

UNAMI Herald

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UN Iraq SRSG joins Ministry of Health in calling for people to help beat COVID-19 by staying home, maintaining strict social distancing and hygiene

Baghdad, 22 March 2020 - The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert joined the Iraqi Ministry of Health today in calling on Iraqis across the country to follow the instructions and advice from health, religious, civilian and security authorities to practice social distancing and strict hygiene in order to protect their families and communities from the spread of the Coronavirus.

"I am here to emphasize our support to their efforts, as well as to the endless efforts of the medical professionals. They are the unsung heroes in the fight against the coronavirus", the Special Representative said after meeting with the Iraqi Minister of Health, Jaafar Allawi. "COVID-19 is an unprecedented challenge which should be taken extremely seriously. And there is no time to waste".

Communities play a critical role in spreading a virus, but also in stopping it. Proper hygiene, in particular washing hands on a regular basis, social distancing and limiting contacts. All this can stop the virus from spreading rapidly.

The Special Representative said she is encouraged by the wide-ranging actions taken in Iraq, including in the Kurdistan Region.

"We should not panic. But to avoid panic, we cannot afford to be complacent. In recent days we noted that some people are unnecessarily breaking the curfew, or not fully abiding by the instructions. To those, I would like to say: you are endangering yourselves, your families, your loved ones and the community at large."

Public health is the number one priority. And all of us are in this together. All nations, all people. She added that quarantine, self-isolation and social distancing are nothing to be ashamed of. This is happening all over the world.

"Mass gatherings should not take place, and this includes sports,



cultural events and religious gatherings. And I would like to underline our appreciation for the calls from all religious authorities to follow the instructions and guidance, to stay home and to stay safe."

Here is the full text of the remarks by the SRSG Hennis-Plasschaert at the Iraqi Ministry of Health:

"I have just finished my meeting with the Minister of Health, in the presence of the World Health Organization Representative in Iraq, Dr. Adham, and their teams.

I am here to emphasize our support to their efforts, as well as to the endless efforts of the medical professionals. They are the unsung heroes in the fight against the coronavirus.

I will speak to you frankly. COVID-19 is an unprecedented challenge which should be taken extremely seriously. And there is no time to waste.

I would like to add my voice to the health, religious, civilian and security authorities calling on the people to abide by the instructions and advice already issued by international health authorities, as well as national recommendations issued by Crisis Committee 55 and local health authorities. All of us must abide by these instructions.

So far, Iraq has been able to contain the spread of the virus. But this is

just an initial victory in a longer struggle. And it has to be clear that this virus can only be fought with the full cooperation of each and every individual, with each one of us doing his or her part.

Communities play a critical role in spreading a virus, but also in stopping it. Proper hygiene, in particular washing hands on a regular basis, social distancing and limiting contacts. All this can stop the virus from spreading rapidly.

I am encouraged by the wide-ranging actions taken in Iraq, including in the Kurdistan Region.

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Public health is the number one priority. And all of us are in this together. All nations, all people.

In this edition ...

Security Council deliberated situation concerning Iraq on its 8739th meeting

New York, 3 March 2020 – The United Nations Security Council deliberated today the situation concerning Iraq on its 8739th meeting. The text (as delivered) of the briefing to the Security Council by Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq and head of UNAMI starts on page 4

WHO technical mission visits Iraq to step up COVID-19 detection and response activities

Baghdad, 15 March 2020 – A high-level technical mission from the World Health Organization (WHO) concluded a visit to Iraq to support the Iraqi Ministry of Health response to COVID-19 prevention and containment measures.



The mission, which comprised experts from the Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean Region and headquarters in Geneva, held a series of meetings with national health authorities to

identify the disease detection dynamics and at-risk populations, in addition to providing guidance on strengthening response and control measures.

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Joint appeal by the UN Secretary-General's Envoys to the Middle East

New York, 11 April 2020 - On 23 March, the Secretary-General launched an appeal for an immediate Global Ceasefire, urging all warring parties to pull back from hostilities, put aside mistrust and animosity, and silence their guns. Many parties have responded positively to the Secretary-General's appeal, but more needs to be done to translate these words into actions.

Too many in the Middle East have endured conflict and deprivation for far too long... *More on page 8*

UN in Iraq raises the alarm: Time to endorse the anti-domestic violence law

Baghdad, 16 April 2020 - The UN in Iraq urges the Iraqi Parliament to speed up the endorsement of the Anti-Domestic Violence Law amid alarming reports of a rise in gender-based and domestic violence cases perpetrated across the country, especially with increased household tensions as a result of the confinement due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) offices in Iraq express their concern at the rising number in domestic violence cases during the COVID-19 pandemic... *More on page 37*

UNAMI hate speech event with UN Under-Secretary-General Adama Dieng

Baghdad, 3 March 2020 — On 3 March, the UNAMI Human Rights Office brought together, in the presence of UN Under-Secretary-General Adama Dieng, UN Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide and the UN global focal point on hate speech, representatives from Iraqi human rights organisations, media monitoring bodies and legal associations, and representatives of diverse communities, to take stock of the dangers that hate speech represents to Iraqi society... *More on page 32*

Iraqi religious authorities adopt Interfaith Statement on the victims of ISIL

Baghdad, 9 March 2020 - United Nations Under-Secretary-General (USG) and Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, Adama Dieng, and Special Adviser (SA) and Head of the United Nations Investigative Team to promote accountability for crimes committed by Da'esh/ISIL in Iraq, Karim A. A. Khan Q.C., commended religious leaders for endorsing an Interfaith Statement on the Victims of ISIL. The Statement followed extensive engagement with religious authorities by UNITAD which continued during USG Dieng's visit to Iraq between 1–6 March ... *More on page 40*

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

UN Iraq SRSG joins Ministry of Health in calling for people to help beat COVID-19 *(continued from cover page)*

Quarantine, self-isolation and social distancing are nothing to be ashamed of. This is happening all over the world. The United Nations, with the World Health Organization in the lead, is supporting Iraqi efforts wholeheartedly.

WHO Iraq, in close cooperation and coordination with the authorities in Baghdad and the Kurdistan Region, has issued guidelines and advice to the public. It is providing technical support across the country including border and airport management, training of personnel on risks, communication and mass gatherings.

WHO is also part of the government committee established to take national decisions to stop the virus from spreading rapidly. Additionally, it is equipping infection control rooms in Baghdad and Erbil, and supplying test kits and personal protective equipment. We are aware that this still falls short of the needs, but there is a global shortage. And WHO has requested Iraq to be a high priority to allow the country to tap into available resources. Last but not least: the work of the government and you, the media, is critical, in both: raising awareness and in countering all the fake news and rumours out there.

Thank you so much.”



Statement by the United Nations in Iraq on the COVID-19 Virus

Baghdad, 19 March 2020 - The COVID-19 virus remains a present threat around the world, in this region, and in Iraq. It affects all segments of society and can only be fought with the full cooperation of each and every individual, every one of us doing what we can to help contain the outbreak.

To date, the measures taken by Iraq have been wide-ranging and squarely aimed at reducing the spread of the pandemic. It has not been easy, but the United Nations in Iraq is encouraged to note that, thanks to these efforts, Iraq has thus far managed to contain the spread of the virus.

However, the success of the containment efforts so far should not lead us to complacency. The fight is far from over. Mass gatherings, which rapidly spread the virus, must be restricted.

UN Iraq notes with appreciation that religious authorities in Iraq have urged their faithful to make public health their priority, and to stay at home

rather than gather in pilgrimage until the pandemic is over. UN Iraq also commends the measures taken by the Government to stop people from gathering in groups that could endanger public health.

All that has been gained in keeping the pandemic under control in Iraq could be lost if people come together in large groups as they normally would during

these dates. UN Iraq therefore calls upon the people of Iraq to commit to avoiding large gatherings – whether sports, religious or other. This is particularly difficult during a period in which we would normally gather to mark the special occasions, but we must think of others at this time, and make sure that we help limit the risk of transmission.



COVID-19 Pandemic coverage continues on page 12.

‘Critical’ window of opportunity closing fast in Iraq, Security Council hears

New York, 3 March 2020 - Political leaders in Iraq will have to “step up to the plate” and prioritize national interests if the country is to realize a more just and prosperous future, the top UN official there said in the Security Council on Tuesday.

Special Representative Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert updated ambassadors on the ongoing political indecisiveness and dissension roiling the country, where citizens continue to protest against corruption, unemployment and lack of basic services, and non-state armed groups such as ISIL remain a threat.

“As I have stated time and again: Iraq’s problems did not occur overnight, nor will they be solved in an instant,” she said.

“Yet times of crisis also present opportunities. And I sincerely hope that Iraqi political leaders will recognize in this moment, the crossroads where they either stand idle, or where they place themselves in the service of their countrymen and women. But I have to say: the critical window of opportunity is closing fast”.

For the past five months, Iraqis have taken to the streets in peaceful demonstrations which prompted the resignation of Prime Minister Abdul Mahdi in November, who stayed on in a caretaker role.

While a Prime Minister-designate was named in February and given a month to form a government, Mohammed Tawfiq Allaw this week withdrew his candidacy due to political obstruction, according to media reports.

On Monday, Mr. Mahdi announced that he will step back from most of his duties, while also calling for elections in early December.

These latest developments will prolong uncertainty and create “significant challenges”, thus further eroding public trust, Ms. Hennis-Plasschaert told ambassadors.

“Constitutionally, the President now has another 15 days to nominate a new Prime Minister-designate, whose government and



programme would again be subject to parliamentary endorsement”, she said.

“While political consultations are ongoing, the question remains whether political parties will find a new consensus-candidate within these time limits”.

‘Window of opportunity’ closing fast Ms. Hennis-Plasschaert began her briefing by reflecting the hopes of Iraqis who continue to pay “an unimaginable price” for their voices to be heard, noting that protestors have been injured and killed, simply calling for justice.

They are determined to see a more just and prosperous future in a sovereign nation that will not be a “battleground” for other conflicts.

“But for this to materialize,

political leaders and communities will have to step up to the plate: placing the country’s interest above all else, building domestic strength”, she said.

For the UN official, it is clear that the protestors, who are backed by “a silent majority”, will not budge on their aspirations. Delivering on their demands will require collective action by the political class.

“Out of the ongoing political crisis, a fairer, stronger and inherently more resilient Iraq can emerge,” she said.

“But again, for this to materialize political leaders will have to act fast, placing the country’s interest above all else”.

By UN News.



Security Council deliberated situation concerning Iraq on its 8739th meeting



New York, 3 March 2020 – The United Nations Security Council deliberated today the situation concerning Iraq on its 8739th meeting. Here is the text (as delivered) of the briefing to the Security Council by Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq and head of UNAMI:

Mister President, thank you so much. Distinguished members of the Security Council, Iraq has not left the headlines in recent months, as domestic, regional and international events have continued to take their toll on the country. And while we will explore these events today, I choose to begin with hope:

- The hope of a people who remain united in their determination for a more just and prosperous future;
- The hope of a sovereign nation that refuses to become a battleground for conflicts that are not its own;
- And the hope that Iraq may very well find itself at the most opportune moment for genuine and lasting political reform in a generation.

But for this to materialize, political leaders and communities will have to step up to the plate: placing the country's interest above all else, building domestic strength. And within this context, it is important not to sugar coat the current harsh reality. The many brave Iraqis - who continue to pay an unimaginable price for their voices to be heard - deserve that we recognize the intolerable abuses they have been subjected to. The killings. The abductions. The violence. The intimidation. The threats. These abhorrent human rights

violations are ongoing and fly in the face of all that is decent. They have no place in a democracy, any democracy. And yes, of course, we do recognize the challenges of operating within a fluid, puzzling security context with multiple actors. However, as I have stated many times: the ultimate responsibility for the peoples' safety and security undeniably rests with the State. It is therefore imperative to put an end to these abuses. Moreover, it is imperative that perpetrators be brought to justice. Impunity ends where accountability begins. And let me emphasize: justice and accountability are a matter of burning importance to the many Iraqis who have lost their loved ones or seen them injured, for no other reason than expressing their frustration with poor economic, social and political prospects. Justice and accountability should also be a pressing matter for the State of Iraq. The rule of law must be strengthened if public trust is to take root. Now Mister President, As I have stated time and again: Iraq's problems did not occur overnight, nor will they be solved in an instant. Yet times of crisis also present opportunities. And I sincerely hope that Iraqi political leaders will recognize in this moment the crossroads where they either stand idle, or where they place themselves in the service of their countrymen and women. But I have to say: the critical window of opportunity is closing fast. Now, with regard to the participation of Iraqi women in the ongoing public protests, it is unprecedented and marks a new page in the history of women's grassroots mobilization in Iraq. Political leaders should heed this call.

Going back to the streets: the security picture is undeniably complex and most challenging to manage. We witness ambiguously identified armed entities with unclear loyalties. And we see groups or individuals using the cover of peaceful protesters and/or security forces to muddy the issues, misleading the public, harming the country's interest, confusing the scene and causing casualties.

All of this is part of Iraq's tough reality. And as Secretary-General Guterres recently stated: "The large number of armed groups operating outside state control is preventing the country from functioning as a normal state."

However, it bears repeating that this is not something political leaders should hide behind. On the contrary. They must dismantle or formally integrate these armed entities under full state control without delay. In other words: this is no excuse for political and governmental inaction.

Now Mister President,

After five months of protests, and the many injured and killed, it should be clear that peaceful protesters - backed by a silent majority – it should be clear that they will not budge on their aspirations. Now, this should be the political class' first and last concern – but so far, we have seen few results.

And let me be clear: delivering on the demands of the people will require a collective effort. I again emphasize that no Prime Minister can go it alone. Every single political actor and leader is fully responsible for restoring the critical confidence of the public in their government and its institutions.

Late last November, the Prime Minister announced his resignation, which was soon approved by Parliament and the President.

The designation of a new Prime Minister, and subsequent attempts to form a new government, ultimately failed due to distrust and disunity. This led to a complicated situation in which the Prime Minister-designate was not able to obtain sufficiently broad support to form his government within 30 days.

Within the last three days, we saw the withdrawal of the candidacy of the Prime Minister-designate - accepted by the President -, and the announcement by the previous and current caretaker Prime Minister that he was stepping back from most of his duties while calling on parliament to seek early elections in December 2020.

Security Council deliberated situation concerning Iraq on its 8739th meeting *(continued)*

Constitutionally, the President now has another 15 days to nominate a new PM-designate, whose government and programme would again be subject to parliamentary endorsement. And While political consultations are ongoing, the question remains whether political parties will find a new consensus-candidate within these time limits.

Clearly, all this prolongs uncertainty and causes significant challenges – further eroding public trust.

Mister President,

One way or another: the road ahead remains fraught with difficulties.

I already mentioned the pressing need for accountability and justice. And another top priority is corruption: perhaps the greatest source of dysfunction in Iraq, and sadly, a core feature of Iraq's current political economy. It is built into everyday transactions.

A related feature of Iraq's political economy is its reliance on patronage and clientelism. This has resulted in a ballooning, inefficient public service that functions more as an instrument of political favour than as a servant of the people.

Now, A cynic would describe this “payroll corruption” as the perfect electoral mobilization strategy, where - perversely - low turnout benefits those pursuing their own narrow, partisan and/or transactional objectives.

Now It is important to tackle the system as precisely that: a system and not just a series of individuals or occurrences. Each bribe or favour serves to reinforce the existing structure.

Therefore, full systemic reform will be necessary. And no one understands this better than the Iraqi woman and man whose chances of a more prosperous life continue to be undermined by a system which ignores them.

Mister President,

Iraq is by no means a poor country, but as I said: private and partisan interests conspire to divert resources away from critical investment in the way forward.

Iraq's massive oil wealth has financed a crude rentier system that sees enormous revenues converted to salaries in unproductive sectors.

Now While external factors (such as regional tensions and oil price fluctuations), while they continue to weigh on the national economy, there are internal factors which Iraq can control. Reducing bureaucracy, increasing the ease of doing business,

strengthening the rule of law, anti-corruption mechanisms: these measures can all incentivize the domestic private sector while attracting foreign investment. These steps are necessary to build a healthy environment that is conducive to broad-based, fairly distributed growth and employment generation.

Iraq must also build, repair and upgrade critical infrastructure, and broaden its revenue base to reduce its dependency on hydrocarbons. Now, Agriculture is already showing promise – good news - as a candidate for investment. And an agricultural revival, in the birthplace of agriculture, will not only improve employment and social cohesion (notably in liberated rural areas) but also strengthen Iraqi food security.

And Within this context, I would also like to highlight the creative resilience of the Iraqi people. Because If one looks beyond the statistics and legal structures, we observe - on the street – plenty of commercial activity. And One can only imagine what this spirit of innovation and entrepreneurship could achieve if freed from the burdens of red tape and bribes.

Mister President,

An important aspect of corruption is illicit financial flows: they not only help explain why Iraqis continue to await roads, hospitals, schools, and legal employment opportunities. They also contribute to further destabilization, by providing channels for the financing of organized crime and violent extremism. And with regards to violent extremism, we cannot ignore the continued threat of terrorism.

Although ISIL has been defeated territorially, it continued - in the past two months – its attempts to increase its military operations in northeastern

Diyala, northern Baghdad and areas of western Iraq.

it goes without saying that ISIL must not be allowed to regroup and recruit. And while constructive negotiations between Iraq's government and its allies are ongoing, following the vote on the parliamentary resolution on the presence of foreign troops, Iraq's allies continue to assist the government and its institutions in the fight against ISIL.

Now It is obvious that a strong state which has a monopoly on the use of force is best equipped to face these multiple security threats. And of course, an equally powerful tool against violent extremism is fairness and justice.

Mr. President, turning to the need for free, fair and credible elections. While the “electoral reset” is a top priority for many - broad, underlying systemic reform and a strong, independent electoral commission will prove crucial.

In other words: the newly appointed electoral commission will need to stand with greater resolve in adhering to the principles of transparency, accountability, independence and professionalism as they rebuild the commission's institutional capacities and kick-start technical electoral preparations.

Moreover, in order to firm up the electoral calendar, there is an immediate need to complete the electoral legal framework. Parliament must act on pending, urgent elements of the electoral law, in particular constituency demarcation and seat apportionment, hopefully bringing voters closer to the candidates and making future elected representatives accountable to their constituents.

Now Turning to Baghdad-Erbil relations, notwithstanding an



Security Council deliberated situation concerning Iraq on its 8739th meeting (continued)

encouraging preliminary deal between the KRG and the Federal Government on oil and revenue sharing, we continue to await a final, long-term and sustainable agreement on this file as well as on security co-operation and Sinjar.

Mr. President,

I think we can all agree that the volatile domestic and regional climate took an extraordinary toll on Iraq in the past months. To point out the obvious, the state-to-state violence we saw play out across Iraq earlier this year, was received as a clear and substantial threat to the country.

The modus operandi and rules of engagement have shifted, and the risk of rogue action by armed groups with unclear reporting lines is a constant concern.

Beyond the immediate security threat, this also takes critical political attention away from urgent unfinished domestic business. But as I have stated before, regional security developments should not eclipse domestic priorities.

Now the question is whether Iraq will flourish as a venue for peace and understanding, or suffer as the arena of external battles.

Mr. President,

I will now turn to the issue of missing Kuwaiti, third-country nationals and

missing Kuwaiti property, including the national archives.

Hopes renewed in January when new human remains were discovered and exhumed from a third grave in Samawa. Despite a very challenging operational context, the Iraqi Ministry of Defence has demonstrated commendable focus on this important file, leading the excavation efforts with assistance from the ICRC.

And I truly hope that the DNA identification of these newly discovered human remains, as well as those that are still being analysed in Kuwait, that it will prove positive and that it will bring closure to the families and relatives of those who went missing nearly thirty years ago.

The contribution of the Tripartite Committee members through the provision and analysis of satellite imagery, supported by witness information, it all proved crucial in locating the Samawa sites. And I would like to call all members of the Committee to continue their steadfast support to the efforts underway for other potential burial sites.

Mr. President,

In closing, it was my intention to conclude with words of hope. But the ongoing political indecisiveness and dissension, leading to a further

paralysis in decision-making, unfortunately do not give cause for immediate optimism. The country and its people continue to be pushed into the unknown.

Also, the repeated pattern of parliamentary sessions which have failed to reach quorum is exactly the opposite of what the country needs, especially during a period of acute political crisis. The fundamental mandate of an elected representative is: to be present, to be counted and to vote. Now like I said last time: out of the ongoing political crisis - a fairer, stronger and inherently more resilient Iraq can emerge. But again, for this to materialize: political leaders will have to act fast, placing the country's interest above all else.

Iraq must and can find strength in diversity, recognizing a cohesive society as more than the sum of its parts.

Putting out one fire after the other is no strategy. It must move from constant crisis management to sustainable and stable politics, building resilience through deep and broad systemic reform. And as we all know: at the end of the day, Mr. President, strength at home is a prerequisite for strength abroad.

Thank you.

Secretary-General António Guterres launches an appeal for global cease-fire

New York, 23 March 2020 – United Nations Secretary-General, António Guterres, launched today an appeal for global cease-fire. Here is the text of the appeal:

Our world faces a common enemy: COVID-19.

The virus does not care about nationality or ethnicity, faction or faith. It attacks all, relentlessly.

Meanwhile, armed conflict rages on around the world.

The most vulnerable — women and children, people with disabilities, the marginalized and the displaced — pay the highest price.

They are also at the highest risk of suffering devastating losses from COVID-19.

Let's not forget that in war-ravaged countries, health systems have collapsed.

Health professionals, already few in number, have often been targeted.

Refugees and others displaced by violent conflict are doubly vulnerable.

The fury of the virus illustrates the folly of war.

That is why today, I am calling for an immediate global ceasefire in all corners of the world.

It is time to put armed conflict on lockdown and focus together on the true fight of our lives.

To warring parties, I say:

Pull back from hostilities.

Put aside mistrust and animosity.

Silence the guns; stop the artillery; end the airstrikes.

This is crucial...

To help create corridors for life-saving aid.

To open precious windows for diplomacy.

To bring hope to places among the most vulnerable to COVID-19.

Let us take inspiration from coalitions and dialogue slowly taking shape



among rival parties in some parts to enable joint approaches to COVID-19. But we need much more. End the sickness of war and fight the disease that is ravaging our world. It starts by stopping the fighting everywhere. Now. That is what our human family needs, now more than ever.

Joint appeal by the UN Secretary-General’s Envoys to the Middle East

New York, 11 April 2020 - On 23 March, the Secretary-General launched an appeal for an immediate Global Ceasefire, urging all warring parties to pull back from hostilities, put aside mistrust and animosity, and silence their guns. Many parties have responded positively to the Secretary-General’s appeal, but more needs to be done to translate these words into actions.

Too many in the Middle East have endured conflict and deprivation for far too long. Their suffering is now compounded by the COVID19 crisis and its likely long-lasting social, economic and political impacts.

We call on all parties to engage, in good faith and without preconditions, on negotiating immediate halts to ongoing hostilities, sustaining existing ceasefires, putting in place more durable and comprehensive ceasefires, and achieving longer-term resolutions to the persistent conflicts across the region.

We also appeal to all to exercise maximum restraint, de-escalate tensions and work to resolve differences through dialogue, negotiation, mediation or other peaceful means. We further call on all to refrain from any activities that can lead to further deterioration of stability and security in any country or the region as a whole.

We urge parties to reach out across

conflict lines and cooperate locally, regionally and globally to stop the rapid spread of the virus and, where possible, to share resources, and allow access to medical facilities where needed.

We call on all sides to facilitate humanitarian access and assistance to the internally displaced and refugees, communities under siege, and all who have been ravaged by war and deprivation, without prejudice or discrimination. This requires fast-tracking the passage of health and aid workers at borders and in-country and ensuring they are protected. We further call on all to facilitate safe, voluntary and dignified return of refugees and IDPs to their homes by urgent, effective and meaningful action and measures.

We call for special attention to the plight of the detained, the abducted and the missing, and for humanitarian releases, access for humanitarian organizations, and urgent steps to ensure adequate medical care and protective measures in all places of detention.

We call on all partners at a time when all are facing immense national challenges, to work with the UN on urgent international response plans and recovery measures. No country, region or community can face the challenge of COVID-19 alone. Solidarity is required today and will be very much needed tomorrow.

Our teams will continue to focus on preventive diplomacy, on assisting all efforts to respond to the health and socio-economic consequences of the crisis, support broad cooperation in the interest of peace and the well-being of all, work relentlessly to facilitate humanitarian access to the most vulnerable, and engage resolutely for these objectives.

None of these efforts will succeed if the guns of war and conflict are not silenced. At a time like this, partisanship and narrow interests must yield to the greater cause and the good of the people. That is why we echo the Secretary-General in calling on all parties in the Middle East to work with the UN so we can “focus on the true fight of our lives.”

Geir O. Pedersen, UN Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria / OSES
Jan Kubis, UN Special Coordinator for Lebanon / UNSCOL

Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq / UNAMI
Martin Griffiths, UN Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen / OSESGY

Nickolay Mladenov, UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process / UNSCO

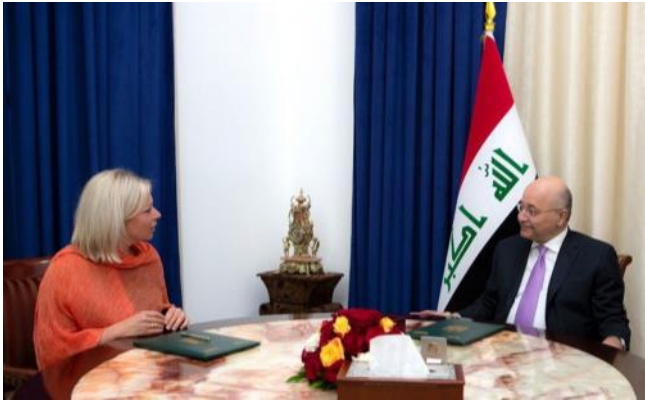


Political Consultations



New York, 3 March 2020 - United Nations Secretary-General, António Guterres, received his Special Representative for Iraq and head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, at the United Nations Headquarters in New York.





Baghdad, 9 March 2020 - President of the Republic of Iraq, Dr. Barham Salih, received today the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert. They discussed political developments in the country and region, including the formation of a new government.

Photo courtesy of the Office of the President.



Baghdad, 14 March 2020 – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met today with Ammar Al-Hakeem, Head of the Al-Hikma National Movement. They discussed the current political, economic, security and health situation in the country.

Photo courtesy of the Al-Hikma National Movement.



Erbil, 16 March 2020 - The President of Kurdistan Region, Nechirvan Barzani, received today Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq. They discussed the political, economic, security and health situation in the country and the region.

Photo courtesy of the Office of the KR President.



Erbil, 16 March 2020 – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met today with the Deputy Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Region, Qubad Talabani. They discussed the health situation in the region in the light of the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus.

Photo courtesy of the KRG.

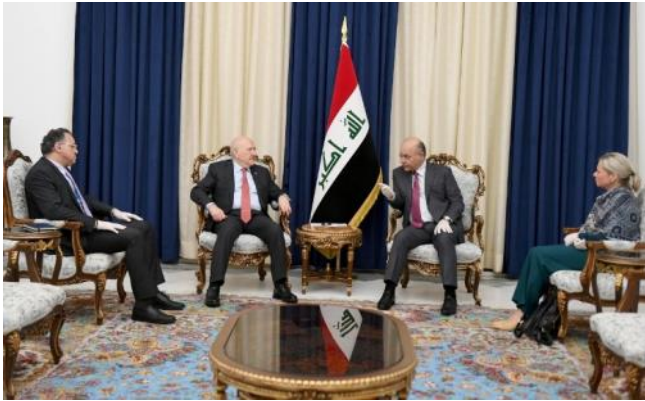


Erbil, 16 March 2020 – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, accompanied by the Deputy Special Representative/Humanitarian Coordinator and Resident Coordinator for Iraq, Ms. Marta Ruedas, met with the Minister of Interior of the Kurdistan Region, Mr. Réber Ahmed. They discussed the security, health and humanitarian situation in the Kurdistan Region.



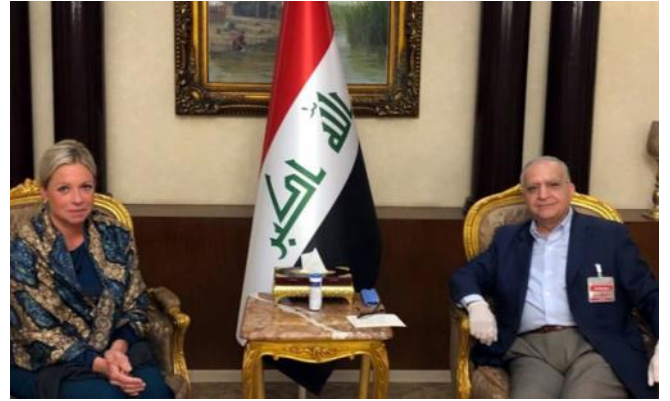
UNAMI Tweet:

Baghdad, 17 March 2020 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, welcomes designation of a Prime Minister candidate to form government. Faced with unprecedented security, political, economic and health crises, Iraq desperately needs an effective Cabinet. Hard work ahead, support of all political forces critical for national unity and success.



Baghdad, 23 March 2020 - The Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert was received today by President Barham Salih. They discussed the efforts being made to contain the spread of the COVID-19 virus and the support the United Nations, led by the World Health Organization (WHO), is providing to Iraq in combating this disease.

Photo courtesy of the Office of the President.



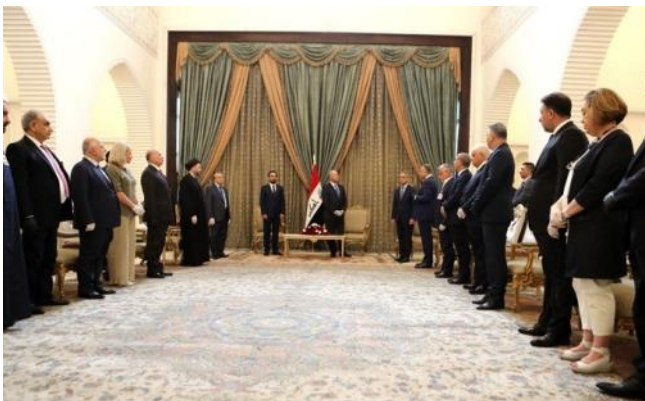
Baghdad, 23 March 2020 – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met today with Iraqi Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Mohammed Al-Hakim. They discussed the health situation in the country, and efforts made by the United Nations and the World Health Organization to assist national authorities in fighting coronavirus pandemic.



Baghdad, 4 April 2020 - Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met today with PM-designate, Adnan Al-Zurfi. They discussed the health and political situation in the country, including the formation of a new government. Iraq faces major economic, security, health and social challenges. This stage requires a cohesive government that can swiftly tackle the multiple crises, serve Iraq’s interests and meet the people’s expectations.



Baghdad, 05 April 2020 – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met today with the Head of the Supreme Judicial Council, Judge Faeq Zaidan. They discussed the dangers of COVID19 spread in prisons and detention centers in Iraq.
Photo courtesy of the Supreme Judicial Council.



UNAMI Tweet:
Baghdad, 09 April 2020 - We recognize and appreciate the hard work of Adnan al-Zurfi over the past weeks and welcome the designation of Mustafa al-Kadhimi to form a new government. The magnitude of challenges currently facing Iraq requires a united leadership that acts with urgent resolve.
Photo courtesy of the Office of the President.



Baghdad, 12 April 2020 – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met today with the Prime-Minister designate, Mr. Mustafa al-Kadhimi. They discussed the ongoing efforts to form a government, and the continued cooperation between the UN and Iraq.
Photo courtesy of the Office of the PM Designate.



Fallujah, 15 April 2020 – The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, was received today in Fallujah by the Speaker of the Council of Representatives, Mr. Mohammed Al-Halbousi. They discussed the ongoing government formation, the need for unity and the health challenges facing Iraq. Photo courtesy of the Office of the CoR Speaker.



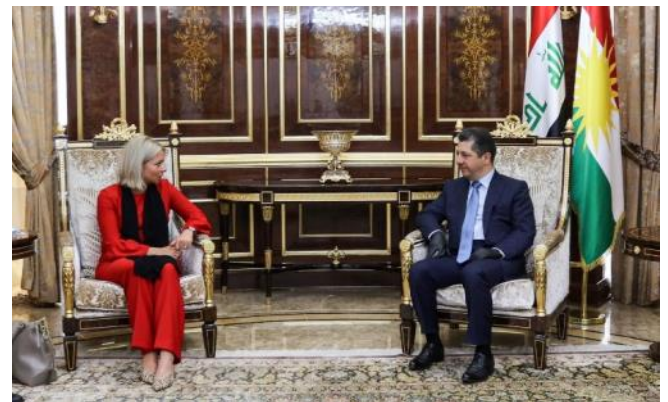
Baghdad, 22 April 2020 - The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, received today a delegation of four women from the Legislative and Executive branches of Government led by Ms. Alaa Talabani, Chair of the Women Caucus in the Council of Representatives, to discuss the urgent need to improve the protection from domestic violence that can harm men or women, children, adults and elderly, or persons with disability.

Adoption of a comprehensive law was identified as one of the priorities for the new Cabinet and Parliament and the meeting also discussed actions that can be taken immediately to facilitate protection - including in dedicated shelters, access to justice and remedies for victims at a time when confinement and impoverishment increase the vulnerability of certain categories of Iraqis.



Erbil, 26 April 2020 – The Deputy Prime Minister of Kurdistan Region, Qubad Talabani, met in Erbil today with the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, and the World Health Organization Iraq Representative, Dr. Adham Ismail. They reviewed the overall situation regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, the measures taken by the Kurdistan Regional Government to stop the spread of the COVID-19 in Kurdistan and the efforts made by the United Nations in that regard. There was agreement to continue the close coordination and cooperation in the fight against the virus, stressing the need to adhere to the advice and recommendations of the health authorities.

Photo courtesy of Kurdistan Regional Government.



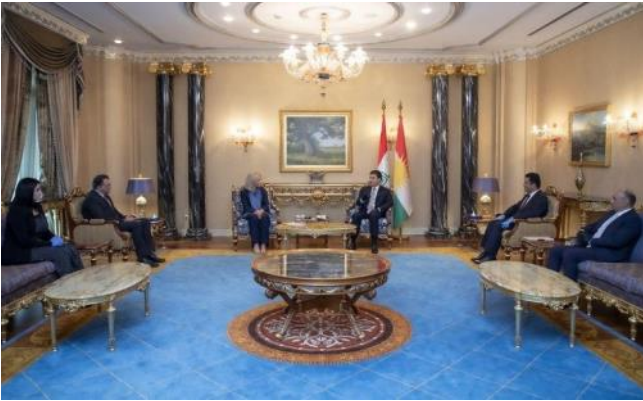
Erbil, 27 April 2020 – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, was received today in Erbil by the Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Region, Masrour Barzani. They discussed the current political, security, economic and health situation in the Region, with special emphasis on the formation of the new Iraqi government, Baghdad-Erbil relations and fight against COVID-19 pandemic.



Erbil, 27 April 2020 – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, accompanied by the World Health Organization Iraq Representative, Dr. Adham Ismail, met in Erbil with the Minister of Health of the Kurdistan Region, Saman Barzanji. They discussed the health situation in the Kurdistan Region, Iraq and the region and measures undertaken to fight against COVID-19 pandemic.



Erbil, 27 April 2020 – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met today in Erbil with the Minister of State of the Kurdistan Region, Khalid Shwani. They discussed the political situation and Baghdad-Erbil relations.



Erbil, 28 April 2020 - Kurdistan Region President, Nechirvan Barzani, received today the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, accompanied by the World Health Organization Iraq Representative, Dr. Adham Ismail. They discussed the political developments in Iraq including the ongoing activities to form the new Iraqi Government, Baghdad-Erbil relations and efforts to contain the COVID-19 pandemic.
Photo courtesy of the Office of President of Kurdistan Region.



Erbil, 28 April 2020 – The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, met today in Erbil with the Kurdistan Region Minister of Interior, Rebar Ahmad. They discussed the current security situation in the country and the region.

COVID-19 Pandemic

COVID-19 preventive measures during mass gatherings discussed with religious leaders and health officials in Iraq

Baghdad, 3 March 2020 – As millions are expected to visit Iraq in the coming month for religious events, WHO is working with religious leaders and health officials to discuss necessary preventive measures to improve planning for mass gathering events during visits to holy sites to protect visitors from possible coronavirus disease (COVID-19) infections. “So far, the measures taken by the Government of Iraq to limit the spread of COVID-19 comply with WHO recommendations. Other urgent preparations, however, are critically needed, such as designating proper isolation facilities,” said WHO

Representative in Iraq Dr Adham Ismail. “Iraq has conducted a risk assessment and health authorities are calling on clerics to support Iraq’s decision to avoid gatherings as much as possible to prevent the spread of this disease. WHO supports that position,” he added.

Iraq announced the first COVID-19 infection on 25 February 2020. This number has since increased to 26 cases on 3 March, all among nationals coming from Islamic Republic of Iran. “Strict measures have been taken by religious authorities at Al-Kadhimain Holy Shrine to preserve the safety of workers and visitors alike. These

measures include the use of personal protective equipment, such as masks and gloves, by all shrine workers, in addition to closing the site for sterilization,” said the Secretary-General of Kadhimain Holy Shrine Dr Haider Hussain Al-Shammari.

WHO is providing technical advice and recommendations on visits to holy sites to prevent the spread of disease, including COVID-19. This includes best methods for sterilizing surfaces and equipment, the use of thermal detection devices at entrances and checkpoints, and proper referral and isolation measures for suspected cases.

Kirkuk’s cash-for-work beneficiaries educated on Coronavirus

Kirkuk, 11 March 2020 - After several cases of Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) were confirmed in Kirkuk Governorate, the Women Empowerment Organization in Kirkuk recently organized a lecture on the disease for beneficiaries of the Cash-for-Work Programme, implemented under the project “Women’s Leadership, Empowerment, Access and Protection in Crisis Response (LEAP). The programme, implemented by UN Women with the funding by the Government of Japan, aims to provide immediate and essential services to women affected by conflict. It gives beneficiaries access to economic opportunities and effective multi-

sectoral services, protection mechanisms and empowerment support.

The lecture shed light on Coronavirus, its symptoms and precautionary

measures to combat its spread.

On the other hand, the beneficiaries of the sewing course prepared 400 masks to be distributed in Laylan Camp in the governorate.



WHO technical mission visits Iraq to step up COVID-19 detection and response activities

Baghdad, 15 March 2020 – A high-level technical mission from the World Health Organization (WHO) concluded a visit to Iraq to support the Iraqi Ministry of Health response to COVID-19 prevention and containment measures.

The mission, which comprised experts from the Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean Region and headquarters in Geneva, held a series of meetings with national health authorities to identify the disease detection dynamics and at-risk populations, in addition to providing guidance on strengthening response and control measures.

The mission also reviewed the Ministry's overall readiness to deal with a potential increase in case reporting and the priority of establishing an Emergency Operation Centre to speed up action now that the disease has been announced as a global pandemic.

WHO experts visited the Central Public Health Laboratory to assess the national laboratory capacity and availability of test kits. They also visited the Communicable Disease Control Centre and designated health facilities in Baghdad to review the ongoing response by nationals and assess the technical support required in the coming period.

Iraq reported its first case of COVID 19 – an Iranian student in Iraq on 22 February 2020 – followed by 4 cases for members of one family with a travel history to Islamic Republic of Iran. Case reporting escalated to include almost all Iraqi governorates. The total



number of cases reported as of 12 March stands at 83 confirmed cases, 24 recovered, and 8 deaths.

There is growing concern among the local health authorities about the possibility of domestic transmission of the disease which would challenge the already vulnerable health system in the country, stretched by years of wars and internal crises. The health authorities have already banned major public events, suspended schools, and closed malls and gathering places until 21

March.

WHO has so far provided and will further provide the Ministry of Health at both central and regional levels with sufficient supplies of laboratory test kits and personal protective equipment to allow for a quick response to severe cases. In addition, WHO is working around the clock to establish 3 negative-pressure rooms in Baghdad, Erbil and Basra to accommodate patients who might require more sophisticated medical treatment.



WHO Representative in Iraq visited Imam Kadhim Shrine with the Iraq Minister of Health and Secretariat General of the Holy Shrine

Baghdad, 15 March 2020 - WHO Representative in Iraq, Dr Adham Ismail, visited Imam Kadhim Shrine with the Iraq Minister of Health and Secretariat General of the Holy Shrine. All sides stressed the importance of adherence to the preventive measures taken by the 55 Committee without panicking the public to stop the spread of COVID-19. Dr. Ismail thanked the Government of Iraq for stepping up the preventive measures to limit the transmission of the COVID-19 disease which is a big challenge given the already over-stretched health system in Iraq.



SRSB Hennis-Plasschaert: “All sports, cultural, religious and/or other gatherings must be avoided in order to contain the rapid spread of this virus”

Baghdad, 26 March 2020 - Message from the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert:

“It is difficult to overstate the magnitude of the challenges facing Iraq at the moment. Political, security, social and economic crises have been compounded by the global COVID-19 pandemic which has not spared Iraq.

These are truly unprecedented times. As the United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres recently stated, unprecedented times call for unprecedented preventive measures. Priority one is to stop the virus from spreading rapidly, and I commend the government authorities for their tireless work on the ground in pursuing this objective. But this is a fight for each and every individual: no amount of government action can succeed without the active involvement of the entire population.

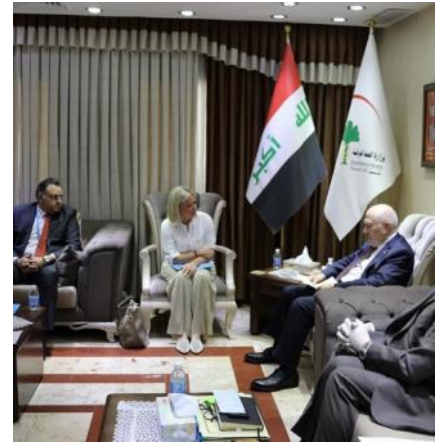
Here I would like to recall the wise words of Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, who has urged Iraqis to obey medical advice on physical distancing, and not to gather in large numbers, where the risk of people infecting others and spreading the virus is very high. I again emphasize, as I did in my recent press conference with Minister of Health Jaafar Allawi and WHO Representative Dr. Adham Ismail, that all sports, cultural, religious and/or other gatherings must be avoided in

order to contain the rapid spread of this virus.

Physical distancing, good hygiene and, where necessary, self-isolation can take a large toll on economic and emotional wellbeing. At times like this, it is important to recall that we are all in this together. Not only all Iraqis, from across the country and from all walks of life, but indeed all of humanity. People should not feel embarrassed if they take the necessary precautions to protect themselves and others. Every girl and boy, woman and man has an essential role to play in this fight, and we should all be proud to play our role. The way each and every one of us manages this moment will determine how soon we can begin to return to normal.

There is good news: we know what works. We know what measures, when properly observed with discipline, consistency and patience, will contain the virus and see us through this crisis. Abiding by the instructions is key to protect yourself, your loved ones and the community at large.

The people of Iraq have overcome such hardship in the past that I am confident they can weather this storm with solidarity and resolve. It is my sincere hope that political leaders will at long last recognize the urgency of the situation and come together in a spirit of national unity. Secretary-General Guterres has called for an immediate



global ceasefire to focus on what he described as “the true fight for our lives”. Surely at a time like this, partisanship and narrow interests must yield to the greater national cause and the good of the Iraqi people.

The United Nations remain more than ever by the side of Iraq during this critical phase. The World Health Organization (WHO) is in the lead, providing assistance on the ground as well as technical support and training. It is joined by the entire UN family which continues to carry out its work during this time of crisis.

We are, as we must be, united in our determination to win the fight against COVID-19.

Stay safe, stay strong, and look after each other. Thank you.”

Newly trained women in Ninewa produce face masks to combat spread of COVID-19 in Iraq

Baghdad, 28 March 2020 - In January 2020, UNDP and Kurdistan Human Rights Watch (KHRW) collaborated to train sixty women on sewing and tailoring in Ninewa over the course of a ten-day workshop. At the time, these women could not have foreseen how their newly developed skills would contribute to combatting the deadly coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic currently sweeping the globe.

As of 25 March 2020, the World Health Organization has tracked over 400,000 cases of COVID-19 with over 18,000 confirmed deaths. The pandemic has affected 197 countries, areas, and territories, including Iraq. When a pharmaceutical company contracted by the Ninewa Department of Health was tasked with producing five million

disposable face masks in response to the spread of COVID-19, thirty of the recently trained women were employed to use their skills to produce the masks. After briefings on the health standards and nature of the environment required for mask production, the seamstresses began creating thousands of masks daily in controlled conditions.

Working swiftly to produce this vital personal protection equipment despite the curfew in Ninewa Governorate, these skilled women are directly contributing to the mitigation of COVID-19 in Iraq.

Aseel, 45, says, “We have produced thousands of pieces and the major portion is delivered to the Ninewa Health Department. Some other organizations are also receiving face masks from us and they distribute

those free of cost in communities and camps.”

Not only has the sewing and tailoring skills training empowered sixty women with new abilities, it has also instilled within them hope for their futures. Sustainable development projects such as these are at the forefront of UNDP Iraq’s priorities. Nora, 37, says, “I am working on developing myself in the sewing profession and in the future, I would like to create a workplace for sewing or a small factory.”

The organization and facilitation of skills development workshops with Kurdistan Human Rights Watch is part of a project spearheaded by UNDP Iraq under the Social Cohesion Programme, which aims to improve the enabling environment for peace and social cohesion in all areas of Iraq.

Iraq reports a noticeable increase in COVID-19 cases since February

Baghdad, 30 March 2020 - Iraq today reported over 630 cases with 46 deaths since the start of the COVID19 outbreak in the country on 24 February 2020. This makes Iraq the country with the second highest number of COVID19 related deaths across the Eastern Mediterranean region after Iran.

The World Health Organization (WHO) expects a spike in tallies of infected cases within the coming 10 days due to the increase in lab testing capacity. Three laboratories became operational for COVID-19 testing in Najaf, Basrah, and Baghdad Medical City in Baghdad. This has increased the numbers of tested cases to more than 4500 tests a day compared to a maximum of 100 per day a few weeks ago.

The Federal and Kurdistan Regional ministries of health, WHO Iraq, and other partners are working together to disseminate facts and preventive measures against the disease, as recommended by WHO.

"WHO is in constant communication with the FMOH and regularly shares all

information, guidelines, recommendations, protocols and risk communication materials as provided by WHO Regional and HQ offices," said Dr. Adham Ismail, WHO Representative in Iraq. "WHO technical teams are putting every effort to support health authorities in their respective efforts," he added.

As of 30 March, more than 630 confirmed cases, 46 deaths, and 152 recoveries were reported all over Iraq. The first confirmed case was reported in Najaf Governorate on 24 Feb followed by four confirmed cases for one family in Kirkuk Governorate one day later. Majority of confirmed cases have a travel history to infected countries like Iran, China, and Europe.

WHO continues monitoring the situation very closely and intensifying its communication and coordination with the Central and Federal ministries of health to maintain a provision of technical and logistic support as possible.

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To access and disseminate reliable information on COVID-19, please consult:

- WHO RO (EMRO): <http://www.emro.who.int/index.html>
- WHO HQ: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>

The fight to contain COVID-19 in Iraq

Baghdad, 1 April 2020 - Over the past few years, Iraq's health system has faced many challenges, including internal conflict and the world's biggest mass displacement in 2014-2016, all of which had a tough toll on an already fragile health system.

With the detection of COVID-19 in China in December 2019, WHO immediately set into preparedness gear, and arranged a series of technical meetings with emergency teams in both Central and Regional ministries of health to assess health facilities' resources and preparedness to respond to a potential importation of the disease.

The sudden eruption of the virus in neighbouring Iran scaled up the risk of the disease spread in Iraq and necessitated faster prevention and infection control measures especially in the holy cities and pilgrimage sites, bordering governorates, and vulnerable communities in IDP and refugee camps. "WHO is aware of the impact of a pandemic like COVID 19 on Iraq's health sector and recovering services," said Dr Adham Ismail, WHO Representative and Head of Mission in

Iraq. "We discussed with the health authorities in the Centre and Kurdistan Region the means of urgent support to contain the transmission of the disease in the country. Joint work is underway and cooperation is at highest levels," he added.

On 2 February, WHO proactively began strengthening national disease surveillance capacities in Iraq and providing case definition and management training, in addition to a large scale of risk communications activities.

Hundreds of thousands of prevention and transmission control messages were printed and provided to 20 directorates of health in the 18 governorates, including the Kurdistan Region governorates of Erbil, Dohuk, and Suleimaniya.

Mobile health teams took to main streets, public and religious places, remote cities and hard-to-reach villages in addition to airports, border points, state institutions, and camps hosting refugees and internally displaced population (IDPs).

Maha Salam and Najah Ahmed from Wasit DOH in Wasit Governorate

eastern Iraq were among the mobile health team distributing WHO health messages to the public as early as 16 February.

Early mobilization campaigns to distribute WHO COVID-19 educational materials succeeded in raising public awareness and preparedness to protect individual health and that of the community in general.

WHO is working with the Central and Regional ministries of health to increase and augment case management capacities, as well as detection and surveillance.

An urgent consignment of PPEs and laboratory test kits was delivered to ministries of health to enable the timely detection of cases and protect health workers in designated hospitals. As of 1 April, Iraq reported a total of 697 confirmed cases with 51 deaths and 169 recoveries all over the country. The reported figures are still moderate so far, but WHO expects a spike in the coming two weeks due to the scale up in lab testing capacity which are going to be of high importance in terms of infection transmission and control," concluded Dr. Ismail.

COVID-19: putting numbers in perspective

Baghdad, 3 April 2020 - COVID-19 is an unprecedented global threat that demands robust responses from governments, communities and individuals.

The Government of Iraq, with the full support of the World Health Organization (WHO) and the entire United Nations family, mobilized early to contain the outbreak. National, regional and local authorities implemented strong measures to reduce the number of cases and suppress the rapid transmission of the virus. These early preventive actions contributed to extending and delaying the epidemiological curve, resulting in comparatively fewer documented cases. In Iraq, as elsewhere, underreporting of

COVID-19 cases is inevitable, due to factors such as fear, cultural issues including stigmatization, undocumented asymptomatic patients, lack of active surveillance and limited testing. Many infected individuals only seek medical treatment in advanced stages of the disease. This not only increases the spread of the virus, but also inflates the reported death ratio. Indeed, mild and recovered cases go underreported and unreported while the documented late stage cases are disproportionately more likely to succumb to the disease.

WHO has been closely monitoring and evaluating COVID-19 laboratory results since the beginning of the spread of the virus in Iraq, and

dismisses the prospect that the government is deliberately hiding or falsifying the results. The number of missing cases can only be accurately determined using active surveillance, which the government started recently. While the government tackles a complex emergency with imperfect data, it must also continue to defend independent reporting, as media freedom is one of the pillars of a democratic society. Transparency, accountability and constructive questioning provide an opportunity for authorities to explain their actions, thus building public trust. Let us remain united in the fight against COVID-19.

Iraq produces COVID-19 laboratory supplies to test more cases rapidly

Basra, 5 April 2020 - In cooperation with the World Health Organization (WHO), the COVID-19 Crisis Cell of Basrah University in southern Iraq has successfully produced urgently-needed laboratory supplies to speed up testing of suspected cases.

The global demand on supplies and equipment to fight COVID-19 has created a worldwide shortage of supplies. In particular, stocks of Virus Transport Medium (VTM)—a gel-like substance used to preserve nasal swab specimens while they are being transported to labs—have been low.

As of 1 April, the University manufacturing team produced more than 1620 VTM in addition to 3200 nasal swabs. These were delivered to health directorates in Iraq's Basra, Muthana, Karbala, and Wasit governorates.

This new production, along with the Reverse Transcriptase-PCR (RT-PCR) kits provided by WHO, has facilitated the testing of hundreds of suspected cases in southern Iraq.

"The latest bottleneck to contain and reduce the spread of COVID-19 in Iraq has been the shortage of supplies and equipment needed to collect and transport samples," said Dr. Adham Ismail, WHO Representative in Iraq. "For this, the World Health Organization and Basra University have coordinated efforts to produce the essential lab products needed to test suspected cases, and together, we set the overall goal for supplying the quantities needed countrywide," he added.

The new local production of VTM and swabs is a collective effort by Basra University, WHO, and other faculties

like Al Zahraa Medical College, Faculty of Pharmacy, College of Sciences, and College of Agriculture, all in Basrah governorate. "We hope this will solve the domestic shortage issue resulting from the global demand," said Dr. Saad Shahin, President of Basra University.

The Basrah Crisis Cell has also announced three other COVID-19 response measures, including an online application for COVID-19 self-reporting. So far, the app has been used by 4500 applicants, of which 130 were qualified for further testing by the RT-PCR kits.

Disinfectants and sterilization material, including hand-rub gel, have also been produced locally with support from WHO and the Government of Iraq.

As of 4 April, Iraq reported 54 deaths, 820 confirmed cases, and 226 recoveries countrywide.

Solidarity from Sulaymaniyah

Sulaymaniyah, 5 April 2020 - Through this UNHCR Quick Impact Project, refugees and internally displaced Iraqis in Sulaymaniyah are making Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to help combat the corona virus (COVID-19).

The PPEs are produced according to Department of Health's standards, and then sent to communities, health facilities and medical teams where they are needed all over the country.

An average of 2,000 PPEs are produced daily and shipped to different locations in Kurdistan Region of Iraq and the rest of Iraq with the help of UNHCR partner Youth Activity Organization – YAO.



UNFPA and its partners conduct awareness sessions on COVID19 prevention methods and social distancing and produce much needed face masks

Baghdad, 19 April 2020 - At the Canada in Iraq-supported women centers, UNFPA and its partners continue to conduct awareness sessions on COVID19 prevention methods and social distancing.

Furthermore, the wonderful women at the centres are helping the community by sewing medical masks, under the supervision of the Directorate of Health.

Photo from The United Iraqi Medical Society - UIMS during the session on how to sew protective masks at the Embassy of Japan in Iraq - supported women center in Nineveh.

UNFPA is proud of its women centers, not only that they help women during and after the humanitarian crisis in Iraq, but in time of Coronavirus, they



are taking action!

With the increasing need for face masks, the women and social workers at one of the UNFPA-supported women centers in Diyala have sown more than 6,000 masks and sent them to communities, health facilities and

medical teams where they are needed all over the country.

The Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) help combat the coronavirus (COVID-19) and are produced according to the Department of Health's standards.

Belgium, Netherlands and Sweden commit \$5 million to tackle COVID-19 outbreak under UNDP Iraq's Funding Facility for Stabilization framework

Baghdad, 7 April 2020 –The governments of Belgium, the Netherlands and Sweden have collectively committed US\$5 million to support the Government of Iraq's response to the COVID-19 crisis, in partnership with UNDP Iraq.

The funds, pledged under UNDP's Funding Facility for Stabilization to help rehabilitate infrastructure damaged by ISIL, will be used to support UNDP Iraq's initial \$22 million COVID-19 response package, which is being implemented under the umbrella of UNDP's stabilization programme.

Measures to combat the virus under this package include increasing the testing capacity of laboratories, providing personal protective equipment to healthcare workers, increasing the number of isolation wards, and undertaking assessments to establish post-COVID-19 recovery strategies. Focusing on the most vulnerable communities in Iraq, activities will be rolled out in nine hospitals selected by local authorities in the underserved areas of Anbar, Diyala, Dohuk, Basra, Karbala, Najaf, Ninewa and Salah Al-Din.

"Containing the coronavirus outbreak is now the Government of Iraq's number one priority, particularly as infection rates rise, putting more pressure on the Iraqi healthcare system outside the major capitals. We're extremely grateful



to Belgium, the Netherlands and Sweden for acting swiftly to commit these funds for prevention activities to stem this crisis," says Resident Representative of UNDP Iraq, Zena Ali Ahmad.

"Due to the strict curfews imposed by the Government of Iraq, we've had no choice but to temporarily halt the implementation of our stabilization activities. However, by capitalizing on the tried-and-tested processes of our successful stabilization work, we will respond to this unprecedented global health crisis with the speed and agility

UNDP Iraq is known for," she says.

"Once this pandemic is under control, our stabilization activities will resume. Until then, we will work closely with the Government of Iraq, the World Health Organisation and other UN agencies to curb the crisis as best we can," she added.

UNDP Iraq is currently discussing the remaining funding gap with other international partners. Processes have been established to ensure that once funds have been committed, the response measures can be implemented immediately.

Sterilizing the streets: Local Peace Committees in Anbar join forces to prevent the spread of COVID-19

Baghdad, 8 April 2020 - Eleven Local Peace Committees have taken the initiative to protect their communities from the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic by sterilizing public spaces in Iraq's Anbar governorate.

Markets, streets, residential areas, schools, government institutions, mosques, and Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps in major areas in Anbar are being disinfected by the committees through trained response teams in coordination with Anbar's Defense, Health and Municipalities directorates.

Established in 2018 by UNDP Iraq to promote peace and stability post-ISIL, the committees are made up of security officers, local authority personnel, civil society organization representatives and tribal sheikhs. Each committee is led by their local Mayor, who, since the onset of the pandemic, has been working to instruct the public to adhere to health protection measures, and have shifted the committees' focus to managing the outbreak.

Mayor of Habbaniyah district, Ali

Dawood Suleiman, discusses the measures taking place in his local community. "We carried out many campaigns, including visits to hospitals and emergency rooms late at night to monitor the readiness of medical personnel to receive urgent cases," he said. "We will also monitor prices in the markets in coordination with security agencies to ensure the price of goods does not rise," he added.

While the Anbar governorate is currently under curfew, basic food shops are open to residents during defined time periods. Local Peace Committee members in the areas of Ramadi, Habbaniyah, Fallujah, Amiriyat al-Samoud, Qarma, Rawa, Anah, Haditha, Rutba, Tuaim, and Heet continue to implement sterilization and communication campaigns to mitigate the spread of COVID-19.

About UNDP Iraq's peace committees Twenty-four Local Peace Committees were formed in Anbar, Ninewa, and Salah al-Din, three governorates liberated from ISIL's occupation in



Iraq, as part of a project undertaken by UNDP Iraq's Integrated Reconciliation Programme, funded by Denmark.

Under the programme, Local Peace Committees were developed to promote community cohesiveness in liberated areas by facilitating dialogue, mediating, and brokering local peace agreements between communities of different backgrounds. They are also responsible for advocating for the basic needs of their communities. Due to the current pandemic health situation, Local Peace Committees are now using their resources to help protect communities from the spread of COVID-19 and its effects.

WHO commends efforts of Iraq Supreme Seminary and urges citizens to follow health measures to save lives

Baghdad, 9 April 2020 - The World Health Organization (WHO) commends the call by the religious Supreme Seminary in Iraq to postpone religious gatherings and its commitment to ensuring prevention measures recommended by WHO and local health authorities in Iraq.

The exponential spread of the new Coronavirus (COVID-19) around the world and the global rise in the number of infections and associated deaths necessitates limiting all social events and mass gatherings, including religious pilgrimages to holy sites. In this respect, WHO is disseminating clear recommendations to governments and the public to temporarily halt these activities in order to limit transmission of the disease.

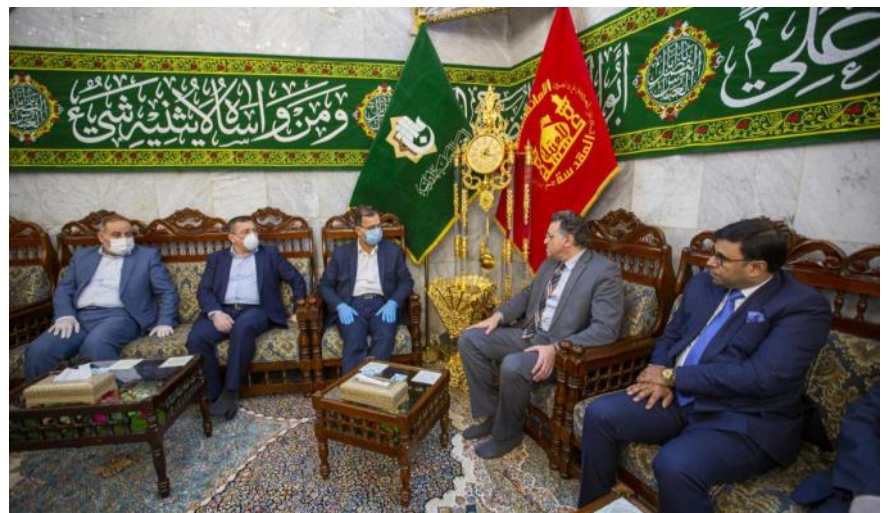
"The Seminaries, mainly in Najaf, Kerbala, and Kadimiya are in full support of WHO and MOH recommendations. We stress the importance of staying home, avoiding gatherings, and consider social distancing to avoid the unintentional harm caused by transmitting the disease," said Dr. Adham Ismail, WHO Representative in Iraq. "WHO thanks the response of the esteemed Seminaries in Iraq and appreciate their support to

health authorities efforts to contain the spread of COVID-19 in Iraq," he added.

Iraq was expecting millions of pilgrims to head to the holy city of Kerbala on 8 April 2020 in one of the biggest religious ceremonies. Fearing this would widen the range of infection, WHO and Federal Ministry of Health in Baghdad made a series of visits to these areas and met with religious seminaries in Najaf, Kerbala, and Kadhimiya in Baghdad to mobilize support for postponing all religious gatherings and advising people

to perform religious rituals from their homes until the COVID 19 outbreak in the country is stabilized.

The Supreme Seminary in Najaf, earlier called upon Iraqis to follow the Ministry of Health's directives and not to underestimate the repercussions of this virus and its dangers. It also obligated people to respect the lockdown and to support national health staff by staying home to limit the spread of infection, ease the burden on health facilities, and minimize morbidity and mortality.



President of Iraq met with a group of national health staff at the Qasr Alsalam Palace in Baghdad to commend their significant efforts in fighting COVID-19 in Iraq

Baghdad, 14 April 2020 - President of Iraq, Dr. Barham Salih, together with Minister of Health, Dr. Jaffar Sadiq, and World Health Organization (WHO) Representative in Iraq, Dr. Adham Ismail, met with a group of national health staff in Qasr Alsalam Palace in Baghdad to commend their significant efforts in fighting COVID-19 in Iraq. President of Iraq Dr. Barham Salih said: "The genuine and remarkable efforts of the national health and medical staff in Iraq will be remembered throughout history. Your guidance to your fellow Iraqis helped us overcome the challenge despite the limited capacity of the health sector". President of Iraq Dr. Barham Salih alongside the Minister of Health, Dr. Jaffar Sadiq, and WHO Representative in Iraq, Dr. Adham Ismail, applauded the national health staff in appreciation for their significant role in containing the transmission of COVID-19 in Iraq. President of Iraq Dr. Barham Salih also



stressed the importance of adhering to preventive measures and to #StayAtHome as the battle against COVID-19 is not yet over and health

workers still have more challenges to face.

Photos courtesy of the Office of the Presidency.

UNHCR hygiene cash assistance to help refugees and internally displaced people in Iraq to combat COVID-19

Baghdad, 17 April 2020 - As the global pandemic continues, refugee, internally displaced (IDP) and returnee communities are at a higher risk due to their difficult living conditions. To mitigate these risks, UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, decided to help over 110,000 vulnerable families (over 550,000 people) from the refugee, internally displaced, and returnee communities in Iraq by providing them with cash so that they can purchase basic hygiene items to prevent the spread of COVID-19. "During these difficult times, we must support those who were forced to flee their homes. Like all of us, they are worried for their families and for themselves, but they don't have the necessary means to protect themselves. Cash will help them buy basic hygiene items, which is an essential preventive measure." said Philippa Candler, Acting Representative of UNHCR in Iraq. The cash distribution started on 15 April in Basirma refugee camp and will continue to cover all refugees and IDPs living in camps as well as vulnerable refugees, IDPs, and returnee families living in urban areas. In cooperation with partners, distribution is carried out through door-

to-door visits, thus ensuring social-distancing and avoiding any crowding that would put the camp residents at risk. UNHCR field staff are part of the distribution team, providing counseling to refugees, IDPs, and returnees. More than ever, additional resources are vital to prevent the spread of the virus in Iraq and to ensure that existing humanitarian programmes, on which the lives and welfare of millions of people depend, continue. UNHCR in Iraq is urgently appealing

for \$26 million to scale-up its activities in response to the COVID-19 outbreak. This scale-up aims to ensure that vulnerable refugee, IDP and returnee families have access to basic hygiene items in addition to conducting essential activities including health promotion and awareness-raising, provision of medical equipment, training of health workers, strengthening health care services and disinfection activities in camps and support early detection of positive cases.



UNICEF and Ministry of Health in Iraq supported sterilization campaigns in camps for vulnerable displaced populations

Baghdad, 13 April 2020 - UNICEF and Ministry of Health in Iraq supported sterilization campaigns in camps for vulnerable displaced populations along with provision of hand washing facilities, hygiene kits and dissemination of key COVID19 awareness messages



WHO hands-over urgent in-kind supplies to Ministry of Health of Kurdistan Iraq to support fighting COVID 19

Erbil, 19 April 2020 - The World Health Organization (WHO) handed over an urgent COVID 19 response consignment of in-kind medical supplies and equipment to the Ministry of Health of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRG-I).

The 7-truck consignment is worth US\$426,732 and it included 151 pallets of medical supplies, and hospital consumables, in addition to 46 pallets of renewable and supplementary items of the Inter-agency Emergency Health Kit (IEHK) sufficient for a population of approximately 200,000 persons for a minimum duration of three months.

The consignment also included, three ICU ventilators and monitors along with personal protective equipment and virus transportation medium, all of which, comes in timely to support the MoH efforts in fighting and containing COVID-19 in KRG-I.

“WHO is very concerned about the health of the Iraqi people and will continue to provide the technical and logistical support required for protecting the health staff of both

Central and Regional ministries as well as the citizens all over Iraq,” said Dr. Adham Ismail, WHO Representative in Iraq.

The urgent shipment of supplies was thanked by health officials in the KRG-I. “We appreciate WHO support to the Ministry of Health of Kurdistan Region of Iraq; it will certainly assist in equipping our national health staff who are working hard to contain COVID 19 in the Region,” said Dr. Saman H. Barzangy, Minister of Health of KRG-Iraq.

The in-kind consignment is meant to

support COVID 19 response activities implemented by the directorates of health of KRG-I. It further included a shipment of 30 hospital beds sent to Sulaymaniyah prior to the hand over due to the urgency of the request.

As of 18 April, the health authorities in KR-I reported 337 COVID 19 confirmed cases with 4 associated deaths and 244 recoveries.

WHO would like to thank Kuwait and USAID for their generous contribution which assisted in funding this COVID 19 protection and treatment consignment.



UNHCR cash assistance helps refugees and IDPs to purchase hygiene items to prevent the spread of COVID19

Baghdad, 21 April 2020 – UNHCR door-to-door cash distribution is ongoing, reaching vulnerable refugees and internally displaced people in Iraq. This cash assistance aims to help them purchase hygiene items to prevent the spread of COVID19. UNHCR plans to reach over 10,000 vulnerable families. Big thanks to Zain Cash and Barzani Charity Foundation teams for their unmatched dedication, ensuring that vulnerable families receive the help they need.



Fighting COVID-19 deepens Iraq's humanitarian crisis - children in emergencies

Baghdad, 21 April 2020 - UNICEF-supported teams disinfecting common areas in the camps hosting some of the most vulnerable people in Iraq.

The COVID-19 virus has challenged developed nations in ways that few could have predicted just a few weeks ago. In Iraq, my colleagues and I watch with trepidation as Europe and the US struggle to contain the virus. Hospitals are overwhelmed, there's an acute shortage of testing and protective equipment, and the death toll continues to rise at a shockingly rapid pace.

We ask ourselves, if it's that bad "over there", what might happen in a fragile country like Iraq where the health care system has been decimated by decades of conflict and under-investment? Adding to this, over 1.2 million people are still displaced, living in crowded formal and informal camps, where social distancing is difficult to implement.

Teams distributing COVID-19 hygiene kits in the camps hosting some of the most vulnerable people in Iraq.

As of 17 April, Iraq reported 1434 confirmed COVID-19 cases (80 deaths) in all governorates or state. On average there are about 20 to 30 new cases a day.

The government has put a nationwide curfew in place to help contain the virus. UNICEF and other humanitarian agencies are racing to step up emergency preparedness and response plans, including combating dangerous misinformation that was spreading like wildfire on social media.

Awareness-raising campaigns have been carried out using mobile radio team to disseminate messages on handwashing and social distancing. UNICEF has also installed several communal handwashing sinks in different locations to encourage handwashing practices following the distribution hygiene items, including soaps and buckets.

"In a public health emergency, information can save lives. A key priority for UNICEF is ensuring children, young people and their families have access to accurate information on how to protect themselves and their loved ones during the pandemic," said Hamida Lasseko, UNICEF's Representative in Iraq.

"So far, there are no COVID-19 cases in the camps where some of Iraq's most vulnerable people live— we must do everything we can to keep it that way," she added.

UNICEF-supported teams are distributing hygiene kits and supplies for those who need them in Iraq.

An emergency within an emergency. Some of UNICEF's financial resources for the wider humanitarian operation have already been reallocated to focus on prevention and response activities in camps for refugees and displaced people.

In coordination with the Ministry of Health and Environment, UNICEF-supported teams have sterilized and fumigated Ninawa camps including Jedaa, Hamam Al-Alil, and Salamiyah; similar activities are also being rolled out for camps in other locations.

Health workers who provide critical care in the camps are also supported with personal protective equipment that is scarce to come by.

"With all the focus on equipping hospitals with protective equipment, health workers in IDP camps were in danger of being forgotten," said Dr Moazzem, the Chief of Health and Nutrition in UNICEF Iraq.

"They were anxious for their safety at a time when every cough or cold could transmit the virus. We knew we had to quickly support them so they can continue to support others," he added.

Dr Moazzem and his team started exploring how to obtain PPEs. They procured 4,000 kits through a local supplier, including gloves, surgical masks, coveralls, and other items for the health workers. Another, 30,000 PPE kits have been ordered and should

arrive in Iraq as soon as global logistical restrictions ease.

Reversing all gains

Looking ahead, the fear is that the pandemic will exacerbate growing inequality in Iraqi society and reverse modest gains made for children since the end of widespread violence two years ago.

"Without a doubt, the economic impact of COVID-19 will plunge the most vulnerable families in Iraq deeper into poverty and children will pay the price. They will be forced to work, child marriage will go up, and violence at home will increase. That is what we must guard against," said Lasseko.

There are also concerns that children's health is being put at risk in other ways. Vaccinations campaigns have been halted or significantly slowed due to social distancing measures. In a country where only half of children between 12-23 months are vaccinated against preventable diseases, every delay in boosting immunization coverage heightens the risk of disease outbreaks such as measles and polio.

Livelihoods are also at risk — an inter-agency hotline that provides information on assistance to displaced families showed that nearly 60 percent of callers in the last two months were concerned about their lack of financial resources and diminishing employment opportunities.

By Laila Ali, Communication Specialist with UNICEF Iraq.



UNDP Iraq supports the authorities and the Iraq Ministry of Health's efforts in fighting COVID19 pandemic

Baghdad, 22 April 2020 – In Ramadi, local authorities are establishing isolation rooms, for patients to receive adequate health services. 130 beds have also been delivered. Isolation beds in Diyala will be delivered shortly. Iraqi authorities are also conducting regular temperature checks for new arrivals and are disinfecting the entrance to Anbar, Salahaldin and Diyala governorates. The United Nations Development Programme in Iraq (UNDP Iraq) supports the authorities and the Iraq Ministry of Health's efforts in fighting COVID19.



IOM Iraq appeals for USD 20.4 million to enhance national COVID-19 response

Baghdad, 23 April 2020 - On 11 March 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) a pandemic. As of 21 April 2020, there were 2,397,217 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and 162,956 deaths reported globally. WHO have reported that the increase in cases of COVID-19 in the Eastern Mediterranean, including Iraq, is of particular and great concern. 1,602 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and 83 deaths had been reported in Iraq by 21 April 2020.

The COVID-19 crisis is not only exacerbating existing vulnerabilities among vulnerable populations in Iraq,

but will have a heavy impact on socioeconomic wellbeing across the country if immediate response and mitigation strategies are not put in place. This includes for an estimated 1.4 million internally displaced persons (some 300,000 of whom are living in camps and reliant on humanitarian assistance) and 4.6 million people who have returned to their area of origin (around half of whom are living in areas with severe or moderately severe living conditions). There are also thousands of migrants in Iraq, many undocumented, who are now unable to work and require protection and support.

"Years of conflict and sanctions have taken a toll on the Iraqi health care system; the COVID-19 pandemic may overwhelm this already weakened infrastructure," said IOM Iraq Chief of Mission Gerard Waite. "There are large IDP, refugee, returnee and migrant communities in Iraq that already face challenges accessing health care and relevant information, and are still recovering from the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) crisis and subsequent economic downturn."

IOM Iraq is appealing to the international community for USD 20,450,000 to contribute to halting further transmission of COVID-19 and mitigating the impact of the outbreak including the socio-economic impact.

The organization will build upon its strong operational footprint and existing expertise in migration health, integrated border management, community-based transition, and recovery and stabilization initiatives, including economic revitalisation activities, to support the Government of

Iraq respond to COVID-19 through short, medium and longer term interventions where possible.

Areas of focus will include Coordination and Partnerships; Tracking Mobility Impacts; Risk Communication and Community Engagement; Disease Surveillance Systems; Public Health Capacities at Points of Entry; Infection Prevention and Control; Case Management and Continuity of Essential Services; Camp Coordination and Camp Management; and Protection. The organization's Communicating with Communities, protection and disability inclusion teams will provide essential support and guidance across all interventions.

IOM Iraq will leverage its wide network of staff and offices across Iraq, experience working in difficult operating environments and its strong ties with government counterparts at national, governorate and local levels, to employ a multi-sectoral, whole of government and society approach.

IOM Iraq's Response Plan is part of the IOM Global Strategic Preparedness and Response plan, which aims to ensure that a well-coordinated, comprehensive, equitable and timely response to the crisis is in place to halt further transmission of the disease, limit the humanitarian and socioeconomic effects of the pandemic, and support affected communities in preparing for longer term-recovery.

In coordination and partnership with relevant local actors and authorities, IOM Iraq will carry out its response in line with the WHO Iraq Country Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan Against COVID-19, released on 23 March 2020.



IOM Iraq leverages mobility data to better understand COVID-19 impact

Erbil, 27 April 2020 - As of 26 April, 1,763 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and 86 deaths had been reported in Iraq. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Iraq has completed a study analyzing the status of healthcare services, public awareness levels, access to services, movement restrictions and the overall economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic across the country.

Data for the study was collected by the IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) in 401 sub-districts across Iraq's 18 governorates. In early April, IOM Iraq's Rapid Assessment and Response Teams conducted phone interviews with its well-established network of key informants (KIs) that includes community leaders, mukhtars, local authorities and security forces.

When KIs were asked to report what they thought would be the top three main issues that would be caused by the COVID-19 crisis in their subdistrict, the most commonly reported issues were a delay in the school year (reported by 89% KIs), followed by a loss of livelihoods (81%) and financial impact (44%).

At the national level, the situation relating to employment is severe. In 68 per cent of subdistricts, KIs reported that the majority of people in their areas have lost their jobs and are facing financial problems as a result. This is apparently most severe in Anbar (96% of KIs reporting), Basrah (94%), and Dahuk (94%) governorates. Only 4 per cent of KIs, located in Baghdad and Ninewa, reported that the majority of people in their subdistrict can work from home and are still receiving their salaries.

KIs in 88 per cent of subdistricts reported that some population groups

are more severely affected by the COVID-19 curfew than others; the three groups most commonly reported to be more affected are daily labourers, followed by Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and then the elderly. In 73 per cent of subdistricts, however, KIs reported that provisions are being made to assist the most impacted groups; most assistance comes from the host community, followed by the national government and then the local government.

"The findings of this study will improve our understanding of how the evolving COVID-19 situation is impacting daily life," said IOM Iraq Chief of Mission Gerard Waite. "A solid evidence base will better inform our response to this crisis, in support of migrants, internally displaced persons, host communities and other vulnerable populations."

The data also show that the majority of public healthcare clinics are open and accessible across the country but residents of Thi Qar, Basrah and Missan governorates may have greater trouble accessing healthcare services when needed (with public clinics closures reported in 40%, 18% and 13% of sub-districts respectively). Private clinics and hospitals are much less accessible at the national level, reportedly being closed in 43 per cent of subdistricts.

Following governmental orders to restrict movement, the findings confirm that schools and most government services are closed throughout the country. Psychosocial support services are also largely closed or otherwise unavailable.

Government-enforced curfews are reportedly well respected across the country, with KIs in 76 per cent of all

sub-districts reporting that the majority of people stay at home and respect the curfew. However, there are some governorates where the curfew orders are not being well respected. This is a particular concern in Baghdad, where KIs in only 15 per cent of subdistricts reported that the majority respect the curfew and stay home.

"During these uncertain times, when data about the impact of the pandemic are scarce, this study has already given us some indications about the current state of available services, as well as the most common preoccupations among diverse Iraqi communities," said Rose Marie Guevremont, IOM Iraq DTM Programme Coordinator. "There are similarities and differences to be noted between governorates, which confirms that a targeted approach should be prioritized. As we continue to develop our short, medium and long term response plans, this kind of information will be crucial."

All information related to the study is available on a new COVID-19 dashboard hosted on the DTM Iraq website, along with the dataset and a summary of the main findings.



WHO Iraq representative and KR parliamentarians discussed the latest developments related to COVID-19 pandemic

Erbil, 28 April 2020 - WHO Iraq Representative, Dr Adham Ismail, met in Erbil with the Deputy Speaker of the Kurdistan Parliament, Hemin Hawrami, and members of the Health Committee in the Parliament. Dr Adham and parliamentarians discussed the latest developments related to COVID-19 pandemic and after lockdown phase measures in Iraq and the Kurdistan Region.

Photo courtesy of the Kurdistan Parliament.



UN Women: The life of Mariam Taha has not been going the usual way over the past weeks

Erbil, 29 April 2020 - The life of Mariam Taha, a 36-year-old technical assistant at the Central Public Health Laboratory in Erbil, the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, has not been going the usual way over the past weeks.

Since the detection of the first COVID-19 cases in Iraq in February 2020 and the imposition of a curfew in all governorates, the lives of Mariam and her family have been turned upside down as her workplace has been dedicated to solely testing suspected cases.

Since then, Mariam, who in normal times has been doing eight-hour shifts every day, started working one day every 10 days for an 11-hour shift.

This one day not only became a long workday away from her husband and four children, but a source of anxiety and fear that she might catch the disease and carry it to her family.

She works in a place where she may get infected at any moment, and thus can infect her family and colleagues.

“No matter how I try to beautify the situation and pretend that it is normal, what is happening makes us ponder, worry. It makes us strictly follow the instructions of the Ministry of Health in Kurdistan Region of Iraq”.

Anxiety is now part of the daily life of Mariam, who has to take every precautionary measure: “I wear what

has become the official uniform, that comes with a face mask, gloves, goggles and the suit”.

“In addition to I keep washing my hands and sterilizing them all the time, I avoid crowded places and try to keep my distance from patients and colleagues”, Mariam said.

Despite all precautionary measures, anxiety and fear dominate Mariam, especially as she heads back home at the end of her shift.

“Every time I leave work, I feel anxious and stressed out that I might infect my family. Before leaving the centre, I take off my disposable personal protective gear and I sterilize myself using medical sterilization provided at the center. As soon as I arrive home, and before any physical contact with anyone in my family, I shower and wash the clothes I was having”, Mariam explains.

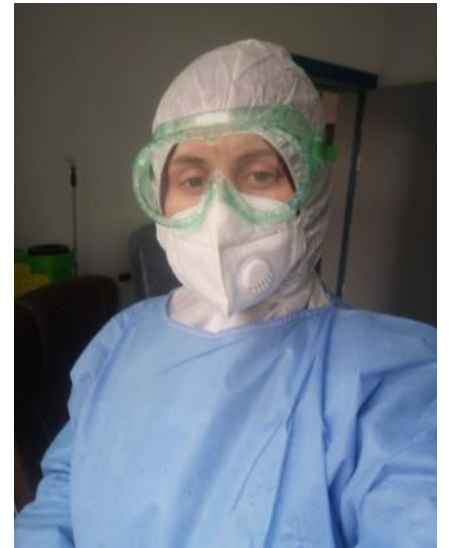
The challenges Mariam is facing due to the nature of her job are enormous and not limited to her fear of transmitting the infection to her family. She has to stay away from home and her family for long hours.

“Although it is only one day every 10 days, it is a long and a hard one. As I leave my five family members, worried how will their day go by during these long hours. What reassures me is that God has blessed me with a husband

who fulfills his responsibilities during my absence”.

Mariam notes that her responsibilities as a wife and a mother have increased during this pandemic, especially after school closures. “My four children are now staying at home without schooling, except for one who is receiving distance learning online and requires time to follow up his homework”.

According to Mariam, no COVID-19 cases were recorded at the Center where she works along with 150 doctors, assistants and administrators, of whom 100 are women.



A personal take on lockdown in Baghdad's Green Zone

By Hilary Stauffer, head of the Reporting, Policy and Strategy Unit in the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in Baghdad

Baghdad, 1 May 2020 - I didn't expect to miss the Hippo.

Currently in the middle of my ninth week of lockdown on the United Nations compound in the Green Zone in Baghdad, there are so many things that I miss from my life back home, beyond the compound gates: Thai food and well stocked grocery stores are just some of them (on my last trip to the tiny shop we have on the compound, I managed to buy laundry detergent and a pomegranate — it was all they had left). And yes, of course, family and friends — although if I'm honest, my loved ones have contacted me more in the last nine weeks than they have the previous 15 years.

But the Hippo — that was unexpected.

Here in Iraq, “Hippos” refer not to river-dwelling mammals (the Tigris is hippo-free, as far as I know) but rather to the extra-large armored personnel carriers that are used to transport UN staff to and from the airport. Free of every conceivable comfort, including cushions, seatbelts, and shock absorbers, each Hippo ride threatens to induce nausea as the vehicle laboriously descends into and climbs out of every pothole on the road to the airport. Chipped teeth are a danger as your upper and lower jaw bang together when jolting over speedbumps. The literal roar of the engine makes conversation impossible. People usually look dazed when exiting a Hippo.

And yet now, the Hippo is the only sign of external life on the compound. It comes through twice a day, carrying troop rotations of the UN Guard Units from their nearby barracks. If you walk around at dawn or dusk, you will see it lumbering around corners, stopping to

drop-off or pick-up members of the Fijian Guard Unit that keep watch on the compound. It is a reminder of life beyond the concrete walls. It's a memento of the outside world, of a Time Before Coronavirus, when travel was possible, even predictable.

Because, of course, there is life outside the compound walls, it's just not life as we know it in this unimaginably vibrant, multi-ethnic, multilingual, multi-faith land. Iraq — a nation of nearly 40 million people with a health system that's at least 40 years out-of-



A personal take on lockdown in Baghdad's Green Zone *(continued)*

date (four decades of upheaval and armed conflict will take a toll) — is now facing the same killer virus that is upending life in much richer countries. Since the first confirmed case was detected on 24 February 2020, Iraq has cut itself off from neighbors and the wider world. With very few resources available to fight COVID-19, authorities — with the robust support of the World Health Organization (WHO) — had to move quickly and commandingly to close borders and shut airports to try and slow the transmission of the disease. Equally important, it imposed 24-hour-a-day curfews in every major city, as well as closing internal crossing points between provinces.

It hasn't been easy. Iraqis are an unapologetically social people. "Large group gatherings" are a way of life. Yet it has, largely, worked: nine weeks after the first detected case, Iraq's confirmed COVID-19 caseload is still below 2,000 people, and the death toll has not yet topped 100. This can only be a triumph. But it does come with a cost. Although Iraq has the fifth largest oil reserves in the world, it is a country with significant vulnerabilities, now exacerbated by COVID-19. Half the population is under 25, where not many have experienced more than a few consecutive years without privation and unrest. The country has been in the grips of a political crisis since October 2019. And two years on from the end of armed conflict against the Islamic State of Iraq and Levant (ISIL), 1.4 million people are still internally displaced, roughly a quarter of whom live in camps. The displaced face a multiplicity of obstacles: destroyed and damaged homes, property contaminated by unexploded ordinance, insecurity, ethno-religious tension, communal mistrust, and a lack of

services and jobs. Any difficulties which existed pre-COVID-19 have now exponentially increased.

Amid this vulnerability, I'm proud to report the humanitarian system is rising to the immediate challenge. The United Nations and its NGO partners have re-oriented the immediate-term humanitarian response to address the immediate needs posed by COVID-19. Soon after the first case was detected, humanitarians began awareness-raising activities, both in IDP camps and among the wider population, spreading messages in English, Arabic and Kurdish. Partners began scaling up hygiene services to vulnerable communities and to different response sectors, including Health, Camp Management, Shelter, WASH, Food Security and Protection, planned how to isolate and quarantine mild-to-moderate cases of COVID-19 in camps, if necessary.

WHO is working closely with the Ministries of Health in both federal Iraq and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq to support preparedness and response, and has created a dashboard to track the spread of the virus. Food security actors are re-calibrating which populations may become newly vulnerable as the lockdowns persist. With schools closed, the Education sector is supporting teachers to provide distance learning. Other organizations are putting people to work sewing masks and PPE equipment. Protection partners are keeping close watch on reports of rising domestic violence, and raising the alarm at the highest levels. Organizations that distribute cash to the most vulnerable are giving one-off cash grants to cover the purchase of masks, gloves, and hand sanitizer. Through it all, accountability and communication with communities

remains key: the Iraq Information Centre — a call centre that provides information on humanitarian assistance to IDPs, returnees, asylum seekers, refugees, and vulnerable host community members — has established a dashboard to track calls they receive about challenges the impact of COVID-19 on affected people.

As movement restrictions and airport closures keep many international staff working remotely, the COVID-19 field response in Iraq is carried out largely through the heroic efforts of national staff, from both UN agencies and civil society. They face daily adversities which requires patience, ingenuity and more than a little innate Iraqi stubbornness to overcome. Restrictions in the movement of people and goods are compounding long-standing access difficulties across the country, hampering humanitarians' ability to reach people in need. Transporting medicines and supplies between governorates and across borders requires constant negotiation. OCHA's sub-offices are in daily contact with governorate counterparts to facilitate these movements wherever possible.

Iraq, like the rest of the world, has a long way to go not just on COVID-19. Humanitarian needs will persist, and will require the sustained support by the UN, partners and donors. But Iraq must be commended for the way it faced the multiple, overlapping threats, as should the UN, NGOs and civil society. It has been my privilege to serve in whatever way I can, even from the confines of the compound.

Nevertheless, there's no harm in dreaming of life beyond the concrete walls — of Thai food, and yes, even of Hippos.

World Health Day: United Nations in Iraq salutes the courage and sacrifices of Iraqi health workers

Baghdad, 7 April 2020 - As Iraq and the world tackle the unprecedented challenges of COVID-19, this year's World Health Day is like no other. Today, we pay tribute to all the health workers on the front lines. They provide treatment and care for affected patients, selflessly risking their lives to save ours.

Amid this global pandemic, their efforts and sacrifices are recognized with immense gratitude. The tireless and exemplary work of Iraqi medical practitioners is critical to keeping citizens healthy, and their work is only more significant during the current crisis.

As pointed out by the World Health Organization (WHO), COVID-19 confirms how important it is for all health workers to have access to the most up-to-date knowledge and guidance in responding to such crises. It also underscores the critical need for personal protective equipment, to ensure they can safely provide care and reduce their rate of infection.

COVID-19 is a global threat that ignores differences in gender, education, belief, ethnicity or wealth. The way to respond to a universal crisis is through solidarity between people. To protect our communities, we must continue to focus on prevention,

following the advice and instruction of local and national authorities by maintaining physical distance and proper hygiene.

As we celebrate World Health Day, we pay tribute to Iraqi health workers and their colleagues across the world. They form the backbone of the global response to the outbreak. The understanding that this is a fight for each and every individual remains key: no medical practitioner can go it alone. Their work, strengthened by the solidarity, compassion and patience of all, will see us through this crisis.

World Health Day: Protecting midwives to keep women and babies safe amid the COVID-19 pandemic

Baghdad, 7 April 2020 - On this World Health Day, we mark the first International Year of the Nurse and the Midwife. Midwives are central to everything we do at UNFPA, the United Nations sexual and reproductive health agency. Their life-saving skills go far beyond delivering babies; midwives educate, empower and enable women to lead healthy lives and to exercise their right to sexual and reproductive health.

Amid the current COVID-19 pandemic, which has already infected more than a million people worldwide, health professionals are unsung heroes working on the frontlines. Midwives risk their own lives to save those of pregnant women and newborns. They ensure safe and healthy pregnancies, taking every precaution to protect the women they serve.

Midwives play a critical role in responding to public health emergencies like COVID-19. They are essential to the strong, resilient health systems we need to survive the coronavirus. It is imperative not to jeopardize essential sexual and reproductive health services by diverting midwives to serve as emergency personnel.

Midwives who serve patients outside of hospitals are crucial to maintaining the safe distancing measures necessary to curb the spread of the disease. The more midwives who are ready to visit the homes of pregnant women in rural communities or who can offer phone-



based antenatal and post-natal care, then the more people able to avoid transmitting or becoming infected by the coronavirus.

While the novel coronavirus sweeps the world, including many developing countries with fragile health systems, women continue to get pregnant and give birth. Midwives are essential to ensure safe pregnancies and births for everyone, everywhere. They also provide the information and contraceptive counselling that women and young people need, even in times of crisis.

As frontline health workers, midwives are particularly vulnerable to the virus. That means pregnant women and babies are at risk, too. We must take urgent action to protect midwives. This includes providing all midwives with the same personal protective

equipment that other front-line health workers use to insulate themselves from contagion.

All over the world, midwives are stepping up to the COVID-19 challenge. With UNFPA support, midwives in hard-hit countries are working round the clock to provide care for women and babies. They say they will never abandon their patients.

Together with the World Health Organization and other partners, UNFPA stands with the world's midwives, today and every day.

Life goes on despite the pandemic; pregnancy and childbirth are no exception. In this difficult time for all, and particularly for health care professionals, let's do everything in our power to protect midwives so they can continue to keep women and newborns safe.

Security

UNAMI condemns attack at Camp Taji, calls for maximum restraint

Baghdad, 12 March 2020 - The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) condemns the latest rocket attack at Camp Taji which resulted in loss of life and injury among troops of the Global Coalition in the fight against Da'esh (ISIL).

These ongoing attacks are a clear and substantial threat to the country, and

the risk of rogue action by armed groups remains a constant concern.

Beyond the immediate security threat, this also takes critical political attention away from urgent unfinished domestic business. The last thing Iraq needs is to serve as an arena for vendettas and external battles.

Maximum restraint on all sides is the

only way forward. The Government of Iraq must exercise its full powers to hold perpetrators accountable and prevent future attacks.

The UN expresses its condolences to the families of the victims and their countries, and wishes the injured a speedy recovery.

Immediate de-escalation is the only way forward

Baghdad, 13 March 2020 - The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) calls for immediate de-escalation on all sides.

Sovereignty is indivisible. Attacks and retaliatory attacks, including repeated strikes on the Global Coalition forces -

present in Iraq at the invitation of its government to fight Da'esh (ISIL) - do not serve the common interest of Iraq.

UNAMI condemns the continued loss of life and calls upon all parties to act with maximum restraint in keeping with international law. Partnership

and dialogue are the only way to build Iraq's strength and to prevent a resurgence of Da'esh. The country and its people cannot afford to be used as a theatre for different power competitions and proxy conflicts. Iraqis desperately deserve stability and peace.

The Secretary-General expresses his serious concern about repeated attacks in Iraq and the region

New York, 14 March 2020 - Statement attributable to the Spokesman for the Secretary-General, Stephane Dujarric - on Iraq:

The Secretary-General expresses his serious concern about repeated attacks in Iraq and the region. The Secretary-General calls on all sides to take

immediate steps towards de-escalating the situation to prevent additional loss of life, injury and destruction.

Gender

The Baghdad Women Association organized in Baghdad a conference entitled “Women's Political Participation in Iraq - Opportunities and Challenges”

Baghdad, 22 March 2020 - Baghdad Women Association organized in Baghdad recently a conference entitled “Women's Political Participation in Iraq - Opportunities and Challenges”.

Supported by UN Women, the conference was held in observance of International Women's Day under the slogan “I am the Generation Equality: Realizing Women's Rights”.

The conference was attended by more than 120 participants from civil society organizations, human rights activists and media outlets, in addition to members of the Independent High Electoral Commission, the Canadian



ambassador, as well as representatives of the Swedish and the French

embassies in Iraq and UN Women officials.

A study on the Implementation of the Iraqi National Action Plan on UN Security Council Resolution 1325 discussed in Baghdad

Baghdad, 23 March 2020 – The Baghdad Women Association recently held a meeting in Baghdad to discuss a study on the Implementation of the Iraqi National Action Plan on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325. The study, entitled “Dual Accountability of the National Action Plan (INAP) for the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 -

Women Awareness and the Use of Standard Monitoring Models”, was carried out under a BWA project to examine INAP's implementation, through funding by UN Women and the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF). The meeting is the fifth in a series of discussion sessions focused on INAP.



A workshop on UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security organized for activists and journalists from Nineveh governorate

Dohuk, 25 March 2020 - The Iraqi Women Journalists Forum, in cooperation with UN Women, has recently organized a training workshop on UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security. A total of 25 activists and journalists from Nineveh governorate, who are currently residing in the northern Iraqi city of Dohuk, took part in the workshop, which comes as part of the activities of the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF).



UNFPA welcomes Japanese support for women and girls in Iraq

Baghdad, 29 March 2020 - The Government of Japan contributed US\$ 1.3 million towards UNFPA interventions for integrated lifesaving reproductive health and gender-based violence services to vulnerable women and girls in five governorates across Iraq.

UNFPA has been adopting an integrated approach to enable women and girls to receive a comprehensive package of services, continuum of care, as well as timely referrals.

The Japanese contribution will ensure that 40,000 women and girls, out of whom 25,000 are pregnant women, from the IDP, returnee, and refugees in the humanitarian settings in Anbar, Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninewa and Salah Al-Din governorates, have access to prevention and response to reproductive health and gender-based violence services which include awareness-raising sessions and case management, as well as consultations and treatment.

In addition, the new commitment will enable UNFPA to improve the capacity of national service providers, especially female caregivers, to deliver high-



quality assistance, including psychosocial and referral services in the targeted five governorates.

“We are thankful for Japan’s trust in UNFPA programme in Iraq,” said Dr Oluremi Sogunro, UNFPA Representative to Iraq. “Women and girls continue to suffer from the impact of the humanitarian crisis. Thanks to Japan’s trust, we will ensure that not only we provide the much-needed reproductive health and gender-based violence services but we strengthen the existing national capacities to build the resilience of the system.”

His Excellency Mr Naofumi Hashimoto, Ambassador of Japan to Iraq, stated: “Japan has recently decided to provide

a new assistance package for Iraq amounting to USD 41 million including this project as assistance for women and girls.”

“With this package, the total amount of Japan’s assistance to the people affected by the crisis reaches US\$ 540 million since 2014. I hope that the assistance from the Government and people of Japan will help ensure protection of women and girls among IDP, returnee and refugees,” he added. Japan has been a UNFPA long-standing partner with contributions amounting to a total of US\$ 11,852,085 over the last five years ensuring women and girls across Iraq have access to health and protection services.

Anbar women defy COVID-19 curfew to continue handicraft learning, production

Baghdad, 21 April 2020 - The COVID-19 lockdown in Iraq did not stop beneficiaries from a women’s economic empowerment project to stop their ongoing handicrafts course but made them along with organizers from the Iraqi Organization for Woman and Future to seek means to continue their training. The trainers and beneficiaries are now continuing their training course, held through support by the Women’s Peace and Security Fund and UN Women, through the Internet and social media platforms. This online activity, according to organizers, is enabling the beneficiaries to be productive through the lockdown period

and to help them provide for themselves and their families, as well as help them reduce stress resulting from the curfew period.

The Iraqi Organisation for Woman and Future also announced that its “Remote Legal Clinic”, which enables women to seek the assistance of legal experts through telephone, Facebook or WhatsApp, was operational. This legal clinic is part of the project “Economic Empowerment of Women Through Gender Equality”, which is being carried out through support by UN Women and the Women’s Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF).



International Women’s Day

The Message from SRSG Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert to Iraqi women on International Women's Day

Baghdad, 8 March 2020 - Iraqi women have been and remain at the forefront of national struggles.

They have made great sacrifices, most recently in the fight against Da’esh and in the quest for a better, fairer future for their country.

They stood up for the right of all Iraqis to a sovereign, free and a more democratic country.

They have paid a heavy price, yet their determination has never wavered.

Their efforts cross all boundaries, uniting mothers and daughters from all

walks of life as they join hands and march together.

On this International Women's Day, I salute and stand with the women of Iraq. The struggle is far from over, and the fight for equality continues.

#StrongWomenBetterIraq

Tailor made: stories of loss, strength and solidarity from Fallujah

Baghdad, 10 March 2020 - "I suffered a lot from displacement. I lost five of my children during the military operations. It really harmed my mental wellbeing," says Maha, 47. "We decided to leave Fallujah and go to a safe place."

Maha* is originally from Al Fallujah district, in Iraq's Anbar Governorate. Like many others from her hometown, Maha was displaced when militants from the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) occupied Anbar; she fled with her husband, two of her daughters and her granddaughters. The family came to Amiriyat al-Fallujah camp in 2016.

Anbar Governorate is home to some of the first cities occupied by ISIL militants. An estimated 36,384 people are still displaced from Anbar as of February 2020.

For women like Maha, who are the breadwinners for their families, employment opportunities are limited. With humanitarian support of the EU, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Iraq holds several training workshops for displaced women in Amiriyat Al-Fallujah camp, to teach them skills that can help them earn an income.

"When I first came to Amiriyat al-Fallujah camp, I used to sew to earn some money to support my remaining family," Maha explains. "My husband is an old man and he has a lot of chronic diseases. Even as I moved [from place to place] I kept sewing because this is the only thing that helps me overcome my sadness since losing my children."

After attending a few sessions of the sewing workshop Maha, who was already an accomplished seamstress, started leading them herself and training other women.

"About 40 female trainees have graduated from my workshops. I still check their work and I'm trying to transfer all my [know-how] onto them," Maha says.

Ansam* was one of Maha's students; she was displaced from Al-Qaim district in 2017 and came to Amiriyat al-Fallujah camp with her family in the same year.

"My children and I have been dealing with mental health challenges since ISIL attacked our town. My daughter is blind and has a brain injury — she was outside on the roof of our home when shelling started around us, and the force of it scared her so much that she fell," Ansam explains.

When Ansam, 41, came to Amiriyat al-Fallujah, she was still dealing with the

trauma of what happened to her child as well as the violent shelling that she witnessed in Fallujah. Like Maha, Ansam's husband is ill and unable to work, which made things even more difficult for the family.

"I used to have panic attacks. Our financial situation was very poor and the general situation around us wasn't good at all," Ansam adds. "I was receiving a financial grant from an NGO, but it wasn't enough for anything."

Sura*, 21, also lives in Amiriyat al-Fallujah camp. She left her home in Heet and went to Al-Qaim district in 2014; military operations forced her to flee again in 2016.

"All the movement and displacement has affected us greatly, and disrupted my schooling," Sura says. "This is a sad thing for me. My wish is to go back to school, but that's hard to do currently."

"I heard that there are workshops that teach sewing skills and I was encouraged to participate. I started learning and my abilities quickly improved," Sura adds.

Sura still dreams of going back to school, but the sewing activity provided her with a creative outlet and she is thinking of opening her own tailoring shop. For her, and for Ansam, the chance to work on designs and make clothes that can help others in their community are sources of joy after all the difficulties they have faced.

"I hope to return to Al-Qaim, but the house we lived in is severely damaged. We need a lot of money to rebuild it and we don't have the means to rehabilitate it," says Ansam, of the challenges she

still faces. "But my psychological and financial situations have already improved."

"Participating in something with my colleagues from the camp and exchanging ideas regarding sewing has also led to new friendships; I very much enjoy sitting at the machine and sewing women's clothing, and the grant I receive for training others helps a lot."

The sewing workshops in Amiriyat al-Fallujah camp were organized by IOM Iraq with humanitarian funding from the European Union.

"I used to watch my friends knit and I loved it; I wished that I could do it like them. Recently, I heard that IOM Iraq had announced courses in knitting and I decided to enroll to learn the basics," said Nisreen. The 22-year-old has lived with her family in Amriyat Al-Fallujah since they were displaced from Al-Ramadi, Anbar in 2014.

"Now my knitting skills rival those of my friends, and I can make a variety of items including warm winter clothes. I am thinking of starting my own knitwear business to generate an income as I raise my six-year-old son," she added.

Nisreen is learning knitting skills alongside four other women and girls in Amriyat Al-Fallujah's Kitting Workshop, run by IOM Iraq with support from EU Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid - ECHO.

*Names and some identifying details have been changed to protect the privacy of individuals.

By Rafal Abdulateef, IOM Iraq



UN-Habitat's trainee Community Mediator

Baghdad, 15 March 2020 - A young woman from a religious minority group in Ninewa overcomes many challenges with support from colleagues and training opportunities provided by UN-Habitat.

Suzan, a bright, ambitious and outgoing young woman from Hamdaniya, Ninewa Governorate, a student of business administration and accounting, has recently discovered her new passion towards resolving property disputes through mediation.

Being experienced in working with people through her previous job as a journalist, Suzan felt confident to apply for the training opportunity in mediation, a methodology in solving property disputes that has been for the first time introduced in Iraq through UN-Habitat's project "Mediation and Peaceful Resolution of Housing, Land and Property Disputes", implemented in partnership with Caritas Czech Republic. The project ran in Hamdaniya and Telkeif districts of Ninewa Governorate from July 2019 to February 2020 as part of a larger programme "Support to Housing, Land and Property Rights for IDPs in Nineveh".

Suzan was one of 14 community members, out of which six females, who went through an intensive training course as per international standards, applied to the local context, and became one of the first certified Community Mediators in Iraq.

"The training in mediation was a milestone in my career and helped me change my life," says Suzan, who wishes to continue her career in this direction after graduation from college. Due to forced displacement, damage and destruction of housing and unlawful seizure of property under the ISIL occupation, property disputes are a common issue in conflict-affected areas in Iraq. Many returnees are now missing property records and documentation which was either lost during the conflict or even deliberately destroyed. Proving ownership rights over housing and land has been a big challenge for the land owners, while the authorities in Ninewa also face difficulties to restore the damaged or missing ownership documentation without property records. Under this scenario, solving property disputes has proven challenging both through private and official channels. Mediation as an innovative method to resolve property disputes between private parties, with the help of a trained

Suzan embraces new opportunities as a



mediator, helps preserve amicable relations and build peace and dialogue between communities, and furthermore it also contributes to the sustainable return of IDPs.

"Mediation is still a new concept in Iraq but it is proving to be effective," says Suzan who worked on 17 cases so far, out of which 15 were successfully solved by signing a written agreement between conflicting parties.

Other Community Mediators had a similar success. In total, all 14 mediators solved successfully 286 out of 343 received cases during the project.

However, these efforts have not been without challenges. Suzan's first mediation case, and so far the most challenging one as she says, was in Bartella, a small city east of Mosul. The dispute over land between two friends escalated and required involvement of a third party.

"I was very concerned because it was my first mediation session and it was in a community that's different from mine. Luckily, I wasn't alone, my colleague Falah was with me, who helped me overcome the anxiety."

Being young, a female and also born as a Christian in a culturally very diverse environment, Suzan faced numerous challenges in approaching her new role. Conservative norms, and particularly socially accepted gender roles, were an important factor for the new mediators to take into consideration.

"Being a female especially made it difficult to change the community's perspective and accept me as a Mediator."

While preparing for mediation sessions, she paid attention to even smallest details that she felt may affect how people perceive her and accept her as a mediator.

"In my first mediation assignment in Bartella, the people I dealt with were from a community which is completely different from mine in terms of customs and traditions. I certainly had to be careful with my appearance. I had to wear clothes similar to theirs, even makeup and hairstyle needed to be adjusted. Even later I always tried to look simple. And I was also very careful when choosing my words," says Suzan, while expressing gratitude to her male colleague Falah who guided her and provided with background information about the customs and traditions in different areas.

Remaining impartial and neutral is essential while mediating in a conflict, although Suzan accepts this was difficult in some cases. The mutual support of her fellow Mediators was also essential to overcome the difficulties she faced while becoming a Community Mediator. Suzan doesn't hide her gratitude and appreciation to her colleagues, who were to her like a family – supportive and encouraging. She bravely accepts all challenges and treats them as opportunities and motivation to explore her own capabilities and grow both as a person and as a young professional.

Suzan, who lives in a family of 12 members, says that her community is now used to see her in her new role as a Mediator, and even some community members approach her unofficially for advice. "That is something that makes me especially happy," says Suzan.

Her message to other young people, especially women, is to be brave while approaching life challenges, and not be afraid to seek help if needed.

By Dejan Drobnjak, UN Habitat

Discussing the role of women in the peaceful movement in Babel and Basra

Baghdad, 16 March 2020 - Ehtiraf Foundation for Young Leaders organized two seminars in Babel and Basra on 4 and 7 March 2020 on "The Role of Women in the peaceful movement".

The two seminars, sponsored by the UN Women to celebrate International Women's Day, discussed issues including sustainable development goals, Security Council Resolution 1325 of 2000 on women, peace and security, and women's participation in political and social movement in light of social, tribal, religious, and governmental influences.

Participants in the two seminars focused on the pros and cons of women's participation in the ongoing protest movement in Iraq and the measures needed to enhance the safe environment for women.

The first goal of the two seminars

focused on highlighting the peaceful movement in which women participated in demonstration squares throughout the governorates of the middle Euphrates and the south, and also on women's role at this stage and their continued provision of assistance and support to men in the demonstration squares, according to a statement by the organizers.

The second goal was to bring together decision-makers and opinion leaders to achieve better results and a clearer vision on the role of the women movement in demonstrations, while at the same time focusing on the importance of women's participation in political decision-making in the future. The discussions were about the necessity of the continued participation of Iraqi and Babel women in the demonstrations until many demands are fulfilled, as women are still absent



from playing their role in many areas, including the political, leadership and administrative areas.

The discussions also highlighted the importance of legislating more laws that support and increase the protection of women, enhance their role in peace negotiations, and rebuild the areas liberated from ISIS.

"Iraqi women: role model and strength"

Baghdad, 21 March 2020 - Sawa Human Rights Organization recently held many activities on the occasion of International Women's Day, sponsored by UN Women and under the slogan "Iraqi Women: Role model and strength".

One of these activities was a meeting held to discuss "Political and economic participation of Iraqi women" in Samawa governorate.

During the meeting, they reviewed the reality of women's political and economic participation and the challenges they face in decision-making.

The recommendations and conclusions that could be implemented during the coming stage were outlined, mainly

included the support of women in the economic and political decision, and the integration of the members of the Iraqi Network for UNSCR 1325 and the members of Alliance 1325 in interactive participation and from several governorates, for cooperation and joint coordination.

The Iraqi Network for UNSCR 1325 includes a group of organizations, bodies and associations working on implementing the United Nations Security Council Resolution No. 1325, adopted in 2000, on women, security and peace.

The meeting was attended by many organizations of the Iraqi Network for UNSCR 1325, and alliance 1325 from the governorates of Baghdad, Basra,



Diwanayah, Najaf, Wasit, Anbar, Nasiriyah, and Muthanna, in addition to a number of activists and specialists in the political and economic fields.

Human Rights

Iraqi judges take part in UN Women workshop on access to justice by GBV survivors

Erbil, 1 March 2020 - A four-day workshop organized by UN Women on access to justice by survivors of gender-based violence concluded in Erbil on Saturday.

Judges from various parts of Iraq took part in the workshop with the aim of validating and using gender-sensitive legal procedures and guidelines aimed at helping magistrates and prosecutors to receive, assess and report cases of gender-based violence.

The workshop focused on the best way to use the guidelines to train justice professionals on means of handling gender-based and conflict-related sexual violence cases.

The workshop, attended by 28 Iraqi judges, was held in collaboration with international organisations partnering with UN Women in Iraq.



UNAMI hate speech event with UN Under-Secretary-General Adama Dieng



Baghdad, 3 March 2020 - The global increase in hate speech as a vehicle to express and transfer xenophobia, racism and intolerance is deeply troubling.

(The UN defines hate speech as “any kind of communication in speech, writing or behaviour which attacks or uses pejorative or discriminatory language with reference to a person or a group on the basis of their religion, ethnicity, nationality, race, colour, descent, gender or other identity factor.”) The UN aims to support its member states to address the root causes and drivers of hate speech and effectively respond to the impact of hate speech on society. Tackling hate speech helps promote peaceful, inclusive societies; helps combat violence against women and minorities and other serious violations of human rights; and plays a key role in countering atrocity crimes and even terrorism.

On 3 March, the UNAMI Human Rights Office brought together, in the presence of UN Under-Secretary-General Adama Dieng, UN Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide and the UN global focal point on hate speech, representatives from Iraqi human rights organisations, media monitoring bodies and legal associations, and representatives of diverse communities, to take stock of the dangers that hate speech represents to Iraqi society. Participants discussed cultural factors, legacies of the past including recent armed conflict and acts of terrorism, patterns of discrimination, and current legislation. They offered ideas on how hate speech might be addressed and countered. The role of the Communications and Media Commission and courts in developing regulatory and judicial responses, respectively, was highlighted. All

agreed that there is a shared responsibility to prevent and prosecute hate speech, including in private homes, classrooms, newsrooms and social media, places of worship and other public venues.

USG Dieng concluded the discussion with a reminder that “eternal vigilance” was the price to be paid for freedom, and everyone must remain vigilant in opposing hate speech. He launched an appeal for all Iraqis to band together against hatred, discrimination and violent extremism.

Introduction by Ms. Alice Walpole, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, at the event:

Under Secretary-General Dieng, Distinguished guests and colleagues, Welcome to this afternoon's discussion on combating hate speech. Thank you to the team in our Human Rights Office for taking the initiative to organise this event.

I am delighted that United Nations Under Secretary-General Adama

Dieng, who is leading the UN's global efforts to combat hate speech, is able to join us today as my co-chair. Mr Dieng has been the UN Secretary-General's Special Advisor for the Prevention of Genocide since September 2012. This is his second visit to Iraq in that role. He has enjoyed a long and distinguished career in human rights and international criminal justice, having previously served as the Registrar of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, and as the Secretary-General of the International Commission of Jurists. He has worked on behalf of the United Nations in Haiti and Malawi; and was the driving force behind the establishment of the African Court on Human and People's Rights. Mr Dieng is here in Iraq at the invitation of our colleagues in UNITAD, the United Nations Investigative Team to promote Accountability for crimes committed by Da'esh – which has given us this excellent opportunity to hear his insights on the new United Nations global Strategy and Action Plan on hate speech.

The United Nations' focus on hate speech reflects deep concern about the growth worldwide of hate speech as a vehicle to express and transfer xenophobia, racism and intolerance. Tackling hate speech helps promote peaceful, inclusive societies; helps combat violence against women and minorities and other serious violations of human rights; and plays a key role in countering atrocity crimes and even terrorism. The UN aims to support its member states in addressing the root causes and drivers of hate speech and effectively responding to the impact of hate speech in society. Mr Dieng will speak further on that.

Here in Iraq, the UN Assistance



UNAMI hate speech event ... (continued)

Mission (UNAMI) has compiled its own action plan on combatting hate speech. We are mainstreaming measures to counter hate speech, in line with international human rights norms and standards, into our programmes and activities, working with local stakeholders and interlocutors. We are aware that the causes and drivers of hate speech in Iraq are many. They may include lack of peace and security; political competition and the sectarianism in Iraqi politics; unemployment and economic uncertainty; poor education; weaknesses in the rule of law; societal anxieties related to the loss of cultural values or terrorism or crime; as well as structural root causes of human rights violations, such as discrimination and inequalities between communities or between men and women.

In countering hate speech, we must nonetheless be careful to respect



freedom of opinion and expression. Here in Iraq, we must work to prevent alleged concerns about hate speech being used to justify any limitation (or prohibition) of freedom of expression, a vital feature of a free and democratic society.

Some of you may be aware of UNAMI's current activities to combat hate speech. Such activities are already a core aspect of many of our areas of operation, such as human rights protection; supporting sustainable peace and societal cohesion; countering terrorism and the spread of violent extremism; preventing and addressing gender-based violence; supporting free and fair electoral processes; protection and reintegration of the displaced and refugees; and protection of minorities. I see many opportunities ahead of us to expand these activities. As a few examples, as Iraq prepares for elections, we will be promoting a code of good conduct which will reject the use of hate speech in electoral campaigning. We have a project with young community activists to equip them to express their views, concerns and ideas in a peaceful and constructive manner. We hope to support efforts to strengthen the capacity of security forces to provide protection to communities in a manner that respects human rights, including protection from hate speech. We plan to use our partnerships with media organisations to promote the values of



tolerance and non-discrimination. We will promote discussion on combatting hate speech as part of our consultations on women, peace and security, including in our support to the Second National Action Plan under UN Security Council resolution 1325.

Importantly, the UN recognises that much of the meaningful action to combat hate speech in Iraq must necessarily be undertaken by Iraqi actors, including the government. Our intention therefore is to engage in dialogue with our stakeholders - to shape activities and identify areas where we can offer targeted support to those working to counter hate speech. For that reason, thank you all very much for joining us today: I will be most interested to hear your thoughts and advice on how we can together combat hate speech in Iraq.

Thank you.

“We want to live like other Iraqis” - Roma representatives meet with UNAMI Human Rights Office and IHCHR

Baghdad, 09 March 2020 - Representatives of the 'Roma of Iraq', an ancient ethnic community, took their concerns to the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and the Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights (IHCHR), seeking their support in advocating with the Government to improve their living conditions and guarantee them their rightful place in Iraqi society.

The 'Roma of Iraq', known in Arabic as ghajar, reportedly of ancient Indian origin, have long complained of prejudice, discrimination and poor living conditions. Their exact number is unknown as they, along with other communities, have never been counted based on their ethnicity. Six of their Sheikhs, each representing one of the Roma tribes, met with the UNAMI Human Rights Office (HRO) and the



Office of the IHCHR Commissioner on Racial Discrimination, with the aim to identify the challenges affecting this

community and the support that HRO and IHCHR could give to the Government in addressing their

“We want to live like other Iraqis” - Roma representatives meet with UNAMI Human Rights Office and IHCHR *(continued)*

unfulfilled rights. The most pressing challenges their people face, according to the Sheikhs, include: an unresolved issue regarding their naturalization before 2003 that is still deemed “exceptional” and singles them out from other Iraqis; poor housing facilities in Baghdad and other Governorates caused by the confiscation of their properties given to them by the Government before 2003; systematic denial of employment opportunities on the basis of their ethnicity; lack of political representation at all levels of Government and the bureaucracy that has made it impossible for those who lost their relatives in military service or who died as a result of terrorist acts to

be compensated. The Sheikhs requested HRO and IHCHR to advocate with the Government to allocate them land for housing and to provide them employment to improve their standard of living. They said they have lived in Iraq for centuries and deserve equal opportunities. Roma settlement A taskforce to resolve such issues was created earlier this year, comprising the Co-existence and Societal Peace Committee under the Prime Minister’s Office, IHCHR and two NGOs together with UNAMI. The taskforce is already working on a housing project in Baghdad for the community, with plans underway. The taskforce will partner with the relevant Government entities

to support the project to completion and to tackle other challenges raised.

The Sheikhs were also invited to designate one representative who will join the Minority Rights Working Group established in August 2019. The Working Group advocates for the implementation of the January 2019 recommendations of the UN Committee on Elimination of Racial Discrimination. The latter expressed concern about the Roma having difficulties in accessing employment, health care, housing and education and recommended that Iraq redoubles efforts to improve the integration of Roma into society, including by ensuring access to the above services.

“Looks don’t matter, but a beautiful soul”

Baghdad, 24 March 2020 - Israa, 25, lives with her 13 person family in Al-Khater village, eastern Thi-Qar governorate. Since birth, she has had a benign facial tumour in her right cheek. She underwent several operations to remove it, but sadly all failed.

Her family could not afford additional, costly treatments, and Israa was bullied at school. She had to leave class for two years, but was still ridiculed in the village.

But Israa had a dream. She insisted on returning to school. She worked hard and obtained a diploma in accounting.

The economic situation and lack of job opportunities were not Israa’s only challenges. Prospective employers repeatedly turned her down, based on the way she looked.

When Israa heard about WFP’s School Feeding Programme, she applied for a job with Al-Mortaqa Foundation, WFP’s partner in Thi-Qar. Her first application was unsuccessful. But she



didn’t give up, and applied again. This time, she got the job. Israa prepares meals for children and loads them onto the warehouse trucks, ready to deliver to schools.

“My job may be simple, but I love it. I am able to support my family. I work for the School Feeding Programme and help children get good and healthy food.”

Israa aspires to be successful and set an example for women, including those with disfigurements and disabilities. She wants to inspire everyone, even those who laughed at her, at how she overcame the odds, and is able to work to support her family.

By Nibras Haddad, WFP Field Monitor Team

Former child bride, once sold to pay debts, finds a new start

Kurdistan, Iraq, 1 April 2020 – Intisar* was only 15 years old when her parents forced her into a marriage. She described it as an act of commerce: They sold her to another family to pay off a debt. “It is the worst feeling in the world to be traded off like that by the people who are supposed to protect you,” said the now-37-year-old Intisar, during a recent interview.

Her husband was 25 years her senior, and immediately abusive. He never missed an opportunity to remind her

that she was “just a bargaining chip,” she said.

“He mistreated me for 22 years, and I never dared say a word. He would physically hurt me, beat me for any reason, insult me using the most disrespectful words. I remember one night, he kept hitting me with a cane, screaming at me ‘You are a nobody – I own you. You are worthless.’ I cried every night for 16 years,” she recalled.

Punished for having girls To make matters worse, Intisar became

pregnant three times, and each time she delivered a girl.

Preference for sons is widespread in her community, with daughters often considered a burden while sons are considered a sign of their father’s virility and potential wage earners for the household.

“Giving birth to girls was apparently my ultimate sin. He kept accusing me of being a failure of a woman and would even starve me for a week after I give birth,” she said.

Former child bride, once sold to pay debts, finds a new start *(continued)*

But in the end, it was her daughters who gave her the strength to leave. After years of watching their mother suffer, they intervened.

“My daughters came to me one day and begged me to leave their father. They said they appreciate the sacrifice I did for them but they can’t bear see me in these conditions.”

She thought a lot about what becoming a divorced woman would entail – from the difficult legal process of securing her independence to facing the stigma and possible harassment that can come with being divorced. Starting all over again scared her but she knew that staying was no longer an option.

Her daughters also showed her the path forward.

“It was my daughters who told me about the women’s centre,” she explained, referring to a support facility for women and girls, supported by UNFPA with funding from Norway. “They told me that I should not be embarking this new journey without the proper support and that the only way to move forward with my life is to seek professional advice and be surrounded by women who have similar stories,” Intisar said.

The centre provides a safe space for women and girls to share their fears, hopes and experiences. It also offers

counselling, referrals to health and social services, and case management for survivors of violence, as well as referrals to legal services provided by nearby non-governmental organizations.

It serves roughly 20 to 25 survivors of gender-based violence each month.

A new start

Today, Intisar lives with her daughters and is in the middle of the process of obtaining a divorce.

She has been attending activities at the women’s centre for three months and is receiving psychosocial support there. “I’ve met with the social worker eight times, and she gave me great advice. She made me feel that I deserve a second chance in life,” Intisar said.

She also has a new support network.

“At the centre, I made friends: women who, just like me, are fighting their battles every day. They, too, are survivors of domestic violence. I feel they understand my pain. The centre has become my home and these women have become my family.”

Overall, Intisar is on the road to recovery.

“I am proud of the scars I have on my body. I am proud of having taken a decision to start over again, to forget a heart-breaking past and the pain I carried for years,” she said. “I now know how worthy I am of a decent and happy life.”

*Name changed for privacy and protection



UNESCO stresses importance of safety of journalists amid COVID-19 pandemic

Paris/Baghdad, 2 April 2020 - The UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Communication and Information today voiced concerns about the safety of journalists when reporting on the global COVID-19 health crisis.

“The role of journalists in informing the public during the ongoing crisis is absolutely pivotal,” said Chakchouk, emphasizing that journalistic work can save lives in the current emergency situation.

“Journalists’ physical and psychological safety should come first,” stated Chakchouk. Media organizations should make sure that journalists are trained on sanitary precautions and equipped with protective material. When sending journalists to report on the virus, their safety must be a priority.

He also recalled that states and duty bearers should ensure safety of journalists in covering the health crisis and its social implications, as per

international standards on freedom of expression.

Aside from concerns about physical safety, journalists are working under considerable psychological stress. While some journalists are working under the pressure of covering the constantly evolving situation, others are worried about job security.

Freelance journalists are especially vulnerable in terms of physical and psychological safety, as they do not always have access to the same resources and support as staff journalists.

Chakchouk affirmed that press freedom is now more important than ever and called on all Member States to ensure that journalists can report on COVID-19 without interference. “In times of health crises, the importance of accurate and reliable journalism cannot be overstated”, he said.

The UNESCO Assistant Director-General also underlined the importance

of ensuring an enabling environment for press freedom in order for journalists to report independently on the crisis, and he encouraged governments to increase the amount of information available to the public.

“The UNESCO Director-General’s report on the safety of journalists and the issue of impunity, to be launched later this year, will highlight the issue of protecting journalists during this pandemic,” announced Chakchouk.

UNESCO and its partners are developing a series of initiatives, to be launched in the coming weeks, to address these concerns.

UNESCO promotes the safety of journalists through global awareness-raising, capacity building and a range of actions, notably in the framework of the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity. Since 1993, at least 193 journalists were killed in Iraq, according to numbers confirmed by UNESCO.

UNESCO stresses importance of safety of journalists amid COVID-19 pandemic *(continued)*

According to NGOs, the numbers are even higher, with up to 50% of journalist killings worldwide during the ten years between 2006 and 2016 taking place in Iraq. Since then, violence against journalists has gone down, with 9 journalists killed between 2017 and 2019. This is partly thanks to measures taken by the government.

However, this year there have already been 6 media workers killed (UNESCO figures). This includes Ahmed Abd al-Samad and Safaa Ghali, who were tragically killed by gunfire from a moving vehicle while covering the protests in Basra in January. Iraq is at

risk of again becoming a place where journalists should fear for their lives. That is why the Dutch embassy supports UNESCO and Free Press Unlimited (FPU) to improve the protection of journalists in Iraq.

Under the project, UNESCO and FPU have spearheaded the implementation of the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity, in close cooperation with the Iraqi authorities, media representatives, as well as national and international specialized NGOs. The project has supported the Iraqi National Committee for the Safety of

Journalists and the Issue of Impunity, which was formed at the order of the Prime Minister in 2016. A Special Investigative Unit for the Protection of Journalists has been set up.

In October, the Netherlands and UNESCO host the World Press Freedom Conference, which provides an opportunity to journalists, civil society representatives, national authorities, academics and the broader public to discuss emerging challenges to press freedom and journalists' safety and work together on identifying solutions. This year's theme is 'Journalism without Fear or Favour'.

UNHCR held a specialized training on working with LGBTI persons in the humanitarian context for the United Nations and partner's staff in Baghdad

Baghdad, 7 April 2020 - UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency stands up for equal rights and fair treatment for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual and Intersex (LGBTI) people everywhere. Fair treatment and protection from violence and abuse are things that many of us take for granted. Yet for millions of LGBTI people, justice and safety is far from guaranteed, particularly under displacement scenarios.

Last week, UNHCR held a specialized training on working with LGBTI persons in the humanitarian context for the United Nations and partner's staff in Baghdad to sensitize them on sexual orientation and gender identity vis a vis our pairs and persons of concern.

Understanding challenges faced by LGBTI individuals is key to ensure their adequate inclusion in all humanitarian and development

response plans. Creating a safe space where every individual feels included and valued can unlock the unique potential of each one of us.



Open Letter from the Regional Directors of UNDP, UNWOMEN, UNFPA and ESCWA in the Arab states region to governments in the region

Baghdad, 10 April 2020 - At the beginning of this week, the United Nations Secretary-General issued an appeal to stop violence everywhere including violence in the home. As Directors of the four United Nations Agencies who have been working together to highlight the importance of Gender Justice and Equality before the law[1] as a clear path towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, we call upon states in the Arab states region to respond to the Secretary-General's appeal.

Many countries of the region have implemented strict movement

restrictions, including curfews, to address the COVID-19 pandemic. At the same time, we need to be conscious of the need to 'do no harm'. We have seen reductions in services for survivors of Domestic Violence across the region and, in some countries, we have witnessed large increases in the numbers of calls to hotlines or other support services.

We urge governments to strengthen already existing services and to provide alternative solutions to ensure the security and safety of women and girls inside their homes and to assist survivors during this time, including

augmenting hotline access, ensuring remote case management, and providing essential health, social services and justice and policing, as courts in some countries of the region have been forced to close. Inclusive solutions must be designed to reach the women furthest behind and be survivor-centred, while referral pathways should be updated to reflect the current situation.

The Arab States are host to large numbers of refugees and internally displaced persons as well as vulnerable women migrant workers. Women and girls in these settings face multiple

Open Letter from the Regional Directors of UNDP, UNWOMEN, UNFPA and ESCWA in the Arab states region to governments in the region *(continued)*

burdens and risks in accessing services. More efforts are needed to ensure their safety and well-being.

We, the regional directors of UNDP, UN Women, UNFPA and the Executive Secretary of ESCWA urge governments in the region to ensure that their message on zero tolerance to Domestic Violence is highlighted in their public announcements and policies, including a commitment to increase investment in services and organisations that provide services to survivors of domestic violence. With support from the four United Nations agencies, they are also invited to learn from emerging good practices in the region and worldwide.

- Now is the time to put in place accessible alternative support services, such as hotlines or psycho-social counselling, to reach all Domestic Violence survivors, while ensuring their safety. This can be done through alternative facilities, such as pharmacies and selected grocery stores

that are open.

- Now is the time to send out the message to all citizens that ALL forms of violence, including abuse of women and children in the home, will not be tolerated and to provide support to those struggling in times of restricted movement.

- Now is the time to provide safe accommodation for women in need.

- Now is the time to ensure that responding to and combatting Domestic Violence is prioritized among local and national security and justice systems.

- Now is the time to ensure that women are included in essential decision making about the response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Now is the time to ensure that essential health provision for maternity services is maintained, in addition to other sexual and reproductive services. The COVID-19 pandemic is not only a health crisis; it is also a crisis of care. Globally women represent more than 70 per cent of all health care workers

and in the home, women are predominantly the carers of the elderly, people with disabilities and children. With more people quarantined at home, the burden of unpaid care for women will most likely increase.

Therefore, we call on all governments in the region to assess and respond to the needs of all care workers, and to ensure that essential services for survivors of domestic violence are maintained and accessible to all women and girls. Ensuring gender justice and equality before the law remains a vital path to implementing the SDGs and protecting all people, everywhere.

Dr Mehrinaz El Awady, Cluster Leader Gender Justice, Population and Inclusive Development UNESCWA
Dr. Moez Doraid, Regional Director a.i., UN Women Arab States
Sarah Poole, Regional Director a.i. UNDP Arab States
Dr. Luay Shabaneh, Regional Director UNFPA, Arab States



UN in Iraq raises the alarm: Time to endorse the anti-domestic violence law

Baghdad, 16 April 2020 - The UN in Iraq urges the Iraqi Parliament to speed up the endorsement of the Anti-Domestic Violence Law amid alarming reports of a rise in gender-based and domestic violence cases perpetrated across the country, especially with increased household tensions as a result of the confinement due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) offices in Iraq express their concern at the rising number in domestic violence cases

during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Over the last week, multiple reports emerged of the rape of a woman with special needs, spousal abuse, immolation and self-immolation as well as self-inflicted injuries due to spousal abuse, sexual harassment of minors, and suicide due to domestic abuse among other crimes. Such crimes raise the alarm for the urgency to endorse the Anti-Domestic Violence Law in Iraq.

The UN in Iraq calls upon authorities to ensure that the judicial systems continue to prosecute abusers, invest more in hotline and online services, support the role of civil society organisations, keep shelter doors open for women fleeing abuse and punish perpetrators of any gender-based

violence.

As United Nations Secretary-General, António Guterres said, "Many women under lockdown for COVID-19 face violence where they should be safest: in their own homes. Today I appeal for peace in homes around the world. I urge all governments to put women's safety first as they respond to the pandemic."

We reiterate the Secretary General's call and ask the authorities in Iraq to prioritise the protection of women and children as part of their COVID-19 response.

The adoption of a law on Domestic Violence will help to ensure that perpetrators of gender-based violence in Iraq, such as those who carried out the heinous incidents seen in recent

UN in Iraq raises the alarm: Time to endorse the anti-domestic violence law *(continued)*

past, are held accountable. Violence against women and girls is a crime and should not go unpunished. The women and girls of Iraq deserve better.

UNFPA Representative in Iraq, Dr Oluremi Sogunro
OHCHR Representative in Iraq, Danielle Bell

UNICEF Representative in Iraq, Hamida Ramadhani Lasseko
UN Women Representative in Iraq, Dina Zorba



UNITAD

President Salih receives Special Adviser Khan

Baghdad, 20 February 2020 - In his meeting today with H.E. Barham Salih, President of the Republic of Iraq, Special Adviser Karim Khan welcomed the President's continued strong support for UNITAD's work in holding Da'esh criminals accountable for their crimes. They discussed the importance of commencing the return of identified Yazidi remains to Kojo, and underlined the need to move forward in adopting legislation to allow for the prosecution of Da'esh perpetrators for crimes that may amount to crimes against humanity, war crimes, and genocide in Iraqi courts.



UNITAD welcomes the announcement by the Medico-Legal and Mass Grave Directorates

Baghdad, 28 February 2020 - UNITAD welcomes the announcement by the Medico-Legal and Mass Grave Directorates that the remains of 62 Yazidi victims were identified and can

finally be returned to their families in Kojo. As additional remains are identified, Special Adviser Karim A. Khan stresses how essential it is that all

family members be informed in advance, and added that these remains should be returned as soon as they are identified.

USG Dieng meet President Salih

Baghdad, 1 March 2020 - President of Iraq, Barham Salih, received United Nations Under-Secretary-General, Adama Dieng, UN Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, and Special Adviser Karim A. Khan. Together they reaffirmed that victims of ISIL crimes from all communities must be recognized and supported. President Salih underlined his commitment to continue to support both.





Baghdad, 1 March 2020 - Special Adviser Karim Khan and USG Adama Dieng met with Judge Faiq Zidan, Chairman of the Supreme Judiciary Council. They emphasized the crucial role of accountability in fostering long-term peace and noted the excellent cooperation between Iraq and UNITAD in this pursuit.



Baghdad, 2 March 2020 – Under-Secretary-General Dieng and Special Adviser Karim Khan were received by Foreign Minister Mohammed Al Hakim today. They discussed UNITAD's role in delivering justice for victims and the imperative of ensuring the needs of survivors and impacted communities are placed at the heart of all accountability efforts.



Baghdad, 2 March 2020 - USG Dieng with Special Adviser Khan met with His Eminence Archbishop Nicodemus Daoud M. Sharaf of the Syrian Orthodox Archdiocese in Mosul, Kirkuk and the Kurdistan region.

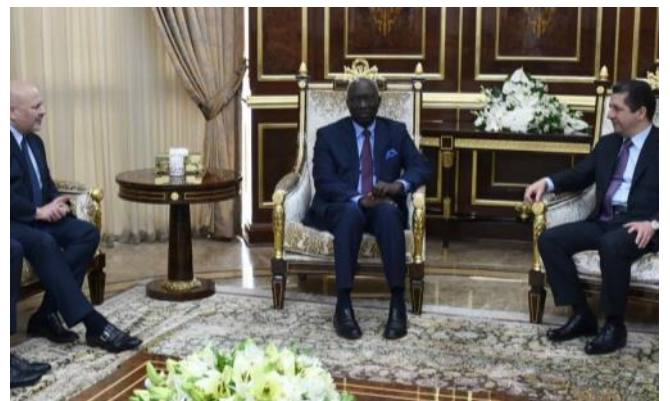
They agreed on the need to engage the Orthodox and broader Christian community as partners in UNITAD's work and that support should be provided to all survivors of ISIL crimes. The USG also emphasized the need to address the needs of all vulnerable communities in Iraq as a basis for long term peace and stability.



Dohuk, 3 March 2020 – Under-Secretary-General Dieng and Special Adviser Karim Khan began their second day in Dohuk, with a meeting with Yazidi survivors of Da'esh crimes at Khanke refugee camp. SA Khan underlined the commitment of UNITAD to support efforts to hold those responsible accountable and emphasized the courage of those coming forward with their accounts. USG Dieng emphasized the role of education in building common understanding across communities, serving as an effective tool in preventing the reoccurrence of such crimes. Dieng and Khan also met with His Holiness Baba Sheikh Khurto Hajji. They honored the perseverance of the Yazidi community to seek and obtain justice as a strong act of resilience in response to ISIL crimes



Erbil, 4 March 2020 - In meetings with President Nechirvan Barzani and Prime Minister Masrour Barzani of the Kurdistan Region, Under-Secretary-General Adama Dieng and Special Adviser Karim Khan of UNITAD emphasized accountability and inclusion as essential preconditions for peace for all minorities in Iraq.



Iraqi religious authorities adopt Interfaith Statement on the victims of ISIL

Baghdad, 9 March 2020 - United Nations Under-Secretary-General (USG) and Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, Adama Dieng, and Special Adviser (SA) and Head of the United Nations Investigative Team to promote accountability for crimes committed by Da'esh/ISIL in Iraq, Karim A. A. Khan Q.C., commended religious leaders for endorsing an Interfaith Statement on the Victims of ISIL.

The Statement followed extensive engagement with religious authorities by UNITAD which continued during USG Dieng's visit to Iraq between 1–6 March. The statement is the first time Iraqi religious leaders have formally endorsed a common statement on the need for justice and the rights of victims and survivors of ISIL. USG Dieng and SA Khan applauded its adoption by His Excellency Sheikh Dr. Ahmed Hassan al-Taha Chairman of the Iraq Jurisprudence Council, His Eminence Sheikh Abdul Mahdi Al-Karbala'i, His Holiness Baba Sheikh Khurto Hajji Ismail Yazidi Supreme Spiritual Leader, and His Beatitude Louis Raphaël I Sako, Patriarch of Babylon of the Chaldeans and Head of the Chaldean Catholic Church.

In the Statement, religious leaders repudiate and condemn the violence of ISIL as completely contrary to their respective faiths. It also underscores that members of all religions across Iraq have been impacted by the crimes of Da'esh, and that all survivors must be supported in their efforts to continue their lives within their communities. The Statement also recognizes the many acts of heroism in which members of their respective communities rose up in defense of those from other religious and ethnic backgrounds.

USG Dieng and SA Khan were particularly pleased that the religious leaders spoke with one voice in acknowledging the tremendous suffering members of their

communities had endured as a result of sexual and gender-based violence and in underlining their commitment to ensure that survivors of such crimes are fully supported and do not suffer from any form of stigmatization. Noting the particular suffering endured by children impacted by the crimes of ISIL, the religious leaders recognized that such children are blameless and should benefit from love and kindness. The critical importance of ensuring that ISIL members are held individually responsible for crimes committed, through fair trials in a court of law, as well as the investigation of cases of those disappeared and abducted by ISIL, is further underlined in the Statement. In this regard, all religious authorities expressed their strong collective support for the work of UNITAD. USG Dieng and SA Khan emphasized that the collective endorsement of this statement reflected the religious leaders' joint effort in advancing accountability for crimes committed by ISIL and prioritizing the need for justice and accountability – as well as empathy and solidarity for all victims. They stressed the crucial role religious leaders can play in fostering a peaceful and inclusive society and noted their essential role in ensuring effective support to the survivors of ISIL, countering violent ideology, mistrust and fear, and in bringing people together on the common ground of humanity.

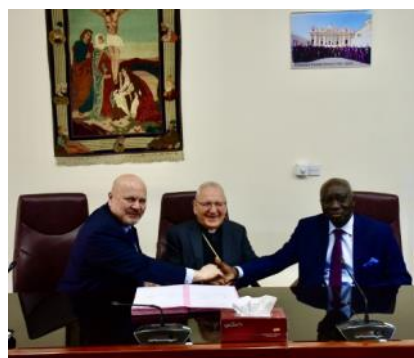
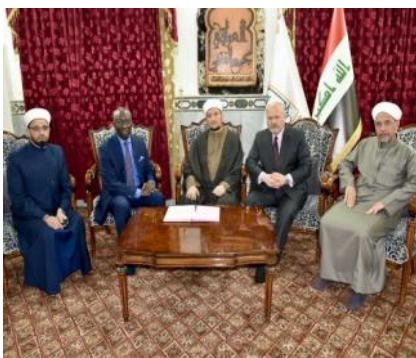
SA Khan stated “This Statement constitutes an extremely important moment, representing as it does, a coming together of leaders from the Christian, Sunni, Shia and Yazidi communities, around universal values represented and promoted by their respective faiths. Justice for the victims of ISIL, support for survivors and an emphasis on inclusion and support in preference to exclusion, stigmatization and derision are important elements to ensure support for survivors – whether

men, women or children. I am particularly grateful to the religious leaders for reiterating their unequivocal support for UNITAD and its mandate to vindicate the rights of victims and survivors to justice.”

USG Dieng stated “This Interfaith Statement constitutes a strong symbol of unity and a renewed call to deepen efforts to address concerns from all citizens of Iraq in their quest for a future together and in peace. It also represents a strong endorsement from these religious communities of the imperative to hold ISIL members responsible for their crimes”.

Reflecting his engagement with religious authorities across Iraq during the visit, as well as the statement made by Sheikh Ahmed Hasan al-Taha upon signature, USG Dieng further noted that efforts were also needed to ensure that accountability is delivered for all crimes committed against members of all communities in Iraq. He noted that such work would serve to strengthen the basis for stable and peaceful relations across Iraq, and that in his capacity as Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, he will continue to engage with national governments, UN partners and other actors to promote justice for all victims as well as recognition of their suffering. Upon endorsing the Statement during a meeting with USG Dieng and SA Khan on 6 March, His Eminence Sheikh Abdul Mahdi Al-Karbala'i described the meeting as “an historic day” and he called upon other religious communities to also endorse the Statement. In the same vein, Cardinal Sako proposed a follow-up conference to broaden the endorsement for the Statement by other religious communities and build upon it.

USG Dieng and SA Khan noted that the adoption of the Statement represented the beginning of a process of further engagement with other religious leaders in Iraq and both emphasized that the statement



Iraqi religious authorities adopt Interfaith Statement on the victims of ISIL *(continued)*

remains open for signature and that any and all faith leaders who wish to sign or endorse the Statement and implement the principles reflected within it are welcome to do so.

Baghdad, 20 March 2020 – Under-Secretary-General Adama Dieng and Special Adviser Karim A.A. Khan QC today applauded the endorsement of the “Interfaith Statement on the Victims of ISIL” by the leadership of the Kaka’i community in Iraq.

Upon signature of the Interfaith Statement by Mr. Sardar Arimand Fattah Agha, of the Kaka’I Community, Under-Secretary-General Dieng and Special Adviser Khan emphasized the landmark status of the Statement in collectively condemning and repudiating the violence of Da’esh. Senior religious leaders in Iraq emphasized that the ideology of hatred espoused by Da’esh and crimes committed are contrary to the core principles of their individual faiths and basic tenets of humanity. Under-Secretary-General Dieng and Special

Adviser Khan further noted that the Statement, for the first time, provided a common commitment by religious communities across Iraq to ensure that all victims of ISIL, including those impacted by sexual and gender-based violence as well as children affected by their crimes, are fully supported and do not suffer from any stigmatization.

Mr. Sardar Arimand Fattah Agha, of the Kaka’I community joins other religious leaders who have endorsed the Statement, including His Beatitude Louis Raphael I Sako, Patriarch of Babylon of the Chaldeans and Head of the Chaldean Catholic Church, His Eminence Sheikh Abdul Mahdi Al-Karbala’i, Representative of the Shia religious authority in Karbala, His Excellency Sheikh Dr. Ahmed Hassan al-Taha, Chairman of the Iraq Jurisprudence Council, and His

in condemning ISIL crimes & underlining Iraq’s commitment to support all survivors in Iraq.

Holiness Baba Sheikh Kurto Hajji Ismail, Yazidi Supreme Spiritual Leader.

The Interfaith Statement was agreed following extensive engagement with religious authorities by Special Adviser Khan as well as the visit of Under-Secretary-General Dieng between 1-6 March.

Under-Secretary-General Dieng and Special Adviser Khan emphasized that the Interfaith Statement remains a living document, and they called upon all religious leaders in Iraq to sign and endorse this historic document. Doing so would demonstrate again the essential unity of all faiths in denouncing Da’esh acts that constitute international crimes and underscore the need for justice and support for the victims and survivors of these crimes.

Inter-faith Statement on the Victims of Da’esh

We, religious leaders from communities across Iraq, underline our common commitment to support survivors of crimes committed by Da’esh and ensure their effective reintegration into our respective communities, thereby strengthening the basis for healing and reconciliation in Iraq.

Upon this meeting, held under the auspices of the United Nations Special Adviser and Head of the United Nations Investigative Team to promote accountability for crimes committed by Da’esh/Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (UNITAD), Mr. Karim Asad Ahmad Khan Q.C., and the United Nations Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, Mr. Adama Dieng, we:

Condemn the violence of Da’esh as contrary to the core principles of our religious faiths as well as the fundamental values of humanity;

Underline that members of all religions across Iraq have been impacted by the crimes of Da’esh and that all survivors must be supported in their efforts to continue their lives within their communities;

Note that crimes of Da’esh also gave rise to acts of heroism in which members of our respective communities

rose up in defense of those from different religious and ethnic backgrounds;

Recognize the tremendous suffering endured by those members of our communities that have been victims of crimes of sexual and gender-based violence and underline our commitment to ensure that survivors of such crimes are fully supported and do not suffer from any form of stigmatization;

Emphasize that all children impacted by the crimes of Da’esh, are innocent children of God. We underline that, whatever pain these children have suffered, they are blameless and should benefit from love and kindness. We further recognize the suffering of those communities whose children were abducted by Da’esh and call for all those taken to be returned to their rightful families;

Recognize that justice will only be delivered for victims of Da’esh by ensuring that individual members of Da’esh are held responsible for their crimes, as well as ensuring the return of displaced persons who were forced to flee as a result of the crimes of Da’esh and in this regard underline our strong collective support for the work of the United Nations Investigative Team to

promote accountability for crimes committed by Da’esh, pursuant to United Nations Security Council resolution 2379 (2017);

Underline that the exposure of Da’esh crimes in a court of law is essential, as well as investigating the cases of disappeared persons and those abducted by Da’esh, not only as a means of delivering justice for its victims, but also as a tool in promoting understanding of the severity and scale of its violence and thereby preventing future revisionism;

Underline our common commitment and our collective stamina in efforts to promote justice, tolerance, reconciliation and forgiveness as the most effective way of combating the legacy of Da’esh crimes in Iraq and a key step in preventing the reemergence of the causes that might lead to the recurrence of Da’esh or other similar groups.



Special Adviser Karim A. A. Khan QC meets Kingdom of Belgium's Ambassador to Iraq

Baghdad, 10 March 2020 - Special Adviser, Karim A. A. Khan QC, met with H.E. Filip Vanden Bulcke, Kingdom of Belgium's Ambassador to Iraq, this afternoon. The Special Adviser took the opportunity to brief the ambassador on the ongoing work of UNITAD in the field, particularly with regards to its investigations and efforts to collect evidence in relation to the crimes of Da'esh in Iraq.

This meeting touched upon ways UNITAD can provide support to the Belgium authorities in relation to their national effort to hold Da'esh suspects accountable. Ongoing discussions with

regards to the provision of expert Belgium support to the Investigative Team was also highlighted.

The Special Adviser presented Ambassador Bulcke with a copy of the landmark interfaith statement that Christian, Shia, Sunni and Yazidi religious leaders adopted and endorsed on support for victims of ISIL.

He highlighted the significance of the unified manner in which different religious leaders came together to denounce ISIL ideology as absolutely repugnant to the core religious teachings that they represent.

He also noted that through the

statement, religious leaders underlined how essential it is to hold ISIL members accountable for their crimes as a prerequisite to stability.



The European Union and UNITAD sign Agreement to support digitization of evidence of ISIL crimes in Iraq

Baghdad, 7 April 2020 - The United Nation Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ISIL (UNITAD) and the European Union (EU) announced today the signing of a Contribution Agreement through which the EU will fund a project to support the digitization and archiving of evidentiary materials of ISIL crimes held by Iraqi authorities.

The EU's contribution of 3.5 million EUR to this project represents the largest extrabudgetary contribution received by UNITAD to date.

Through this project, UNITAD will provide technical assistance and support to national authorities and those in the Kurdistan Region, to establish a comprehensive, indexed inventories of evidence relevant to ISIL crimes committed in Iraq.

This will strengthen the evidentiary basis for UNITAD and Iraqi national authorities in developing comprehensive case-files supporting domestic proceedings brought against ISIL members for crimes that may constitute crimes against humanity, war crimes and genocide, in line with international standards.

UNITAD is implementing this project with support from the government of Iraq and in consultation with the Iraqi National Coordinating Committee. As an initial step, UNITAD will conduct detailed mapping of existing evidentiary material, before developing a detailed digitization plan.

Special Adviser Karim A. A. Khan QC, Head of UNITAD, thanked the EU for its generous support and underlined "The preservation and organization of evidentiary material in relation to ISIL

crimes will serve to deepen the evidential foundations available for ISIL prosecutions. By establishing a comprehensive documentary record of these acts, we also contribute to global efforts to promote peace and security by ensuring that the ideologically bankrupt nature of ISIL is exposed."

The Special Adviser added that doing all this will help ensure justice and that the gravity of these crimes – and the sacrifices made by Iraqi citizens – are not forgotten. "The victims, survivors – and indeed humanity – deserve no less. Accordingly, I record my gratitude to the EU for its generous contribution and to the Government of Iraq for its support of this project" he concluded.

The EU funding for the project will run for 18 months, starting on March 26, 2020.

The Netherlands continues to support accountability for ISIS crimes in Iraq through its support to UNITAD

Baghdad, 8 April 2020 - The Netherlands continues to support accountability for ISIS crimes in Iraq through its support to UNITAD. This month, the Dutch contribution for witness & victim protection and support was renewed. The support from the Netherlands, given since 2018, enabled the establishment of a Witness Protection and Support Unit. In addition, the Netherlands has provided a specific contribution for outreach to Yazidi communities, late 2019. The new contributions total EUR 700,000.

Ambassador Eric Strating met with UNITAD Special Adviser Karim Khan last month to discuss the work of UNITAD and the new Dutch

contribution.

"The horrible crimes of ISIS cannot go unpunished", said Ambassador Strating. "Accountability is key, not just for the victims, but for Iraq as a whole, in order to close this chapter of its history and prevent a repeat. UNITAD does crucial work in gathering and storing evidence for trials. The Netherlands will continue to provide support for this effort".

"I am grateful for the continued support from The Netherlands". Special Adviser Khan added. "Support from the Netherlands has augmented the ability of UNITAD to implement a victim-centered approach in its criminal investigations, including the hiring of

specialized clinical psychologists to prepare and help vulnerable victims and witnesses during interviews in line with international standards".



A message of solidarity and support from UNITAD Special Adviser

Baghdad, 10 April 2020 - At this moment, the world is facing an unprecedented challenge, and governments are working to address it by adopting various measures and interventions to keep their citizens safe.

The alarming rate in which the COVID-19 virus has spread and its deadly impact are placing exceptional demands on Iraq and countries around the world.

My heart goes out to those directly impacted by the spread of the COVID-19 virus, and the disruption it is having on their livelihoods and that of their families and communities.

I am particularly concerned about the disproportionate impact this pandemic

is having on the survivors of ISIL, who continue to suffer in various ways from the crimes inflicted upon them and their communities. My Team and I express solidarity with these survivors as well as our heartfelt prayers.

UNITAD is complying in full with the measures the Government of Iraq and the KRG have put in place to restrict the spread of the virus, while harnessing technology to continue our investigations and remain in contact with survivors, so as to discharge our mandate as effectively as possible.

We look forward to the day when the pandemic recedes thus allowing restrictions to be lifted. Our thoughts and prayers for good health go out to the survivors and victims of ISIL and,



indeed, to all the people of Iraq. My Team and I remain committed to fulfill the promise made to them of justice and holding the perpetrators of ISIL crimes accountable.

Humanitarian

Property and land dispute cases in Ninewa Governorate are being peacefully solved through mediation



Baghdad, 1 March 2020 - Outstanding result of over 80% of cases registered to solve property and land disputes in Hamdanyia and Telkeif districts of Ninewa Governorate have been successfully solved through mediation process, facilitating reconciliation and peacebuilding in the region.

UN-Habitat, in partnership with Caritas Czech Republic, implemented an initiative in these two districts titled "Mediation and Peaceful Resolution of Housing, Land and Property Disputes", which ran from July 2019 to February 2020.

During the closing ceremony on 20 February 2020 in Hamdanyia to mark the successful completion of the initiative, Mr. Muslim Qazimi, UN-Habitat's Housing, Land and Property Rights Coordinator, thanked local authorities for "their support and trust

throughout the process that have contributed to build valuable institutional knowledge and capacity in mediation and social cohesion in communities where mediation was not a practice in the past."

Targeting housing, land and property disputes, and with a special focus on the support to ethnic and religious minorities, mediation is one of the most innovative mechanisms in Iraq that aims at empowering members of the community to solve their conflicts in an amicable way.

For the first time in Iraq, 14 young people, including 6 females, from the local communities have successfully completed a specialized training on alternative mechanisms of conflict resolution also known as mediation based on international standards and became certified Community Mediators. As a result of the successful training and despite the challenges that mediators faced while working on diverse property dispute cases, the achievements were remarkable and the positive impact in the communities is evident with 286 out of 343 received cases solved with support from the project.

During the ceremony, the Community Mediators shared their stories and challenges faced throughout the process, describing the difficulty to explain the new mediation approach to the community members as the hardest part. Another big challenge for them at the beginning was to explain how

peaceful resolution of conflict works, what are their roles when addressing a dispute, and what are the benefit for all involved parties. Female Mediators were also concerned about how the community would perceive them, with some even worried that their own families would not be supportive.

"The professional training that we received improved my self-confidence and communication skills. It also helped me to be more courageous. As a result, I knew how to deal with challenges during cases applying the knowledge and skills acquired from the amazing international mediator who trained us," said Saly Mattu Bham, one of the 14 Community Mediators.

Both male and female Mediators worked closely to address any gender-related perceptions and show that they were all working as equals in a team. As for the families, they are all now the Mediators' main supporters.

The achievements of the Community Mediators are even more valuable knowing that they were addressing complicated cases in very heterogeneous communities, while they themselves come from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds.

Trained to apply international standards on mediation, and along with very clear principles of neutrality and impartiality, Community Mediators have in a short time earned people's trust, which allowed them to address conflicts that could not be solved through other channels.

IOM Iraq extends support to help IDPs overcome their challenges, and contribute to stable and safe communities

Dohuk, 1 March 2020 - On 25 February, Better World Organization for Community Development hosted a motivational panel for IDPs in Kabarto 2 camp, Dohuk Governorate. The panel included women and youth speakers from both IDP and host communities, who shared stories about their challenges and their personal successes. This was done to encourage and motivate youth and women in the camp to become active community members, while they are still living in displacement. There are around 350,000 persons living in protracted displacement in camps across Duhok Governorate; some face mental health problems due to accumulated stress and family or community tensions. During the event a small exhibition

displayed paintings, photographs and books, while a band with members from the IDP community performed for the audience.

The motivational panel was organized with IOM Iraq's support, and funded by the Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance.



Greenhouses - a Quick Impact Project from UNHCR that supports refugees and the host community

Sulaymaniyah, 2 March 2020 - In Sulaymaniyah, 23 greenhouses were handed over to refugees at the Arbat refugee camp.

The greenhouses make available to the local market fresh vegetables.

A Quick Impact Project from UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency that supports refugees and the host community.

Equipped with seeds and a drip irrigation system, these refugees are supplying the local market with fresh vegetables and providing for their families.



UN-Habitat to provide critical support to 6,000 out-of-camp displaced Iraqis in the Fallujah Sub-districts of Al-Garma, Al Saqlawiyah and Markaz Fallujah

Baghdad, 4 March 2020 - In three Fallujah sub-districts, Al-Garma, Al Saqlawiyah and Markaz Fallujah, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) and its partner, the Engineering Association for the Development and Environment (EADE), will provide help for 6,000 struggling Iraqis to improve their living conditions.

Displaced Iraqi families and other vulnerable people living in critical shelter conditions suffer from a lack of dignity, safety, security, privacy and protection from harsh weather conditions such as the recent abnormal snowfall in some areas of Iraq.

This project will help displaced Iraqis living outside of IDP camps, to improve

their living situation by providing the means to upgrade and repair their basic shelters.

The Iraqis with the highest needs, and who do not have the resources to improve their situation, will be identified through a socio-economic vulnerability assessment. Following the assessment, non-food item (NFI) kits and shelter repair kits will be provided, helping these families to repair their homes and regain a sense of dignity.

UN-Habitat would like to thank the donors that generously fund the Iraq Humanitarian Fund (IHF), its partner the Engineering Association for the Development and Environment (الجمعية الهندسية للتطوير و البنية). the Global Shelter Cluster, the United Nations Office for

the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (مكتب الأمم المتحدة لتنسيق الشؤون الإنسانية) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR Iraq) for the provision of NFI kits.



UNHCR welcomes funding from Japan to assist vulnerable displaced persons in Iraq

Baghdad, 5 March 2020 - UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, welcomes the generous contribution of USD 5 million from the Government and people of Japan to protect and assist internally displaced persons (IDPs), returnees, and refugees across Iraq. This brings Japan's total contribution to Iraq during the past six years to USD 100 million.

With Japan's support, UNHCR will ensure the provision of legal assistance to up to 6,000 internally displaced individuals and 2,800 Syrian refugees, along with improved protection monitoring and enhanced access to civil documentation, as well as with psychosocial counselling and strengthened prevention and response activities for sexual and gender-based violence.

H.E. Mr. Hashimoto, Ambassador of Japan to the Republic of Iraq, expressed Japan's commitment to providing assistance to vulnerable displaced individuals in Iraq and emphasized, "Japan has recently decided new assistance package for Iraq amounting to USD 41 million

including this project as assistance for IDPs, returnees and Syrian refugees. With this package, the total amount of Japan's assistance to the people affected by the crisis reaches USD 540 million since 2014. I hope that the assistance from the Government and people of Japan will help provide necessary services to the vulnerable people in need."

"The Government of Japan has been one of UNHCR's most important contributors in recent years. The longstanding and ongoing cooperation between Japan and UNHCR has enabled the operation to continue providing protection and humanitarian assistance to thousands of vulnerable displaced families in Iraq. This assistance shows the strong and unwavering commitment of Japan to address the needs of displaced populations in Iraq as the country works towards stabilisation and recovery. With ongoing support, we will continue to assist and protect those affected by displacement." said Philippa Candler, UNHCR Acting Representative in Iraq.



While the situation in Iraq has notably improved during the past years and the country is steadily transitioning and advancing into a new post-conflict phase, thousands of vulnerable displaced families remain in dire need of humanitarian assistance. With over 1.4 million displaced Iraqis, 4.6 million returnees, and 288,000 refugees, needs are huge and ongoing assistance is essential to continue ensuring a stable and peaceful recovery.

UN-Habitat assisting female-headed households



Baghdad, 10 March 2020 - Malia is a widow from Al Bohishma neighbourhood in the rural town of Yathrib, Governorate of Salah Al Din. She struggles on a daily basis to support her six children, one of whom was badly injured in the recent fighting that devastated this area and left him permanently disabled. Malia is thankful because her home was recently connected by UN-HABITAT to a new potable water network extension and their severely damaged house is among over 100 houses in Yathrib assessed and selected for rehabilitation

this year, out of which 20 per cent are occupied by female-headed households. "My husband and my three sons were martyred during the ISIL occupation," says Malia, "I now live with four daughters and two sons and we are looking forward to our home being rehabilitated soon".

The upgrading of the water network and rehabilitation of houses in Yathrib Sub-District are part of the area-based set of integrated projects being undertaken under the EU-funded programme 'Supporting Recovery and Stability in Iraq through Local

Development', implemented by UNDP in partnership with UN-Habitat.

Nadefa, a 45-year-old single mother with five children, from Sinjar, during the recent war was left without a husband and without a house. She did her best to support her children, but living in a burned down house was devastating. Now, the family's living conditions are improving after their house has been selected and is being rehabilitated by UN-Habitat among other 199 houses in Sinjar alone, out of which 26 houses are occupied by female-headed households.

The rehabilitation work is undertaken within the programme titled "Strengthening the Long-Term Resilience of Subnational Authorities in countries affected by the Syrian and Iraqi Crises" funded by the EU Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian Crisis, the 'Madad Fund', and implemented by UNDP and UN-Habitat. Over 950 houses in Erbil, Dohuk, Sumel, Mosul and Sinjar have been selected for rehabilitation through the Socio-Economic Vulnerability Assessment Tool SEVAT based on the level of damage of the houses and the vulnerability of target refugees, IDPs and host community members.

World Food Programme continues implementation of its School Feeding programme in Iraq

Baghdad, 12 March 2020 - 12 March is the International School Feeding Day!

Better nourished children can focus on learning in school and are at lower risk of developing poor health conditions. WFP's School Feeding Programme launched in December for the academic year 2019-2020. It has expanded to 330,000 schoolchildren in over 1,000 schools across 11 governorates of Iraq. WFP appreciates and celebrates the success of the programme in collaboration with the Ministries of Education and Health, who have made School Feeding possible!

And here are few stories from Iraq.

One of the heroes of our story today is Yusuf. He and his younger siblings lost their father at an early age, five years ago. They suffer extreme poverty due to a lack of breadwinners in the family. Their mother long since emigrated and their stepmom had begun to take care of them. After a while, she too left and the boys moved to their late father's mud hut, on the outskirts of the city.

Yusuf is approaching 11 years old. He studies in the 3rd grade of primary school, but was going to leave school for two years, because of his family's dire living conditions. Yusuf and his brothers Ammar and Hamza have become the breadwinners for their two younger sisters.

As their mud house was isolated and they had no one older to protect them, they became fearful and uncertain, and decided to move to the middle of the city, to a rental house despite their financial hardship. "This was so we could feel safe and secure," recounts Yusuf. Then the school year began, and Yusuf and his brothers were present for several days, but then disappeared, prompting the school staff and students to investigate what happened. They discovered that the boys worked all day to make the rent for their home, and cover the basic needs that kept them alive but were insufficient.

The school staff and classmates told him and his brothers about the School Feeding programme, which provides regular meals to students, thus avoiding the need to leave school to work to fill their stomachs. The staff and fellow students encouraged Yusuf to continue studying and helped him organize his time between studying and working outside. Yusuf and his brothers have returned to Hatem Al-Ta'i School for Boys. Today, they extend their sincere thanks and gratitude to

the World Food Programme, its partners, and all those who have contributed to bringing smiles and joy to their faces and other students. "I am now thinking about my future," says Yusuf.

I visited Tariq al Hussein mixed school in Hamza (Qad83), which has 253 young students. The school is made up of caravans and located in a rural area. The families there are very poor and some of them Bedouin, who used to move during winter to another area in Najaf to feed their animals in green pastures.

The Tariq al Hussein headmaster Mr. Salim was so grateful to implement the School Feeding programme. He added that in his area the children used to leave school completely and work as shepherds, to help their families. "Now I find the students arrive early morning before school opening, and each five minutes a student comes to me and asks: What are you going to distribute today Sir? Another student asks impatiently: Don't you think the food truck is late today?"

Manar Qassim's story attracted my attention.



Manar is seven years old in Grade 2. She is an orphan, Mr. Salim told me. Her mother died when she was just three months old. Manar had no choice but to leave school last December, to join her Bedouin family in Najaf during the winter. But when her family heard, from relatives in the area, that the School Feeding programme is being implemented in her school, they decided to send her back to re-join school again and to live with her uncle's family in Hamza. Manar is one of the most intelligent students at her school, and all her teachers like her personality. She is a very optimistic and ambitious person, who seeks to continue her education to be "an important person in the future and

help the poor people and help my family."

Omer and his friend Hamza, both ten



years old, are students at Al Ta'azur primary school in Jibab Island, west of Ana district in Anbar. They are from poor families who rely on fishing or farming to support their lives. Illiteracy levels are among the highest in Iraq.

The years pass by, but Omer and Hamza are still in the first grade, as they were careless to drop out, staying behind for many years for simple reasons.

After the School Feeding programme started, I met them at the Headmaster's office and asked: What is the secret behind your regular attendance at school? And how come, as your Headmaster has informed me, you look so glad to come to school every day?" They replied with bashful half-smiles, "We come every day to eat, play and learn, as nowadays we feel so glad to have healthy meals with a variety of items that encourage us to attend daily."

It is worth mentioning that one of the major challenges faced by Omer and his friend is transportation. They arrive every day by fishing boat, wearing no life vests and sometimes, they have to wait around an hour after school for a fisherman to pick them up and steer them home.

The school headmaster told me about many dropout students who recently re-joined the school, just because they heard about the School Feeding meals. The Headmaster appreciated the effort of Ministry of Education along with WFP, to launch such a programme to serve the needs of Iraqi students.

By Heyad Musa, Abdulwahid Hameed and Thaer Al Salman (WFP Field Monitor Team)

Assistance delivered to Mosul after violent storm hits Iraq

Erbil, 20 March 2020 - An unusually powerful storm has swept through the Middle East. The storm brought torrential rains that caused flooding in parts of northern and eastern Iraq on 18 March.

Mosul, in Ninewa Governorate, was particularly hard-hit and local civil defense authorities moved quickly to evacuate residents in danger — the city was significantly damaged during the conflict with the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, making it difficult for the remaining infrastructure to withstand the violent storm. It was also reported that a displaced family of five died in Diyala Governorate, eastern Iraq, after their house collapsed from the force of the storm.

On Friday (20/3) the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Iraq organized a distribution of non-food item (NFI) kits to affected families in Mosul, many of whom are now staying with relatives in safe locations. The kits include blankets, kitchen sets, jerry cans, hygiene kits and plastic sheets. Informational material about managing the spread of the Coronavirus was included with each NFI kit.



The Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government are currently implementing curfews and preventive measures that restrict movement between governorates, making it difficult to reach affected communities with supplies. IOM Iraq continues to work with the local authorities to ensure that humanitarian aid can be delivered and that vulnerable individuals can be assisted.

The distribution of NFI kits was made

possible with support from USAID.

Heavy rainstorms with strong winds drench also Duhok Governorate. While there were no casualties in camps for Syrian refugees and displaced Iraqis, the punishing rain caused floods cutting off access to parts of camps along with collapse of some tents and damage to personal belongings.

UNHCR and partners worked as quickly as possible to respond to those whose shelters were damaged or destroyed and need basic relief items.

Community-led solutions essential to sustainable returns of IDPs with perceived affiliation: IOM Iraq study



Erbil, 26 March 2020 - Anbar, in western Iraq, is the country's largest governorate by area. In early 2014, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) seized control of Anbar from the Iraqi Government; nearly half a million people fled the ISIL advance between January and May 2014. A second wave of displacement took place in 2016

when the military campaign to expel ISIL reached the area.

As of February 2020, over 1.4 million people have returned to Anbar. However, tensions exist between those who fled during ISIL's initial advance and those who remained, many of whom would become displaced later on during military campaign to retake areas under ISIL control. Many families in the group that remained are often perceived to have affiliations with ISIL, regardless of any actual affiliation or sympathies with ISIL.

A new study by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Iraq analyses the responses of six communities in Falluja district of Anbar governorate to the return of displaced community members with perceived affiliation. The communities — Saqlawiya Center, Albu Shejeel, Al Abba, Karma Center, Al Husi, and Phelat — were directly affected by the ISIL conflict.

“There is still a sense in certain communities that those who remained in Anbar under ISIL, or have family or tribal ties to perceived affiliates, are ISIL sympathizers,” explained IOM

Iraq Chief of Mission Gerard Waite. “When some of these individuals were displaced, and later attempted to go home, they were displaced again when their communities of origin rejected them for this perceived affiliation.”

Internally displaced persons (IDPs) who are rejected by their communities are unable to return and therefore risk remaining exiled from their communities or displaced for extended periods. Social acceptance of those who remained living under ISIL occupation is critical to prevent further grievances and new cycles of conflict; however, this cannot be achieved without acknowledging the perspective of victims.

The research investigates three key areas: the factors that contribute to high or low levels of acceptance of IDPs with perceived affiliation; mechanisms put in place by communities to manage return of IDPs with perceived affiliation; and obstacles limiting the sustainable return of IDPs with perceived affiliation. The research forms part of IOM's broader work supporting durable solutions to internal displacement in Iraq.

IOM: Vocational training opening new opportunities for IDPs

Baghdad, 31 March 2020 - "I am planning to open my own beauty salon, so I decided to join this free course to enhance the skills that I have in hairdressing and cosmetics. I will also hire Ru'aa, who I met in this class, to work with me in the saloon that I will do when we finish this course," said Fatima, a 19-year-old from Basra.

Fatima and 10 other female students are learning hairdressing and cosmetics skills, as part of the Training and Mentoring project for Women's Empowerment in Basra. This project is implemented by the International Organization for Migration, with support from Mitsubishi Corporation, in collaboration with the Iraqi Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.



"I used to watch my friends knit and I loved it; I wished that I could do it like them. Recently, I heard that IOM Iraq had announced courses in knitting, and I decided to enroll to learn the basics," said Nisreen. The 22-year-old has lived with her family in Amriyat Al-Fallujah since they were displaced from Al-Ramadi, Anbar in 2014.

"Now my knitting skills rival those of my friends, and I can make a variety of items including warm winter clothes. I am thinking of starting my own knitwear business to generate an income as I raise my six-year-old son," she added.

Nisreen is learning knitting skills alongside four other women and girls in Amriyat Al-Fallujah's Knitting Workshop, run by IOM Iraq with support from EU Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid - ECHO.

"Since I was a child, I have been in love with the shapes that blacksmiths are able to create. I eventually started my own blacksmith shop and it was a good job. Then ISIS entered the Jurf al-Sakhr area in 2014 and I was displaced; since then I have been living in camps," said Isaac, 25, who lives with his family in Amriyat Al-Fallujah, Anbar.

Isaac and 19 other IDPs in Amriyat Al-Fallujah recently participated in a training course in smithery. The training was held at IOM's workshop in



the camp, as part of its camp management support team's Community Mobilization activities. Following the training, the participants started working in the workshop through a cash-for-work program — they will produce items such as shelves, doors, windows and more that will be provided to IDPs in the camp free of charge.

"After we were displaced, I stopped working for a long time. This workshop added a lot to my knowledge of smithery; now I have a lot of new creative ideas and my wish is to go back to my home town and open my workshop again."

The blacksmith workshop in Amriyat Al-Fallujah was also supported by ECHO.

Floods in Mosul did not wait for COVID-19 movement restrictions to be lifted



Mosul, 7 April 2020 - Last week, as most citizens were confined at home by government decree, many areas in the north of Iraq experienced torrential rain and subsequent flashfloods. As if the COVID19 pandemic outbreak and economic crisis were not enough, people in Mosul stood helpless as water levels

rose dramatically in the streets and entered their homes. Prompted by a desperate call for help made by the residents of Maghreb, a west Mosul neighbourhood where UNHabitat is conducting an area-based urban recovery project funded by the European Union, its field team

managed to obtain a special permission from the local authorities to reach the site and assess the situation with the sector municipality staff and community representatives. Ten workers from the area were recruited for two days to dig and remove the tons of accumulated dirt that blocked the main manhole. The team also handed over boxes of hand sanitizing gel, gloves, and 500 face masks to municipal staff and workers. Due to the unavailability of medical masks in Mosul, the team had them locally tailored in 24 hours, demonstrating how even while asked to stay apart to fight the pandemic, communities will come together in solidarity to lend each other a hand.

This initiative was conducted under the EU-funded programme 'Supporting Recovery and Stability in Iraq through Local Development', implemented by United Nations Development Programme - UNDP in partnership with UN-Habitat.

Prior to the curfew enacted in response to COVID-19, 500 struggling Iraqi families in Markaz Fallujah, Fallujah sub-district, were provided with basic non-food items by the UN-Habitat and its partner

Baghdad, 5 April 2020 - Quilts. Mattresses. Solar lamps. Water jerry cans. Cooking stoves. Imagine being displaced from your home and not having these basic items to stay warm, safe, hydrated, clean and fed.

As the world rushes to the shops to stock up on supplies to get through national lockdowns and quarantines, IDPs, who often live day-to-day, do not have the same option. They are highly sensitive to changes in access to food, water, or services, particularly those not living in camps.

In early March, prior to the curfew enacted in response to COVID-19, 500 struggling Iraqi families in Markaz Fallujah, Fallujah sub-district, were provided with basic non-food items by the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) and its partner, the Engineering Association for the Development and Environment (EADE), supported by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

“While we share our collective concerns



for the health of our families and communities, we must also remember the vulnerable, the isolated, and those who need community support, particularly the elderly, the disabled, and households headed by woman,” said UN-Habitat Iraq Head of Country Programme, Mr. Wael Al-Ashhab.

UN-Habitat would like to thank the

donors that generously fund the Iraq Humanitarian Fund (IHF), its partner the Global Shelter Cluster, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) and the UNHCR Iraq for the provision of NFI kits.

Belgium and Italy support WFP’s assistance to displaced families and refugees in Iraq

Baghdad, 22 April 2020 - The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) welcomes two generous contributions from the Governments of Belgium and Italy of €1 million each (US\$1.1 million) to assist internally displaced people (IDPs) and Syrian refugees in Iraq.

“The vulnerable situation of IDPs and refugees in Iraq is now further exacerbated by COVID-19. Italy remains committed to supporting WFP in its work to reach affected communities, helping people meet their food needs. Particularly in the current context, where many people have lost day jobs or cannot work, food assistance remains vital,” said the Italian Ambassador to Iraq Bruno Pasquino.

Both contributions – committed pre-COVID-19 crisis – will enable WFP to distribute monthly cash-based transfers through electronic vouchers (“e-vouchers”) and “mobile money,” to 81,300 of the most vulnerable IDPs and Syrian refugees – who had to flee their homes and still live in camps. Cash assistance gives people the freedom to buy the food of their choice and at the same time sustains demand in local



shops boosting the local economy, which is being badly affected by COVID-19.

Restrictions imposed to face COVID-19 in the country have pushed food prices higher while at the same time people’s incomes diminished as they are unable to work. WFP is seeking US\$31.9 million to help meet the increased needs of families affected by COVID-19. “By addressing the food needs and assisting communities in strengthening their coping mechanisms, WFP plays a significant role in a number of countries and as such, is a key partner of Belgian humanitarian aid,” said

Ambassador of Belgium to Jordan and Iraq Filip Vanden Bulcke. “We are keen to support a comprehensive Food Security system in Iraq through our multiyear and flexible funding to WFP, to respond to people in need of humanitarian food assistance.”

“As people’s needs grow in the current context, WFP extends its gratitude to the Governments of Belgium and Italy for such strong and enduring partnerships,” said WFP Representative in Iraq Abdirahman Meygag. “These funds are helping us ensure that the most vulnerable IDPs and Syrian refugees have enough to eat and prevent them from spiraling into hunger and poverty during this very difficult time.”

Despite the retaking of areas that had been occupied by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), 1.4 million people continue to be displaced, hampered from returning to their homes due to severe damage, a lack of basic services and security issues. Due to violence in neighboring Syria, Iraq continues to host around 247,500 Syrian refugees.

In March UN Habitat and its partners were able to complete a distribution of non-food items to a total of 1,000 struggling Iraqi families in Anbar



Baghdad, 23 April 2020 - As traffic reduced and towns became quiet, at least one truck was still moving in the streets of Fallujah. In late March, basic household items were slowly and carefully loaded onto trucks and driven to identified shelters. Street by street, shelter by shelter, family by family, people came out to collect their

assistance packages.

Carrying out distributions of items in the early days of COVID-19 response required limiting contact between people and using protective items such as gloves and masks. However, it was also an opportunity to provide people with accurate information about COVID-19 from the World Health

Organization (WHO) and phone numbers they can call to ask questions, such as the Iraq Information Centre hotline, managed by the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), on behalf of the Humanitarian Country Team.

“Accurate information about the spread of COVID-19 is critical, particularly in urban areas and informal settlements where people live very close to one another, and social distancing is simply not possible. UN-Habitat is distributing accurate information to Iraqis wherever possible during these difficult times,” said UN-Habitat Iraq Head of Country Programme, Mr. Wael Al-Ashhab.

In March, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN Habitat) and its partner were able to complete a distribution of non-food items to a total of 1,000 struggling Iraqi families in Anbar. UN-Habitat would like to thank the donors that generously fund the Iraq Humanitarian Fund (IHF), its partner Engineering Association for the Development and Environment, the Global Shelter Cluster, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (United Nations OCHA), and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR Iraq) for the provision of NFI kits.

Stabilization and Development

UNFPA presents its new Country Programme Document to donors, authorities and potential implementing partners

Erbil, 25 February 2020 - UNFPA held on 23-24 February, a two-day meeting with donors, government entities and potential implementing partners in Erbil, in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, to introduce to them the UNFPA new Country Programme Document and discuss the development of its implementation framework.

On the first day, the UNFPA team presented to the attendees the Fund's framework for the reproductive health, gender and gender-based violence, youth, as well as the population and development programmes, with contribution from the monitoring and evaluation and the communications teams.

The presentations were followed by a deeper group thematic discussion on the expectations and strategies for each



of the different programmes.

On the second day, the thematic groups held discussions with the programmes

team on what can be offered to women, girls, and youth on policy making but also services.

Stronger than iron - stories of determination and resilience

Mosul, 1 March 2020 - Established in 1979, Al-Hadidi Iron Turning Factory in Mosul was well known across Iraq for its high-quality work — specialized in the production of mechanized wells and water systems. At its peak in the 1980s, the factory had customers throughout the country and employed 40 people.

Hamdi*, 49, is the factory's current owner. He started visiting Al-Hadidi as a child, accompanying his father who established the business; now, he is an experienced mechanic with grand ambitions for the family business.

"Many families made a living through this factory, including ours," said Hamdi.

For almost 40 years, it seemed like nothing could slow the factory's roll - neither the conflicts of the 1980s, nor the economic sanctions imposed on Iraq in the 1990s.

Then, in 2014, ISIL arrived in Mosul.

The Al-Hadidi Iron Turning Factory lost its way while Mosul, Iraq's second largest city, was occupied by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant. The factory was hit by missiles during the battle to recapture the city, and the building's structural integrity was damaged.

The business also suffered from a loss of manpower — most of the employees left Mosul after ISIL took over. One employee, Samad, was displaced to Erbil with his family; during the fighting his house was hit by a mortar and his daughter was severely injured. The factory remained open, but only Hamdi's family remained.

"We were afraid that if we closed the factory, ISIL would occupy it, so we pretended we were still working at full steam," Hamdi explained. Things got complicated when ISIL militants showed up at the factory one day, and kidnapped Hamdi's brother to pressure the family into manufacturing torture devices.

"They wanted me to produce weapons and all sorts of vile torture instruments. That was the most horrific experience of my life," Hamdi continued. "I couldn't leave Mosul, so I just hid from them until the city was liberated."

ISIL requested a high ransom to release Hamdi's brother; Hamdi and his siblings managed to collect the requested amount and secure their brother's release.

"But my brother doesn't know us anymore," Hamdi lamented. "The drugs they gave him and the torture they inflicted upon him left him with severe



trauma."

When Mosul was retaken, Hamdi reopened his business, but it had lost all of its former glory. Part of the building was destroyed, none of the skilled workers had come back and, most painfully, his brother - a competent mechanic - was no longer able to work.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) selected the Al-Hadidi Iron Turning Factory as a beneficiary of a grant through its Enterprise Development Fund (EDF) project, and Hamdi was given a USD 33,000 grant in two installments.

"This was the biggest opportunity of my life. I was feeling so low. We lost so much during the conflict; coping was not easy," said Hamdi. "This grant helped me get back on my feet, and I feel even stronger now."

Hamdi rehabilitated the factory's building and hired four employees with the first installment. With the second, he bought equipment and hired seven more employees.

Rehabilitation of local businesses encourages the return of Internally Displaced Persons, which is the core tenet of the EDF project. Samad, the former Al-Hadidi employee who moved to Erbil to seek medical treatment for his injured daughter, is one example.

"The reopening of Al-Hadidi factory has helped me in two ways: I returned to my home and got my job back, and now that we are here, a nongovernmental organization will be covering my daughter's medical expenses," Samad* said.

In addition to encouraging sustainable returns and reintegration, initiatives like the EDF boost the local economy by making high-quality local products available again, thus decreasing dependence on imports.

By investing in the private sector and enhancing local production capacity,

IOM Iraq supports target sectors that have a high impact on the economic recovery and job creation. Al-Hadidi Iron Turning Factory is an example of the economic impact of EDF initiatives: the rehabilitation will positively impact the value chain connected to irrigation facilities, which were also damaged during the conflict, thus creating additional employment opportunities in the sector.

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

Al-Hadidi Iron Turning Factory is supported by EDF, an initiative co-funded by KfW - The German Development Bank.

* Names and some identifying details have been changed to protect the privacy of individuals.

Story by Sazan Gawdan with contributions from Avand Hasan/IOM Iraq - Photo credit: Hersh Yaseen/IOM Iraq



“Be clean and stay healthy” – delivery of a health and hygiene awareness-raising campaign in Yathrib Sub-District, Salah Al Din governorate



Baghdad, 1 March 2020 - In February 2020, in parallel to the extension of the potable water network in the residential area of Al-Bohishma, located to the east of Yathrib Sub-

District, UN-Habitat has successfully delivered a Community Health & Hygiene Awareness-Raising Campaign targeting women, youth and children of the area through its implementing

partner Human Relief Foundation (HRF). The itinerant sessions were designed by professional HRF hygiene trainers who developed an interactive and fun approach to promote good sanitation and personal hygiene practices. These included handwashing and dental hygiene, treatment of unsafe water, handling and safe storage of drinking water, sanitation, lice and scabies treatment, typhoid and diarrhea prevention, water conservation, and the safe disposal of solid, organic and toxic waste. As part of the outreach campaign, 400 households received a small Health & Hygiene Kit. This initiative was undertaken as part of the on-going area-based programme that was launched in 2019 in post-conflict urban areas, under the EU-funded programme ‘Supporting Recovery and Stability in Iraq through Local Development’, implemented by UNDP in partnership with UN-Habitat.

UNICEF partners with the Republic of Korea to provide water and sanitation services for the most vulnerable children in Iraq

Baghdad, 4 March 2020— Approximately 3 million children and young people across Iraq need humanitarian support as they try to recover from years of conflict and violence.

The Republic of Korea has partnered with UNICEF and contributed US\$1 million to provide water and sanitation services to the most vulnerable children living in displacement camps in Anbar, Ninewa and Salah al Din—areas hardest hit by the violence.

“An estimated 30 per cent of displaced children live in camps, where humanitarian needs are greatest. The contribution from the Republic of Korea will ensure we are able to continue providing critical services such as safe drinking water as well as maintaining sanitation facilities to promote hygiene and protect children from preventable diseases,” said Hamida Lasseko, UNICEF’s Representative in Iraq.

In addition to the provision of safe drinking water for nearly 60,000 people in the displacement camps, the contribution from the Korea will support the following activities:

- o care and maintenance of the existing water systems including the network, taps, water tanks and water purification units;



- o care and maintenance for the sanitation facilities, including repair of latrines, showers, toilet pans, and septic tanks;

- o waste collection services;
- o dissemination of information, education, and communication materials on water conservation, safe purification and storage of water, and

hygiene awareness sessions will take place to help maintain positive practices in the targeted population.

In 2019, the Water, Hygiene and Sanitation Cluster (WASH) co-led by UNICEF and other non-governmental organizations reached over 1.8 million people with safe water in Ninewa, Salah al Din and Anbar.

The Government of Japan and UNESCO sign agreement on job creation for youth in Mosul

Baghdad, 3 March 2020 - The Japanese Ambassador to Iraq, Mr. Hashimoto Naofumi, and Representative of UNESCO to Iraq, Mr. Paolo Fontani, signed today an agreement in Baghdad in support of the project to support job creation for youth in Mosul. The project aims to foster sustainable job creation for youth supporting the return of IDPs through quality TVET training for skilled construction workers.

The project will be implemented in synergy with other UNESCO activities under the umbrella initiative 'Revive the Spirit of Mosul' to coordinate international efforts in revitalizing educational and cultural institutions in Mosul, in close cooperation with the Government and the people of Iraq. This project will have linkages to the EU project "Reviving Mosul and Basra Old Cities".

Director and Representative of UNESCO Iraq Office praised this



innovative contribution: "UNESCO is very grateful to the Government and the people of Japan. The project will empower young people in Mosul through supporting employment and self-employment and reduce the likelihood of marginalization and extremism."

Ambassador Hashimoto highlighted: "Japan has recently decided new assistance package for Iraq amounting to USD 41 million including this project

as assistance for youth in Mosul. With this package, the total amount of Japan's assistance to the people affected by the crisis reaches USD 540 million since 2014. I hope that the assistance from the Government and people of Japan will help foster sustainable job creation for youth in Mosul in reconstruction efforts".

Japan has long been a valued donor to UNESCO in Iraq. In 2019, the Government of Japan supported the project "Voices of the children of Old Mosul: the rehabilitation and management of primary schools in historic urban context emerging from conflict". The project lays the ground for a holistic approach to the prevention of violent extremism in primary education with the provision of training to support the four key elements that influence the experience of children's learning: parents, teachers, school principals and school policies and procedures.

Approximately 1 million children in Iraq to receive health and nutrition support, thanks to a new contribution from Japan



Baghdad, 11 March 2020 –Japan has contributed US \$ 4.4 million to support UNICEF's health and nutrition programmes for some of Iraq's most vulnerable children and their families. The grant will target population in displacement camps as well as seven governorates impacted by conflict and displacement, including Dohuk, Erbil, Suleimaniyah, Kirkuk, Ninewah, Salahaddin, and Anbar.

"Japan is a friend to the children of Iraq. We are thankful for their support during this critical period where we must act with a sense of urgency to ensure that children are vaccinated

against preventable diseases and families are able to access adequate healthcare," said Hamida Lasseko, UNICEF's Representative in Iraq.

The contribution will ensure over 1 million highly vulnerable children under five are immunized against preventable diseases. Refugees and pregnant women will also be supported with a comprehensive package of health and nutrition assistance.

H.E. Mr. Hashimoto Naofumi, Ambassador of Japan to the Republic of Iraq, said:

"Japan has recently decided to provide a new assistance package for Iraq

amounting to USD 41 million including this project as assistance for children and mothers. With this package, the total amount of Japan's assistance to people affected by the crisis reaches USD 540 million since 2014.

"I hope that the assistance from the Government and people of Japan will help enhance access to basic health and nutrition services for vulnerable children and mothers," he added.

Iraq's health sector has been severely decimated by years conflict and under investments, leaving the most vulnerable children and families struggling to access lifesaving services.

In Ninewah and Salaheddin, two governorates that were heavily impacted by the violence, only 50 percent and 60 percent of health centers, respectively, are fully functioning. This has placed enormous pressure on functioning health facilities as they try to cope with growing demands as more and more families leave displacement camp and return to their homes.

In addition, the contribution will also be used to support approximately 100 health centers in the targeted governorates with new equipment and cold chain storage to ensure proper storage of vaccination.

'How training in digital and English-language skills changed my life'

Yasser, a Syrian refugee in Iraq recalls his journey from longing to study to becoming a web designer through WFP's EMPACT scheme.

Baghdad, 11 March 2020 - Hi, I'm Yasser. I'm 23, from Damascus, Syria. I left Syria in 2011 — because of the war — and moved to Lebanon. I stayed in Lebanon with my family for a year. I started working as a butcher. Then I tried to study, but it was difficult for me because I had to support my family. So I quit studying. I left the butcher's and started working in a market, as a customer assistant. Then I moved to a poultry shop, then back to the butcher's. After that, we had to move to Cairo. Life in Egypt was anything but easy. None of us could work at that time.

Then we decided to move again, to Iraq. We were not very lucky when we came to Iraq because, suddenly, ISIL came and the situation became more difficult. I tried going back to school, but again, I had to help my father, to support my family.

The next job I had was working in a concrete-block factory in Iraq. After a month, the factory shut down, and I lost my job. It was winter and cold,

with no job opportunities.

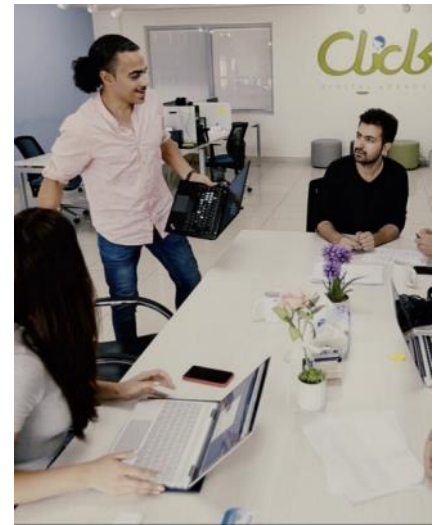
At that time I met my friend, who invited me to sell balloons at traffic lights. Suddenly, this was the best job I'd had so far. It was enough to pay the rent for my house. But it had a downside, which was: this job was very embarrassing.

Later, I got an opportunity to work in a kitchen as a butcher again and I developed my skills enough to end up as a general chef. One day, there was an announcement in the refugee camp, about EMPACT courses in the American University of Sulaymaniyah. Immediately, I applied, and I got accepted.

I started learning English and social-media marketing. I was the first in all my class. Then I graduated to the advanced stage of the programme, and I started learning how to design a website, on WordPress.

Even before I graduated, I got my first professional job, at Click digital agency, as a web designer and social media specialist. EMPACT continued to support me, by providing a laptop for my first job.

Now, after more than one year, I am an Account Executive, team leader and quality controller at Click. I have a



large base of clients, in and outside Iraq.

I am really lucky to have had the chance to attend this amazing programme, and I really encourage anyone with a dream to attend it.

EMPACT — Empowerment in Action! — is funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)

By Sharon Rapose, WFP Iraq.

Incorporating climate change into the recovery and reconstruction of public facilities - 'Building Back Better' in Heet

Baghdad, 16 March 2020 - UN-Habitat has recently launched the renovation of Al Nejoom Primary School in the Baker neighbourhood in the city of Heet, Anbar Governorate. While the two-story structure did not suffer any serious physical damage during the conflict with ISIL, the building was in a state of general disrepair and unfit for its purpose. The school currently operates in two shifts and serves 520 pupils, with an average of 43 pupils per class. Rehabilitation works include the overhaul of its leaking roof, repairs to the looted electrical system, the makeover of windows and doors, and the renovation of its run-down sanitary facilities. The availability of proper toilets and clean water can encourage children, especially girls, to go to school and remain in the school system. Availability of proper handwashing facilities is also of special importance these days to support the preventive measure of the Covid-19 outbreak.

In consideration of the climatic context of Heet and the peak temperatures it

can reach in July (52°C), the team have introduced a set of retrofitting measures to improve the thermal comfort of the building. These include roof insulation, fitting of shading devices above classroom windows, new fans and vents, solar water heater, and the installation of shading sails over sections of the schoolyard. Also, in an effort to support the local economy and

reduce the ecological footprint of the project, contractors were encouraged to use as much as possible materials sourced from the local market and produced in Iraq. This initiative is undertaken under the EU-funded programme 'Supporting Recovery and Stability in Iraq through Local Development', implemented by UNDP in partnership with UN-Habitat.



IOM Iraq to rehabilitate water facility in Basra

Basra, 16 March 2020 - In recent years, water scarcity in Basra's al-Qurna district had affected its population of 100,000, led to the displacement of over 100 families and affected agriculture and livestock businesses. With support from Qatar Charity **مركز الخيرية**, IOM Iraq will rehabilitate the plant.

"When successful, the benefit of the project will reach more than 100,000 residents and have a positive impact on the whole the district," said Arab Al-Jazairi, Assistant to the Governor of Basra, during the kick-off ceremony on 9 March.



Water for all

Baghdad, 22 March 2020 - On World Water Day, we remember all the families affected by climate change, and the importance of water for all.

Qassem, a farmer in Sinjar, Ninewa, had to flee his village in 2014 due to the conflict. He and his family found refuge in a camp in Zakho, Duhok governorate. When it was eventually safer to return, years later, he took the first opportunity to go home.

"My land means everything to me. As soon as I heard that some villages were freed from ISIL, I had to go back and try to farm a small plot of land, to resume our lives." But they had to start again from nothing: "My sheep were gone, everything in my house was looted. Imagine that they even took the water pump from my farm. Talking about what I saw then makes me want to cry, even today!"

"There was no water or electricity, so I called my neighbors to try and salvage whatever remaining pipes their lands still had, to build a small water system from the borehole that was still intact." WFP and partner Action Against Hunger - Middle East's project with Qassem and other participants helped prepare their land for cultivation. The project provided Qassem's family with a drip irrigation system and a greenhouse. Other participants installed or repaired livestock shelters or beehives, and grew kitchen gardens. Training and mentoring covered farming techniques, food security, and irrigation using the repaired or new systems. Qassem started by planting onions in winter.

"This really helped me pick myself up and resume my life as a farmer. I hope that things will work out, so that I can

generate enough income, and try to buy more sheep. I was not able to use the primitive system that I salvaged from old pipes, but now I can water my plants more efficiently and grow more crops."

Interview and photo by Aida Burnett-Cargill, Nazar Barakat & Ahmed Rezeq, WFP Iraq



Mosul metalworker helps Old City neighbours after displacement

Mosul, 25 March 2020 - Ashwaq skips cheerfully past the rubble of destroyed buildings in Mosul's Old City, holding her father's hand as he shows her the streets their family have called home for generations. After years of occupation and displacement, she no longer recognizes her own neighbourhood.

Now nine years old, Ashwaq was just four when ISIS took over the city. For the first three years of occupation, her father Saad kept her indoors with her siblings to protect them from the authoritarian rule imposed on local residents. They faced restrictions on everything from what they could wear to whether they could use mobile phones, with severe penalties for

breaches, including public beatings and executions.

When the battle to retake the city was launched in October 2016, Saad and his family fled to another part of Mosul. They managed to avoid the worst of the fighting, which left much of the historic Old City in ruins.

Now, with financial help to rehabilitate their damaged home, the family are finally moving back into their old neighbourhood. The support comes through a cash-for-shelter programme led by UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency.

"I was very keen on going back [to] my old neighbourhood, which goes back to Assyrian times," Saad said of the historic area of Mosul where he lived

and worked. "It is 6,000 years old, and I want to bring life back to it".

Mosul is the largest city in Ninewa governorate, where around 1.7 million formerly displaced Iraqis have now returned to their homes. Yet more than 334,000 people remain displaced.

When the fighting finally ended, more than 40,000 homes in Mosul were in need of rehabilitation.

Through its cash-for-shelter programme, which provides for up to US\$4,000 for essential repairs, UNHCR has so far helped to fix up some 765 homes, ensuring safe shelter for more than 7,000 people. But given the scale of the destruction, it will take many years of continued support before things return to normal.

Mosul metalworker helps Old City neighbours ... (continued)

As he points out major landmarks to Ashwaq, such as the bridge over the Tigris River and some of the ancient homes along its banks, Saad recalls what life was like here in more peaceful times.

“People went on picnics near the river. My friends and I used to play football on the riverbank. Life was good and prosperous in Mosul back then.”

Saad’s first priority after moving back into his rehabilitated home was to reopen his metal welding workshop, which his father established back in 1978 before passing it on to his son.

Before the conflict, most of his business consisted of making specialist aluminium ducts and ventilators for home heating and air-conditioning systems. But there was little demand for such comparative luxuries during the city’s occupation and the difficult years that followed.

When he first reopened the shop, he found that the needs of the few neighbours returning to the area were more basic, and he found a way to resume his work while lending a helping hand.

“I went back to my workshop and felt that I can help people who returned by fixing their damaged water tanks and



heaters for a small cost, while many people who could not afford to pay me, I helped for free,” he explained.

He also made around 350 simple wood-burning stoves using sheet metal, which he sold to those who had no other means of keeping warm for US\$5, barely enough to cover his costs.

“We are all citizens of Mosul.”

“This helped people – not only homes but also shops were reopened,” Saad said. “People deserve a second chance. Most of them are poor and they need a helping hand. We are all citizens of Mosul. Those of us who are able to should help those who are less fortunate than us.”

With people and commerce slowly returning to the neighbourhood, Saad recently resumed making parts for central air-conditioning and heating systems for the first time in more than six years.

He hopes this encouraging sign marks the start of a better life for his family and the city, and his daughter Ashwaq will once again come to recognize the neighbourhood she had forgotten as home.

“All what I want is for my children to live a good life and that I am able to provide a comfortable life for them. I hope they have a good future in Mosul.”

By Firas Al-Khateeb, UNHCR Iraq

Japan provides an additional \$3.6 million for UN-Habitat’s reconstruction and peacebuilding programme in Iraq

Baghdad, 2 April 2020 - The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) welcomes an additional contribution of USD 3.6 million from the Government of Japan to support reconstruction and peacebuilding in Iraq through the rehabilitation of war-damaged houses and construction of low-cost housing units in Sinjar, Ninewa Governorate.

Under the new phase of this project, UN-Habitat will improve living conditions in Sinjar through a comprehensive urban recovery approach, including (a) rehabilitation of public spaces and infrastructure, (b) construction of low-cost housing units to accommodate returnees whose houses are totally destroyed and have not received any support for rehabilitation or reconstruction of their houses, and (c) vocational training. Graduates of the vocational training will be employed for rehabilitation and construction activities implemented by UN-Habitat, which will contribute to rebuilding their livelihoods.

His Excellency Mr. Hashimoto Naofumi, Ambassador of Japan to the Republic of Iraq, stated: “Japan has

recently decided to provide a new assistance package for Iraq amounting to USD 41 million including this project as assistance for conflict-affected areas in Ninewa Governorate. With this package, the total amount of Japan’s assistance to the people affected by the crisis reaches USD 540 million since 2014. I hope that the assistance from the Government and people of Japan will help rebuild livelihoods of affected communities through rehabilitating community infrastructure and housing units”.

UN-Habitat is grateful to the people

and the Government of Japan for their continuous generous support which allows integration of the New Urban Agenda and physical interventions for post-conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding. In line with the New Urban Agenda, UN-Habitat is committed to promote adequate services, accommodation and decent job opportunities for conflict-affected persons in urban settings.

With a contribution of approximately \$55 million since 2015, the Government of Japan has been a vital partner to UN-Habitat’s Iraq Programme.



"We can do it!" - building safer homes in Iraq's IDP Camps

Baghdad, 5 April 2020 - The shelters that make up Jad'ah 5 camp, in Iraq's Ninewa Governorate, all have the same architecture: tents made of a metal frame; an inner cover; a layer of insulation; an outer cover; front and back doors. Sandbags are placed around the base outside, to weigh down the tarpaulins and keep the structures in place.

In Jad'ah 1 and Jad'ah 5 (separate sections of the same camp) these modest constructions are still home to 20,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs); across Iraq, there are an estimated 1.4 million IDPs, 24 per cent of them live in camp settings.

Shifa Abdulla's tent in Jad'ah 5 houses eight people: she has lived there with her husband and six daughters since being displaced from Mosul in 2017.

"When we came to the camp, the tent was in a bad state," Shifa, 35, explained; in 2019, the roof of her tent started leaking. "We asked for help many times, but nothing happened."

Many tents in the camp, constructed by the Government of Iraq in 2016, needed to be repaired or replaced but a lack of resources made it difficult to address these needs. Through the Iraq Humanitarian Fund (IHF) – a country-based pooled fund led by the Humanitarian Coordinator and managed by OCHA – the International Organization for Migration (IOM) received a grant in 2019 to replace all tents in the Jad'ah camps since they were beyond their life expectancy.

The project's priority was to replace the tents' soft covers, while reusing the original metallic frames, and add new sandbags around the exterior bases to prevent rainwater from entering the tents during the wet season. Another objective was to engage the camps' residents as much as possible, through a Cash for Work scheme designed to provide work opportunities.

Starting in October 2019, teams of workers dismantled and then replaced all parts of the tents during two-week shifts (six working days each) before rotating to allow new teams to work. This schedule was put in place to include as many families as possible in the project.

"My daughter and I were both able to work for a few days, and it helped a lot," said Iman Abdulla, 43, who also lives in Jad'ah 5. Iman is the head of her household, and her daughter is a widow; employment options can be limited for women in these situations. "Women, especially widows, don't have

many employment opportunities, they only get to do tailoring work which doesn't pay much."

IOM Iraq aimed to include a large number of women in the project, to work alongside the men and earn fair and equal wages for their families. With the understanding that all programming must be gender-responsive, female engineers from IOM Iraq's Camp Management and Shelter programmes hosted focus group discussions for women in Jad'ah 5 in April 2019 to better understand their needs. Participants were asked, amongst other things, whether they wanted to work and about the types of jobs they were willing to do. During the discussions, it also emerged that the women had struggled to find work in the past, because no one had taken the time to ask them if they were willing or able to do certain tasks.

Building the capacities and resilience of women, girls, men and boys is a key part of any humanitarian response. IOM Iraq prioritized women's participation, and the cash-for-work project provided an opportunity for the women to learn new skills while earning some money to meet their families' needs.

"We learned how to dismantle and set up the tents on our own, and with the right materials we can do it again if needed," added Iman. "The project managers treated us well, the wages were good and our tents are more comfortable now."

During the focus group sessions, participants were asked whether they were comfortable working alongside men; in many contexts, construction jobs are viewed as "men's work" and

women may be excluded from such work opportunities for cultural reasons. "Some of the women who didn't participate in the project were critical and said this isn't 'women's work'; some families don't allow women to work," said Shifa. "But my husband and I both took part; the women who participated were comfortable working with men and the men were comfortable working with us."

"We did this together, as brothers and sisters, and I learned a lot from this experience," she added.

IDPs in the Jad'ah camps still have many needs to be met — primarily financial. Shifa, Iman and several other women who attended a follow-up focus group discussion in early March 2020 reported that the money they earned through the tent repair activity helped them support their families – so they hope such initiatives take place again. The exercise also contributed to their communities' acceptance of women as equals and breadwinners in their own right, while enhancing the women's self-confidence.

The participants reported that there was a lot of solidarity between the teams — if an older woman couldn't carry out certain tasks, everyone would come to help her. If one team grew tired from the day's tasks, another team would quickly step in to take their place.

"We met many people through this activity and made new friends," Iman concluded. "Any work that IOM offers in future, we will learn how to do it."

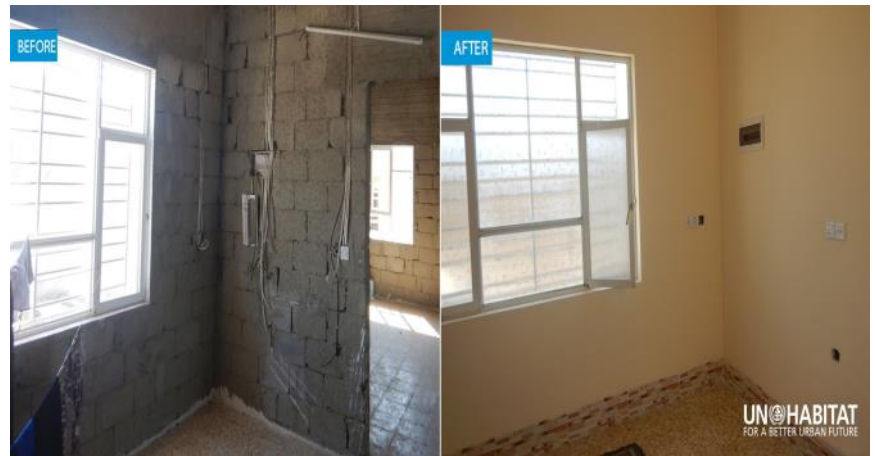
Written by Vanessa Okoth-Obbo, IOM Iraq/Photography by Yad Abdulqader



UN-Habitat Iraq completed the rehabilitation and handing over of 47 housing units in Dohuk, Sumel, Mosul and Sinjar

Baghdad, 15 April 2020 - UN-Habitat Iraq has recently completed the rehabilitation and handing over of 47 housing units in Dohuk, Sumel, Mosul and Sinjar. Around 300 men, women, boys and girls now have access to improved and safer housing conditions in their respective communities.

The rehabilitated houses are part of the larger rehabilitation of 490 housing units occupied by IDPs, refugees and host community members and are undertaken under the programme titled "Strengthening the Long-Term Resilience of Subnational Authorities in countries affected by the Syrian and Iraqi Crises" funded by the EU Regional Trust Fund in Response to the Syrian Crisis, the 'Madad Fund' and implemented by UN-Habitat in partnership with UNDP. The rehabilitation of other houses under the



same programme will be resumed once the lockdown is over.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic and its effect on the programme, UN-Habitat has proactively reached out to

947 beneficiary families and their respective communities with advice on how to stay healthy and avoid the spread of COVID-19 virus in their communities.

Debris-recycling initiative seeks to bolster return of displaced in Iraq, amidst growing risks of COVID-19 outbreak



Baghdad, 17 April 2020 - With support from the Government of Japan, the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) is joining forces with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to launch an innovative debris-recycling project that will help displaced persons in Kirkuk Governorate, northern Iraq, return to their homes.

"With almost 10,000 destroyed houses in Kirkuk Governorate, our priority is to enable [displaced persons] to return and rebuild their demolished homes," said Ali Humadi, Kirkuk's Assistant Governor for Technical Affairs.

The plight of the approximately 1.4 million Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Iraq has taken on a new urgency, as they are widely recognized to be some of the most vulnerable communities to the novel coronavirus pandemic.

"The impact of the epidemic is exacerbated by the conditions in which the displaced live," said Dr. Jassim Hamadi, Deputy Health and Environment Minister. "Their cramped living circumstances, both in formal camps and densely populated informal settlements, and difficulty in accessing basic services – especially healthcare – makes them extremely vulnerable to the spread of the virus."

Emphasizing that "the presence of huge volumes of debris on peoples' properties is the main obstacle preventing the return of at least 80 per cent of cases", Ali Humadi welcomed sustainable solutions to the debris problem and the redoubling of efforts to facilitate returns given the ongoing public health emergency.

Kirkuk authorities estimate that from 2014 to 2017, around 8-9 million tonnes of debris were created during the

conflict with so-called Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant. Around two-thirds of this debris consists of concrete, blocks and stones that can be recycled, while the rest is mudbricks. A major challenge in handling this debris stems from the potential presence of unexploded ordnance.

Meanwhile, life is slowly picking-up in some of Kirkuk's 135 destroyed villages. "It's a citizen-led effort," said Ibrahim Khalaf, a prominent community member from Buwaiter, a village that was razed to the ground in June 2015.

Buwaiter is one of many villages along the front lines separating militants from the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in southern Kirkuk from Kurdish Peshmerga forces in the north. This large belt of land, that stretches over 65 kilometres and divides Kirkuk Governorate in half, was until recently a no man's land emptied of its inhabitants as entire villages were levelled flat.

"People are trying to do what they can to rebuild their homes with their meager resources," Khalaf said. He further asserted that "that just removing the debris from one house can cost around 2.5 million Iraqi dinars (USD 2,000)." This amount is well beyond the means of many families affected by the conflict, and around half of Buwaiter's nearly 1,000 inhabitants are unable to return as a result.

IOM Iraq estimates that there are still

Debris-recycling initiative seeks to bolster return of displaced in Iraq, amidst growing risks of COVID-19 outbreak *(continued)*

around 60,000 IDPs in Kirkuk.

“The most important thing now is to clear all this debris, and if possible, help people reconstruct their homes,” Khalaf noted.

“We are at a loss for what to do with all this debris,” said Hassan Nassif, the head of Multaqa sub-district whose 35 villages, including Buwaiter, were wiped out during the conflict. He went on to decry “the chaotic dumping of debris in seasonal wadis and despoiling of agricultural land, which will surely create problems for the future”.

By practically demonstrating the potential for debris recycling through this pilot project, UNEP aims to apply a circular vision to the debris problem, transforming it into part of the solution in partnership with IOM. This includes not only facilitating safe returns, but also generating livelihood opportunities through Cash for Work activities,

carrying out more cost-effective reconstruction by reusing crushed rubble, and better environmental management.

The project is being implemented in close collaboration with the Kirkuk authorities and the Ministry of Health and Environment, and benefits from valuable facilitation support from the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI).

“Crushing the rubble is a pragmatic and straightforward answer, offering a ray of hope in dealing with our massive challenges, including creating jobs for displaced youth,” Nassif added. “We stand ready to support this initiative and look forward to expanding this recycling approach in Multaqa and Kirkuk.”

H.E. Hashimoto Naofumi, Ambassador of Japan to Iraq, said: , “Japan has recently decided to provide a new

assistance package for Iraq amounting to USD 41 million including this project as assistance for debris recycling in Kirkuk Governorate.

With this package, the total amount of Japan’s assistance to the people affected by the crisis reaches USD 540 million since 2014”.

He went on to say, “Japan is pleased to invest in addressing this overlooked debris problem and support a sustainable return process that integrates the humanitarian, reconstruction and environmental angles of the question.”

As part of this one-year project, which starts this month, UNEP also plans to work closely with Kirkuk Governorate’s recently created Debris Working Group and the Environment Ministry to strengthen their capacity to develop and apply optimal debris management plans.

Security Sector Reform

Evaluating perceptions of security and police in Iraq: IOM study



Erbil, 14 April 2020 - Since 2003, Iraq has experienced cyclical episodes of intra-state violence and continuous, collective calls for improved governance and adherence to the rule of law. Public distrust of state security actors is a major policy challenge and barrier to sustainable peace-building, because widespread distrust of the police and other state security actors discourages citizens from reporting crimes and other problems to state authorities while paving the way for multiple non-state security actors, with varying degrees of accountability, to occasionally fulfil the roles of legitimate and accountable security providers.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Iraq partnered with Yale Law School’s Center for Global Legal Challenges (GLC) to study the

effects of IOM’s Community Policing Programme, which aims to improve safety and security by building trust and cooperation between Iraqi civilians and law enforcement institutions.

“The Community Policing Programme is an important part of IOM Iraq’s migration management portfolio, as it helps build more resilient and secure communities,” said Placido Silipigni, Head of IOM Iraq’s Migration Management Unit. “This study offers insight into the programme’s effects in diverse contexts; it helps to further support the development of an evidence base that will guide the design and implementation of future activities, at the local and central level, in order to maximize the impact of the interventions.”

Evaluating Perceptions of Security and

Police in Iraq analyses key similarities and differences in three communities — Baradiyah (Basra Governorate), Hamdaniyah (Ninewa Governorate), and Jubeil (Anbar Governorate) — across five areas: perceptions of security; perceptions of actors present in the communities and their impact on security; strategies for dispute resolution; perceptions of police; and gender differences in civilian-police relations.

“Understanding the perceptions, attitudes and concerns that community members expressed in each community can help to identify more efficient, feasible and sustainable approaches to rebuilding trust between the police and their communities, thus restoring accountable institutions, at the local and central level,” said Olga Aymerich, Research Officer at IOM Iraq. “This is a vital entry point to improving security outcomes and reveals the need for initiatives that strengthen this relationship.

This baseline report is based on data from a door-to-door first way of survey conducted in July-August 2019, before the implementation of the Community Policing Programme. The endline survey was conducted in December 2019 after the Community Policing Programme implementation and will be analysed in a subsequent report.

Government of Japan furthers support for security and development nexus in Iraq

Baghdad, 29 April 2020 - The Government of Japan is supporting the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Iraq's continued efforts to leverage the security-development nexus in Iraq, providing IOM with a further USD 3.63 million in funding for 2020-21.

Iraq is grappling with the cumulative effects of past conflicts on its development, which has left the country vulnerable to renewed conflict. Now, once again, Iraq is facing concurrent crises which threaten its security and development: the COVID-19 outbreak; the collapse in global oil prices, on which the Iraqi economy heavily depends; and political deadlock which has left the country with a caretaker government since December 2019.

"The turbulence that has hit Iraq over the past six months illustrates that there is still a critical need to address economic, social, and security drivers of instability in vulnerable communities to prevent the country from backsliding into conflict," said IOM Iraq Chief of Mission, Gerard Waite. "With the Government of Japan's support, IOM continues to leverage the security-development nexus to break the cycle of conflict."

With this support from the Government of Japan, IOM Iraq will support the

Government of Iraq in leveraging the Security-Development Nexus (SDN) to promote stabilization in some of Iraq's most vulnerable communities. IOM will place a particular focus on supporting the socio-economic reintegration of self-demobilized former combatants who are seeking to re-establish their lives in areas of origin.

"Japan has recently decided to provide a new assistance package for Iraq amounting to USD 41 million, including this project to reinforce the Security-Development Nexus," said H.E. Naofumi Hashimoto, Ambassador of Japan to Iraq. "With this package, the total amount of Japan's assistance to the people affected by the crisis has reached USD 540 million since 2014."

"Years of conflict have had an impact on Iraq's economic and social development, while social and economic decline has been a significant destabilizing factor. A holistic approach is needed in the security and development domains," he added.

The project, "Leveraging the Security Development Nexus in Iraq: Support for Community Stabilization in Conflict Affected Communities", will build upon lessons learned and good practices gathered under the 2019-20 GoJ-supported pilot project "Supporting the Security Development Nexus in Iraq".

Under that project, over 8,500

individuals were reached with social cohesion; mediation; peacebuilding; mental health and psychosocial support activities or took part in training sessions. Twenty-eight small and medium enterprises in Tel Afar and Najaf received financial support, while 134 people received individual livelihood support. Five new Community Policing Forums were established by the Ministry of Interior (MOI) with IOM Iraq's assistance — three in Ninewa, and two in Najaf.

In addition to social cohesion, mental health and psychosocial support, small and medium enterprise and livelihood support, IOM Iraq's initiatives in support of the SDN will focus on establishing and enhancing Community Policing Forums, alongside the MOI, to improve communication and trust between community members and law enforcement actors.



Mine Action

UNMAS increases awareness and technical capacity on mainstreaming gender into mine action activities

Baghdad, 7 March 2020 - UNMAS Iraq has been working in tandem with the National Mine Action Authorities to increase awareness and technical capacity on mainstreaming gender into mine action activities and increasing women's empowerment within the sector.

Through direct collaboration with the Directorate of Mine Action Gender Unit, training and workshops have been delivered, bringing together different explosive hazard management entities from the Government of Iraq. It is essential that women's participation in decision making roles is enhanced and that their unique and different needs and experiences are mainstreaming throughout activities.

Through an Action Plan and the contextualized use of the Gender in Mine Action Guidelines, a strong

foundation will be developed to mainstream gender considerations and women's empowerment in the project

cycle of NMAA activities for an effective and inclusive response to explosive hazards in Iraq.



UNMAS and the Directorate of Mine Action (DMA) organized a workshop on Gender in Mine Action in Baghdad

Baghdad, 6 March 2020 - UNMAS in collaboration with the Directorate of Mine Action (DMA) recently organized a workshop on Gender in Mine Action in Baghdad.

More than 50 representatives from governmental entities including the Iraqi Ministry of Health & Environment, the Prime Minister Office, the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Defense and the Swedish Embassy as well as from non-governmental organizations such as UNICEF, Handicap International, Danish Church Aid, Baghdad Organization, the Iraqi Health and Social Care Organization and Norwegian People's Aid participated in the workshop.

Opening remarks were delivered by Mr. Jassim Abd AlAziz, Deputy Minister of

Health and Environment, and Mr. Francis O'Grady, UNMAS Iraq Head of Projects.

The workshop aimed to raise awareness and engage participants in presentations and discussions on the importance of considering the particular needs, experiences, voices and the necessary participation of both women and men in mine action activities, toward effective explosive hazard management in Iraq.

The day began with an overview of gender concepts and a deep dive into gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment, followed by a session on international and national guidance and tools for mainstreaming gender in mine action, a presentation by the DMA Gender unit as well as a discussion about success stories and

challenges from the field.

UNMAS Iraq would like to take the opportunity to thank the government of Canada for its support to gender mainstreaming activities in the country.



UNMAS participated at the 'National and international debate on effective and efficient advocacy: The KRG experience' panel discussion

Erbil, 10 March 2020 - UNMAS Senior Programme Manager, Pehr Lodhammar, recently participated in the 'National and International Debate on Effective and Efficient Advocacy: The KRG Experience' in Erbil. This forum brings together government representatives, International Non-Governmental Organizations, academics, think tanks, and researchers for the purpose of discussing effective advocacy and policy guidance to enhance government policies and practices for a further transparent, accountable, responsive,

equitable and inclusive institutions.

The forum was divided into five panel discussions highlighting different topics such as Effective Advocacy: Successful Examples, Stakeholders, and Challenges, and Achieving National and Regional Advocacy Goals: Policy Advancement, among others. Pehr Lodhammar participated in the second panel on International Observations on Good Governance Practices in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, along with representatives from UNAMI as well as the US and Korean consulates.



UNMAS and Directorate of Mine Action discussed ongoing developments in Iraq's mine action sector and the latest updates on projects and operations in the pipeline

Baghdad, 12 March 2020 - UNMAS Iraq Senior Programme Manager, Mr. Pehr Lodhammar, recently met with the Director General of the Directorate of Mine Action (DMA), Mr. Khalid Rashad, to discuss ongoing developments in Iraq's mine action sector and the latest updates on projects and operations in the pipeline. The meeting also provided an opportunity for UNMAS to introduce its new Senior Project Officer, Ms. Emire Khidayer, to DMA. Mr. Rashad and Mr. Lodhammar

discussed numerous topics, including amending and updating the National Mine Action Strategy and Standards, allocation of budget towards mine action operations in country, grant modalities, as well as areas of improvement for enhanced coordination.

UNMAS would like to thank DMA for their efforts in coordinating mine action activities in Iraq, and for their role in facilitating safe environments for vulnerable communities.



UNMAS Iraq Operations Management Team (OMT) working group members recently participated in a training on “Stock Take and Opportunity Analysis and Online Platform User”

Baghdad, 14 March 2020 - "The goal of reform is a 21st-century United Nations focused more on people and less on process, more on delivery and less on bureaucracy," Secretary-General António Guterres.

The impact of UN programmes at the country level is directly related to the effectiveness, efficiency and cost of the operations that support them. The lower the cost of business operations, the more resources remain within the programme budget. The Business Operating Strategy (BOS) was included to the UN reform, and each UN Country Team has been tasked to transform its BOS to the new Online

platform with better key performance indicators, and improved processes.

To help initiating the UN Iraq BOS update for 2020-21, the Operations Management Team (OMT) working group members recently participated in a training on Stock Take & Opportunity Analysis and Online Platform User.

Sumer, Samee and Shna from UNMAS Iraq are part of the OMT working groups for Human Resources, Administration, Finance, Procurement, Logistics and Information and Communication Technology to identify opportunities to work as one business unit, with a view to enabling more

funds to be spent in programming and less in internal business operations. The training was delivered by UNMAS Iraq Technical Support Team Lead, Mika Toivonen, who participated in the BOS Train-the-Trainer course in Amman in November 2019, and was qualified as BOS 2.0 Instructor.



UNMAS held an induction training on “Humanitarian Mine Action for Mine Action Center personnel” for the Directorate of Mine Action (DMA) Mosul staff

Baghdad, 15 March 2020 - UNMAS recently held a two-day induction training on “Humanitarian Mine Action for Mine Action Center Personnel” for the Directorate of Mine Action (DMA) Mosul staff in Erbil. The workshop is part of a series of training and technical support initiatives undertaken by UNMAS and tailored for the Government of Iraq to generate a new cohort of skilled Iraqis well-positioned to tackle mine action challenges faced by the country today. The course provided participants with

an overview of UNMAS activities in explosive hazard management, risk education, international conventions, humanitarian mine action pillars, gender mainstreaming, integration and equal opportunities, quality management as well as other topics.

Commenting on the training, one of the participants said: “The sessions were very useful and comprehensive, including many different aspects of mine action that we found to be beneficial. In addition, we were introduced to technical mine action

terminology which will help significantly with our work.”

UNMAS Iraq would like to thank the Federal Republic of Germany for its contribution to training and technical support initiatives in country.



Japan’s contribution to UNMAS risk education initiatives enhances awareness of explosive hazard threats in vulnerable communities

Baghdad, 31 March 2020 – The United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) welcomes an additional contribution of USD 345,454 from the Government of Japan to further mitigate the threat posed by explosive hazards in support of the provision, facilitation and enablement of humanitarian and stabilization support. UNMAS, working in tandem with its implementing partners, continues to maintain a weighted presence in Iraq, especially in the areas retaken from the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). This contribution from the Government of Japan will support UNMAS explosive hazard management activities in Iraq, which includes risk education initiatives that target vulnerable women, men, girls and boys who live in or will return to contaminated areas. This ensures that

local citizens are informed of the dangers posed by explosive hazards, and are aware of suspicious items, thus equipping them with precautionary measures that could potentially save lives.

H.E. Mr. Hashimoto Naofumi, Ambassador of Japan to the Republic of Iraq, stated: “Japan has recently decided to provide a new assistance package for Iraq amounting to USD 41 million including this project as assistance for explosive hazard management.

With this package, the total amount of Japan’s assistance to the people affected by the crisis reaches USD 540 million since 2014.

I hope that the assistance from the Government and people of Japan will help displaced people safely return to retaken areas.”

“Significant explosive contamination

remains uncleared throughout the retaken areas, particularly in the Old City of Mosul, which is littered with IEDs that pose a significant threat to the affected communities, with children being especially vulnerable.” said Mr. Pehr Lodhammar, UNMAS Senior Programme Manager in Iraq. “Whether through direct explosive hazard management, or risk education initiatives, Japan’s generous contribution will go a long way in supporting humanitarian and stabilization efforts in the country.”

The Government of Japan is an essential contributor to UNMAS explosive hazard management activities in Iraq and has donated over USD 14 million since 2016.



Clearing Mosul's mines

Mosul, 04 April 2020 - In the battle to liberate Iraq from the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (also known as Da'esh), Mosul - Iraq's second largest city and cultural epicenter - was hardest hit.

To help rebuild this iconic city and make safe the surrounding areas, the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) works alongside the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), and others to remove explosive ordnance and other hazardous objects remaining from the conflict, enabling the restoration of critical community services and infrastructure such as schools, hospitals, roads, water systems, and electricity networks.

Almost three years after Mosul's liberation, approximately 62,000 explosive hazards have been cleared across more than 1,422 sites in Mosul.

UNMAS clearance teams search for explosives in Mosul's historic old city, which, after its liberation, contained approximately 10 million tonnes of rubble - the equivalent of three Giza pyramids. After streets were cleared for mines, UNDP employed thousands of locals to remove the rubble.

Al Shifa Hospital Complex in West Mosul was one of Da'esh's headquarters and was heavily bombed in the battle to liberate the city. Five specialist health facilities on the complex are currently being rehabilitated by UNDP, including the Oncology Hospital, the biggest facility for cancer patients in Ninewa.

UNMAS experts hold an explosive hazard training course for contractors in West Mosul. The workers, employed by UNDP to remove rubble, are trained on how to recognize and react to the threat of mines and improvised explosive devices.

The hospital was previously the largest center for healthcare in the city and was heavily damaged during fighting between Iraqi forces and Da'esh during 2017. At the time, reconstruction projects were in process to rehabilitate the vast facility after UNMAS cleared the area of explosive contaminants from the area. Due to the size of the complex, both clearance operations and reconstruction were happening simultaneously.

For many IDPs, destroyed housing is one of the biggest obstacles to their return. Addressing this issue is challenging and sensitive in post-conflict Iraq, especially due to high levels of site contamination with

explosive remnants of war (ERW). IOM Iraq routinely coordinates with UNMAS to provide essential information about the risks of explosive hazards in affected communities.

Last year, IOM Iraq completed a pilot project in West Mosul, focused on ERW decontamination and removal of debris. The activity has expanded in 2020; debris will be cleared from more completely destroyed households in the Al Zanjili neighbourhood of West Mosul and explosive hazards will be removed from the sites, in partnership with Tetra Tech.

Residents near Mosul prepare land to plant olive trees as part of WFP's livelihoods and resilience programmes. The projects help people find work again when they return home from camps, enable access to water, and allow communities to recommence farming. The land has been cleared of explosive hazards, thanks to WFP's close partnership with UNMAS, experts from the private sector, and other partners.

Ensuring areas are safe from explosive hazards means that participants in WFP's programmes have been able to safely plant vegetables and fruit in "kitchen gardens," which help families meet their household food needs, and secure an income by selling their excess produce. Fellow participants in the programme have planted harvestable trees, and constructed and planted in greenhouses. Many have improved their access to water through restored canals nearby, and new or repaired irrigation.

Safely growing in newly created or repaired greenhouses helps vulnerable families and their communities start farming again, after returning from camps.

Stabilizing Iraq after Da'esh

At the request of the Government of Iraq, UNDP established the Funding Facility for Stabilization (FFS) in June 2015 to facilitate the return of displaced Iraqis, lay the groundwork for reconstruction and recovery, and safeguard against the resurgence of violence and extremism, through the rehabilitation of critical infrastructure. Clearance first

Before any reconstruction and rehabilitation tasks can commence, the area must first be cleared from explosive hazards - improvised explosive devices (IEDs) in particular, that are easily made, camouflaged, and turned into deadly weapons intended to

kill. While IEDs are easy to assemble, they prove a challenge to render safe, specifically due to their dynamic nature. Any houseware item can be turned into an IED, with children especially vulnerable.

After clearance comes recovery

UNDP Iraq has completed more than 2,300 stabilization projects in 31 liberated towns and districts in Iraq, helping local authorities to quickly rehabilitate essential infrastructure and services like schools, hospitals, roads, water networks, and electricity systems. These efforts have contributed to the return of more than 4.6 million IDPs.

IOM Iraq works to address the drivers of conflict, displacement and irregular migration, by strengthening Government capacity to provide services; initiatives that rebuild trust between communities; increasing opportunities for community and civil society interaction. Stabilization and recovery programmes include community engagement; livelihood and job creation; mental health and psychosocial support in conflict-affected communities; social cohesion projects; and infrastructure rehabilitation among others.

WFP is supporting 70,000 returnees from camps and host communities through scaled-up, longer-term livelihood and resilience activities such as restoring irrigation systems, agricultural inputs and training opportunities. Such activities help vulnerable people and their communities get back to work, and meet their food requirements.

For this International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action (IMAD2020), UNMAS, UNDP, IOM, and WFP, would like to thank all of the front-line personnel who risk their lives on a daily basis to clear critical infrastructure in contaminated areas.

By UNMAS, UNDP, IOM, and WFP



UNMAS held a training course on “Basic Humanitarian Mine Action Management” for national government stakeholders in Diyala

Baghdad, 7 April 2020 - In cooperation with the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Center (JCMC), last month, UNMAS held a two-day training course on “Basic Humanitarian Mine Action Management” for national government stakeholders in Diyala, Iraq. The training is part of a series of training and technical support initiatives undertaken by UNMAS and tailored for the Government of Iraq to generate a new cohort of skilled Iraqis well-positioned to tackle mine action challenges faced by the country today. The training was delivered for 33 staff (23 men, 10 women) representing several key departments, ministries, and municipalities across the public sector. The course provided participants with an overview of UNMAS Iraq activities in explosive hazard management, risk education,



explosive ordnance disposal/improvised explosive device disposal, gender mainstreaming, integration and equal opportunities, quality management as well as other topics.

Lamia Ghadban, Head of the Governor Office and a participant in the training, said: “The workshop was substantive and informative, introducing us to the

national and international mine action standards, standard working practices, and the standing operation procedures, among others. This will help us in conducting our jobs.”

UNMAS Iraq would like to thank the Federal Republic of Germany for its contribution to training and technical support initiatives in the country.

Healthcare

The race to improve suicide prevention in Iraq



Baghdad, 19 March 2020 - When Basheer* got married, his wedding — held in a camp for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Duhok Governorate — brought great joy to his loved ones. It was the first wedding in his extended family since the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) launched an attack on Sinjar, his hometown, in 2014.

A week later, Basheer was dead. The young man had committed suicide; to this day, neither his family nor the police understand why.

Zaynab*, 16, was originally from Tel Afar. Her family was displaced to a camp in Kirkuk Governorate, where they lived in this modest tent (pictured right). Her father believes that years of living in the small space in a camp caused Zaynab’s behaviour to change:

she gradually became quieter and more reclusive.

“Living in a camp for her was equal to confinement, sitting in this small tent watching the days go by waiting for something to change,” said her father. One day, she took her life.

A 2016 WHO estimate shows that worldwide roughly 800,000 people commit suicide each year, putting the average suicide rate at 10.5 per 100,000 people. In Iraq, 447 cases were recorded in 2018 — a rate of 1.7 cases per 100,000 people.

While these numbers may be low, a recent study by the Iraqi Ministry of Health shows that suicide is on the rise. The 2018 figures represent a 64 per cent increase from the number of cases recorded by the Ministry of Health in 2015 (290), and most

involved young people under the age of 30.

Pre-existing mental health issues have been cited as factors in suicidal cases across the country. However, years of violence in Iraq may also have contributed to the rise of suicide among young people. This rise is due to an increase in mental health problems — including depression and anxiety — in particular among displaced and returnee communities.

“According to our surveys, most of the people who went through displacement were mentally exhausted, even after they returned to their areas of origin,” said Dr Imad Abdulrazaq, Director of Mental Health at the Iraqi Ministry of Health. “About 25 per cent showed symptoms of medium to severe depression, with suicidal or aggressive thoughts.”

“Many displaced people are still living in camps and cannot return to their homes. This situation requires mental health services and livelihood support, so that these people can get back to their normal lives,” Dr Abdulrazaq added.

A displaced Yazidi family near their tent in Duhok Governorate’s Shekhan camp. Anjam Rasool/IOM Iraq, 2019
Sakar Sabir is a suicidologist with Azhee, a local NGO based in Erbil that supports families who have lost loved

The race to improve suicide prevention in Iraq *(continued)*

ones due to suicide. “People who don’t have a healthy mental state will be more prone to suicidal tendencies, and the displaced communities have been through a lot in the past five years. Many of them need support,” she said. But mental health issues are not the only causes of suicide. “More often than not, other factors exist such as social issues that can cause the mental health problems and [contribute to the development of] suicidal tendencies,” Sabir added.

Figures from the Iraqi Ministry of Health show that nearly 60 per cent of the suicide cases in Iraq involve a mental health problem. Other reasons include “poor economic situations, depression, and domestic violence,” Dr Abdulrazaq said.

Sakar Sabir believes that the available numbers of suicide cases in Iraq are only a fragment of the actual numbers due to heavy underreporting. Often, numbers provided by different government bodies show discrepancies; for example, the Kurdistan Regional Government’s (KRG) police figures show that the number of suicides in the region was 239 in 2018, while the KRG Ministry of Interior has a figure of 300 for the same year. Raber Y. Aziz/IOM Iraq, October 2019.

Suicide in IDP and Returnee Communities

Finding data about suicide rates within IDP and returnee communities is a challenge, since not all Iraqi governorates record this data. However, the Department of Health in Duhok – which hosts some 250,000 IDPs – has noted some disturbing figures over the past two years, showing suicide rates in camps to be five times higher than the nationwide average.

Between 2017 and 2018, 42 cases of suicide inside camps — with a ratio of four female victims to one male — were recorded by the Duhok Department of Health, or 8.46 cases per 100,000 people. A survey by the same Department also found that depression, anxiety and psychosis are widespread in displaced communities.

“Some of the cases [involve] clinical conditions, but most times a psychosocial reason leads to depression. IDPs have been [in camps] for a long time, and it comes down to their ability to cope with their situation,” said Dr Omed, the focal point for Mental Health Services at the Duhok Department of Health.

“Many displaced persons are struggling to find job opportunities and can’t

invest their time in activities that are meaningful or that generate income, so they think their life has no value,” Dr Omed added.

In Kirkuk Governorate a local NGO, Iraqi Human Rights Centre, noted in a statement (Arabic) posted to their Facebook page on 5 February 2019 that there were 44 cases of suicide in 2019 in Kirkuk alone, which represents about 10 per cent of the 2018 figure for the whole of Iraq.

Kirkuk is also home to a large number of displaced persons and returnees.

Faris* was only 14 when his family fled ISIL’s 2014 onslaught on Sinjar. He lives with his family in an improvised home set up in a public space in Shariya, Duhok Governorate. Because of his precarious mental health condition, he has tried to commit suicide several times.

“It’s been five years since we fled. We never thought our life would be like this. Before ISIL, life was good. The best thing was that we belonged there, and we had a home,” he explained.

“No one thought that we would suffer a genocide. After we fled, everything changed forever. We have no home now; all my friends are scattered. It’s just not the same life. And here we don’t have job opportunities.”

Buhar* is a Yazidi girl from Sinjar; her family has lived in Duhok’s Shariya Camp since 2014. In 2019 she slipped into a depression, and attempted suicide multiple times.

“We are among family and friends here, but this is not where we belong. We fled to this place because we didn’t have a choice,” she explained. “Days just keep passing by and our lives are difficult. I miss my home. [After] ISIL attacked us, everything I loved was gone.”

“We keep thinking about our families and friends and those taken by ISIL, about our difficulties as displaced persons. Life in a tent is not a life. My dad has a disability and none of us has a job,” she added.

Buhar was eventually referred to a clinical psychiatrist and hospitalized in Duhok. She was put on medication to help alleviate her depression; and receives further treatment from a psychologist working at the community centre in Shariya for psychosocial assistance — led by local organization DAK, with support from the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

Buhar and other visitors to the Shariya Centre engage in recreational activities such as reading, tailoring, sports and others to help them overcome

depression. Anjam Rasool/IOM Iraq, 2019.

Ayman is a trained psychologist working at this community centre; he sees both Buhar and Faris for consultations. He believes that everyone in Shariya – IDPs and host community members – is in need of awareness raising, psycho-education and psychosocial support to prevent suicide, because often the victims and their families do not realize that they have mental health issues.

“Many families dismiss the symptoms as insignificant,” Ayman said. “Faris’ family thought he was just trying to get attention, that he was being dramatic. But his symptoms were very serious.”

The widespread stigmatization of suicide means that many individuals don’t seek support when they are in distress, and these conditions may develop into severe mental health problems.

“[Suicide] is considered a taboo subject in Iraq. Victims’ families will call it an accident; [they’ll say] that someone fell, or someone was burned while using the stove,” said Dr. Rezan, Director of Mental Health in the Erbil Department of Health.

When patients and their families avoid seeing doctors and seeking help, simple cases of depression or anxiety can progress from low to high severity.

“Later they develop suicidal thoughts which turn into plans. Then they might send signals [about the plans], and that may end up in suicide if these signals are neglected,” said Dr. Imad, from the Iraqi Ministry of Health.

Fighting this stigma will require a perception change about suicide, but more importantly about mental health issues, because prevention can take place when a condition is addressed early.

This will require awareness raising on a large scale.

Ayman’s team reached out to Faris’ family to educate them about symptoms of depression; the family was receptive and took Faris’s condition more seriously. Some individuals are able to visit the psychosocial support centre in Shariya, while others are referred to the centre by family and friends. The centre also identifies cases through family visits and outreach activities in the community.

DAK, an IOM Iraq implementing partner, provides a range of family and community-based activities, and focused non-specialized services including awareness meetings, group discussions, informal activities,

The race to improve suicide prevention in Iraq *(continued)*

vocational courses, recreational activities, cultural activities, sport activities, and emotional support sessions. IOM Iraq has similar centres in seven governorates across Iraq.

Challenges and Needs Gaps

Iraq is one of 80 countries worldwide that has a suicide prevention strategy, but the lack of credible statistics about mental health and suicide — which are essential for understanding the scale of needs and planning an adequate response — needs to be addressed first. “The ministry is planning to open Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) units in every Primary Health Care Centre, where people can receive services and trained staff can collect data to determine the patients’ mental health conditions,” said Dr. Rezan, from Erbil’s Department of Health, “because only then something can be done to prevent suicide.”

But plans to expand available MHPSS services, and carry out far-reaching awareness campaigns will require a tremendous work force, which Iraq currently does not have. According to WHO’s 2017 Mental Health Atlas, Iraq

has 639 mental health workers — or 1.77 specialized workers per 100,000 people.

In 2019 IOM Iraq, in cooperation with the Ministry of Health, organized a comprehensive training for nurses from primary health care centres, and a workshop to build capacity among specialized psychiatrists

“The workshop allowed us to develop a guidebook that has specialized and non-specialized entries to help MHPSS workers provide better services, safely interact with mental health patients, manage high risk and emergency cases and refer patients for specialized care,” said Dr. Imad.

The capacity building activities were organized in different governorates across the country.

Awareness raising was done through interactive sessions between the community and IOM Iraq facilitators; misconceptions about prevention and response to suicide cases were challenged, and participants’ personal experiences were discussed and analyzed.

Ayman, the therapist at community centre in Shariya town, thinks that carrying out awareness raising campaigns at the community level is

crucial to teach families to pay attention to their own mental health, seek support if they identify symptoms of depression and fight stigmatization.

“We are trying to help these people help themselves because no matter what we do, if they do not know how to identify symptoms and seek support, and if they don’t listen, their situations will not improve,” he said.

The outcomes were more positive for Faris and Buhar because they received appropriate treatment to help them manage their mental health problems. Intensifying the efforts to raise awareness of mental health problems, fighting stigma, and training more specialized therapists to provide better services are all crucial actions to take in order to reduce suicide rates amongst Iraq’s displaced populations.

IOM Iraq’s MHPSS capacity building and awareness raising initiatives were made possible with funding from the UK Government.

*Names and some identifying details have been changed to protect the privacy of individuals.

Written by Raber Y. Aziz, with contributions from Anjam Rasool/IOM Iraq

UNICEF and WHO sound the alarm on the health dangers of children in Iraq missing routine immunization during the Covid-19 pandemic



Baghdad, 26 April 2020 – In Iraq, less than half of children between the ages of 12 and 23 months are fully immunized against preventable diseases and only two-thirds are protected against measles. Disruption of immunization services caused by the ongoing covid19 pandemic is likely to further reduce measles coverage by an additional 20 per cent, leaving the most vulnerable children at risk of disease outbreak.

“We need to be fully engaged in

protecting Iraqi children from COVID-19 while at the same time ensuring that we continue to protect children from preventable diseases. In these unprecedented times, our message to parents is to make sure children receive their routine immunizations while following national and local guidance on COVID-19 preventive measures including physical distancing, hand washing, and proper coughing and sneezing hygiene as advised by the government and health

officials,” said Hamida Lasseko, UNICEF Iraq Representative.

Immunization is the key to ending child deaths from a range of diseases such as measles and polio, thereby giving children a chance to grow up healthy and reach their full potential.

“We cannot afford to go backwards on our achievements. While we are still to have a vaccine for covid19, let us take full advantage of the vaccines that are available by ensuring that children in Iraq are immunized on time” added World Health Organization (WHO) Iraq Representative Dr Adham Ismail.

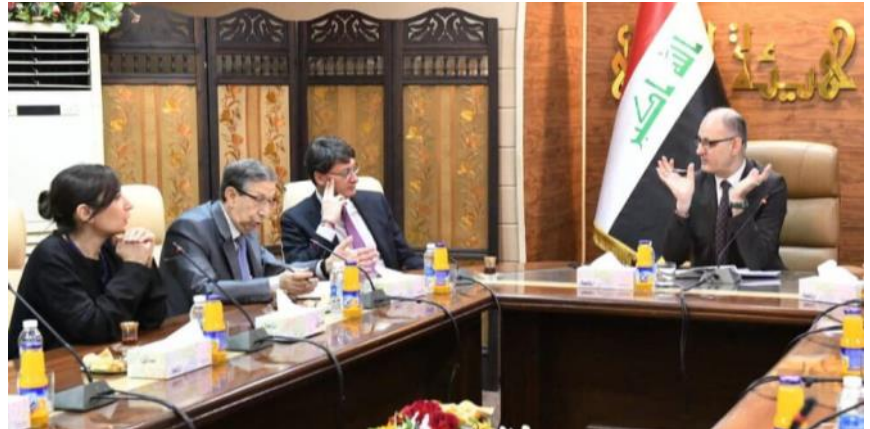
Vaccinations rates in Iraq have been low in recent years due to decades conflict and under-investment in health services.

UNICEF and WHO are calling on the Government of Iraq to increase investment in health services and to start planning intensified immunization activities, including campaigns, to identify and reach children with missed vaccine doses, once the pandemic is fully under-control.

Heads of UNESCO Iraq and Ministry of Culture discussed the ongoing works in Al-Nouri Mosque

Baghdad, 3 March 2020 - Mr. Paolo Fontani, Director of UNESCO Iraq, met with the Minister of Culture, Dr. Abdulameer Al-Hamdani, to discuss the ongoing works in Al-Nouri Mosque. Mr Fontani was accompanied by Mr Mounir Bouchenaki, special advisor to UNESCO Director General Azoulay, and Ms Maria Rita Acetoso, Senior Specialist in charge of Al-Nouri Mosque reconstruction.

The UNESCO team presented to the partners the work that UNESCO has been doing in Mosul including rubble removal and demining of Al-Nouri Mosque, stabilization measures and documentation and preservation of architectural remains. He emphasized that UNESCO is looking for a broader consensus among the local population



and authorities regarding the future reconstruction model of the Mosque and Minaret.

UNESCO will work closely with Iraqi

authorities on the reconstruction and rehabilitation of the historic Al-Nouri Mosque in order to preserve Iraq's unique cultural heritage.

Young Moslawis paint Mosul neighborhood blue to emulate chefchaouen



Mosul, 25 March 2020 - "Rwad Al Ataa", a group of Iraqi youth in Mosul, repainted an old neighborhood to emulate Chefchaouen's signature blue after the city sustained significant

damage due to conflict.

"The initiative put a smile on peoples face," said Myassar Al-Shekhawy, an active volunteer in Mosul that took part in the initiative. "The residents of Al-

Mashahada neighborhood love it, the community is very happy".

"The color blue was chosen because it comforts the local population," added Al-Shekhawy, we were inspired by Chefchaouen, the Blue Pearl of Morocco. The project took only two weeks to complete.

"This will leave a print and hopefully this initiative can be implemented in other areas in Mosul," added Ahmad Omar, a resident of the Al-Mashahada neighborhood, also known as the "blue neighborhood".

Mosul is one of the oldest cities in the world. It is one of the largest cities in Iraq, rich in history, heritage, and culture. In Arabic, the name Mosul means "the one that connects". For millennia, Mosul was a strategic crossing point on the Tigris River, connecting north to south, east to west..

Music in Mosul, more than just a tune

Mosul, 15 April 2020 - In June 2014, the music died in Mosul. It was then that violent extremists laid claim to the city on the banks of the Tigris, a city known for its deep and diverse culture life. Music was banned.

As part of its flagship initiative to Revive the Spirit of Mosul through heritage, cultural life and education, UNESCO is in the early stages of implementing a programme to Revive

the Musical Traditions of Mosul.

"We are a people of love, of beauty, of civilization, of music. Music is a world of beauty for all of humanity, and it is a major part of Mosul and of Iraq". Ehsan Akram Al Habib, 39, violinist.

"Music is life," said Ehsan Akram Al Habib, a 39-year-old violinist from Mosul who saw the beauty of music robbed from his city. "Mosul, with the diversity of its religions and

civilizations, is a mosaic that represents all of Iraq."

Revive the Musical Traditions of Mosul seeks to refocus public attention on the diversity of the musical traditions of Mosul. The province of Ninewah in Iraq is home to many religious, cultural and ethnic minorities, each with their specific songs and musical forms, and even musical instruments that find themselves at the intersection of

Music in Mosul, more than just a tune *(continue)*

history, musical expression and tradition. “We are a people of love, of beauty, of civilization, of music. Music is a world of beauty for all of humanity, and it is a major part of Mosul and of Iraq,” said Ehsan.

The programme is part of a project entitled “Listening to Iraq”, which UNESCO is implementing in Mosul with our partner “Action for Hope”, an NGO that was created in 2013 to empower vulnerable populations by celebrating cultural diversity and strengthening social cohesion, as well as recreating the vitality of the arts scene in Mosul and in Iraq in general. “By bringing back music to Mosul,” said Ehsan, “we are trying to bring back life to our city.”

UNESCO has also undertaken preliminary steps to research and map diverse musical practices, building on previous efforts by Iraqi musicians.

This will lead to identifying masters of at least four different musical practices who are able to perform and teach. This phase will be followed by a seminar to discuss teaching methodologies and performance styles among professional musicians and music educators from Iraq and other countries in the region. Finally, a training programme for

young musicians in these different musical practices will be established.

“Action for Hope” is a non-profit organization that is led by Basma El Husseiny, a member of UNESCO’s expert facility for the implementation of the 2005 Convention on the Promotion and Protection of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions.



UNESCO and ICCROM sign an agreement on capacity building for the reconstruction of Mosul’s cultural heritage

Baghdad, 20 April 2020 – The International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM), through its Regional Conservation Office in Sharjah (UAE), will provide a two-year capacity building programme for professionals and craftspeople to contribute to the reconstruction of Mosul’s Old City. This programme is possible thanks to the financial support of the Government of the United Arab Emirates and the European Union and is part of the UNESCO initiative to Revive the Spirit of Mosul.

This ICCROM-UNESCO partnership aims at strengthening the expertise of local young professionals and craftspeople in order to equip them with the required skills for the

reconstruction and rehabilitation of the Old City and, as a result, ensure long-term livelihood opportunities.

The programme targets both young professionals from various disciplines such as architecture, engineering or urban planning, and craftspeople such as masons, carpenters, or stone carvers. Young professionals will be trained on heritage management and conservation, providing them with technical competencies needed to participate in the physical reconstruction of the city. The programme will also prepare a number of skilled building craftspeople to contribute towards the long-term reconstruction needs of the Old City, taking into consideration the protection, revival and evolution of

Mosul’s heritage values.

The capacity building programme will be implemented through a practical on-the-job training modality where trainees will actively participate in the reconstruction of the city’s historic landmarks and houses, and will receive a stipend.

The institutional capacity building scheme falls into the framework of the Revive the spirit of Mosul initiative, UNESCO’s response for the recovery of one of Iraq’s iconic cities. The initiative aims at contributing to community reconciliation and peace building through the recovery of the living environment and rehabilitation of the city’s heritage sites. The initiative places special emphasis in empowering the population as agents of change involved in the process of rebuilding their city through culture and education. This partnership between UNESCO and ICCROM will reinforce local expertise that can participate in the reconstruction, ensuring both ownership and long-term livelihood opportunities for the people of Iraq.

This ICCROM-UNESCO partnership will specifically support the UAE funded project Reviving the Spirit of Mosul by rebuilding its historic landmarks namely the Al-Nouri Mosque and its Al-Hadba Minaret, as well as the Al-Tahera Church and Al-Saa’a Church and European Union funded project Reviving Mosul and Basra Old Cities.



Reconstruction of the Al-Nouri Mosque Complex in Mosul moves ahead to architectural decisions after first phase is completed

Paris, 21 April 2020 – The Joint Steering Committee of UNESCO's rehabilitation and reconstruction project of the Al Hadba Minaret and the Al-Nouri Mosque of Mosul on Tuesday determined future steps for the reconstruction of the two architectural landmarks of the Old City of Mosul (Iraq).

The decision, taken during the third session of the Steering Committee, marked the launch of the second phase of UNESCO's Revive the Spirit of Mosul initiative.

Following the meeting, UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay said that "today marks the culmination of many months of hard work, but also of cooperation, dedication and determination to ensure that we all move ahead together, side by side, to revive the spirit of Mosul. At the end of phase one of the reconstruction of the Al-Nouri Mosque complex, I wish to reiterate UNESCO's firm commitment to the successful implementation of the project for Mosul, for Iraq, and for the world."

Acting for the Committee, UNESCO will launch an international architectural competition for the reconstruction of Al-Nouri Mosque. The competition will take on board the input of the residents of Mosul who will be invited to take part in a large-scale consultation concerning the main reconstruction options for the Minaret and the Mosque. The timetable of these activities will depend on the ongoing response to COVID-19 in Mosul. The second phase of the Revive the Spirit of Mosul Project involving the consolidation of the remaining base and reconstruction of the Minaret and Mosque, will begin once field and soil investigations are completed and after an extensive consultation with the local community on the design of the edifice and on whether to make the Minaret lean to one side as the original did.

At this stage, the Joint Steering Committee endorsed the reconstruction of the Al Hadba Minaret in its original location and opted for an intermediate solution for Al Nouri Mosque, aimed at maintaining the visual aspects of the building as it was before its destruction in 2017.

Recalling that "Al Nouri Mosque is a cultural asset, an archaeological and historical monument," Iraq's Minister of Culture expressed "a strong desire to maintain the authenticity of Al Nouri Mosque with the least of modification."

The project, supported by the United Arab Emirates (UAE), aims to restore and reconstruct the historic landmarks of Mosul, notably the emblematic Al-Nouri Mosque and its celebrated, 45-meter tall

leaning Al-Hadba Minaret, built more than 840 years ago. This historic and defining structure was all but leveled by violent extremists who occupied the city from 2014 to 2017. The project also provides employment opportunities and job training. It is an integral part of UNESCO's flagship initiative Revive the Spirit of Mosul, launched in February 2018, as the Organization's response for the recovery of one of Iraq's most iconic cities, through the revival of education, heritage and cultural life.

Noura bint Mohammed Al Kaabi, the United Arab Emirates' Minister of Culture and Knowledge Development of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) welcomed progress in the reconstruction project saying, "we have come a long way since the project's inception. [...] We have witnessed significant developments on the ground, and I believe the local community in Mosul is satisfied with the project."

The Minister of Culture and Knowledge Development of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Noura bint Mohammed Al Kaabi commented the decision saying, "we have come a long way since the project's inception. This progress would have not been possible without the relentless efforts made by the technical committee and the steering committee. [...] We have witnessed significant developments on the ground. Al Nouri Mosque represents a historical and a cultural asset."

"We are all aiming for the same goal," explained the Minister, "and we shall agree on the principle of safeguarding this cultural heritage. The project has invested a great deal in the local community. We will continue to engage Maslawis throughout the process and are committed to train and hire more Iraqis as part of the project."

Tuesday's meeting of the Joint Steering Committee marks the end of the first

phase of the project that began in early 2019 and lasted a year. It consisted of clearing and demining the site, documenting and assessing it, stabilizing parts that could be salvaged as well as overall planning.

In October 2019, UNESCO, the UAE and the Government of Iraq agreed to undertake the reconstruction of two churches in the Old City of Mosul: the Al-Tahera Syriac Catholic Church and the Conventual Church of Our Lady of the Clock, with a view to reviving the cultural diversity that has characterized the history of Mosul over the centuries.

The President of the Sunni Waqf of Iraq, Saad Kambash for his part said that "rebuilding Al-Nouri Mosque, Al-Hadba Minaret and Al saa'a and Al Tahera Churches, is an essential part of the process of reviving the Spirit of Mosul and spreading hope to enhance the community cohesion"

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the third meeting of the Joint Steering Committee was held virtually. It was co-chaired by the Minister of Culture of Iraq, Abdulameer Al-Hamdani, Minister of Culture and Knowledge Development of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Noura bint Mohammed Al Kaabi, and the Assistant Director-General for Culture of UNESCO, Ernesto Ottone R., with the participation of the President of the Sunni Waqf of Iraq, Saad Kambash, the Representative of the Christian Waqf, Safaa Saffo, and Nicolas Tixier, of the Provincial Dominican Order.

The Assistant Director-General for Culture of UNESCO, Ernesto Ottone R., for his part said that "Mosul always was a crossroads of cultures, proud of its identity and diversity. The project underway pays tribute to the courage of the Moslawis who, spontaneously, in the face of violence, formed a human shield to protect their common heritage."



With the official approval from The Dominican order, UNESCO will now start the stabilization and rehabilitation of The Conventual Church of Our Lady of the Hour in Mosul

Mosul, 24 April 2020 - With the official approval from The Dominican order, UNESCO – in close collaboration with relevant authorities - will now start the stabilization and rehabilitation of The Conventual Church of Our Lady of the Hour in Mosul. This Project's component will include all the phases of a stabilization/rehabilitation project (from site clearance and initial survey to the preparation of the detailed design for the actual execution of the works), which will create a unique 'on-the-job training' opportunity for local heritage professionals and craftsmen. In fact, the actual implementation of this component will be closely integrated with the long-term capacity building program foreseen within the scope of the Project.

The Conventual Church of Our Lady of the Hour (Al-Saa'a Church) lies at the heart of the Old City of Mosul, at the junction of the two main streets that cut through the historic urban fabric. Built at the end of the XIX century, it has always been considered as one of the iconic landmarks of the Old City of Mosul.

Centre of many spiritual, cultural and educational activities, the church became a living example of the brotherhood between Moslawis, covering religious, cultural and social

functions.

Its architectural and heritage value is important as well. Each viewer coming from Nineveh or Al-Farouq Street would see the Al-Hadba Minaret first then the bell tower of the Conventual Church of Our Lady of the Hour, or vice-versa. This architectural and urban feature is engraved in the memory and history of the people and of the city and is emblematic of the cultural diversity and peaceful co-existence between its communities.

In October 2019, the stabilization and rehabilitation of the Conventual Church of Our Lady of the Hour was included as one of the main outputs in the UAE funded UNESCO Project

'Reviving the Spirit of Mosul by rebuilding its historic landmarks', along with the Al Tahera Syriac Catholic Church and the Al Nouri Mosque complex.

UNESCO is fostering reconciliation and social cohesion in Mosul through the restoration and reconstruction of emblematic historical sites as part of UNESCO's international initiative "Revive the Spirit of Mosul". The rehabilitation of this church is important not only because of its value as cultural heritage, but also as a testimony to the diversity of the city, a proud crossroads of cultures and a peaceful haven for different religious communities over the centuries.



UNESCO begins onsite works in the old city of Mosul within the EU funded project to revive Mosul Old City

Mosul, 28 April 2020 – In close coordination with the Iraqi Armed Forces, UNESCO initiated the first phase of activities by clearing the rubble and UXOs from the first 34 selected houses around the Al-Nouri Mosque in Mosul, Iraq. The process of

clearing the grounds is more than just the removal of old stones. In fact, amidst the rubble there are valuable pieces that could be reused during reconstruction. This is another example of UNESCO's commitment to restoring the structures with every effort taken

to preserve their historic integrity.

This initiative is made possible with the generous support of the European Union and coordinated work with the Government of Iraq, local partners and international experts. It is being undertaken as a major part of UNESCO's Initiative to Revive the Spirit of Mosul. This initiative includes three main strategic areas: education, cultural life and heritage.

UNESCO has undertaken the delicate task of reconstruction from amidst the ruins, while ensuring strict adherence to the historic integrity of the structures.

The purpose of the project is to promote livelihood opportunities for youth in Iraq and in particular among the communities of the Old City of Mosul and to contribute to the restoration of the historic urban landscape while contributing to social cohesion and inter-community reconciliation.



Life on the front line

Baghdad, 30 April 2020 - Protestors on the streets and a government lockdown of all media is all in a day's work for Norwich High School alumna Alice Walpole.

"Yes, now is a perfect time to talk... Yes, now is a perfect time to talk... Yes, now is a perfect time to talk... Yes, now is a perfect time to..."

A chilly Friday morning in London towards the end of last year, and we are trying to speak via WhatsApp to Norwich High School alumna Alice Walpole at the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) in Baghdad. After listening to the same phrase on a loop for a few minutes, we send her an email to let her know of the problems in connecting. This is when we learn that just moments before our aborted call, the Iraqi government had closed down all social media platforms and much of the internet in response to the hundreds of thousands of protestors who had taken to the streets of their capital to demand more jobs, an end to corruption and better public services.

UN Assistant Secretary-General Alice Walpole is Deputy Special Representative (Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance) in UNAMI, a frontline role where she is uniquely positioned to effect change in a country that is desperate to move forward. Once we were able to reach her on the phone, she explained: "Iraqis are wonderful people, diverse, proud and resilient. The country has emerged from terrible conflict and there's a chance now for it to build a stable and prosperous future. Our role, under a mandate from the UN Security Council, is to advise, assist and support in that development."

The bigger picture she paints shows the scale of the work to be done, particularly in the realm of women's advancement. "Women here have been largely excluded from the political sphere, despite quotas for female MPs," she says. "With just one female minister, there are very few women in the national decision-making process. This includes the judiciary, senior civil service roles, diplomacy, academia and so forth. Essentially, the top echelons in all professions are severely underrepresented by women."

"Iraq has a huge cadre of energetic, experienced women. It cannot afford to ignore the talents of 50% of its population."

An increase in the number of women in decision-making roles would offer significant social and economic benefits; it's widely documented that those countries where girls finish their education and are enabled to join the workforce will enjoy greater economic growth and social stability. In other



words, women's empowerment builds political stability, boosts productivity and increases economic diversification, in addition to other positive development outcomes. UNAMI is working with female advisers from all walks of life, to get women's voices heard in Iraq's national dialogue. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres is dedicated to improving gender parity within the UN itself, and has been successful in establishing it at a senior level.

"Iraq has a huge cadre of energetic, experienced women. It cannot afford to ignore the talents of 50% of its population."

"We're now working to get it to filter through the organisation," says Alice, "although unsurprisingly, there can be difficulties in reaching gender parity in some fields." It follows that while some posts will attract all applicants, there are still some, for example on security and engineering teams, that remain predominantly the preserve of men. Equally, Iraq as a posting can prove tricky. As a designated 'non-family duty station', many people will be put off. "It's true that we face challenges in Iraq to recruit and retain female staff, but for those that do come, we are trying to do all we can to accommodate them," she says, and mentions mentoring, a female doctor and yoga classes as some of the provisions now being offered on the Baghdad compound. Not to mention an entirely female senior leadership team. Alice talks about showcasing the work of female colleagues, so that "people don't think of the UN in the field as just male peacekeepers".

What was it that drew Alice to this world in the first place?

"My mother was a politician and she had a career when a lot of women in the UK did not. I was brought up in a family with strong female role models and a long history of public service. Norwich High School had very much the same ethos, and actively encouraged us to engage with society. We were taught by strong-minded, independent women; it was a very good launching-off point. It wasn't until I got to university that I realised how radical some of that thinking had

been. Our headmistress, the redoubtable Dorothy Bartholomew, made us believe that we could do anything we wanted with our lives."

And the challenges?

"The toughest challenge for me is being away from my six children. I miss them all the time we're not together. But I do get home for a week, and sometimes longer, every six weeks or so. And I know that my children – who are all in their twenties now – fully support me and understand the value of the work I do. "We live in an era of increasing nationalism – the building of barriers – across the world. I believe in internationalism and multilateralism. The organisation that most embodies this global interconnectedness is the UN. So now, with countries closing in on themselves, the UN's work is more important than ever. It's a privilege to work for this organisation."

Alice Walpole

The Hon Alice Walpole OBE is the Deputy Special Representative (Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance) of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). She has previously served as British Ambassador to Luxembourg and to Mali and Niger, and as British Consul-General in Basra, Iraq. She has also served in various capacities in London, New York, Brussels and Dar es Salaam with the British Foreign Office. She was appointed OBE in the 2017 New Year Honours for Services to British Diplomacy.

Established at the request of the government of Iraq, UNAMI has been on the ground since 2003, working to fulfil a wide-ranging mandate. Elements include advising and assisting the government on advancing political dialogue and national reconciliation, assisting in the electoral process, facilitating regional dialogue between Iraq and its neighbours and promoting the protection of human rights and judicial and legal reforms. The operation is one of the UN's biggest: costing \$100m a year, requiring almost 1,000 national and international staff, and working closely with UN agencies including UNDP, UNICEF and UNESCO.

UNESCO, UNICEF and Ministry of Education discussed the development and rollout of a comprehensive Education Management Information System (EMIS) for Iraq

Baghdad, 04 March 2020 - UNESCO together with UNICEF met with the Ministry of Education’s Deputy Director General for Planning and the Ministry’s EMIS Technical Committee to discuss the development and rollout of a comprehensive Education Management Information System (EMIS) for Iraq.

The availability of relevant, timely and critical data strengthens government’s ability to improve education through evidence-based policy and decision making. Through its EU funded EMIS project, the UNESCO Office in Iraq is supporting the MoE to develop and rollout a comprehensive Education Management Information System (EMIS). EMIS functions as a

management tool to capture and utilize education data, for nationwide

monitoring and improved planning, and more effective delivery of services.



Timeline

Message from the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Iraq, Ms. Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, to the people of the Kurdistan Region and Iraqis as a whole, on the occasion of Nowruz

Baghdad, 20 March 2020 - Nowruz, traditionally a time of renewal and a celebration of history and identity for Kurds and many other people around the world, comes at a particularly challenging time this year.

Normally, families and friends would gather and celebrate in colourful public displays as they welcome the arrival of spring, but this year we will celebrate

at home as COVID-19 can only be fought with the full cooperation of each and every individual.

I would like to wish you a Happy Nowruz. Let us all find hope in the light of spring: may it shine bright across generations, communities and borders, bringing peace, good health and unity.

Nowroztan Pirozbet



UNAMI on Twitter

Baghdad, 12 April 2020 - Warmest greetings to Iraqi Christians on the

occasion of Easter. Despite these difficult days and the restrictions due

to COVID-19, may the occasion bring joy to all. Stay safe. Stay healthy.

Baghdad, 15 April 2020 - Best wishes to the Yezidi community on the Yezidi

new year. May new light bring peace, safety and health.



UN Iraq Special Representative Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert extends her best wishes for a peaceful, healthy Ramadan

Baghdad, 23 April 2020 – The holy month of Ramadan is a time for peace and reflection which Muslims dedicate to praying and fasting, emphasizing forgiveness and charity towards those less fortunate. As COVID-19 continues to take a heavy economic and emotional toll in Iraq and around the globe, with

lockdowns, curfews, and physical distancing, Ramadan remains an opportunity to pause, cherish what we have, look after each other and find peace of mind. The UN family in Iraq wishes you a safe and healthy Ramadan. Better days lie ahead. Ramadan Kareem.

