.

The Education Ecosystem Dashboard: a dashboard that provides insights into student demographics, university specialization, skill development, and technology integration in education. It aims to bridge the market-skill gap that contributes to high youth unemployment rates in Iraq.

A Locally-Led Innovation, Globally Supported

The iDATA initiative reflects the transformative power of partnerships, innovation, and digital solutions in addressing Iraq's most pressing challenges. By supporting the scale-up of iDATA, UNDP Accelerator Lab is championing a new model of development: one that puts local innovators at the forefront, backed by the power of data, partnerships and the promise of sustainable progress.

By Mahdi Al-Saadawi, Multimedia officer, UNDP



UNESCO and KOICA strengthen efforts to boost youth employability in Ninawa, Iraq

Erbil, 22 April 2025 — UNESCO and the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) reaffirmed their partnership to enhance job opportunities for vulnerable youth in Ninawa through targeted vocational training programs.

A review meeting held in Erbil brought together representatives from both organizations to assess progress on the KOICA-funded project, “Enhancing Employability for Vulnerable Youth in Ninawa, Iraq.” The meeting was led by

Dr. Tap Raj Pant, Chief of Education and Officer-in-Charge of UNESCO Iraq accompanied by Mr. Mohammed Abdurahman, National Project Officer, and Mr. Jong Junyoung, KOICA’s Resident Representative in Erbil, accompanied by Mr. Abdullah Kurdo, Project Management Specialist, and Mr. Mudhafar Y. Hamad, Logistics Officer.

The project has delivered vocational training in high-demand sectors, including:

- Solar Panel Installation and Maintenance
- Upholstery
- Air Conditioner Installation and Maintenance
- TV and Monitor Maintenance.

These programs are equipping youth with practical, market-driven skills, improving their chances of securing employment.

UNESCO and KOICA also emphasized the importance of continued collaboration with local authorities, businesses, and educational institutions to build a sustainable support network for youth development.

To ensure ongoing progress, both sides agreed to conduct regular joint review meetings and adapt implementation strategies as needed.

This initiative highlights a shared commitment to fostering inclusive economic growth and long-term stability in Iraq through youth empowerment.



Youth

Anas Saleh Mohammed: from training to career success

Mosul, 10 April 2025 - Anas Saleh Mohammed, 23, a graduate of Electronics Engineering with a specialization in Communications from the University of Mosul, faced a competitive selection process when applying for an on-the-job training opportunity. Among many candidates, Anas was selected to undergo training with chosen companies.

“The experience was not easy at all, but I wanted to pursue it because it would enhance my field of specialization and provide me with a job opportunity with the company.”

During the training period, Anas took full advantage of every moment, attending all field assignments with Asiaccell, which is one of the Telecom companies in Iraq that offers mobile phone services and Mobile Internet mainly in Iraq. His dedication and skills did not go unnoticed, and by the

end of the training, Asiaccell recognized his competence and offered him a full-time job.

“I am proud of myself and proud of my work and production. It was the happiest moment of my life.”

Securing a stable job in his field was a significant achievement and a dream come true for Anas, especially in Iraq, where job opportunities can be challenging. This accomplishment provided him with professional satisfaction and financial security. However, Anas's ambitions do not stop there. He aspires to continue his studies, advance in his career, and keep up with technological developments to enhance his income and career prospects, which have been growing since he started working at the company. Anas expressed his happiness at securing his job and his determination to achieve even greater success in the future.

We met with Huda, from Human Appeal - implemented by UNDP in partnership with Human Appeal and funded by the German government - highlighted the impact of the program in Mosul and the Nineveh Plains. Through on-the-job training, participants like Anas were linked to

opportunities tailored to their skills, interests, and university specialization. Anas’ coordination with Asiaccell led to an interview at the company’s headquarters, where his outstanding performance during the training resulted in a stable job.

About the Project

The ongoing conflicts in Iraq have severely affected social and economic stability, particularly following the ISIS crisis, which caused mass displacement. Since 2015, efforts have been made to restore basic services, enabling many residents to return home. UNDP’s Building Resilience through Employment Project (BREP) funded by the Government of Germany, through KfW, supports safe returns through economic empowerment and housing reconstruction, focusing on five liberated governorates: Anbar, Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninawa, and Salah al-Din. The program creates jobs, enhances skills in construction and agriculture, and supports small and medium enterprises. To date, more than 5,500 young men and women have received training in various fields, paving the way for a brighter future in Iraq.

By Sally B. Al Bahri, Partnerships and Communications Analyst, UNDP Iraq



Iraqi law students shine at Arabic Arbitration Moot in Riyadh

Riyadh, KSA, 16 April 2025 - "It is a success for Iraq and a result of our efforts to make arbitration known in the country. Representing Iraq on such a platform and returning with multiple awards encourages us even more," says Deleen Dlshad a law student at Duhok University.

Mohammed Abdulhadi, who studies law at the American University of Iraq, Sulaimani, adds: "Being here and meeting students from across the Arab world helps us build our network, learn from each other, and make Iraq more visible in international fora. We were awarded Best Respondent's Memorandum and Best Respondent Oralist. This encourages us even more to continue learning and help our country excel in the near future."

Hatem, Ahmed, and 18 other students from the American University of Baghdad, American University of Iraq Sulaimani, University of Baghdad, Mosul University, and Duhok University participated in the Riyadh in person rounds of the Arab Arbitration Moot, organized by the Saudi Center for Commercial Arbitration. This year, 154 teams from 24 countries joined the competition. Only 32 teams advanced to the in-person rounds in Riyadh, including five teams from Iraq, a significant increase from two teams last year.

"I have been part of this journey since 2023. Last year, we represented Iraq at the Arab Arbitration Moot for the first time. This year, our numbers have more than doubled," says Hatem Kareem, a student at the American University of Baghdad, and one of four students who participated last year following arbitration training provided by UNDP.

"Like others, I joined the arbitration trainings UNDP has been offering. These sessions have supported our capacity, skills, and knowledge in commercial dispute resolution and arbitration. Thanks to this training and the support we received, we elevated our performance and tested our knowledge at the regional level," says Ahmed Saad from Mosul University.

UNDP has been supporting law students across Iraq to build their capacities in Commercial Dispute Resolution, with Arbitration as one of the key focus areas. Funded by the European Union through the Anti-Corruption and Arbitration



Initiatives, for the second consecutive year, UNDP has supported student participation in the Arab Arbitration Moot through coaching and preparation.

Out of the five Iraqi teams that participated this year, two reached the Round of 16, and one advanced to the quarterfinals. This highlights the growing strength, interest and capacity of Iraqi law students and universities in the field of arbitration, a vital tool in unlocking Iraq's business potential.

Arbitration is a private dispute resolution mechanism which is widely used between investors and local counterparties, whether private or public. Compared to national courts, arbitration offers faster, more efficient, and more reliable process of resolving disputes for businesses. It allows for the selection of specialized arbitrators, streamlined processes, and legally binding final awards.

Currently, Iraq lacks modern legislation regulating commercial arbitration. With UNDP's support, a draft arbitration law has been developed and is now under review in Parliament. UNDP also supports

enhancing the capacity of the judiciary and lawyers in arbitration and mediation, thereby building an ecosystem conducive of efficient mechanisms of dispute resolution in line with best international practices. All these efforts are intended to creating a reliable business environment attracting and retaining investments in Iraq.

"I plan to begin my career in the Iraqi judicial system after graduation, where I can make a difference using the knowledge and skills I've gained through my education and training. Iraq needs young, forward-looking professionals to take the country to the next level and my goal is to be a part of that," says Zahraa Hayder from Baghdad University.

By supporting both the government and the next generation of legal professionals, UNDP aims to ensure that Iraq's future lawyers, judges, and prosecutors are well-equipped to promote fair, efficient commercial dispute resolution. This will help position Iraq as a trustworthy market, unlock investment opportunities, and support economic diversification.



Visit of Under-Secretary-General for Operational Support to Iraq, 18–21 April 2025

Baghdad, 21 April 2025 - The Under-Secretary-General for Operational Support, Mr. Atul Khare, visited Iraq from 18 to 21 April 2025 in the context of the upcoming drawdown and transition of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), followed by a period of in-situ liquidation as mandated by Security Council Resolution 2732 (2024), to determine the nature and extent of Headquarters support to these processes.

During his visit, USG Khare, accompanied by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq Dr. Mohamed Al Hassan, was received by His Excellency, Mr. Mohammed Shia Al-Sudani, Prime Minister of the Republic of Iraq. USG Khare also held separate meetings with His Excellency, Mr. Abdul Amir al-Shammari, Minister of Interior; His Excellency, Mr. Thabet Muhammad Saeed Al-Abbasi, Minister of Defence; and His Excellency, Mr. Mohammad Hussein Bahr Aluloom, Undersecretary of the Foreign Ministry for Bilateral Relations who is tasked with working with UNAMI on the Mission transition and liquidation plan.

Discussions with senior Government officials emphasized the shared commitment to ensuring a smooth and orderly drawdown of UNAMI by the end of December 2025, and to completing all in-situ liquidation activities by the end of September 2026.



Photo: UNAMI / Ivan Djordjevic

USG Khare expressed his appreciation to the Iraqi authorities for their steadfast support throughout the UNAMI presence in the country, and noted the positive developments towards lasting peace and stability. He assured the Iraqi authorities of the United Nations' commitment to the safe removal of all hazardous waste prior to the handover of facilities and locations. He underscored that the continued cooperation and engagement of the Iraqi leadership will be critical to ensure the successful conclusion of this transition.

The Under-Secretary-General also toured the UN Integrated Compound in Baghdad where UN personnel reside and work, and held a series of internal meetings, including with representatives of UN Agencies,

Funds and Programmes operating in Iraq, as well as a townhall for UNAMI personnel.

The visit also served as an opportunity to showcase the Mission's significant progress in environmental management. USG Khare commended UNAMI for enhancing its environmental performance and reviewed key initiatives, including a visit to the Dijlah Eco Park where he planted a tree, the Waste Management Yard, and the water and energy management systems. He particularly noted the successful installation of modular Wastewater Treatment Plants (WWTPs) employing advanced technology, and solar energy panels which generate up to four Giga watt hours annually. Such projects would certainly leave a positive environmental legacy in the country.

Ramadan Iftar brings together the UN with media and influencers in Iraq

Baghdad, 27 March 2025 - The United Nations in Iraq hosted a Ramadan Iftar gathering elite Iraqi

journalists and influencers, with the attendance of UNICEF, the UN Development Programme, the UN

Population Fund, and the UN Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI).

The meeting was a great opportunity to foster dialogue and collaborate with media and influencers, discuss future areas of partnership to support development issues, advocate for children's rights and youth empowerment, and protect the rights of women and girls in Iraq.

We appreciate the role of media and content creators in delivering important messages to the community, and we look forward to further collaborations together for a better future for all!



The United Nations in Iraq holds Women’s Security Awareness Training session

Baghdad, 21 April 2025 - The United Nations in Iraq held a Women’s Security Awareness Training (WSAT) session at the UN Headquarters in Baghdad from 16-17 April 2025. The training session brought together 16 female participants representing the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and the UN Agencies, Funds and Programmes operating in the country. The two-day training session was facilitated by Ms. Farah Hameed from the World Food Programme and Ms. Reman Hayder from UNICEF Iraq. The Women’s Security Awareness Training is highly recommended for all female UN Security Management System (UNSMS) personnel. It empowers women with the knowledge, skills, and mindset needed to operate in higher-risk environments and equips them with practical tools and confidence to manage and respond effectively to security risks.

Grounding exercises were implemented during the training session to help participants release negative energy and stay focused. These activities supported emotional regulation, reduced stress, helped participants feel more present and connected, as well as enabled them to continue learning in a joyful and supportive environment. Participants shared their positive

feedback with the facilitators: “This training helped me feel more confident and aware of the risks we may face as women in the field.” “It’s not just about security — it’s about empowering us to do our jobs safely and effectively.” “Now I understand how to assess situations and take action with more confidence.”



Timeline

UNAMI on X

Erbil, 10 March 2025 - National Clothing Day is celebrated on 10 March every year in Kurdistan Region. In Erbil and elsewhere in the Region, Kurdish women and men wear their traditional attire for the occasion, with vibrant colors and different tailoring styles. Happy Kurdish clothing day!



Nowruz greeting from SRSG Dr. Mohamed Al Hassan

Baghdad, 20 March 2025 - Nowruz greeting from the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General and Head of UNAMI, Dr. Mohamed Al Hassan: “Nowruz symbolizes the renewal of life. It ushers in the spring with its promise of renewal and brings hope for a brighter and more optimistic tomorrow. In 2010, the UN General Assembly

proclaimed 21 March of every year as the International Day of Nowruz. For the Kurds in Iraq and many other peoples celebrating this happy occasion, Nowruz marks the beginning of a new year. On this occasion, we extend our warmest wishes and congratulations to the Iraqi people, the people in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and all the peoples celebrating Nowruz, coupled

with a spirit of optimism, new opportunities, peace, joy and prosperity for all. The United Nations will continue to stand alongside the people of Iraq as a committed partner in their pursuit of a brighter future. Nowruztan Pirozbet!”

Nowruz message from the Deputy SRSG, Resident Coordinator, Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Ghulam M. Isaczai

Baghdad, 21 March 2025 – “Nowruz is a time of joy and renewed hope, a celebration rooted in history for many communities around the world that welcomes spring. To all Nowruz

celebrants, especially the Kurdish people of Iraq, I hope your days are filled with joy, peace, new opportunities, and prosperity.”



Eid al-Fitr Message from the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of UNAMI, Dr. Mohamed Al Hassan

Baghdad, 30 March 2025 - “On Behalf of the United Nations family in Iraq I would like to extend to the noble people of Iraq my warmest congratulations and sincere wishes on the occasion of Eid al-Fitr, along with hopes for a better future. I would also like to take this

opportunity to call on the dear people of Iraq to preserve the gains that have been achieved and to continue striving for progress that fulfills the aspirations and hopes of all – towards an Iraq of hope, a prosperous and secure Iraq, at peace with itself, its neighbors, and the wider region.

I also wish to reaffirm our strong ties of cooperation with Iraq and our fruitful, ongoing partnership in support of a thriving nation.

Eid Mubarak. May your days be filled with happiness, and may you be blessed with many joyful returns of this occasion.”

Eid al-Fitr Message from the Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General, Resident Coordinator, Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, Ghulam M. Isaczai

Baghdad, 30 March 2025 – “On behalf of myself and the United Nations Country Team in Iraq, I extend

my warmest congratulations and best wishes to the Government and people of Iraq on the occasion of Eid al-Fitr.

On this blessed occasion, we pray for peace, prosperity and well-being of all Iraqis and people in the region”.

UNHCR on X

Baghdad, 07 April 2025 - On the International Day of Sport for Development and Peace, we celebrate the value of sport to bring joy and hope to refugee children around the world. Together, we can create safe spaces where children can laugh and learn.



UNODC on X

Baghdad, 07 April 2025 - On this #SportsDay, we celebrate the transformational power of sport to build resilient communities and inspire change. It's not possible if sport is tainted by corruption and crime. At UNODC, we work to #SaveSport and preserve the integrity of sports we love.



Hope on the pitch: a Yazidi girl's defiant dream

Erbil, 06 April 2025 - In the blistering heat of August 2014, the world watched in silence as the unthinkable unfolded. Entire Yazidi families were ripped apart, villages turned into graveyards, and women and girls were sold, enslaved, and silenced. What happened on Sinjar Mountain was not just a humanitarian catastrophe—it was a genocide, an attempt to erase a people, their culture, their spirit. But from the ashes of that horror, where hope seemed impossible, a new generation has begun to rise.

Among them is a young Yazidi girl, named Ikhlas who was little girl at that time. With fire in her heart and cleats on her feet, Ikhlas' battlefield is now the football pitch, and her dream—to one day play professionally for the Iraq National Team—is not just a personal ambition, but a quiet act of defiance. In her story, we find not only the pain of the past, but the promise of a future that was never meant to be stolen.

[A Difficult Beginning](#)

“We fled from Qahtaniyah on foot —



seven days without food or water... Ikhlas cried from hunger. Today, she smiles every time she scores a goal.” — Faiza, Ikhlas' sister

When ISIS swept through Qahtaniyah, Ikhlas was only four years old. Her sister Faiza, now a humanitarian worker, recalls those harsh days:

“We escaped on foot to the Syrian border. We endured hunger, thirst, and slept under the open sky for seven long

days. Ikhlas, just a little girl then, wept from hunger and thirst. But we endured. We were heroes.”

After their displacement, the family settled in displacement camps in Zakho, Duhok Governorate, for six months before moving to Sheikhan in Erbil.

[The Birth of a Passion](#)

“Sport brings people together and spreads peace. Football became my way

Hope on the pitch: a Yazidi girl's defiant dream *(continued)*

of expressing myself.” — Ikhlas Imran
Despite the hardship, Ikhlas discovered her passion — football.

“Since she was little, she loved the game,” Faiza says. “I used to take her with me to all community football activities. Today, I’m proud to call her an exceptional player.”

The Dream Lives On

Now 15 years old, Ikhlas sees football as a bridge between people — a force for peace. She dreams of playing for Iraq’s national women’s team, representing her hometown, Qahtaniyah, and all Yazidi women with pride.

“I wear number 7 because Cristiano Ronaldo is my idol... I dream of meeting

him one day to tell him the story of Yazidi women.” — Ikhlas

Real Madrid is Ikhlas' favorite club and she celebrates her goals just like her football hero, Cristiano Ronaldo.

“Number 7 is his number, and he’s my inspiration,” she says. “One day, I hope to meet him and share with him the story of what happened to Yazidi women — to send a message to the world through him.”

First Championship

“I’m proud of my team... I scored four goals and we won the first women’s championship in Qahtaniyah!” — Ikhlas

In a historic achievement, Ikhlas and her team won the first women’s football

tournament ever held in Qahtaniyah — organized by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and funded by the Government of Japan, as part of the initiative to strengthen social cohesion and build peace in the area.

She didn’t just lift the trophy — she was also the tournament’s top scorer with four goals.

A Message to Every Girl

“Believe in your dreams. Nothing is impossible. Football is not only for men — just like every other field. We are just as capable of shining.” — Ikhlas

By Mahdi Al-Saadawi, Multimedia officer, UNDP

The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General and Head of UNAMI, Dr. Mohamed Al Hassan, extends greetings to the Yazidi Community on the occasion of Yazidi New Year

Baghdad, 16 April 2025 - On the occasion of Yazidi New Year, I extend my sincere congratulations and best wishes to all Yazidis in Iraq and around the world.

This holiday is an opportunity to celebrate the rich heritage of this ancient community, and to honor its sacrifices and steadfastness in the face of profound hardship — challenges that have only strengthened its resolve to

seek justice and live in dignity.

The United Nations in Iraq reaffirms its unwavering commitment to supporting the Yazidi community on its path to comprehensive recovery — a recovery that will only be complete when all displaced persons have returned home in safety and dignity, when there is clarity about the fate of the missing, when abducted individuals are reunited with their loved ones,

when those responsible for the crimes committed against this community are held accountable, and when Yazidis are able to fully regain their rights in a prosperous and thriving Iraq.

On this special occasion, we reaffirm our solidarity with the Yazidi people and our steadfast support for their right to a future of peace, justice, and human dignity.

Happy New Year.”

The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of UNAMI, Dr. Mohamed Al Hassan, attends Easter Mass in Baghdad

Baghdad, 20 April 2025 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of UNAMI, Dr. Mohamed Al Hassan, attended today the Easter Mass held at the Latin Cathedral of St. Joseph and St. Teresa of the Child Jesus in Baghdad.

On this occasion, the Special Representative delivered a speech in which he affirmed the important role of Christians in Iraq, a role that enriches the history and diversity of this ancient country. He also stressed the need to protect Christians and their beliefs.

Here is the full text of his Easter message:

“My Christian sisters and brothers in Iraq,

I extend to you my best wishes and warmest greetings on the occasion of Easter.

The Christian community in Iraq is rooted in this good land. It has been an

essential component in Mesopotamia throughout history and adds to its unique diversity.

We in the United Nations affirm the importance and role of the Christian community in Iraq as part of the rich diversity of this country.

We look forward to good days and a

promising future for the Christians of Iraq and all Iraqis as they contribute to the advancement of Iraq.

You bring pride to this ancient country. Your heritage is highly appreciated, and this requires all of us to protect it, care for it, and ensure its continuity.

Happy Easter.”

