

IRAQ



Common Country Analysis

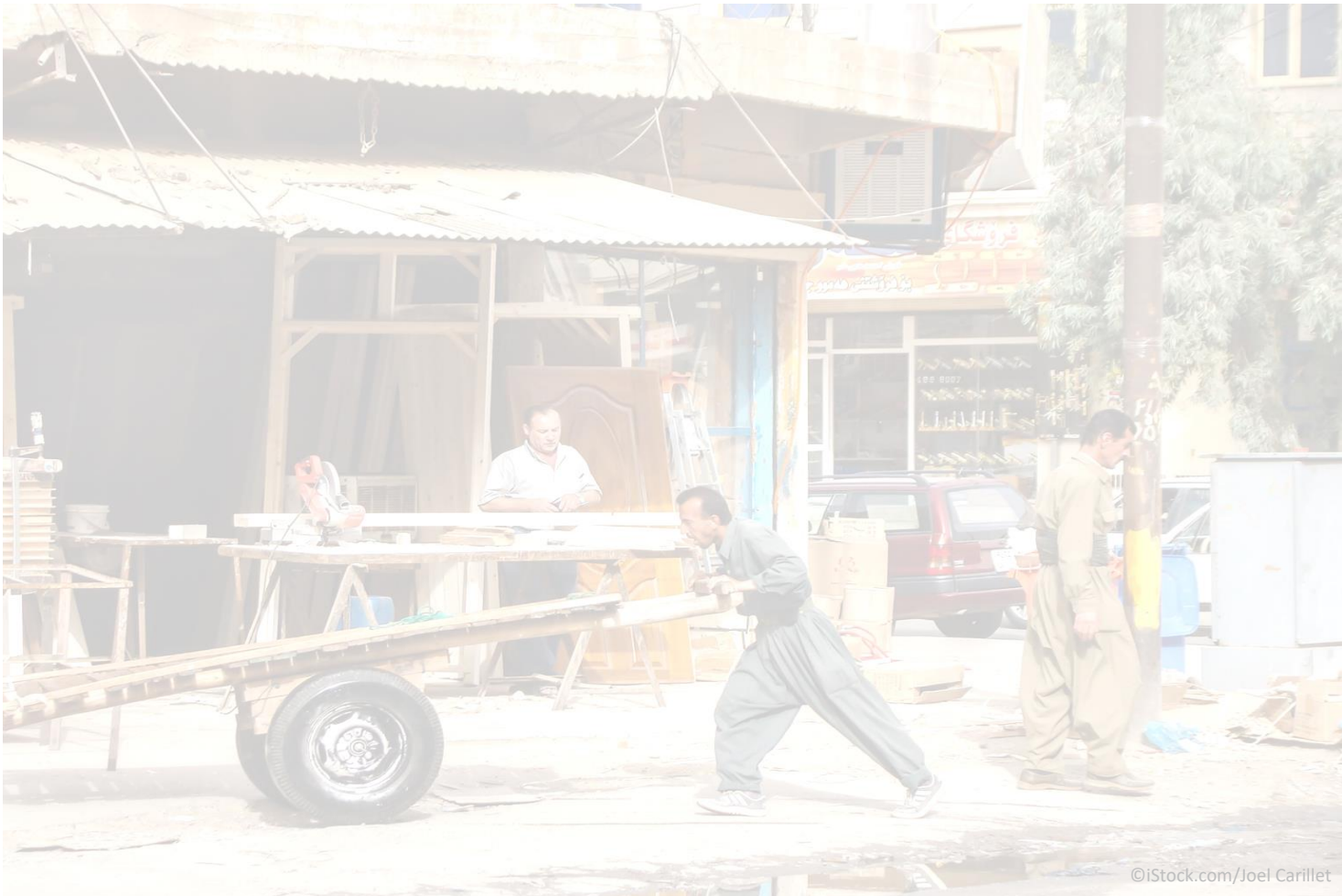
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United Nations in Iraq



الأمم المتحدة - العراق
United Nations Iraq



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Letter to the Regional Director from the Resident Coordinator

Dear Laila,

On behalf of the entire United Nations Country Team (UNCT) in Iraq, I am pleased to present the 2021 edition of our Common Country Analysis (CCA).

Based on the comments generously provided by the Minister of Planning Khalid Battal Najim, we revised the CCA to include the Covid-19 pandemic, fluctuating oil price and the youth demonstrations, that led to the resignation of the previous Government of Iraq.

We also brought the 2021 edition of the CCA into line with the latest guidelines received from your Development Coordination Office. These new guidelines came out on 24 April 2020, the very week after we had finalized the 2020 edition of our CCA.

New for this 2021 edition was the unprecedented support from and collaboration with the Bretton Woods Institutions in the Middle East (IMF, WTO and WB) as well as the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA). Their insights and contributions greatly strengthened the macro-economic aspects of the CCA.

Building on our collaborative experience, I look forward to forging close ties with these non-resident organizations in the future, for the mutual goal of a coherent and consistent development policy in Iraq. Our aim is not to provide band aid, but, rather, durable solutions, as is currently being piloted by the various area-based coordination groups.

The plight of the more than 1 million IDPs and the issue of camp closures continues to worry me. Closing camps does not mean all IDPs go home. In fact, some of the camp closures led to secondary, in a few cases even tertiary displacement. A durable solutions framework is now in place that helps the UN system support the Government in Iraq in finding ways to facilitate a safe, dignified and voluntary return to their areas of origin, or, if this is not possible, sustainable re-settlement.

The 2021 edition of the CCA will hopefully become a useful inter-agency tool to assess where interventions are most needed and useful, not just for the UNCT, which is bound to the UNSDCF anyway, but for our many NGOs development partners as well.

Yours,

Irena Vojáčková-Sollorano

Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General to Iraq, Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator.

Foreword

Iraq's gross domestic product should qualify it as a 'middle-income country'. Yet, efficient provision of public services and an overall good standard of living remain an unfulfilled government promise for most Iraqis. With a high percentage of its 40 million population under the age 25, the youth are calling for improved governance and state institutions that promote economic growth, accountability and jobs.

Additionally, high operational costs related to security forces come at the cost of investments and public services. When Iraq finally emerged from the prolonged fight against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (locally known as 'Daesh'), public grievances started to be expressed openly. Nationwide demonstrations began in 2019, driven primarily by young people calling for meaningful political reforms to improve governance, counter corruption and strengthen accountability.

The inadequate and disproportionate response to the protests, including instances of excessive use of force and violent reprisals by armed actors, led to the resignation of the former Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi, and the formation of a new government led by Mustafa al-Kadhimi. The new Government is facing many overlapping challenges, including a political stalemate in the implementation of needed political and economic reforms; a precarious security environment exacerbated by regional tensions; the COVID-19 pandemic; and an economic crisis compounded by the collapse of global oil prices.

Unfortunately, 4 years after the defeat of ISIL, Iraq still ranks in the top 10 globally for Internally Displaced People. While the Government of Iraq is in the lead in dealing with the issue from a security point of view, the United Nations Country Team has come together under a Durable Solutions Framework, which helps to bring

about sustainable and durable solutions. Access to the area for humanitarian and development partners is key to implementing the durable solutions framework, and 7 Area Based Coordination Groups have been set up, as a pilot, to promote an enabling environment for returns.

Achieving reconstruction and restoration goals, improving access to essential services, taking action to support environmental sustainability and mitigating the impacts of climate change are crucial to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Such issues are reflected in the country's National Framework for Reconstruction and Development. The Iraqi National Development Plan (NDP) includes priorities on sustainable rural development, spatial development as well as reconstruction, thereby aligning national agendas more closely with the SDGs.

The United Nations Country Team (UNCT) is assisting the Government of Iraq in addressing these challenges. The 2020-2024 United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (formerly known as 'UNDAF') supports the people of Iraq in achieving the National Development Plan targets by aligning those targets with the SDGs. Although, in principle, the Government of Iraq is committed to achieving the 2030 Agenda, in practice the many challenges that the country faces make articulating a coherent pathway quite difficult.

This Common Country Analysis (CCA) is a step towards identifying strategic development priorities through data and analysis, while applying United Nations programming principles. The CCA identifies strategic development opportunities, while recognizing capacity limitations facing the realization of these goals. It is also a useful starting point for determining long-term development goals for a more secure, stable, prosperous and equitable Iraq.

Executive Summary

Introduction

As part of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, the Iraq Common Country Analysis (CCA) includes contextual, political, economic and social challenges, and reduces the duplication by other development actors who need updated background information about Iraq to guide and focus their interventions. It also enables the United Nations and its development partners to support national priorities and obligations; contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); and define parameters within which to operate at a level to achieve results. The CCA is a living document that will be updated on a continuous basis to reflect situational developments.

This new 2021 Common Country Analysis was initiated in January 2021 at the request of the Iraqi Minister of Planning, who invited the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Iraq to update the 2021 edition of the Common Country Analysis with the latest insights on the Covid-19 pandemic, the impact of the recent fluctuations in oil price on the development of Iraq, and the legacy of the protests and demonstrations by mainly Iraqi youth demanding greater accountability and transparency from their Government. This analysis was produced with support from the Bretton Woods Institutions (the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organization and the World Bank) in the Middle East, as well as the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA).

Country background and trends

Iraq, one of the founding members of the United Nations, has experienced prolonged conflict over the past four decades. Deepened public mistrust in state

institutions has contributed to instability, violence, and a near break in the social contract, as demonstrated by the recent mass protests by young people, which resulted in a change of government.

Unless the Government of Iraq takes the necessary steps to implement meaningful reforms that meet the aspirations of the Iraqi people, the country would risk facing another cycle of instability in 2021 and beyond. In addition, Iraq has deteriorating socio-economic conditions amplified by the COVID-19 pandemic, a collapse in oil revenue, proliferation of armed actors operating outside state control, societal tensions and division by the ISIL conflict, a large internally displaced persons (IDP) population, and wider regional tensions.

The upcoming elections planned for October 2021 will determine the political future of Iraq and represent a major test of its political system's ability to restore some confidence and deliver tangible benefits that meet the long-standing needs and aspirations of the Iraqi people.

Humanitarian situation

Humanitarian priorities in Iraq include providing urgent assistance to acutely vulnerable IDPs. This requires making large investments in critical infrastructure and housing, re-establishing basic services, creating employment opportunities for the IDPs, and enforcing social cohesion and security. Development and stabilization actors are best equipped to address such challenges.

Political division or paralysis among different government actors are likely to strain the capacity of humanitarian partners to serve people in need. The

politicization of displacement, the ongoing need for IDP camps, and the social cohesion and stabilization challenges, have the potential to expose acutely vulnerable IDPs and returnees to harm, particularly in an election year. Alongside these challenges, the COVID-19 pandemic continues to pose a threat to all Iraqis, especially acutely vulnerable people, including those with medical conditions, minorities and women.

In the short term, humanitarian partners will continue to offer essential services to the most vulnerable returnees. In the long term, partners will have to find ways to support Iraqis in building social cohesion and ensure sustained support for vulnerable, displacement-affected population groups.

Despite all best efforts by the Humanitarian Country Team, increasing development assistance and enhancing institutional support for the forcibly displaced through investment in priority sectors, such as access to quality services, documentation, socio-economic inclusion, recovery and reconstruction, is the key to achieve equitable and inclusive development in Iraq.

Economic situation

The economic crisis resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic and decline in oil prices has created serious challenges for Iraq and highlighted deeper problems. In December 2020, the Central Statistics Office of Iraq reported that its gross domestic product (GDP) had dropped by 21.5 per cent, compared to the same period of the previous year. Iraq is extremely dependent on the oil price, and the budding services sector was locked down by travel restrictions.

In addition, small and medium enterprises are facing challenges exacerbated by the current crisis, with their average monthly revenues falling by 44 per cent in 2020, while the average size dropped from 5.4 to 4.3 full-time employees. This affected the most vulnerable first, such as the youth and day labourers. According to

the World Bank, the economic downturn brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic may push an additional 5.5 million Iraqis, and potentially more, into poverty, if public sector reforms are not carried out in a progressive and efficient fashion.

Poverty remains a constraint on growth and a serious challenge for many, but mostly for women. Iraq already has the highest poverty rate of all upper-middle-income countries. But averages do not tell the whole story: according to the ESCWA regional gender gap report, more than 60 per cent of women's work is unpaid, and the great disparity in the unemployment rate for women (31 per cent) and men (10 per cent) highlights the gendered dimension of poverty in Iraq.

In December 2020, the Central Bank of Iraq also devalued the Iraqi currency by 20 per cent against the United States dollar, from 1,200 dinars to 1,470 dinars per dollar. This decision, which was motivated by fiscal constraints, resulted in a sudden price increase for all imports, and some market upheaval. In the long-term, devaluation may improve domestic competitiveness, but sustained improvements in competitiveness will require deeper reforms.

However, the Government of Iraq has little scope for providing fiscal stimulus. The 2020 budget balance was already negative, falling to -16.8 per cent of GDP due to declining government oil revenue. Delays in budget approvals and chronic shortcomings in financial management created further complications. Iraq also lacks basic public financial management mechanisms. An Integrated Financial Information Management System could connect all government spending units electronically and automate the basic budget execution functions, and a treasury single account would integrate all government accounts into a single treasury account. Without these measures, the Government cannot control all the data and information related to its financial resources and all its cash balances.

Leaving no one behind

The principle of leaving no one behind is particularly important in Iraq, where there are extreme poverty, health and education inequalities and various other forms of discrimination. COVID-19 worsened the situation and reversed many development gains. Many social groups are marginalized on various levels: legal, institutional and cultural, and lack access to basic services. The political situation makes it more difficult to address the root causes of injustice from laws leading to further marginalization. To address marginalization, Iraq should adhere to the values of democracy, respect for human rights and social justice.

Several social groups in Iraq are identified as vulnerable, including women; children and youth; ethnic and religious minority groups; people with disability; internally displaced persons; foreign migrants; victims of trafficking; refugees; and stateless persons. It should be noted that these groups are not vulnerable per se. However, their unique situations may put them more at risk of experiencing vulnerability, marginalization and exclusion.

Moreover, displaced minority communities face acute challenges caused by their minority status that makes them a target of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and other armed extremist groups. These minority communities have little confidence in the government's ability to ensure their safety and security at the local level or put in place reconciliation initiatives. As a result, a significant portion of some minority groups have fled the country since 2003. Ensuring the safety and security of these displaced minorities is essential to leaving no one behind.

The additional complication of IDPs remaining in closed camps, now in many instances classified as informal settlements following closure of the majority of IDP camps in Federal Iraq, adds further vulnerabilities to people unwilling or unable to return home for several reasons. A related challenge is the adverse impact on returns of a fragmented and inefficient identity

management system which nevertheless has a central role on freedom of movement and in access to housing and public services and public security protocols.

Families with a perceived affiliation with ISIL face many of the same obstacles to return as other IDPs, including destroyed homes, lack of livelihoods and lack of documentation and financial means to return.

The return and reintegration of families with a perceived affiliation with ISIL will require a dedicated and distinct response that is both conflict-sensitive and synergized with ongoing facilitated return efforts.

Access to employment and livelihood opportunities continues to be the main concern of IDPs: 70 per cent live in locations where access was reported among the top three needs. Housing remains a pressing issue for the displaced population: 42 per cent of IDPs live in locations where housing was mentioned among the top three needs, with no change compared to May 2018. Only 8 per cent of households remain settled in critical shelter arrangements – compared to 16 per cent in 2016 – while the share of the population settled in camps is comparatively increasing each year.

Iraq also hosts around 250,000 refugees from Syria, the majority of whom are in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. In that region, refugees have a *de facto* right to employment in the private sector upon presentation of their UNHCR identification card. However, in federal Iraq, refugees must go through a registration process with the Ministry of Interior to be allowed to work. This poses several barriers to refugees' access to formal sector jobs.

Trafficking in persons is a multi-faceted problem in Iraq, for both Iraqis and foreigners, with conditions such as the presence of large numbers of vulnerable populations, coupled with a weak rule of law, providing a fertile ground for this phenomenon to breed. However, Iraq has made headway to address trafficking in persons by signing several international obligations relating to combating trafficking and supporting its

victims. Iraq has also shown its commitment to upholding these obligations through several national laws and corresponding actions it has taken.

Iraq is also a transit and destination country for hundreds of thousands of South Asian, Southeast Asian and African migrant workers, including for domestic care, construction and service sectors. Victims or potential victims of trafficking enter Iraq through the main airports, are harboured in large cities, and then transported to other locations within the country and beyond, such as the Gulf States or Syria.

When Iraq is a destination for these migrant workers, they are often recruited by employers in low-skilled business sectors, such as cleaning services, and are brought to neighbouring countries, deceived and exploited into forced labour and other forms of exploitation upon arrival. As COVID-19 and the concurrent decline in the global oil price impacted workforces across Iraq, migrant workers are finding themselves in precarious situations, with employers laying them off or withholding their pay, leaving them unable to meet their basic needs, and thus exposing them to a heightened risk of trafficking.

Very few such cases are ever investigated by Iraq's criminal justice agencies however, and most cases seen by police are cases of trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation. Victims in such cases are women and girls and may be either Iraqi or foreign nationals.

Effective investigation and adjudication of all forms of trafficking in Iraq, and adequate support to and protection for its victims, will require significant additional investment in capacity building, infrastructure, and policy development.

Ensuring that no one is left behind in Iraq requires that these efforts be inclusive and address the risks of all the above-mentioned vulnerable and marginalized groups. It is to be noted that women and girls often fall within the most deprived and disadvantaged groups in

marginalized situations. Therefore, gender mainstreaming in development approaches is essential.

Human rights

As a founding member of the United Nations, Iraq has committed itself to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The compliance of Iraq with its Constitutional and international human rights obligations is crucial to achieving the SDGs, economic, social and cultural rights, observing the principle of leaving no one behind and rebuilding trust. Although Iraq has ratified several international human rights instruments and conventions, these have yet to translate into domestic legal framework. Several draft laws remain pending with the Council of Representatives or are at various stages in the legislative process. Thus, necessitating the need to expedite the endorsement of pending legislation and development of policies and implementation plans for the attainment of economic, social cultural rights and to promote protection for vulnerable groups, including women, children, minorities and internally displaced persons.

The Committee on the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination highlighted a dire situation for the protection of minority communities and the preservation of cultural heritage in Iraq. The lack of basic statistical information to identify the ethno-religious composition of the population also poses a fundamental challenge to identifying and addressing the needs of the diverse societal fabric of the Iraqi population.

Children are also at high risk. While Iraq has ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1994, it did so with some reservations. In 2008, Iraq acceded to the Optional Protocol to the CRC on the involvement of children in armed conflict, as well as the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

Children also suffer from the collective punishment of families with perceived or actual affiliation with ISIL and other extremist groups. They often have limited access to education and experience discrimination, psychological distress, domestic violence, child labour and child marriage. Furthermore, most cannot access essential services because they have no civil documentation.

Persons with disabilities

Persons with disabilities in Iraq, who have been disproportionately affected by armed conflict, violence and other emergencies, experience multiple challenges in accessing equitable services, thereby hindering full enjoyment of their rights and meaningful participation in society. Their situation has been worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has compounded obstacles they face in accessing protection and humanitarian assistance.

Persons with disabilities face a general lack of infrastructure to facilitate their mobility, obstacles in accessing public services, and limited inclusion in decision-making processes. Challenges include, for example, absence of wheelchair access and elevators, sign language interpreters, talking traffic lights and access to various forms of technology.

Persons with disabilities in Iraq also have limited opportunities for meaningful jobs and face high rates of economic inactivity and unemployment. They are often employed in low-skilled, low-paid jobs, a direct consequence of on average lower educational attainment. The situation is more severe for women with disabilities, as they suffer from a higher rate of economic inactivity.

Institutional and societal changes are required to make a definitive shift from a charity-based to a rights-based approach to disability. The legal framework for the promotion and protection of the rights of persons with disabilities needs to be strengthened so that attitudinal

and physical barriers that prevent their active participation in society are dismantled. Of equal importance is the need for an inclusive approach by the Government of Iraq in developing and implementing legislation, policies and programmes to address the situation of women and girls with disabilities.

Displacement

Understanding protracted internal displacement in Iraq, particularly since 2014, is a complex matter. Large-scale population movements occurred in several waves during the conflict and intertwined with aspects such as the ethno-religious/tribal identities of the populations. Return movements also occurred in stages, depending on when areas were retaken from ISIL, the post-conflict physical and social conditions of these areas, and whether or not certain groups were allowed to come back to them.

The fragility of the state in the aftermath of conflict and crises has meant that large parts of the population in Iraq, especially those affected by displacement, are not reached by government services. Consequently, displacement-affected households are highly likely to remain in heightened and protracted vulnerability. For example, 2020 estimates by the World Bank indicate that poverty in regions with large concentrations of people affected by displacement is more than twice than in the rest of the country. The COVID-19 pandemic has worsened conditions for displacement-affected households, even as efforts were sustained by humanitarian actors to continue helping the most vulnerable.

A higher incidence of monetary poverty is not the only indicator of cross-cutting protracted vulnerability among displacement-affected population groups. Another recent study looking at multidimensional poverty in Iraq across the four dimensions of resources, human security, power and voice, and opportunity and choice, identified IDPs, refugees, and single-headed households (the majority of the latter being female-headed, compounding their vulnerability) as the most

vulnerable population groups in the country. At the same time, the lack of civil documentation among displacement-affected households also limits the prospects for their financial and human security.

Continued vulnerabilities in the absence of sufficient resources increases the reliance of many households on negative coping strategies, including those that put the lives of women and girls at risk, such as forced and early marriages. This is particularly acute for households headed by single women, who are already constrained in their ability to secure sustainable livelihoods. Similarly, children may also get dropped out of school as resources become scarce, and access to schools becomes increasingly difficult for several reasons, such as lack of financial means to travel to school. According to one estimate, prolonged periods of conflict and violence have left more than 3.2 million primary school age children in Iraq without education. Poverty in the country has worsened in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, affecting children the most.

Evidence indicates that displacement affected groups often live in precarious conditions, marked by overcrowded or illegally occupied houses that have limited access to basic services and poor infrastructure. This also leaves them more vulnerable to diseases, leading to poor health outcomes.

Higher vulnerability, protracted poverty, and lack of opportunities mean that displacement-affected households not only have limited power, but also few means to get their voices heard. This is reflected in their lack of representation as separate groups in national assessments, despite their large numbers.

The ISIL crisis caused mass displacement across impacted areas, with almost six million people displaced at the height of the crisis. An estimated 1.224 million IDPs still live in situations of protracted displacement across 18 governorates.

Gender equality and women's empowerment

The 2005 Iraq Constitution stipulates that all Iraqis are equal before the law and prohibits discrimination based on sex. It specifically says that "Iraqi citizens, men and women, shall have the right to participate in public affairs and to enjoy political rights including the right to vote, elect, and run for office". However, by stipulating that "no law may be enacted that contradicts the established provisions of Islam", the Constitution opens the door for more conservative interpretations that could limit women's rights. As a result, the status of women in Iraq can greatly depend on the implementation of Islamic law and on the priorities, interpretations and preferences of male religious authorities.

The 2005 Constitution provides guarantees for the implementation of all international instruments to which Iraq is a party. Iraq ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1986, but with some reservations. In addition, it has yet to sign or ratify its optional protocol, which establishes complaint and inquiry mechanisms for CEDAW, and has yet to ratify the Optional Protocol on violence against women.

On the other hand, the May 2018 parliamentary elections saw an unprecedented number of women candidates, nearly 2,600, and women won 25.5 per cent of seats (84 out of a total of 329 seats) in that election. This was an indication of the society's increasing confidence to elect women, despite a number of challenges during the electoral campaign, including defamation, intimidation and harassment, which led to the withdrawal of several candidates from the electoral process.

Women in Iraq have long been perceived to play a key role in peacebuilding and promoting social cohesion. However, despite the constitutional representation quota of women in the national parliament, women

continue to be under-represented at national and local levels, including in reconciliations committees.

Furthermore, since October 2019, women have played an increasingly significant role in the political sphere. In particular, their involvement in the protest movement that demands political, economic and social reforms, may encourage future inclusion of women in decision-making processes. However, the security situation, which had improved in 2019, deteriorated significantly in the last few months in the context of the protests and the geopolitical conditions in the region, and cases of violence have been reported against women activists.

According to 2018 data, only 18.1 per cent of females over 15 years old are economically active, compared to 74.1 per cent of males. Moreover, women are left out of the industry sector, representing 3.9 per cent (mostly related to the oil sector), compared to men (23.4 per cent), while they are more active in the agriculture sector (mostly informally and with poor social protection) representing 43.9 per cent, compared to men (12.3 per cent). The unemployment rate for young females is double than that of males. In 2017, about 56 per cent of young females were unemployed compared to 29 per cent for young males. There is a lack of information about women working in the informal labour sector, as well as in agricultural and domestic work.

Gender-based violence (GBV) is common in Iraq, as well as a deeply-rooted social stigma towards survivors of such violence, particularly sexual violence. Stigma often leads to “honour” killings/crimes, including the maiming or burning of hundreds of women and girls yearly. These crimes are not usually reported to the authorities. If survivors do report GBV, the judicial system seldom prosecutes the perpetrator. GBV survivors face challenges in accessing quality basic essential services. Challenges are also noted with regards to affordable access to health-care services, including sexual and reproductive health, and severe lack of protection and referral mechanisms to address GBV.

Female IDPs in Iraq are particularly vulnerable to domestic violence. Female heads of household, comprising an estimated 13 per cent of all IDP and returnee households, are at high risk because, as managers of the home, they must interact with men outside the family, or in traditionally male domains. IDP women are also at heightened risk of sexual exploitation and abuse and collective punishment if they are perceived to be affiliated with ISIL or other extremist groups.

Environment and climate change

Iraq’s environment has been subject to several pressures stemming from uncontrolled population growth, which has contributed to economic stress and political challenges, as well as pressure on the country’s ecological and natural resources. Rising demand for water, coupled with poor hydro-management, climate change, protracted conflict, severe environmental degradation brought on by a lack of institutional frameworks and policies, as well as natural and human made factors, are all factors that are pushing Iraq close to absolute water scarcity, where 18 per cent of the people are living in water-scarce areas. Also, the impact of three conflicts has led Iraq to become one of the most contaminated countries in the world, with significant environmental consequences of explosive ordnance on land access and management.

Recent analysis shows that Iraq will suffer from increased temperatures, intense heat waves, variable annual rainfall with increased intensity, decreased runoff and sea-level rise in the Gulf. While Iraq ranks 130 out of 181 countries in the Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative (ND-Gain) Index that measures climate vulnerability (with a ranking of 1 being the least vulnerable), Iraq ranks as the 16th least ready country. This is principally due to a weak institutional context for disaster risk management, which is limited to the foundational regulatory framework for disaster risk reduction.

Key findings

Economy

Overreliance on oil sector revenue makes Iraq highly vulnerable to shocks. A diversified national economy, preceded by reforms to encourage private sector investment, will make Iraq and its people more resilient to such shocks and boost employment in highly productive sectors.

Significant infrastructure damage impacting economic production and livelihoods opportunities must be addressed so that families and communities can recover financially. This will take significant investment through the national budget and external contributions and will also require a reshaping of the economy to allow for diversification of revenue streams. Partnering with the private sector, particularly in reconstruction activities and employment creation, will be necessary. It also needs to be complemented by a reform of the public sector, which garners a significant portion of the national budget without delivering efficient or transparent services to the people. Growing non-oil sectors, such as agriculture, tourism and import/export businesses, while also promoting regional and international partnerships essential to the growth of such sectors, should be further explored and supported.

Application of information and communications technology, entrepreneurship and investment promotion will also generate opportunities for job creation and economic and industrial diversity. Achieving industry diversity needs time. It will be better for Iraq to start setting up a more inclusive and sustainable industrial and economic development system.

At the same time, considering the significant unemployment that could create flashpoints for discontent and unrest, particularly in underserved areas of the country, it is essential that a more concerted effort is made to link education to employment and link

investments to the opportunities and constraints felt by increasingly scarce natural resources. This can be at the formal education level, with curricula that reflect the technical needs of the non-oil economy, as well as technical and vocational training for out-of-school youth, women, and those seeking new opportunities, and creating volunteering opportunities to gain job-related skills. Promoting and supporting entrepreneurship is key to an accelerated recovery process in many parts of the country.

Governance

Poor governance has undermined trust and quality of service delivery and marginalized the recipients of the services – the citizens. The current weak social contract between the state and the people needs to be re-established. The Government needs to implement transparent, responsive and inclusive structural reforms of state and civil institutions.

Perhaps the most compelling evidence of this challenge is the state of basic service delivery nationwide. Impacted by conflicts over the years and by underinvestment in development and legislation that is no longer relevant or supportive in the current environment, the Iraqi state now must rebuild its relationship with the people.

A starting point should be essential services – ensuring that all people in the country receive continued access to inclusive quality services, regardless of their background or socioeconomic status. Improving essential services will require developing new and enhancing current mechanisms that benefit the end-user and address rampant corruption in the delivery system. Additionally, the Government needs to resolve civil documentation challenges that many Iraqis, particularly those impacted by the conflict, face daily.

Similarly, focusing on existing state obligations, such as international conventions, the Constitution of Iraq, and national strategies, will show political commitment to

the welfare of the people, especially if the new government can work with civil society to achieve those obligations and create and provide platforms for dialogue with volunteer groups and civil society to build trust and participate in service delivery.

Finally, any trust-building process must emphasise the rule of law, address corruption and recognize the positive aspects of cultural diversity as part of promoting national heritage and identity for peaceful societies. Creating a rights-based and gender equality culture, with respect for its different components as equal contributors to the success of all, will be essential to the sustained success of these processes.

Durable solutions

The Government of Iraq must take a leading role in resolving internal displacement in the country as well as sustaining a protective environment for refugees. International partners stand ready to support technically and financially, whether in camps or within affected communities, through field-level activities, coordination and strategy development, or technical capacity development to manage and support the progressive resolution of displacement. At the same time, rights of other forcibly displaced population groups, including refugees, should be ensured, including their ability to find, and be engaged in, sustainable livelihood opportunities. It should also be understood that while fiscal constraints might limit the government's ability to include refugees into national social protection schemes, their inclusion will, in the long run, be in the interest of raising the country's overall prosperity.

The majority of those who were displaced as a result of the conflict with ISIL are in out-of-camp situations. While most of those are in relatively stable living situations, either staying with host families or being able to afford renting an accommodation, around 8 per cent of them remain in precarious situations, generally referred to as "critical shelter", such as informal settlements and unfinished or abandoned buildings.

Remaining IDPs, both in and out of camp, face a series of challenges that prevent them from returning home, integrating locally, or settling in new locations. These challenges are complex, overlapping and often interrelated. They are also often gendered, and accordingly, the rights of women and girls must be at the forefront of durable solutions.

Obstacles to IDP return can be conceived of in three broad categories: (1) service or material challenges, such as housing damage, lack of livelihood opportunities, lack of basic services and other issues; (2) issues around social cohesion, ethno-religious tension and needs for reconciliation; and (3) issues related to security and political challenges preventing return.

The United Nations in Iraq has established a Durable Solutions Working Group that includes all relevant actors and stands ready to assist the Government to resolve the displacement issue and those affected by it in line with the relevant human rights and protection standards, namely the Principled Returns Framework, the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Framework on Durable Solutions and, of course, Iraqi law.

Social cohesion

Iraq needs to build human capital, provide social protection, promote inclusion and strengthen social cohesion as a prerequisite to a stable society.

At the upstream level, there is a need to reform the social safety net and social protection system to address the needs of vulnerable populations in Iraq and enhance coordination across all social protection instruments. To ensure effective use of resources, it is necessary to move away from regressive subsidies and benefits. Reform should aim at ensuring broad coverage of poor and vulnerable groups that are most at risk of being left behind, with predictable and regular income support as a foundation for a solid social protection floor.

It is also critical to extend a comprehensive social insurance package to a larger share of the workforce, particularly to private sector workers, including those in the informal economy. This would better integrate social security regimes for private and public sector to facilitate labour market mobility and formalization and enhance medium term financial sustainability of the social protection system.

Another element of this process is the need to create space for youth, women and other marginalized segments of the population, such as those affected by displacement, whose voices are not heard in the decision-making that impacts their lives. This includes peacebuilding, economic empowerment and opportunities, volunteering opportunities and access to basic services essential for their safety, dignity and quality of life. From a protection standpoint, it also includes services to those who have suffered trauma during the conflict, and protection against violence because of one's gender, ethnicity, religion or age.

Environment and climate change

Iraq is very vulnerable to climate change and needs to urgently address several issues regarding climate resilience, natural resources management and environmental protection, including risk and disaster management.

Iraq is rich in natural resources, particularly oil, and vulnerable to environmental hazards, such as pollution, flooding, drought, and conflict-related contamination. The impact of climate change is already widely felt in Iraq, with higher temperatures leading to greatly

increased levels of evaporation and loss of water use by farmers and general consumers. While some challenges require preparedness, mitigation and adaptation measures, others require management, political intervention, and proactive planning. Issues such as pollution, for example, impact human health, economic production, and the ability to live in safety. Air and water pollution can result from industry, conflict, as well as poor infrastructure, leading to improper waste and water management.

Natural resource-related conflict must also be understood and mitigated. Clearance of unexploded ordinance and other conflict-related contamination can revive productive land for agriculture and allow for safe returns to liberated areas. Similarly, trans-boundary cooperation with neighbouring countries regarding shared resources, such as water, will be essential for the long-term health and welfare of Iraq. Engagement of the private sector to promote greener technologies must also play a significant role.

Addressing the management and protection of natural resources, biodiversity and productive lands not only ensures their sustainable use, but also contributes to a better disaster risk preparedness, response and management. Planning of expanding human settlements that are risk-resistant, while also managing the environment in a sustainable manner, is essential for the future of Iraq. Community education and awareness, including through volunteering to build resilience, combined with legislative and policy frameworks, can provide a sustainable approach i.e. encourage behavioural change to meet the needs of the population without damaging the environment and natural resources necessary for the quality of life

التحليل القطري المشترك للعراق لعام 2021

الملخص التنفيذي

معلومات أساسية عن القطر والاتجاهات السائدة

شهد العراق؛ أحد الأعضاء المؤسسين للأمم المتحدة، صراعاً طويلاً طوال العقود الأربعة الماضية. وقد ساهم الشعور العام العميق بعدم الثقة في مؤسسات الدولة في وجود حالة من عدم الاستقرار والعنف كاد أن ينفرد بسببها العقد الاجتماعي، مثلما تجلّى ذلك خلال الاحتجاجات الجماهيرية التي نظمها الشباب ونتج عنها تغيير الحكومة.

ومالم تتخذ الحكومة العراقية الخطوات اللازمة لإجراء الإصلاحات الفعالة التي تُلبّي تطلعات الشعب العراقي، فمن المحتمل أن تواجه البلاد خطر التعرض لموجة أخرى من الاضطرابات في عام 2021 وبعده. إضافة إلى ذلك، يشهد العراق أوضاعاً اقتصادية واجتماعية متدهورة فاقمتها جائحة كوفيد-19، وانهيار عائدات النفط، وانتشار الجماعات المسلحة التي تعمل خارج سيطرة الدولة، ووجود أعداد كبيرة من السكان النازحين، والتوترات الإقليمية واسعة النطاق.

وسوف تحدد الانتخابات المقبلة، التي من المقرر اجراءها في تشرين الأول 2021، مستقبل العراق السياسي، وستمثل اختباراً هاماً لمقدرة نظامه السياسي على استعادة بعض الثقة المفقودة، وتقديم فوائد ملموسة من شأنها تلبية احتياجات الشعب العراقي وتطلعاته القائمة منذ زمن طويل.

الأوضاع الإنسانية

تشمل الأولويات الإنسانية في العراق تقديم المساعدة العاجلة إلى النازحين الذين يعيشون أوضاعاً بالغة الهشاشة. ويتطلب هذا القيام باستثمارات ضخمة في البنى التحتية الحيوية، والإسكان، وإعادة تأسيس الخدمات الأساسية، وخلق فرص

مقدمة

بصفته جزءاً من إطار التعاون للأمم المتحدة في مجال التنمية المستدامة، يشتمل التحليل القطري المشترك للعراق على تحديات سياقية وسياسية واقتصادية واجتماعية، ويقف تكرار (الأنشطة) عن طريق الأطراف الفاعلة الأخرى في مجال التنمية، والتي تحتاج إلى معلومات أساسية محدّثة عن العراق لتوجيه مشاريعها وتركيزها. كما يمكن التحليل الأمم المتحدة وشركاءها في مجال التنمية من دعم الأولويات والالتزامات الوطنية؛ والمساهمة في تحقيق أهداف التنمية المستدامة؛ وتحديد الأطر التي يتعين أن تعمل ضمنها بالمستوى الذي يمكنها من تحقيق النتائج المحددة. التحليل القطري المشترك هو وثيقة حيّة يتم تحديثها بشكل مستمر لتعكس تطورات الأوضاع في العراق

بدأ العمل في التحليل القطري الجديد لعام 2021 في شهر كانون الثاني 2021، بناء على طلب من وزير التخطيط العراقي الذي وجه دعوة للمنسقة المقيمة للأمم المتحدة في العراق لتحديث طبعة التحليل القطري المشترك لعام 2021 بتضمينها آخر المستجدات بشأن جائحة كوفيد-19، وتأثير الإنهيار المؤخر في أسعار النفط على تطورات الوضع في العراق؛ والآثار التي خلفتها الاحتجاجات والمظاهرات التي نظمها الشباب العراقي مطالبين بحكومتهم بقدر أكثر من المساءلة والشفافية. وجرى إعداد هذا التحليل بدعم من مؤسسات بريتون وودز (Bretton Woods صندوق النقد الدولي، ومنظمة التجارة العالمية، والبنك الدولي) في الشرق الأوسط، فضلاً عن اللجنة الاقتصادية والاجتماعية لغربي آسيا (الإسكوا).

النفط، وكان قطاع الخدمات الوليد قد أغلق بسبب القيود المفروضة على السفر.

بالإضافة إلى ذلك، تواجه المشاريع الصغيرة والمتوسطة تحديات فاقمتها الأزمة الحالية، حيث انخفض متوسط إيراداتها الشهرية بنسبة 44 في المئة في عام 2020، في حين انخفض متوسط حجم العمالة ذات الدوام الكامل بنسبة تتراوح ما بين 5.4 إلى 4.3 بالمئة. وقد أثر هذا الانحدار في المقام الأول على الفئات الضعيفة مثل الشباب والعمالة اليومية. ووفقاً للبنك الدولي، فإن التراجع الاقتصادي الذي أحدثته جائحة كوفيد-19 قد يدفع 5.5 ملايين شخص آخرين في العراق، وربما أكثر من ذلك، نحو الفقر، ما لم تجر إصلاحات في القطاع العام بشكل مطرد وناجح.

لا يزال الفقر يمثل عائقاً أمام النمو وتحدياً خطيراً للكثيرين، لا سيما النساء. والعراق به بالفعل أعلى معدل للفقر من بين جميع البلدان ذات الدخل المتوسط الأعلى؛ ولكن المعدلات لا توضح القصة بأكملها؛ إذ إنه وفقاً لما ورد في التقرير الإقليمي "الإسكوا" حول الفجوة بين الجنسين فإن أكثر من 60% من العمل الذي تمارسه النساء غير مدفوع الأجر؛ كما أن أوجه التفاوت الكبير في معدلات البطالة بين الجنسين حيث تبلغ (31%) للنساء و (10%) للرجال توضح ارتباط الفقر في العراق بالبعد المتعلق بالتنوع الاجتماعي.

في كانون الأول 2020، قام البنك المركزي العراقي بتخفيض قيمة العملة العراقية بنسبة 20% مقابل الدولار الأمريكي من 1,200 دينار إلى 1,470 دينار. وقد نتج عن هذا القرار، الذي كان الدافع وراءه معوقات مالية، ارتفاع مفاجئ في أسعار جميع المواد المستوردة، وحدوث بعض الاضطرابات في الأسواق. وقد يؤدي تخفيض سعر العملة في المدى الطويل إلى تحسين القدرة التنافسية للمنتجات المحلية، ولكن التحسن المستدام في هذه القدرة يتطلب إصلاحات أعمق.

ولكن الحكومة العراقية لديها نطاق ضيق لتقديم حافز مالي؛ فرصيد الميزانية لعام 2020 كان سلبياً بالفعل، حيث تدنى إلى سالب 16.8 بالمئة بالنسبة للنتائج المحلي الإجمالي بسبب تناقص إيرادات الحكومة من النفط. لقد أدى التأخير في صدور الموافقات اللازمة للميزانية وقصور في الإدارة

عمل للنازحين، وتعزيز التماسك الاجتماعي والأمن. إن الأطراف الفاعلة في مجالي التنمية وإعادة الاستقرار مزودون بشكل جيد بمتطلبات التصدي لمثل هذه التحديات.

ومن المرجح أن تؤدي حالة الانقسام السياسي أو الشلل فيما بين مختلف الأطراف الحكومية الفاعلة إلى الضغط على قدرة شركاء المجال الإنساني على تقديم الخدمة إلى الأشخاص المحتاجين إليها. وقد يؤدي اتسام حالة النزوح بالطابع السياسي والحاجة المستمرة لمخيمات النازحين، والتحديات الماثلة أمام التلاحم الاجتماعي والاستقرار، إلى تعريض الفئات شديدة الضعف من النازحين والعائدين إلى ضرر كبير، لا سيما في سنة تجرى فيها انتخابات. وبجانب هذه التحديات، لا تزال جائحة كوفيد-19 تشكل تهديداً لجميع العراقيين، خاصة الفئات السكانية شديدة الضعف.

وسيوصل شركاء العمل الإنساني في المدى القصير تقديم الخدمات الأساسية إلى الفئات الأشد ضعفاً من العائدين. أما في المدى الطويل؛ وبالتالي، يتعين على الشركاء إيجاد سبل لدعم العراقيين في بناء النسيج الاجتماعي وضمان الدعم المستدام للفئات السكانية الضعيفة المتأثرة جراء النزوح.

وعلى الرغم من كل الجهود الطيبة التي يبذلها الفريق القطري للعمل الإنساني في العراق، فإن زيادة المساعدات التنموية، وتعزيز الدعم المؤسسي للنازحين قسراً، من خلال الاستثمار في القطاعات ذات الأولوية مثل الحصول على خدمات ذات جودة، والحصول على الوثائق الثبوتية، والاندماج الاجتماعي والاقتصادي، والتعافي وإعادة الإعمار، تمثل العامل الرئيسي لتحقيق تنمية في العراق تشمل الجميع.

الوضع الاقتصادي

لقد تسببت الأزمة الاقتصادية الناتجة عن جائحة كوفيد-19، وهبوط أسعار النفط في تحديات خطيرة للعراق، وسلطت الضوء على مشاكل أكثر عمقاً. في كانون الأول 2020، أورد الجهاز المركزي للإحصاء في العراق أن الناتج المحلي الإجمالي قد انخفض بنسبة 21.5 بالمائة، مقارنة بنفس المدة من العام الماضي. ويعتمد العراق بشكل كبير على سعر

المحلي، أو على القدرة على تنفيذ مبادرات للمصالحة. ونتيجة لذلك، لجأ قسم كبير من بعض مجموعات الأقليات إلى الفرار خارج البلاد منذ عام 2003. إن ضمان سلامة وأمن هذه الأقليات يعد عنصراً جوهرياً في عدم إغفال أي أحد.

وتواجه العوائل التي يُشكك بانتمائها لتنظيم داعش العديد من العقبات نفسها التي تواجه غيرهم من النازحين في العودة إلى ديارهم؛ ومن بينها المنازل المهتمة وانعدام سبل كسب العيش والافتقار إلى الوثائق الثبوتية، والوسائل المالية للعودة. وثمة تعقيد آخر يتمثل في النازحين الذين لا يزالون يعيشون في المخيمات التي جرى إغلاقها والتي باتت تصنف مستوطنات غير رسمية، وهو ما يزيد من هشاشة الأوضاع التي يعيشها الأشخاص غير الراغبين في العودة إلى ديارهم أو غير القادرين على ذلك لأسباب عديدة، في حين يستمرون في العيش في بيئة تفتقر إلى الخدمات الأساسية. وسوف تتطلب عودة هذه الأسر التي يوجد تصور بانتمائها إلى تنظيم داعش ودمجها في المجتمع، استجابة متميزة ومكرّسة لهم خصيصاً، تراعي ظروف النزاع ومعززة بجهود مستمرة لتحقيق العودة المبسرة.

ولا تزال إمكانية الحصول على فرص العمل وسبل كسب العيش الهم الرئيسي للنازحين؛ إذ وفقاً للتقارير، يعيش 70% منهم في أماكن يعد الحصول على عمل، أحد الاحتياجات الثلاثة الرئيسية. ولا يزال السكن قضية ملحة بالنسبة للسكان النازحين؛ حيث يعيش 42% من النازحين في أماكن ذكر فيها السكن ضمن الاحتياجات الثلاثة الرئيسية، دون تغيير في الوضع، مقارنة بما كان عليه في أيار 2018. وهناك 8% فقط لا يزالون مستقرين في ترتيبات مأوى حرجة مقارنة بـ 16% في عام 2016؛ وفي الوقت نفسه، نجد عند المقارنة، أن مجموعة السكان المستقرين في المخيمات تزداد كل عام عن سابقتها.

يستضيف العراق أيضاً حوالي 250,000 لاجئ من سوريا يقيم أغلبهم في إقليم كردستان العراق؛ حيث يتمتع اللاجئون هناك بحقوق فعلية للتوظيف في القطاع الخاص عند إبرازهم الهوية الصادرة لهم من مفوضية الأمم المتحدة العليا لشؤون اللاجئين؛ ولكن في العراق الاتحادي يتعين على اللاجئين المرور بعملية التسجيل لدى وزارة الداخلية لكي يُسمح لهم

المالية إلى مزيد من التعقيدات. ويفتقر العراق أيضاً إلى الآليات العامة الأساسية للإدارة المالية. وإذا تواجد نظام معلومات متكامل للإدارة المالية فيمكنه أن يربط جميع وحدات الصرف الحكومية بشبكة حاسوب الإلكترونية، وأتمت المهام التنفيذية الأساسية للميزانية، ومن شأن حساب خزينة واحد أن يدمج جميع الحسابات الحكومية في حساب خزينة واحد. ومن دون هذه الإجراءات لا تستطيع الحكومة السيطرة على جميع البيانات والمعلومات المتعلقة بمواردها المالية وكافة أرصدها النقدية.

المبدأ الأممي : عدم إغفال أحد

إن مبدأ "عدم إغفال أحد" أو عدم ترك أحد وراء، يُعدُّ ذو أهمية خاصة بالنسبة للعراق حيث يتفشى الفقر المدقع، وعدم المساواة في الحصول على خدمات الصحة والتعليم، وغير ذلك من شتى أصناف التمييز. وقد زاد الوضع سوءاً بسبب كوفيد-19 مما أدى إلى ضياع العديد من المكاسب التنموية. وتتعرض العديد من فئات المجتمع للتهميش على شتى الأصعدة: القانونية والمؤسسية والثقافية، والافتقار إلى إمكانية الحصول على الخدمات الأساسية. والأوضاع السياسية تجعل الأمر أكثر تعقيداً لعلاج جذور الظلم الموجود في القوانين التي تؤدي إلى مزيد من التهميش. ولكي يتم التصدي للتهميش، ينبغي على العراق التمسك بقيم الديمقراطية والعدالة الاجتماعية.

وهناك عدة شرائح اجتماعية في العراق تصنّف ضمن الفئات الضعيفة، بما فيها النساء والأطفال والشباب والأقليات العرقية والدينية، والأشخاص ذوي الإعاقة، والنازحين، والمهاجرين الأجانب، وضحايا الاتجار بالبشر، واللاجئين، والأشخاص عديمي الجنسية. وينبغي الملاحظة أن هذه المجموعات ليست ضعيفة في حدّ ذاتها؛ إلا أن أوضاعها الفريدة قد تجعلها مهددة أكثر من غيرها بخطر التحول إلى فئات ضعيفة.

علاوة على ذلك، تواجه الأقليات النازحة تحديات خطيرة تتسبب فيها وضعيتها كأقلية، مما يجعلها هدفاً لتنظيم الدولة الإسلامية في الشام والعراق (داعش) وغيرها من الجماعات المسلحة المتطرفة. ولدى مجتمعات الأقليات ثقة ضئيلة في قدرة الحكومة على ضمان سلامتها وأمنها على الصعيد

بالعمل. وهذا الأمر يشكل حاجزاً أمام حصول اللاجئين على وظائف في القطاع الرسمي.

ويُعد الاتجار بالبشر مشكلة ذات أوجه متعددة في العراق للعراقيين والأجانب على حدٍ سواء؛ وذلك لوجود ظروف تتسم على سبيل المثال بتواجد أعداد كبيرة من الفئات السكانية الضعيفة مقرونة بضعف سيادة القانون، مما يقود إلى توافر بيئة خصبة لهذه الظاهرة لكي تنمو وتترعرع. وعلى أي حال، قطع العراق شوطاً كبيراً في معالجة الاتجار بالبشر عن طريق توقيع عدة التزامات دولية متعلقة بمكافحة التهريب ودعم الضحايا. كما أظهر العراق التزامه باحترام هذه الالتزامات من خلال وضع عدة قوانين وطنية واتخاذ إجراءات مواكبة لها.

حقوق الإنسان

بوصفه أحد الأعضاء المؤسسين للأمم المتحدة، العراق ملتزم بالإعلان العالمي لحقوق الإنسان؛ وامتثاله لحقوق الإنسان الواردة فيه أمر جوهري لتحقيق أهداف التنمية المستدامة، ومراعاة مبدأ عدم إغفال أحد، وإعادة بناء الثقة. وعلى الرغم من مصادقة العراق على عدة صكوك ومعاهدات دولية لحقوق الإنسان، إلا أنه ينبغي ترجمتها إلى أرض الواقع وذلك بمؤاومة القوانين الوطنية لها. فهناك عدة مشاريع قوانين إما أنها لا تزال عالقة لدى مجلس النواب، أو لا تزال في مراحل مختلفة من عملية التشريع.

وقد أشارت اللجنة المعنية بالاتفاقية الدولية للقضاء على جميع أشكال التمييز العنصري على الوضع السيئ فيما يتعلق بحماية مجتمعات الأقليات والحفاظ على التراث الثقافي في العراق. وكذلك يشكل عدم توافر المعلومات الإحصائية الأساسية لتحديد التركيبة العرقية - الدينية للسكان تحدياً أساسياً أمام تحديد وتلبية احتياجات النسيج الاجتماعي المتنوع للسكان العراقيين.

يواجه الأطفال أيضاً خطراً كبيراً؛ ففي حين صادق العراق على اتفاقية حقوق الطفل في عام 1994 إلا أنه فعل ذلك مع بعض التحفظات. وفي عام 2008 انضم العراق إلى البروتوكول الاختياري لاتفاقية حقوق الطفل بشأن اشتراك الأطفال في النزاعات المسلحة، بالإضافة إلى البروتوكول الاختياري لاتفاقية حقوق الطفل بشأن بيع الأطفال واستغلال الأطفال في البغاء وفي إنتاج المواد الإباحية.

ويعاني الأطفال أيضاً من العقاب الجماعي للأسر التي يُشكك في انتمائها أو المنتمية بالفعل إلى "داعش" والجماعات المتطرفة الأخرى. فكثيراً ما يعانون من محدودية فرص التعليم محدودة ويتعرضون للتمييز والمعاناة النفسية، والعنف الاسري، وعمالة وزواج الاطفال. علاوة على ذلك، معظمهم لا يستطيعون الحصول على الخدمات الأساسية لافتقارهم إلى الوثائق الثبوتية.

ويمثل العراق أيضاً معبراً ووجهة لمئات الآلاف من العمال المهاجرين من جنوب آسيا وجنوب شرق آسيا وأفريقيا، بمن فيهم عمال قطاعات خدمة المنازل، والبناء والتشييد، والخدمات. يدخل ضحايا الاتجار بالبشر والضحايا المحتملون إلى العراق عبر المطارات الرئيسية، ويتم إيواؤهم في المدن الكبيرة ومن ثم نقلهم إلى أماكن أخرى داخل البلاد وخارجها مثل دول الخليج وسوريا.

وعندما يكون العراق هو الوجهة المقصودة لهؤلاء العمال المهاجرين، يتم توظيفهم غالباً عن طريق جهات توظيف في قطاعات الأعمال التي لا تتطلب عمالة ماهرة، مثل خدمات النظافة، ويتم جلبهم للدول المجاورة حيث يتعرضون عند وصولهم للخداع والاستغلال في العمل القسري وغيره من أشكال الاستغلال. وفي الوقت الذي أثرت فيه جائحة كوفيد - 19 متزامنة مع انهيار أسعار النفط عالمياً على القوى العاملة في جميع أنحاء العراق، يجد العمال المهاجرون أنفسهم في أوضاع شديدة الخطورة؛ إذ يقوم أرباب العمل بتسريحهم أو حجب مرتباتهم، فأصبحوا عاجزين عن تلبية احتياجاتهم الأساسية وبتاتوا عرضة لخطر الاتجار بالبشر بشكل متصاعد.

إن مبدأ عدم إغفال أحد في العراق يتطلب جعل جهود التنمية شاملة للجميع، وأن تتصدى للأخطار المحدقة بكل الفئات الضعيفة والمهمشة المذكورة أعلاه. وتجدر الإشارة إلى أن النساء والفتيات كثيراً ما يقعن ضمن أكثر الفئات حرماناً

النزوح

إن فهم النزوح الداخلي المطول في العراق، خصوصاً منذ عام 2014، يعد مسألة معقدة إذ حدثت حركات سكانية واسعة النطاق في عدة موجات أثناء النزاع وتداخلت مع جوانب أخرى مثل الهوية العرقية-الدينية و/أو العشائرية للسكان. وحدثت أيضاً حركات عودة على مراحل حسب التوقيت الذي تم فيه تحرير المناطق من سيطرة تنظيم داعش والظروف المادية والاجتماعية في مرحلة ما بعد النزاع في هذه المناطق، وما إذا كان يُسمح لمجموعات معينة بالعودة إليها أم لا.

إن هشاشة الوضع في أعقاب النزاعات والأزمات تعني أن الخدمات الحكومية لا تصل إلى فئات كبيرة من السكان في العراق ولا سيما المتضررين من النزوح. ونتيجة لذلك، فمن المرجح إلى حد كبير أن تظل الأسر المتضررة من النزوح في حالة من الضعف الشديد والمطول. فعلى سبيل المثال، تشير تقديرات البنك الدولي لعام 2020، إلى أن الفقر في المناطق التي يتركز فيها عدد كبير من السكان المتضررين من النزوح، يفوق ضعف نظيره في باقي مناطق البلاد. وقد أدت جائحة كوفيد-19 إلى تفاقم أوضاع الأسر المتضررة من النزوح حتى مع استمرار الجهود التي تبذلها الجهات الفاعلة في المجال الإنساني لمواصلة تقديم المساعدة لأشد الفئات ضعفاً.

ولا يشكل ارتفاع معدل الفقر النقدي المؤشر الوحيد للضعف الطويل الأمد في صفوف المجموعات السكانية المتأثرة بالنزوح. إذ توجد دراسة حديثة أخرى تنظر إلى الفقر المتعدد الأبعاد في العراق من خلال الأبعاد الأربعة للموارد والأمن البشري والطاقة والصوت والفرص والخيارات والنازحين المحددين والملاجئين والأسر ذات المعيل الواحد (التي تعيلها إناث، مما يزيد من ضعفها) بوصفها أكثر الفئات السكانية ضعفاً في البلاد. وفي الوقت نفسه، فإن عدم امتلاك الأسر المتأثرة بالنزوح للوثائق المدنية الثبوتية يحد أيضاً من احتمالات تحقيق أمنها المالي والإنساني.

إن انعدام الموارد الكافية يزيد من أوجه الضعف المستمرة في اعتماد الكثير من الأسر المعيشية على استراتيجيات

الأشخاص ذوي الإعاقة

يواجه الأشخاص ذوي الإعاقة ممن تأثروا بشكل غير متناسب بالنزاع المسلح والعنف وحالات الطوارئ الأخرى، تحديات متعددة في الحصول على الخدمات على قدم المساواة مع الآخرين مما يعيق تمتعهم الكامل بحقوقهم ومشاركتهم الفعالة في المجتمع. وقد تفاقم وضعهم بسبب جائحة كورونا الأمر الذي ضاعف من المعوقات التي يواجهونها في الحصول على الحماية والمساعدة الإنسانية.

ويواجه الأشخاص ذوي الإعاقة نقصاً عاماً في البنى التحتية لتيسير حركتهم والمعوقات التي تحول دون حصولهم على الخدمات العامة ومحدودية فرص إشراكهم في عمليات صنع القرار. ومن بين تلك التحديات، على سبيل المثال، عدم وجود الكراسي المتحركة والمصاعد ومرجعي لغة الإشارة وإشارات المرور الناطقة والحصول على مختلف أشكال التكنولوجيا.

إن الفرص المتاحة للأشخاص ذوي الإعاقة للحصول على فرص عمل ذات معنى تعد محدودة كما أنهم يواجهون معدلات عالية من الخمول الاقتصادي والبطالة. وكثيراً ما يعملون في وظائف منخفضة المهارات والأجر وهي نتيجة مباشرة لانخفاض معدل التحصيل التعليمي. وتزداد هذه الحالة حدةً بالنسبة للنساء ذوات الإعاقة حيث إنهن يعانين من معدل أكثر ارتفاعاً من الخمول الاقتصادي.

فمن الضروري أن يتم إجراء تغييرات مؤسسية ومجتمعية لإحداث تحول نهائي من نهج قائم على الإحسان إلى نهج قائم على الحقوق جراء الإعاقة. وينبغي تمكين الإطار القانوني الخاص بتعزيز وحماية حقوق الأشخاص ذوي الإعاقة حتى يتم إزالة الحواجز السلوكية والمادية التي تحول دون مشاركتهم النشطة في المجتمع. وبذات القدر من الأهمية، هي الحاجة إلى اتباع الحكومة العراقية لنهج شامل في إعداد وتنفيذ التشريعات والسياسات والبرامج الرامية إلى معالجة وضع النساء والفئات ذوات الإعاقة.

بالحقوق السياسية بما في ذلك الحق في التصويت والترشيح والترشح للمناصب". غير أن الدستور، ينص أيضا على أنه "لا يجوز سن قانون يتعارض مع ثوابت احكام الإسلام"، وهذا يفتح الباب أمام تفسيرات أكثر تحفظا يمكن أن تحد من حقوق المرأة. ونتيجة لذلك، فإن وضع المرأة في العراق يمكن أن يعتمد إلى حد كبير على تنفيذ الشريعة الإسلامية وعلى أولويات وتفسيرات وتفضيلات السلطات الدينية الذكورية.

ويوفر دستور عام 2005 ضمانات لتنفيذ جميع الصكوك الدولية التي صادق عليها العراق. ومن ضمنها، اتفاقية القضاء على جميع أشكال التمييز ضد المرأة (سيداو) في عام 1986، ولكن مع وجود بعض التحفظات. وبالإضافة إلى ذلك، لم يوقع العراق أو يصادق بعد على بروتوكولها الاختياري بعد، والذي ينشئ آليات لتقديم الشكاوى والتحقيق فيما يتعلق باتفاقية سيداو، ولم يصادق بعد على البروتوكول الاختياري الخاص بالعنف ضد المرأة.

ومن ناحية أخرى، شهدت الانتخابات البرلمانية التي أجريت في أيار 2018 مشاركة عدد لم يسبق له مثيل من المرشحات بنحو 2,600 مرشحة، حيث فازت المرشحات في تلك الانتخابات بنسبة 25.5% من المقاعد (84 مقعد من أصل 329 مقعدا). وكان ذلك مؤشرا على ثقة المجتمع المتزايدة في انتخاب النساء على الرغم من وجود عدد من التحديات التي رافقت الحملات الانتخابية، بما في ذلك التشهير والتخويف والمضايقة، مما أدى إلى انسحاب العديد من المرشحات من العملية الانتخابية.

وينظر للمرأة في العراق ومنذ وقت طويل بأنها تمتلك القدرة على الاضطلاع بدور رئيسي في بناء السلام. ورغم الكوتا الخاصة بتمثيل المرأة في مجلس النواب العراقي، لا يزال تمثيل المرأة منقوصاً على المستويين الوطني والمحلي بما في ذلك ضمن لجان المصالحة.

وعلاوةً على ذلك، اضطلعت المرأة منذ تشرين الأول 2019 بدور متزايد الأهمية في المجال السياسي. وعلى وجه الخصوص، قد تشجع مشاركتها في التظاهرات التي تطالب بإصلاحات سياسية واقتصادية واجتماعية على إشراك

التكيف السلبية بما فيها تلك التي تعرض حياة النساء والفتيات للخطر مثل الزواج القسري والمبكر. ويتفاقم هذا الأمر بشكل خاص بالنسبة للأسر المعيشية التي تعيلها نساء وهن مقيدات أساساً في قدرتهن على تأمين سبل عيش مستدامة. وعلى نحو مماثل، يمكن أيضا ان يترك الأطفال المدرسة عندما تصبح الموارد شحيحة وتزداد صعوبة الوصول إلى المدارس لعدة أسباب مثل عدم امتلاك القدرة المالية للذهاب إلى المدارس. ووفقا لأحدى التقديرات، فإن فترات النزاع والعنف التي طال أمدها أدت الى حرمان أكثر من 3.2 مليون طفل في سن الدراسة الابتدائية في العراق من التعليم. وقد تفاقم الفقر في البلد في أعقاب جائحة كوفيد-19 التي تؤثر على الأطفال أكثر من غيرهم.

وتشير الدلائل إلى أن الجماعات المتضررة من النزوح كثيرا ما تعيش في ظروف غير مستقرة تتسم بالاكتمال أو في مساكن مشغولة بصورة غير قانونية تتسم بمحدودية الخدمات الأساسية وضعف البنى التحتية. وهذا بدوره يجعلهم أكثر عرضة للأمراض مما يؤدي إلى نتائج صحية سيئة.

ان ارتفاع شدة الضعف والفقر الطويل الأمد، وانعدام الفرص يعني أن الأسر المتأثرة بالنزوح لا تعاني من محدودية طاقتها فحسب، بل إنها تعاني أيضاً من قلة الوسائل التي تمكنها من إسماع صوتها. وينعكس هذا في عدم وجود من يمثلهم كمجموعات منفصلة في التقييمات الوطنية على الرغم من أعدادهم الكبيرة.

أدت الأزمة التي أوجدها تنظيم داعش الى حدوث نزوح جماعي في المناطق المتضررة بحدود ستة ملايين نازح في ذروة الأزمة. ويبلغ الرقم التخميني للنازحين الذين لا يزالون يعيشون في نزوح مطول في المحافظات الثماني عشرة قرابة 1.224 مليون نازح.

المساواة بين الجنسين وتمكين المرأة

ينص دستور العراق لعام 2005 على أن جميع العراقيين متساوون أمام القانون ويحظر التمييز على أساس الجنس. وينص الدستور تحديداً على أن "للمواطنين العراقيين رجالاً ونساءً الحق في المشاركة في الشؤون العامة والتمتع

التعامل مع الرجال خارج الأسرة أو مع القطاعات التي يهيمن عليها الذكور تقليدياً. وتعرض النازحات أيضاً لخطر كبير يتمثل في الاستغلال والاعتداء الجنسيين والعقاب الجماعي إذا ما ساور الآخرين الشك في موالاتهن لتنظيم داعش أو سائر الجماعات المتطرفة الأخرى.

البيئة والتغير المناخي

لقد تعرضت بيئة العراق الى العديد من الضغوط الناجمة عن النمو السكاني غير المنضبط الذي تسبب في نشوء الإجهاد الاقتصادي والتحديات السياسية فضلاً عن الضغوط التي يولدها على موارد البلاد البيئية والطبيعية. إن ازدياد الطلب على المياه، بالإضافة إلى سوء الإدارة المائية والتغير المناخي والنزاعات الطويلة الأمد والتدهور البيئي الشديد الناجم عن الافتقار إلى الأطر والسياسات المؤسسية فضلاً عن العوامل الطبيعية والبشرية كلها عوامل تدفع العراق إلى الاقتراب من الندرة المطلقة للمياه حيث يعيش 18% من الناس في مناطق شحيحة المياه. كما أن أثر ثلاث نزاعات أدى بالعراق إلى أن يصبح البلد الذي توجد فيه أكبر نسبة تلوث بالمتفجرات في العالم، من مخلفات الحرب مع ما يترتب على ذلك من عواقب بيئية كبيرة على الوصول إلى الأراضي وإدارتها.

وتظهر إحدى التحليلات التي أجريت مؤخراً بأن العراق سيعاني من ارتفاع درجات الحرارة وموجات الحر الشديدة وتغير هطول الأمطار السنوي مع زيادة الشدة وانخفاض الجريان السطحي وارتفاع مستوى سطح البحر في الخليج. وفي الوقت الذي يحتل فيه العراق المرتبة 130 من أصل 181 دولة في مؤشر مبادرة نوتردام العالمية للتكيف المعروفة بـ (ND-Gain) الذي يقيس قابلية التأثر بالمناخ (مع تصنيف 1 باعتباره الأقل عرضة للخطر)، يحتل العراق المرتبة السادسة عشرة بين الدول الأقل استعداداً. ويعزى ذلك بالأساس إلى السياق المؤسسي الضعيف لإدارة مخاطر الكوارث والذي يقتصر على الإطار التنظيمي التأسيسي للحد من مخاطر الكوارث.

المرأة مستقبلاً في عمليات صنع القرار. بيد أن الوضع الأمني الذي كان قد شهد تحسناً في عام 2019، عاد ليتدهور كثيراً في الأشهر القليلة الماضية في سياق الاحتجاجات والظروف الجيوسياسية في المنطقة وحالات العنف ضد الناشطات التي جرى الإبلاغ عنها.

ووفقاً لبيانات عام 2018، فإن ما نسبته 18.1% من الإناث الناشطات اقتصادياً هن ممن بلغن 15 عاماً من العمر فقط مقارنةً بـ 74.1% من الذكور. وعلاوة على ذلك، فنسبة النساء اللواتي يُتركن خارج القطاع الصناعي تمثل 3.9% (ترتبط معظمها بقطاع النفط) مقارنة بالرجال (23.4%) في حين نجد ان المرأة أكثر نشاطاً في قطاع الزراعة (ومعظمها غير رسمية وتتسم بضعف الحماية الاجتماعية) بما يمثل نسبة 43.9% مقارنة بالرجال (12.3%). ومعدل البطالة في صفوف الشباب هو ضعف معدل البطالة في صفوف الذكور. وفي عام 2017، كان نحو 56% من الشباب عاطلات عن العمل مقابل 29% للشباب. هناك نقص في المعلومات عن النساء العاملات في قطاع العمل غير الرسمي وكذلك في الأعمال الزراعية والمنزلية.

يُعدُّ العنف القائم على الجنس شائعاً في العراق فضلاً عن وصمة العار الاجتماعية المتجذرة بشكل كبير تجاه الناجيات من هذا العنف، لا سيما العنف الجنسي. وغالباً ما تؤدي وصمة العار إلى جرائم القتل المرتكبة باسم "الشرف"، بما في ذلك تشويه أو حرق جسد مئات النساء والفتيات سنوياً. وعادة لا يتم إبلاغ السلطات بهذه الجرائم. وإذا ما أبلغ الناجون عن هذا العنف فإن النظام القضائي نادراً ما يلاحق الجناة. ويواجه الناجون تحديات في الحصول على الخدمات الأساسية الجيدة والنوعية. ولوحظ وجود تحديات فيما يتعلق بالحصول على خدمات الرعاية الصحية بأسعار معقولة، بما في ذلك الصحة الجنسية والإنجابية والافتقار الشديد إلى آليات الحماية والإحالة لمعالجة العنف القائم على النوع الاجتماعي.

ان النازحات في العراق معرضات بصفة خاصة للعنف الاسري. وتعرض ربات الأسر، والتي تشمل قرابة 13% من مجموع الأسر النازحة والعائدين، الى خطر شديد عليهن، لأنهن بصفتهم مسؤولات عن إدارة منازلهن، يتوجب عليهن

المدرسة والنساء وأولئك الذين يبحثون عن فرص جديدة وخلق فرص التطوع لاكتساب المهارات المتعلقة بالوظيفة. ويعد تعزيز ودعم ريادة الأعمال أمراً أساسياً لتسريع عملية التعافي في أجزاء كثيرة من البلاد.

الحوكمة

لقد قوضت الإدارة السيئة الثقة وجودة تقديم الخدمات، كما أدى إلى تهميش متلقي الخدمات – وهم المواطنين. ويحتاج العقد الاجتماعي الضعيف الحالي بين الدولة والشعب إلى إعادة تأسيس. كما تحتاج الحكومة إلى تنفيذ إصلاحات هيكلية شفافة ومتجاوبة وشاملة لمؤسسات الدولة والمؤسسات المدنية.

وربما يكون الدليل الأكثر إقناعاً على هذا التحدي هو حالة تقديم الخدمات الأساسية على الصعيد الوطني. فبعد تأثرها بالنزاعات على مرّ السنين وقلة الاستثمار في التنمية والتشريعات التي لم تعد ذات صلة أو داعمة في البيئة الحالية، يجب على الدولة العراقية الآن إعادة بناء علاقتها مع الشعب.

ويتوجب أيضاً أن تكون نقطة البداية هي الخدمات الأساسية - ضمان حصول جميع الناس في البلد على إمكانية الوصول المستمر للخدمات عالية الجودة، بغض النظر عن خلفيتهم أو وضعهم الاجتماعي والاقتصادي. وسيطلب تحسين الخدمات الأساسية تطوير آليات حديثة وتعزيزها كي تعود بالنفع على المستخدم النهائي وتعالج الفساد المستشري في نظام تقديم الخدمات. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، تحتاج الحكومة إلى حل تحديات الوثائق الثبوتية المدنية التي يواجهها يومياً العديد من العراقيين، ولا سيما المتأثرين بالنزاع.

وبالمثل، فإن التركيز على الالتزامات الحالية للدولة، مثل الاتفاقيات الدولية والاستراتيجيات الوطنية، سيُظهر التزاماً سياسياً برفاهية الشعب، خاصة إذا كان بإمكان الحكومة الجديدة العمل مع المجتمع المدني لتحقيق تلك الالتزامات وإنشاء منصات للحوار مع مجموعات المتطوعين والمجتمع المدني لبناء الثقة والمشاركة في تقديم الخدمات.

أخيراً، يجب أن تؤكد أي عملية لبناء الثقة على سيادة القانون ومعالجة الفساد والاعتراف بالجوانب الإيجابية للتنوع

النتائج الرئيسية

الاقتصاد

إن الاعتماد المفرط على عائدات قطاع النفط يجعل العراق أكثر عرضة للصدمات. إن الاقتصاد الوطني المتنوع، الذي تسبقه إصلاحات لتشجيع استثمارات القطاع الخاص، سيجعل العراق وشعبه أكثر قدرة على مواجهة مثل هذه الصدمات ويعزز التوظيف في القطاعات عالية الإنتاجية.

ويجب معالجة الأضرار الكبيرة للبنية التحتية التي تؤثر على الإنتاج الاقتصادي وفرص سبل العيش كي تتمكن العائلات والمجتمعات من التعافي مالياً. وسيطلب ذلك استثمارات كبيرة من خلال الميزانية الوطنية والمساهمات الخارجية وسيطلب أيضاً إعادة تشكيل الاقتصاد للسماح بتنوع مصادر الإيرادات. كما سوف تكون الشراكة مع القطاع الخاص، لا سيما في أنشطة إعادة الإعمار وخلق فرص العمل، ضرورية. وبالتالي، يجب أن يُستكمل بإصلاح القطاع العام، الذي يستحوذ على جزء كبير من الميزانية الوطنية دون تقديم خدمات فعالة أو شفافة للشعب. وينبغي مواصلة استكشاف ودعم القطاعات غير النفطية المتنامية، مثل الزراعة والسياحة وأعمال الاستيراد والتصدير وكذلك في ذات الوقت تعزيز الشراكات الإقليمية والدولية الضرورية لنمو هذه القطاعات.

كما أن تطبيق تكنولوجيا المعلومات والاتصالات وريادة الأعمال وتشجيع الاستثمار سيولد فرص للعمل والتنوع الاقتصادي والصناعي. ويحتاج تحقيق التنوع في الصناعة إلى وقت كاف. وسيكون من الأفضل للعراق أن يبدأ في إقامة نظام تنمية صناعية واقتصادية أكثر شمولاً واستدامة.

وفي الوقت ذاته، وبالنظر إلى البطالة الكبيرة التي يمكن أن تخلق بؤر استياء واضطراب، لا سيما في المناطق المحرومة من البلاد، فإنه من الضروري بذل جهد أكثر تضامناً لربط التعليم بالتوظيف وربط الاستثمارات بالفرص والقيود التي يشعر بها من خلال الموارد الطبيعية الشحيحة على نحو متزايد. ويمكن أن يكون هذا على مستوى التعليم الرسمي، باعتماد المناهج التي تعكس الاحتياجات الفنية للاقتصاد غير النفطي، وكذلك التدريب الفني والمهني للشباب خارج

ويمكن تصور العقبات التي تعترض عودة النازحين في ثلاث فئات واسعة: (1) الخدمات أو التحديات المادية، مثل الأضرار التي تلحق بالمساكن، ونقص فرص كسب العيش، ونقص الخدمات الأساسية، وقضايا أخرى، (2) قضايا حول التماسك الاجتماعي والتوتر العرقي والديني والاحتياجات للمصالحة، و(3) القضايا المتعلقة بالتحديات الأمنية والسياسية التي تمنع العودة.

وقد أنشأت الأمم المتحدة في العراق الفريق العامل المعني بالحلول الدائمة يضم جميع الجهات الفاعلة ذات الصلة وهي على استعداد لمساعدة الحكومة على حل مشكلة النزوح بما يتماشى مع معايير حقوق الإنسان والحماية ذات الصلة، وهي إطار العودة المبني والمبادئ التوجيهية بشأن النزوح وإطار عمل اللجنة الدائمة المشتركة بين الوكالات حول الحلول الدائمة، وبالطبع القانون العراقي.

التماسك الاجتماعي

كشرط أساسي لمجتمع نامٍ مستقر، يحتاج العراق إلى بناء رأس المال البشري مع توفير الحماية الاجتماعية، وتعزيز الإدماج وتعزيز التماسك الاجتماعي.

فعلى مستوى الإجراءات الإعدادية، هناك حاجة لإصلاح شبكة الضمان الاجتماعي ونظام الحماية الاجتماعية لتلبية احتياجات الفئات الضعيفة من السكان في العراق وتعزيز التنسيق عبر جميع أدوات الحماية الاجتماعية. ولضمان الاستخدام الفعال للموارد، فإنه من الضروري الابتعاد عن الإعانات والفوائد التراجعية. إذ يجب أن يهدف الإصلاح إلى ضمان تغطية واسعة للفقراء والفئات الضعيفة الأكثر عرضة للتخلف عن الركب، مع دعم دخل منتظم معروف ومحدد كأساس لأرضية حماية اجتماعية قوية.

ومن الأهمية بمكان أيضاً توسيع حزمة التأمين الاجتماعي الشامل لتشمل نسبة أكبر من القوة العاملة، ولا سيما عمال القطاع الخاص، بما في ذلك العاملين في الاقتصاد غير الرسمي. وهذا من شأنه أن يدمج بشكل أفضل أنظمة الضمان الاجتماعي للقطاعين الخاص والعام لتسهيل تنقل سوق العمل وإضفاء الطابع الرسمي عليه وتعزيز الاستفادة المالية على المدى المتوسط لنظام الحماية الاجتماعية.

الثقافي كجزء من تعزيز التراث والهوية الوطنية للمجتمعات المسالمة. إن خلق ثقافة قائمة على الحقوق والمساواة بين الجنسين مع احترام مكوناتها المختلفة كمساهمين متساويين في نجاح الجميع، سيكون ضرورياً لتحقيق النجاح المستمر لهذه العمليات.

حلول دائمة

يجب أن تلعب الحكومة العراقية دوراً رائداً في حل مشكلة النزوح في البلاد. ويقف الشركاء الدوليون على استعداد لتقديم الدعم الفني والمالي، سواء في المخيمات أو داخل المجتمعات المتضررة، من خلال الأنشطة على المستوى الميداني والتنسيق وتطوير الإستراتيجيات أو تطوير القدرات الفنية لإدارة ودعم الحل التدريجي للنزوح. وفي الوقت نفسه، ينبغي ضمان حقوق مجموعات السكان الأخرى للنازحين قسراً، بما في ذلك قدرتهم على إيجاد فرص كسب العيش المستدامة والمشاركة فيها. ويجب أن يكون مفهوماً أيضاً أنه في حين أن القيود المالية قد تحد من قدرة الحكومة على تضمين اللاجئين في خطط الحماية الاجتماعية الوطنية، فإن إدراجهم سيكون، على المدى الطويل، في مصلحة زيادة الرخاء العام للبلد.

إن غالبية الذين نزحوا نتيجة النزاع مع داعش يعيشون في أوضاع خارج المخيمات. وفي حين أن معظم هؤلاء يعيشون في أوضاع معيشية مستقرة نسبياً، سواء كانوا يقيمون مع عائلات مضيقة أو قادرين على تحمل تكاليف استئجار مسكن، فإن حوالي 8 في المائة منهم لا يزالون في أوضاع محفوفة بالمخاطر، يشار إليها عموماً باسم "المأوى الحرج"، مثل العشوائيات والمباني غير المكتملة أو المهجورة.

ويواجه النازحون المتبقون داخل المخيمات وخارجها سلسلة من التحديات التي تمنعهم من العودة إلى ديارهم أو الاندماج محلياً أو الاستقرار في مواقع جديدة. وهذه التحديات معقدة ومتداخلة وغالباً ما تكون مترابطة. كما أنها غالباً ما تميل لأن تكون موجهة على النوع الاجتماعي، وبالتالي، يجب أن تكون حقوق النساء والفتيات في طليعة الحلول الدائمة.

على العيش بأمان. كما يمكن أن ينتج تلوث الهواء والماء عن الصناعة والنزاع، فضلاً عن ضعف البنية التحتية، مما يؤدي إلى إدارة النفايات والمياه بشكل غير لائق.

ويجب أيضاً فهم النزاعات المتعلقة بالموارد الطبيعية والتخفيف من حدتها. ويمكن أن تؤدي إزالة الذخائر غير المنفجرة والملوثات الأخرى المرتبطة بالنزاع إلى إحياء الأراضي المنتجة للزراعة والسماح بالعودة الآمنة إلى المناطق المحررة. وبالمثل، فإن التعاون عبر الحدود مع الدول المجاورة فيما يتعلق بالموارد المشتركة، مثل المياه، سيكون ضرورياً لصحة ورفاهية العراق على المدى الطويل. كما يمكن أن تلعب مشاركة القطاع الخاص في الترويج للتقنيات الصديقة للبيئة دوراً مهماً.

وبالمثل، فإن معالجة إدارة وحماية الموارد الطبيعية والتنوع البيولوجي والأراضي المنتجة لا يضمن الاستخدام المستدام لتلك الموارد فحسب، بل يساهم أيضاً في تحسين التأهب لمخاطر الكوارث والاستجابة لها وإدارتها. ويعد التخطيط لتوسيع المستوطنات البشرية المقاومة للمخاطر، مع إدارة البيئة أيضاً بطريقة مستدامة، أمراً ضرورياً لمستقبل العراق. كما يمكن أن يوفر تثقيف المجتمع وتوعيته، بما في ذلك من خلال التطوع لبناء القدرة على المواجهة، جنباً إلى جنب مع الأطر التشريعية وأطر السياسات، نهجاً مستداماً يلبي احتياجات السكان دون الإضرار غير المبرر بالبيئة والموارد الطبيعية اللازمة لنوعية الحياة.

ومن العناصر الأخرى في هذه العملية هو الحاجة إلى خلق مساحة للشباب والنساء والفئات المهمشة الأخرى من السكان، مثل المتضررين من النزوح، الذين لا تُسمع أصواتهم في صنع القرار الذي يؤثر على حياتهم. وهذا يشمل بناء السلام والتمكين الاقتصادي وخلق الفرص وفرص التطوع والوصول إلى الخدمات الأساسية الضرورية لسلامتهم وكرامتهم ونوعية حياتهم. ومن وجهة نظر الحماية، فإنه يشمل أيضاً الخدمات لأولئك الذين عانوا من الصدمات أثناء النزاع، والحماية من العنف بسبب الجنس أو العرق أو الدين أو العمر.

البيئة والتغيير المناخي

العراق شديد التأثر بالتغير المناخي ويحتاج إلى معالجة العديد من القضايا بشكل عاجل فيما يتعلق بالقدرة المناخية وإدارة الموارد الطبيعية وحماية البيئة، بما في ذلك إدارة المخاطر والكوارث.

ويعد العراق غني بالموارد الطبيعية، لا سيما النفط، وهو عرضة للمخاطر البيئية، مثل التلوث والفيضانات والجفاف والتلوث المرتبط بالنزاع. إن تأثير تغير المناخ محسوس بالفعل على نطاق واسع في العراق حيث تؤدي درجات الحرارة المرتفعة إلى زيادة كبيرة في مستويات التبخر وفقدان استخدام المياه من قبل المزارعين وعموم المستهلكين. وبينما تتطلب بعض التحديات الاستعداد وتدابير التخفيف، فإن البعض الآخر منها يتطلب الإدارة والتدخل السياسي والتخطيط الاستباقي. وتؤثر قضايا مثل التلوث، على سبيل المثال، على الصحة والإنتاج الاقتصادي والقدرة

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

AML	Anti-Money Laundering
APMBC	Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention
CBI	Central Bank of Iraq
CCA	Common Country Analysis
CCM	Convention on Cluster Munitions
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women
CFSVA	Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis
CFT	Combatting Financial Terrorism
CPJ	Committee to Protect Journalists
CoI	Commission of Integrity
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CRSV	Conflict-Related Sexual Violence
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DMA	Directorate for Mine Action
DNA	Designated National Authority
DSTF	Durable Solutions Task Force
DU	Depleted Uranium
EIA	Energy Information Administration
EO	Explosive Ordnance
EORE	Explosive Ordnance Risk Education
ERW	Explosive Remnants of War
ESCWA	Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
EU	European Union
FFS	Funding Facility for Stabilization
FY	Fiscal Year (locally same as calendar year)
GAR	Global Assessment Report
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GCSD	Governorate Commission on Sustainable Development
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GII	Gender Inequality Index
HC	Humanitarian Coordinator
HLP	Housing, Land and Property
HNO	Humanitarian Needs Overview
HRC	Human Rights Council
ICSSI	Iraqi Civil Society Solidarity Initiative
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IEA	International Energy Agency
IED	Improvised Explosive Device

IHCHR	Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights
IHEC	Iraqi High Electoral Commission
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IPU	Inter-Parliamentary Union
IQD	Iraqi Dinar (1,400 IQD = \$1)
ISIL	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (locally known as 'Daesh')
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (locally known as 'Daesh')
ITC	International Trade Centre
km ²	Square Kilometre or 250 acres (locally known as a '1,000 donum')
KRI	Kurdistan Region of Iraq
KRSO	Kurdistan Regional Statistics Office
kWh	kilowatt hour
MCNA	Multi-Cluster Needs Assessment
MENA	Middle East and Northern Africa
MENARO	Middle East and Northern Africa Region Office
MICS	Multi-Indicator Cluster Survey
NCSD	National Committee on Sustainable Development
NDI	National Democratic Institute
NDP	National Development Plan
NESAP	National Environmental Strategy Action Plan
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
No.	Number
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for the Human Rights
OPEC	Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries
PCB	PolyChlorinated Biphenyls (a common pollutant in Iraq)
PDS	Public Distribution System (locally known as 'welfare')
PMCs	People's Mobilization Committees
PMFs	Popular Mobilization Forces (locally known as PMCs)
PRS	Poverty Reduction Strategy
RC	Resident Coordinator
RCP	Regional Collaborative Platform
REACH	Renewable Energy, Energy Efficiency and Climate Change
Res.	Resolution
RICCAR	Regional Initiative for the Assessment of Climate Change in the Arab Region
SCD	Systematic Country Diagnostic
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SIDA	Swedish International Development Agency
SMEs	Small and Medium Enterprises
SPN	Social Protection Network

SSR	Security Sector Reform
STR	Scientific and Technical Reports
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats
TRW	Toxic and hazardous Remnants of War
U5MR	Under Five Mortality Rate
UN	United Nations
UNAMI	UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (as per UNSC Res. 1500)
UNCAC	UN Convention Against Corruption
UNCCD	UN Convention to Combat Desertification
UNCT	UN Country Team
UNCTI	UN Country Team in Iraq
UNDP	UN Development Programme
UNEP	UN Environment Programme
UNFCCC	UN Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNFPA	UN Population Fund
UNGA	UN General Assembly
UNHCR	UN Refugee Agency
UNICEF	UN Children's Fund
UNMAS	UN Mine Action Service
UNODC	UN Office for Drugs and Crime
UNSC	UN Security Council
UNSDCF	UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (formerly UNDAF)
US	United States
USAID	US Agency for International Development
USD	US Dollar (\$1 = 1,400 IQD)
WASH	Water and Sanitation Hygiene
WB	World Bank
WBG	World Bank Group
WHO	World Health Organization
WFP	World Food Programme
WPP	World Population Projects
WTI	West Texas Intermediate Oil Quality
WTO	World Trade Organization

1. Introduction

1.1 Country background and trends

Iraq, one of the founding members of the United Nations, has experienced prolonged conflicts over the past four decades. Deepened public mistrust in state institutions has contributed to instability, violence and a near breaking point of the social contract, as demonstrated by the recent mass youth protests that resulted in a change of government.

Unless the Government of Iraq takes the necessary steps to implement meaningful reforms that meet the aspirations of the Iraqi people, the country could risk facing another cycle of instability in 2021 and beyond. Furthermore, the socio-economic deterioration has been amplified by the COVID-19 pandemic, a collapse in oil revenue (on which the Government depends), proliferation of armed actors operating outside state control, a large internally displaced persons (IDPs) population and wider regional tensions.

Official Name: Republic of Iraq

Geography: Bordered by Turkey (north), Iran (east), Kuwait (southeast), Saudi Arabia (south), Jordan (southwest) and Syria (west). See map below.

Capital: Baghdad

Ethnic Diversity: Arabs, Kurds, Assyrians, Turkmen, Shabakis, Yazidis, Armenians, Mandeans, Circassians and Kawliya and African-Iraqis.

The upcoming elections planned for October 2021 represent a major test for the ability of the country's political system to restore some confidence and deliver tangible benefits that meet the long-standing needs and aspirations of the Iraqi people.

1.1.1 Humanitarian situation

The 2021 edition of the Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO-2021) comprehensively identifies the critical barriers that face finding durable solutions and transitioning from humanitarian assistance into self-reliance.¹ These include the need to make large investments in critical infrastructure and housing, re-establish basic services, create employment opportunities and enforce social cohesion and security.

The Government-mandated closure of IDP camps, which had slowed down due to COVID-19, escalated again in October 2020, leaving a third of departing IDPs in secondary displacement. There continue to be significant obstacles to sustainable returns.

Political divisions among different government actors are likely to strain the capacities of humanitarian partners. The politicization of displacement, the continued need for IDP camps, in addition to other challenges relating to social cohesion and stabilization, have the potential to exacerbate the vulnerability of IDPs and returnees, particularly in an election year. Moreover, COVID-19 continues to pose a threat to all Iraqis, especially acutely vulnerable people, such as women, minorities and people with prior medical conditions.

1 United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) (2021). *Iraq Humanitarian Response Plan 2021*. Available at

<https://reliefweb.int/report/iraq/iraq-humanitarian-response-plan-2021-february-2021>.

In the short-term, humanitarian partners will continue to offer essential services to the most vulnerable returnees, who face acute needs like livelihood assistance, security and access to basic services. In the long term, partners will have to find ways to help Iraqis build their social cohesion and ensure sustained support for vulnerable displacement-affected population groups.

Meanwhile, strengthening humanitarian, development and stabilization engagement through structured transitional linkages and coordination mechanisms, including through the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2020-2024, will help reduce vulnerabilities and promote a transition from dependency on humanitarian assistance to durable solutions and sustainable development. This includes support from volunteer groups and civil society that play a critical role in responding to humanitarian needs by helping IDPs with food, psychological support and capacity building.

The efforts made by the Humanitarian Country Team, however, do not remove the need for increasing development assistance and enhancing institutional support for the forcibly displaced. In this respect, investing in priority sectors (e.g., access to quality services, documentation, socioeconomic inclusion, recovery and reconstruction) is key for achieving inclusive development in Iraq.

1.1.2 The economic situation

The economic crisis resulting from both COVID-19 and the decline in oil prices has created serious challenges for Iraq and highlighted deeper problems. In December 2020, the Iraqi Central Statistics Office reported that its gross domestic product (GDP) had

dropped by 21.5 per cent compared to the same period of the previous year. Iraq is extremely dependent on oil prices, and the budding services sector has been hampered by travel restrictions.

At the company level, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) are facing exacerbated challenges due to the current crisis. Average monthly revenues fell by 44 per cent in 2020, while average employment size dropped from 5.4 to 4.3 full-time employees. This has mostly affected the most vulnerable, such as the youth and day labourers. According to the World Bank, the economic downturn brought about by COVID-19 may push an additional 5.5 million Iraqis, and potentially more, into poverty, if public sector reforms are not carried out in a progressive and efficient fashion.²

Poverty remains a constraint to growth and a serious challenge for many Iraqis, especially women. Iraq already has the highest poverty rate in all upper-middle-income countries. Averages, however, do not tell the whole story: according to ESCWA's regional gender gap report, more than 60 per cent of Iraqi women's work is unpaid, and the great disparity in the unemployment rate for women (31 per cent) and men (10 per cent) highlights the gendered dimension of poverty in the country.³

On 19 December 2020, the Central Bank of Iraq (CBI) devalued the Iraqi currency by 20 per cent against the United States dollar, from IQD 1,200 to IQD 1,470 per dollar. The CBI's decision, motivated by the fiscal constraints, resulted in a sudden price increase for all imports, as well as some market upheaval.

In the long-term, devaluation may improve domestic competitiveness, but deeper reforms are required if such improvements are to be sustained. Sustainable

2 World Bank (2020), *Iraq Economic Monitor – Protecting Vulnerable Iraqis in the Time of a Pandemic: The Case for Urgent Stimulus and Economic Reforms*.

3 Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), 2019, *The Arab Gender Gap Report 2020: Gender Equality and the Sustainable Development Goals*. Available

at https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/page_attachments/19-00954_arab_gender_gap_report_final_report_24nov2020.pdf.

industrial development will be a strong driver for economic growth and job creation in a country with vulnerable and simple industry development structures. However, the Government of Iraq has little scope for providing fiscal stimulus. The 2020 budget balance was already negative, falling to -16.8 per cent of GDP due to declining government oil revenue. Delays in budget approvals and chronic shortcomings in financial management created further complications, which were compounded by the former Government's failure to submit the 2020 budget to the Parliament. The Government also lacks basic public financial management mechanisms. An integrated financial information management system would connect all government spending units electronically and automate the basic budget execution functions, and a treasury single account would integrate all government accounts into a single treasury account. Without these, the Government has no control over all the data and information related to its financial resources and all its cash balances.

1.2 Process and methodology

This CCA was initiated in January 2021 at the request of the Minister of Planning, Khalid Battal Najim. Minister Najim invited the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Iraq to update the 2021 edition of the CCA with the latest insights on the Covid-19 pandemic, the impact of the recent fluctuations in oil prices on development in Iraq, and the legacy of the recent youth protests and demonstrations.

The 2021 edition of the CCA was revised in line with the most recent guidelines, published on 24 April 2020 by the United Nations Development Coordination Office in New York. Subsequent consultations were held within all 19 members of the United Nations Country Team in Iraq and the Peer Support Group for the Arab States. New for the 2021 edition is the support from the

Bretton Woods Institutions (the International Monetary Fund; the World Trade Organization; and the World Bank) in the Middle East as well the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA).

The 2021 edition of the CCA analysis is based on the following elements:

1. Taking stock of Iraq's Progress towards fulfilling the 2030 Agenda;
2. Review of multidimensional risks and financial flows;
3. Analysis of underlying causes and factors influencing the country's status;
4. Key findings to feed into the cooperation framework; and
5. Cross-cutting considerations on human rights, displacement, disability and gender.

1.3 Leaving no one behind

The principle of leaving no one behind is particularly important in Iraq, where many suffer from extreme poverty, health and education inequalities and other forms of discrimination. COVID-19 worsened the situation and reversed many development gains. The political situation adds to the difficulty of addressing the root causes of injustice, beginning with certain laws that lead to further marginalization.⁴

Iraq has long suffered from conflict, and coupled with an ongoing humanitarian crisis, this resulted in reversals in development, including higher mortality rates, income loss, gender-based violence, poverty and youth unemployment. Vulnerable groups in Iraq are not exclusively in camps, but also in host communities. The most pressing issues are cross-cutting, and include human rights, people with disabilities, IDPs and women and girls.

4

<https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/>

[files/publications/files/leaving-no-one-behind-integrating-marginalized-groups-english.pdf](https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/publications/files/leaving-no-one-behind-integrating-marginalized-groups-english.pdf).

Several social groups in Iraq are identified as vulnerable, including women; children and youth; ethnic and religious minority groups; people with disability; internally displaced persons; foreign migrants; victims of trafficking; refugees; and stateless persons. It should be noted that many of these groups are not vulnerable per se. However, their unique situations may put them at a higher risk of experiencing vulnerability.

Iraq also consists of several ethnic, religious and linguistic minority groups, including Christians, Baha'is, Iraqis of African descent, Romas, Faili Kurds, Kaka'is, Mandaeans, Shabak, Turkmen, Zoroastrians, Jews and Yazidis. Despite several constitutional provisions, these minority communities suffer from serious direct and indirect discrimination in access to services.

Moreover, displaced minority communities face acute challenges caused by their minority status that makes them a target of ISIL and other armed extremist groups. As a result, a significant portion of some minority groups has fled the country since 2003.

Christian, Yazidi and Shabak communities, in particular, have faced severe violence and trauma that still hinder their desire to return home.⁵ In November 2019, the General Directorate of Yazidi Affairs of the Kurdistan Regional Government released missing person statistics from the Yazidi community. Of the estimated 6,417 Yazidis abducted, 3,524 were rescued. Approximately 1,197 women, 339 men, 1,038 girls and 950 boys escaped, while 2,893 remain missing.

These minority communities have little confidence in the government's ability to ensure their safety and security or put in place reconciliation initiatives.⁶ Ensuring the safety and security of these displaced minorities is essential to leaving no one behind.

Families with a perceived affiliation with ISIL face many of the same obstacles to return as other IDPs, including destroyed homes, the lack of livelihoods or lack of the documentation and financial means needed to return. The additional complication of IDPs remaining in closed camps, now classified as informal settlements, adds further vulnerabilities to people unwilling or unable to return home for several reasons, while remaining in an environment without essential services. Families face stigmatization, rejection by communities in areas of operations, risk of retributive attacks, and general discrimination and marginalization by the Iraqi society. This makes the traditional solutions to displacement, including return, local integration or relocation, much more complicated. The return and reintegration of families with a perceived affiliation with ISIL will require a dedicated and distinct response that is both conflict-sensitive and synergized with ongoing facilitated return efforts.

Many of the families with a perceived affiliation with ISIL that have returned through the so-called "sponsorship" system, were never granted official security clearances by all relevant security actors in or in the vicinity of their area of return or relocation. They are therefore unable to access civil documentation, which impacts their access to essential services, freedom of movement and social welfare entitlements. As their adult male relatives have often been killed, detained or are missing, most of these households are headed by women, and the absence of traditional breadwinners leaves them without access to income. They also face other challenges in terms of land/housing ownership, general safety and access to services outside of their current area of residence, including access to government social protection schemes. The situation could generate significant grievances and perceived or actual marginalization, which can contribute to

5 Mansour, R, 2018. *Rebuilding the Iraqi State: Stabilisation, Governance, and Reconciliation*. European Parliament Director-General for External Policies. Available at

[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2017/603859/EXPO_STU\(2017\)603859_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2017/603859/EXPO_STU(2017)603859_EN.pdf).

6 Ibid.

increased risk of engagement in new or resurgent waves of violent extremism.

Access to employment or livelihood opportunities continues to be the main concern of IDPs, 70 per cent of whom live in locations where access was reported among the top three needs. Other reported pressing issues include housing, with 42 per cent of IDPs living in locations where housing was mentioned among the top three needs, with no change compared to May 2018. Only 8 per cent of households remain settled in critical shelter arrangements – compared to 16 per cent in 2016 – while the share of the population settled in camps is comparatively increasing every year (from 12 per cent in 2016 to 32 per cent in 2019).⁷

In the labour market, there has been an increasing competition for a limited number of jobs in mostly urban centres. Those who do work are often pushed into precarious jobs and are underpaid. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) reported that jobs frequently do not provide sufficient income, especially in Kirkuk and Ninewa, forcing families to rely on multiple income sources. With time, access to employment becomes even more difficult for IDPs, as skills go unused and qualifications become outdated.

Iraq hosts around 250,000 refugees from Syria, the majority of whom are in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Identification cards are required when applying for a job in the formal sector. The public sector further requires a nationality certificate. In that region, refugees have a de facto right to employment in the private sector upon presentation of their identification card issued by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). In other parts of Iraq, however, refugees must go through a registration process with the Ministry of Interior in order to work. This poses several barriers to their access to formal sector jobs. While some refugees have managed to gain employment in the public sector in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (despite legal nationality

requirements), most are employed in informal work in the private sector.

Trafficking in persons is a multi-faceted problem for both Iraqis and foreigners. There is fertile ground for this phenomenon with large vulnerable populations, coupled with a weak rule of law. However, Iraq has made headway to address this problem by signing a number of international instruments relating to combating trafficking and supporting its victims. This includes the 2002 Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime, which covers practical issues related to smuggling; and the United Nations Palermo Protocol to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in human beings, supplemented by the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocols.

Iraq has also demonstrated its commitment to upholding these obligations through several national laws and corresponding actions. For instance, the 2012 anti-trafficking law criminalizes both sex and labour trafficking, and the Kurdistan Regional Government has also passed the Countering Human Trafficking Law No. 6. In addition, elements of the 2005 Iraqi Constitution address human trafficking through laws such as the Human Organs Transplant and Prevention of Trafficking (2016); the Labour Law (2015); the Law on the Residence of Foreigners (2017); the Penal Code (1969); the Criminal Procedure Code (1971); and the Law on Juvenile Welfare (1983).

Iraq has also set up a Central Committee on Combating Human Trafficking in 2012, with representatives from several ministries and bodies, including the Higher Judicial Council, the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. There are also specialized agencies, such as the dedicated Counter-Trafficking Unit in the Ministry of Interior and the

7 International Organization for Migration (IOM), *Integrated Location Assessment IV*, December 2019.

Directorate for Combatting Human Trafficking in the Kurdistan Regional Government.

However, there remains fundamental issues with the operationalization of these measures resulting in policy gaps. Some key deficiencies in the protection of trafficking victims, for example, relate to the issue of identification and referral of Iraqi and foreign victims to protection services. During 2019, the Ministry of Interior identified only 148 victims of trafficking, and it is not clear how many of those were referred to protection services. The number was even lower in 2020, with only 72 such victims identified. The Kurdistan Regional Government also reported only 155 identified victims, but did not report whether it could provide them with any protection services.

Another deficiency is a persistent lack of understanding for the concept of trafficking in persons, or who may be classified as a trafficking victim under international law. As a result, victims are continuously seen as offenders and may have to spend time in jail for violations such as prostitution or child soldiering, before their status is determined. In addition, foreign trafficking victims are penalised for immigration offences, which often results in detention and steep fines while they wait for their exit clearance.

Furthermore, according to the 2020 Trafficking in Persons report, the Kurdistan Regional Government did not report prosecuting or convicting any traffickers during the reporting period, and despite the Ministry of Interior's anti-trafficking unit detaining 504 individuals for alleged trafficking crimes, only 67 people were convicted. Despite alleged reports of corruption and complicity, the Government of Iraq did not "investigate or hold criminally accountable officials allegedly complicit in sex trafficking crimes or non-compliant militia units"⁸ between April 2019 and March 2020 either.

In this context, ISIL committed trafficking offences against certain communities, such as the Turkmen and the Yazidis. In particular, ISIL attacked Sinjar district in Ninewa Governorate and carried out a mass abduction of Yazidi girls and women. Another affected population are foreign migrants who were recruited and deceived with false promises of living in an Islamic state offering free health care, education and high-paying jobs.

Furthermore, there are records of Iraqis trafficked into various forms of exploitation within and across national borders, with Iraqi cities serving as transit points for both internal and international trafficking. The 2020 Trafficking in Persons report found that trafficking networks also sold Iraqi children, particularly girls, to buyers in Jordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia and Syria, as well as in Europe.

Iraq is also a transit and destination country for hundreds of thousands of South Asian, Southeast Asian and African migrant workers, including for domestic care, construction and service sectors. Recognising that migration can be a powerful driver for sustainable development, in some cases migrant workers can be subject to exploitation due to vulnerabilities in the worker sponsorship system and challenges in enforcing labour law.

Victims or potential victims of trafficking enter Iraq through the main airports, are harboured in large cities, and then transported to other locations within the country and beyond, such as the Gulf States or Syria. When Iraq is the destination of these migrant workers, they are often recruited by employers in low-skilled business sectors, such as cleaning services, and are brought to neighbouring countries, where they are deceived into forced labour and other forms of exploitation upon arrival. As COVID-19 and the concurrent decline in the global oil price impacted workforces across Iraq, migrant workers are finding themselves in precarious situations, with employers

8 United States Department of State, 2020. *2020 Trafficking in Persons Report*. Available at

<https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-trafficking-in-persons-report/>.

laying them off or withholding their pay, leaving them unable to meet their basic needs, including food and rent, and thus exposing them to a heightened risk of trafficking.

To conclude, ensuring that no one is left behind in Iraq requires the development efforts to be inclusive and to address the risks of all the above-mentioned vulnerable and marginalized groups. It is of note that women and girls often fall within the most deprived and disadvantaged groups, making gender mainstreaming in key to leaving no one behind. Development-related policies, programmes and strategies should address the different factors and dimensions leading to exclusion, while being tailored to the national, sub-national and local contexts. It is imperative to undertake an evidence-based analysis to determine who is being left behind; identify development priorities; devise solutions within the Iraqi context, and decide how to measure and monitor progress towards leaving no one behind while also advancing national and local accountability to fulfil this principle.

1.3.1 Human rights

As a founding member of the United Nations, Iraq has committed itself to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The country's compliance with its human rights obligations is crucial for achieving the SDGs, observing the principle of leaving no one behind and rebuilding trust. However, although Iraq has ratified several international human rights instruments and conventions,⁹ these have yet to translate into a

domestic legal framework. A number of draft laws remain pending with the Council of Representatives or are at various stages in the legislative process.

In 2008, the Council of Representatives passed Law No. 53 of 2008 to establish the Iraq High Commission for Human Rights (IHCHR), mandated to promote and protect human rights for all Iraqis.¹⁰ However, the IHCHR is only *partially* compliant with the Paris Principles.¹¹ It is, therefore, imperative to focus on a formal, transparent and participatory legislation for the selection and appointment of its membership, taking into account meritocracy, pluralism and gender-balance. Iraq still needs the legal provisions to address conflicts of interest, outreach to remote populations, funding to deliver on mandates, and a more robust relationship with local human rights institutions.¹²

For example, the above-mentioned 2020 statistics on missing persons do not include minority groups such as Christians, Kurds, Kaka'is, Mandaeans, Shabak, Shia Arabs and Turkmen, who were systematically targeted and persecuted by ISIL. The endorsement by the Federal Parliament of the Yazidi Female Survivors and Other Components Draft Law on assistance and reparations for survivors of ISIL's sexual violence focusing on Yazidis and other minority groups, is a positive development on transitional justice in addressing the needs of survivors of atrocities that include reparations, services for survivors of conflict-related sexual violence and their rehabilitation into society. However, it fails to include

9 See Annex 8.2 for a table of conventions to which Iraq is a party/signatory.

10 United Nations Iraq, 2012. *Iraq's First Independent High Commission for Human Rights, Landmark Achievement*. [press release] 9 April 2012. Available at https://www.uniraq.org/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&id=221:iraq-s-first-independent-high-commission-for-human-rights-landmark-achievement&Itemid=605&lang=en.

11 The Paris Principles outline international benchmarks for national human rights institutions along six pillars of criteria: mandate and competence; autonomy from the

government; independence; pluralism; adequate resources; and adequate powers of investigation.

12 International Coordinating Committee of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, United Nations, 2015. *Report and Recommendations of the Session of the Sub-Committee on Accreditation (SCA)*. Geneva: International Coordinating Committee of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights. Available at <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/NHRI/GANHRI/SCA%20MARCH%202015%20FINAL%20REPORT%20-%20ENGLISH.pdf>.

provisions on children born of sexual violence, which will require further legislation.

The Committee on the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination highlighted a dire situation for the protection of minority communities and the preservation of cultural heritage in Iraq. The lack of basic statistical information to identify the ethno-religious composition of the population also poses a fundamental challenge to identifying and addressing the needs of the diverse societal fabric of the Iraqi population.

Children are also at high risk. While Iraq has ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)¹³ in 1994, it did that with reservations in respect to Article 14, paragraph 1, concerning children's freedom of religion. In 2008, Iraq acceded to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, as well as the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

In 2015, the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child welcomed some of the measures taken by the Iraqi Government, such as the enactment of the Combating Trafficking in Persons Act No. 28 (2012), the creation of an Aftercare and Family Integration Programme, and the establishment of two child helplines. However, the Committee also noted that existing policies and programmes were insufficient to address the root causes of the sale of children, including child prostitution, discrimination of minority children, IDPs, and those living in the streets.¹⁴ The Committee expressed concern at the lack of a

comprehensive policy/strategy to stop child recruitment for use in armed conflicts. It urgently recommended that Iraq adopt a plan and allocate funds to prevent the use of children by armed groups.¹⁵ Iraq has not ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) on a communications procedure. Therefore, individuals and civil society organizations (CSOs) are not able to submit complaints to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child.¹⁶

As reflected in the 2021 Iraq Humanitarian Needs Overview,¹⁷ children also suffer from the collective punishment of families with perceived or actual affiliation with ISIL and other extremist groups. They often have limited access to education and experience discrimination, psychological distress, domestic violence, child labour and child marriage. Furthermore, most cannot access essential services because they have no civil documentation.¹⁸

In its recent reports on the Right to Education in Iraq, UNAMI/OHCHR has documented how traditional gender roles and norms, family levels of education, poverty, perceived protection concerns, and trauma continue to create barriers for girls' access to education. In these reports, OHCHR/UNAMI made recommendations that are aligned with Iraqi pledges as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and with the implementation of relevant recommendations of the Universal Periodic Review.

1.3.2 Persons with disabilities

13 <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>.

14 Vilardo, V., Bittar, S., 2018. *Gender Profile: Iraq. A situation analysis on gender equality and women's empowerment in Iraq*. Oxfam International.

15 Ibid.

16 UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), *Status of Ratification Interactive Dashboard*. Available at <http://indicators.ohchr.org/>.

17 UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA). *Iraq: 2019 Humanitarian Needs Overview*. Available at <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/iraq/document/2019-iraq-humanitarian-needs-overview>.

18 Ibid.

In Iraq, persons with disabilities experience multiple challenges in accessing equitable services, and are thereby deprived of fully enjoying their rights and from meaningful participation in society. They have been disproportionately affected by armed conflict, violence and other emergencies.¹⁹ Their situation has been worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has compounded the obstacles they face in accessing protection and humanitarian assistance.

Iraq has little infrastructure to facilitate the mobility of persons with disabilities. There is, for example, a general lack of wheelchair access and elevators, sign language interpreters, talking traffic lights and access to various forms of technology. This hinders access to public services, and limits inclusion in decision-making processes.

Moreover, persons with disabilities in Iraq have limited opportunities for meaningful employment, and are faced with high rates of economic inactivity and unemployment.²⁰ The situation is more dire for women with disabilities and is aggravated by gender and societal stereotypes, making them suffer from a higher rate of economic inactivity, reaching 95.4 per cent in contrast to 55.8 per cent for men with disabilities.²¹ In the public sector, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs has decided to allocate 6 per cent of jobs to persons with disabilities, but this has yet to be enforced.²² Persons with disabilities appear to work informally, and the opportunities available for them in the private sector remain limited. They also find it challenging to get loans from banks to start their own

businesses.²³ Persons with disabilities in the workforce are often employed in low-skill, low paying jobs, which is a direct consequence of lower educational attainment on average.

The Government of Iraq ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in January 2012 and adopted the relevant Law No. 38 of 2013. This law establishes a commission to promote, respect and protect the rights of persons with disabilities, and oversee the implementation of the country's obligations under the CRPD. The Iraqi Commission on Persons with Disabilities, which operates under the fiscal and administrative authority of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, needs to do more if it is to ensure the protection of the human rights of persons with disability.

For example, Law No. 38 assesses disability based on a medical approach, amendments are needed to bring it in line with the CRPD. Also, derogatory terminology concerning persons with disabilities remain in laws and policies, including paragraph 495 (4) of the Criminal Code Law No. 111 (1969), which refers to a person with disability as 'a person of unsound mind'.²⁴ Persons with disabilities reported challenges such as the absence of sign language interpreters on television networks and unfulfilled quotas of 5 per cent in the public sector and 3 per cent in the private sector.

In line with the 2019 United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy, the United Nations Country Team Iraq has formed a Disability Inclusion Working Group to

19 UNAMI/OHCHR, 2016. *Report on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Iraq*, 2016, p. 3. Available at https://www.uniraq.org/index.php?option=com_k2&view=itemlist&layout=category&task=category&id=164&Itemid=650&lang=en&limitstart=12.

20 Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), 2018. *Disability in the Arab Region 2018*. ESCWA. Available at https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/publications/files/disability-arab-region-2018-english_1.pdf.

21 Ibid.

22 United States Agency for International Development (USAID), 2014. *Values of Access to Justice and Persons with Disabilities in Iraq*. USAID. Available at https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00K2Z6.pdf.

23 Ibid.

24 Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Concluding Observations on the Initial Report of Iraq, 23 October 2019. Available at https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/TBSearch.aspx?Lang=en&TreatyID=4&DocTypeID=5.

coordinate the implementation of the UNCT Disability Inclusion Action Plan, ensure regular dialogue with the Iraqi Alliance of Disability Organizations, and report to the UNCT.

Institutional and societal changes are required to make a definitive shift from an approach to disability that is charity-based to one that is rights-based. The obligations of Iraq under the CRPD need to be affirmed. The legal framework for the promotion and protection of the rights of persons with disabilities needs to be strengthened so that attitudinal and physical barriers that prevent their active participation in society are dismantled. Of equal importance is the need for an inclusive approach to developing and implementing legislation, policies and programmes to address the situation of women and girls with disabilities.

1.3.3 Displacement

Iraq has faced, and continues to face, recurrent displacement from war and conflict. This means that large segments of the population remain in protracted vulnerability. According to a report issued by the Ministry of Planning in 2017, there are 3,687 informal settlements in 13 governorates of Iraq. The state of displacement affects populations in a variety of ways, including prolonged cycles of poverty and lack of basic documentation, decent residential conditions, basic services, health care, education and livelihood opportunities.

Issues underlying the protracted internal displacement in Iraq, particularly since 2014, are complex. Large-scale population movements occurred in several waves during the conflict, and were intertwined with aspects such as the ethno-religious/tribal identities of the populations. Most of these movements were into urban and

peri-urban settings, with a smaller subset of people displaced into camps established in response to the crisis. Return movements also occurred in stages, depending on the areas retaken from ISIL, the post-conflict physical and social conditions of these areas and whether or not certain groups were allowed to come back to them.

The fragility of the State in the aftermath of conflict meant that many Iraqis are not covered by government services. Problems relating to access, of both services and opportunities, are worse for those affected by displacement. Consequently, displacement-affected households are highly likely to remain in heightened and protracted vulnerability. For example, 2020 estimates by the World Bank indicate that regions with large concentrations of people affected by displacement are twice as poor as the rest of the country.²⁵ COVID-19 has worsened conditions for displacement-affected households, even as efforts were sustained by humanitarian actors who are helping the most vulnerable.

A higher incidence of monetary poverty is not the only indicator of cross-cutting protracted vulnerability among displacement-affected population groups. Another recent study looking at multidimensional poverty in Iraq across the four dimensions of resources, human security, power and voice, and opportunity and choice, identified IDPs, refugees, and single-headed households (the majority of the latter being headed by women) as the most vulnerable population groups in the country.²⁶ Extreme resource poverty remains high among these groups, often exacerbated by secondary displacement that several households experience due to limited development in areas of return.

At the same time, the lack of civil documentation among displacement-affected households limits the prospects for their financial and human security.²⁷

25 The World Bank, 2020.

26 Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, 2020.

27 According to Sida's framework, being poor in terms of human security means that violence and insecurity are constraints to different groups' and individuals' possibilities to exercise their human rights and find paths

Continued vulnerabilities, in the absence of sufficient resources, increase the reliance of many households on negative coping strategies, including those that put the lives of women and girls at risk such as forced and early marriages. This is particularly marked in households headed by single women, who are already constrained in their ability to secure sustainable livelihoods.

Similarly, children may also be forced to leave school as resources become scarce, and access to school becomes increasingly difficult for several reasons, such as lack of financial means for transport to school.

According to one estimate, prolonged periods of conflict and violence have left more than 3.2 million primary school-age children in Iraq without education. Poverty in the country has worsened in the aftermath of COVID-19, affecting children the most. In a recent study, UNICEF posits that deprivation in school enrolment and access to improved water sources are leading contributors to household and children's vulnerability.²⁸ Both these contributors are more acute for households affected by displacement, often located in areas with limited access to basic services and adequate infrastructure.²⁹ Many households have also opted not to return to areas of origin because of security concerns and lack of opportunities.³⁰

Evidence indicates that displacement-affected groups often live in precarious conditions, marked by overcrowded or illegally occupied houses with poor infrastructure and limited access to basic services. This also leaves them more vulnerable to disease, leading to poor health outcomes. Additionally, livelihood opportunities for displaced people are often unpredictable, as most of them find work on a temporary basis in informal markets. Worse still, family structures are also disrupted as members of the family get separated or are unable to return to their places of

origin. Consequently, deprivation is likely to be higher among such households along multiple dimensions. According to a recent study, displacement is significantly linked with multidimensional poverty in Iraq, implying that displaced households are more likely to be multidimensionally poor.³¹

Worryingly, despite their large numbers, displaced people have a limited voice to express their needs or be represented in national decision-making processes. This is reflected in their lack of representation as separate groups in national assessments, including those relating to multidimensional poverty and socioeconomic vulnerability.

With persistent political and fiscal fragilities in Iraq, displacement-affected population groups, including both IDPs and refugees from other countries (mainly Syria), will remain vulnerable. Their vulnerabilities, needs and conditions, therefore, need to be consistently assessed, highlighted, and represented to prevent their long-term deprivation, which would eventually affect the rest of the country as well.

The ISIL crisis caused mass displacement across impacted areas, with almost six million people displaced at the height of the crisis. An estimated 1.224 million IDPs still live in situations of protracted displacement across 18 governorates.

As of December 2020, returns to areas of origin have slowed. This can be linked to improvements across a range of indicators. For example, between December 2019 and December 2020, the largest decrease in the number of people returning home was recorded in the governorates of Salah al-Din (54,768) and Anbar (47,448), while the largest increase in people returning home was observed in Ninewa (61,578). In Salah al-Din, the largest

out of poverty. See Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, 2020.

28 World Bank and UNICEF, 2020.

29 See Integrated Location Assessment of IOM's Iraq Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM), by region. Available at <http://iraqdtm.iom.int/ILA5>.

30 IOM, 2013.

31 Temgoua, Sharma, and Wai-Poi, 2020.

decreases were recorded in Tikrit and Tuz Khurmatu, where more agricultural activities took place, more businesses were open, more residents could find employment, and reconciliation efforts between the different ethno-religious groups were more successful. In Anbar, the largest decrease was observed in Falluja due to the improvement of the situation with regards to daily public life, agricultural activities and businesses. In Ninewa, the largest increases were recorded in Sinjar and Al-Ba'aj, with poor conditions reported in terms of agricultural activities, businesses, electricity sufficiency and services provided by civil servants, teachers, nurses and police, among others, together with the absence of reconciliation processes and tense public life.³² Ninewa and Salah al-Din remain the governorates hosting the highest number of returnees living in severe conditions, with 235,302 and 143,682 individuals, respectively. Salah al-Din and Diyala host the highest proportions of returnees living in severe conditions (21 per cent in both governorates).

1.4 Gender equality and the empowerment of women

Iraq ranked 152 (out of 153 countries) on the Global Gender Gap Report 2020,³³ and 146 (out of 162 countries) in the Gender Inequality Index of the 2020 Human Development Report produced by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).³⁴

1.4.1 Situation analysis on gender equality and the empowerment of women in Iraq

Legislation, policy and practices on gender equality and the empowerment of women

The 2005 Constitution stipulates that all Iraqis are equal before the law and prohibits discrimination based on sex (Article 14). The preamble states that “we, the people of Iraq, ... have resolved with the determination of our men, women, elderly, and youth ... to pay attention to women and their rights”. Article 20 specifically says that “Iraqi citizens, men and women, shall have the right to participate in public affairs and to enjoy political rights including the right to vote, elect, and run for office”. However, by stipulating that “no law may be enacted that contradicts the established provisions of Islam”, the Constitution opens the door for more conservative interpretations that could limit women’s rights. As a result, the status of women in Iraq can greatly depend on the implementation of Islamic law and on the priorities, interpretations and preferences of male-dominated religious authorities.

The Constitution provides guarantees for the implementation of all international instruments to which Iraq is a party. Iraq ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1986 with reservations to Article 2 (f) and (g), which call on states to modify or abolish existing laws and penal codes that discriminate against women; Article 16, on the elimination of discrimination in marriage and family relations; and Article 29, Paragraph 1, with regard to the principle of international arbitration on the interpretation or application of the Convention. Iraq has yet to sign or ratify its optional protocol, which establishes complaint

32 IOM DTM Returns Index, December 2020.

33 Global Gender Gap Report 2020, World Economic Forum (WEF), December 2019. Available at <https://www.weforum.org/reports/gender-gap-2020-report-100-years-pay-equality>.

34 Iraq has a gender inequality index value of 0.577, ranking it 146 out of 162 countries in the 2019 index. In Iraq, 25.2 per cent of parliamentary seats are held by women, and 39.5 per cent of adult women have reached at least a secondary level of education compared to 56.5 per cent of

their male counterparts. For every 100,000 live births, 79 women die from pregnancy related causes; and the adolescent birth rate is 71.7 births per 1,000 women of ages 15-19. Female participation in the labour market is 11.6 per cent compared to 74.2 for men. Human Development Report – Country Notes on Iraq, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Available at http://hdr.undp.org/sites/all/themes/hdr_theme/country-notes/IRQ.pdf.

and inquiry mechanisms for CEDAW, and has yet to ratify the Optional Protocol on violence against women.

The Government of Iraq, with the support of United Nations agencies, prepared a National Development Plan (NDP 2018-2022), a Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS 2018-2022) and a Reconstruction and Development Framework (2018-2027). According to the UNDP Rapid Integrated Assessment, aimed at tracking if national priorities areas are aligned with SDG 5, only 50 per cent of SDG 5 targets have corresponding targets in the NDP (2018-2022). Based on the analysis, targets 5.1, 5.2 and 5.4, notably related to ending discrimination, violence and exploitation against women and girls, and unpaid care value and domestic responsibilities, are not covered in the NDP. The Government has also engaged in developing an 'Iraq Vision 2030' aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs. Furthermore, Iraq presented its first Voluntary National Review Report in 2019, sharing its experience with the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.

Significantly, Iraq was the first Arab country to launch a National Action Plan on the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 in February 2014, which was, in fact, a significant step toward enabling women's participation and protection in the processes of conflict resolution and peacebuilding in Iraq. In September 2016, the United Nations and the Government of Iraq signed a Joint Communiqué on the prevention of and response to conflict-related sexual violence. In March 2018, the Government launched an implementation plan for the Joint Communiqué.

The second National Action Plan was launched in 2020 by the Council of Ministers in partnership with UN Women. Iraq has still to implement the other resolutions on women, peace and security, which address sexual violence in conflict.³⁵ The Iraqi National

Action Plan II, which is scheduled to run from 2020-2024, is structured across three strategic pillars: participation, protection and prevention, and integrates key lessons learned from the first National Action Plan, building on the challenges and opportunities identified and outlining the mechanisms necessary for implementation. The drafting process was led by the Iraq Cross Sector Task Force. To ensure inclusive local ownership, the Task Force hosted meetings that included representatives of civil society organizations, the National Security Agency, the Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights and the National Reconciliation Committee.

In May 2019, with the technical assistance of UN Women, Iraq produced the Beijing +25 National Report, assessing gender-related results achieved in the past five years and outlining national priorities for action for the next five years.

Iraq participated in the third Universal Periodic Review cycle in 2019 (34th session). Key recommendations supported by the Government of Iraq relevant to gender equality and women's empowerment included the following:

- Amend domestic legislation to bring it into compliance with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women;
- Re-establish the ministries of human rights and the status of women;
- Amend the nationality act (No. 26 of 2006) to ensure equality of rights between women and men in the acquisition, transfer, retention and change of nationality;
- Criminalize all forms of domestic violence against women, including forced intimate relations, "crimes of honour" and female genital mutilation;

35 By ratifying the Optional Protocol, a state recognizes the competence of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women—the body that monitors states' parties' compliance with the convention—to

receive and consider complaints from individuals or groups within its jurisdiction.

- Improve the gender balance in the recruitment of public officials, awarding of ministerial portfolios and appointments to senior political positions;
- Continue implementing the national action plan on women, peace and security;
- Ensure full enjoyment of the right of women to access specific educational information that would ensure the health and well-being of their families, including information and advice on family planning;
- Establish a national institution for women's empowerment with a mandate to monitor the development and implementation of legislation and policies designed to eliminate discrimination and violence against women and girls and increase their access to rights such as those to work, health and education.

In 2011, the Law on Protection against Domestic Violence was drafted by a Committee of Experts in partnership with civil society organisations, under the sponsorship of the former Ministry of State for Women's Affairs (abolished in 2015), in line with articles 1 and 2 of the CEDAW. Ten years later, the Parliament has not yet approved the draft law, impeding the implementation of the CEDAW and other international commitments.³⁶ Continued delays in approving this law, particularly given the fluid political situation, is hampering gender equality and women's empowerment.³⁷ To take action, the Government launched the National Strategy to Combat Violence Against Women in Iraq in 2018 as a critical step to protect women from domestic violence. Many amendments to the current Penal Code that have an impact on women's rights are being currently discussed and waiting to be enacted.

1.4.2. Key actors/stakeholders working on gender equality and the empowerment of women in Iraq

(a) Women's machineries in Iraq

In 2017, the Directorate of Women's Empowerment was officially established by the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers, by Resolution No 4, which defines its composition and role. In addition, the Higher Committee for the Advancement of the Status of Iraqi Women and the Higher Committee for the Advancement of Rural Women Status have been restructured. However, these institutions, mandated to promote and protect women and girls' rights, have no decision-making power. There is an opportunity to increase coordination and synergies and enhance efficiencies for the implementation of strategies and policies to promote gender equality and protect women and girls' rights across the country, including for comprehensive and integrated gender-responsive budgeting across all sectors.

The Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) has made improvements showing a political will to advance the gender equality agenda with laws and regulations that are more compatible, albeit not fully, with the principles of CEDAW. Further ahead of the Government of Iraq, the KRI has created some legal mechanisms to safeguard female survivors of violence, including:

- The National Strategy to Combat Violence against Women 2017-2027;
- Kurdistan Region Amendments to Iraq's Personal Status Law (2008);
- Kurdistan Region Law to Combat Domestic Violence (2011).

36 UN Women provided its technical support to the UNCT Confidential Report to the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women Committee in February 2019, jointly with UN agencies members of the Interagency Task Force.

37 Specifically, UNSCR 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1960 (2010) and 2106 (2013), 2122 (2013), and 2242 (2015); and 2379 (2017).

After creating the General Directorate of Combating Violence against Women in 2007, under the Ministry of Interior, the High Council of Women's Affairs was established in 2010 to develop government policies and strategies regarding women's issues in political, economic, social and cultural areas. In addition, the 2011 Law against Domestic Violence (No. 8) holds perpetrators, including husbands, accountable for their actions, and offers more protection for victims of psychological and domestic violence within the family, mandating the provision of shelter to violence survivors.

In addition, in February 2009, several amendments were made to Kurdistan election law to increase the inclusion of all groups. The legal minimum quota of female parliamentarians was increased from 25 per cent (the current quota at the federal level) to 30 per cent of the legislature.

(b) Women's leadership and participation in systems of governance

The May 2018 parliamentary elections saw an unprecedented number of women candidates (nearly 2,600), with women winning 25.5 per cent of seats (84 out of a total of 329 seats).³⁸ This indicated an increased confidence to elect women, despite a number of challenges during the electoral campaign, including defamation, intimidation and harassment, which led to the withdrawal of several candidates from the electoral process. Despite the 25 per cent constitutional quota for women's representation in the national parliament,

women continue to be under-represented in political decision-making at national and local levels, and in independent and reconciliation committees.³⁹ Despite the adoption of the Political Parties Law No 39 of 2015, which stipulates women's representation in the national assembly, their participation and/or representation in political parties is still weak as the law does not include provisions guaranteeing women's participation in leadership structures of political parties.⁴⁰

Gender inequality also affects women's participation as voters: to register before the elections, voters must travel to registration centres to obtain biometric voter cards. However, fluid security conditions and care-taking responsibilities continue to pose barriers to women's ability to register to vote. Furthermore, since October 2019, women have played an increasingly significant role in the political sphere. In particular, their involvement in the protest movement that demands political, economic and social reforms, may encourage future inclusion of women in decision-making processes. However, the security situation, which had improved in 2019, deteriorated significantly in the last few months in the context of the protests and the region's geopolitical conditions, and cases of violence against women activists have been reported.

(c) Economic empowerment of women

According to data from 2018, only 18.1 per cent of females over 15 years old are economically active, compared to 74.1 per cent of males.⁴¹ Moreover,

38 Women in national parliaments. Inter-parliamentary Union (IPU) 1 December 2018.

39 The ensuing government did not have any female cabinet members until Parliament appointed a woman as Minister of Education in 2019, after many nominations of women to cabinet posts were vetoed. The nomination of the Minister of Education was mostly a response to public protests demanding urgent reform. Today, only three of 20 parliamentary committee chairs are women. Also, at the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC), only nine staff – 14 per cent – are women. IHEC's working group on gender does not have a dedicated budget or staff. In the KRI, by law, at least 30 per cent of seats are

allocated to women. Thirty-one per cent of the candidates for parliamentary seats were women, and the regional government has three women ministers.

40 Moreover, women in Iraq face obstacles to access to justice. Iraqi women and girls face several legal restrictions that limit their mobility and decision making. Such restrictions may stem from women's role in traditional societies, which was often limited by a fathers' or husbands' guardianship.

41 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Inequality Index*. UNDP (2018). Available at <http://hdr.undp.org/en/composite/GII>.

women are left out of the industry sector, where only 3.9 per cent of women work, compared to 23.4 per cent of men. Women are more active in the agriculture sector (mostly informally and with poor social protection) representing 43.9 per cent, compared to 12.3 per cent for men.⁴² The unemployment rate for young females is double that of males. In 2017, about 56 per cent of young females were unemployed compared to 29 per cent for young males.⁴³ There is a lack of information about women working in the informal labour sector, as well as in agricultural and domestic work.

Despite certain advancements for rural women, the prevalence of traditional practices limits the extent of their involvement in development programmes and their access to credit, which prevents them from inheriting or acquiring land, accessing health care and social services and participating in decision-making processes at the community level. Women in agriculture are rarely in control of the resources and the financial transactions in that sector, even though they amount to 43.7 per cent of the agricultural workforce in Iraq.⁴⁴

Women make essential contributions to the local economy in general and to the rural economy in particular. Yet, their access to productive resources and employment opportunities remains limited, which holds back their ability to improve their lives and to better contribute to the economic growth, food security and sustainable development of their communities and country. The 2015 Iraqi Labour Law prohibits gender-based discrimination in recruitment, promotions and dismissal, and penalizes sexual harassment at the workplace.⁴⁵ The law, however, does not guarantee equal pay for men and women for work of equal value. Under this law, women's employment in certain jobs,

such as those that are harmful to their health or that require working at night, is legally restricted.

Another challenge facing women and girls in Iraq, especially gender-based violence survivors and female heads of household, is their limited access to housing, land and property rights. Even though the Constitution and laws related to land and property recognize gender equality with respect to ownership rights, women are still subject to illegal traditional and cultural norms that exclude them from land inheritance. Women are often unable to replace missing ownership documents or reclaim possession of occupied property due to discriminatory barriers in accessing courts, and are officially barred from accessing compensation claims for damaged/destroyed property. They also face barriers when attempting to transfer land and property titles from deceased husbands or relatives to themselves, which often results in intra-family land grabs.

(d) Violence against women and girls

Women and girls face additional challenges rooted in discriminatory gender-related practices intrinsic in Iraqi cultural and societal norms. Although Iraq lacks reliable data on violence against women, the 2020 Annual Report by the General Directorate of Combating Violence Against Women of the Kurdistan Regional Government documented 10,625 incidents of domestic violence, including 25 cases of murder, 38 suicides, 67 incidents of self-immolation and 125 incidents of sexual violence. According to the Ministry of Health, domestic violence killed more than 3,000 women between 2010 and 2015, with 548 women murdered in 2017. The Ministry of the Interior's Family Protection Directorate reported 12,514 cases of domestic violence (Nov. 2020).

42 Gender Data Portal. World Bank (2017).

43 World Bank Group. *Iraq Economic Monitor from War to Reconstruction and Economic Recovery*. Fall 2020. Available at [https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/34749#:~:text=Iraq's%20GDP%20shrank%20by%206.8,y\)%%20Q2%2D20.](https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/34749#:~:text=Iraq's%20GDP%20shrank%20by%206.8,y)%%20Q2%2D20.)

44 UN Women and Oxfam. *Gender Profile – Iraq: A situation analysis on gender equality and women's empowerment in Iraq*, 13 December 2018.

45 The 2015 Iraqi Labour Law also extends maternity leave 98 days (from 72 days); however, maternity benefits are fully paid by the employer, which could be a disincentive to hire women.

Gender-based violence (GBV) is common in Iraq, as well as a deeply rooted social stigma towards survivors of such violence, particularly sexual violence. Stigma often leads to “honour” killings/crimes, including the maiming or burning of hundreds of women and girls yearly. In 2017, there were 272 cases of honour crimes, and 3,400 cases of domestic violence reported to the police and referred to the courts.⁴⁶ Commonly, these crimes are not reported to the authorities. If survivors do report GBV, the judicial system seldom prosecutes the perpetrator. GBV survivors face challenges in accessing quality basic essential services, including social, economic and legal assistance. Challenges are also noted with regards to affordable access to health-care services, including sexual and reproductive health, and severe lack of protection and referral mechanisms.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, GBV was prevalent in Iraq, most notably in the form of domestic and intimate partner violence. A UN Women study on the effects of COVID-19 on violence against women in Iraq revealed that nearly one in three of the women respondents reported feeling unsafe in their homes and were afraid of domestic violence, and 56 per cent of all respondents reported witnessing violence or knowing a woman who has experienced a type of violence since the spread of the pandemic. Iraq’s 2020 Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) estimated that 1.29 million people are at risk of GBV and require specialized services. Recent data collected through the GBV Information Management System, coordinated by UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund, and UNHCR, highlighted that 98 per cent of survivors reporting incidents of GBV were females. Three out of four cases were incidents related to domestic violence.

Female IDPs in Iraq are particularly vulnerable to domestic violence. Female heads of household, comprising an estimated 13 per cent of all IDP and

returnee households, are at high risk because, as managers of the home, they must interact with men outside the family, or in domains traditionally dominated by males. IDP women are also at heightened risk of sexual exploitation and abuse and collective punishment if they are perceived to be affiliated with ISIL or other extremist groups.⁴⁷ In addition to intimate partner violence, displaced women, particularly those who head their households, have limited access to services and provisions. This is especially the case for the subset of women IDPs who are stigmatized due to former or perceived affiliation with ISIL. These women are likely to be disproportionately affected by the economic and social upheavals resulting from the pandemic. Preliminary data collected by humanitarian organizations in Iraq during the pandemic shutdown indicated a rise in gender-based violence in the context of the camps.

Broadly, the ongoing impunity around sexual and gender-based crimes leads to continued violence, with few mechanisms for gender justice. Policy and legal reforms must accompany new strategies to make a significant impact. It is essential to mainstream gender equality and women’s empowerment at the institutional and local, regional and national levels. Accompanying such efforts, and in the absence of a formal ministry for women’s affairs, Iraq needs to strengthen women’s roles in decision-making forums, like ministries and governorate offices.

Conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) remains underreported due to entrenched gender inequality, lack of trust in the justice system, fear of reprisals and social stigma codified in the law, which permits “honour” as a defence and allows perpetrators to marry their victims to avoid criminal charges, in addition to a failure of prosecutors to treat CRSV as an offence no less serious than terrorism. Services for CRSV survivors

46 No Place to Turn: Violence against women in the Iraq conflict, Ceasefire Centre for Civilian Rights and Minority Rights Group International, February 2015.

47 UNAMI and UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, *Report of Human Rights in Iraq*, July to December 2017, p. 12 (2018).

remain extremely limited, which also contributes to the high rate of underreporting. Women and girls with perceived association with ISIL, who used to reside in IDP camps but had to move to their areas of origin following the closure of camps, find themselves in secondary displacement and driven into deeper poverty. Survivors of CRSV have been further exposed to the risk of sexual exploitation by Iraqi security forces due to their vulnerabilities and a lack of basic services.

(e) Leaving no one behind: Vulnerable women and girls

Iraqi women comprise half of the 40 million population, and head one in ten Iraqi households, 80 per cent of women who head households are widows.⁴⁸ Over 1.5 million displaced women and girls were subjected to violations of their universal human rights and live in harsh circumstances, especially those affected by ISIL. Women and girls who have been living under ISIL control have been exposed to sexual slavery, kidnapping, rape and other forms of conflict-related sexual violence. Between 5,000 to 10,000 women and girls are estimated to have been abducted or trafficked for sexual slavery or ransom.⁴⁹ The most vulnerable women, such as those belonging to religious minorities (Christians, Mandaeans and Yazidis), are particularly at risk of violence and discrimination.⁵⁰ Among other vulnerable groups of women, data shows that nearly two million women in Iraq are either widowed or divorced, increasing their burden of care and their vulnerability to exploitation and abuse, as well as exacerbating their lack of economic opportunities and basic services. Although data on women and girls with

disabilities are not readily available, 2011 estimates place the number at four million.⁵¹

Early marriage is another challenge facing Iraqi women and girls. Nearly 24.8 per cent of Iraqi marriages involve girls under the age of 18. The Iraqi Personal Status Law sets marriage age at 18 but allows girls above 15 years of age to marry, with permission. Also, 33.9 per cent of marriages in Iraq take place outside courts, with 22 per cent of them involving girls under the age of 14. Forced marriages are also still reported in various parts of Iraq, in addition to a type of marriage that is called Al Fasliyah, in which women from a specific tribe are given to another as a marriage gift to settle tribal disputes.

(f) Impact of COVID-19 on women in Iraq

Challenges facing Iraqi women have been considerably exacerbated after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic is deepening pre-existing gender inequalities and exposing vulnerabilities in social, cultural, political and economic systems, which, in turn, are amplifying the impacts of the pandemic. Across every sphere, from health to the economy, security to social protection, women and girls suffer disproportionately from the impacts of COVID-19, more specifically in relation to the following:

- i. Incidence of GBV: the pandemic and the subsequent movement restrictions forced women and girls to be in close contact with their abusers. Moreover, access to support services for GBV survivors (such as health and psycho-social support, legal aid and security services) has been

48 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Iraq. *Gender in Focus*. Available at www.iq.undp.org/content/dam/iraq/docs/Gender_final.pdf.

49 UN Women. *Assessment of National Women's Machineryes in Iraq: Achievements, Challenges & Scenarios for the Future*. 2017-2018.

50 In August 2014, around 3,100 Yazidis were killed in the Mount Sinjar area, while 6,800 were kidnapped to become

sex slaves or fighters. Since the start of the Mosul offensives of ISIL in May 2016 alone, hundreds of cases of abductions have been reported with female abductees being forced to become sex slaves for ISIL members. The Situation of Minorities in Iraq after ISIS, Unrepresented Nations and People Organizations. June 7, 2018.

51 UNAMI and OHCHR, *Report on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Iraq*, p. 3 (December 2016).

significantly limited by the pandemic, and most of the protection facilities in place – including shelters and safe houses for survivors of violence managed by civil society organizations – have been forced to temporarily suspend their services.

- ii. Gender inequalities and vulnerabilities relating to income generation: women’s economic situation has been affected in a different way than men’s as the pandemic crisis increased the burden of unpaid care work on women and girls. This, together with the pre-existing pay gender gap, women’s marginalization from the labour market and their overrepresentation in the informal and care sector, disproportionately hindered women’s labour participation and engagement in income generating activities.
- iii. Women’s participation in and capacities for inclusivity in peacebuilding and decision making: restrictions to movement imposed by COVID-19 and the subsequent recent shift to online discourse, coupled with the limited e-capacity of Iraqi women-led organizations and networks, further challenged the participation of Iraqi women in decision-making processes, directly affecting their capacity to benefit from mentoring and skill-building support as well as to participate in, and monitor, ongoing efforts in support of women and girls’ rights.

(g) Elements of causal analysis

Decades of repression caused by a strong conservative culture, economic sanctions and armed conflicts have led to deterioration in the lives of women and girls in Iraq and an associated loss to the country. Iraqi women, including women refugees, today lack sufficient educational and economic opportunities and health care, have limited access to the labour market, and experience high levels of violence and inequality. A significant contributory factor has been the declining literacy rate in Iraq amongst rural women and the increased number of girls in the south not attending secondary school, combined with the high fertility rate

associated with early marriage, and low levels of access to contraception. The cessation of military operations in Iraq has not diminished the need for humanitarian interventions, and IDPs, particularly women, adolescents, youth and children, as well as returnees, face increased rates of violence.

These conditions are often exacerbated by misinterpretation of religious texts, cultural and social norms, and lack of awareness of women’s rights and potential, as well as institutional and legal barriers. Violence and lack of security and stability constrain Iraqi women and girls to traditional reproductive roles, limiting their access to employment and education. Violence against women and girls, and, most notably, domestic violence, have been consistently prevalent in Iraq in the last few decades while sociocultural norms limit the participation of women and adolescent girls in their community, including in decision-making processes that are important to the community.

Women also suffer from discriminatory laws, social norms and attitudes that promote inequality and women and girls’ low levels of decision-making in sexual and reproductive health issues. Other barriers they face relate to the accessibility and bias often found in services. For example, low numbers of women in managerial positions are linked to social norms and public discourse that do not value women as leaders in the same way as they do men.

Conflict has strongly impacted women’s participation in the labour market. In situations of conflict, fear of violence and harassment can also serve as strong deterrents to female participation in the labour market. Limited employment opportunities, exacerbated by increased responsibility to support families, can lead to harmful coping mechanisms, such as “survival sex”, as well as increased risk of sexual exploitation and abuse.

2. Progress towards the 2030 Agenda

2.1 The Sustainable Development Goals

Several initiatives are underway with international donors and development partners that are aligned with the SDGs, including the National Development Plan (NDP) 2018-2022, the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS), the Reconstruction and Development Framework (2018-2027), and its Vision 2030.

A National Committee on Sustainable Development (NCSD), chaired by the Minister of Planning, was mandated to monitor the progress on the SDGs, and to submit reports on the country's growth to a "high-level follow-up group".⁵² During 2019, with the support of UNDP, the Government presented the first Voluntary National Review (VNR) report. The review included valuable insights concerning priorities and challenges

from, inter-alia, the academia, civil society, the private sector, women, young people and the parliament. The review focused on advances and challenges with the implementation of Iraq Vision 2030 priorities and related SDGs, namely, human development (SDGs 1, 3, 4 and 5), good governance and safe society (SDG 16), economic diversification (SDGs 8 and 9) and sustainable environment (SDGs 6, 11 and 13). It should be noted, however, that after the submission of the first VNR, the country's focus shifted due to the public demonstrations and political instability.

Preparations are underway for the second VNR in 2021. Many specialized technical committees at the national and provincial levels, have been put in place to support the National Committee on Sustainable Development (table 1).

Table 1. National specialized technical committees with relevant SDGs

Specialized Technical Committee	SDG(s) addressed
Poverty Reduction	1, 2, 10
Environmental Sustainability	6, 13, 14, 15
The Green Economy	7, 8, 9, 12, 17
Cities and Human Settlements	11
Human Development	4, 5
Population and Development	3
Awareness Raising	Across all sectors/SDGs
Good Governance	16
Statistics and Information	Across all sectors/SDGs

Source: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 2018. Support to the Government of Iraq for the Implementation and Monitoring of SDGs: Project Annual Report

52 Iraq's Voluntary National Review 2019. Available at <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/memberstates/iraq>.

The NCSD also supports Governorate Committees on Sustainable Development (GCSDs). GCSDs are chaired by the governors and include representatives of local line ministries. They are tasked with monitoring the progress of the SDGs at the governorate level and reporting to the NCSD. In 2019, the Anbar, Basra, Karbala and Kirkuk governorates submitted the first governorate-level SDG reports to NCSD.

A series of studies have been conducted by UNDP to assess the impact of COVID-19 and the decline in international oil prices, covering their impact on poverty levels, fiscal position, vulnerability, local communities as well as other socioeconomic adverse effects. In this context, UNDP Iraq has been providing technical support for a team of national consultants at the Ministry of Planning to develop its Socio-economic Response Recovery Plan.⁵³ The plan will consider three possible scenarios, with emphasis on the worst-case scenario as the most likely due to the second wave of COVID-19 and the decline in oil prices.

Based on the current trends, the Government has decided to address the country's practices and challenges from a decentralization perspective,, with five local governorates serving as pilot local communities.

However there remain significant challenges for the Government to fully integrate the SDGs into

the operationalization of the National Development Plan, as well as other national planning and strategy development processes, with the necessary complementary monitoring and reporting mechanisms. Furthermore, understanding the financing gaps and identifying models for financing the achievement of the SDGs in Iraq remain challenging. The Government has acknowledged this, and there has been a request for continued assistance from the United Nations in this regard.

2.2 Resilience

Iraq has faced four decades of upheaval, dictatorship, sanctions, several major wars and civil strife. Such calamities all sapped the nation's strength. Indeed, it is easy to focus on the country's prolonged instability, but it is the resilience of Iraq that has kept the country together.⁵⁴

2.2.1 Understanding multi-dimensional risks and contexts – towards a national risk register

Although Iraq has shown great capacity for resilience in the face of a long series of unrelenting shocks, many more crisis are emerging or may emerge. Figure 1 illustrates some shocks that may occur in the country's immediate future, and the dynamic nature of the likelihood and severity of their impacts.⁵⁵

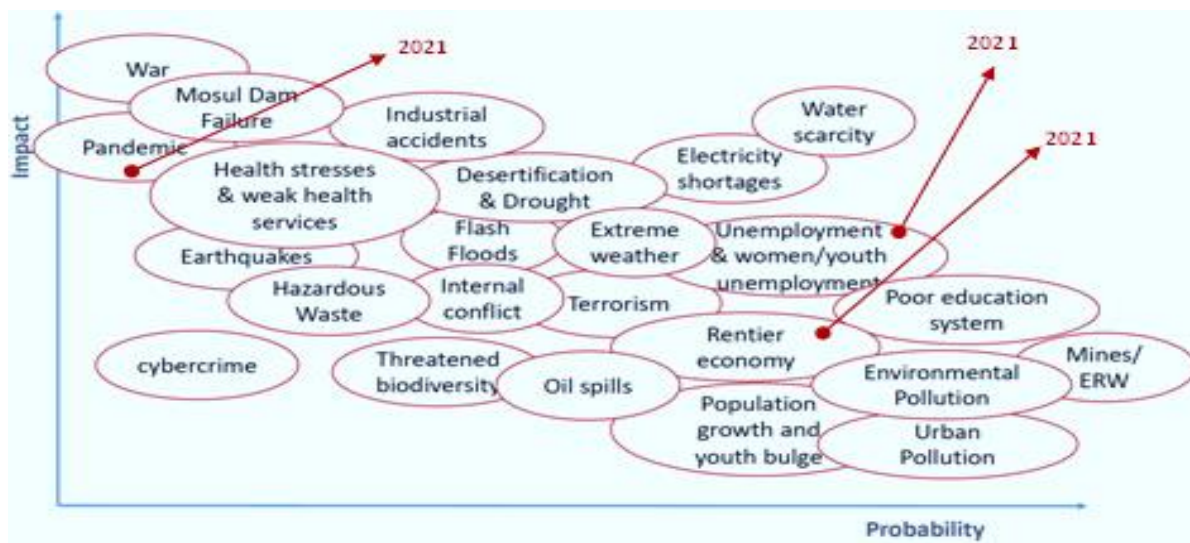
53 Available at https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/2021-01/IRQ_Socioeconomic-Response-Plan_2020.pdf.

54 Building resilience in Iraq is advanced using the four key elements for resilience building as elaborated in the UN Resilience Guidance. Those four elements are (i) multidimensional risks and contexts, (ii) multiple

stakeholders, (iii) interconnected systems, and (iv) resilience capacities.

55 These are usually determined and reviewed on a regular basis by expert judgement as part of National Risk Register Assessments. For a typical example, see [National Risk Register 2020 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk).

Figure 1. A conceptual sample of possible future shocks in Iraq, mapped according to likelihood and impact



Source: Adapted from UNDP Iraq. Original assessment in early 2020 and arrows showing rising probabilities and impacts.

Iraq remains vulnerable to external dynamics, particularly geopolitical tensions and competing political agendas, as well as global health emergencies and economic crises.⁵⁶ The situation is further constrained by internal fragmentation. Figure 1 shows the rising impact and/or probability of pandemics (COVID-19), oil price fluctuations, multiple effects in rentier economies, and youth unemployment and disenfranchisement throughout 2020 and into 2021, all of which may exacerbate fragility and fragmentation.

While future potential shocks depicted remain a serious concern, the current risks facing the country are equally troublesome, table 2, derived from the INFORM risk index, captures current natural and human made risks.

Table 2 demonstrates that risk are at their highest from six sources, including projected

conflict, forced displacement, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, in addition to governance. A precondition to effectively deal with current risks and future shocks is to urgently address social and institutional fragility at the local and national levels. Such a pathway will very much depend on an all-inclusive national reconciliation process and the mainstreaming of good governance, as stipulated by SDG 16. The civil service should be meritocratic, productive, transparent and accountable. An uncompleted reconciliation process is uncondusive to resilience. The need for such governance has been loudly demonstrated by the protests calling for better essential services and a conducive environment that meets the aspirations of the Iraqi people. Of great concern are the killings of youth activists who voiced popular dismay with the chronic governance deficit in the country.

56 For an overview, see Fanar Haddad (ed), Jan. 2020 'The Statecraft of Small States: Foreign Policy and Survival Strategies', *Insights*, Middle East Institute.

Table 2. Components of the INFORM Global Risk Index (2021)

	Earthquake	Flood	Tsunami	Tropical Cyclone	Drought	Epidemic	Projected Conflict Risk	Current Highly Violent Conflict Intensity	Development and Deprivation	Inequality	Economic Dependency	Uprooted people	Other Vulnerable Groups	DRR	Governance	Communication	Physical infrastructure	Access to health care
Iraq	5.4	9.5	0.0	0.0	5.3	6.9	9.9	9.0	4.9	4.2	1.4	9.0	2.2	8.4	7.8	4.0	3.5	5.6

Source: INFORM Global Risk Index 2021.

Note: Colours denote ascending scale of risk, green representing a lower level of risk and red the highest level of risk.

Building resilience at home will strengthen Iraq's capacity to diversify its international relations and enable it to better navigate the regional and global geopolitical tensions that threaten its sovereignty and stability. Furthermore, going beyond the ramifications of geopolitical polarization that plays out in many countries, including Iraq, the socioeconomic, political and security challenges resulting from the Syrian conflict will continue to have serious manifestations on the Iraqi people, in particular as relates to the large swaths of ungoverned spaces along the Syrian-Iraqi border that serve as safe havens or bases for non-State actors and illicit trade networks. The war economy of Syria, combined with that of Iraq, and the resulting illicit trade network, will further undermine the resilience of Iraq in the years to come.

2.2.2 Illicit trade networks

According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, trafficking, including with drugs, has been steadily on the rise in Iraq since 2003. This is due to the porous Iraqi borders that have become ever more difficult to control after the United States-led

operation in 2003 and the ISIL offence that affected the security and political environments.

According to available data on seizures and related arrests, a large portion of the world's heroin, opium and hashish, as well as methamphetamine produced in Afghanistan, are transported through Iraq en route to markets in the Arabian Peninsula and Europe.

The numbers of traffickers intercepted at the borders with Iran, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia have increased in recent years, mainly in the Iraqi provinces of Basra and Maysan, indicating an inward as well as outward flow of drugs and illicit products.

According to the Iraqi authorities, Basra, the country's third largest city and main seaport, and the only one with access to the Gulf, has become particularly vulnerable to trafficking. Its strategic location between Iran and Kuwait, and the absence of custom controls, lead to a dramatic rise in drug trafficking.

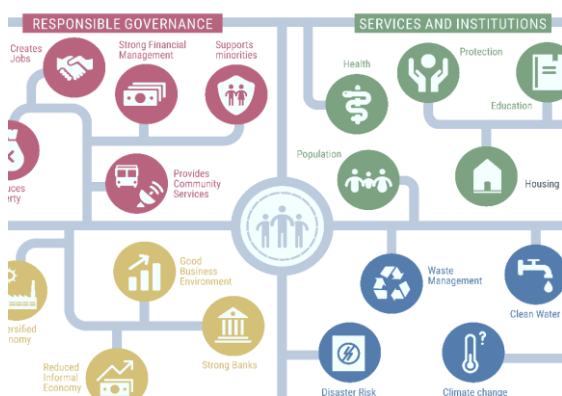
2.2.3. Interconnected systems

A country cannot build resilience piecemeal; it rather requires a holistic, long-term vision that addresses all facets of state and societal resilience (figure 2).

Otherwise, gains made in one area will be undermined by neglect in another. The scale of the challenges is greater than the capacity of the Government of Iraq.

Furthermore, emerging complex risks can now affect whole systems and spread across them, as demonstrated by the impact of COVID-19 that has emerged from an environmental concern to become one that is undermining health, to economic, financial and social systems, both in Iraq and indeed in the world.⁵⁷ This requires developing the necessary institutional governance arrangements and related capacities to manage and reduce these emerging complex systemic risks.⁵⁸

Figure 2. A conceptual diagram illustrating national resilience on multiple pillars of society



There is a pressing need for Iraq to move away from perpetual crisis management towards a more sustainable and productive approach that builds

resilience at the state and societal levels. This would allow it to enhance its absorptive, adaptive, anticipative, preventive and transformative⁵⁹ capacities to manage and reduce emerging, complex and systemic risks. This requires a comprehensive, long-term structural reform programme based not on short-term political calculations, but on the future sustainability of the Iraqi State and society. The challenges being addressed are more extensive than the capacities of any single government, and so too should be the response. Civil unrest, insurgency, political instability, geopolitical tensions and economic and ecological collapse are not hypothetical risks but salient, and in some cases structural, threats.

2.3 Durable solutions

Durable solutions coordination architecture tackles displacement from an area-based approach, and brings together humanitarian, stabilization, peacebuilding and development actors. Achieving durable solutions for all returnees, totalling roughly 4.8 million as of 31 December 2020,⁶⁰ and sustaining a favourable protection environment for refugees and other forcibly displaced population is complex and will require time, human and financial resources and long-term commitments from the Government of Iraq, donors and humanitarian and development actors.

Prevailing challenges can prevent resolutions. For example, gaps in the housing sector (such as the lack of social housing solutions for the poorest) were exacerbated by the conflict and years of systematic under-resourcing, leading large numbers of people to live in informal settlements with insecure tenure. Addressing structural poverty in Iraq is no less crucial

57 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Iraq, *Impact of the Oil Crisis and COVID-19 on Iraq's Fragility* Impact of the oil crisis and COVID-19 on Iraq's fragility | UNDP in the Arab States.

58 The UNDRR Global Assessment Report (GAR 2019), Report 2019 | GAR (undrr.org).

59 As elaborated in the draft UN Common Guidance on Helping Build Resilient Societies.

60 International Organization for Migration (IOM), December 2020, *Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM)*. Available at <http://iraqdtm.iom.int/>.

than resolving the future of IDPs, and sustainable return mechanisms or displacement will contribute to the resilience of the whole community and to the country's shock-responsive capacities in the future.

Multiple activities and projects have been implemented by various actors since the World Bank's Damage and Needs Assessment report (2018), and are still currently underway. For example, the UNDP Funding Facility for Stabilization (FFS), which started in 2015, mobilized more than \$1.2 billion from 27 donors and implemented 3,600 rehabilitation and livelihood projects. The FFS was explicitly geared up to support returns and contributed to the arrival of IDPs within its mandated 31 localities across the five previously occupied ISIL governorates.

During 2020, stakeholders began to pivot towards joint-planning, specifically towards durable solutions and area-based programming, and a Durable Solutions Network. But the crucial and underlying issues related to security, social cohesion, reintegration and, eventually, reconciliation, are more challenging; they are nonetheless essential to the sustainability of IDP return and the population's resilience.

The complicated, protracted type of displacement in Iraq calls for a new approach, one that transitions from emergency care to solving the root causes of displacement and its consequences, particularly sustainable return and durable solutions (table 3). Thus, a key priority is devising comprehensive, responsive framework that provides continuous support to the forcibly displaced and wider displacement-affected communities, as in the Durable Solutions Strategy and Operational Framework. Equally importantly, given the state of turmoil in the region, any durable solutions framework should remain inclusive of the refugees who were forced to flee from their own countries.

Success requires bringing together key humanitarian, stabilization, peacebuilding and development actors *delivering as one*, building on each other's *comparative advantage* and delivering *collective outcomes*, in line with the National Plan for Solving Displacement and the

country's development framework, i.e. the National Development Plan 2018-2022, National Reconstruction and Development Framework for 2018-2027, Iraq Vision 2030, KRI 2020 – A Vision for the Future, Strategy for the Reduction of Poverty in Iraq (2018-2022), as well as the SDG 2030 Agenda.

The durable solutions plan will be implemented through area-based projects addressing barriers to resolving displacement, at the levels of individual cases and different areas. This will be supported by an integrated and multi-stakeholder approach to reconstruction, rehabilitation and recovery, through infrastructure rehabilitation, support to social and economic inclusion, and local (national) capacity development for effective service delivery. Once the approach is endorsed, there will be significant consultations with authorities, resident communities and IDPs, and in-depth assessments to identify and choose the projects. Resources will have to be made available.

In parallel, all actors need to take steps to reinforce coordination between humanitarian and development actors. That includes starting a collaboration between clusters, the durable solutions task force and working group, and the priority working groups in charge of preparing and implementing the United Nations Development Cooperation Framework, in addition to scaling up the work on Legal Documentation and HLP (Housing, Land and Property sub-cluster) and preparing and delivering a robust advocacy strategy at all levels. Some of these activities do not involve high costs and could be implemented rapidly.

Both approaches should be used to develop methodologies and best practices and should "feed" each other. Coherence and coordination will be vital. In the long-term, a failed return and resolution of the displacement situation in Iraq might result in the future resurgence of conflict and a lag in of human and economic development. This could create another internal displacement crisis and continued emigration, or undocumented and irregular migration.

Table 3. Priorities for sustainable return (identified by IDPs and returnee communities)

CATEGORY 1 Service delivery and/or material interventions	CATEGORY 2 Community reconciliation, dialogue and social interventions	CATEGORY 3 Advocacy and negotiation
<p>Criteria 2: Adequate standard of living</p> <p>Criteria 3: Access to livelihoods and employment</p> <p>Criteria 4: Access to effective mechanisms to restore housing, land and property (HLP) or to provide compensation</p> <p>Criteria 5: Access to and replacement of personal and other documentation</p>	<p>Criteria 6: Voluntary reunification with family members separated during displacement</p> <p>Criteria 7: Participation in public affairs</p> <p>Criteria 8: Access to effective remedies and justice</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Criteria 1: Long-term safety, security and freedom of movement
<p>Resource, material and individual service need in both areas of origin and areas of displacement</p>	<p>Social cohesion issues</p>	<p>Access and security related challenges</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Damaged/destroyed housing Land tenure and other HLP issues Lack of economic opportunity/jobs Mental health issues (e.g. trauma, depression, PTSD, etc.) Lack of basic services (water, electricity, education, health, etc.) ERW/UXO/IED contamination Debris preventing reconstruction Lack of basic documentation/ protection services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ethno-religious tension, protection Perceived ISIL affiliation (allowed to return by authorities but fearful of revenge, reprisal, community acceptance) Other issues preventing acceptance of returnees by communities (e.g. mental health) <p>Communities facing these challenges may also face category 1 issues</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Areas blocked (militias) Perceived ISIL Affiliation (blocked from return by authorities) Security clearance House occupation (by armed groups) <p>Communities facing these challenges may also face category 1 and category 2 issues</p>

3. Review of Multi-dimensional Risk and Financial Flows

3.1 Multi-dimensional risk

Table 4 includes a comprehensive presentations of the different multi-dimensional risk areas facing Iraq, with an elaboration of the consequences of each risk area

on different real-life events, and a scope of the measures responses needed to address each risk while taking into account the SDGs relevant to addressing that risk when applicable.

Table 4. Multidimensional risks facing SDG implementation in Iraq

Risk area	Description	Scope
1. COVID-19 Pandemic	<p>Increase in number of cases and deaths.</p> <p>Health system overwhelmed and cannot cope.</p> <p>Disruption in delivery of routine (non-COVID-19) services; resources diverted to respond to COVID-19 increasing other health vulnerabilities.</p> <p>Government re-introduces mitigating measures, such as movement restrictions, partial/full lockdowns, reduction in working hours and staffing, border closures, etc. (This contributes to further deterioration of economic situation, loss of income and jobs).</p> <p>Continued infection of health workers, which further reduces health workforce capacity.</p>	<p>Mitigating measures</p> <p>Development of a national plan to respond to COVID-19, taking into consideration different scenarios, including recovery and transition to health system strengthening – linking COVID-19 response to existing national policies and strategies.</p> <p>Strengthen the health system by developing a cohort of trained volunteer health workers in coordination with volunteer involving organizations.</p> <p>Improve disease surveillance, contact tracing and testing capacity.</p> <p>Boost public awareness, buy in, and adherence to preventive measures.</p> <p>Sufficient number of vaccines received; cold chain, consumables and other requirements are available; vaccines are distributed equitably based on prioritization plan.</p>

Risk area	Description	Scope
<p>2. Oil Price Fluctuations</p>	<p>Iraq is the third largest oil exporter globally, where hydrocarbon accounts for 60 per cent of GDP and 90 per cent of central government revenue.</p> <p>Iraq therefore remains very vulnerable to fluctuating oil prices, severely exposing the country to the risk of a major financial and economic crisis.</p> <p>Throughout 2020, oil prices were forecast to average around \$30 per barrel, whereas the government budgeting for last year prepared for \$56 per barrel.</p> <p>The impact of an budgetary deficit caused by oil prices resulted in a weakened financial position from which to address other risks, such as confronting the challenges of COVID-19.</p> <p>However, even if the price of oil recovers, the risk of further budgetary fluctuations will remain, while the oil market undermines economic diversification by the state.</p> <p>Furthermore, to mitigate against the risk presented by a volatile oil market, major reductions in government spending will be needed, even if financing is identified.</p>	<p>SDGs 1, 7, 8 and 13</p> <p>Mitigation Measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reforms to end reliance on the oil sector; • Reduction of government overheads to mitigate against the consequences of a fall in oil price; • Establishment of an Oil Fund to stabilize government revenue against a fluctuating oil price; • Economic stability, led by a diversified economy, would enable the UN and other development actors to continue to work with, through and for the Government of Iraq.
<p>3. Political Instability</p> <p>Risks to the stability of established political and government structures resulting from politically driven factors.</p>	<p>A lack of political stability in Iraq can manifest itself in many ways across the Iraqi population and can adversely impact UN activities.</p> <p>Political stability will directly increase the adherence to UN principles, including combating corruption, as well as the continued advocacy and advisory assistance to promote inclusive and democratic political processes.</p>	<p>SDGs 16, 17, 8 and 9</p> <p>Mitigation Measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenges to political system/Government may induce reforms/greater inclusion; • Changes in governance structures or principles; • Reduction in corruption levels; • Eventually, better governance would lead to a political stability that would allow the

Risk area	Description	Scope
	<p>The erosion of political stability would damage the impact of UN activities in most aspects. Technical assistance and support for improved capacities in service delivery on behalf of, or through the Government, would suffer. For instance, this could negatively impact the work of election monitors or the role of conflict resolution mediators at the community level.</p> <p>Additionally, for the Government of Iraq itself, a deterioration of political stability would lead to fewer steps being taken to address public grievances and improve governance at the sub-national level.</p> <p>However, a stabilized political landscape will allow the Government to encourage political reforms, with a focus on resource management and anti-corruption measures. It will also strengthen the government's ability to review national security architecture and finalize the National Security Strategy and SSR Programme.</p>	<p>UN to further support more reforms and implement other related projects.</p>
4. Youth Protests	<p>Mass protests might disrupt some education/transportation/government services.</p> <p>Protests could increase tension in the run-up to elections.</p> <p>Government response might lead to human rights violations, including the right to peaceful assembly and to protest.</p> <p>Protesters may be targeted by non-State armed groups, further compromising the social fabric and civil peace.</p> <p>Potential for legitimate public protest to be perceived by some actors as public disorder.</p>	<p>SDGs 8, 9,10 and 15.</p> <p>Measures taken to address protest demands, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involvement of youth in all levels of decision-making; • Economic reform to increase job opportunities for young people; • Electoral reform to empower youth and give greater legitimacy to elected Government; • Create, engage and/or support (youth) volunteering platforms (virtual and physical) and networks to increase voice and representation of youth volunteers working on the issues that affect them, in their communities and societies;

Risk area	Description	Scope
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop context-specific gendered national youth volunteering policies and frameworks, including leadership opportunities for young people, training and support, but also securing young volunteers from personal insecurity, risk, exploitation and other abuses. <p>Security forces trained in peaceful and non-violent crowd-control measures; orders issued against use of violence.</p> <p>State control of weapons, absence of non-State armed groups.</p> <p>Inclusion of youth in UN programmes and projects.</p>
<p>5. Democratic Space</p> <p>Risks to democratic and human rights institutions, and to civil and political rights resulting from shrinking civic space, exclusion, repression and intimidation.</p>	<p>The risk of a reduction in the democratic space can manifest itself in multiple ways. For example, it could perpetuate mistrust between the State and the people of Iraq, which may in turn lead to the collapse of the public administration, impacting the delivery of services.</p> <p>A lack of democratic freedom may also result in a political stalemate and increased sectarian tensions, marginalization of communities with perceived affiliations, including harassment or violence against human rights defenders and journalists. It may also lead to the reduced impact of durable solutions for the forcibly displaced people by the deterioration of much-needed protection services.</p> <p>A clear undemocratic event, such as delayed elections beyond the constitutional timeline or non-transparent electoral process, could trigger political instability and social unrest, which can lead to continued demonstrations.</p>	<p>SDGs 5, 16 and 17</p> <p>Mitigation Measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued UN dialogue with political actors on the importance of safeguarding the democratic space in Iraq; • Advocate for electoral reform through UNAMI; • Programming aimed at vulnerable groups, including youth participation in political life; • Step up protection measures and expose threats to the democratic space; • Support national institutions, including civic and social institutions; • Advocate with political actors for increased engagement with civil society and vulnerable groups.

Risk area	Description	Scope
<p>6. Social cohesion, gender equality and non-discrimination</p> <p>Risks to social unity and equality resulting from direct and indirect discrimination, horizontal inequalities and demographic trends.</p>	<p>Social cohesion, gender equality and non-discrimination would be eroded if governance actors take actions that would further exclude marginalized or vulnerable groups.</p> <p>If community level social cohesion initiatives are reduced, it would cause a further lack of trust between communities and groups. Prevalence of distrust would risk having a negative impact on vulnerable groups and would create, for instance, further obstacles to the return of IDPs to areas of origin, and protracted displacement would continue.</p>	<p>SDGs 1, 5, 10 and 17</p> <p>Mitigation Measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dialogue and advocacy with policymakers to support the development of policy and legal frameworks; • Promote inclusivity and equality; • Inclusive area-based approaches, with the active involvement of both state actors and communities; • Promote interdisciplinary dialogue and partnerships across stakeholder groups, including women, CSOs, youth, community peace committees and faith-based groups, reinforcing reconciliation and social cohesion efforts; • Advocate for the reform of social protection systems to promote effective targeting within their schemes and services; • Organize campaigns to raise awareness for inclusion of all minorities; • Activate social protection mechanisms.
<p>7. Regional and global influences</p> <p>Risks to the integrity, stability, safety and prosperity of the country and its people as a result of the actions of external actors or the influence of external events.</p>	<p>Broader geopolitical tensions and the continued absence of inter-state dialogue to ease these tensions could impact Iraq, risking its territory becoming an arena for international disputes.</p>	<p>SDGs 8, 9, 16 and 17</p> <p>Mitigation Measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain impartiality and dialogue with national leadership; • Demonstrating political unity in addressing regional tensions; • Support from the UN to safeguard the country's sovereignty and to insulate itself from regional tensions and competing geopolitical interests; • Better coordination of anti-terrorism efforts and operations.

Risk area	Description	Scope
<p>8. Internal Security</p> <p>Risks to the security of the country, its people and infrastructure, and to the ability of the international community to operate effectively due to security issues.</p>	<p>The complexity of factional security services remains a potential area of severe risk, particularly the continued operations of armed actors operating outside State control and the continued need to professionalize state security forces.</p> <p>Multiple armed actors present ongoing security challenges and undermine government efforts to reform the security sector and impede accountability for violations against the Iraqi people. Weak government control over the entire security apparatus could lead to excessive use of force or killings by security services or other armed actors, with little to no judicial accountability.</p>	<p>SDGs 8, 9, 16 and 17</p> <p>Mitigation measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate for sustained and free access to hard-to-reach areas; • Coordinate with governmental counterparts and security personnel to adjust plans of action according to needs, accessibility and security; • Continued documentation and advocacy at domestic and international levels; • Continued support, advice and assistance by the UN to promote democratic security services that are accountable and transparent; • Promote civilian and parliamentary oversight and accountability on security service providers and institutions; • Support civil society at national and local levels to play an active role in civilian oversight of the security sector; • Promote community-security sector collaborative partnerships to build mutual trust and confidence and to address local safety and security issues; • Keep low profile operations, especially for international staff; • Focus more on secure governorates /areas until the situation is more stable; • Be more dependent on national staff and partners for implementation; • Dialogue and awareness of security forces to reduce/stop using force and killings.

Risk area	Description	Scope
<p>9. Justice and Rule of Law</p> <p>Risk to the fair, effective and comprehensive implementation and application of the principles of justice, the rule of law and accountability.</p>	<p>Without structural reforms to strengthen and modernize state institutions and applicable legal frameworks, there remains a risk of weakened due process and rule of law.</p> <p>This may well manifest itself by reducing the chances and regularity of efficient, transparent and accountable justice and rule of law institutions and service delivery.</p> <p>There is a small risk that the Government of Iraq may become unable to maintain the rule of law altogether. However, the risk of declining justice systems will most likely continue to result in the lack of access to legal services for refugees, IDPs, returnees and marginalized groups, including those of perceived affiliations with ISIL.</p>	<p>SDGs 5, 16 and 17</p> <p>Mitigation Measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programmes are designed to build trust in justice and legal protection; • Continue to actively protect human rights and the rule of law as judicial priorities for the Iraqi Government, including the rights of women and minorities; • Continued documentation and advocacy at domestic and international levels; • Increased attention to advocacy as a channel to bring together civil society and donors to improve the rule of law; • Stepped up advocacy and search for incentives, together with donors and civil society; • Work to focus on the protection of civilians and humanitarian activities; • Where possible, provide support to the court system and police structures to maintain justice and security.
<p>10. Infrastructure and access to social services</p> <p>Risks to society and the population resulting from a lack of, or limited access to, physical infrastructure, and/or basic social services.</p>	<p>Should already poor governance systems continue to deteriorate, many areas of everyday lives will be negatively affected. Increased restrictions on the availability, use and accessibility to services, such as transport, roads, electricity and internet services, risk becoming ever more frequent in the face of weakened infrastructure.</p> <p>Adverse effects of poor social services would risk impacting the spread of meaningful education services and the quality of adequate provisions offered in the areas of returnees.</p>	<p>SDGs 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 11 and 17</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gear donor and government investments towards assisting the most vulnerable population in both urban and rural areas, including peri-urban informal settlements that lack most basic services; • Push the sustainability principle of <i>leaving no one behind</i> to help overcome the geographical and socioeconomic disparities that are inhibiting the whole country's potential; • Use the 2021 census and CSO development indicators to lobby for a more equitable repartition of the national budget (i.e., population + development index); • Improve the provincial authorities' capacity in financial management and budget execution;

Risk area	Description	Scope
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support robust education management information systems, including providing access to distance learning and Accelerated Learning Programme classes; • Advocate for funds for stabilization programming in the returnee’s areas; • Continued advocacy with the Government to invest national budgetary resources in the rehabilitation of priority infrastructure in key sectors to enable people’s access to services in areas affected by and vulnerable to conflict; • Support the Government to develop financing models for service delivery in priority sectors (education health etc.), which would improve the quality of services.
<p>11. Displacement and Migration</p> <p>Risks to the population and to the stability of the country resulting from pressures associated with displacement and/or migration.</p>	<p>As Iraq continues to pursue durable solutions, the successful protection, inclusion and integration of displaced persons, including refugees, in relevant national programmes and frameworks, face different risks and a broad scope of possible negative consequences.</p> <p>The possible deterioration of the political or security situation may lead to disruptions in access to protection, assistance and other programming for displaced populations, and therefore increase their vulnerability and protection needs. Further deterioration in the political, security and economic situation in the country may likewise upend the capacity of relevant line ministries to adequately ensure the protection and delivery of services to displaced populations.</p> <p>Gaps in the promotion and support for social cohesion between displaced persons and host communities, and the absence of sufficient livelihood and economic opportunities, may contribute to tensions over access to</p>	<p>SDGs 10, 11, 16 and 17</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advance social cohesion programmes, with a focus on the most vulnerable groups; • Further and promote durable solutions programmes; • Support ongoing systems strengthening to ensure humanitarian-development continuum and integration of services; • Further and promote programmes in support of durable solutions objectives through the National Plan and the Strategic Operational Framework – note that the second part of this sentence is not currently present in the draft shared. • Promote area-based coordination and multisectoral programmes (civil/legal documentation, profiling and registration, stabilization, recovery, reconstruction, HLP issues including compensation, livelihoods, social cohesion and reconciliation and facilitated return movement) to support the reintegration of displaced person and returnees, while supporting communities

Risk area	Description	Scope
	<p>limited support and resources, which may in turn compromise integration, reintegration and durable solutions overall, and lead to discrimination, disenfranchisement and negative coping mechanisms.</p>	<p>as a whole in overcoming the impact of displacement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain coordination structures to manage the Durable solutions architecture and various operational elements. • Promote area-based and multisectoral programmes (civil/legal documentation, profiling and registration, stabilization, recovery, reconstruction, HLP issues including compensation, livelihoods, social cohesion and reconciliation etc.); • Pursue sustained advocacy with the Government on the need for durable solutions for displaced populations. • Advent of the Iraq UN Network on Migration to support GoI with implementation of the Global Compact on Migration and to promote and advocate for priorities and objectives under the GCM relevant to Iraq. Including capacity building and technical support to the GoI on data and research around migration governance. • Advance implementation of the Global Compact for Migration (GCM) through operationalizing the National Migration Management Strategy with UN system-wide support through the UN Network on Migration in Iraq. and advocate for priorities and objectives under the GCM relevant to Iraq. Including capacity building and technical support to the GoI on data and research around migration governance.. • Advance an integrated border management approach anchored in national strategic plans such as the national development plan, national migration strategy and national security strategy; and key thematic frameworks such as the Iraq National Action Plan on UN SCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security.

Risk area	Description	Scope
<p>12. Public Health</p> <p>Risk to the population, economy and stability of the country resulting from actual and emerging health emergencies.</p>	<p>Beyond the risks posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, further public health risks are threatening the population of Iraq.</p> <p>In particular, children and mother mortality rates may increase, alongside a general increase of malnourishment rates.</p> <p>A rise in mental and psychosocial cases across the country is also likely and risks causing a further economic and mental strain placed on the population in the wake of the pandemic.</p>	<p>SDGs 3 and 17</p> <p>Mitigation Measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint review of hygiene procedures in public health facilities; • Implementation of the new surge policy, deployments from the emergency roster and implementation of SOPs for emergencies; • Support Ministry of Health to provide universal and gender-responsive health coverage through strengthening primary health care and priority public health programmes; • Support Ministry of Health to strengthen Maternal and Child Health centres to remain open 24/7 and enhance the system of surveillance; • Support Ministry of Health in establishing a robust surveillance system to identify the malnourished population and start a food support programme.
<p>13. Food security, agriculture and land</p> <p>Risk to people, agriculture, and/or production in the country resulting from lack of crop, food production, livestock and related issues.</p>	<p>Risks to food security fall into three main areas: production, competition and disease.</p> <p>The risk of more weakened local production would lead to rising prices as the availability and access to food diminish. This can be exacerbated by any further disruption to value chains or to the public distribution system.</p> <p>More issues pertaining to housing, land and property, such as compensation mechanisms or land disputes, may well upscale competition over access to arable or grazing land risks. This may be compounded by explosive remnants of war, resulting in further lack of access to farmland that can, in turn, affect production.</p>	<p>SDGs 2, 9, 5 and 17</p> <p>Mitigation Measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage efficient and regulated use of water for irrigation and human/animal consumption (water resource management); • Support the Government to create an enabling environment for sustainable agribusiness and food value chains inside Iraq; • Support the diversification of the economy, including agricultural land use, through the private sector by providing funding/loans for food production projects; • Continue to strengthen and advocate for the respect of HLP rights of minority groups;

Risk area	Description	Scope
	<p>The risk of transboundary animal diseases or pests decimating crops remains an eminent threat that would continue to have a severe impact on food production.</p> <p>Impacts of climate change are a major threat on food security in Iraq including exerting pressures on the available natural resources such as water.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support communities with capacity development and new technologies for agro-processing/value chains; • Support the rehabilitation of water infrastructure; • Border control and capacity development (quarantine); • Advocate with the Government to pilot climate-resilient models for developing the agriculture sector; • Promote models for integrated livelihood interventions. • Advocate with the Government to prioritize mine action tasking in agriculture areas. <p>Enhance working conditions in agriculture sector in line with national and international labour standards.</p>
<p>14. Environment and climate change</p> <p>Risks to the ecology of the country, its ecosystem and its people resulting from issues associated with the environment, climate and natural resources.</p>	<p>Risks caused by a deteriorating environment and climate situation in Iraq manifest themselves in multiple ways, from energy and water shortages to land degradation and extreme weather events.</p> <p>Low capacity for water and energy infrastructure management and maintenance will increase the chances of water and energy shortages. The risk caused by a decrease in systematic dam safety and management is particularly noticeable, alongside any potential river flow restrictions caused by transboundary restrictions.</p> <p>In addition, toxic and chemical pollution, such as medical waste, would impact natural resources, such as land and water.</p> <p>Meanwhile, if land degradation and the loss of biodiversity continue, the</p>	<p>SDGs 12, 13, 14, 15 and 17</p> <p>Mitigation Measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foster political and technical cooperation on transboundary river resources in support of sustainable water strategies, in line with the Hague Declaration; • Enhance government's ability to manage water resources, such as identifying alternative water resources options like groundwater; • Build capacity to improve disaster response and risk-coping strategies; • Increase funding for re-vegetation, pilot implementation of more effective irrigation methods and support the implementation of the National Environment Strategy and Action Plan (NESAP) launched by UNEP in 2013; • Support the drafting of resilience plans for cities and provinces most vulnerable to sand and dust storms;

Risk area	Description	Scope
	<p>risk of climate change-induced displacement would increase.</p> <p>Additionally, as climate change continues, it is expected that the intensity of natural disasters will rise. This could mean that damage caused by earthquakes, droughts, floods, fires and sand and dust storms will cause increased damage to the population, necessitating country-wide adaptation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater support for disaster risk management and response mechanisms; • Activation of the climate change action plan at the local and national levels; • Emergency policy reform in support of agro-industry supported; <p>Create decent job opportunities in environmental interventions.</p> <p>Engagement and capacity building of volunteer groups and civil society in responding to environment and climate risks, and resilient plans.</p>
15. Economic Stability	<p>Significant risks to economic stability exist beyond the severe risks faced by the oil market and the fall in oil prices.</p> <p>The risk of augmented levels of corruption continues to erode public trust in the economic infrastructure of Iraq.</p> <p>Fiduciary risk management remains poor, as investment remains lacking in non-oil sectors and as the State fails to fully fund national development programmes.</p> <p>Additionally, no functioning financial and banking system is in place, and a breakdown of the national financial system is the main hurdle preventing the generation of job opportunities.</p>	<p>SDGs 5, 8, 9 and 17</p> <p>Mitigation Measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In partnership and coordination with the World Bank, advocate with the Government for policy reforms that promote economic diversification, including less dependency on the oil sector; • Support the Government to strengthen priority systems and capacities for anti-corruption/demonstrate models to safeguard against corruption by promoting UN principles; • Public financial management reform; • Support the Government to develop sector-specific plans and policies to create an enabling environment for investment. <p>Support the Government in achieving a smooth transition from informal to formal economy.</p>

3.2 Fiscal and financial risks

3.2.1 Fiscal landscape in Iraq

The COVID-19 pandemic and the declining oil price have had a devastating impact on Iraq, which is extremely dependent on the price of oil, a risk in and of itself. Low oil prices, coupled with social unrest, compounded fiscal pressures and contracted economic performance significantly, by as much as 4.7 per cent in 2020.⁶¹ In 2021, several factors condition the prospects of recovery, including the effectiveness of the stimulus packages enacted by the Government in response to the COVID-19 crisis,⁶² the recovery of the global economy, and most importantly, a rebound in oil prices.

Oil has persistently generated 90 per cent or more of the government's revenues (figure 3). Although the share of non-oil revenues in total revenues has been increasing, it remains negligible. This makes it difficult for Iraq to finance the bare minimum current expenditures and poses substantial risks for financing the SDGs.

For Iraq to achieve sustainable development, the State must harness sufficient financial resources to propel the country forward in the post-conflict environment. Transparent public financial management is key to achieving sustainable development and the State's reconstruction goals, including the \$88 billion

needed to rebuild areas affected by ISIL. It is also crucial for establishing the legitimacy of the State; ensuring accountability and efficiency in managing public resources; delivering basic services; achieving gender equality and women's empowerment; and stimulating job growth to counter the spread of radicalism among youth and disadvantaged populations. The Iraqi National Development Plan prioritizes the need to achieve economic reforms, including financial, fiscal and trade reforms, that are linked to SDG 8 on decent work and economic growth, SDG 9 on industrial development and SDG 12 on responsible production and consumption.⁶³

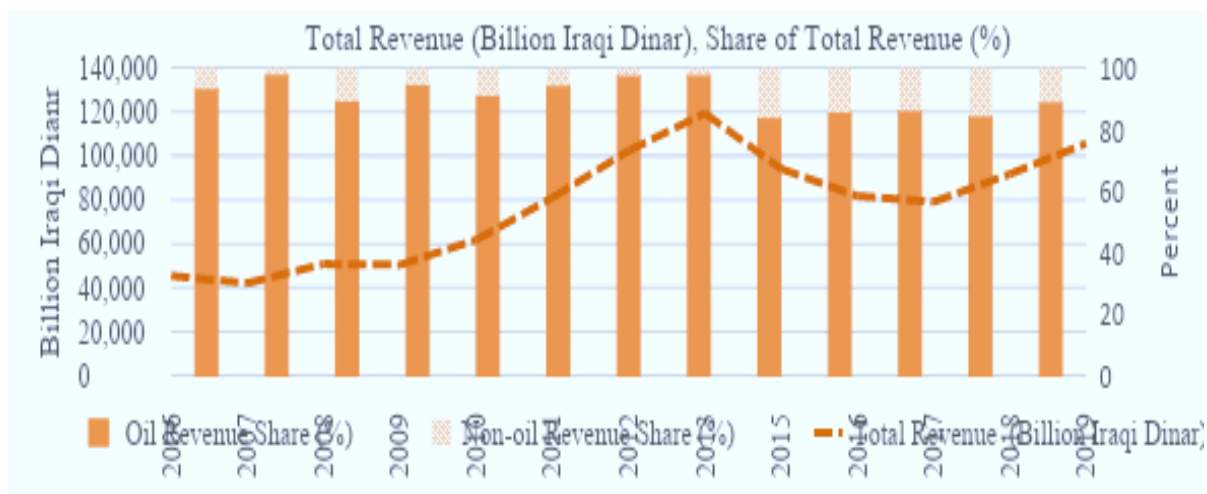
As demonstrated in figure 4, a structural imbalance between the bloated public payroll – estimated to have captured as much as 43 per cent of overall government expenditures – the provision of goods and services, and investment expenditure, which encompasses infrastructure investment and research, has undermined economic progress for years. In addition, the high operational costs related to the security forces in response to ISIL and other security matters came at the cost of investments and public services. There is an urgent need for a realignment of public expenditure, focusing on improved basic services, as indicated by the recent protests and demonstrations by young people, and growth-enhancing sectors that have higher potential for generating jobs.

61 A more pessimistic scenario in which the COVID-19 pandemic is expected to persist throughout the first quarter of 2021 predicts an economic contraction of 8.8 per cent in 2020. ESCWA, "Realities and Prospects in the Arab Region Survey of Economic and Social Developments 2019-2020", E/ESCWA/CL3.SEP/2020/1. Available at <https://www.unescwa.org/publications/survey-economic-social-development-arab-region-2019-2020>.

62 Iraq has announced support to the economy and business as well as social protection policy support mainly through cash transfers and income support.

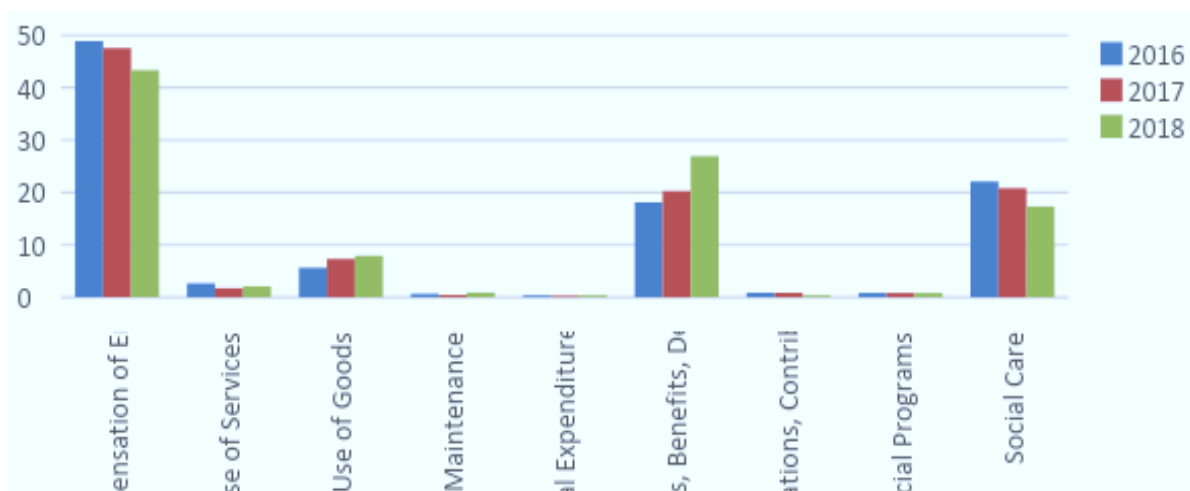
63 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 2018. *Support to the Government of Iraq for the Implementation and Monitoring of SDGs: Project Annual Report*. Baghdad: UNDP.

Figure 3. Oil and non-oil revenues, 2006-2019



Source: Annual Federal Budget Law (Ministry of Finance of Iraq).

Figure 4. Composition of Operating Expenditures (percentage)



Source: Iraq Budget 2019 Analysis.

Unfortunately, it seems that these reforms have yet to materialize. Under the proposed budget, current expenditure is still set to constitute the bulk of all government spending at 75 per cent of the total, with estimates to grow annually, leaving the remaining 25

per cent, or less, dedicated to investments.⁶⁴ Of the investments, 60 per cent is allocated to oil infrastructure, most of which is considered to be poorly executed due to a lack of capacity and skilled labour. Productive investment spending, such as those on

64 Tabaqchali, A., 2018. *Iraq's Investment Spending Deficit*. Institute for Regional and International Studies. Available at

https://auis.edu.krd/iris/sites/default/files/Investment_Spending_Deficit_Final_for_Publication.pdf.

electricity, water, housing and education, account for what little remains.

In other resource-rich countries, oil revenues usually lead to the development of ancillary industries. However, Iraq has not yet seen such spillover from oil into the local economy.⁶⁵ The lack of upstream and downstream industrial chains aggravates the vulnerability of the Iraqi economy. The public sector wage bill remains the single largest and fastest-growing budget item, accounting for a whopping 15.6 per cent of GDP, which is enormous, even by regional standards.⁶⁶

The cost of the war with ISIL resulted depleted financial resources for priorities related to development, reconstruction and social spending.⁶⁷ For example, the 2018 federal budget law allocated more than \$18 billion to security and defence, or an estimated 21 per cent of the total public expenditure, compared to 9.5 per cent to education and 4 per cent to health.⁶⁸ Additionally, the dominance of the public sector wage bill in government expenditure and the political incentives within the State to maintain its current spending levels have over time resulted in a lack of investment in non-oil infrastructure and other sectors of the economy as a means to diversify.⁶⁹

This structural imbalance in the economy between operational and investment expenditure exposes the country to external shocks. In response to the fall in the price of oil in 2014 and the start of the war with ISIL that year, the Government cut investment spending, while simultaneously increasing defence and military spending.⁷⁰ A lack of sophisticated borrowing or credit

operations and a climate that is non-conducive to borrowing have further contributed to the government's tendency to trim investment spending to benefit other sectors, such as the bloated public sector wage bill.⁷¹

Furthermore, any surpluses generated over time, fuelled in part by continued borrowing from the IMF in 2016, have gone unspent; it was estimated that Iraq would accumulate between \$22 and \$25 billion by the end of 2018, but political and economic constraints impeded the government's ability to spend it.⁷²

While the Government received an estimated \$30 billion in loans and bank credits to help cover the \$88 billion it needs to finance reconstruction in liberated areas, greater capital is needed to fill the fiscal gaps. Debt burden is not currently a concern for Iraq as it remains within sustainable levels. The ratio of public debt to GDP stood at 68 per cent in 2019.⁷³ However, the COVID-19 pandemic, low oil price levels and conflict are widening the fiscal deficit.

3.2.2 Policy recommendations

Maintaining the status quo by neglecting to offset the structural imbalance between current and investment spending could reduce the space for fiscal consolidation and thus impede reconstruction efforts. Realigning the budget to augment revenue and rationalize spending, while improving efficiency of spending and curbing corruption, can help mobilize greater resources. The National Development Plan 2018-2022 notes the need to improve "the degree of

65 Ibid.

66 World Bank Group 2020, Iraq Economic Monitor. Available at [https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/34749#:~:text=Iraq's%20GDP%20shrank%20by%206.8,y\)%%20in%20Q2%2D20](https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/34749#:~:text=Iraq's%20GDP%20shrank%20by%206.8,y)%%20in%20Q2%2D20).

67 Ibid.

68 Ibid.

69 Tabaqchali, A., 2018. *Iraq's Investment Spending Deficit*. [Institute for Regional and International Studies. Available

at https://auis.edu.krd/iris/sites/default/files/Investment_Spending_Deficit_Final_for_Publication.pdf.

70 Ibid.

71 Ibid.

72 Ibid.

73 IMF World Economic Outlook 2020.

integrity and transparency and reduce administrative and financial corruption".⁷⁴ Improving fiscal space to finance recovery efforts from COVID-19 would require a number of policy reforms that Iraq may consider urgently, especially in the area of raising revenues and improving efficiency of expenditures. These include:

(a) Generate fiscal space through tax reforms

The gradual diversification of revenues is key to improving sustainable fiscal space. In the short term, Iraq would need to look for potential opportunities through widening the tax base. The country has no Value Added Tax or excise taxes. Sales taxes on cigarettes and alcohol, introduced in 2015, were subsequently revoked in 2016.⁷⁵ The enforcement of the customs duty has been at the discretion of the Iraq General Commission of Customs. This is reflected by the IMF's several recommendations to reconsider and reform the customs administration and the tax system in general.⁷⁶

(b) Generate fiscal space through rationalizing spending and improving efficiency of expenditures

On the other side of the fiscal balance, rationalizing public expenditure is a priority. To begin with, rationalizing subsidies, particularly fuel subsidies, and reforming financial management systems to enable institutions to manage state finances in an effective

and sustainable manner, is a priority.⁷⁷ In this context, establishing a "Social Expenditure Monitor"⁷⁸ to inform decisions to rebalance the priorities in spending, improving transparency and minimizing leakages in overall public finance management, are key enablers for "smart spending" to improve fiscal space.⁷⁹ Reducing the wage bill is a top priority, but it can be done only when there are incentives for the private sector to flourish and generate jobs.

(c) Developing a well-strategized medium to long-term macro-fiscal framework

Impediments to finance for development and the mobilization of funds to finance reconstruction are significant. In this context, Iraq needs to consider developing a well-strategized macro-fiscal framework to enhance fiscal space, which can help achieving its National Development Plan targets and objectives.⁸⁰ Debt financing is an important instrument of fiscal expansion, but it should be considered in the context of fiscal sustainability.

Fiscal sustainability, after all, is an accounting exercise. It is good as long as the data is good and transparent. A transparent public finance management system is a top priority to assess the risks and vulnerabilities of fiscal sustainability.

74 Republic of Iraq, Ministry of Planning, 2018. *National Development Plan 2018-2022*. Available at https://www.iraq-jcme.jp/pdf/archives/nationaldevelopmentplan2018_2022.pdf.

75 IMF, 2017.

76 IMF, 2017; 2019; 2020.

77 Republic of Iraq, General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers, *White Paper for Economic and Financial Reform, 2020*.

78 Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) 2019. *Social Expenditure Monitor for Arab States*. Available at <https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/pu>

blications/files/social_expenditure_monitor_for_arab_states_eng.pdf.

79 Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) *Policy Brief on "Limited Fiscal Space Puts the Arab Region Recovery from COVID-19 at Risk"*. Available at https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/20-00230_covid-19_limited-fiscal-space-en_june30_f.pdf.

80 Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and Ministry of Planning, Iraq, 2019. *'Macro-Fiscal Policy toward Economic Diversification and Employment Generation in Iraq'*. Available at <https://www.unescwa.org/file/93943/download?token=J1OJOREc>.

4. Underlying Risk Factors and Dynamics

4.1 Governance and institutions

4.1.01 Enhancing legitimacy

Surveys indicate that Iraqi citizens see their political leaders and government officials as corrupt, driven by individual or partisan interests and lacking commitment to national interests and citizen rights. A survey conducted by the National Democracy Institute⁸¹ found that 75 per cent of Iraqis did not believe the country is heading to the right direction. Unemployment, corruption, security, education and access to basic services were the top priorities the Government needed to address.⁸²

Despite a comparative decrease in violence during the 2018 elections, voter turnout hit an all-time low, with only 44.5 per cent.⁸³ The turnout was even lower in some governorates, such as Baghdad, where only 32 per cent of the residents cast their votes,⁸⁴ which may reflect a lack of trust in the country's electoral and political systems.

Against this backdrop, large-scale popular protests erupted across Iraq in October 2019, initially over poor social services, lack of economic opportunities and widespread corruption. Demands then evolved into a complete overhaul of the political and electoral system, and the protests eventually led to the resignation of the Prime Minister at the end of November 2019. The

government initially responded to the demonstrations as a security issue, the measures taken to quell the protests drew wide criticisms and further exacerbated the divide between the government and its people, opening space for violence, including by non-State actors.

4.1.02 Decentralization

Decentralization is highlighted by the Iraqi National Development Plan as one of seven core priorities for "good governance". Article 116 of the Constitution established that the Republic of Iraq is a decentralized, federal state. Still, the issue of decentralization continues to be ambiguous. This is complicated by the fact that Iraq has four levels of formal government.⁸⁵

Decentralization is perceived as a threat to national unity and identity. Additionally, there are no legal definitions of the powers and jurisdictions linked to each level of government and/or providing dispute resolution mechanisms. Although article 116 describes the regions and governorates as "decentralized", article 122 defines this decentralization as "administrative", limiting their capabilities and scope of action.

Humanitarian and development actors need multiple sets of permissions from differing authorities, causing delays in service provision. This is sometimes referred to as a "deconcentrated administration", meaning the

81 National Democratic Institute (NDI), 2019. *NDI Poll: Improved Social Cohesion, but Iraqis Remain Dissatisfied with Government*. Available at <https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/NDI%20Poll%20-%20July%202019%20%28English%29.pdf>.

82 Ibid.

83 "Iraq: Election results within two days, turnout at record low", *Al Jazeera English*, 13 May 2018. Available at

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/5/13/iraq-election-results-within-two-days-turnout-at-record-low>.

84 Ibid.

85 The levels are: central/federal, governorate, district and sub-district. The central government consists of 36 ministries, constitutional bodies, independent bodies, central government agencies and several commissions.

central government is merely transferring power to an administrative unit at the local level, instead of actually “devolving” the power to the sub-national entities. This allows the central government to control the administration and service delivery at the governorate and district levels.⁸⁶

4.1.03 Public administration reform

Challenges relating to expenditures include inadequately designed budgets that increase the already-inflated wage bill, while under-financing critical spending for human capital. The plunge in oil prices and COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020 significantly widened the public deficit, underpinning the need for reforms to the financial management system.

Most financial and administrative functions are performed by central ministries that, in theory, delegate power to directorates based in each governorate, which in turn are supposed to delegate to offices in districts and sub-districts. The result, however, is an overlap in the functions, competencies and jurisdictions of different ministries and administrative units. Contributing factors to the challenges include:

1. The lack of proper data collection and analysis systems.
2. Inconsistent policy planning.
3. Poor financial management.
4. The lack of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

These challenges have led to over-employment of public staff, an inflation of public expenses and a slowdown in bureaucratic procedures. The attempts made by successive governments to address these challenges

have been largely hindered by a lack of political will to implement needed administrative reforms. Much of the reform needed was addressed in the White Paper for economic and financial reform that was presented by Prime Minister al-Kadhemi’s Government in October 2020. However, implementation plans remain vague.

4.1.04 Security sector reform

The security environment in Iraq is complex and challenging. Reform of the security sector is crucial for long-term stabilization efforts and peace. Enhanced security and justice, are key for the country’s transition to long-term stability.

Several gaps need to be addressed, such as judicial and legal reform, correctional services and improving gender equality in essential public security services such as local police. The most pressing challenges include:

- Lack of coordination and capacity within and between security and justice;
- Continued presence and/or re-emergence of ISIL;
- Inefficient and untimely service delivery compromised by destroyed infrastructure;
- The fight against ISIL that has come at a heavy cost in skilled human resources;
- Lack of sufficient capacity development for security and justice in most provinces;⁸⁷
- Limited and under-resourced justice pathways for survivors of SGBV/CRSV;
- The Government’s inability to consolidate and control the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) and other militia groups;
- Slow policy decision-making due to the recurring political instability.

86 Al-Mawlawi, A., 2018. *Functioning Federalism’ in Iraq: A Critical Perspective*. *LSE Middle East Centre Blog [blog]* 11 March. Available at <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/mec/2018/03/11/functioning-federalism-in-iraq-a-critical-perspective/>; Siegle, J. and O’Mahony, P., 2005. *Assessing the merits of decentralization as a conflict mitigation strategy*. Washington, D.C.: Development Alternatives Inc. Available

at <https://africacenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Assessing-the-Merits-of-Decentralization-as-a-Conflict-Mitigation-Strategy.pdf>.

87 It is worth noting the leadership training provided by UN Women in 2019 to 150 magistrates and general prosecutors from all governorates.

- Sustained capacity development and operational support is needed to reinforce a "green to blue" shift toward a citizen-centric national security approach.
- Addressing the security-development nexus, including in the area of border management, requires integration of both security and development objectives with an enhanced focus on the Women, Peace and Security agenda.

While progress has been made in rebuilding liberated areas, these efforts are often undermined by the lack of accountable and transparent security and justice services. Reforming the security and justice sectors and restoring the rule of law are key for short and long-term stability and peace. State and non-State security actors should be included in the reform efforts, with a focus on holding security actors accountable for any abuse.⁸⁸

4.1.05 Infrastructure repair

Given the scale of the destruction, it is essential to determine what is to be restored and what is to be replaced. Immediate reconstruction and restoration, particularly of infrastructure critical to basic service delivery and economic activities, must be addressed, building on the success of the UNDP Funding Facility for Stabilization, which to date has implemented 2,300 projects across liberated areas, including in the electricity, education, health, livelihoods, municipality, transport and sewage and water sectors.

Sources of national funding are dependent on oil revenues, which suffered during the conflict. For a variety of reasons, very few of the pledges from the Kuwait International Conference for Reconstruction of Iraq have materialized, making this an unlikely source of support for reconstruction in the short term. At the same time, budget execution for non-oil spending,

including reconstruction, stood at a meagre 18 per cent, which is not sufficient. There are also systemic governance challenges facing rebuilding and renewing the infrastructure such as mismanagement and corruption.⁸⁹

4.1.06 Housing needs

Iraq has been facing a shortage in housing for many years. One of the main causes is the fast-growing population, which resulted in a rise in rents and real estate prices. Large-scale migration from rural to urban areas, caused by sectarian violence and lack of livelihood opportunities, combined with social preference of the Iraqi households to live in individual housing units rather than multi-story buildings, have exacerbated the housing shortage in urban areas. The most recent available statistics, from the 2009 census, indicated a shortage of 759,000 housing units across Iraq. Many point out that the real housing shortage is much more severe than these figures.

In addition to the shortage, the housing sector faces other challenges, including:

- Complicated management systems and procedures for allocating land for housing purposes;
- Lack of updated master plans for major cities, including Mosul, resulting in the construction of informal houses and settlements;
- Limited availability of funding for housing loans from private banks mainly due to complicated procedures and strict conditions.

In conflict-affected areas, damage and destruction exacerbate housing challenges. A World Bank study, estimated total damages to the housing sector in the seven assessed governorates of Anbar, Babel, Baghdad, Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninewa and Salah Al Din at IQD 18.7 trillion

88 Human Rights Watch (HRW), 2017. *Flawed Justice: Accountability for ISIS Crimes in Iraq*. Available at <https://www.hrw.org/report/2017/12/05/flawed-justice/accountability-isis-crimes-iraq>.

89 Al-Khatteb, L., 2018. *Iraq's Post-Government Formation Economic Outlook*. Available at <https://research.sharqforum.org/2018/10/24/iraqs-post-government-formation-economic-outlook/>.

(equivalent to \$16.1 billion). In aggregate, the housing sector needs a total IQD 20.6 trillion (equivalent to \$17.4 billion). Approximately 138,000 residential buildings have been impacted, and half of them were damaged beyond repair. Low-income housing has experienced the bulk of the damage, at 68 per cent, indicating that the conflict has severely impacted the low-income population of Iraq, worsening the already fragile situation they face.

Addressing housing needs in post-conflict Iraq requires an area-based, multi-sectoral, participatory and inclusive approach. An interim strategy would suggest first addressing the needs of residents of partially damaged housing that can be repaired quickly. In the medium-term (two- to five-year timeframe), a detailed strategy of how to rebuild destroyed houses should be devised, possibly in partnership with the private sector and commercial banks.

4.1.07 Education gaps

Starting in March 2020, the education situation in Iraq has been critical due to the outbreak of COVID-19. While the numbers of infections continued to soar up in the country, the schools were closed, and it remained uncertain when they would re-open. These circumstances forced United Nations agencies and their partners to adapt and develop contingency plans.

To ensure continuity of learning for school-age children, United Nations agencies supported the Federal Ministry of Education in the production and broadcast of video lectures for the uncompleted curricula through the TV Education Channel. They also supported the Ministry of Education of the Kurdistan Regional Government by improving the capacity of servers to launch a new e-learning platform, EWANE. Moreover, to address the psychological impact of COVID-19, United Nations agencies provided online psychosocial support sessions to help students develop and improve coping skills and greater resilience, particularly in facing severe stress and anxiety caused by school closures due to the pandemic, uncertainty about reopening, challenges with

new ways of learning, and information and knowledge gaps on this pandemic.

Education budgets, which account for only 9.6 per cent, remain far below the international benchmark of 20 per cent. Moreover, there are shortages in teaching staff, textbooks, and learning materials, and no reliable education management information system to support planning. The pandemic also had an impact on access to education and higher education. School closures and the suspension of non-formal education activities throughout several months prevented more than ten million children and young people from accessing learning. According to the World Bank, an increase in learning losses is to be expected, thereby impacting the country's economy in the long run. This adds to the existing gender disparities, putting girls at further risk of dropping out.

4.1.08 Food insecurity

Both the drop in global oil prices and the COVID-19 outbreak, which brought a surge in unemployment, have affected household food security. Moreover, Iraqis faced significant challenges accessing shops and markets, especially during the initial implementation of mitigation measures.

To reconcile its budget deficit of IQD 80 trillion, the Government decided to devalue the Iraqi dinar against the United States dollar. This devaluation was an essential step to reduce the fiscal deficit. The devaluation, however, also drove up prices of essential food items, which affected the purchasing power of vulnerable communities. Internal displacement has particularly impacted the populations' overall food security situation and livelihoods.

Food insecurity in Iraq is driven by several interrelated challenges including poverty; low agricultural productivity; post-harvest losses; widespread government intervention in food systems; gender inequality and inequity; low literacy among vulnerable groups; a lack of empowerment opportunities that drive

high population growth; and high unemployment rates at the national level, especially among youth. The Food Security Cluster estimates that around 730,000 conflict-affected IDPs/returnees are food insecure, including 435,000 who require immediate food and livelihood assistance.

IDPs living in camp settings are among populations facing the highest levels of vulnerability to food insecurity due to limited access to food sources/markets and the loss of income sources due to COVID-19 containment measures. Among female-headed households living in camps, 15 per cent reported food as the primary reason for taking on debt.⁹⁰

Despite continued Government efforts to end the IDP crisis, the remaining IDPs or secondarily displaced to other formal or informal settlements will continue to need food assistance from the World Food Programme (WFP) and its other partners in the Food Security Cluster.

The Food Security Cluster estimates⁹¹ that around 47,000 IDPs living out of camps are food insecure. Governorates with the most severely food insecure IDPs are Duhok, Erbil, Ninewa and Salah Al-Din. Additionally, around 427,000 returnees are food insecure and unable to meet basic needs and access livelihoods. Governorates with the highest number of food insecure returnees include Ninewa (167,980), Anbar (136,250), Salah Al-Din (64,230) and Kirkuk (30,000). In the absence of durable solutions in the areas of origin, the

food security status of returnee populations remains critical.

One in every five people in Iraq lives in poverty and food insecurity. A further 30 per cent of the population face a high risk of falling into poverty and food insecurity.⁹² The availability of adequate food at the national level does not necessarily ensure economic and physical access to food at the household level. An analysis of the macro and socioeconomic trends in recent years indicates significant risks to poor households and their food security.⁹³

Protracted displacement due to ongoing camp closures, coupled with limited availability of financial resources, have exacerbated existing vulnerabilities. Food assistance is required to support IDPs who cannot leave camps due to their perceived affiliations, tribal conflict or ethnic tension. Vulnerable displaced families living in camps need consistent and predictable food assistance until transfer of responsibility from humanitarian actors to the Public Distribution System (PDS) and other national social safety nets takes place.

It should also be noted that the Government intends to gradually merge its two social safety net programmes, namely the PDS and the Social Protection Network (SPN), and institute stronger targeting, move towards cash transfers and vouchers where appropriate, and improve monitoring and evaluation.⁹⁴ Surveys in 2016 and 2018 found that while the PDS reached the majority of families, the SPN showed limited success, reaching only 33 per cent of the poorest families.⁹⁵

90 MCNA VIII – Female Headed households.

91 Based on MCNA VIII data.

92 Dhehibi, B, 2018. IRAQ – Zero Hunger Strategic Review Eliminating Hunger in Iraq and Meeting SDG 2 Targets – Preliminary Results. [online] CGIAR. Available at <http://repo.mel.cgiar.org/handle/20.500.11766/8167>.

93 World Food Programme (WFP), 2016. Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis (CFSVA). Available

at <https://www.wfp.org/publications/iraq-comprehensive-food-security-vulnerability-analysis-2016>.

94 ICARDA and World Food Programme (WFP), 2018. *National Strategic Review of Food Security and Nutrition in Iraq*. [online] Reliefweb Available at <https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000102716/download/>.

95 World Food Programme (WFP) 2019 Iraq Socio-economic Atlas Socio Economic Atlas. 2019. Available at <https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP->

A cross-cutting approach to food security will be the implementation of agricultural transition activities for out-of-camp IDPs and returnees in areas with high severity of need. Those will be targeted through a scale-up of livelihoods support, agricultural inputs and income-generating activities to promote self-reliance and meet the minimum needs of out-of-camp populations. In 2021, durable solutions will be prioritized in these areas to revitalize food production and restore sustainable livelihoods of returning families, to help support the transition of Iraq from emergency to stabilization.

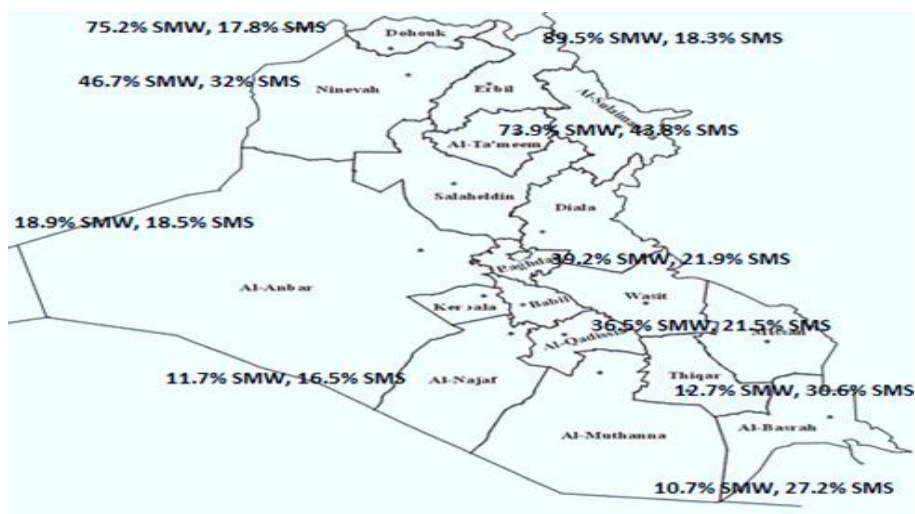
4.1.09 WASH needs

Over 2.2 million people across Iraq are in critical need of sustained, equitable access to safe and appropriate water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) services. Of these, 52 per cent are women, 47 per cent are children, and 4 per cent are elderly. Protracted displacement from homes and places of origin can increase levels of vulnerability found in a population.⁹⁶ The protracted

conflict in Iraq has resulted in massive damage to water and sanitation infrastructures, negatively impacting public health and highly vulnerable communities. The WASH sector has seen significant damage amounting to IQD 1.6 trillion.⁹⁷ Despite rehabilitation efforts by several governmental and international development agencies, the bulk of the infrastructure still suffers from partial or total damage. The extensive damage of assets deeply affects their functionality in the cities and governorates, thereby affecting households' daily usage and service of water.

According to the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) 2018 report, 85.7 per cent of households across all governorates have access to basic water services. However, only 40 per cent have access to safely managed water and around 23 per cent to safely managed sanitation. Figure 5 shows samples of safely managed water (SMW) and safely managed sanitation (SMS) figures in Iraq.

Figure 5. Safely managed water and safely managed sanitation figures



Source: MICS 2018 – UNICEF Iraq-2018 – WASH section.

[0000110173/download/?_ga=2.211850708.1999363395.1620122431-124284547.1620122431](https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SH.UW.SRVS.SV.SM?locations=IQ).

⁹⁶ Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) 2019.

⁹⁷ World Bank, 2018. *Iraq Reconstruction & Investment: Damage and Needs Assessment of Affected Governorates*.

World Bank. Available at <http://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/600181520000498420/pdf/123631-REVISED-Iraq-Reconstruction-and-Investment-Part-2-Damage-and-Needs-Assessment-of-Affected-Governorates.pdf>.

However, water availability, access, and sanitation in the region are below international standards. Furthermore, water resources are increasingly under stress due to both climate change and bureaucratic mismanagement. Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS6) results, endorsed in November 2018, show that most water facilities are operating with low chlorine dosage (less than 0.2 mg/l), which is below WHO minimum guidelines and increases the risk of Cholera and/or other water-related diseases outbreak.⁹⁸ The main challenges facing the water sector include:

- The weakness and instability of electrical power needed for operations;
- Lack of citizen awareness on conservation;
- Trespasses to the network;
- Insufficient technical and administrative staff;

Obsolescence of the network and in most governorates.⁹⁹

Existing water and sewage infrastructure in Iraq, including treatment plants and pipe networks, is largely in disrepair. Insufficient operating budgets are exacerbated by poorly trained personnel, unreliable electricity and a tendency to look for quick fixes rather than long-term solutions. The main challenges facing the sanitation sector include:

- Trespasses on the sanitation and rainwater networks;
- Lack of awareness and misuse of sanitation networks;

- Scarcity and instability of electrical power needed for pumping stations.

The sector will require an update of the systems of governance, at both national and subnational levels, concomitantly with the reconstruction of assets.

An acute concern has been the increasing water scarcity, since water levels in both the Tigris and the Euphrates rivers have been decreasing at unprecedented rates. This is caused by changes in the country's climatic and meteorological conditions, with increases in average temperatures compounded by lower average rainfall throughout the year, and water damming actions by neighbouring countries. In addition, these environmental and geo-political elements are exacerbated by continuing poor water resource management.

Policies and practices of Iraqi authorities since the 1980s have been the principal cause of the river water quality degradation, but there are also other factors. Damming projects in Iran, Syria, and Turkey have impacted waterflow into the Tigris and Euphrates.¹⁰⁰ At the same time, local authorities, individuals and businesses have been dumping significantly more industrial, agricultural and human waste into the rivers.¹⁰¹

The low and deteriorating quality of water and sanitation services in Iraq are a consequence of economic sanctions, conflict resulting in damage to water infrastructure, and long-term under-investment. This gap has been filled in some areas by the private

98 MICS6 results endorsed in November 2018. According to the 2018 Iraq MICS, the under-five mortality rate (U5MR) is 26 per 1,000 live births due to diarrheal diseases related to inadequate WASH services; this number could rise sharply should existing services collapse. This is especially alarming given the critical role played by hygiene in preventing and controlling infections, including the spread of COVID-19.

99 Republic of Iraq, Ministry of Planning, 2010. *Environmental Survey in Iraq 2010: Water, Sanitation, Municipal Services*. Republic of Iraq.

100 Human Rights Watch. *Iraq's Failure to Manage the Water Crisis*, July 2019. Available at <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/07/22/iraq-water-crisis-basra#:~:text=Basra%20is%20Thirsty&text=The%20128%2Dpage%20report%2C%20E2%80%9C,outbreaks%20and%20continued%20economic%20hardship>.

101 Nadhir Al-Ansari, *Hydro-Politics of the Tigris and Euphrates Basins*, Engineering, 2016.

sector, providing drinking water and sanitary facilities, but at a high cost. However, this provides a nexus point for bringing in the private sector in a planned, regulated manner and transparency.

The over-stretched community WASH systems cannot often cope with the additional burden of displaced populations, particularly if there has been damage to the infrastructure. As such, host and camp communities will continue to require some level of specialized WASH support, essentially for IDPs who are unable to return soon.

4.1.10 Electricity outage

Inadequate supply of electricity is one of the top concerns in Iraq, negatively impacting daily life, national development, economic growth, private sector regeneration and job creation. Prior to the emergence of ISIL, the country's electricity sector suffered from a series of simultaneous and complex challenges. After years of sanctions and conflict, investments in reconstruction, rehabilitation and expansion of generation, transmission and distribution infrastructure were insufficient to cope with growing demand, leading to a dilapidated national electricity grid and poor supply reliability.

This chronic problem in electrical power supply forced the people to either buy their own household generators or to resort to privately owned-and-operated neighbourhood generators, with high supply costs and considerable noise and air pollution. Private generators owners charge about \$0.4/kWh¹⁰² to residential consumers. This situation, which led to ample public dissatisfaction and recurring massive protests, and was compounded when the electricity sector suffered great damage in the ISIL-controlled

territories. This resulted in the sector becoming one of the most affected in terms of damage cost, estimated at IQD 8.2 trillion (about \$7 billion).¹⁰³

In general, reconstruction is more costly in insecure areas due. Potential and actual instability and violence are compounded by contamination with unexploded ordnance and improvised explosive devices (IEDs). This severely constrains the restoration of electricity services. Rehabilitation work on the power sector is ongoing, but public electricity, upon which many other services rely, remains unreliable. In addition to costs resulting from physical damages, the lack of electricity supply has broader economic implications arising from the substantially high cost of alternative options, including generators.

4.1.11 Explosive ordnance contamination

Iraq is one of the world's most contaminated countries by explosive ordnance (EO). Although the full extent of contamination is not known, 3,245 sq.km. of contaminated land has been recorded across Iraq and is likely much higher. A Directorate for Mine Action (DMA) survey, completed in southern Iraq in December 2019 confirmed 1.5 billion square metres of contamination, of which 9,700 million square metres are minefields. Legacy contamination includes mined areas, cluster munition strike sites and explosive remnants of war (ERW) as the result of the 1980-1988 war with Iran, the 1991 Gulf War, and EO remaining following the United States-led coalition invasion in 2003 and the conflict with ISIL between 2014-2017. Barrier minefields also still exist along the Iraqi borders.

Iraq is party to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC), the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM)

102 World Bank Project Appraisal Document on a Proposed Loan in the Amount of \$200 Million to the Republic of Iraq for an Electricity Services Reconstruction and Enhancement Project on April 19, 2019. Available at <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/504001557108087756/pdf/Iraq-Electricity-Services-Reconstruction-and-Enhancement-Project.pdf>.

103 World Bank, 2018. *Iraq Reconstruction & Investment: Damage and Needs Assessment of Affected Governorates*. Available at <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/600181520000498420/pdf/123631-REVISED-Iraq-Reconstruction-and-Investment-Part-2-Damage-and-Needs-Assessment-of-Affected-Governorates.pdf>.

and the Convention of Certain Conventional Weapons. Iraq's obligations under the APMBC have been extended until February 2028. The country has also extended the deadline for compliance with its Cluster Munition clearance obligation under the CCM to 1 November 2023.

Mine action plays a pivotal role in enabling stabilization and reconstruction efforts in areas retaken from ISIL, namely to: prevent recurrence of conflict; resume basic services; allow for IDPs safe return to their areas of origin; and prevent harvesting of components to produce new IEDs.

Between 2016 and 2020, UN efforts in liberated areas helped remove over 67,335 items of EO, including over 2,296 IEDs/IED main charges and 1,147 victim-operated IEDs. The United Nations has surveyed and cleared 1,355 infrastructure sites, including hospitals, bridges, schools and water treatment and power plants previously contaminated with unprecedented quantities of EO. Yet, despite these achievements, EO, specifically ERW and IEDs, still block reconstruction efforts and hinder livelihood recovery, including in urban centres, residential areas and agricultural lands, and continue to deter people from returning home.

The Intentions Survey of IDPs in Iraq, conducted by the REACH humanitarian initiative in March 2020, indicated that 1.4 million Iraqis remain in displacement. IDP households continue reporting complete or heavy damage to their home as a primary safety reason for not returning to their areas of origin. The presence of damaged or destroyed houses is a proxy indicator for EO contamination. The extensive use of air-delivered weapons accounts for much of the physical damage to buildings, whilst the placement of IEDs by ISIL was a widespread and commonly used tactic to deny subsequent entry to buildings as well as safe movement around them. In many areas, there is evidence that residential properties were also used as factories to manufacture explosive items.

The prioritization of clearance in residential areas is critical to ensure safe return to homes and communities in the context of the government's decision to close camps and achieve the return of displaced Iraqis. Residential areas present a complex environment for clearance, and hence UN Mine Action Service (UNMAS) has developed a detailed operational methodology for Rubble and Residential Area Clearance, which has been submitted to the national authorities, providing detailed guidance on the requirements for the technical management of the clearance activities and liability considerations.

To reduce the effects of EO and promote safe behaviour in the short term, UNMAS provides explosive ordnance risk education to affected communities, including recent returnees who are unaware of the presence of EO in their communities, and to the internally displaced with intentions to return. In addition, UNMAS Iraq provides safety and awareness information sessions for at-risk, humanitarian and development workers.

Mine action is a largely male-dominated sector, and attaining gender balance amongst first responders, community liaison, risk education officers and clearance teams is a challenge. While aspects of the integration of gender mainstreaming into the prioritization of mine action activities in Iraq remain aspirational, real efforts and progress have already been made to integrate females into clearance teams and to drive research on gender mainstreaming of prioritization of taskings, and courses related to explosive ordnance are being delivered to the Ministry of Interior's Women Training Institute. Evidence suggests that the training and employment of women deminers and educators contribute to women's socioeconomic empowerment.

Protecting civilians from the threats of mines, ERW, cluster munitions and IEDs requires a sustainable national mine action capacity with the adequate capabilities to address extensive and complex contamination across the country. The mine action authorities in Iraq, the Directorate for Mine Action, and the Iraqi Kurdistan Mine Action Agency, have both been

in existence for long, and have largely focused on legacy minefields and ERW areas from past conflicts; however, the EO problem caused by ISIL occupation and subsequent military operations is complex and extensive, exceeding the capacity of the existing Iraqi resources. In order to effectively manage the mine action response, the Directorate for Mine Action must further develop sustainable and effective coordination mechanisms with the Iraqi Kurdistan Mine Action Agency, the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Centre, the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Defence and governorate-level authorities.

4.1.12 Destruction of shared cultural heritage

The restoration of cultural heritage started in the Old City of Mosul in 2019, with some of the city's historical landmarks, such as Al Hadba Minaret, al-Nuri Mosque, al Saa'a and Al Tahera Churches, al-Aghwat Mosque and two palatial houses (Ziada and Sulaiman Al Saigh), in addition to 43 houses. The works in these sites include demining, rubble removal and cataloguing of remains, damage assessments, urgent stabilization measures and restoration, in addition to developing a comprehensive recovery and reconstruction plan for Mosul's Old City. These activities are being implemented through a participatory approach to ensure ownership and contribute to fostering social cohesion and community reconciliation.

4.1.13 Endemic corruption

One of the recurring demands of youth demonstrations has been ending corruption, safeguarding of Iraq's sovereignty, and merit-based government appointments. Iraq is ranked 169th out of 180 on the Corruption Index of Transparency International, which ranks countries based on indices that measure the

prevalence of political, economic and administrative corruption within its various institutions.

Transparency International reports that the volume of public funds looted from since 2003 amounts to \$300 billion. Moreover, around 5,000 projects were not implemented because of poor planning, at a time when the country was going through an internal and external debt crisis that exhausted its economy, despite all its material and human wealth.

According to the World Bank, Iraq is ranked the second most corrupt country in the world, and one with the weakest business and investment environments. Even though the country has the second largest oil reserves in the world, such corruption created a protracted economic and social crisis as many Iraqis suffer from high unemployment, poor public services and extreme poverty.

In March 2008, Iraq acceded to the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC).¹⁰⁴ It was reviewed during the first cycle of the Implementation of the Review Mechanism (IRM)¹⁰⁵ of the UNCAC provisions regarding Chapters III and IV on criminalization, law enforcement and international cooperation, respectively. The UNCAC second review cycle on Chapters II and V on preventive measures and asset recovery review will be finalized during 2021.

The first UNCAC review report encouraged the anti-corruption authorities to enact laws pertaining to the mandatory provisions of the Convention, including laws on active bribery of foreign public officials, obstruction of justice (with regards to witnesses and false testimony), and the seizure and forfeiture of converted and intermingled property. The report also urged the country to consider enacting laws related to the UNCAC

104 This convention, the first and only legally-binding international anti-corruption instrument with a mandatory character of many of its provisions, covers five main areas: corruption preventive measures; criminalization and law enforcement; international

cooperation; asset recovery; and technical assistance and information exchange.

105 The Implementation Review Mechanism is a peer review process that assists States parties to effectively implement the Convention.

provisions on trading in influence, bribery in the private sector, abuse of functions, embezzlement of property in the private sector, participation and attempt (in terms of preparation to commit an offence), the protection of witnesses and reporting persons, and the cooperation with law enforcement authorities and the Commission of Integrity (Col).

The Col is the main anti-corruption body in Iraq, tasked to detect, investigate and prosecute cases of corruption, including those forwarded by the Board of Supreme Audit and the Inspectors General for further criminal investigation. The Col is also mandated to work on preventing corruption and ensuring that adequate preventive measures are applied in the public sector.

Article 10 of the Col law provided for the establishment of a committee mandated to recover stolen assets.¹⁰⁶ However, not much has been achieved in this area to date due to a lack of specialized technical capacity. Iraq has a robust domestic framework to enable asset restraint and confiscation, including provisions to freeze and confiscate assets in absentia. The framework to facilitate international cooperation to recover the proceeds of corruption appears less well developed.

Senior public officials in Iraq are obligated by law to submit an annual asset declaration form to the Col; however, the submission rates are very low.

The Col law (Law No. 30 of 2011) was amended by Law No. of 30 November 2019.¹⁰⁷ The amendment expanded the law by adding the crime of illicit gain, and included procedures on mandatory financial disclosure and on investigating illegal enrichment, primarily related to the disclosure of assets, and limited to specific categories of

senior public officials or, according to Article (17) of the law: “any person deemed necessary by the Commission to submit disclosure of proceeds. This amendment, however, requires the development of clear mechanisms for the Col staff to monitor and verify asset disclosures, which has not been undertaken yet”.

The Commission also focuses on combating corruption in the private sector. In 2018, it became a member of the Private Sector Development Committee (chaired by the Ministry of Planning), which is implementing the Private Sector Development Strategy 2015-2030. The Col will assist the Committee in ensuring that integrity measures are introduced in the private sector, and that relevant anti-corruption laws and regulations are in place and effectively implemented.

Like corruption, money laundering is endemic in Iraq. The Iraqi economy is primarily cash-based; hence, many financial transactions do not enter the banking system, which provides opportunities to make illegal money, including criminal activities that go undetected. The use of paper-based traditional financial analysis techniques and insufficient capacities of financial and non-financial reporting further complicate the detection and tracing of money laundering, including terrorism financing cases.

Recently, considerable efforts have been made to enhance the anti-money laundering (AML) legal and regulatory framework, with some positive results. For instance, Iraq is no longer subject to the Financial Action Task Force’s ongoing global anti-money laundering and combating the financing of terrorism (AML/CFT) compliance process.¹⁰⁸ The amendments are still

106 Commission of Integrity Law. Available at <http://ar.parliament.iq/2011/09/24/%D9%82%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%88%D9%86-%D9%87%D9%8A%D8%A6%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%86%D8%B2%D8%A7%D9%87%D8%A9/>.

107 The Law on Criminalizing Illicit Gain Number (15) was initially enacted in 1958 and annulled in 2019, with some of its parts integrated into the Col Law.

108 Improving Global AML/CFT Compliance: On-going Process 29 June 2018. Available at [https://www.fatf-gafi.org/fr/publications/juridictions-haut-risques-et-sous-surveillance/documents/fatf-compliance-june-2018.html?hf=10&b=0&s=desc\(fatf_releasedate\)](https://www.fatf-gafi.org/fr/publications/juridictions-haut-risques-et-sous-surveillance/documents/fatf-compliance-june-2018.html?hf=10&b=0&s=desc(fatf_releasedate)).

insufficient to effectively counter money laundering and further improvements are needed.

The primary entity tasked with combating money laundering is the Anti-Money Laundering and Countering Finance of Terrorism Office in the Central Bank of Iraq. The Office reports annually to the AML/CFT Council, chaired by the Governor of the Central Bank, on the number of suspicious transaction reports (STRs), as well as money laundering and terrorism financing trends and techniques.

The AML/CFT Office still processes the STRs manually, which leads to extending the time and efforts exerted by the financial analysts. Therefore, it needs to shift towards a robust intelligent analysis system and an integrated database that allows the direct receipt of STRs made by the reporting entities and using advanced electronic features.

4.1.14 Judicial reform

Chapter three of the 2005 Constitution lays out clear terms for judicial power, particularly in articles 87 and 88. Despite this, the judiciary struggles to maintain full independence. Access to court information is limited, and judges encounter pressures, including political and personal threats. Substantial court backlogs and poor documentation and archiving systems need solutions conducive to justice administration. International ratified instruments are not fully integrated into the legislation, which, in turn, impacts the legal system and institutional structure, including the access to pro-bono legal aid.

Law enforcement is adversely affected by the factors undermining the independence of the judiciary and the

integrity commission, and by the impunity of non-State actors, including paramilitary groups. The factors obstructing the proper functioning of the judiciary provide fertile grounds for continued corruption. There is also a need for greater capacity-development of the judicial sector to better equip it when dealing with ISIL trials. Regaining public trust in the rule of law and justice institutions will remain essential foundations for Iraqi peace, stability and development.

4.1.15 Adolescents and youth

The changes in the population age structure in Iraq present a historic window of opportunity to invest in the human capital and rights of young people and ensure a demographic dividend. However, young people in Iraq, both girls and boys, face significant barriers in their transition to adulthood. Children currently represent 48 per cent of the population, and youth aged 15-24 account for 20 per cent. Around, 43 per cent (8 million) are adolescents below the age of 15 years, and 31 per cent are young people between the ages of 10 and 24 years.¹⁰⁹ The number of Iraqi adolescents and youth is expected to reach 16.4 million by 2030 – (31 per cent of the overall population), and 23 million by 2050.¹¹⁰

Rates of youth participation in the labour force are considerably lower than the rest of the world, standing at 24.06 per cent overall, with a gender gap of over 38 per cent as 52.8 per cent of young men participate in the labour market versus 14.3 per cent for young women.¹¹¹ According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), the estimated youth unemployment rate in Iraq in 2019 was at 16.5 per cent.¹¹² The

109 United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, World Population Prospects: The 2017 Revision (UN WPP), United Nations, New York, 2017. Available at <https://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/>.

110 MENA Generation 2030, UNICEF, 2019. Available at <https://www.menayouthhub.org/sites/menayouthhub.org>

/files/eman/Mappercent20Factpercent20Sheets/template_IRQ_rev.pdf.

111 World Bank Data, 2017. *Iraq*. Available at <https://data.worldbank.org/country/iraq>.

112 See <https://www.statista.com/statistics/812116/youth-unemployment-rate-in-iraq/>.

underemployment of youth was estimated at 28 per cent in 2018.¹¹³

The main challenges impeding labour force participation, youth employment and equal opportunities include high labour force growth, (i.e. the youth bulge), the inability of the Government and the private sector to capitalize on the demographic dividend, nepotism, corruption and lack of accountability, limited private sector development, low enterprise creation, and gender inequalities affecting.¹¹⁴ The bloated public sector and poorly targeted social transfers, declining quality of health and education services, and patronage networks favouring older workers, impact youth labour participation by constraining them from productive activities.¹¹⁵ A fundamental restructuring of the Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in the Iraqi educational system is also essential if the private sector is to present a meaningful opportunity to increase the productive engagement of young Iraqis in the economy.

Poverty, impeding educational attainment, skills acquisition and health outcomes, has limited the potential of many Iraqi youth.¹¹⁶ Girls and older adolescents (15-19) are more vulnerable to poverty. Girls have been particularly affected by movement restrictions that impact access to education, healthcare and jobs.¹¹⁷ Girls, particularly in IDP or refugee

communities, or whose mobility outside the household is constrained, face massive disengagement and isolation, impacting their mental well-being.

A crucial concern affecting Iraqi youth is limited access to education. If young women are deprived of basic education, they are more likely to enter into child marriage and early childbearing. Marriage is commonly a replacement for education, especially in displaced communities.¹¹⁸ Adolescent girls (10-14) remain most vulnerable.¹¹⁹ The adolescent birth rate among 15-19 years is 75 per 1,000 live births in rural areas, and 68 per 1,000 live births in urban areas in Iraq. Adolescents and youth have no national programme on adolescent health and access to sexual reproductive health services. The demand for family planning satisfied with modern methods is as high as 54.6 per cent.

The participation of youth in any platforms and in government-run youth centres is limited to just 5 per cent, according to the National Adolescent and Youth survey 2019 conducted by the Ministry of Planning in Iraq. Though youth centres provide huge infrastructure across the country, there is a need for improvement in programming, partnership, community engagement and financial allocations.

The National Adolescent and Youth Survey 2019 shows that peace and security and constant instability in Iraq

113 Republic of Iraq, Ministry of Planning, 2018. *National Development Plan 2018-2022*. Baghdad: Republic of Iraq. Available at https://www.iraq-jccme.jp/pdf/archives/nationaldevelopmentplan2018_2022.pdf.

114 The World Bank, 2017. *Economic Outlook of Iraq*. [online] World Bank. Available at <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/iraq/publication/economic-outlook-april-2017>; United Nations Children's Fund Middle East and North Africa Office (UNICEF MENARO), 2018. *Youth Unemployment in the Middle East and North Africa, Background paper*. Available at https://www.unicef.org/about/annualreport/files/MENA_RO_ROAR_2017.pdf.

115 World Bank Group, 2020. *Iraq Economic Monitor*. Available at

[https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/34749#:~:text=Iraq's%20GDP%20shrank%20by%206.8,y\)%20in%20Q2%2D20](https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/34749#:~:text=Iraq's%20GDP%20shrank%20by%206.8,y)%20in%20Q2%2D20).

116 UNICEF, Ministry of Planning (MoP), *Child Poverty in Iraq: An Analysis of Child Poverty Trends and Policy Recommendations for the National Poverty Reduction Strategy 2017-2021*.

117 The World Bank's Iraq *Economic Monitor* (-2018).

118 UNICEF, Situation Analysis of Women and Children, 2018.

119 United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Humanitarian Needs Overview, 2020. Available at https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/iraq_hno_2020.pdf.

are major concerns, with 72 per cent of young people reporting that instability in Iraq is due to terrorist groups and 34 per cent attributing it to criminal gangs, while 27 per cent highlighted financial and administrative corruption, 20 per cent the lack of consensus between politicians, 18 per cent weak state institutions/affairs, 17 per cent intolerance among the public and 13 per cent religious extremism. The United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security is being adopted as a new emerging area of development in Iraq, and is one of the pillars of the United Nations Global Youth Strategy. Youth participation/engagement for peacebuilding and reconciliation processes is crucial for sustainable development in Iraq.

Data from the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS)¹²⁰ shows that only 49 per cent of surveyed girls and women aged 15 to 49 feel safe to walk alone in their neighbourhood after dark. Similarly, 12 per cent report having experienced various forms of discrimination or harassment in the past 12 months. The average percentage of women aged 20 to 49 years who were first married or in union before age 18 stands at 24.8 nationwide. The rate of married women under 15 is 7.2 per cent, and 28 per cent for women aged 20 to 24. These ratios are almost identical between urban and rural areas.

Adolescents and youth have a limited voice, which has led to disillusionment and disengagement, as demonstrated in low levels of civic engagement.¹²¹ Fifty-five per cent of youth feel that life has deteriorated over the last decade, and only half of young Arabs have

confidence in their government in dealing with unemployment, with that number decreasing to 24 per cent in Iraq.¹²² Evidence shows that when young people are empowered to play meaningful roles within their communities and are given a sense of purpose, they make positive/healthy choices and transcend violence and discrimination.

4.1.16 Child protection

Violence directed at women and girls within the family is often normalized and legitimized by survivors, perpetrators and communities by referencing cultural and religious norms. Forty per cent of women and girls aged 15 to 49 are still unfamiliar with the legal definition of domestic violence and marital rape and their respective legal rights. Widespread gender-based violence, especially sexual violence and exploitation and family violence, persists. Child marriage rate has increased between 2011 and 2018, from 24 to 28 per cent for females aged 20 to 24 married before the age of 18; and from 5.7 to 7.9 per cent for the same age group married before the age of 15.

Movement restriction and the widespread of fear due to COVID-19 have negatively impacted health and well-being, leading to increased child protection risks. Nearly 3.8 million need protection services. Also, institutional reforms could not take place: there is still no child protection unit or directorate within the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, and the juvenile justice system remains retributive rather than restorative.

120 United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), 2018. *Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS6) Briefing*. Iraq: UNICEF. Available at <https://www.unicef.org/iraq/reports/2018-multiple-indicator-cluster-survey-mics6-briefing>.

121 Iraq Country Report: Evidence Generation: Participatory Action Research (PAR) with Young People in the Middle East and North Africa, UNICEF MENA Regional Office, 2020.

122 United Nations Children's Fund Middle East and North Africa Office (UNICEF MENARO), 2017. *The Situation for*

Adolescents and Youth in the Middle East and North Africa: What We Know for Sure, Evidence Brief. UNICEF MENARO. The rise in poverty is more worrying when considering that the social protection system in Iraq remains fragmented and ineffective in addressing needs of the vulnerable and the poor. Before COVID-19, data shows that the various social protection schemes benefited only 20 per cent of the poor.

Gender inequality also persists – families report being more inclined not to seek outside care when a girl is ill (44 per cent) than when a boy is ill (38 per cent). In addition, overall access to basic healthcare remained limited – in Salah al Din, health partners reported 60 per cent of health centres as damaged/destroyed, and only half of facilities in Ninewa were considered ‘fully functional’. Even when open, services are frequently of poor quality; a recent Quality of Care survey showed that in camp Primary Healthcare Centres, 54 per cent of patients cited only partial availability of prescribed medications.¹²³

4.1.17 Civil society

Civil society organizations (CSOs) have existed in Iraq since its formation as a nation-state in 1921, although they were affiliated with political parties. During the Coalition Provisional Authority period, there was a resurgence of NGOs/CSOs, as the country dealt with significant political and social upheaval and reform. Iraq is estimated to have as many as 10,000 CSOs, although most are not formally registered.¹²⁴

Some CSOs maintained their independence, though a continued reliance on Government funding and fear of security forces, resulted in many continued CSO affiliations with political parties. Overall, it is widely felt that while civil society has made gains and provides essential partners for international and national actors to deliver assistance, many organizations are aligned to political ideologies. It would be advisable to create an enabling legislative and policy environment for civil society and volunteer groups that impacts their activities, registration, database and relations with the Government.

The allure of funding from donors, either directly or through pass-through arrangements as implementing partners for larger organizations, such as the United Nations, has led to the creation of a large number of small unsustainable organizations that live from grant to grant without always being able to deliver in full capacity. Without standards regarding the most recent issues, such as psychosocial counselling, such organisations may risk causing harm even if they deliver their services with good intentions.

Finally, most NGOs are relegated to service delivery activities, with localized work in advocacy and policy. Research by the National Democratic Institute showed that CSOs face barriers in influencing policy due to “A dismissive, and occasionally hostile, political class; lack of internal focus and structure; and organizational connections to political parties, damaging the sector’s desired reputation for independence”.¹²⁵ The number of CSOs representing the interests of women in the political sphere has dramatically reduced over the years.

4.1.18 Freedom of the press

Freedom of the press is guaranteed in the Iraqi Constitution, but legal instruments contain vague and unclear terminology that gives space for abusive interpretations. Some older legislations are still enforced, such as the 1968 Publications Law that prohibits insulting the government. The law allows for up to seven years in prison for those found guilty of the offence, but its implementation is arbitrary as it does not define what constitutes an insult.¹²⁶ Authorities also use the 1969 Penal Code that allows journalists to be prosecuted for libel and defamation. While the Constitution explicitly prohibits the establishment of special courts, the Supreme Judicial Council created one to prosecute

123 HNO, Health, 2019.

124 Iraqi Research Foundation for Analysis and Development (IRFAD), 2014. *Iraq Civil Society*. Available at <http://www.irfad.org/iraq-civil-society/>.

125 National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI), 2011. *The Voice of Civil Society in Iraq*. Available at

https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/Civil_Society_Assessment_Iraq.pdf.

126 Freedom House, 2021. *Freedom of the Press – Iraq*. Available at <https://freedomhouse.org/country/iraq/freedom-world/2021>.

journalists in 2010. In 2011, a law aimed at protecting journalists entered into force, but had been deemed by many to be ineffective. An article within the legislation that outlaws “an incitement to violence” has been frequently misused by authorities to arrest journalists.

According to the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), 186 journalists have been killed in Iraq since 1992. It is believed that 112 of those were targeted murders and 111 were committed with impunity.¹²⁷ Iraq has featured in the CPJ Impunity Index since its inception, and ranked third on it in 2018.¹²⁸ While Iraq has a high number of media organizations, the majority are linked to or funded by different political parties. Trust in the media is low; 75 per cent of the population state they trust television as a source of information, while only 5 per cent trust radio and only 2 per cent trust newspapers and magazines.¹²⁹ Despite support by the civil society, such as the Iraqi Women Journalists Forum formed in 2014, women in the media are often restricted to writing on “women’s issues”.

While it has been on the political agenda for several years, a draft bill on this issue has yet to be put to the legislature. The draft law and all following amendments still include a clause that would punish a person who uses any information gained in a way that ‘adversely affects the country’.¹³⁰ The interpretation of such a vague and undefined clause is open to abuse of power.

4.2 Current political economy

Continued protests over unemployment, corruption, insecurity and lack of basic services that started in

October 2019 led to the resignation of then Prime Minister Adil Abdul Mahdi at the end of that year. In May 2020, Mustafa al-Kadhimi was elected interim Prime Minister, tasked with leading the country to hold early elections, now slated for October 2021.

Building on this momentum, in October 2020 al-Kadhimi’s Government presented its White Paper for economic and financial reform, setting out a three-year strategy (2021-2023) addressing a wide range of issues, including the financial and banking sector, economic diversification through agriculture sector development, the private sector, basic infrastructure and services, social protection and governance. While the October 2019 unrest highlighted the Government’s shortcomings in fulfilling its responsibilities towards the Iraqi people, it also brought a valuable opportunity for reform.

4.2.1 Economic activities of armed groups outside state control

The war against ISIL left a highly fragmented security landscape dominated by hybrid and informal, yet heavily armed, actors. Chief amongst these is the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF). Since 2014, the Government made several attempts to regulate and restructure the PMF, from a loose amalgam of non-State armed groups (some affiliated to foreign influences) into a consolidated organization operating under Iraqi state control.

The PMF budget allocation, which is set out in the Federal Budget Law, was \$2.2 billion in 2019, which is more than is being spent on social services such as

127 Committee to Protect Journalists, 2019. *Journalists killed in Iraq since 1992*. [online] CPJ. Available at <https://cpj.org/mideast/iraq/>.

128 Witchel, E., 2018. *Getting Away with Murder*. [online] Committee to Protect Journalists. Available at <https://cpj.org/reports/2018/10/impunity-index-getting-away-with-murder-killed-justice.php>.

129 National Democracy Institute, 2011. *The Voice of Civil Society in Iraq*. NDI. Available at

https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/Civil_Society_Assessment_Iraq.pdf.

130 ICSSI, 2017. Freedom of Expression and Access to Information: The Iraqi Women Journalists Forum Works to Promote Essential Rights. *Iraq Civil Society Solidarity Initiative*. Available at <https://www.iraqicivilsociety.org/archives/7493>.

health or education. Practically, however, the PMF continues to retain political influence, economic clout and access to illicit financial revenues.

The proliferation of arms outside of State control has weakened the Government's authority at the sub-national level and further impeded its ability to provide security and services. The lack of State authority in some parts of Iraq has also led to the reinforcement of the informal justice system and a parcelling of the economy, further eroding State legitimacy, and therefore its resilience. ISIL retains the capability to exploit security vacuums, as demonstrated by the twin bombings in Baghdad in February 2021.

4.2.2 Disputed internal boundaries as barriers to trade

The status of the disputed internal boundaries (remains a point of contention, resulting in disagreements over resource issues, considering the vast oil and gas deposits in these areas. These boundaries are also affected by the diverse ethnic and religious communities and the presence of different security actors who may impeded trade, as well as the interests of international actors.

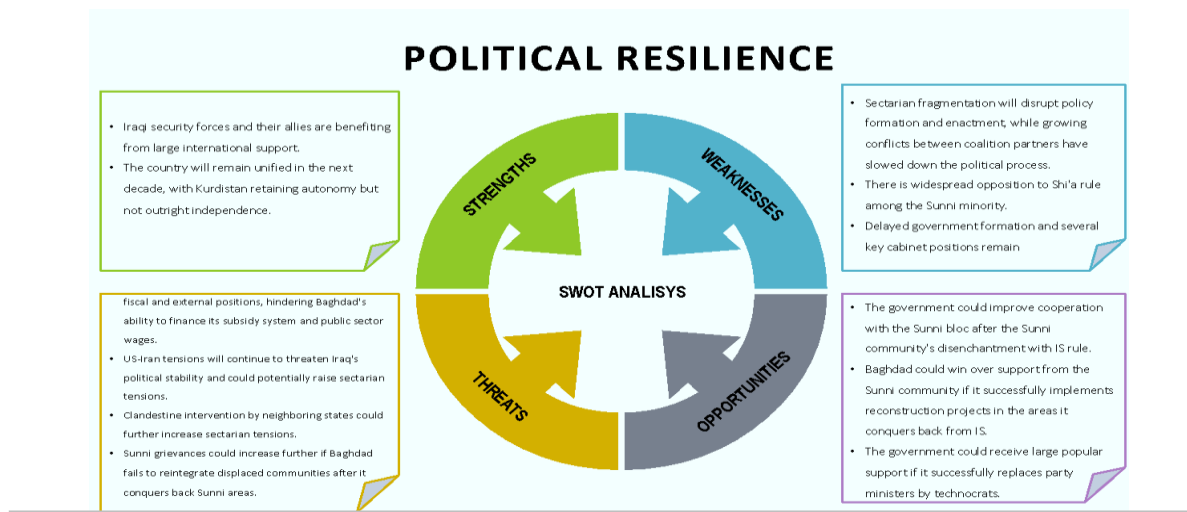
In Kirkuk, obstacles include the lack of agreement on what constitutes a disputed area (Article 140 refers to the oil-rich province of Kirkuk 'and other disputed areas'), and the fact that many of those displaced by the previous campaigns do not want to return to their areas of origin. In Ninewa, tensions continue to play out, especially in Sinjar, with implications for the Yezidi community. Other disputed areas possess fertile lands suitable for agricultural development, such as the Nineveh Plains and the Al-Jazeera region.

4.2.3 Economic growth

There are four areas (Figure 6) that focus on inclusive economic growth and are key to meeting the SDGs:

- Achieving sustainable financial stability, inclusive of public financial management;
- Economic diversification to greater economic growth by relying less on oil;
- Poverty reduction, social inclusion, improving basic infrastructure and protecting vulnerable groups;
- Improving governance and building state capacity by providing a stable taxation system.

Figure 6. An economic SWOT analysis of Iraq



Source: JAU – UNAMI 2020.

4.2.4 Employment

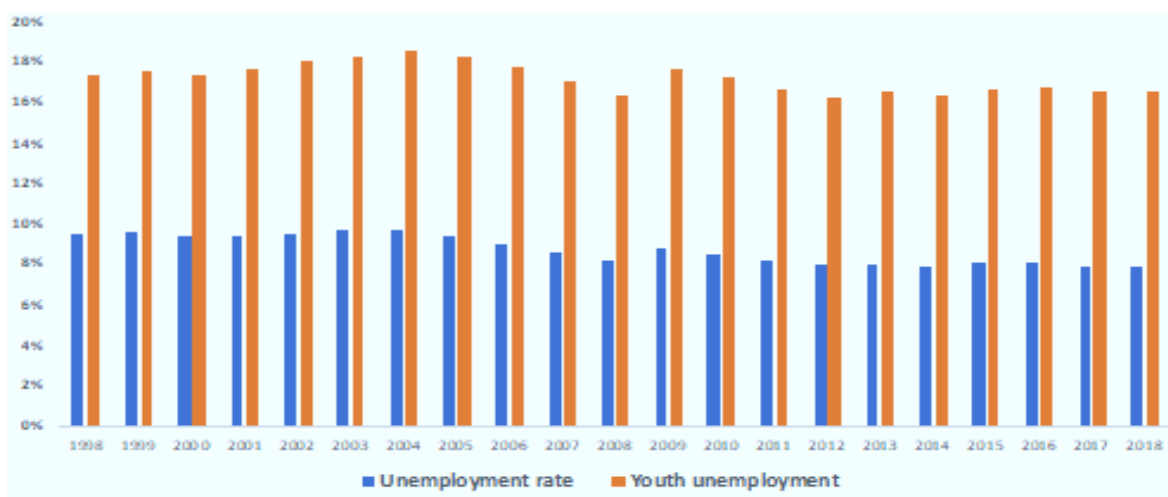
Job opportunities available for youth are more likely to be in the informal sector than the formal sector. Workers in the informal sector often lack formal contracts and social protection. Furthermore, given the lack of stable regulations and effective governance measures, the informal sector lacks the necessary social safety measures that could easily frustrate the youth and lead to a massive protest against any government. It is worth noting that this age group has been the main driver of the recent protests and demonstrations.

In addition to reduced employment prospects for the youth, women, persons with disabilities and IDPs also suffer from some of the highest unemployment rates.

The ILO estimates that while female labour force participation in Iraq is low – estimated at 20 per cent – Iraqi women who participate in the labour market are more likely to be under-employed or employed only part-time. Young women in particular struggle to find employment: In 2016, 65 per cent of young women were unemployed, compared to 32 per cent of young men. The same year, the unemployment rates for women aged 15 to 24 reached 69 per cent in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.¹³¹

According to the World Bank, approximately 27 per cent of IDPs are unemployed, and within that group, the most vulnerable are women and children, 49 per cent of whom are less than 18 years old.

Figure 7. Unemployment rate in Iraq



Source: World Bank database, 2021.

Oil is not a labour-intensive industry, and the hydrocarbons sector of Iraq employs only 3 per cent of the workforce in a country where chronic youth unemployment is a constant threat to political stability and state-society relations. Figure 7 shows the most recent government statistics data, with unemployment

at 13 per cent. This figure is misleading as the workforce in Iraq is relatively small. Given that the majority of women are not seeking employment, the estimated labour force participation rate for women is 11.2 per cent, compared to 72.4 per cent for men.¹³²

131 International Labour Organization 2019.

132 International Labour Organization, Country Profiles [online]. Available at <https://ilostat.ilo.org/data/country-profiles/>.

4.2.5 Economic challenges

Despite the abundance of human capital and oil wealth, it has been difficult for Iraq to create job opportunities. Job pressures are more than economics; future peace and social cohesion rely on re-establishing a social contract where Iraqis can sustain themselves through gainful employment. Prospects for employment creation are a litmus test for progress on this social contract. While addressing youth unemployment must be a central part of the country's economic reform plan, youth entrepreneurship and industrial development will be two critical methods regarding job creation.

To ensure sustainable and durable solutions to the current twin issues of youth apathy and disengagement (including unemployment), together with active protests and demands for action, more scaling up of solutions that work is needed, as well as a shared responsibility among policymakers, private sector actors and young people. The creation of more targeting strategies to develop the private sector through Small and Medium Enterprises, start-ups and young entrepreneurs could have a significant impact.

4.2.6 The private sector

The private sector potential in Iraq remains underdeveloped. Inhibiting factors for investment and hiring in the private sector include public payroll patronage and the dominance of State-owned enterprises as large employers due to the weakness of the investment climate. Additionally, the growing private sector continues to risk crowding out from lower-cost imports and State-owned enterprises. A law on Small and Medium Enterprises, which has been in development since 2011, includes the establishment of an SME agency, and could perhaps pass in 2021.

Compared to the public sector, the private sector has lower average wages, job security and benefits. Currently, the estimated wage gap ratio is 5:1 between the public and private sectors.

Additionally, high public sector wages and guaranteed job security provide little incentive to work in the private sector. Pay and benefits, including pension entitlements, in the public sector have historically been superior. Iraq does not provide incentives for private-sector employment or outside investment.

4.2.7 Agribusiness and small and medium enterprises

The country's food and agribusiness sector, including the supply of agricultural inputs, processors, traders and others active along the value chain outside of production, makes a significant contribution to the country's non-oil economy and is an important link in expanding and increasing value added from agriculture.

According to the International Trade Centre (ITC),¹³³ each additional investment in the agribusiness sector could create around 140-150 jobs in the Iraqi economy. If reforms would allow the agribusiness sector to achieve a stable growth rate of 3 per cent over the next years, this could lead to the creation of more than 170,000 additional jobs by 2030. However, the development of this sector has been constrained by a combination of factors. The sector's capacity has been damaged by conflict and underinvestment. Now it faces the additional burden of the COVID-19 pandemic and its impacts on the economy. Like other small and medium enterprises, Iraqi food and agriculture businesses have mostly responded by temporarily reducing employment, requesting leniency in making payments and increasing marketing efforts.¹³⁴

133 International Trade Centre (ITC) (2021). "Identifying agricultural and processed food products with potential for production and commercialization in Iraq". Unpublished.

134 International Organization for Migration (IOM), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and International Trade Centre (ITC) (2020). Panel Study III: Impact of COVID-19 on SMEs in Iraq: Food and agriculture. Available at

Challenges facing the agribusiness value chain are not limited to farming; the commercialization of agriculture and agro-processed products is hampered by the underdevelopment of the value chain in manufacturing and services, including logistics, storage, processing, digitalization and e-commerce, marketing and quality assurance. Moreover, worker skills are needed to directly support improvements in productivity and to facilitate technological upgrading. Furthermore, the structure and organization of the sector can hinder new and small firms. State-owned enterprises and larger firms play important roles in the value chain, particularly in the supply of agricultural inputs. At the same time, weak organization – including underused or non-existent mechanisms for public-private dialogue – slows reform.

4.2.8 Agriculture

Iraq classifies around 16 per cent of its land (7 million hectares) as arable. Of this, six million hectares are rain-fed crops or under irrigation. Rain-fed farming is concentrated mainly in northern Iraq, where cereals are the main crops. In central and southern Iraq, where agriculture depends mainly on irrigation from the Tigris and Euphrates rivers and their tributaries, mixed farming systems are predominant. In the central provinces, fruit trees, mainly citrus, are inter-planted in date palm orchards. Vegetables, mainly tomatoes and potatoes, are important irrigated crops. More than 64 per cent of cultivated land in Iraq is irrigated.

Agriculture is also the largest employer, especially in rural areas. However, the sector has suffered from low productivity, inefficiency and neglect. In Iraq today, the yield gaps remain significant due, in part, to the effects of prolonged wars, civil strife, sanctions, droughts, deteriorated infrastructure and poor agriculture extension, thus decreasing farmers' ability to compete on the local and global markets. Poor yields and post-harvest management have made Iraq

dependent on imports to meet its domestic food needs, making it a major importer of agricultural products. Sustainable use of natural resources is also essential to ensure resilient agriculture production, particularly in the (semi-) arid regions.

Experts anticipate that upstream riparian developments and climate change, among other natural and man-made drivers, will decrease water availability and increase the likelihood of extreme weather events (i.e. drought and floods), thus increasing water scarcity and reducing agricultural productivity. Beyond production, challenges exist downstream of the value chain. There is a high degree of variability in agricultural commodity prices, limited market information and access to financial capital for small and medium enterprises. Typically, post-harvest management, such as sorting and grading, is practically absent, and the lack of proper packaging, cold chain infrastructure, storage facilities and processing plants increases losses, issues that also apply to other perishable commodities. Additionally, the regulatory environment does not support private sector growth or proper labour standards, further constraining economic growth in the sector. The country's key priorities are therefore to ensure sustained improvements in governance, including management of its natural resources, support fair and sustainable employment opportunities and build human capital.

The ISIL conflict left the Iraqi agriculture sector in ruins due to massive population movements, along with the destruction of water systems, irrigation facilities and other infrastructure. The World Bank estimates that the conflict resulted in the loss of IQD 2.4 trillion (\$2.1 billion) for the agriculture sector, including IQD 689 billion (\$590.9 million) for damaged machinery critical for production. The output lost during the conflict depleted farmers' working capital and damaged greenhouses, livestock assets and irrigation systems.

The landholding system in Iraq is a mixture of owner-operator, lease-holding and sharecropping arrangements. In the rural areas of the poorest governorates, smallholder farmers and livestock producers are the most marginalized households, and unemployed young men and women are the most vulnerable. Smallholder farmers with a holding size ranging from 2.5 to 7.5 hectares in rainfed areas, and less than four hectares in irrigated regions, account for 35 per cent of the total number of farmers in Iraq.

The backbone of the agricultural sector are the staple crops of wheat and barley, which are key to national food security. Large resources are allocated to support domestic production through subsidization of agricultural inputs (seeds, fertilizer) and outputs (the Government buys produce from farmers at almost twice the world market price), while also the purchased barley is then sold to the livestock sector at subsidized prices. The resources available attract mainly large established farm holdings to grow cereals every year, while alternative crops find little following, as it is difficult to compete with the available subsidies.

Livestock production has been an essential pillar of the Iraqi agriculture sector, representing one third of the total value of the output. Cattle, goats and sheep are the primary livestock in Iraq, supplying meat, wool, milk and skins.

Animal husbandry is a fundamental source of income and food for female-headed households. In the livestock sub-sector, the Government subsidizes mainly domestically produced and purchased barley, but imports remain high for some commodities, such as milk and poultry. The sub-sectors dependency on wheat and barley subsidies limits the development of

a competitive private agriculture sector, transparent markets and diversified smallholder farming systems.

The recent crisis has also greatly affected the livestock sector. In liberated areas, reasons for losses were more diverse, including difficulties in animal vaccinations and treatment, explosive devices contamination or unavailability of medicines and vaccines. The biggest threat is transboundary animal diseases spreading across the borders and causing substantial losses to rural families, threatening the livelihoods of vulnerable farmers and the food and nutrition security of millions. Structural challenges exacerbate current agricultural problems. Issues such as limited rural financing, low-level technologies, climate change, weak research and extension capacities and the construction of dams in neighbouring countries contribute to reduced water inflows and increased salinity.

Moreover, there are significant gaps in the institutional capacities within the agriculture sector. Support by the Government and non-governmental and development partners can help establish well-developed farmer associations and organizations. In turn, a more robust network would provide collective supplies and offer new approaches that would enable smallholder producers to be more commercially competitive.

As a food security priority, the Government may have to provide agricultural inputs and services to help restore fragile livelihoods and assist returning or vulnerable families.¹³⁵ Efforts to rehabilitate the country's destroyed silos, storage and crop processing facilities, especially in crisis-affected areas, must continue to absorb the local wheat harvest.¹³⁶ Wheat is the backbone of the Public Distribution System helping all categories of beneficiaries; thus, rehabilitation assistance is a priority. However, the current system

135 UN Office of the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), 2018. *Iraq: 2018 Humanitarian Response Plan – Advance Executive Summary UNOCHA*. Available at <https://reliefweb.int/report/iraq/iraq-2018-humanitarian-response-plan-advance-executive-summary-enar>.

136 UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), 2018. *2019 Humanitarian Needs Overview*. UNOCHA. Available at https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/ir_q_2019_hno.pdf.

does not address food insecurity and is expensive to implement, and there are inefficiencies and leakages in the supply and delivery mechanisms.¹³⁷

Agriculture uses 85 per cent of the surface water, making it by far the country's largest consumer. Water losses in irrigation schemes are substantial. By and large, water is conveyed to farming fields through very poorly maintained distribution systems made of earth canals and ditches that suffer significant water losses because of infiltration, seepage, leakage and evaporation. Therefore, reform of these systems and the introduction of new technology and equipment and water management practices are necessary.

Import dependency remains high for most of the country's strategic food commodities. Iraq has been mostly self-sufficient in the production of domestic vegetables, fruit and meat, but had to resort to imports to meet cereal requirements.¹³⁸ While the value of imports of the main food groups in Iraq has steeply declined, the demand for imported food continues to grow, and local agricultural production fails to keep pace with population growth, which currently stands at 2.7 per cent annually.¹³⁹ To date, the Ministry of Trade remains the leading importer of strategic commodities, such as wheat, rice, vegetable oil and pulses, the products with the most substantial import value.

A growth strategy for the sector would include diverse elements, including using the country's domestic market as an immediate consumer base to expand production of grain (wheat), fresh fruits and vegetables, dairy products and meat. Exports offer opportunities for

agribusiness development, spearheaded by dates and other high-value crops (fresh fruits and vegetables), to the region in the short-term, and to Europe in the medium/long-term. Moreover, the foremost opportunity for creating jobs lies within the value chains further downstream, including the processing of agriculture commodities, as current agribusiness value chains are under-developed, with a low ratio of product processing from primary agriculture.¹⁴⁰

The crucial role of agriculture in economic development is widely recognized, with numerous success stories on how that sector promotes development. The sector is labour-intensive, serving as the largest source of private jobs by employing 20 per cent of the country's workforce, with women making up over half of that workforce, compared to just 9 per cent across all sectors—highlighting the sector's importance for social inclusion. The sector has a strong multiplier effect on other economic activities, including services and transport. A 1 per cent increase in agriculture GDP growth would lead to 1.2 per cent increase in total employment (compared to just 0.35 per cent for the industrial sector). Improving the Iraqi economic outlook depends on the agri-food sector.¹⁴¹

4.3 Oil market dynamics and rentierism

Although oil accounts for 92 per cent of government revenues, its extraction and production represents no more than approximately 1 per cent of total employment, with few links to non-oil activities.¹⁴² The lack of a

137 World Food Programme (WFP), 2018. *Iraq Zero Hunger Strategic Review (ZHSR)*. [online] WFP. Available at <https://www1.wfp.org/zero-hunger-strategic-reviews>.

138 World Food Programme (WFP), 2016. *Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis (CFSVA)*. Available at <https://www.wfp.org/publications/iraq-comprehensive-food-security-vulnerability-analysis-2016>.

139 Worldometers, 2019. Iraq population. Available at www.worldometers.info/world-population/iraq-population/.

140 World Bank, 2020 *Iraq Economic Monitor*. Available at <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/347>

49#:~:text=Iraq's%20GDP%20shrank%20by%206.8,y)%20in%20Q2%2D20.

141

<http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/848371571505101026/pdf/Iraq-Economic-Monitor-Fall-2019-Turning-the-Corner-Sustaining-Growth-and-Creating-Opportunities-for-Iraq-s-Youth.pdf>.

142 World Bank Group, 2020. *Iraq Economic Monitor*. Available at

<https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/347>

transparent trade policy limits international competition to invest in Iraq and contributes to a growing trade imbalance, as the country relies heavily on oil exports, which represent 99 per cent of all exports against a range of imported goods.¹⁴³ Furthermore, according to World Bank data, the growth in the oil sector does not directly lead to job creation; for instance, a 1 per cent increase in oil output generated only 0.2 per cent reduction in employment in the industry.¹⁴⁴

Since the mid-twentieth century, Iraq's oil abundance has led to the neglect of other sectors of the economy. The need to diversify is particularly crucial considering the colossal task of rebuilding the areas destroyed by conflict. Although oil revenues enabled the rapid expansion of the public sector, they did not create enough jobs to absorb new entrants into the labour market, nor did they address the high rate of unemployment, which currently stands at 16 per cent. Iraq expects that non-oil economic growth will benefit from increased investment for reconstruction, but higher non-oil growth will be short-lived in the absence of structural reforms.¹⁴⁵ As shown in Figure 8, there is a continued focus on expenditure instead of long term investment, the budget for 2021, which has been approved, does not deviate from this trend.

Even though the price of oil has almost returned to the pre-COVID-19 levels as of February 2021, its fluctuations over 2020 posed a significant threat for Iraqi budget. The public sector revenues of Iraq are among the most oil-dependent in the world. In 2020 and 2021, the share of oil revenues is estimated at around 93 per cent of total government revenues, and the share of non-oil

revenues is estimated at about 7 per cent only.¹⁴⁶ With these numbers in mind, and with an estimated 74 per cent of total revenues spent on public sector salaries, such volatility in oil revenues implies that these are not enough to meet the bare minimum expenditure on public sector wages and social protection. This may be a cause for grave concern that has potential for social unrest.

According to the United States Energy Information Administration (EIA), the average production of oil in Iraq fell between 2019 and 2020 by 13 per cent. This, together with a 33 per cent decrease in average oil prices, meant that the total oil revenues from the oil sector in 2020 were 41 per cent less than in 2019. The outlook for 2021 and 2022 looks better, but total revenues are projected to remain lower than in 2019 by 27 per cent and 24 per cent respectively. As the movements of the price of oil are correlated with the supply (as OPEC aims at counteracting the fall in prices by limiting production), the oil revenues of Iraq are even more volatile than the prices themselves. Therefore, to mitigate the impact of collapse in the oil market on the revenues of Iraqi households and the potential risks of social unrest, the revenues from other sources must be significantly increased. Potential surplus in oil revenues should be used for building trust funds to survive the grim years, and not spent immediately on increases in wages and social benefits.

The oil and gas sector will remain a driving force in the Iraqi economy for the coming years. Iraq possesses one of the largest proven oil reserves and the largest proven gas

49#:~:text=Iraq's%20GDP%20shrank%20by%206.8,y)%20in%20Q2%2D20.

143 The Republic of Iraq, Ministry of Planning, 2018. *National Development Plan 2018-2022* Baghdad, Republic of Iraq. Available at https://www.iraq-jccme.jp/pdf/archives/nationaldevelopmentplan2018_2022.pdf.

144 World Bank Group, 2015. *Strengthening the Growth-Employment-Welfare Nexus*. Available at <http://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/57603146>

8254041518/pdf/938590BRIOP1470ion0PolicyBrief10Eng.pdf.

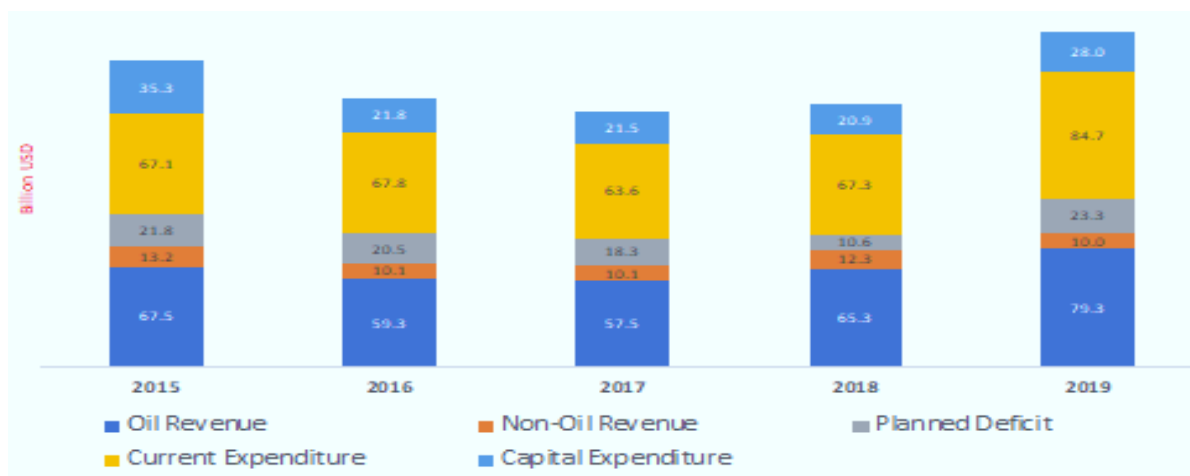
145 World Bank Group, 2018. *Jobs in Iraq: a primer on job creation in the short-term*. Available at <http://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/255111529495871846/pdf/Jobs-in-Iraq-a-primer-on-job-creation-in-the-short-term.pdf>.

146 The White Paper for economic and financial reform in Iraq, Ministry of Finance, November 2020.

deposits in the world.¹⁴⁷ The Iraqi oil industry is entering a new phase of production, one that is more expensive and complex than the upstream development of the past decade. A growing number of fields are entering the secondary recovery stage, which requires the sourcing of more water to sustain reservoir pressure.¹⁴⁸ Iraq currently needs approximately 1.3-1.5 barrels of injected water for every barrel of oil extracted, which places considerable strain on its ecological resources, with knock-on effects on water supplies and agriculture. The broader operational focus is now shifting to more complex reservoirs, which are more costly to exploit.

With costly and complicated stages of production growth ahead, Iraq will need international oil companies' investments with scale, capital and technical expertise. Iraq will also need to fix infrastructure issues; its upstream growth outpaced midstream investment, leading to onshore bottlenecks such as problems with storage capacity, water supply and midstream pipeline networks. Overall, the Iraqi oil sector requires a significant infrastructure upgrade and expansion to sustain continued growth.

Figure 8. Iraq's Oil Exports and Revenue, 2014-2020



Source: Iraq's Ministry of Oil.

Domestic and regional security concerns, in addition to political uncertainty, could jeopardize the prospects of such mega-projects and increase the difficulties associated with investing in Iraq. The country needs to offer international oil companies more advantageous remuneration and revenue sharing arrangements.¹⁴⁹ As

a case in point, the Iraqi uncompetitive fiscal terms, combined with strategic paralysis at its Petroleum Contracts and Licensing Directorate, led to the exit of oil giant Shell from the Majnoon field in mid-2018.¹⁵⁰

147 Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), 2018.

148 Secondary recovery requires water to be injected into oil formations to sustain reservoir pressure. Gas injection is a potential alternative, but Iraqi difficulties with gas flaring and the demand for gas to meet its energy requirements make this option difficult.

149 Ahmed Mehdi, "Iraqi Oil: Industry evolution and short and medium-term prospects", *The Oxford Institute for Energy Studies*, OEIS Paper 79, Oct. 2018. Available at

<https://www.oxfordenergy.org/wpcms/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Iraqi-Oil-industry-evolution-and-short-and-medium-term-prospects-WPM-79.pdf>, p. 4-6.

150 Aref Mohammed Ahmed Rasheed, "Shell to hand over Iraq's Majnoon oilfield by end June 2018: Iraq officials", *Reuters*, Nov. 8, 2017. Available at <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iraq-oil-shell/shell-to-hand-over-iraqs-majnoon-oilfield-by-end-june-2018-iraqi-oil-officials-idUSKBN1D817D>.

Iraqi political vulnerability to regional dynamics translates into economic instability. The Abqaiq attack and the tanker attacks of 2019 showed how regional strife affects oil infrastructure. Less dramatically, Iraqi vulnerability to regional conflict can lead to investment withdrawal.

4.4 Economic transformation

Resilient, inclusive and sustainable growth in Iraq will require economic diversification through the development of the non-oil economy and the private sector for job creation and enhanced productivity. In addition, digitalization and improved governance will be among other critical approaches that are likely to play an important role in supporting economic transformation, export development and trade policy reform.

Job creation has been a priority, but also an enormous challenge for Iraq. The working age labour force participation rate was just 43 per cent in 2019, and the unemployment rate was 12.8 per cent. Young people (aged 15 to 24) and women are particularly affected; their participation rates were 27.3 per cent and 12.1 per cent, respectively.

In addition to security and related challenges, Iraq suffers from an overwhelming lack of access to credit, high entry and exit barriers to starting a business and a slow and ambiguous legal and regulatory system. Prolonged conflict and infrastructure underdevelopment mean that firms often suffer from unreliable essential services, including water, electricity, sewage and telecommunications. In 2018, the total cost of reconstruction and recovery was estimated at \$88.2 billion, most of which remains unfunded. Industry, commerce and agriculture were the most severely damaged productive sectors, while infrastructure in the

power, oil and gas sectors sustained the most severe damages. Within the social sector, the World Bank's Damage and Needs Assessment report of 2018 found that housing, social protection, employment and livelihoods were severely impacted.

Faster productivity growth, particularly in the non-oil sector, is critical to economic diversification. Labour productivity growth across all sectors averaged just 2.7 per cent per year from 2008 to 2019, most of which occurred within sectors rather than through labour reallocation. Most structural change in Iraq has taken place through the expansion of the services sector. As a share of GDP, services increased from 10.6 per cent in 2000 to a peak of 53.5 per cent in 2015, before declining slightly. Value added per worker grew fastest over this period in the industrial sector (3.3 per cent per year) but fell by an average of 8.9 per cent per year in agriculture. At the same time, labour utilization is also relatively low; the estimated labour force participation rate was at 43.1 per cent and unemployment rate was 12.8 per cent in 2020. For comparison, the averages among all upper middle-income countries were 64.5 per cent and 12.8 per cent, respectively.

The creation of new firms and the growth of productive small and medium enterprises support the expansion of new areas of economic activity and enhance competitiveness, although the challenging business environment in Iraq poses barriers to such dynamism. Iraq only possesses a handful of large, typically family-run multi-industry conglomerates in retail, domestic trade, telecommunications and construction, rather than in traded goods and services.¹⁵¹

The poor private investment climate has also contributed to the proliferation of small-scale economic activities in the informal economy, which has not received adequate attention at the policy and decision-making level in Iraq. Effective formalization strategies,

151 World Bank (2018), *Iraq Reconstruction and Investment: Part 2 – Damage and Needs Assessment of Affected Governorates*.

in most of the cases, combine interventions to increase the economy's ability to absorb informal economy workers and enterprises, as well as to strengthen the ability of individuals and enterprises to enter into the formal economy.

While trade can be a driver of growth and development, the Iraqi export concentration inhibits growth and exacerbates volatility. The country's exports grew by an average of 9.4 per cent in real terms over 2010-2019, to a total of \$91 billion, but are highly concentrated in petroleum. Mineral fuels accounted for 97 per cent of the total value of goods exports. There is significant scope to expand non-oil exports, including through market diversification. Since 2008, China, India, Italy, the Republic of Korea and the United States have accounted for about three quarters of the Iraqi non-fuel exports.

Successful export development will also depend on strengthening trade policy. WTO membership, in particular, would open additional avenues for Iraq to benefit from easier access to a range of markets and more predictable trade conditions. While an official request to join the WTO was made in 2004 and some progress was made soon after, this stalled until an informal meeting of the Working Party on the Accession of Iraq was held in 2017. The current situation provides an appropriate context to continue these efforts. Regardless of the outcomes of this process, the required reforms associated with accession would also support development and peacebuilding by fostering stronger rules-based governance in Iraq.

Digitalization has the potential to support economic transformation in Iraq by improving access to information, lowering transaction costs and improving access to new markets. Remote work, online platforms and e-commerce have demonstrated their importance, particularly during the pandemic. Gaps remain in the use of these tools, however; in 2018, 25 per cent of the population of Iraq did not use the Internet. Improvements in infrastructure, access to technology and digital skills

are needed to harness the potential of digital technologies.

The current economic structure undermines the private sector's role as the main engine of job creation, and hence needs to be prioritized in any new reform plan. Governance and institutional capacities are often weak. Iraq was ranked in the bottom 10 per cent globally in the 2019 Worldwide Governance Indicator categories on political stability and absence of violence/terrorism, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, rule of law and control of corruption. Improved institutional capacities will be needed to support reform.

Transformation would require going beyond investing in neglected sectors. The Government of Iraq should also reduce its footprint on the economy by cutting back on public wages and follow through on other much-needed transformations. A holistic approach would tackle corruption and foster institutional reform.

4.5 Upcoming elections and boosting the democratic process

Voter apathy and low levels of public trust in elections are significant challenges to the democratic process in Iraq. The parliamentary elections held in May 2018 had a low turnout of 44.5 per cent heightened public concerns about the transparency and credibility of elections, leading to a recount amidst allegations of fraud. It is worth noting the targeting of women candidates and the chilling effect this may have had on women's political participation.

Similarly, as highlighted in discussions in the post-election review conducted by the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC), the use of technologies in elections was identified as having a negative impact on public confidence. Voter apathy and overall low turnouts have also been exacerbated by the precarious security environment prevailing in the country, which discourages voters, especially women and vulnerable groups, from participating). A specific challenge to

inclusive and participatory elections in Iraq is the impediment that IDPs face in engaging with the electoral process in all its phases. There were also concerns relating to the interpretation and implementation of the 25 per cent constitutional quota for women. This continues to be interpreted as a ceiling for women's representation in the Council of Representatives, although it was meant to signify a minimum.

Upon its assumption of office in May 2020, the current Iraqi Government has placed holding early parliamentary elections on the top of its priorities. The Independent High Electoral Commission, although faced by adverse circumstances due to the pandemic and the economic situation, has since started its preparations for the elections. These include, among others, developing the operational plan and electoral calendar and planning for the resumption of biometric voter data collection.

Almost a year after the draft law was voted upon, and following successive parliamentary sessions on the topic, the Council of Representatives approved the distribution of electoral constituencies for 16 of the Iraqi governorates. The apportioning of constituencies in the remaining two contentious governorates, Ninewa and Kirkuk, were later approved following intensive discussions among various political actors.

The new electoral law provides for 329 parliamentary seats, of which 25 per cent (83 seats) are reserved for women, in line with constitutional provisions, and nine are reserved for minority representatives (five Christians, one Yezidi, one Shabak, one Sabean Mandeian and one Fayli Kurd). The delineation of constituency boundaries will be guided by the location of food ration centres and voter registration centres, grouping one or more to form each electoral constituency. Each governorate is divided into several constituencies, with a country-wide total of 83 constituencies. Voters will vote for individual candidates, with seats allocated to those receiving the highest number of votes.

In January 2021, a series of meetings took place between senior Iraqi leaders and the IHEC Board of Commissioners, which were also attended by UNAMI, to discuss progress of electoral preparations. Several technical challenges were highlighted, particularly the low biometric registration coverage, the limited period for candidate nomination, and the finalization of the ballots for the elections.

Accordingly, UNAMI, in coordination with UNDP, prepared an electoral support project entitled "Support to Iraq's Electoral Process". Following its approval, the project is now in the process of implementation. It consists of two phases, corresponding to the request from the IHEC and the Iraqi authorities for support in building IHEC's institutional capacities and for direct assistance in organizing early parliamentary elections.

Phase I of the project, focusing on capacity development, seeks to address technical capacity gaps brought about by recent staffing changes at IHEC, so that the Commission can quickly attain the required institutional and staffing capacities to organize the elections. It entails the immediate deployment of international and national electoral advisers to provide technical and advisory support in key areas jointly identified with IHEC.

Phase II, on direct technical support to the elections, builds upon and reinforces the objectives, outputs and activities of phase I, while introducing a third output focused on direct technical assistance to IHEC in preparation for early parliamentary elections. Additional electoral advisers are being deployed to support technical areas of preparations at the Commission's headquarters level, while also expanding field presence at the United Nations regional hubs, to support IHEC field preparations at its governorate electoral offices. Several activities will also be implemented to support civic and voter education initiatives and to enhance IHEC engagement with electoral stakeholders.

4.6 Covid-19 and health

4.6.1 Impact of COVID-19

Iraq recorded its first COVID-19 cases on 24 February 2020. In response to the pandemic, Iraq worked with WHO to develop a preparedness and response plan, and implemented a total lockdown, including closing all its borders on 14 March, for more than one month. These measures included restrictions on commercial activity as well as civilian movements across the country and at international airports and points of entry.

Based on available data from the WHO Iraq Dashboard and the Ministry of Health and Environment, by 31 December 2020, more than 593,000 COVID-19 cases were reported in the country, with over 12,800 related deaths, including more than 29,000 cases reported among health care workers, who sustained 181 fatalities. Following a decline at the end of 2020, an upward trend was reported since the first weeks of January 2021. This trend is attributed to the circulation of a new mutated variant of the virus suspected to be the UK variant (B.1.1.7), which continues to be responsible for up to 60 per cent of the reported cases. The upward trend is currently continuing to be reported as of the first week of March 2021. An increase in the number of COVID-19 cases countrywide, and the associated morbidity and mortality, will require more robust measures to support health facilities and health workers with COVID-19 vaccinations, case management and infection prevention and control measures, disease surveillance and risk communications and community engagement interventions.

The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed some significant gaps in infectious disease control measures in Iraqi laboratory capacity, human resources and surveillance. At the initial stages, the country lacked the necessary equipment and skills to test suspected cases,¹⁵² resulting in selective and insufficient testing (e.g., hospitalized patients only) and a failure to test key population groups, including health professionals and care-home residents, which aggravated the situation and delayed the control of the epidemic. However, the Ministry of Health, working with WHO, was able to scale up laboratory capacity that went from one central lab with PCR testing capacities at the beginning of the epidemic, to nearly 270 testing sites by the end of 2020. The same is true with regards to Intensive care units that did not have optimal bed capacities and sufficient trained human resources. However, a major scale up was undertaken rapidly after the start of the epidemic.

As with many other countries around the world, women have been particularly exposed to the multidimensional risks of COVID-19. The number of cases of domestic violence has increased significantly during the pandemic in Iraq.¹⁵³ WHO's rapid assessment of health service responses to survivors of gender-based violence during the COVID-19 pandemic in Iraq¹⁵⁴ found an increase of 40 per cent in the prevalence of GBV cases in the country since the onset of the pandemic. This calls for urgent interventions from all health sector partners and the Government to prioritize and integrate mental health and psychosocial support, including counselling and treatment, for the Iraqi population.

As a result of a limited number of health care professionals and hospital bed capacities, many patients were forced to be treated at home. The number of

152 Enabling Peace in Iraq Centre, Iraq's health system at risk: the struggle to fight COVID-19 and save lives June 2020. Available at <https://enablingpeace.org/iraqs-health-system-at-risk/>.

153 Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, *COVID-19: Exploring the Impact of the Pandemic on the Lives of Syrians and Iraqis*, August 2020. Available at

<https://www.kas.de/en/web/syrien-irak/single-title/-/content/covid-19>.

154 The GBV Sub-cluster Rapid Assessment: The Impact of COVID-19 outbreak on gender-based Violence in Iraq. Available at <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/iraq/assessment/gbv-sub-cluster-rapid-assessment-impact-covid-19-outbreak-gender-based>.

doctors per capita is low in Iraq (0.8 per 1,000 people). At the height of the pandemic, the shortage in health personnel forced many doctors and nurses to work overtime and to continue working additional shifts, despite the exhaustion and the burnout associated with this overwhelming situation.

These challenges require government training of more personnel and strengthening of disease detection and surveillance in the country for quick response, not only to the escalating waves of the virus, but also to any potential disease outbreaks that may occur in the future. All these need to be done amidst significant disruptions in health care systems that are already struggling due to previous armed conflicts and civil unrest.

COVID -19 and ensuring travel restrictions underscored the importance for Iraq to continue to strategically integrate multi-sector national objectives, including in the field of public health, into national border management through strategic planning, coordination and increased technical capacity.

4.6.2 Essential health services

Decades of political and economic instability have undermined health services and infrastructure. As such, Iraq was ill-prepared to respond to a sudden onset of a pandemic like COVID-19. More than 350 hospitals and primary health care centres were still in need of rehabilitation of some nature by the end of 2019.¹⁵⁵ Like previous disease outbreaks and humanitarian emergencies, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic disrupted access to essential health services.¹⁵⁶ This has had a major impact on the capacity of health systems to continue delivering essential health services, such as outpatient visits and vaccinations for young children,

antenatal care, safe deliveries by skilled health workers and maternal, newborn and childcare. Also affected is the management of communicable and non-communicable diseases like cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, cancers and hypertension.

The immunization rates during COVID-19 significantly dropped, risking future disease outbreaks. The disruptions in the vaccination programmes left child cohorts unprotected. When compared to 2019, all antigens witnessed various levels of decline in 2020. Oral Polio Vaccines dropped from 85 per cent to 78 per cent, penta from 84 per cent to 74 per cent, and measles from 82 per cent to 76 per cent. As such, to maintain the vaccination status of children in the country, it is essential that health authorities, in collaboration with health partners, explore ways to keep children's immunities boosted, especially by organizing supplementary and national vaccination campaigns in areas with limited access to health care facilities and services and where immunity gaps exist.¹⁵⁷

Three per cent of the population of Iraq are above the age of 65.¹⁵⁸ WHO estimates that 30 per cent of Iraqis have high blood pressure, 14 per cent have diabetes, and more than 30 per cent are obese. All these groups are classified as vulnerable to severe disease and death by COVID-19.¹⁵⁹ Maintaining preventive and curative services is critical. Iraq needs to achieve the optimal balance between fighting the COVID-19 pandemic and maintaining essential health services.

4.6.3. Humanitarian health emergency assistance and displaced populations

At the end of 2020, 2.4 million conflict-affected people required health assistance, including 300,000 IDPs. In

155 International Organization for Migration (IOM), *COVID-19 Impact Survey Dashboard June 2020*.

156 OCHA, COVID-19 Addendum to the Humanitarian Response Plan 2020 Iraq July 2020.

157 UNICEF and WHO sound the alarm on the health dangers of children in Iraq missing routine immunization during

the COVID-19 pandemic (April 2020).

158 <https://www.statista.com/statistics/327299/age-structure-in-iraq/>.

159 World Health Organization (WHO), Coronavirus disease (COVID-19): Risks and safety for older people (May 2020); Risks and safety for older people (May 2020).

addition, almost 500,000 IDPs living in out-of-camp locations also needed health services, yet do not have the means to access health care. A total of 1.7 million returnees required some form of health assistance.¹⁶⁰ The displaced population is particularly vulnerable, given the potential rise of COVID-19 cases in camps, which could become breeding grounds for the virus if not managed adequately and in a timely manner.¹⁶¹ Free public health services are only available for displaced people with proper documentation proving their status, hence affecting those who are not registered.

Camp closures have forced displaced populations to move out of camps and return to locations without adequate essential services, which may further challenge the ability to sustain essential health care, including the COVID-19 response.

An analysis of the humanitarian needs prior to COVID-19 shows that public hospitals were already facing capacity challenges, and private health services were largely inaccessible for displaced populations due to the inability to cover transportation and treatments costs. This situation has been exacerbated by a lack of awareness and improper infection prevention practices, diminished contact tracing capacity, inadequate disease surveillance and rapid response, insufficient diagnostic capacity of laboratories, as well as the stigma associated with infection. In line with the vulnerable populations' needs, it is imperative that health cluster partners deliver emergency health support to people living in internally displaced person camps, host communities and returnees in hard-to-reach areas.

Projection of needs with the impact of COVID-19 is likely to extend several years beyond 2021. An Expanded Programme on Immunization ought to be supported to ensure quality and quantity of COVID-19 vaccinations of the Iraqi population, including prioritization based on risk assessments. Concerted efforts should focus on mitigating the risks for future epidemics and outbreaks and build resilience of health systems in preparedness and response. Strengthening health systems is key for a full functional and operational universal health coverage in Iraq.

4.7 Environment and climate change

Iraq's environment has been subject to several pressures stemming from uncontrolled population growth, which has contributed to economic stress and political challenges, as well as pressure on the country's ecological and natural resources. Increasing demand for water, coupled with poor hydro-management, climate change, protracted conflict, severe environmental degradation due to a lack of institutional frameworks and policies, as well as natural and human made factors, are all pushing Iraq close to absolute water scarcity, where 18 per cent of the people live in water-scarce areas.¹⁶² During the past 30 years, Iraq has shifted from being a water-secure to a water-stressed country due to a combination of factors, including:¹⁶³

- Neighbouring countries' development projects upstream from the Tigris-Euphrates, affecting quality and quantity of the water flow;
- Centralized and complicated governance of water, together with inadequate regulatory framework and enforcement;

160 OCHA, COVID-19 Addendum to the Humanitarian Response Plan 2020 Iraq July 2020.

161 United Nations, The Impact of COVID-19 on the Arab Region; an Opportunity to Build Back Better (July 2020). Available at <https://www.un.org/en/coronavirus/covid-19-and-arab-region-opportunity-build-back-better>.

162 Water Scarcity Clock. Available at https://worldwater.io/?utm_source=google&utm_medium=search&utm_campaign=WaterscarcityData&campaign_id=6444167483&adgroupid=77198318295&adid=376808482554&gclid=CjwKCAjwgbLzBRBsEiwAXVlygMsNa_96jBe7oUaxRWue4Rdubx7QsZRPITCP1oBDbuul5yomfWZhrxocAnkQAvD_BwE.

163 Radhwan K. Abdulhaleem, "Water Research Consultancy in southern Iraq", Final Report to IOM-FAO Project, May 2019.

- Reduced water use efficiency, with a staggering 75 per cent used in irrigation;
- Seventy-five per cent of central and southern Iraq under irrigation affected by salinity due to poor farming practices;
- Water contamination due mainly to untreated municipal and industrial wastewater discharge.

Recent analysis of climate impacts shows that Iraq will suffer from increasing temperatures, intense heat waves, variable annual rainfall with increased intensity, and decreased runoff and sea-level rise in the Gulf.¹⁶⁴ While Iraq ranks 130 out of 181 countries in the Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative (ND-GAIN) Index that measures climate vulnerability (with a ranking of 1 being the least vulnerable), Iraq ranks as the 16th least ready country.¹⁶⁵

As expected, environmental stress has contributed directly to political instability. Water shortages and increases in water salinity were the immediate triggers for the mass protests in Basra in 2018. In the north of Iraq, the devastation of water scarcity on the agricultural sector facilitated terror recruitment amongst destitute farmers searching for alternate sources of income.¹⁶⁶

The effects of climate change, water shortage and land and water contamination are having a devastating impact on Iraqi ecosystems, economy and population, triggering loss of biodiversity and livelihoods and reducing hydropower generation. This, in turn, increased population displacement from rural to urban areas, and added to health crises and social unrest. These impacts will also degrade the country's Mesopotamian Marshlands (the Ahwar), a World Heritage site with an exceptional diversity of species,

many of which are already threatened, endangered or vulnerable.

As Iraq moves forward, it will need to address the management of its natural resources and the protection of its environment, and devise disaster risk management strategies that are key to economic revitalization, social well-being and cohesion for the future of Iraq as a whole. Iraq has recently submitted its Sixth National Report on Biodiversity that addresses the challenges facing its biodiversity, including climate change, drought, environmental pollution and others. The Report's findings will be used to develop subsequent biodiversity conservation activities.

The urgency of Iraqi environmental vulnerabilities can scarcely be exaggerated. Some areas for immediate pushback could include reducing hydrocarbon spillage, waste management, air and water pollution. This is in addition to fighting desertification through better hydro-management (decreasing soil moisture is one of the key factors driving the frequency of dust storms), increasing awareness of water use, especially among farmers to shift from flood irrigation to more water-efficient irrigation methods, and investing in solar and other sustainable sources of energy.

4.7.01 Environmental restoration

Iraq faces daunting environmental and climate challenges that will affect the implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. As such, the Government identifies ecological sustainability and the mitigation of and adaptation to climate change as a priority in its National Development Plan, and has created a specialized technical sub-committee to support the National Committee on Sustainable Development on

164 By mid-century, projected rainfall is variable with decreases up to 11 per cent during the October-March season (RCP8.5), 2-degree temperature rise, and decreased local runoff up to 5 per cent annually (RICCAR, 2017).

165 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, "Climate Change Profile, Iraq", April 2018.

166 Peter Schwartzstein, "Climate Change and Water Woes Drove ISIS Recruiting in Iraq", National Geographic, 14 November 2017. Available at <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/news/2017/11/climate-change-drought-drove-isis-terrorist-recruiting-iraq/>.

issues related to environmental sustainability and the green economy. It has also identified SDGs 6, 13, and 15 as priority areas and SDG 11 and 14 as a second priority, and has started adaptation planning.¹⁶⁷

4.7.02 Climate change

As Iraq is a downstream riparian country in the Tigris-Euphrates river basin, it is expected to be severely affected by climate change. Upper riparian countries have intensified their efforts to construct large dams over the past decade, which will have significant adverse impacts downstream. Some insight into its status vis-à-vis its neighbours can be seen in the table below.

As mentioned above, projections suggest that Iraq will suffer from severe climate change impacts.¹⁶⁸

Between 1970 and 2004, the annual mean temperature increased by one to two degrees

Celsius.¹⁶⁹ It is projected that the yearly mean temperature will increase by two degrees Celsius by mid-century and be accompanied by more frequent heatwaves.

Drought has become more intense and persistent in the central and southwestern parts of Iraq. Prolonged drought has also taken a toll on rain-fed crops in the north. Variable precipitation, particularly during the wet season (October-May), whereby mean annual average rainfall is expected to decrease by up to 11 per cent by mid-century, coupled with increased rainfall intensity, can compound adverse impacts on agriculture. Localized runoff to recharge aquifers may decrease up to five per cent annually, resulting in more prolonged and severe droughts, which may further result in climate-induced displacement.

Table 5. 2019 INFORM Risk Index: Iraq and its neighbours

Name of Country	0 = lower risk 10 = highest risk	INFORM Risk	INFORM Rank out of 191
Iraq DRR Score: 8.4	INFORM Risk	7.2	17
	Hazards and Exposures	8.6	5
	Vulnerability	6.1	27
	Lack of Coping Capacity	7.0	21

Source: Inform Index for Risk Management (INFORM), 2019. Inform Country Risk Profile – Iraq. Available at <http://www.inform-index.org/countries/country-profiles>.

4.7.03 Air pollution

Iraq also suffers from high levels of air pollution caused by a variety of factors, including the use of low-quality

fuel in transport, power generation and the industrial sectors; a significant increase in the number of personal cars in the last decade or so; the absence of an adequate public transport system; emissions from

167 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 2018. *Support to the Government of Iraq for the Implementation and Monitoring of SDGs: Project Annual Report*. Baghdad.

168 United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and others, 2017. *Arab Climate Change Assessment Report – Main Report*. Beirut.

Available at https://www.unescwa.org/sites/www.unescwa.org/files/publications/files/riccar-main-report-2017-english_0.pdf.

169 K4D Helpdesk, 2018. *Environmental Risks in Iraq*. [pdf] UK Department for International Development. Available at https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5b3b63a3e5274a6ff466faa5/Environmental_risks_in_Iraq.pdf.

industrial facilities; open burning of waste due to a lack of sufficient waste management facilities and services; and an increase in illegal logging and tree-cutting for fuel use.

Continual flaring of associated and natural gas in oil fields leads to high levels of emissions that contribute to a deterioration of air quality. Currently, Iraq is flaring around 70 per cent of natural gas that it produces, releasing approximately 20 million tons of carbon dioxide per year to the atmosphere.¹⁷⁰

4.7.04 Sand and dust storms

Iraq is one of the most affected countries in the Middle East by sand and dust storms, which have increased drastically in the last decade and are continuously increasing due to desertification and as a result of the 2003 war. Studies show that storms affecting Gulf countries, such as Kuwait, are mainly generated in desert areas in southern Iraq.¹⁷¹ One of the main reasons behind the development of these storms is the climatic changes within the region, especially the drastic decrease in the annual rate of rainfall, besides environmental changes, such as the drying up of the marshes, land degradation and desertification.¹⁷²

4.7.05 Water resources

Water demand is steadily increasing due to population growth, environmental considerations and economic development.¹⁷³ Deterioration in both quality and quantity of water has put almost 40 per cent of historically irrigated agricultural areas out of production. Almost 70 per cent of cropland is affected by high soil salinity, which significantly limits crop yields.¹⁷⁴ Inadequate water supply also has a direct economic impact on the private sector, whereby the average manufacturing firm in Iraq reported experiencing 17 water outages per month.

The damage caused by ISIL has severely impacted the water sector. Damages, mostly barrages, pumping stations, water bridges, dams, dykes and levees, are estimated at a value of IQD 134 billion, or \$115 million.¹⁷⁵

Threats of water shortages are due to a variety of internal and external challenges.¹⁷⁶ Externally, climate change and water resource policies of neighbouring countries contribute to such risks. Iraq is very dependent on the water resources of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, which provide more than half of the country's freshwater needs, and much of this surface water crosses in from neighbouring countries, making

170 World Bank Group, 2017. *Iraq Systematic Country Diagnostic*. Available at <http://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/542811487277729890/pdf/IRAQ-SCD-FINAL-cleared-02132017.pdf>.

171 Ali Al-Hemoud, Ali Ali-Dousari, Hassan Al-Dashti, Peter Petrov, Abeer AL-Saleh, Sarhan Al-Khafaji, Weam Behbehani, Jingli and Petros Kourtrakis, "Sand and dust storm trajectories from Iraq Mesopotamian flood plain to Kuwait", *Science of the Total Environment* 710 (2020).

172 See https://www.researchgate.net/publication/276048930_Sand_and_dust_storm_events_in_Iraq.

173 Danboos, A., Jaafar, O & El-Shafie, A 2017, Water scarcity analysis, assessment and alleviation: New approach for arid environment. *International Journal of Applied Engineering Research*, vol. 12, No. 18, pp. 7536-7545.

174 World Bank Group, 2017. *Iraq Systematic Country Diagnostic*. Available at <http://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/542811487277729890/pdf/IRAQ-SCD-FINAL-cleared-02132017.pdf>.

175 World Bank, 2018. *Iraq Reconstruction & Investment: Damage and Needs Assessment of Affected Governorates*. Available at <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/29438/123631.pdf?sequence=4&isAllowed=y>.

176 Al-Muqdadi, SW, Omer, MF, Abo, R, and Naghshineh, A, 2016. Dispute over Water Resource Management – Iraq and Turkey. *Journal of Environmental Protection*, No. 17 (2016), p. 1097-1099.

Iraq vulnerable to water policies outside its control. Almost all of the water from the Euphrates River originates in Turkey and Syria, and approximately 50-60 per cent of the Tigris River water originates from Iran and Turkey.¹⁷⁷ The lack of an international agreement on the Euphrates and Tigris river basin, that extends beyond Iraq to Jordan, Iran, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Syria, affects riparian rights between the countries. More significant shortages of water resources in Iraq are expected as Syria and Turkey continue to expand the development of their irrigation projects along the Euphrates, and likewise by Iran and Turkey in the Tigris basin.

Internally, water resource management high costs and low quality of services pose significant challenges to the availability of water. Public spending on the water sector increased rapidly between 2007 and 2012,¹⁷⁸ and the average annual public expenditure on water, as a proportion of total federal spending in 2012, was almost four per cent, the equivalent of 1.8 per cent of GDP.¹⁷⁹

Inadequate domestic regulations for water usage, weak enforcement, leaky pipes, lack of proper regulation regarding the dumping of toxins, and insufficient and derelict water and sewage treatment facilities are also contributing factors. The capacity of public institutions, such as the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Water Resources, to provide services has declined over the past two decades. The National Water Council (sometimes referred to as the Supreme Water Committee), created in 2014, is tasked with developing with partners a coordinated government response on water issues.

4.7.06 Chemicals and waste

Improper waste management practices will not only pollute land, air and water, but will also impede the provision of public health necessities, such as clean water and air and safe food. These practices disproportionately affect vulnerable groups, such as recent migrants, unemployed, disabled elderly persons and women and children. At the national level, a municipal solid waste generation had increased from 11.4 million tons in 2010 to 14.9 million tons in 2016. Only 64 per cent of this waste is collected. Besides, the country is also generating more than 9,000 tons of industrial waste every year.

The Iraqi National Environment Strategy and Action Plan (puts sound management of chemicals and integrated waste management as two of the strategic objectives and top priorities to ensure the protection of human health. Since the establishment of the Ministry of Environment, the Government of Iraq made considerable efforts to mitigate impacts of hazardous waste and harmful substances. The Ministry of Environment has constituted a department that deals with chemicals, established the Chemicals Synergies Committee, and initiated many directives and regulations throughout the lifecycle of chemicals. Implementing these multilateral environmental agreements and operationalizing a holistic approach for waste management are vital challenges for environmental management in Iraq.

177 K4D Helpdesk, 2018. *Environmental Risks in Iraq*. UK Department for International Development. Available at https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5b3b63a3e5274a6ff466faa5/Environmental_risks_in_Iraq.pdf.

178 World Bank Group, 2014. *Republic of Iraq Public Expenditure Review: Toward More Efficient Spending for Better Service Delivery*. Available at

<https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/19281/899160PUB0978100Box385216B00PUBLI00.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>.

179 World Bank Group, 2017. *Iraq – Systematic Country Diagnostic*. Available at *Diagnostic*. Available at <http://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/542811487277729890/pdf/IRAQ-SCD-FINAL-cleared-02132017.pdf>.

4.7.07 Environmental impacts of conflict

(a) Conflict pollution

Military operations and sabotage and looting of oil and mining facilities, military-industrial sites, chemical and pharmaceutical facilities, power plants and nuclear research facilities have been a signal feature of the conflict since 2003. Oil well fires stockpiles and munitions disposal sites, depleted uranium (DU) and other toxic remnants of war (TRW), and military scrap metal (containing PCBs, heavy metals, asbestos, DU and mineral oils) have all created a toxic environment at the local level in many conflict-affected areas. This led to the direct exposure of civilians to poisonous and sometimes radioactive materials and contaminated soil and groundwater, and will likely have a long term environmental and public health impact.¹⁸⁰ Although there is anecdotal evidence by doctors in Iraq regarding increased congenital disabilities, and rates of cancer have been widely reported,¹⁸¹ a lack of thorough epidemiological research into this has stifled any attempts to link conflict contamination to them.

(b) Debris management

A major environmental problem created by the ISIL conflict is the generation of massive quantities of debris, not only in major urban centres such as Mosul, Kirkuk and Ramadi, but also in secondary towns and villages in Ninewa, Anbar, Salah El-Deen, and Diyala governorates. Over 55 million tons of debris were created by the conflict. For example, in Mosul city alone, it is estimated that the conflict created around 8-10 million tons of debris. The International Organization of Migration (IOM) cites destroyed houses as the most critical

obstacle for the return for the estimated 1.5 million displaced persons in the country.

In Kirkuk, for example, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has initiated a pilot programme, with the help of UNAMI's Development Support Office and IOM, that demonstrates the potential for debris recycling by applying a circular vision to the problem and transforming the colossal volumes of rubble that currently litter the city into part of the solution. This pilot programme not only facilitates safe returns of IDPs and generates livelihood opportunities through cash for work projects, but also promotes better environmental stewardship. After this proof of concept, it would be advisable to extend and mainstream the debris management programme across other governorates.

4.7.08 Land degradation and loss of biodiversity

Land degradation and loss of biodiversity pose significant threats to the socioeconomic and environmental well-being of Iraq. World Bank data from 2018 estimates land degradation at 26 per cent. The causes of environmental degradation are attributed to increasing population growth of one third in the previous decade,¹⁸² which contributed to growing needs for resources like food, energy, housing and water. There is also intensified pressure on the environment due to higher levels of disposal of solid and liquid wastes.

Practices such as unsustainable agriculture and illegal hunting of wild animals and birds threaten ecosystems, and have led to land degradation and desertification. Other factors, such as poor environmental awareness, weak and inadequate environmental monitoring systems, and lack of institutional capacity in

180 Toxic Remnants of War Project, 2014. *Pollution Politics: Power, Accountability and Toxic Remnants of War*. Toxic Remnants of War Project. Available at https://ceobs.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/WEB_READY%E2%80%93TRW_Pollution_Politics_Report.pdf.

181 Fernandez, B. *Iraq, 15 years on: A toxic US legacy*. *Middle East Eye* 18 March 2018. Available at <https://www.middleeasteye.net/fr/node/69628>.

182 World Bank Data, 2018.

environmental protection, also contribute to land degradation and biodiversity loss. The cost of environmental degradation in Iraq accounts for 4.9-8.0 per cent of the GDP, with an average of 6.4 per cent, or \$5.5 billion, a year.¹⁸³

Land in Iraq faces deterioration, desertification, and degradation, particularly in the form of the movement of sand dunes and a frequent occurrence of dust and sandstorms in the central and southern regions of the country. In addition, soil salinity affects the production potential of roughly 70% of the total irrigated area of Iraq, with large areas no longer suitable for agricultural production. The area of land facing desertification, excluding the Kurdistan region, is 66,946 km², which accounts for over 15 per cent of the country's overall territory. According to the Ministry of Agriculture, in 2016, dunes constituted 1,000 km² throughout the central and southern regions and around 137,500 km² across the entire country. If the Government does not take action to combat the effects of desertification, more than 53 per cent of the total area of Iraq, equivalent to 93,000 km², could be affected.¹⁸⁴

While land degradation poses a critical threat to biodiversity by removing habitats for wild species, other human activities, such as unsustainable agriculture, commercial development and hunting, pose additional threats to ecosystems and biodiversity. The IUCN Red List of threatened species identified biological resource use, residential and commercial development, climate change, human intrusion, agriculture and natural system modifications as the root causes that put 682 plant species currently at the risk of extinction in Iraq.

Therefore, in addition to sustainable land management practices, additional measures against unsustainable human activities that threaten biodiversity should be

established to preserve the environment.¹⁸⁵ The Mesopotamian marshes, situated in the most fertile part of the country, are of a particular concern. The wetlands are highly fragmented, affecting the survival of many species, the health of the marshes and the people whose livelihoods depend on the environmental services provided by them.¹⁸⁶

Wetland areas are essential for water resources, filtration and drought and flood management. The drainage and diversion of water supplies for agriculture and oil exploration, and their use for production and military purposes since the 1980s, are the most severe threat to the marshes.¹⁸⁷ Restoration efforts after the 2003 war have been patchy because of noncompliance with environmental flow allocations, high soil, water salinities and periodic drought. Iraq adopted Land Degradation Neutrality targets through the Ministry of Agriculture aiming, *inter alia*, at converting 150,000 ha of sand dune land to grasslands by 2035 as compared to 2017.

4.7.09 People and the environment

Iraq faces numerous challenges when it comes to environment, all of which have a direct linkage and impact on the people of Iraq. Starting with the climate change, Iraq has been seeing an increase in the annual mean temperature exposing people to intense heatwaves and a decrease in the annual rainfall, which both are impacting agriculture, the water resources and even energy (according to the institute of development studies, 2018). These challenges are causing more land degradation and increasing the risk of contamination of water. The water pollution and shortages are directly impacting households putting people at risk of contracting water-borne diseases. The World Health Organization estimates 25% of child mortality relates to

183 Sixth National Report of Iraq to the Convention on Biological Diversity, 2018.

184 Ibid.

185 The IUCN Red List of threatened species. Please note that some species are associated with more than one threat.

186 K4D Helpdesk, 2018. *Environmental Risks in Iraq*.

187 Fawzi, MN, and Mahdi, AB, 2014. Iraq's inland water quality and their impact on the Northwestern Arabian Gulf. *Marsh Bulletin*, 9 (1), 1-22.

preventable water-related diseases with villages reporting skin rashes due to polluted water.

Another impact of these challenges is internal migration due to two main reasons, the first being the desertification and land degradation causing an abandonment of agriculture lands and forcing the people who live off of agriculture to migrate to the borders of big cities such as Baghdad, and the second is the conflict-related pollution and depleting of resources like what happened in the northern region of the country. This migration is adding more stress to the already-suffering infrastructure of the cities and further deepens the challenges adding more and more suffering on the livelihoods of the people.

4.7.10 Towards a green economy

As an oil producing country, Iraq has been heavily reliant on oil and gas-fired power. Its total primary use depends more than 90 per cent on oil, and the rest on natural gas. This has resulted in extensive damages to the environment and to public health. For example, oil production has reduced supplies of drinking water, while gas flaring from oil extraction is responsible for pollution and public health problems.

Iraq is now seeking to diversify its energy dependency away from fossil fuels within the next decade, and enhance the energy mix, which will contribute to meeting its Paris Agreement commitments contained in its Nationally Determined Contribution (Lowering emissions by 14 per cent by 2035). Iraq plans to meet 10 per cent of its energy needs from renewable sources by 2028 by developing large-scale solar, wind and biomass capabilities. Finally, transitioning away from fossil fuels can have positive socio-economic benefits in the form of job creation and establishment of secondary industries (e.g. solar panel production and maintenance, etc.).

4.7.11 Environmental policy mechanisms

Since the 1972 Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment, Iraq has enacted more than 60 environmental policies and laws¹⁸⁸. The protection of the environment was inscribed in the Iraqi Constitution of 2005, and subsequently Law 37 on the Ministry of Environment (2008) and Law 27 on Environmental Protection and Improvement (2009) were passed.

Iraq's National Development Plan 2018-2022 identified several challenges facing environment in Iraq including lack of proper policies and legislations that provide the institutional framework attentive to these challenges. It highlighted several measures to address environmental issues including water management, air contamination, protecting biodiversity, and climate change impact. The government of Iraq considers now climate change as the top urgent environmental issue that need to be effectively and efficiently addressed in line with its international obligations. .

Recognizing the need to develop an integrated environmental strategy for Iraq, the MoE launched the National Environment Strategy and Action Plan (NESAP) in 2013 as well as the first State of Environment and Outlook Report in 2014. The Ministry of Environment is in the process of updating the NESAP with support from UNEP and UNDP. Iraq also prepared a National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (2015-2020) aiming at spreading the knowledge and awareness about biodiversity and sustainable use of its natural resources by 2050, under the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Since 2001, Iraq accessed, signed or ratified 16 Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) related to climate change (UNFCCC, Kyoto Protocol, Paris Agreement), biodiversity (CBD, Biosafety, Ramsar, CITES

¹⁸⁸ See also

<https://www.informea.org/en/countries/IQ/legislation>

& CMS), chemicals (Basel, Stockholm, Rotterdam, Minamata) and desertification (UNCCD).

The government has recently ratified the Paris Agreement and is in the process of developing the National Adaptation Plan on climate change. Iraq is also in the final stages of updating its NDCs and is applying for a significant amount of climate related finance from the international community. This shows that the government is prioritizing the climate change agenda.

The baseline with regard to data and information for reporting and managing MEAs, as experienced and reported through the processes of preparing the State of Environment and Outlook Report, the Initial National Communication to UNFCCC, the National Action Plan to Combat Desertification (NAP), the NBSAP, the National Biosafety Report and experience with the Ramsar Convention, can be characterized as follows:

- Despite a variety of environmental data generated by the different departments and ministries, there are still substantive gaps in data and information on the environment, the socioeconomic and geographical dimensions, ecosystem type coverage, and biodiversity;
- No results-based monitoring. The use of indicators and targets to measure and improve environmental performance is very limited;

- Data generation activities are often ad hoc. There is no policy or strategy to generate data in the short, medium and long term within an integrated and comprehensive system. This leads to information being collected multiple times by different Ministries for multiple reporting and assessment processes as well as other uses because of insufficient knowledge management and sharing;
- Poor data quality in terms of accuracy and consistency.
- Challenges with regard to accessibility of data and information;
- Limited data and information exchange among stakeholders;
- Weak regulatory framework on data standards, exchange protocol, interpretation and use;
- Current data and information systems do not align with the decentralisation governance structure in the country; and

Limited human and institutional capacities for data, information and knowledge management and the processing of data is mainly paper-based, reactive and ad hoc

5. Common Country Analysis: Key Findings

5.1 Social cohesion

Iraq needs to build human capital while also providing social protection, promoting inclusion and strengthening social cohesion.

At the upstream level, there is a need to reform the social safety net/social protection system to address the needs of vulnerable populations in Iraq and enhance coordination across all social protection instruments. To ensure effective use of resources, it is necessary to move away from regressive subsidies and benefits. Reform should aim at ensuring broad coverage of poor and vulnerable groups that are most at risk of being left behind, providing them with predictable and regular income support, as a foundation for a solid social protection floor.

It is also critical to extend a comprehensive social insurance package to a larger share of the workforce, particularly to private sector workers, including those in the informal economy. This would better integrate social security regimes for private and public sectors to facilitate labour market mobility and formalization and to enhance medium-term financial sustainability of the social protection system.

Another element of this process is the need to create space for youth, women and other marginalized segments of the population, such as those affected by displacement, whose voices are not heard in decision-making processes that impact their lives. This includes peacebuilding, economic empowerment and opportunities, volunteering opportunities and access to basic services essential for their safety, dignity and quality of life. From a protection standpoint, it also includes services to those who have suffered trauma

during the conflict, and protection against violence based on gender, ethnicity, religion or age.

Building human capital requires a people-centred and inclusive approach that recognizes and embraces diversity and the unique contributions, capacities and potentials everyone brings to the successful development of the family, community and country. Reforms to relevant legislation, policies and mechanisms that ensure inclusive governance can be achieved through enhanced partnerships between the State and civil society, an enabling environment for civil society and volunteer groups to contribute to social cohesion, an improved adherence to international obligations, such as CEDAW and those related to Children in Armed Conflict, as well as other frameworks to which Iraq is signatory, and responsive national budgeting that supports programmes targeting those who were left behind.

5.2 The economy

Overreliance on oil sector revenue makes Iraq highly vulnerable to shocks. Diversification of national economy and encouraging private sector investment, will make Iraq more resilient and boost employment in productive sectors.

Significant infrastructure damage impacting economic production and livelihood opportunities must be addressed. This will take significant investment through the national budget and external contributions, and will also require a restructuring the economy along the lines of diversification of revenue streams. Partnering with the private sector, particularly in reconstruction activities and employment creation, will be necessary. This needs to be complemented by a reform of the public sector, which garners a significant portion of the national budget.

More investment and support should be channelled to growing non-oil sectors that promote regional and international partnerships, such as agriculture, tourism and export/import trades.

Application of information and communications technology, entrepreneurship and investment promotion will also produce opportunities for job creation and economic and industrial diversity. Diversification of industries needs time and needs more inclusive and sustainable industrial and economic development framework.

At the same time, considering the significant unemployment rates that could create flashpoints for discontent and unrest, particularly in underserved areas of the country, more concerted efforts are crucial to link education to employment and link investments to the opportunities and constraints felt by increasingly scarce natural resources. This can be at the level of formal education, with curricula that reflect the technical needs of the non-oil economy, as well as technical and vocational training that provides new skills and opportunities for out-of-school youth, women, and new-opportunity seekers. Promoting and supporting entrepreneurship is key to an accelerated recovery process in many parts of the country.

5.3 Governance

Poor governance has undermined trust, quality of service delivery, and marginalised the recipients of the services. The Government needs to implement transparent, responsive, and inclusive structural reforms of state and civil institutions.

Poor governance has undermined trust and the quality of service delivery. Most importantly, it increasingly disenfranchised the recipients of the services – the citizens. The linkages between State and people, weakened by conflict and weak governance structures, should be reinforced. The Government needs to

implement transparent, responsive and inclusive structural reforms of state and civil institutions.

Perhaps the most compelling evidence of this challenge is the state of basic service delivery nationwide. Impacted by conflicts over the years, compounded by underinvestment in development and by legislation that is no longer relevant or supportive in the current environment, it is from improved service delivery that the State must rebuild its relationship with the people.

A starting point should be essential services – ensuring that all people in the country receive continued access to quality services, regardless of their background or socioeconomic status. Improving essential services will require developing new, and enhanced, mechanisms that benefit the end-user and prevent corruption. Additionally, the Government needs to resolve civil documentation challenges that many Iraqis, particularly those impacted by the conflict, face daily.

Similarly, focusing on existing State obligations, such as international conventions and national strategies, will show political commitment to the welfare of the people, especially if the new Government can work with the civil society to deliver on those obligations. This can be done by creating platforms for dialogue with volunteer groups and civil society organizations to build trust, engagement and ownership of governance mechanisms.

Finally, any trust-building process must emphasize the rule of law, address corruption and recognize the positive aspects of cultural diversity as part of promoting national heritage and identity for peaceful societies. Creating a rights-based and gender equality culture, with respect for its different components as equal contributors to the success of all, will be essential to the sustained success of these processes.

5.4 The environment

Iraq is very vulnerable to climate change and needs to address several issues regarding climate resilience, the management of natural resources and environmental protection, including risk and disaster management.

Iraq is both rich in natural resources, particularly oil, and vulnerable to environmental hazards, such as pollution, flooding, drought and conflict-related contamination. The impact of climate change is already widely felt in Iraq, with higher temperatures leading to increasing levels of evaporation and loss of water use by farmers and general consumers. While some hazards require preparedness and mitigation measures, others require management, political intervention and proactive planning. Issues such as pollution, for example, impact health, economic production and the ability to live in safety. Air and water pollution can result from industry, conflict, as well as poor infrastructure, leading to improper waste and water management.

Natural resource-related conflict must also be mitigated. Clearance of unexploded ordinance and other conflict-related contamination can revive productive land for agriculture and allow for safe returns to liberated areas. Similarly, transboundary cooperation with neighbouring countries regarding shared resources, such as water, will be essential for the long-term welfare of Iraq. Engagement of the private sector to promote greener technologies can also play a significant role.

Addressing the management and protection of natural resources, biodiversity and productive lands not only ensures sustainable use of those resources, but also contributes to enhancing preparedness response and management of disaster risks. Planning for risk-resistant human settlement expansion, while also sustainably managing the environment, is essential for the future of Iraq. Environmental degradation created by unplanned settlements can be the catalyst for floods, deforestation, soil salinity and other negative effects on the environment. Community education and raising awareness, combined with legislative and policy

frameworks, can provide a sustainable approach that meets the needs of the population without unduly damaging the environment and natural resources necessary for the quality of life.

5.5 Durable solutions

The Government must take a leading role in resolving the problem of internal displacement in the country, while leveraging the technical and financial resources of international partners. At the same time, rights of other forcibly displaced population groups should be guaranteed, including their right to sustainable livelihood opportunities. It should also be understood that while fiscal constraints might limit the Government's ability to include refugees in national social protection schemes, their inclusion will, in the long run, be conducive to the country's overall prosperity.

As of June 2020, 1.4 million people remain displaced in Iraq due to the conflict with ISIL. The majority of the remaining IDPs are in out-of-camp situations. While most IDPs are in relatively stable living situations, either staying with host families or being able to afford accommodation rent, around 8 per cent of them remain in precarious living conditions, generally referred to as "critical shelters", such as informal settlements and unfinished or abandoned buildings.

Remaining IDPs, both in and out of camp, face a series of challenges that prevent them from returning home, integrating locally or settling in new locations. These challenges are complex, overlapping, and often interrelated. They are also often gendered, and accordingly, the rights of women and girls must be at the forefront of durable solutions.

Obstacles to IDP return can be conceived of in three broad categories: (1) service or material challenges, such as housing damage, lack of livelihood opportunities, lack of basic services and other issues; (2) issues around social cohesion, ethno-religious tension

and needs for reconciliation; and (3) issues related to security and political challenges preventing return. Frameworks in line with human rights and protection standards are needed to resolve these issues, and the Durable Solutions Working Group, established by the United Nations in Iraq, can help in establishing such frameworks.