

FOR IRAQ

The United Nations in Iraq



2022: Challenges and Opportunities



UNAMI Public Information Office

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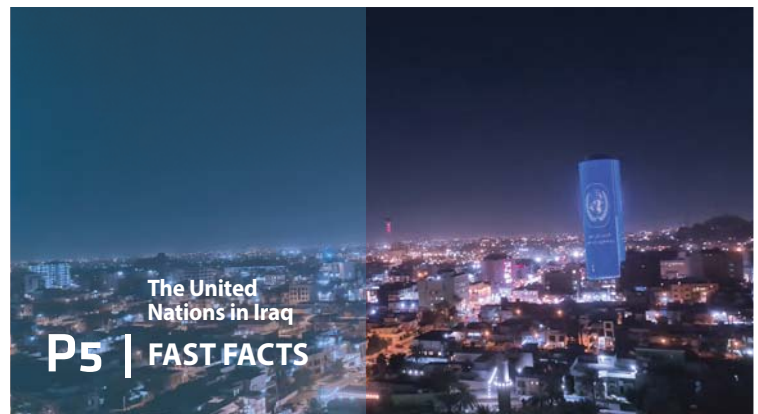
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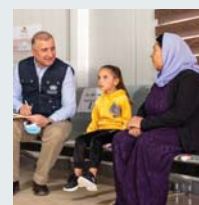
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Buoyed by political stability and steady revenues, and if opportunities are indeed seized, Iraq stands a good chance of progress in 2023



Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of UNAMI

MS. JEANINE HENNIS-PLASSCHAERT

FOREWORD

The year 2022 was a tumultuous year for Iraq. Political disputes over the election results in late 2021 carried over, paralysing the State and heavily affecting the delivery of already inadequate public services. Eventually the political crisis boiled over into the streets, with protests, sit-ins and violence resulting in the loss of life. International tensions and violations of Iraqi sovereignty by neighbouring countries caused further instability. The United Nations in Iraq was not immune to these developments: at times, our work also was affected.

But Iraq eventually succeeded in overcoming a year-long political impasse. A new president was elected and a new government was formed, launching a campaign to combat corruption and improve services, and seeking to address the people's immediate needs. Soon after the government formation in late 2022, we mobilized to assist, providing techni-

cal support and advice as required, and working closely with the authorities on a wide range of issues.

There were bright spots to be noted in 2022. Iraq continued to win praise as an arena for regional dialogue. And for Iraq to flourish, we called on all to help foster an enabling environment, reiterating that established diplomatic instruments are at everybody's disposal, also in times of heightened tensions or when faced with security concerns. Continued support for Iraq's regional outreach and extended hand will remain vital.

Putting its house further in order will be a priority for Iraq in 2023. Provincial elections are scheduled for later in the year, as well as the delayed Kurdistan Regional elections. Meanwhile, a structured, institutionalized dialogue between the federal Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government will be essential to resolve all outstanding matters. And

stable security structures and a unified administration remain the obvious prerequisites for Sinjar's rehabilitation and the return of displaced Sinjaris.

Many other areas require the attention of Iraq's government too: addressing Iraq's significant environmental challenges; facilitating the continued returns of Iraqi nationals from north-east Syria, including Al Hol camp; finalising the Kirkuk Dialogue; and upholding international human rights norms and standards – to name but a few. And while the United Nations in Iraq is moving from humanitarian assistance towards durable solutions, we expect the government to step up its funding and contributions.

Buoyed by political stability and steady revenues, and if opportunities are indeed seized, Iraq stands a good chance of progress in 2023. As always, the United Nations stands ready to assist and contribute.

The United Nations in Iraq

Fast Facts



Which UN organizations operate in Iraq?

The United Nations in Iraq comprises two field missions (UNAMI and UNITAD), UN Agencies, Funds and Programmes, working at the community, governorate and national levels across the Republic of Iraq.

UNAMI

The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) is a special political mission established in 2003 by UN Security Council Resolution 1500, at the request of the Government of Iraq. Its role was greatly expanded in 2007 with the adoption of Resolution 1770.

UNAMI is headed by the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, who is supported by two deputies. One Deputy SRSG oversees Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance, while a second Deputy SRSG oversees UN humanitarian and development efforts and also performs the

functions of Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Iraq.

Through its resolution 2631 (2022), adopted on 26 May 2022, the Security Council extended the mandate of UNAMI until 31 May 2023.

UNAMI has an authorized strength of 687 personnel (294 international, 391 national and 2 UNV).

The Mission's budget for 2022: USD 98.1 million.

The Mission is administered by the United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and supported by the Department of Peace Operations as well as the Department of Operational Support.

UNAMI's mandate

Resolution 2631 (2022)

Adopted by the Security Council at its 9043rd meeting, on 26 May 2022

The Security Council,

Recalling all its previous relevant resolutions on Iraq, in particular 1500 (2003), 1546 (2004), 1557 (2004), 1619 (2005), 1700 (2006), 1770 (2007), 1830 (2008), 1883 (2009), 1936 (2010), 2001 (2011), 2061 (2012), 2110 (2013), 2169 (2014), 2233 (2015), 2299 (2016), 2379 (2017), 2421 (2018), 2522 (2020), 2576 (2021) and *reiterating* resolutions 2107 (2013) and 2621 (2022) on the situation between Iraq and Kuwait, and the values set forth in 2367 (2017),

Reaffirming the independence, sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity of Iraq, and emphasizing the importance of the stability, prosperity, and security of Iraq for the people of Iraq, the region, and the international community, particularly in light of Iraq's territorial victory over the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL, also known as Da'esh), and *encouraging* the international community to increase its support to Iraq in this regard,

Supporting Iraq in addressing the challenges it faces as it continues its stabilization efforts, including the ongoing fight against terrorism and ISIL, Al-Qaida and their affiliates, and continues the task of recovery, reconstruction, stabilization and reconciliation, including the requirement to meet the needs of all Iraqis, including women, youth, children, displaced persons, and persons belonging to ethnic and religious minorities, *recognizing* the threat of explosive ordnance and its impact on civilians, including children, and *welcoming* efforts to clear areas of such devices,

Condemning in the strongest terms the 7 November 2021 assassination attempt against Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al Kadhimi,

Recalling the fundamental principle of the inviolability of diplomatic and consular premises, and the obligations on host Governments, including under the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations and the 1963 Vienna Convention on Consular Relations, to take all appropriate steps to protect diplomatic and consular premises against any intrusion or damage, and to prevent any disturbance of the peace of these missions or impairment of their dignity,

UN Iraq

The United Nations in Iraq | FAST FACTS

Commending the Government of Iraq's and the Independent High Electoral Commission's execution of a technically well-managed and generally peaceful election on 10 October 2021,

Calling for the swift and peaceful formation of a new government, to deliver on national priorities for the Iraqi people, including through economic reform, regional cooperation, stabilization, development and the promotion and protection of human rights,

Noting the importance of the Government of Iraq urgently delivering meaningful reforms aimed at meeting the Iraqi people's legitimate demands to address corruption, deliver essential and basic services, diversify its economy, create jobs, improve governance, and strengthen viable and responsive state institutions, recognizing the Government of Iraq's efforts to that effect, and *calling* for State institutions to redouble efforts to pursue accountability for those responsible for crimes involving the killing, serious injury, abduction or disappearance of demonstrators and journalists, and to safeguard and respect the right of freedom of expression,

Noting the Government of Iraq's desire to see internally displaced persons and displaced Iraqis in Syria return to their areas of origin or resettle elsewhere in Iraq, *stressing* the importance of achieving dignified, safe and durable solutions undertaken on a voluntary and informed basis,

Recognizing the importance of the effective and timely implementation of the Yazidi Female Survivors Law and the need to hold perpetrators of conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence accountable, to provide mental health and psychosocial support to victims, and to provide reparations and redress measures for all survivors identified in the law, and *calling upon* the Government of Iraq to extend its provisions to all victims,

Recognizing that the adverse effects of climate change, ecological changes, and natural disasters, among other factors, can contribute to desertification and drought, adversely impact the humanitarian situation, and aggravate any existing instability, *emphasizing* the need for comprehensive risk assessments by the Government of Iraq with the support of the United Nations, upon the request of the Government of Iraq, to take meaningful

actions to adapt to or mitigate challenges posed by climate change and ecological change, and acknowledging the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement,

Expressing concern at the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in Iraq, *recalling* resolution 2565 (2021) and *stressing* once again that equitable access to safe, efficacious and affordable tests, treatments and COVID-19 vaccines is essential to end the pandemic,

Calling on the international community to remain strongly committed to providing support to Iraq for its humanitarian, stabilization, reconstruction, and development efforts and looking to the Government of Iraq as it assumes increased responsibility for the provision of humanitarian services,

1. *Decides* to extend the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) until 31 May 2023;

2. *Requests* that the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and UNAMI, at the request of the Government of Iraq, shall:

(a) prioritize the provision of advice, support, and assistance to the Government and people of Iraq on advancing inclusive, political dialogue and national and community-level reconciliation, taking into account civil society input, with the full, equal, and meaningful participation of women;

(b) further advise, support, and assist:

(i) the Government of Iraq, the Independent High Electoral Commission and other Iraqi institutions with efforts to strengthen electoral preparation and processes, including through regular technical reviews and detailed reporting on electoral preparations and processes, as part of the Secretary-General's regular reporting cycle;

(ii) the Government of Iraq and the Council of Representatives on constitutional review, the implementation of constitutional provisions, as well as on the development of processes acceptable to the Government of Iraq to resolve disputed internal boundaries;

(iii) the Government of Iraq with progress on security sector reform, including by prioritizing the planning, funding, and implementation of efforts to strengthen state control and reintegration pro-

grammes for former members of armed groups, where and as appropriate, in coordination with other multinational entities;

(iv) the Government of Iraq on facilitating regional dialogue and cooperation, including on issues of border security, energy, trade, environment, water, adverse impacts of climate change in particular those contributing to desertification and drought, resilience building, infrastructure, public health, and refugees;

(c) promote, support, and facilitate, in coordination with the Government of Iraq:

(i) the coordination and delivery of humanitarian and medical assistance, notably to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the transition of humanitarian services to government systems;

(ii) the safe, timely, orderly, voluntary and dignified return or local integration, as appropriate, of refugees and displaced persons, including through the efforts of the UN Country Team, and timely access to legal assistance and civil documentation for internally displaced persons and displaced Iraqis in Syria, including persons at risk of statelessness, particularly children without birth registration or other documentation of legal identity;

(iii) the coordination and implementation of programmes to improve Iraq's capacity to provide effective essential civil and social services, including health care and education, for its people and continue to support Iraq's active regional and international donor coordination of critical reconstruction and assistance programmes, including through effective follow-up of international pledges;

(iv) Iraqi, World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and other efforts on economic reform, capacity-building and setting conditions for sustainable development and recovery and reconstruction including in areas affected by terrorism, including through coordination with national and regional organizations and, as appropriate, civil society, donors, and other international institutions;

(v) the contributions of UN agencies, funds, and programmes to the objectives outlined in this resolution under the unified leadership of the Secretary-General through the Special Representative for Iraq, supported by their designated Deputy;

(d) promote accountability and the protection of human rights, and judicial and legal reform, with full respect for the sovereignty of Iraq, in order to strengthen the rule of law and improve governance in Iraq, in addition to supporting the work of the UN Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ISIL (UNITAD) established in resolution 2379 (2017);

(e) approach gender mainstreaming as a crosscutting issue throughout its mandate and to advise and assist the Government of Iraq in ensuring the full, equal and meaningful participation, involvement and representation of women at all levels of decision making, including in the context of elections and government formation, and the promotion of women's economic empowerment, by supporting the implementation of the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security consistent with resolution 1325 (2000) and related resolutions, and the Joint Communiqué on Prevention and Response to Conflict Related Sexual Violence;

(f) Note the importance of treating children affected by armed conflict primarily as victims, and urge the Government of Iraq and UN Country Team to strengthen child protection, including the reintegration of children in accordance with Iraq's national laws and Iraq's obligations under international law, and to support the implementation of the conclusions of the Security Council's Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict;

(g) and actively support the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government to work together and engage in regular and structured dialogue in order to resolve outstanding issues, in a manner consistent with the unity of Iraq and its constitution, including security provisions, budgetary arrangements and the management of Iraq's oil and gas resources, and to implement existing agreements, including the 2020 Sinjar Agreement;

3. *Recognizes* that the security of UN personnel is essential for UNAMI to carry out its work for the benefit of the people of Iraq and calls upon the Government of Iraq to continue to provide security and logistical support to the UN presence in Iraq;

4. *Expresses* its intention to review the

mandate and reporting cycle of UNAMI by 31 May 2023, or sooner, if requested by the Government of Iraq;

5. *Requests* the Secretary-General to report to the Council every four months on the progress made towards the fulfilment of all UNAMI's responsibilities;

6. *Decides* to remain seized of the matter.

UNITAD

United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by Da'esh/ISIL (UNITAD) is an independent and impartial accountability mechanism mandated by the United Nations Security Council to support domestic efforts to hold ISIL accountable by collecting, preserving and storing evidence in Iraq of acts that might amount to war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide committed in Iraq. UNITAD was established as a unanimous response from the international community to a request for assistance from the Government of Iraq. Effective cooperation with the Government of Iraq is central to the mandate and activities of UNITAD. Led by a Special Adviser, UNITAD works closely with domestic counterparts to conduct its work in a manner complementing investigations carried out by the national authorities, and in full respect for national sovereignty.

THE UN COUNTRY TEAM

The United Nations Country Team (UNCT) in Iraq comprises 25 members, including 15 resident and 3 non-resident agencies: FAO, ILO, OCHA, OHCHR, UNICEF, UNCTAD, UN WOMEN, UNDP, ESCWA, UNESCO, UNEP, UNHCR, UN-HABITAT, UNIDO, UNFPA, UNODC, UNOPS, WFP, WHO, UNMAS, ITC, IFC, IMF and IOM. (UN-ESCWA, UNEP and UNCTAD are the non-resident agencies.) In addition, the UNCT includes the World Bank Group.

Led by the Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Iraq/ Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, the UNCT works to improve the lives and livelihoods of all Iraqis by supporting the country in achieving the Sustainable Development Agenda and its related Sustainable Development Goals with the

latest specialized expertise and evidence-based actions. The spirit of the Sustainable Development Goals is captured in a single phrase: 'to leave no one behind'. This is the principle that guides everything the United Nations does in Iraq. The overall framework under which the United Nations Country Team delivers is the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2020-2024 (formerly UNDAF), which presents the key shared development objectives of the United Nations in the country. The United Nations in Iraq has been working together in a new, coherent way to support the government to achieve its national development priorities and international development commitments, including the Sustainable Development Goals.

Where does the UN operate in Iraq?

The United Nations family operates in all the 18 governorates of Iraq and operate at the community, governorate, regional and national levels. National and international staff are deployed throughout the country and work in partnership with their local, provincial, regional and national counterparts.

What is the difference between UNAMI and the other UN entities operating in Iraq?

The presence of the UN agencies, funds and programs in Iraq is established on the basis of bilateral agreements with the Government of Iraq.

UNAMI is a political mission established in 2003 at the request of the Government of Iraq.

UNITAD was established in 2018 as a unanimous response from the international community to a request for assistance from the Government of Iraq.

How long has the UN been present in Iraq and why?

Iraq is a founding member of the United Nations. A number of UN organizations have been operating in Iraq since 1955. Others established their offices in the early 1990s and again after 2003. The UN continues to be present in Iraq to respond to the needs of the Iraqi people and support their efforts to achieve a peaceful and prosperous future.



Interview with

Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance

MR. CLAUDIO CORDONE

“

I am keen to contribute to UNAMI's efforts in making progress in all areas of our mandate, working closely with the Iraqi government, political actors as well as civil society

”

You took on your duties in Iraq last August. What are your initial impressions?

As I expected, Iraq is a rich and complex country and with significant regional weight. I have not lived in Iraq before but I grew up in the Middle East and was always keen to learn the history of the countries in the region and visit them. I served the United Nations in Libya and Tunisia for four years with the United Nations Support Mission for Libya and in the last five years I headed the Lebanon Field Office of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. There are similarities between Lebanon and Iraq, specifically the social diversity and political complexity with many of the same advantages and

challenges. I left Lebanon without a government and found an Iraq also struggling to form one – fortunately this issue has been resolved now although continuous efforts are required by everyone not to lose sight of the broader interests of the Iraqi people while pursuing different and legitimate political goals.

How do you see your role as the DSRSG for political affairs and electoral assistance?

My main role is to support the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General in the implementation of her political and mediation mandate as defined by the United Nations Security Council. As a mission we have been very active in trying to facilitate



the process of government formation and in general in supporting the proper functioning of the state institutions and respect for constitutional deadlines and other requirements. In the end of course we can advise, facilitate dialogue, make suggestions, but decisions remain entirely in Iraqi hands.

As provincial and parliamentary elections are in this government's programme, I expect that I will be dedicating increasing attention to UNAMI's role in supporting the Iraqi authorities in the preparation and conduct of fair, well-managed elections, building on the achievements of the October 2021 elections. The Kurdish Region of Iraq is also due to hold elections as the Kurdish Parliament term expired recently.

Finally, my role is also to work closely with the other UNAMI Deputy Special Representative, Mr. Ghulam Isaczai, to ensure that UNAMI's activities and that of UN Agencies, Funds and Programmes are well integrated and that the UN in Iraq truly operates as one.

Engagement on the Missing Kuwaiti Persons and Property file is one of your key responsibilities. What has been achieved and what progress can be expected?

In 2022 there was more progress in the identification and return to their families of the remains of Kuwaitis and other missing persons, reducing the number of those still unaccounted for to 309 by the end of 2022. The use of satellite imagery and witnesses coming forward are contributing to further exploration of possible burial sites. Last November UNAMI

provided training to Iraqi officials in the use of ground-penetrating radar, which again should assist in the search for burial sites. In addition, further Kuwaiti property including books and other material was found by the Iraqi authorities and returned to Kuwait in 2022. I discussed these and other issues in both Kuwait and Baghdad in order to speed up the implementation of this specific Security Council mandate given to UNAMI.

UNAMI's mandate is wide and enjoys strong support by the Security Council. What would you identify as the main priorities for UNAMI in 2023?

In 2022 Iraq has gone through a serious political crisis which at one point degenerated in violence and could have had disastrous consequences for the country and for all Iraqis. Wisdom prevailed in the end, the violence stopped, the Council of Representatives elected a President and voted in a new government, which has started to actively address the challenges facing Iraq, such as widespread corruption. However, one must not be complacent, and the need to encourage continuing dialogue and willingness to compromise will have to remain high on UNAMI's agenda.

Another important priority is to make progress in resolving the pending disputes between the Kurdish Regional Government and Iraq's federal government. I have followed the most recent negotiations facilitated by UNAMI over the governance of Kirkuk and I hope that a final agreement can be reached and implemented in the coming few months. The Sinjar agreement needs to be implemented, and the issue of the disputed

territories and oil revenues still awaits an agreement between Baghdad and Erbil. UNAMI's is ready to facilitate a regular and structured dialogue to resolve these outstanding issues, in line with Iraq's unity and constitution.

At the heart of UNAMI's mandate, as everywhere else in the world, is the promotion of human rights. This is not only about assisting Iraq in ensuring freedoms, protecting people against torture and other abuses and promoting the rule of law. This is also about assisting Iraq in ensuring women's full participation in the political and social arenas, and also giving a voice to the youth of the country. I have already actively engaged with the women organizations in the country and have been keen in seeking the views of Iraqi youth — I recall a lively discussion in Mosul last October with young men and women, many of whom were involved in rebuilding the city's physical and social infrastructure after the ravages of Da'esh. And given Iraq's plurality of communities and religious beliefs, I see the promotion of human rights as encompassing also the respect for diversity and for the rights of all minorities.

Finally, in terms of priorities, the United Nations is keen to promote good relations between Iraq and its neighbours, respecting legitimate security concerns and Iraq's sovereignty. Last October and November I visited both Kuwait and Iran to discuss issues relevant to UNAMI's mandate — UNAMI maintains an office in each of the two countries. The Baghdad II conference which was held in Amman last December with the participation of Special Representative Ms. Hennis-Plasschaert was an important recognition of Iraq's regional importance.

What do you wish for in 2023?

Whether it is the issue of the disputed territories between the Kurdish Region and the rest of Iraq or the issue of the timing and conduct of elections, progress if not resolution of these issues are within reach in 2023 if there is sufficient political good will. In the end what needs to be borne in mind by everyone is the best interests of all Iraqis in all their diversity. I am keen to contribute to UNAMI's efforts in making progress in all areas of our mandate, working closely with the Iraqi government, political actors as well as civil society.



Interview with

Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General, Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq (DSRSG/RC/HC)

MR. GHULAM M. ISACZAI

He shares information about his role as DSRSG/RC/HC, his view on the support the UN system is providing to the country towards meeting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). He also shares insights on the current humanitarian transition, the importance of SDGs and the crucial role of the UN's support to the humanitarian and development efforts in the country.

Recently you joined the UN family in Iraq. How do you see your role as the DSRSG/RC/HC overseeing the UN's humanitarian and development efforts in this country? How does it compare with your previous posts?

I look forward to supporting Iraq's efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development, including to build back better in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. As we have seen from recent political unrest, coupled with visible effects of

climate change, Iraq is at a crossroads, and this is a pivotal time for the country to focus on sustainable development.

My role as DSRSG/RC/HC is to support and facilitate bringing together the various parts of our system, to strengthen the complementary and coherence of our support and actions, thereby amplifying the impact of our contribution to respond to the humanitarian and development needs and to the progress of Iraq.

I hope that through bringing our pro-

grammatic work together, we can also help communities and citizens across all Iraq recognize that they all have the same aspirations, needs and goals no matter what their background. They can play a more active role in determining what kind of society and what kind of future they want for their communities and their country. This is where I see the driving force of my position and my office.

How do you see the relationship of the "triple nexus" around humanitarian, development, and peace actors?



The overall humanitarian situation in Iraq has improved considerably, with nearly five million people returned home over the last five years with the support of the government, humanitarian partners and the international community



With the triple nexus, we are emphasizing coordination and working smarter, cohesively and collectively. By bringing together sustainable development, peacebuilding/mediation, and humanitarian aid, we are coordinating how the world responds to crises, moving toward sustainable peace. In a post-conflict setting such as Iraq, violent extremism, poverty, and environmental degradation are increasingly concentrated and affect the most vulnerable disproportionately.

Ensuring this nexus operates smoothly requires constant coordination, alignment of planning and strategy, securing the necessary funding for collective outcomes, and ensuring approaches are focused on those they are intended to help, including engagement with civil society as key stakeholders.

Having the unique 'triple hatted' position of DSRSG/RC/HC gives the UN the ability to pull together so many diverse actors into one coherent way forward and help build a truly holistic one UN approach. As you know peace, development, and humanitarian actions are interlinked and always reinforce each other and is crucial in achieving sustainable progress. There is also a recognition that the root causes of many of the most urgent

humanitarian situations are either of development or political nature, thus we cannot speak of humanitarian solutions without taking into consideration the other two pillars of our work. For instance, humanitarian access in some cases needs to be negotiated with political actors and solution to protracted displacement needs to be found in development. This is not to take away from the importance of safeguarding humanitarian principles, but to recognize the need for coherence with the work of the peacebuilding and political communities.

What are the challenges of reconciling these three roles?

I believe it is an opportunity, rather than a challenge, to coordinate activities throughout the whole UN system in Iraq, the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT), United Nations Country Team (UNCT), and the mission, under these three fields of our work. It is important to recognize the synergies and overlaps among the three and how to connect them in operational context is what makes this nexus effective.

Could you briefly explain the transition from humanitarian to development response in Iraq and what are the main structures put in place to help facilitate this transition?

The overall humanitarian situation in Iraq has improved considerably, with nearly five million people returned home over the last five years with the support of the government, humanitarian partners and the international community.

By end of 2021, the UNCT developed a UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) and its Durable Solutions pillar. This resulted in developing a mechanism focusing on the nexus between the UN's humanitarian and development efforts. Eight Area Based Coordination (ABC) mechanisms have been put in place in complex areas of return. The ABCs ensure that humanitarian and development actors coordinate and plan together with local government structures to facilitate the implementation of durable solutions for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and

returnees.

In recognition of the burgeoning durable solutions architecture in Iraq and recovered national capacities, the humanitarian community in Iraq has begun, in late 2022, a gradual transition from humanitarian response towards development approach, including stabilization and economic recovery with a strong focus on durable solutions and supporting returnee families to reintegrate into their area of origin, encouraging an increasing role of the Government as a primary duty bearer.

The UN and its partners are working with the Government of Iraq (GoI), including the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), to hand over humanitarian operations and to support the Government in assuming their responsibility of responding to the residual humanitarian needs and the provision of lifesaving and life-sustaining services to conflict-affected populations in Iraq.

In support of the GoI and the KRG efforts to respond to the remaining humanitarian needs during 2023, the Iraq HCT has launched the Humanitarian Transition Strategy for Iraq (HTS) to set out the critical needs remaining in 2023 and define the HCT's recommended priorities for humanitarian actors and donors. This is being complemented by the development of the durable solution strategy connecting the UNSDCF and the government plan to end displacement.

That being said, we will continue to request the international community's support. Where required, the UN and humanitarian partners will continue to provide lifesaving assistance to vulnerable individuals and communities as long as humanitarian needs persist. Our partnership with the humanitarian donors and partners continues to be strong as we remain engaged in supporting the reintegration of IDPs and returnees and identify durable and dignified solutions for IDPs and returnees.

Such challenges are often linked to high levels of conflict-related damage to housing and infrastructure, lack of access to jobs and income-generating activities, and impediments to

legal frameworks that require structural and institutional interventions. Households also face a lack of access to basic services, including health, psychosocial and protection services; social cohesion issues; and access to education and security vacuums in areas of origin, undermining the revival of effective rule of law and stability. These lingering challenges undermine efforts to reintegrate into society and result in secondary displacement, or an increased likelihood of circular migration.

Some humanitarian needs persist, and the UN provided humanitarian support in camps and informal sites throughout 2022 and will continue to do so into 2023. However, operations must focus more closely on development-oriented programming that can better respond to structural and institutional gaps and create conducive environments for durable solutions, while resolving root causes of vulnerability and displacement.

Such an approach promotes multi-year and whole-of-organization programming towards collective outcomes – often articulated as milestones towards national SDG targets – and enhancement of local capacities for resilience. This longer-term vision requires all humanitarian, development, stabilization, and peace-building actors to promote, support and facilitate national and local authority ownership by mainstreaming processes that encourage joint efforts with Government counterparts.

What were the UNCT achievements in 2022?

As of June 2022, of all five million people displaced during the Daesh crisis, over 81 percent have returned, while 1.16 million Iraqis internally displaced since 2014 are still displaced in formal and informal sites, including 180,000 persons hosted in 26 camps (25 in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and one in Ninewa Governorate). About 2.5 million people in 2022 needed assistance compared to 11 million in 2017. This has been possible due to the support of humanitarian and development partners.

During 2022, over a million acutely vulnerable people were targeted by

the Iraq Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP), those are in-camp IDPs, out-of-camp IDPs, host communities and returnees. As of 1 November 2022, the humanitarian assistance planned in the HRP has reached 180,000 in-camp IDPs, 533,000 out-of-camp IDPs and 568,000 returnees.

The UN team in Iraq is working, alongside the Government in supporting returnees through the provision of assistance and addressing protection needs, as well as supporting the preparedness and resiliency of those communities of origin into which returnees will reintegrate.

The UN's Funding Facility for Stabilization has remained a steadfast partner of the Government of Iraq. To date, we have rebuilt more than 35,200 houses since liberation from Daesh in 2017.

The UN's efforts to address violent extremism include empowering a cross-section of society, including youth, women, religious leaders, government actors, and non-governmental organizations. Support to community reintegration and social cohesion saw thousands of families receive support through a comprehensive package of housing rehabilitation, livelihoods support, mental health and psychosocial support, and community capacity building on mediation and conflict management.

The Iraqi government has a clear vision to adapt to the effects of climate change through the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) which serve as the country's guiding policy framework, developed with support from UNDP after Iraq joined the Paris Climate Accord in 2021.

More information and details of UNCT achievements in 2022 will be included in the Annual Progress Report and Annual Review, which will be published on the UN Iraq website by end of March.

What factors hinder the implementation of the SDGs?

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, political unrest, and environmental challenges negatively affect most development indicators across the 17 SDG goals, from Iraq's agricultural sector to human health and community

dynamics. If not addressed promptly and effectively, they could increase fragility and threaten the stability of Iraq.

Another barrier that affects the implementation of SDGs is the availability and reliability of data and financial and technology-related factors.

What roles can the UN Resident Coordinator / Humanitarian Coordinator (RC/HC) play in SDGs achievement?

As Resident Coordinator, I lead the work of the UNCT in support of the GoI to increase their resilience to climate change, recover from external shocks, mobilize financing for development and foster integrated policy support for the advancement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

I believe pulling together all the agencies, funds and programmes of the UNCT is critical to provide support and solutions to the needs of the Government and its people, ranging from social services to climate action and accelerating the country team's progress to provide joint and comprehensive support to the Government's socio-economic policies and efforts to achieve the SDGs. By ensuring clear communication and setting collective objectives, we all row in the same boat so to speak, and in unison, while capitalizing on our unique mandates.

The 2030 agenda for sustainable development is at the core of our work and we remain committed to supporting GoI and the people of Iraq to achieve the 2030 Agenda and to accelerate the implementation of the SDGs. At the UN, this requires that we work even more closely together across all the agencies, funds and programmes – leveraging partnerships and financing with governments, civil society and the private sector. We have a really strong UNCT in Iraq which I'm proud to lead. We will continue to demonstrate that working together leads to better and more sustainable results, boosts efficiencies and eliminates overlaps.

Under the umbrella of the United Nations Sustainable Cooperation Framework (UNSCF) which outlines a clear

set of priorities and commitments for sustainable development in the country and provides an inclusive and forward-looking roadmap in line with Iraq's Vision 2030, the country's national development plan, the National Plan on Displacement in Iraq and the White Paper for Economic Reform, the Resident Coordinator leveraged integrated policy support from the UN entities working in Iraq to enhance resilience and protect the most vulnerable through more integrated programming, and deliver together towards Iraq's National Sustainable Development Goals.

The spirit of the Sustainable Development Goals is captured in a single phrase: 'to leave no one behind.' This is the principle that guides everything that we in the UN family do in Iraq and will be as important as ever for our joint work and programmes.

The whole UNCT in Iraq has been working together in a new coherent way to support the GOI to achieve its SDGs, in line with Iraq's vision for 2030 and provide tailor-made support for addressing the needs of the most vulnerable and those who are at risk of social exclusion in the country.

I look forward to supporting Iraq's efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development, including building back better in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. As we have seen from recent political unrest, coupled with the visible effects of climate change, Iraq is at a crossroads, and this is a pivotal time for the country to focus on sustainable development.

How do you see the role of youth in SDGs? What's your vision for the UN on the ground to involve youth for a better Iraq for all?

Currently more than 60 percent of Iraq's population is under the age of 25. Young people are one of the most valuable resources for building a prosperous and inclusive Iraq, a country at a pivotal stage of development, following decades of conflict, economic crises and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Empowering youth is a key tenant of development, as youth are the future. We work to engage and inspire



youth through establishing networks of youth in various governorates and supporting community peace initiatives, capacity development on various in-demand skills, and job-matching to reduce unemployment.

The UN supports young people to participate and take a more active role in society and advance their engagement to take the SDGs forward. Harnessing the potential of this demographic and ensuring their voices are integrated into decision-making, advocacy and development policy is one of my main priorities for next year. The UNCT is working to develop a UN Youth Strategy to engage, support, and empower young people to help deliver the SDGs by 2030.

As part of the UN's commitment to ensure that young people in Iraq participate in our work, we are also working to establish a Youth Advisory Council (UNYAC), to engage young people in raising awareness on gender, peace, and human rights and benefit from their views, insights and ideas.

The need for the UNCT to scale up and strengthen its support to youth and make them agents of change and key players towards Iraq's achievement of the 2030 Agenda is my top priority.

What will be the UNCT Iraq priorities in 2023?

Corruption issues have received a new impetus and urgency under the new administration with the PM making it clear that fighting corruption at

all levels is a priority. The UNCT will harness this opportunity to support the government in strengthening its institutional capacity to prevent and combat corruption and increase transparency and accountability of the public sector through the integration of anti-corruption solutions and policy, and implementing joint programmes on anticorruption. The UN will also support efforts to ensure access to public services in rural areas, access to justice for vulnerable groups, and enhancement of capacity of constitutional bodies, human rights institutions, and law enforcement bodies to implement international obligations.

The UN system will continue accelerating policy and institutional reforms aiming to ensure gender-responsive, age- and disability-sensitive planning and budgeting, and quality people-centred services. By promoting citizen participation and agency of young people, women and people left behind in decision making, the UN will contribute to enhanced democratic governance and a greater cohesion of the country's diverse society. A more responsive social protection system is a crucial component of meeting our collective commitments to the most vulnerable.

Our approach in 2023 is multi-faceted. The UN will support the Government and all stakeholders in designing and implementing innovative and sus-



tainable climate change adaptation and mitigation initiatives in agriculture, health, water, transport, energy production and housing infrastructure sectors with a focus on IDPs return areas.

The UN system will intensify efforts to support the country to address climate change with a focus on addressing water scarcity, strengthening joint climate programming and developing a comprehensive and coherent climate action advocacy and adaptation strategy and water strategy, management of natural resources, disaster risk reduction, pollution and waste management, expanding support towards adaptation and resilience strengthening, with a focus on improving and expanding social protection efforts.

The UNCT will also continue to support Iraq's ability to tap into the significant potential of the country's agriculture, livestock and fisheries sectors as key for economic development and to strengthen the systems that underpin resilience against humanitarian shocks.

The UNCT is focusing on the need to mainstream climate change adaptation and climate security approaches throughout its programme portfolio in Iraq as an approach to build resilience of communities and institutions. Some key foreseen activities include enhancing the climate change adaptive capacity through implementation of practical adaptation measures in agriculture through improved irrigation infrastructure and efficient management of water resources, agricultural best practices, climate smart technologies, using renewable energy, and inclusive value chains. Equally, activities for inclusive and diversified economic growth, employment generation, in addition to community resilience will be also the focus of the UN in the next two years.

We will continue to provide lifesaving, humanitarian aid; reduce the impact of the political, social, security and economic destabilizing factors that could derail the transition, recovery, and reconciliation process; and contribute to a sustainable, stable and regulated environment on the path towards development. We will also continue to support the returns from North-East Syria, wider peace and security processes, as well as making inroads into climate migration, with a

special focus on the South.

The UNCT will continue to provide policy advice and support to government institutions to accelerate the 2030 Agenda implementation, as agreed in the 2023 Joint Workplan with the Government. The UN entities will continue to ensure their activities are aligned with the key national workstreams and strategic priorities, including the National Development Strategy, and the current Government programme.

The UN will continue to create and support jobs and resilient SMEs, fostering advanced technology and skills adjusted to future needs, promoting business opportunities and strengthening capacities for a sustainable and competitive rural economy.

The UNCT will also focus on strengthening capacities of national institutions and social partners to design and implement effective and innovative Active Labour Market Policies, decent work and skills development programmes for youth, women, and persons with disabilities and policies for inclusive and resilient economic growth and reduce inequalities. Regulations will be further aligned with ILO standards.

Another key focus of the UNCT for next year will be embracing data for development and digitalization in the public sector reforms which will assist the government to streamline business processes, through undertaking a comprehensive mapping and diagnostic analysis of ongoing and planned data systems and exploring the feasibility of establishing an online monitoring system for planning and monitoring the goals of the SDGs, Vision 2030 by building on the existing data systems in the line ministries.

A people centered recovery

and sustainable development in Iraq can only be achieved with strong partnerships and cooperation that invests available resources, knowledge and expertise to overcome the challenges facing Iraq in a holistic, comprehensive and integrated approach. In 2023, we will continue to work towards accelerating the engagement and collective action of government, civil society, international financing institutions and donor partners to drive transformational and systemic change toward sustainable development.

A comprehensive partnership strategy will be placed at the core of the UNCT's workplan and will allow for agencies to leverage existing collaborations while also developing new partnerships to benefit the UNCT.

Leveraging synergies between the UNCT, World Bank regional entities and development partners will be crucial. The UN will also work with partners from Government to civil society, academia and private sector, building alliances that can rise to the challenges ahead of us, including strengthening the prevention of violence against children and women, including improved access to essential services. The UN will also intensify efforts with Government agencies and CSOs as well as existing youth groups to explore more avenues to empower adolescents, especially girls, including the most vulnerable. Through our work, we will continue to support community reconciliation, and social protection.

We will also focus on joining efforts with media and partners to amplify important messages on climate, gender-based violence, ending inequality and accurate and fact-based reporting and combatting misinformation.



We will continue to play our value-added role as a provider of technical expertise and transformative policy advice, while building local capacities where necessary



The UN system in Iraq will continue to focus on the reinforcement of the strategic partnership with the Government and development partners through its interdependent and complementary strategic priorities defined in the Cooperation Framework. This will include the deepening of the relationship with the national authorities, focus more on building greater synergies through joint initiatives such as joint programming and work plans.

Ensuring the safe and sustainable return of displaced Iraqis back to their communities and finding durable solutions to the issue of internal displacement is another key priority of the Government of Iraq, and the UNCT in Iraq. I have focused my attention on expanding engagement and support with the Government of Iraq to accelerate efforts to find durable solutions for those who have returned home, secure civil documentation for all those who lost it during the conflict and support the gradual transition of emergency assistance towards longer-term development and government assistance.

This has meant focusing beyond just meeting the needs of people still in camps, but also mobilizing the system to serve those out-of-camp IDPs who live in underserved areas, or those who have been compelled to leave camps and find themselves in informal settlements. In parallel, our development and stabilization partners are engaged with the Area-Based Coordination groups (ABCs) to ensure that living conditions are dig-

nified and sustainable in return areas. We will strengthen the ABCs and ensure they work closely together with the local governments to identify and fill remaining gaps in the basic service delivery and development needs.

Moreover, UN interventions will also be directed towards supporting the education sector including primary and adolescent learning, and youth development and empowerment through technical and vocational education and training and youth network will be supported by the UN this year.

Equally, labour and social protection legislative reforms and basic social services for vulnerable populations such as IDPs and returnees will be supported.

We will continue to play our value-added role as a provider of technical expertise and transformative policy advice, while building local capacities where necessary.

The UNCT will also update the Common Country Analysis (CCA) to provide a more accurate assessment of the country context as well as the baseline for 2023 programming. Based on the updated CCA, the UNCT will review its biennial Joint Work Plan (2023–2024) in support of UNSDCF implementation. The review will ensure that the outputs and activities of the Joint Work Plan continue to be aligned with the strategic outcomes of UNSDCF as well as the current country context and the SDG priorities as stipulated in the SDG Framework in Iraq that was adopted by the authorities.

The UNCT will also strengthen the work of its data groups and thus facilitate more focused and strategic engagement of the UNCT under each distinct UNSDCF strategic priority, including joint policy recommendations, joint programmes, position papers and resource mobilization approaches. The identified annual targets of the data groups will also contribute to the annual review of the 2023–2024 Joint Work Plan and to its revision and alignment with the annual UNSDCF objectives in Iraq.

Within this context, and under my

leadership and coordination, the UNCT will continue its efforts to ensure full national ownership of the UNSDCF implementation and its full alignment with the SDG priorities in the country. The UNCT will continue to work closely with the relevant authorities in Iraq and the UNSDCF Steering Committee, which is responsible for overall strategic oversight of UNSDCF implementation.

Finally, as we look to 2023 and beyond, the UN family will remain a steadfast partner of the people and Government of Iraq. Our pledge next year, as ever, is to pursue sustainable, inclusive, gender-sensitive, integrated, effective and efficient development pathways to achieve the 2030 Agenda for everyone in Iraq.

We will continue supporting the government in building back better and building forward, with a particular focus on strengthening systems for quality and inclusive access to services and empowerment of people to claim their rights and improving living conditions for the people in Iraq.

What have you done before coming to Iraq?

Before Iraq, I was the UN Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator ad interim in Jordan and before that, UN Resident Coordinator to the Republic of Azerbaijan (2016) and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (2013). I also served as the UNDP and UNFPA Resident Representative in both countries. I also served as the Director of Program at the United Nations Volunteers in Bonn, Germany; UNDP Senior Advisor and Country Director a.i in Tajikistan, UNDP Deputy Resident Representative and Head of Program in Nepal, and Assistant Resident Representative in Yemen. I also served in Afghanistan, and Syria with the UN system.

Before that, I was the Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to the UN in New York. Prior to that, I served in senior roles in Afghanistan, Pakistan and the United States and held positions with the Swedish Committee and Save the Children and worked with the private sector.



Office of Political Affairs and Analysis

Interview with

Acting Head of UNAMI Office of Political Affairs and Analysis (OPAA)

MR. MOHAMMED AL-NAJJAR

Well-versed in Iraqi politics, Mohammed al-Najjar leads the UNAMI Office of Political Affairs and Analysis (OPAA), which provides reporting and analysis to inform and support the work of UNAMI senior leadership. OPAA is also heavily involved in UNAMI outreach and engagement with Iraqis at all levels. It is this aspect of his work that Mr. al-Najjar

finds particularly rewarding: “it gives me and my team an opportunity to meet Iraqis, learn about their concerns and interests and remind ourselves of why we are here in Iraq”. Through this work OPAA aims to support the good offices of the Special Representative and the Deputy Special Representative (Political and Electoral Assistance) to promote political dialogue, not just

among Iraq’s leaders and the political parties but between all segments of Iraqi society.

Mr. al-Najjar highlighted his team’s youth projects as something which will have a long-term benefit for Iraq and that has also been “immensely fulfilling” for all the OPAA staff involved. He explained that in 2022 the projects were centered around taking action

on climate change and used innovative methods to get young people to focus on the topic and build political engagement around it. OPAA staff worked with over 200 young people, half of them women, from various governorates to encourage them to identify priorities and formulate concrete policy initiatives. One of the innovative methods used was a “Hackathon” which OPAA staff explained referred to “intensified problem-solving”. In essence, over 20 young people from across Baghdad spent a weekend in Basra to find new and unconventional solutions to climate-related problems. They then presented their ideas and initiatives to an expert panel that included the Prime Minister’s Adviser for Youth, Qasim al-Zalimi, and the heads of Basra’s agriculture and environment departments. The experts were certainly impressed with the results, welcoming the “constructive suggestions” made to them and giving practical recommendations and advice to support the implementation of the initiatives.

UNAMI then brought 35 young men and women together for a national conference in Baghdad, where they presented their ideas to the Deputy Speaker of the Council of Representatives, Shakhwan Abdullah, the Minister of Youth and Sports, Ahmed al-Mubaraqaa, the Prime Minister’s Adviser for Youth and Members of Parliament. It was the novel ideas brought forward and the energy on display that impressed both the guests and the UNAMI staff involved, with the Deputy Speaker highlighting how much the “capacity and expertise of these young people can benefit the progress and prosperity of Iraq”. Deputy Special Representative Claudio Cordone had the same point of view and called on the participants to “play their role in full to build a peaceful and sustainable future for Iraq”. He also reminded of the United Nations commitment to work with Iraq’s youth to deliver on their ambitions, in line with the of the Secretary-General’s “Youth 2030” strategy. OPAA staff were certainly impressed by, and drew energy from, those involved, describing it as “inspiring to know such a



diverse range of young people want to be involved in Iraqi politics, and that they have the ability to shape the future of their country”.

Other engagement might be less dynamic and present a greater challenge but is nevertheless rewarding for OPAA staff and beneficial in fulfilling the UNAMI mandate. For example, Mr. al-Najjar has invested considerable time into facilitating the Kirkuk Dialogue. He explained that with his staff, he has engaged with government officials, political and religious leaders and component leaders to facilitate dialogue with the aim of establishing a joint vision for the normalisation of the situation in the governorate. In the past, progress has been slow, but Mr. al-Najjar explains that this comes from the importance of the issues to the stakeholders and believes that considerable advances took place during the year. He sincerely hopes that the stakeholders can reach a final agreement soon, noting that all of the Kirkuk components, including the Arabs, Kurds, Turkmen and Christians, seem determined to reach an agreement that would improve the daily lives of the people of Kirkuk.

Similarly, OPAA engages with the stakeholders in the Sinjar Agreement to advocate for its full implementation. Mr. al-Najjar highlighted the work of OPAA’s field office in Mosul whose staff meet with stakeholders at the grass-root level, which he said complement-

ed and supported the good offices extended by the Special Representative. This work will be just as relevant in 2023 with the goal of implementing the agreement reflected in both the UNAMI mandate and the new Government’s programme.

Mr. al-Najjar also reminded that OPAA, in Baghdad and the Erbil Regional Office, works to support the development of sustainable relations between Baghdad and Erbil, another issue prominent in the Government’s programme and the UNAMI mandate. OPAA’s engagement with stakeholders from both parties aims to help the Special Representative exercise her good offices to support the development of “regular and structured dialogue” to allow the resolution of outstanding issues.

OPAA has also facilitated dialogue between civil activists and the Government of Iraq to address outstanding issues from the October 2019 protests. Observing this dialogue, Mr. al-Najjar has seen the government show willingness to take practical steps to address these concerns but knows that continued engagement is needed.

Asked to look forward to OPAA’s engagement in 2023, Mr.al-Najjar foresaw more of the same: “challenges, frustrations and rewards!”. OPAA will continue its engagement with the Iraqi people to back the Mission’s leadership’s work in supporting inclusive dialogue to address Iraq’s outstanding issues.



Office of Electoral Assistance

Q&A with

Principal Electoral Adviser and Director of UN Integrated Electoral Assistance

DR. AAMIR A. ARAIN

What has been the greatest achievement of the UNAMI Office of Electoral Assistance in 2022?

In 2022, UN electoral assistance activities in Iraq focused on taking stock of the lessons from experiences during the 2021 Council of Representatives elections, protecting the gains and successes from such elections, and in supporting efforts to further enhance the institutional and electoral capacities of the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) and other Iraqi institutions.

Right after the election results were certified, IHEC and UNAMI jointly un-

dertook a process of post-election review and learning exercises. A review of field level experiences from IHEC governorate electoral offices and thematic reflection sessions by the various IHEC sections and units in the national office were conducted from January to March 2022. These culminated in a lessons learned workshop (LLW) held in March 2022 in Sulaymaniyah, Iraq, wherein IHEC officials and staff and UNAMI OEA electoral advisers discussed overall lessons and came up with a list of key recommendations for further enhancing the organization of future Iraqi elections.

The outcome of the lessons learned workshop was used as the basis for developing and implementing a capacity building plan in support of IHEC. Several training and capacity development activities were implemented through the UNAMI-UNDP implemented electoral project, entitled Support to Iraq Electoral Processes.

Starting in February 2022, UNAMI OEA regional and governorate electoral staff initiated a series of discussion sessions and training activities in all of IHEC's 18 governorate electoral offices. These are aimed at enhancing the knowledge and skills of IHEC staff at

the governorates on key areas of electoral management and operations. The topics for these activities included gender and elections, electoral operations, electoral legal framework, logistics, training and procedures, election security, communications, outreach and engagement with electoral stakeholders.

Field level trainings were complemented by capacity development activities implemented throughout 2022 at the national level focused on enhancing IHEC staff's IT and database management skills, field coordination, public outreach, election security, electoral operations, legal, procurement, logistics, report writing and information management.

UNAMI OEA advisers and the UNAMI Gender Unit also actively supported IHEC efforts to reconstitute the IHEC Gender Team. Along this line, an IHEC Gender Plan was developed which incorporated inputs and recommendations from UNAMI. Based on the gender plan, regional level gender sessions were implemented by IHEC in Baghdad, Erbil and Basra to discuss with IHEC governorates and voter registration staff on ways to encourage increased participation of women in voter registration activities and for further supporting the capacity development of IHEC women staff. UNAMI also continued to encourage IHEC to identify several women staff who could benefit from an intensive program to develop their leadership skills for future career advancement in senior levels at IHEC.

UNAMI OEA also actively supported efforts to enhance coordination between IHEC and the Electoral Judicial Panel (EJP). UNAMI held regular meetings with the members of the EJP to reflect on the process for managing electoral complaints and appeals during the 2021 Council of Representatives elections and to discuss recommendations and ways forward on enhancing the system for election dispute resolution in Iraq. Towards this end, UNAMI facilitated a study visit to Mexico by the Head of the Federal Supreme Court, members of the EJP and the Chairperson of IHEC. They discussed with officials of Mexico's Supreme Court of

Justice of the Nation, Electoral Tribunal and Electoral Institute on the roles of judicial and electoral institutions in handling and addressing electoral disputes. Based on lessons from the study visit and from research done on relevant comparative experience from other countries, work is ongoing with the IHEC legal staff on ways to better address electoral complaints and appeals for future elections.

Another priority area for technical support throughout 2022 is on IHEC's efforts to upgrade its biometric voter registration systems. UNAMI briefed senior Commission officials on biometric voter registration issues and with the support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), organized a study visit to Malawi from 24 to 30 July to learn from the latter's experience in civil and voter registration. UNAMI OEA also supported the commission in conducting study visits upon the invitation of the electoral management bodies of South Africa on 13-17 November and of Mauritius on 20-25 November 2022. Members of the IHEC Board of Commissioners had the opportunity to interact with their counterparts in these countries on issues and topics related to electoral management, electoral operations and in engaging with electoral stakeholders. They also took keen interest on the efforts of these electoral management bodies to enhance women participation as electoral officials, voters and staff.

As part of UNAMI-UNOPS electoral support project, a series of debriefing sessions were organized with national observer networks between April-June 2022. A report on the outcome of these sessions was prepared and published to inform future domestic election observation and international support for such activities.

Upon the request of the Kurdistan Region's authorities, UNAMI attended several meetings of the region's political leaders and political parties' representatives aimed at addressing issues that impacted on the timely holding of the region's parliamentary elections. UNAMI provided presentations on ways to address the differ-

ences regarding the number of electoral constituencies, the reactivation of the mandate of the current board of Kurdistan Region's Independent High Electoral Commission or appointment of new members, voters' list, minority representation and election date. However, the deadlines set by the region's committee for resolving the issues passed without any agreement and the regional parliament decided to extend its term for another year, and with it, the election date itself.

To sustain all these electoral technical assistance activities and to keep the electoral project donors abreast of electoral related developments, UNAMI OEA provided regular briefings to donors, either through the Election Working Group or bilaterally with the various embassies present in Iraq. Regular project reports were provided on a quarterly and annual basis. These have helped inform project partners on the status of the implementation of the electoral projects and the donors support for such.

What were the major challenges in 2022?

The main challenge of course in 2022 is the delays in the process of government formation and the uncertainties it created on the electoral front. Despite what could be considered as a better organized elections in Iraq's electoral history, it took several months or almost a year even before a government was formed following the 2021 Council of Representatives elections. The protracted discussions and negotiations in the first half of 2022 included calls for new or early elections. IHEC, and UNAMI OEA, had to continuously follow developments and how it would impact on their ongoing activities and priorities.

There were also latent discussions during that period among several political parties on the status of the electoral commission itself. These talks have become less pronounced following the formation of the new government. However, it continues to resurface amidst efforts to review the electoral law and the IHEC Law. In relation to this, UNAMI continued to emphasize the importance of protecting the gains



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IHEC has considerably regained a significant stature after the 2021 Council of Representatives elections

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and successes from the recent electoral process.

On the technical front, the efforts to improve the coverage of IHEC’s biometric voter registration remains a constant challenge. This is the reason why several capacity development activities, including UNAMI facilitated study visits, were organized to support IHEC in moving forward with efforts to review its voter registration systems.

How do you see the IHEC in the next few years?

IHEC has considerably regained a significant stature after the 2021 Council of Representatives elections. It has regained certain credibility and trust from the public at the level not experienced prior to that election. Efforts must therefore continue towards sustaining and even further doubling on such public confidence by further improving its systems and processes for managing and implementing elections.

Specifically, efforts must continue to be devoted towards improving the voter registry, the process for managing the timely and transparent announcement of election results, the structure and system for addressing electoral complaints and appeals and for further enhancing the Commission’s engagement with various electoral stakeholders.

Strong, independent and profession-

ally managed electoral institutions are pillars for a country’s stable, responsive and representative governance. The Independent High Electoral Commission and other Iraqi institutions needs continued support in strengthening its capacities and readiness for holding credible Iraqi-led and Iraqi-owned elections.

Looking forward, what is on the electoral agenda for 2023?

The approved governmental program made specific references on holding federal and provincial level elections. The government also stated its commitment to support IHEC in all aspects of the electoral preparations.

At this point, there are talks regarding holding the provincial council elections in October 2023. In a meeting hosted by the Iraqi Prime Minister on 4 December 2022 with the Speaker of the Council of Representatives and the Chairperson of IHEC, the requirements for holding the provincial council elections were discussed. Subsequently, IHEC sent a letter to the Prime Minister on 15 December 2022 identifying its budgetary and other requirements for holding the elections. IHEC also emphasized on the necessity of a finalized electoral law by the first quarter of 2023.

As such, holding the provincial council elections in 2023 will require that the executive and legislative branch to move forward with any proposed

amendments to the electoral legislation for IHEC to firm up its electoral timetable.

Another overdue election is the Kurdistan regional parliamentary elections which was initially scheduled in 2022 but is now likely to take place in 2023. Again, however, holding such elections will require a serious and sustained commitment among the region’s leaders to bridge the differences on the various issues impacting on the holding of the elections. They also need to prioritize the reactivation of the region’s KIHEC. A duly functioning electoral management body is needed if electoral planning and preparations to start. At the same time, a reconstituted KIHEC will also need to consider reviewing all its systems and procedures in line with the Federal Court ruling, and the need for closer coordination and complementation between the KIHEC and IHEC.

Amidst all these discussions, the process of enhancing electoral capacities of Iraq’s electoral institutions must continue to move forward. In his 12 December 2022 letter addressed to the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Iraq, the IHEC Chairperson identified priority areas for continued UN support. The UN will take such request into consideration in reviewing the needs and identifying areas for continued electoral assistance to Iraq.

Human Rights Office

Q&A with UNAMI Human Rights Office



What is the human rights mandate of UNAMI?

UNAMI Human Rights Office (HRO) is responsible for the implementation of the Mission's human rights mandate in accordance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 2631 (2022) and its preceding resolutions to "promote accountability and the protection of human rights, and judicial and legal reform, with full respect for the sovereignty of Iraq, in order to strengthen the rule of law and improve governance in Iraq".

In 2022, UNAMI HRO supported the government's efforts for the promotion and protection of human rights of all citizens of Iraq. Our office also engaged with the Government of Iraq, civil society and the Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights (IHCHR) to promote legislative, institutional and policy measures to increase respect for human rights and engagement with United Nations human rights mechanisms.

How did the human rights situation evolve in Iraq in 2022?

In 2022, small-scale peaceful protests took place throughout the year in various governorates with people demanding access to economic and social rights,

including improved access to education, healthcare, water and better employment opportunities, an end to corruption and accountability for human rights violations and abuses in the context of demonstrations.

Limited accountability for human rights violations and abuses remained an ongoing concern and contributed to shrinking civic space. Consequently, civil society activists, journalists and human rights defenders faced a range of challenges.

UNAMI HRO continued engagement with the Government of Iraq, however, progress towards promoting accountability for human rights violations remained limited despite announcement of some measures by the Government. The formation of a new Government in October 2022 offers an opportunity to strengthen public's trust in Iraqi institutions by ensuring meaningful accountability for violence perpetrated by armed elements during the demonstrations.

Despite the election of the Council of Representatives in October 2021, progress could not be made for the endorsement of a number of draft bills, including the Anti-Domestic Violence, Freedom of Expression and the Protection from

Enforced Disappearance laws. The adoption of the draft legislation by the Council of Representatives will strengthen protection and accountability of human rights in Iraq.

Additionally, the Council of Representatives was unable to form the Committee of Experts to select new members of the Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights (IHCHR) Commission, thus delaying the appointment of a new Board of Commissioners. The Board of Commissioners will play a crucial role in the institution's work to promote the principles of non-discrimination, fairness, equality, justice and inclusiveness in Iraq. In 2023, UNAMI HRO will continue to advocate for immediate measures be taken to appoint the IHCHR Board of Commissioners in full compliance with Article 7 of the 2008 Law of the High Commission for Human Rights, and in accordance with the international "Principles Relating to the Status of National Human Rights Institutions" (The Paris Principles).

What has UNAMI HRO done to promote protection for freedom of expression and to protect civil society activists and human rights defenders from online threats?

The protection of fundamental freedoms of expression and the right to peaceful assembly is a core priority for UNAMI HRO which engaged in monitoring and reporting on the situation of activists, human rights defenders, journalists and protestors. In June 2022, UNAMI released an Update on Accountability in Iraq: Limited progress towards justice for human rights violations and abuses by 'Unidentified Armed Elements'. UNAMI documented incidents aimed at suppressing dissent and criticism carried out by 'unidentified armed elements' targeting activists. The Update also documented steps taken by the Government for accountability of perpetrators of violence against demonstrators and offered specific recommendations for promot-



ing accountability and ending impunity. UNAMI HRO extensively engaged in promoting the freedom of expression and the right to peaceful assembly, protection of journalists and prevention from online threats and protection risks to activists, human rights defenders and journalists, including female human rights defenders and women journalists.

Through its month-long campaign “Be safe.” on social media HRO raised awareness on digital security whilst highlighting the security risks in the digital space, providing a daily tip benefiting human rights defenders and civil society organizations for staying safe online and offline. In March 2022, UNAMI HRO and the Iraqi Network for Social Media concluded the implementation of a joint project on digital security and digital rights with a roundtable discussion attended by Iraqi authorities, private companies and civil society representatives. Data security, online protection, privacy and access to information formed the basis for discussion while outlining steps to strengthen rights in the online space, particularly freedom of expression.

During October and November, UNAMI HRO conducted 18 online dialogues with at least 150 women journalists, young influencers, and bloggers to promote and enhance understanding of the gender dimensions of challenges faced in the course of their work. This was followed by a four-day training of trainers on “Gender and Human Rights-Based Approach to Reporting” focusing on the concepts of gender mainstreaming and increasing safety of women journalists online and offline.

In October, HRO released a manual titled “Online Protection and Digital Security: User Guide for Human Rights Defenders” in partnership with the Iraqi NGO “INSM

for Digital Rights”. The Guide provides users of digital technology, particularly human rights defenders and journalists, with practical information on how to mitigate online risks, protect their privacy and data, and preserve their rights and freedoms online.

In November and December, UNAMI held three workshops in Baghdad, Basra and Najaf with the Human Rights Committee of the Iraqi Bar Association to increase pro bono lawyers’ capacity to conduct advocacy on issues related to freedom of expression and provide effective legal assistance to journalists and activists facing sanctions or threats due to the conduct of their work.

What has been done to protect the human rights in the administration of justice?

As part of its efforts to contribute to the United Nations objective of sustainable peace and security, HRO engaged in promoting human rights in the administration of justice enhances measures for conflict prevention, building social cohesion and respect for the rule of law. For this purpose, HRO conducted detention monitoring (January to June 2022) and trial observation to monitor compliance with procedural guarantees, detention safeguards and fair trial standards in Iraq throughout 2022.

HRO provided technical support in promoting the human rights of detainees and mainstreamed human rights during the counterterrorism operations by the Government of Iraq. Engagement with senior officials of the Ministry of Interior on the prevention of torture and the mainstreaming of human rights compliance during counter-terrorism investigations was a key feature of this body of work.

Additionally, HRO enhanced the capacity of law enforcement officials of the Ministry of Interior in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq on the protection of the rights of detainees in accordance with “The United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners” (the Mandela Rules). HRO also enhanced understanding of female staff from two Asayesh facilities in Erbil on the rights of prisoners and detainees.

HRO worked with judges and prosecutors in Baghdad as part of the ongoing engagement with the High Judicial Council to develop judicial guidelines on key fair trial standards and rights of detainees based on international and Iraqi laws.

What role did UNAMI HRO play in promoting women’s rights, particularly protection of women from domestic and gender-based violence?

Jointly with the UNAMI Gender Unit and UN Women in Iraq, HRO advocated at local and national levels to enhance women’s representation and their meaningful participation in decision-making processes and their active contribution in promoting non-discriminatory, equitable and inclusive Iraqi society. HRO engaged in strategic dialogue with authorities in the Federal Iraq, the Kurdistan Regional Government, civil society and the United Nations Country Team to promote protection from Gender-Based Violence and accountability for the crime of violence against women and conflict-related sexual violence.

In December 2022, in collaboration with the Kurdistan Regional Judicial Council and the High Council for Women and Development, HRO conducted a high-level policy dialogue on accountability for criminal violence against women and girls in domestic settings, highlighting



the challenges faced in the administration of justice and proposed recommendations on promoting accountability of perpetrators of domestic and gender-based violence. Between June and September 2022, HRO conducted a series of four consultative workshops which were preceded by another high-level policy dialogue in Erbil, aimed at providing a structured forum to enhance capacity and build political will and consensus to effectively investigate and prosecute gender-related killings, thereby increasing accountability for such crimes, bringing together representatives from the High Council for Women and Development in the Kurdistan Region, investigative judges, criminal court judges, the Directorate of Combating Violence against Women and Family.

In October and November 2022, UNAMI HRO organized focus group discussions with at least 1,100 female survivors of conflict-related sexual violence in Duhok to empower survivors to claim their rights and rebuilding their lives and supporting others.

The roundtable discussions organized by the HRO with representatives from government, human rights defenders and civil society, highlighted the importance of community-based initiatives to raise awareness about gender equality and the leadership role of women in mitigating the effects of climate change and identified advocacy options to strengthen and raise awareness to counter the impact of climate change – theme of the International Women's Day 2022.

How did UNAMI HRO support the Government of Iraq in implementing its commitments with regard to enforced disappearances?

Enforced disappearance, both from the past and recent, is a serious human



rights concern in Iraq. In support of the efforts undertaken by the Government of Iraq and to promote its engagement with the United Nations Committee on Enforced Disappearances, HRO supported the Secretariat of the Committee on Enforced Disappearances and facilitated the visit to Iraq, from 12 to 24 November, by a three-member delegation of the United Nations Committee on Enforced Disappearances. The delegation engaged with government officials, victims, civil society organizations, UN officials and the diplomatic community, and shared its preliminary findings with the Government of Iraq.

What is UNAMI HRO doing to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights?

To mark the launch of the year-long campaign leading up to next year's 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), UNAMI's Human Rights Office coordinated the efforts of experts across Iraq's component groups to translate the UDHR's 30 Articles into eight of Iraq's minority languages, all of which are now available online on the OHCHR website.

The translation of the UDHR into Avestan, Fali Kurds, Kaka'is (Mancho), Serbian Mandeian, Shaback, Sumerian, Turkmen and Yazidi will complement the Arabic and Kurdish (two dialects) already available online, and aim will contribute to Iraq's rich linguistic diversity.

The process of translation was uniquely powerful, bringing together community representatives, linguists, translators, academics, other language experts, civil society organizations and human rights defenders, and required countless hours of discussion, collaboration, and linguistic and legal analysis to capture the meaning and spirit of each individual hu-



man right.

In a nation as richly diverse as Iraq, the UDHR is particularly relevant and powerful. Its guarantee of human rights without distinction of nationality, gender, national or ethnic origin, religion, language, or any other status, serves to unite Iraqis in their shared aspiration to achieve equality, freedom and human dignity.

What steps have you taken to address human rights of Iraqi societal components?

HRO worked closely with civil society, government officials and Iraqi societal components to enhance efforts for the promotion and protection of the rights of ethnic and religious groups of Iraq. Structured engagement with minority youth and marginalized groups enabled increased awareness and concerted action by civil society to engage with the UN and Government of Iraq for the adoption of measures to increase protection for minorities and promote social cohesion and peaceful co-existence.

To promote protection for the human rights of ethnic and religious minorities and social cohesion, HRO organized five workshops in Baghdad, Basra, Erbil, Kirkuk, and Mosul, attended by at least 75 youth from various religious and ethnic groups on basic human rights concepts and a range of storytelling methodologies, including short digital film making, cartoon sketching and photography.

In the last quarter of 2022, HRO organized a series of five roundtables in Baghdad, Basra, Dohuk, Erbil and Mosul, to promote protection for minorities, peaceful co-existence and safe return of IDPs. Over 125 participants comprising of Fali Kurds, Arabs, Armenians, Chaldean Assyrian, Iraqis of African Descent,

Turkmen, Yazidis and Sabeen Mandeans shared ideas, issues facing these communities and recommended solutions.

HRO facilitated the participation of 15 Iraqis of African Descent (seven women and eight men) in a two-day UN Regional meeting for the Middle East to observe the 10th anniversary of the International Decade for People of African Descent as part of efforts to eliminate all forms of discrimination against people of African descent, to raise awareness.

To promote tolerance and social cohesion, UNAMI and the UN Office of the United Nations Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide co-facilitated a dialogue on countering hate speech, discrimination, and marginalization. In this event, representatives from component groups, civil society organizations, the Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights, the Iraqi Bar Association and the Communications and Media Commission in Iraq raised key concerns and identified solutions for countering hate speech in Iraq.

To counter hate speech and promote social cohesion, and to celebrate diversity, in June, UNAMI held an event with children from different communities. The event “We are Iraq” was attended by primary school children from different social component groups in Baghdad, as well as tribal elders, government officials, teachers and civil society representatives.

How many capacity building/training activities did HRO organize during 2022? Who were the participants?

In 2022, HRO organized 134 capacity building workshops/trainings/events (111 in-person and 23 online) in Baghdad, Basra, Erbil, Kirkuk and Mosul. In total, 2,087 participants (1,239 men and 857 women) benefitted from these capacity building activities. The capacity building workshops, and training events were attended by lawyers, civil society activists and networks, human rights defenders, women rights activists and women’s rights NGOs, government officials, judges, and staff of the Iraq High Commission for Human Rights.

Does your office engage with youth, women and organizations working on

disability rights?

In 2022, HRO engaged with 38 youth-led organizations across Iraq promoting engagement of young people in the promotion and protection of human rights. As part of its Pace Narratives project to promote the human rights of religious minorities, HRO engaged Iraqi youth in digital film making through a series of five workshops highlighting the role of Iraqi youth as catalysts for positive change in building sustainable peace.

HRO engaged and collaborated with 114 women-led organizations in Baghdad, Basra, Erbil, Kirkuk and Mosul, reaching out to and working closely with these organizations and groups for the protection of women’s rights. During the 16 days of activism against gender-based violence campaign, HRO organized 4 separate awareness raising events, for a total of 84 women and men in Baghdad, Basra, Kirkuk and Mosul.

The events enhanced the ongoing advocacy and civil society exchange with government counterparts on how to strengthen the advocacy to criminalize domestic violence in federal Iraq, formalize effective support systems for survivors and hold perpetrators accountable for crimes committed inside the home. Moreover, HRO organized dialogues, focus group discussions and high-level engagement to promote accountability for violence against women.

To promote the human rights of persons with disabilities, HRO engaged and collaborated with 28 organizations of persons with disabilities. Additionally, HRO continued to support with the implementation of UN Disability Inclusion Strategy of the United Nations.

What are UNAMI’s human rights priorities in 2023?

In 2023, UNAMI HRO will continue to support the Government of Iraq, civil society and the Iraq High Commission for Human Rights to promote and protect human rights as per the Security Council mandate and in accordance with Iraq’s national and international human rights commitments. UNAMI HRO priorities in 2023 include:

- Protection of civic and democratic space and creation of enabling en-

vironment for civil society actors, including human rights defenders, journalists and media workers through laws and policies compliant with international standards;

- Strengthening the rule of law and fair trial standards through a comprehensive legislative, policy and institutional reform process to ensure respect for international due process and fair trial standards;
- Promoting accountability for human rights violations and abuses, included targeted killings, abductions, threats and harassment of activists, human rights defenders, journalists and protesters;
- Protection and promotion of the rights of religious and ethnic minorities, diversity and inclusive and non-discriminatory policies to achieve social cohesion and peaceful coexistence;
- Using awareness raising about the power and relevance of the UDHR, in 12 languages of Iraq, as a tool to promote social cohesion, celebrate diversity and recognize the value of Iraq’s rich cultural and linguistic heritage.
- Promoting compliance with international law and the Constitution of Iraq, concerning accountability for perpetrators of domestic and gender-based violence, and conflict-related sexual violence and protection of women’s rights and inclusion of women in decision-making processes;
- Promoting and advocating for endorsement of legislation and policies for the protection of civilians from the effects of violence and insecurity and respect for human rights during counter-terrorism operations in compliance with international human rights norms and standards;
- Protection of children affected by conflict, violence and insecurity and safeguarding human rights of children deprived of liberty.

Resident Coordinator Office (RCO) Development Support Office (DSO)

A glimpse of activities in 2022



The year 2022 was full of hard work and challenges for RCO-DSO. The joint office was active in providing support to its clients in the following domains:

Durable solutions: RCO-DSO has played a significant role in Area-Based Coordination (ABC) where our staff in our different hubs across Iraq attended or facilitated (in their capacity of the Secretariat) more than 29 meetings of the ABC Groups. When it comes to Coordination, DSO supported 53 missions, meetings, and roundtable discussions, such as the UNDP-British Embassy Roundtable discussion on Water in Basra, the work of Action Against Hunger, Mercy Corps, the roundtable meeting on Diversity & Inclusion, and many others.

RCO-DSO also plays a vital role in Organizing and being the secretariat for regular meetings with development actors, including UN entities, NGOs,

civil society organizations, community leaders, local officials, and the private sector to share information on the ongoing and needed activities at the governorate level. It maintains a directory of local development actors in the governorates.

As for Facilitation, RCO-DSO acts as the development coordination focal point between UN Agencies, UNAMI, Government, NGOs, and Civil Society. It also responds to UNCT requests for information that assist them in writing proposals. Ad hoc assessment missions and conferences for the resident and non-resident agencies on specific issues are organized by RCO-DSO in addition to following up on action points. On Advocacy, RCO-DSO encourages Durable Solutions (DS) as mentioned above and reports opportunities for DS to the Durable Solutions Task Force, and it promotes SDGs in the governorates through public speaking and

participation in meetings and events. Meetings with different Government counterparts, NGOs, UN Agencies, and cluster meetings were facilitated and attended as well.

The RCO-DSO “Data management and M&E unite” is still playing an active and important role in sharing knowledge and building the capacity of the Co-operation Framework M&E Working Group, Program Management Team, Priority Working Groups members in several topics relating to data and M&E; while on Knowledge Management, RCO-DSO serves as a local development expert in the governorate, providing information about development needs, trends, actors, programs, SDGs, and development strategies by GOI and others.

On top of all that, DSO has been active in sharing reports on emergencies in the areas/ governorates that have no UN missions on the ground.



Photo: (c)International Nuremberg Principles Academy

UNITAD and Iraqi Judiciary leading partnership towards accountability for ISIL international crimes in Iraq

A longstanding partnership with the Iraqi judiciary witnessed major developments during 2022, as UNITAD continues to support justice and accountability efforts in Iraq and globally for ISIL international crimes, which fall within the mandate of UNITAD. The Team has continued its direct cooperation with Iraqi judges to support capacity building of the judiciary in international criminal law and international humanitarian law in order to ensure full preparedness for the prosecution of ISIL international crimes before Iraqi courts, once an appropriate legal framework is in place for such prosecutions in Iraq.

This year's cooperation began with a ceremony recognizing the Iraqi members of the Judiciary who completed the online course on International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and International Criminal Law (ICL), organized by UNITAD. The ceremony was organized at the Supreme Judicial Council, where Special Adviser and Head of UNITAD Christian Ritscher and Chief Justice Faiq Zidan handed the certificates to all participants. The training aimed to serve as a foundational introduction to ICL and IHL. UNITAD was pleased and proud to have assembled a group of international lecturers who are eminent experts in the field and Arabic

speakers at the same time.

Given that the atrocities committed by ISIL in Iraq qualify as international crimes, these legal considerations are crucial. The adoption of an adequate legal framework in Iraq, together with the strengthening of the Iraqi Judiciary's capabilities, would pave the way for the prosecution of ISIL members responsible for war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide in Iraq. This is why UNITAD has planned, in partnership with The International Nuremberg Principles Academy, an advanced in-person training, which took place at the Academy in Nuremberg, Germany,

bringing together 19 Iraqi judges from all over the country, including the Kurdistan Region. The curriculum of the advanced training was designed specifically to meet the needs of the judiciary in Iraq, with the goal of introducing the necessary in-depth knowledge towards prosecuting ISIL international crimes in Iraq in the future.

During this training, the judges benefited from the expertise of renowned international experts, including academics and practitioners who discussed and analyzed important cases from international tribunals as well as national cases that recognize



successfully transformed, 5.5 million paper pages so far into digital forms. To further this effort and ensure that this vital knowledge is maintained in Iraq, approximately 30 local independent contractors have been hired and trained in the best procedures for gathering and storing evidence.

Moreover, efforts to extend technical support to the Iraqi Council of Representatives in the process of adopting a legal framework allowing the prosecution of ISIL perpetrators in Iraq for international crimes have been intensified. These efforts are made in close cooperation with the Supreme Judicial Council as well as legal experts from the Iraqi government.

and use universal jurisdiction in the prosecution of international crimes. Such expertise supports judges in Iraq to be better equipped to commence and oversee prosecutions and trials for ISIL international crimes before Iraqi courts in accordance with international standards and best practices. The course material included both the substantive areas of IHL and ICL and the procedural components, including modes of international cooperation in criminal proceedings, that are often required to conduct and fulfill criminal investigation and indictment of international crimes cases.

In a similar vein, UNITAD provided eleven

Kurdistan Region investigative judges and prosecutors with a pilot training course on international crimes case development.

In another field, the Team has maintained its support for the Iraqi judicial system via the digitization project that helps Iraqi courts convert their holdings of documentary records pertaining to ISIL crimes into digital form and bring them in line with international standards. As part of this endeavor, the Team continues to equip and train national digitization and archiving specialists.

With a throughput of around 100,000 pages each week, the digitization effort

Through this work, Special Adviser and Head of UNITAD Christian Ritscher continuously reaffirmed the Team's commitment to seeing justice served for all victims and survivors of ISIL crimes in Iraq. As he indicated during his briefing to the UN Security Council: "Only by prosecuting and referring to such [ISIL's] barbaric acts as war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide will we be able to deliver justice to the many victims and survivors and ensure that their voices are heard. I reiterate UNITAD's commitment to work towards this goal; a commitment we owe to the survivors, to international justice, and to humanity at large."





Promoting Accountability for ISIL international crimes, UNITAD works in partnership with Iraq and all affected communities

Stemming from the calls of the victims and survivors of ISIL crimes, UNITAD was established at the request of Iraq, to ensure justice is served with the participation of victims in the accountability processes. Hence, the Team continues to strengthen its ties with impacted communities of ISIL international crimes in Iraq. With its pioneering victim-centered approach, UNITAD has built stronger connections with affected Iraqi communities, centering their priorities and needs in the realm of the Team's work and various lines of investigations.

Throughout the year 2022, UNITAD intensively conducted its investigations into ISIL crimes against all impacted communities in Iraq, including but not limited to the Yazidi, Shia, Turkmen, Sunni, Christian, Kaka'i, and Shabak communities. Moreover, UNITAD established a specific investigative line regarding the destruction of the cultural heritage of Iraq by ISIL members.

The Team aims to remain accessible to all such communities at different levels,

whether at the level of field investigative units, or at the level of the Team's leadership which maintained direct interactions with survivors, faith leaders and civil society groups through numerous meetings and field visits.

Earlier in the year, UNITAD, jointly with United Nations Development Program and the Office of the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, organized the Second High-Level Conference on the Interfaith Statement on the Victims and Survivors of Da'esh/ISIL. The conference aimed to build on the momentum of the landmark Interfaith Statement adopted in March 2020 by the religious leaders of the Chaldean Catholic, Kakai, Shia, Sunni and Yazidi communities of Iraq, under the auspices of UNITAD and the UN Office on Genocide Prevention. The Second Conference aimed to broaden participation and included more than 40 faith leaders from different communities across Iraq who were engaged in discussions around the Interfaith Statement, and the importance of account-

ability for viable reconciliation.

Moreover, throughout the year, Special Adviser Ritscher met with religious leaders of Yazidi, Sunni, Christian, Shia and other communities. In December 2022, he visited Najaf for the first time and met with His Eminence Grand Ayatollah Ali Al-Sistani. "We have constantly counted on His Eminence's wisdom and support to our cause in serving justice, and to our work in the pursuit of accountability for all victims of ISIL international crimes in Iraq," Special Adviser Ritscher said after the meeting.

During her first visit to Iraq, UNITAD Special Adviser Ritscher accompanied USG for Genocide Prevention Alice Nderitu on a series of field visits in Duhok and Sinjar, including to the sites of mass graves of Yazidi victims in Solagh and Hardan. They also met with Yazidi activists, survivors and families of the victims and were truly inspired by the stories of survivors who have been trying to move on with their lives while advocating for justice for themselves, their communities and oth-



er victims. The visit was documented in a video that was published in commemoration of the Yazidi genocide in August.

Additionally, the Team continued to engage with the wide NGO community through the meetings of the UNITAD-NGO Dialogue Forum. In October, the Fourth Biannual Plenary Roundtable of the Forum convened in person for the first time. This roundtable brought together participants from UNITAD with both Iraqi and international NGOs to discuss the Team's investigative priorities and how NGOs can contribute with a significant role to support investigations and outreach to victims and survivors. A speaker from the Shabak community gave remarks as part of the Forum's commitment to dedicate a space to different voices of affected communities.

In addition to this outreach work inside Iraq, UNITAD also worked to promote accountability for ISIL international crimes at international and regional levels, as an integral part of UNITAD's mandate to promote accountability throughout the world. During 2022, UNITAD organized a series of special events in cooperation with the Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which were co-hosted with Iraqi embassies abroad.

In April, UNITAD, joined by the Embassy of Iraq to Germany and the German Federal Foreign Office, co-hosted a special event in Berlin, Germany on "Investigating Financial Dimensions of War Crimes, Crimes against Humanity, and Genocide",

discussing investigations into ISIL's complex financial systems, schemes, and financiers and financing the international crimes committed by the group against different Iraqi communities.

In June, at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, UNITAD, joined by The Permanent Mission of Iraq to the United Nations and The Permanent Mission of Finland to the United Nations, co-hosted a special event on "The Pattern of Mass Killing: ISIL crimes against the Tikrit Air Academy Personnel", and presented a video produced in partnership with SITU Research as a special production aiming at bringing the crime scene to the audience. The video synthesizes testimonial, documentary, digital and forensic evi-

dence into a compelling narrative that tells the story of the core international crimes committed by ISIL members in Tikrit.

In November, UNITAD, joined by the Permanent Mission of Iraq to the League of Arab States and the General Secretariat of the League, co-hosted a special event in Cairo, Egypt, titled "Towards Prosecuting Core International Crimes Committed by Members of Da'esh/ISIL in Iraq: Command Responsibility, Identifying Leaders and the Role of ISIL Foreign Fighters". This event showed how leadership cases for senior ISIL leaders and middle leaders can be built, explaining ISIL's leadership structure and the responsibility of commanders, including responsibility for failing to prevent or punish the commission of international crimes. A case study on the so-called "foreign fighters" who joined ISIL from countries other than Iraq was also presented during the event.

This outreach work in Iraq as well as at regional and international levels serves the strategic objectives of UNITAD in the pursuit of accountability towards holding ISIL perpetrators accountable before competent courts. "Through continued collaboration with the Government of Iraq and Iraqi judiciary, UNITAD will be able to further advance investigations towards ensuring accountability for ISIL international crimes, and serving justice to the victims, who have been waiting for long to see their day in court," said Special Adviser Ritscher.





FAO: Focusing on policy issues like food security and animal health

FAO Iraq, in line with its Country Programming Framework and government priorities, works on policy issues like food security and animal health. In 2022, in consultation with the Donor Coordination Group for Agriculture and Water, co-chaired by FAO and the Netherlands, FAO supported the Ministry of Agriculture in reviewing the National Food Security Strategy, as well as formulating a Medium-Term Action Plan that would guide implementation of the Strategy. Additionally, FAO is supporting the regulatory framework on Animal Health for the effective delivery of veterinary services.

In 2022, FAO supported the Government of Iraq in its efforts with respect to climate change adaptation and mitigation, working towards climate-resilient and low-emission agrifood systems while taking into consideration all agricultural sectors, related value chains and ecosystems in a holistic way and recognizing the importance of a balance between the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. In this regard, FAO continues its efforts to enhance climate resilience of vulnerable agriculture households in Iraq’s rural communities including buffalo producers in the Marshes.



To respond to the challenges related to water scarcity, FAO is and will work to enhance the climate resilience of farming communities in Southern Iraq under the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) funded project by increasing and stabilizing water availability at the farm gate; optimizing agriculture and water productivity; and reducing the adaptation deficit of farming communities via specific and tailored trainings and capacity development processes.

Additionally, as women in rural areas are disproportionately affected by climate change with unequal access to resources

and assets, barriers to decision-making and limited mobility, and at the same time, women have the potential to become agents of change – leaders, practitioners, educators and influencers in climate change adaptation and mitigation, FAO activities aim at empowering rural women as agents of change for climate adaptation through training courses on the state-of-the-art techniques for climate adaptive agriculture, agri-business planning and development and use of social media for climate change adaptation and advocacy.

FAO to reverse the land degradation process in Southern Iraq is supporting through the GEF funded project 2,500 farmers through FFS on Sustainable Land Management practices.

FAO in cooperation with relevant Ministries supported in 2022 vulnerable smallholder farming and breeders’ to better withstand shocks and challenges through the rehabilitation and installation of modern dairy equipment; establishment of small/medium-scale village milk centers for collection, cooling, processing and marketing of dairy products; provision of inputs, including seeds and fertilizers; and introduction of new forage seeds, such as ryegrass, alfalfa mixture, barley, sorghum fodder and maize silage under the European Union funded project “Support to agricultural livelihoods of rural and peri-urban returnees and communities in Nineveh Governorate, Iraq”. Additionally, good practices and innovative solutions have been tailored and piloted by FAO for post-harvest and marketing facilities/infrastructure (i.e. grading, processing and packing facilities, cold storage and transportation).

FAO is also working to strengthen veterinary services in Iraq and build capacity in disease recognition, field and laboratory diagnostics, epidemiology, data collection and analysis, reporting and early warning systems for high-threat animal diseases under the Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) funded project “Improving Delivery of Animal Health Services and Disease Surveillance in Iraq”. A robust veterinary service that has improved communications between regional and central Iraqi authorities, as well as with the herding community, will help to mitigate the threat of highly

pathogenic animal diseases within the region. In this regard, FAO rolled out in 2022 the Event Mobile Application (EMA-i) technology, to improve efficiency, quality and timeliness of reporting while facilitating timely information sharing among all stakeholders, from livestock farmers to district and chief veterinary officers.

Under the umbrella of the One Health Approach, FAO took the initiative to organize consultations with key stakeholders to discuss the role of the veterinarian services in Iraq in addressing transmissible zoonotic diseases and to intensify coordination in the effort to control animal and human diseases.

As sector leader, FAO is supporting the Government of Iraq increase water availability at the farm level and enhance water productivity; and to address land degradation through globally proven best sustainable land management practices. Support is provided for restoring irrigation infrastructure, including capacity building, for food production and livelihoods to boost staple crops (wheat and barley), potato and tomato.

FAO supported the Government of Iraq in its efforts with respect to climate change adaptation and mitigation, working towards climate-resilient and low-emission agrifood systems while taking into consideration all agricultural sectors, related value chains and ecosystems in a holistic way and recognizing the importance of a balance between the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development.



UNDP: Supporting the Government of Iraq to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

Throughout 2022, UNDP has remained committed to supporting the Government of Iraq to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. UNDP remains focused on mitigating the effects of climate change on the environment through support to government policies, civil society organizations, and individuals is required. Additionally, as demonstrated by recent bouts of unrest, a focus on anti-corruption and security sector reform needs is required. Ensuring the safe and sustainable return of displaced Iraqis back into their communities is another key priority of the Government of Iraq, and UNDP.

UNDP's efforts to address violent extremism include empowering a cross-section of society, including youth, women, religious leaders, government actors, and non-governmental organizations. Support to community reintegration and social cohesion saw thousands of families perceived to be affiliated with ISIL receive support through a comprehensive package of housing rehabilitation, livelihoods support, Mental Health and Psycho-Social Support, and community capacity building on mediation and conflict management.

The Funding Facility for Stabilization has remained a steadfast partner of the Government of Iraq. To date, we have rebuilt 35,200 houses since liberation from ISIL in 2017. UNDP will continue to support stabilization and community readiness for the reintegration for thousands of Internally Displaced Iraqi families, including persons perceived as affiliated with the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), who are often women and



children, to ensure durable solutions for displacement. UNDP's approach to stability in Iraq includes support to stabilization in liberated areas through rehabilitation of infrastructure and services, livelihoods creation, Mental Health and Psycho-Social Support, and strengthening local government capacities, thereby strengthening social cohesion.

Iraq's Higher Judicial Council adopted a new Code of Conduct as a bold step forward, towards promoting a culture of integrity and transparency. Adopted by the Higher Judicial Council, the Code of Conduct will strengthen judicial integrity, impartiality, and independence. In turn, this will add greater pressure on accountability, prevent undue influence, and encourage impartial decision making. UNDP will continue supporting the judiciary in developing and delivering training on the Code of Conduct for judges and prosecutors.

The Iraqi government has a clear vision to adapt to the effects climate change through the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) which serve as the country's guiding policy framework, de-



veloped with support from UNDP after Iraq joined the Paris Climate Accord in 2021. The Iraqi delegation to COP27, composed of over 100 government representatives, civil society representatives, and youth and women representatives, participated in the conference with high visibility. This year was the first time Iraq had a youth delegation, with three youth representatives. Over

half of the Iraqi delegation were women, who took part of the negotiations. The Iraqi negotiators were also active in negotiating articles of the Paris Agreement regarding Carbon Markets and Technology Transfer. UNDP supported a number of the delegation members to attend and provided support during negotiations and on the ground during the conference.



UNEP: supporting Iraq to combat climate change

Interview with

UNEP Representative and Regional Director for West Asia

SAMI DIMASSI

Intro

UNEP Regional Office for West Asia provides leadership and technical expertise and encourages partnerships in caring for the environment by inspiring, informing, and enabling nations and peoples in the West Asia region to improve their quality of life without compromising that of future generations.

The office covers 12 Arab countries namely: Kingdom of Bahrain, Republic of Iraq, The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, State of Kuwait, Republic of Lebanon, Sultanate of Oman, State of Palestine, State of Qatar, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Syrian Arab Republic, United Arab Emirates, Republic of Yemen.

What are the main challenges faced by Iraq?

Iraq is one of the most vulnerable countries to climate change. The country has been witnessing severe environmental degradation, desertification, drought, water scarcity, sand and dust storms, as well as severe loss of biodiversity and threatening levels of pollution.

In 2022, UNEP Regional West Asia Office (UNEP-ROWA) that covers 12 Arab countries including Iraq, continued sup-

porting the country to address the triple planetary crisis: climate change, pollution and loss of biodiversity.

How did UNEP Regional Office for West Asia support Iraq to combat climate change?

UNEP regional Office for West Asia worked closely with the government of Iraq to meet its obligations under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). This includes the development of its Second



National Communication / Biennial Updated Report

UNEP continued to support the Government of Iraq in developing its National Adaptation Plan to strengthen institutional, technical, and financial capacities and ensure that medium to long-term climate adaptation needs are integrated into national development planning in the country. In addition, UNEP supported the Government in establishing, the Climate Modelling Unit at the Ministry of Environment which serves as a hub for climate-related information, involving key stakeholders, such as government institutions, academia, CSO, among other entities.

The loss of biodiversity in Iraq became prominently visible. How is UNEP supporting the country to restore, preserve and conserve its environment?

Unfortunately, when it comes to loss of biodiversity, Iraq is in a race against the clock. In 2022, UNEP-ROWA worked closely with the government of Iraq to establish and implement a National Protected Areas Network. Two pilot sites (Dalmaj and Teeb) were declared as protected areas with 211,275 ha of surface benefitting approximately 15 villages. Once finalized in 2023, the project is expected to achieve milestones for biodiversity conservation by preserving spe-





cies and habitats through establishing the well-structured and well-managed protected areas.

Moreover UNEP-ROWA supported Iraq in securing a GEF-funded project in the amount of USD 4.5 million “Promoting an Integrated Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Land Management in Highly Degraded Landscapes of Iraq”. UNEP will be supporting the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Agriculture in integrating biodiversity conservation and land degradation neutrality into national sectoral policies, while simultaneously expanding the national system of protected areas and promoting sustainable nature-based agriculture.

The accumulation of challenges Iraq has been facing resulted in drastic environmental conditions, pollution being a notable one. How is UNEP supporting? The year 2022 was an impactful year in combatting pollution in Iraq. Through a close partnership with the Government of Iraq, UNEP-ROWA supported the Development of the National Implementation Plan for the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs). In consultation with international and national experts, sources of POPs were successfully identified, especially polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs). This played a big role in setting the stage for the remediation of POPs-contaminated sites.

On the other hand, UNEP has actively helped the Government of Iraq fulfill its obligations under the Minamata Convention on Mercury. In 2022, UNEP assisted Iraq using the Mercury Inventory Toolkit to identify and quantify sources of mercury in Iraq. The focus is now on remediation and adopting a proactive approach to managing mercury.

In order to combat the environmen-



tal pollution that Iraq is facing, UNEP joined forces with UNDP and the Ministry of Environment of Iraq to develop the Pollution Programme, which aims to promote an integrated approach for the control and prevention of pollution from relevant sectors, including waste management. In 2022, a baseline pollution assessment report was generated, and pollution prevention priorities were identified in the sectors of water resources, agriculture, health, sanitation, and waste.

the “National Strategy of Environmental Pollution Reduction and Action Plan 2022 – 2030” was developed to analyze the current situation and start taking action against air, land, and water pollution.

War and conflict generate large amounts of solid waste and debris and contribute to the deterioration of the environmental state in the country. How did UNEP support Iraq’s environment recover from the war?

UNEP -ROWA worked with the government of Iraq through the post-conflict intervention on transforming waste to compost. After the successful establishment of a composting facility in Karbala in 2021, and training of the municipal staff, UNEP took a step forward with this project and developed in 2022 the national guideline on composting.

Moreover, UNEP partnered with IOM handed over the debris recycling center in Mosul funded by the Government of Japan, to the municipality of Mosul to ensure the sustainable continuation of the management of the large amount of the remaining debris, estimated to be around 55 million tons.

Effective policy and decision making requires access to science and evidence-based approaches, How is UNEP helping decision makers access

information in order to make environmentally sound decisions?

UNEP has adopted the Science to policy approach to ensure the decision makers are well equipped with the information they need to make environmentally sound decisions. Working closely with the Ministry of Environment and the Central Statistics Organization at the Ministry of Planning, UNEP has been working on a holistic platform that provides all users with the environmental data and information they need. The Environmental Information System – Iraq (EIS – Iraq) is a platform that is accessible by all users, including researchers, academics, and government officials. The main objective of the project is to enhance the country’s capacity for monitoring and reporting on Multilateral Environmental Agreements through a well-integrated and functional system. As well as linking satellite imagery with environmental indicators in the form of a user-friendly insight dashboards.

To achieve optimal results in providing a holistic platform, UNEP and the Ministry of Environment identified 6 key indicators: Land, Water, Marine & Coastal, Biodiversity, Health & Environment, and Engagement & Governance, each supported by satellite data, graphs, data and statistics, and analyzed information. In 2022, the project made a considerable progress, and the ministry announced the establishment of the national environmental center, a hub for information to support the decision makers with evidence-based insight.

What are the environment priorities for Iraq for 2023?

UNEP will continue to support the Government of Iraq to address critical environmental issues and fulfill its obligations under various international environmental agreements while taking into consideration the national priorities. The priorities for 2023 will include advancing climate change agenda, reducing environmental degradation and combatting pollution in line with UNEP’s Programme of work 2022-2023 (POW) and the Mid-term Strategy 2022-2025. Our aim is to improve the quality of life of the Iraqi people while supporting them in restoring and preserving their environment.



UN-Habitat: 25 years of improving people's living conditions

In 2022 UN-Habitat Iraq celebrated its 25th anniversary. This occasion offered a chance for its staff and partners to proudly look back at the many milestones in its history of improving living conditions in Iraq by accelerating recovery and promoting adequate housing, better access to basic services and sustainable urbanization.

UN-Habitat has been active in Iraq since 1996 under the Oil for Food Programme and led a multi-million reconstruction programme in the 1990's to assist IDPs and other vulnerable groups in Iraq. After 2003, UN-Habitat was largely engaged in early recovery efforts, supporting new waves of IDPs through the provision of shelter and reconstruction initiatives. In those years, UN-Habitat has also played an essential role in delivering technical assistance to central and local authorities facing unprecedented urbanization challenges to advise on policy making and strategies, including the National Urban Strategy and National Housing Policy in 2010 (which was

reviewed and updated in 2018), upgrading informal settlements and supporting decentralized decision-making.

In 2014, as the country plummeted into a complex humanitarian crisis triggered by the occupation by the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) which caused the forced displacement of over 6 million people and the physical destruction of settlements affected by the fighting, the portfolio of UN-Habitat Iraq expanded to include both humanitarian and development programmes providing IDPs, Syrian refugees and host communities with dignified shelter and an improved living environment.

In the past 5 years, UN-Habitat has refo-

ocused its attention towards community-based post-conflict reconstruction, rehabilitating over 5,000 damaged housing and public facilities, including marketplaces, and providing much needed basic services in low-income and informal urban settlements. It has supported returns to Mosul by building a medium-rise housing complex that was inaugurated in May 2022, comprising of low-cost 324 apartments. Its teams have created a dozen public open spaces through participatory design, including the iconic Al Yarmouk Park in Mosul, which was inaugurated last October, in occasion of World Cities Day. To support the return of vulnerable IDPs to their areas of origin



in Sinjar, Telafar and Yathrib, UN-Habitat has built over 440 core houses in-situ. It has delivered vocational training for over 2,000 unemployed youth, while continuing to provide technical assistance to local and national authorities in urban policy-making and city planning, urban heritage conservation, advocacy, data analysis, GIS mapping, and climate change adaptation.

Crowning the effort of its Housing, Land and Property (HLP) team, on 16th of December, the Head of the UN-Habitat Programme in Iraq Wael Al-Ashhab, joined by DSRSG/RC Ghulam Isaczi, met with the Prime Minister of Iraq, HE Mohammed S. Al-Sudani to discuss the legal decree for recognizing the Yazidi's land and property rights. On the 27th of December 2022, the Council of Ministers approved in its regular meeting the Legal Decree which was jointly drafted with UN-Habitat and the Prime Minister's Office. The approved legal decree recognizes and grants land ownership and property rights for the Yazidi minority and will formalize their land rights by

turning the 14,550 Occupancy Certificates issued so far by UN-Habitat into full Land Ownership Titles.

UN-Habitat remains steadfast in its commitment to strengthen further the longstanding partnership with the Government of Iraq (GoI) to achieve its goals for improving the lives of citizens. It supports GoI at the national and local levels to promote transformative change in cities and human settlements through the lens of reduced spatial inequality, enhanced shared prosperity, improved urban environment and climate change mitigation, and effective urban crisis prevention and response. Through its partnership with the Government and development partners, UN-Habitat works towards equitable access to institutions and services ensuring social cohesion, protection, and inclusion. UN-Habitat, through its work supported also: 2018-2022 National Development Plan, 2018-2022 Poverty Reduction Strategy, Iraq Vision 2030, United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework and United Nations Iraq Socio-Economic

Response Plan (SERP).

The agency has served as the leading thinktank for sustainable urbanization and human settlements and has played a unique role in supporting the country attain nine of the ambitious indicators of SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities. The strategic vision of UN-Habitat Iraq programme is aligned within the global normative frameworks of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2015), the Paris Agreement (2015), the New Urban Agenda (2016), and the UN-Habitat Strategic Plan 2020-2023.

In one of his last speeches, Mr. Wael Al-Ashhab, Head of UN-Habitat Iraq, stated: "The last 25 years have given us plenty of reasons to celebrate. This is an incredible milestone for any UN-Habitat office. If we look back at where we started and what we have achieved, since 1997 we have certainly made remarkable progress. The programme has reached this success through our staff's dedication, commitment, and hard work."



UNHCR: Empowering displaced populations and host communities to mitigate protection risks and access solutions

In 2022, UNHCR's interventions focused on empowering displaced populations and host communities to become better equipped to mitigate protection risks and access solutions. With thanks to the Refugee Education Integration Policy, led by the Kurdistan Regional Government and supported by UNHCR, UNICEF, Save the Children and education partners, 90% of Syrian refugee children in grades one to four enrolled in public schools in the Kurdistan region of Iraq, while 70% (i.e. those qualified) of Syrian refugee teachers were recruited, as of the end of November.

In 2022, IDPs and IDP returnees secured some 72,500 civil documents, including civil IDs, unified national IDs, birth certificates, public distribution system cards, and Iraqi nationality certificates, thanks to the effort from UNHCR, relevant authorities and partners. Access to civil documentation enables IDPs to access basic public services such as education, healthcare and social security benefits; increases their freedom of movement; enables them to participate in the public

affairs of the country; and contributes to the prevention of statelessness.

To base its strategy and response to statelessness-related risks on evidence, UNHCR with its partner Legal Clinics Network (LCN) conducted a detailed study on statelessness for the Failsi Kurds and the Bidoons; two groups most at risk of statelessness in Iraq. This allowed to provide support to stateless persons to get their Iraqi nationality. UNHCR also continued leading civil documentation efforts

and coordinating the legal task force in Jeddah 1 centre in Ninewa governorate, securing 321 civil documents for Iraqi returnees from al-Hol camp in north-east Syria in 2022. Moreover, to decrease the use of harmful coping mechanisms such as reducing food intake, accumulating debt, child labour or forced marriage. UNHCR provided multipurpose cash assistance to some 8,000 refugees, and over 20,000 IDP and returnee families, assessed as socio-economically vulnerable.



UNHCR also provided winterization cash assistance to some 17,000 refugee and 40,000 IDP households.

Contributing to a responsible UN transition from the Protection Cluster as part of the humanitarian - to - development shift in Iraq, UNHCR co-established and now co-leads the Protection Platform - a new coordination mechanism at the strategic level created to ensure high level advocacy and engagement on current and emerging protection issues in Iraq. With the deactivation of the CCCM cluster, UNHCR absorbed the cluster functions for the 25 IDP camps in the KR-I, continuing to support cross-

camp coordination, planning and strategic decision-making, and leading joint advocacy with relevant partners. In July 2022, the KRG authorized IDPs living in tented camps in Duhok to self-upgrade their shelters, with UNHCR's technical assistance and communication with communities. This breakthrough came following a series of advocacy efforts by UNHCR to allow IDPs to upgrade tented shelters (designed to be an emergency shelter solution, and at high risk of fire incidents), in line with UNHCR's overall strategy to find dignified solutions for IDPs living in camps, including through local integration.





ITC: Fully dedicated to the development of micro, small and medium sized enterprises

Interview with

Representative, Head of Country Programme

MR. ERIC BUCHOT



Can you please give us a brief about ITC's work in Iraq?

ITC is the joint agency of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the United Nations (UN). ITC is the only international development agency fully dedicated to the development of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) to enable them to benefit from trade. Working with partners to strengthen MSME competitiveness, ITC helps to build entrepreneurial and employment opportunities, particularly for women, youth, marginalized and poor communities. ITC's main clients are MSMEs, business support organizations and governments.

Funded by the European Union, the

'Strengthening the Agriculture and Agrifood Value Chain and Improving Trade Policy in Iraq' (SAAVI) is ITC's flagship programme in Iraq. Throughout 2022, ITC-SAAVI project continued its contributions to inclusive economic growth and job creation, particularly for youth, by improving agricultural sector competitiveness and supporting trade development in Iraq.

What do you consider as ITC's biggest achievements in 2022?

We are proud to offer a unique value proposition in the humanitarian-development-peace nexus in Iraq, as the lead agency supporting private sector development and MSMEs.

In 2022, key highlights of our interventions include:

First Iraq National Trade Forum

The potential of Iraq's agri-food market is remarkable with a projected import demand of over \$5.6 billion by 2025, according to ITC's estimates. This represents a huge opportunity for inclusive growth, as over 170,000 jobs could be generated through the development of domestic agriculture and agri-food value chains by 2030. However, at current demand levels, the full potential in the local market is not being realized by domestic producers.

To address these challenges, ITC and IOM jointly organized the first Iraq National Trade Forum (INTF), sponsored by the European Union and German Cooperation (KfW). The event held on 28 and 29 November combined high-level panels with practical workshops and business-to-business (B2B) meetings and featured an exhibition of innovative firms under the theme "Made in Iraq", with representation from all Iraqi governorates.

The forum was a success, with over 450 participants and 150 Iraqi companies and international buyers having negotiated deals and built business relationships for an anticipated trade value of USD 2.5 million. We were particularly proud to see vibrant Small and Medium Enterprises coming from each and every Iraqi governorate. Listening to the 100 speakers during the various technical sessions and high-level panels over two days it is clear that there is a strong momentum for the development of agri-business in Iraq, from farm to fork.

Creation of productive and commercial agribusiness alliances

In 2022, ITC-SAAVI established 10 agribusiness alliances organizing farmers and rural supply chains in Iraq, from North to South, and each linked with reputable buyers. It is anticipated that this market-based model will improve competitiveness of over 1,500 farms/MSMEs.

These alliances offer farmers with support to improve their production capacities, upgrade their business model (production, quality, post-harvest/storage, marketing) to seize these remunerative

market opportunities, developing their own local business plans and establish long-term meaningful connections with buyers.

These efforts are already bearing fruits. In late 2022, the Erbil branch of Carrefour purchased 6.5 tons of tomatoes from Mosul farmers, in two successful transactions. These resulted in 100% increase in the farmers' income, representing a net gain of USD 2,000 for farmers. Tomatoes that would usually fetch 0.3 USD per kilogram were sold at the agreed price of 0.6 USD per kilogram. This marks only the beginning of a mutually beneficial business relationship and holds a promising outlook for our agribusiness alliances. We are already seeing similar deals being made all over the country.

National sector strategies for high-potential agriculture and agri-food products

Two ITC-facilitated strategies high potential agrifood products, (poultry and tomatoes), developed under the leadership of the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) were finalized and launched in an official event held on 7 July 2022. This event marked the culmination of the design phase of the strategies and the kick-start of the implementation phase. The implementation of these strategies is already underway with the contribution of the international agencies involved in the EU Agri-Food Business Development Programme in Iraq.

Developing the business skills and entrepreneurship of Iraqi youth

Around 637 youth in Baghdad and Basra successfully completed the training course on life-skills for employability and entrepreneurship in the curriculum of Kick for Trade delivered in partnership with the Ministry of Youth and Sports. A selection of graduates was offered the opportunity to meet with potential private sector employers who have current internship or (short-term) staff vacancies or anticipate vacancies. Working closely with ten selected key support organizations, over

14,700 young were reached out to raise their awareness on the opportunities held by Iraq's agrifood sector. In 2023, 4,000 of them will receive tailored training on entrepreneurship and agri-business.

Directly contributed to reinvigorating Iraq's WTO accession process

ITC is the main international focal point organization supporting Iraq's government efforts within the framework of WTO accession. ITC has strived to create and maintain momentum through advisory and technical support, capacity-building, and by creating a platform for discussion among key stakeholders. Technical assistance provided by SAAVI led to the submission of revised WTO accession related documents, a significant step in the accession process.

What are ITC's immediate plans for the year ahead?

Next year, we will focus on consolidating the work under our agribusiness alliances. A series of practical training modules on production, marketing, packaging, etc. have been developed and master trainers are being trained throughout the country. Support will also be provided on upgrading hardware through a market system development approach when necessary. ITC will continue putting MSMEs at the centre of our work, helping farmers develop their own agribusiness plans and create win-win market linkages with buyers. Following a successful process for the development of tomato and poultry strategies, ITC was requested by MOA to develop a sector strategy for potatoes. This is also in our immediate plans. Under MOA's leadership, consultations will kick off early next year. ITC-SAAVI will also continue developing the business skills and entrepreneurship of Iraqi youth and key support organizations. In the area of trade policy support, we'll carry on with our technical assistance towards Iraq's WTO accession process.

At the same time ITC will increase the size of the local team and expand operational presence in Mosul and Basrah. We are also working on the development of new programs beyond agri-business, capitalizing on our initial success, and following the same market system development approach with other economic sectors.



UNICEF: A transition year full of achievements for children

In 2022, UNICEF was a crucial partner for Iraq, as the country team increasingly shifted its focus from humanitarian response to longer-term development. As the UN agency for children, we continued to work across sectors, bringing our expertise and our hearts to safeguard the rights of girls and boys and their wellbeing.

It is time for partners in Iraq to come together and invest in children's future, a future where they can fully realize their rights to education, health, protection, clean water, and environment and to a life of wellbeing and opportunity

Our vast experience across the development cycle, from emergency and post-conflict settings to development and middle-income settings, helped us reach almost 2 million children with improved access and quality of learning, provide almost 1.5 million people access to safely managed water and achieve 90 per cent coverage of measles and DTP immunization, the highest in two decades.

The winding down of the longstanding cluster system for humanitarian assistance to Iraq opened a space in which, going forward, the government will lead on preparing for and coordinating response to Iraqis in need.

UNICEF and UNHCR worked with partners to guarantee the right to learn to all refugee children in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) through the implementation of the Refugee Education Integration Policy.

We are proud of the groundwork we have done, in particular on the child rights legislation (drafted and awaiting approval in Federal Iraq and KRI), to build systems and institutional structures that will support an effective, equitable response to the needs of girls and boys, and their families.

We have covered the whole life cycle of a child. From birth, through the introduction of ECD screening and counselling services to mother and child, to young adult-



hood, supporting over 120,000 vulnerable young people, 55,000 of them girls, who are most affected by harmful social norms, to identify issues and lead community initiatives, advocacy, and education interventions. In addition, we have supported almost 91,000 girls and women with risk mitigation, prevention, and response for gender-based violence (GBV).

We have also increased our advocacy on key issues for children in Iraq. Climate change is one of the main threats for the new generation, and in order to find a way forward, we generated evidence through the Climate Landscape Analysis for Children, measuring the impact of climate change. At the same time, poverty continues to be a scourge threatening children in Iraq, and the preparation of the Child-adjusted Multidimensional Poverty Index will help to build a stronger social protection system for the most vulnerable children.

We work with a constellation of partners and donors who share our values and commitment to children, especially the most marginalized and vulnerable. The results in these pages are rooted in their commitment to Iraq's future.

My colleagues at UNICEF in Iraq and I extend to our partners our heartfelt thanks for their support and wholehearted belief in our shared vision for children.

Now, as we look to the future, UNICEF also issues a call to action: it is time for partners in Iraq to come together and invest in children's future, a future where they can fully realize their rights to education, health, protection, clean water, and environment and to a life of well-being and opportunity.

Key achievements

In 2022, we advanced the strategic shift towards digitalizing health systems, preparing to roll out digital health information system, geo-mapping, and link digital birth registration with health facilities for improved tracking of children's health needs so that no child is left behind.

Through the intensification of integrative immunization (3IS programme), where COVID-19 and essential immunizations were integrated, about 134,000 "zero-dose" children received essential childhood vaccinations for the first time, and rates of DTP and measles vaccination reached over 90 per cent coverage.

Our interventions on water, sanitation and hygiene enabled almost 1.5 million people to access safely managed water, in addition to supporting 156,000 school children to learn in a cleaner, greener, and more hygienic school environment. As a response to climate change, a Climate Landscape Analysis for Children and Young People was finalized to provide evidence of the impacts of climate change on children and young people, and water safety planning and quality monitoring was institutionalized in KRI with a water safety plan committee established.

To manage water resources sustainably, with partners, in UNICEF we piloted solar-powered water systems, medical waste treatment, seawater desalination for schools, wastewater treatment and recycling, rainwater harvesting and aquifer recharge, which were complemented by digital monitoring. A



pioneering system to eliminate freshwater wastage in Basra saved enough water for 8,000 more households.

Every child in Iraq has a right to learn. In 2022, through UNICEF's support, more than 1.8 million children benefited from improved access to and quality of learning. As part of systems building, in UNICEF we supported the development of

the draft National Education Strategy and expanded the Education Management Information System collecting data from more than 2,500 schools to ensure that every child in Iraq has access to quality education. In the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI), the Refugee Education Integration Policy integrated refugee children into the public education system, while the Back-

2Learning campaign encouraged children to return to school in two Federal Iraq governorates. This enabled more than 28,000 children excluded from learning back into education. To improve the quality of learning, communities received block grants to renovate classrooms and facilities for students with disabilities in 1,331 schools.

Safeguarding children's rights to protection in a complex environment is of paramount importance. In UNICEF, we supported the development of the Child Rights Legislation and developed child-friendly justice service guidelines and diversion framework. Child protection and gender-based violence services benefited more than 570,000 girls and women, while more than 1,500 children, including 173 girls were released from detention; and more than 36,000 people acquired the needed skills to protect themselves against explosive ordnance.

As key steps to empower young people, and ensure their development and participation, more than 120,000 young people aged 10-24 years, almost half of them girls, gained life skills and citizenship education. At the same time, more than 40,000 vulnerable young people developed their





skills for employability through Innovation Labs, Learning Passport, and other channels.

On World Children's Day, as part of these youth engagement efforts, UNICEF appointed two youth advocates on climate change and ECD, respectively. This led to enhanced exposure of Iraqi youth to these two critical issues at national and international levels, including during the Climate Change Summit (COP27) meetings at UN General Assembly, World Breast Feeding Week, and Immunization week.

UNICEF accelerated its strategic shift towards a human-centered approach to encouraging families and communities to adopt positive behaviors, capitalizing on community engagement for sustainable social and behavior change. As part of setting the basis for this work, UNICEF conducted six social and behavioral research projects, and augmented the findings with online listening tools and rumor tracking to better understand the drivers of behavior change.

At the same time, COVID-19 lifesaving messages reached 86 per cent of Iraq's population, while 10,000 people received COVID-19 vaccines at major religious events. In addition, a total of 20,000 children enrolled in schools following community engagement around girls' education. To capitalize on the power of youth, more than 50,000 young people engaged in four social mobilization campaigns.

All this work is supported by our communication and advocacy efforts to position UNICEF as the leading voice on children. Over 10 million people were reached through mass media in Iraq, and 1.7 million supporters were engaged through UNICEF social media platforms. On one of the key advocacy priorities of the year – aiming to end the use of explosive weapons in populated areas, heavily affecting children, we produced advocacy materials focused on the impact of explosive weapons in Iraq, that reached 42 million people internationally.

Vision towards 2023 and beyond:

In UNICEF, we will continue to advocate and generate evidence on how public finance management can invest in children's future. We will redouble efforts in some of the key areas for children and young people in Iraq, such as Climate Change, ECD, public finance for children and the transition from humanitarian to development, while capitalizing on the voices of young people.

As for systems building, we will continue to prioritize digital transformation to generate and analyze quality data for modern, efficient health, education and social services, in addition to building evaluation capacity. As UNICEF, we will also establish shock-responsive systems to address the remaining needs of vulnerable people affected by protracted conflict and enhance their resilience while scaling down humanitarian programmes.

Finally, as girls in Iraq continue to face challenges due to harmful social norms and gender inequality, in UNICEF we aim to achieve truly gender-transformative results by convening partners for a shared vision; engaging with adolescents, especially girls, on gender equality and citizenship; and changing social norms by engaging parents, community leaders and men as active partners.



UNESCO's activities in Iraq

Education

EMIS and capacity strengthening for quality education in Iraq

Under the "System building and capacity strengthening of the Ministry of Education and Directorates of education for effective delivery of quality education outcomes" project, UNESCO has developed a purpose-built Education Management Information System (EMIS) for Iraq. In partnership with UNICEF, the EMIS is being rolled out across 10 General Directorates of Education (GDoE). In support of this rollout, UNESCO has delivered 3,000 laptops to schools that are involved during this phase of the project, and the Communications and

Media Commission (CMC) is providing internet connection and WIFI devices free of charge to those schools targeted. In 2022, UNESCO finalized the training of 68 Master Trainers from the General Directorates of Education, who will train the system's school-level users. In addition, 66 sets of classroom training materials, 30 online tutorials with online quizzes, 36 YouTube training tutorials, 15 manuals, and 126 knowledge base articles were developed and deployed in English and Arabic, to support end-level users.

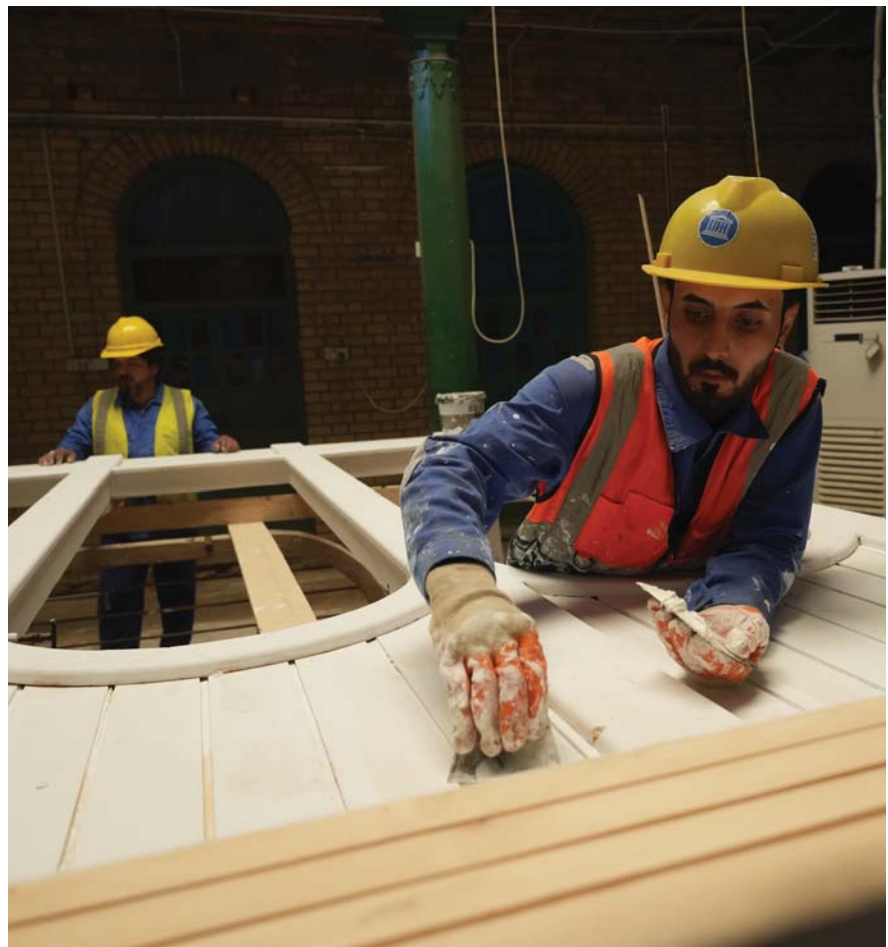


Under the same project, UNESCO completed the training of 105 Master Trainers in online distance learning. 10 days of training was delivered to support Iraq's teachers ensure effective online distance learning. As the Master Trainers cascaded the training to over 4,000 teachers in Baghdad, Basra, Thi Qar, Qadissiyah and Ninewa, UNESCO also provided follow up training sessions to promote peer-learning and establish a community of practice amongst the trainers.

TVET/Skills development and job creation

As a part of “Reviving Mosul and Basra Old Cities” project, funded by EU, 1568 Trainees (275 Female) graduated from the Vocational Training Centers in Mosul and Basra in 2022, and 1,068 of the graduates’ got jobs in the ongoing project of rehabilitation in the old cities of Mosul and Basra, in addition to 856 (33 Female) semi-skilled workers who received on the job training in Mosul.

More than one hundred humanitarian success stories on UNESCO’s efforts to foster resilience, cultural identity, social cohesion and inter-community reconciliation in the old cities of Mosul and Basra through the creation of job opportunities and the development of youth skills among IDPs/returnees. The brochure features human interest stories, showcasing the impact on people’s lives within UNESCO’s flagship project.



Prevention of Violent Extremism through education

Under the “Gendered Approach to Preventing Violent Extremism through Education in Iraq” project, UNESCO and partners have developed participatory training programmes and strengthened the capacities of close to 10,000 educational stakeholders (60% females) from more than 500 primary and secondary schools, and 36 master trainers and 289 student leaders from universities in Al Anbar and Ninewa governorates. Additionally, UNESCO’s Short Lessons for Peace social media campaign reached more than 70,000 learners.

Lastly, UNESCO and the University of Mosul organized a very successful Education for Peace in Iraq Conference to launch the New UNESCO Chair on PVE and Fostering a Culture of Peace at the University of Mosul. The multiactivity Conference brought together more than 500 education stakeholders to deliberate on the past, present, and future role of education in building peace. The proceedings will inform UNESCO’s forthcoming report on The State of Education for Peace in Iraq.



Job creation through Technical and Vocational Education system strengthening and labor market linkage



Under the “TVET Phase 2” project, funded by the EU, UNESCO is working to increase the employability of graduates from 5 Vocational schools and 7 Technical Universities as models for widespread future reform. UNESCO has conducted 70 capacity

building workshops and online meetings with 825 Ministry of Education officials and school teachers and administrators (31% female), resulting in quality improvement plans for the vocational schools, and two competence based curricula for ICT for vocational education. In addition, the Vocational Schools are piloting 3 new curricula in Hospitality, Construction and Agriculture. The focus in the current period is on developing new curricula for the vocational schools in ICT which has led to the successful development of two new curricula and the Learning and Teaching materials for these are currently under development by the MoE working groups.

For Higher education, UNESCO has supported 7 Technical Universities to develop new curricula and quality plans to international standards in Civil Engineering, ICT, Tourism and Food Processing using the Bologna Process and tools. 113 workshops and Meetings have taken place to support this process involving 1842 participations 15% of which were female (reflecting the gender disparity in HE). These new degree programmes are market led and student centred and were recently approved by the new Minister of Higher Education and are under implementation.

Culture

UNESCO’s activities in the old city of Mosul

UNESCO has established a Community Information Center in partnership with the UAE, EU, and a Local Community Based organization. The Center aims at ensuring that local communities are informed on the progress made in rehabilitating the UNESCO sites and raise awareness on the importance of preserving, utilizing, and valuing the city’s rich tangible and intangible heritage. The Center opened on 4th November 2022 in the presence of the Minister of Culture of Iraq.



UAE funded projects

In 2022, UNESCO continued the rehabilitation of four monumental landmarks in the Old City of Mosul (the Al-Habda Minaret, the Al-Nouri Mosque Complex, the Al-Saa’a Complex, and the Al Tahera Church.) in close coordination with the Iraqi Authorities and in partnership with the United Arab Emirates. The complex preparation phases, preliminary studies, and investigations for the four monumental sites have been completed. Reconstruction works started in early 2022 after project stakeholders approved the final designs. The design process was conducted through several bilateral consultations with local authorities, site owners, key stakeholders, and experts. This process led to the final presentation of the design for the four landmarks to the community through various events in early 2022.

The reconstruction has been implemented following a participatory approach and engaging and empowering project stakeholders and beneficiaries through training and job creation. So far, UNESCO has created more than 2,000 jobs (exceeding the project target of 1,100). Moreover, the specialized training for young professionals from Mosul on the conservation and rehabilitation of histori-



cal monuments in post-conflict contexts started in April 2022 in partnership with ICCROM. The first 25 young Mosuli professionals will graduate by the end of the year.

EU funded projects

The reconstruction and rehabilitation of 124 heritage houses in Mosul is underway, including vital infrastructure upgrading (electrical, sewage and water networks and road surface). The first reconstruction package of 43 houses including infrastructure, started in December 2020 and was completed in April 2022. The rehabilitated houses have been handed over to their owners. Rehabilitation of 75 additional houses started in September 2021 to be set for completion March 2023.

The construction first Mosul child-friendly school is Al Ekhlass School is underway since December 2020. The school

construction will be completed in May 2023 will reply to the need of the local communities for adequate educational facility.

In addition to the above, UNESCO is also rehabilitating Al Ziyada and Sulaiman Al-Sayegh Palatial Houses in the old city of Mosul, both owned by the Ministry of Culture/State Board of Heritage and Antiquities. Suleiman house reconstruction has started in early February 2022 with al Ziyada House in July 2022. The work on these historic houses are progressing smoothly. The Suleiman house is expected to be completed by January 2023.

This EU funded project allowed the creation of 3,270 local jobs and 1,568 vulnerable youth graduated from the Technical Vocational and Education and Training programmes (275 Female), hence supporting livelihoods.

Communication and Information



In 2022, UNESCO's CI sector focused on four main projects; Breaking the Silence: Enhance Accountability and Prosecution for Safety of Journalists and Fighting Impunity, funded by the Netherlands, Voices of Peace: Promoting Coexistence through Local Radios, funded by France, and the International Programme for the Development of Communication fund for Safety of Journalists in Mosul.

UNESCO Iraq Office with funding from the Multi-Donors Programme launched a new flagship national platform for female journalists to report harassment, 145 female journalists were trained on reporting offline and online threats. UNESCO works with the High Judiciary Council to develop the Freedom of Expression judge's guideline, as well as working with the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Justice, the Human Rights Committee, the Iraqi National Committee on Safety of Journalists and Issues of Impunity and the Iraqi Journalists Syndicate. Communication and Information was part of establishing the 18 publications courts to bring judges to one discussion table.

UNESCO on the II phase of the Breaking the Silence: Enhance Accountability and Prosecution for Safety of Journalists and Fighting Impunity, is working on developing the prosecution and judiciary follow up on journalists cases as well as developing the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity.

Around 300 journalists participated in "safety and security of journalists" events in 2022. More than 1300 police officers attended the safety of journalists online MOOC training course within the Multi-Donors Programme project.

UNESCO's activities in the old city of Basra

UNESCO is rehabilitating 11 historic Shanshaeel houses and rehabilitating a section of its historic Al Ashar canal thanks to the EU fund. Three of these remarkable buildings currently under rehabilitation are hosting Basra's artists and writers' associations and the Cultural Palace, managed by the Ministry of Culture.





UNMAS: durable solutions, nationalization and localization

Introduction by

Chief Mine Action Programme, UNMAS Iraq

MR. PEHR LODHAMMAR



“ one of my main objectives has been to increase women’s participation in the Iraqi mine action sector ”

For me, 2022 was my sixth year as the head of UNMAS in Iraq. Over the last six years the programme has gone from supporting and enabling stabilization in the liberated areas, as the main activity for the first two-three years, to supporting durable solutions and focusing on nationalization and localization. For UNMAS it doesn't really matter what one calls it though, since we continue with our three pillars of activities including survey and clearance, explosive ordnance risk education (EORE) and technical support to ensure that Iraqi communities are safe.



What has been really encouraging this year has been to see the successful continuation of our partnership model, where UNMAS has provided grants to international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) who then in turn have partnered with national NGOs to build their capacity over a period of three years, so that these national NGOs, by mid 2023 will be fully autonomous and able to carry out survey and clearance as well as all other functions any NGO must be able to fulfil.

From the day I set foot in Iraq one of my main objectives has been to increase women's participation in the Iraqi mine action sector. Mine action traditionally is a male dominated sector and most of us,

including myself, come from the military or police. Iraq was no exception when I first arrived, but we have, together with our implementing partner organisations managed to change this. Now we have a high level of very capable and brave women working with our operational teams on the level from searcher to team leader.

As proof of the bravery, persistence, and resilience of these women I would like to provide an example from July 2022. On 5 July, a team of searchers, on their way to the worksite in the morning, set off a newly laid improvised explosive device (IED). The bus they had travelled in was completely destroyed and by looking at

the bus one would have expected severe injuries and even fatalities. Luckily the women and men who travelled in the bus only had minor injuries, coupled with the shock from the explosion. All passengers could leave the hospital the same day but, still, my fear was that the families would not let the seven women who had travelled in the bus, go back to their clearance work again. I was right. The women met a lot of resistance and arguments about how dangerous their work was. Still, only a month later, all women, and men, were back in the field, removing IEDs in support of a highly impacted nearby Iraqi community, now more than ever, determined to rid Iraq from the menace of unexploded ordnance. I always say that; every day is a school day in Iraq, and if I have learnt one thing, it is what resilience looks like, and I see it here every day.

During 2022 I brought many of our donors to Al-Shifa hospital in western Mosul. We completed clearance at Al-Shifa four years ago now, so why bring donors there? The reason is simple; Al-Shifa was one of our first stabilization priorities. We cleared thousands of items of unexploded ordnance there over almost 18 months. We did so under the most imaginable difficult conditions, inside and under buildings that could collapse any second with tons and tons of war debris mixed with IEDs. We dealt with human remains still wearing explosive suicide belts, and with still active, IEDs threatening the safety of our high-risk search operators moment and every day. Al-Shifa is a piece of history for UNMAS Iraq, and it is not until now we really see the full extent of the impact of our work, almost five years later. There is now a temporary hospital at the site, many of the buildings have been rehabilitated and are again hosting medical services and new buildings are erected at the site. All our donors who visit Al-Shifa leaves with strong impressions and memories, from what UNMAS experienced there, what we cleared and the difficult, and often gruesome, conditions we worked under.

Lastly, I would like to thank all UNMAS Iraq staff for the incredible work they do, every day, and how they make, what often looks impossible, look easy. It is an honour to work with each and every one of you and an honour to have served the Iraqi people for a great portion of my life.

Operations and activities:

Technical support (TS)

In Iraq, UNMAS supports the Government of Iraq (GoI), and in particular the two national mine action authorities (NMAAs) to enable and strengthen their ability to support communities impacted by explosive ordnance (EO), and to enable socio-economic development and welfare. This is done through providing technical and advisory support for the NMAAs, so that they effectively can lead and coordinate the sectors necessary mine action response. In parallel, to support national mine action operators, three “partnership model grants” were implemented in 2022 to increase the capacity of national NGOs through a partnership with international NGOs.

Through this model, two national organizations were fully accredited and operational, to conduct clearance operations and also in a position to autonomously manage a fully nationally led mine action response. During 2022, UNMAS also continued to support the Iraqi Ministry of Interior with various police training courses, including the Explosive Hazard Management First Responder training, which enables female and male local police officers to identify explosive threats and then warn their local community members while reporting the threat so that it can be dealt with by specialized teams.

Explosive ordnance risk education (EORE)

UNMAS supports capacity development of national operators and delivers EORE, to ensure that Iraqis can mitigate the risk of EO accidents and incidents. On an operational level, UNMAS conducts survey and clearance operations to release agricultural and residential areas in support of durable solutions for the safe and dignified return of those displaced, and to enable safe access to land and infrastructure for impacted communities.



Explosive hazard management (EHM)

Continuous conflicts over the last four decades have left Iraq as one of the most EO impacted countries in the world. According to the Gol, there are more than 2,500 square kilometers of contaminated areas across the country. Legacy contamination from past conflict, as well as extensive and complex new contamination in the areas liberated from the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). Clearance of EO will enable reconstruction and development activities to go forward, facilitate the return of internally displaced people (IDPs) and allow for the resumption of livelihood activities amongst impacted communities.

Gender mainstreaming

In addition to the three pillars of activities, gender mainstreaming has been one of the core initiatives of UNMAS in Iraq and part of all activities implemented. To enhance this initiative, not only externally but also internally within the Iraq programme, a Gender Task Force was established with representatives of each UNMAS Iraq section. This enabled UNMAS in Iraq to comprehensively cover and maintain gender equality in the programme.

Case study: EORE training for school teachers in Ninewa

Since Ninewa governorate was part of the front line during the conflict with ISIL, large amounts of explosive contamination in the form of IEDs and ammunition that was fired but failed to function, are still present. Much is still present today and poses a significant threat to Iraqis living there. EO related accidents are still frequent and many of them unfortunately involve school children.

During 2022, UNMAS continued to work to ensure that EORE activities are sustained in affected areas. One of the initiatives included engagement with the Iraqi Ministry of Education and the Directorate of Education in Ninewa, to deliver EORE training for school teachers. As a result, 262 female and 338 male school teachers received EORE train-the-trainers (T3) sessions, which allows them to sustainably deliver EORE messages for their students at their respective schools. Mr. Khalid Shaheen, one of the participants, stated "The EORE training was very useful and important to build EORE capacity among school teachers, so that we can convey EO related messages our communities in general and students in particular." The trained teachers continues to teach EO risk mitigation measures and deliver life saving messages in schools, under the supervision of the Directorate of Education. This initiative, initially involving the local education authorities, is expected to expand to other governorates in the coming years.



Achievement summary in 2022

- Provided Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) training session for 36 police officers from the MoI, including 15 women, and Improvised Explosive Device Disposal (IEDD) training for 41 police officers, including one female police officer. In addition, 31 police officers received EOD/IEDD T3 sessions.
- Provided EORE lifesaving messages for 95,070 people (11,483 women, 32,068 girls, 42,541 boys and 8,978 men) at IDP camps, local communities and schools. EORE awareness sessions were also delivered to 958 cash-for-work employees, NGO staff members, and UN security personnel, including 138 women.
- Cleared 3,299,683 million square meters of land and removed 8,209 explosive remnants of war (ERW) and 3,885 IEDs.
- By the end of 2022, women represented 25 percent of the technical and support staff amongst the UNMAS Iraq's implementing organisations, in a sector previously, and traditionally, dominated by men in Iraq.



UNFPA: Ending early marriage allows girls to continue their education thus empowering the next generation to follow a different path

When Aisha turned 17, her family wanted her to get married. She immediately accepted the proposal, hoping that she would take a break from the suffering and the violence her brother subjected to her.

“I was happy to get married and leave because my brother always mistreated me and used violence against me. Little did I know I put myself in far worse trouble,” said Aisha.

Aisha felt let down. Little did she know she was the second wife until the engagement day. Aisha shared a small room with her husband’s first wife in the same home. She tried her best to cope with the situation, but the husband was unfair and did not treat both

wives equally. To her bad luck, she couldn’t bear a child, and that’s when her agony peaked.

Aisha began withdrawing from interacting socially with her neighbours, family, and relatives. She lost confidence in herself and found it challenging to decide on anything. She felt hopeless and helpless. One of her neighbours, who was going to the Al-Qaim Community Centre in Anbar, suggested she take the risk and visit the Centre to seek help. She decided to take the plunge and go. “The day I visited the UNFPA-supported Centre was my lucky day!” said Aisha.

She was welcomed with open arms and felt a sense of relief knowing she

would get the help and support she needed. She found solace in the attention and care she received at the Centre. Aisha was ready to embark on her journey to find a way to better cope with her anxieties and stresses. And when she felt better, she participated in other recreational activities and life-skills training. She was filled with a newfound optimism.

She leaned on her faith and the support she received from the Centre to build healthier coping skills, communicate better with others, socialise more effectively, and develop strategies for better decision-making.

Aisha’s story is a reminder that marriage at a young age can significantly



strain adolescent girls and boys, as they are not yet equipped with the necessary skills or resources to deal with the challenges of marriage. Young people must receive the correct information and resources to help them make informed decisions about marriage and have access to support and guidance to help them navigate through the difficulties of life.

The UNFPA-supported Women Community Centre helped Aisha to gain the confidence she needed to take control of her life and face her problems. But her determination made her face her problems fearlessly. Aisha still lives with her husband, but she is mentally more stable and focuses on learning a new skill to earn an income.

For decades, child, early, and forced marriages have been a concern worldwide; it is a human rights violation. Globally, 1 in 5 girls is married or in a union before her 18th birthday. According to the Iraqi Women Integrated Social and Health II survey (I-WISH-II Survey) conducted in September 2021 by the Central Statistical Organization and Kurdistan Region Statistics Office with technical support from UNFPA, 25% of adolescent girls under 18 are married in Iraq.

In the past 25 years, the prevalence of child marriage across the

Arab States Region has dropped from 1 in 3 to 1 in 5 young women. But in Iraq, the rate of early marriage for girls under 18 increased from 21.7% to 25.5% between 2011 and 2021, according to (I-WISH-II Survey). On top of that, although a slight change, the marriage of adolescents under 15 has also increased in 2021. To achieve gender equality, empower all girls and women, and eliminate harmful practices, including child marriage, by 2030, tremendous joint efforts are needed to reach the Sustainable Development Goals.

UNFPA and the Council of Ministers Secretariat (COMSEC), in partnership with the Women Empowerment Department (WED) and support from the United Kingdom, Sweden, France, and Canada, organized a two-day conference in June 2022 to discuss early marriage in Iraq, and ways of confronting it.

The conference recognized the alarming situation of early marriage over the past decade in Iraq. The event brought together government entities, local authorities, religious and tribal leaders, civil society organizations, young people, academia, and representatives of the international and donor community to discuss the root causes of early marriage, its impact, and solutions to address it.

The participants shared profound evidence of the devastating consequences of early marriage on the socio-economical progress and psychological and physical health of young girls and boys, families, communities, and society at large.

Under the leadership of the Secretary-General of the COMSEC, the Women Empowerment Department (WED) released 12 recommendations to support the local authorities in reducing and preventing early marriage in Iraq.

1. Ending the early marriage phenomenon in line with relevant laws.
2. Follow up on the draft of the Anti-Domestic Violence Law and mobilise community efforts to pass the law.
3. Advocate plans and programmes within the National Strategy for Iraqi Women (2023-2030) to prevent early marriage.
4. Develop programmes and procedures targeting rural women to empower them and educate them on their rights.
5. Inclusion of programmes and activities to reduce the phenomenon of early marriage within the updated National Population Policy Document
6. Develop targeted programmes to enhance marriage conditions for low-income families within the national strategy for poverty reduction.
7. Reviewing the laws governing compulsory education and considering the possibility of including the intermediate stage to reduce the rate of school dropout, particularly for girls., the modification of these laws are needed to deal with increasing rate of dropout rate that remarked recently
8. Organise sessions in IDP camps to raise awareness of the marriage process, its values and the legal obligations of both partners.
9. Invite research and study centres to study the rise in the divorce rate in the country and to propose appropriate solutions and special programmes to reduce this phenomenon.
10. Raise awareness and change behaviours through media campaigns and programmes at various levels to explain the marriage process, roles and responsibilities, legislations and rules, and punishment according to the law.
11. Encourage civil society organisations to organise community awareness and advocacy campaigns focusing on the dangers of early and forced marriages.
12. Invite international organisations to support projects and programmes aimed at reducing the high divorce rate and strengthen the role of civil society organisations to promote the economic empowerment of women.



UNOPS in Iraq

Funded by the Government of Japan, UNOPS rehabilitated seven primary healthcare centres (PHCs) in Anbar governorate and procured more than 2,200 medical equipment items, pieces of furniture, and supplies. The project aimed at enhancing access to medical services to support the COVID-19 response, thereby contributing to improving the living conditions of affected populations in the targeted areas, including returnees, and internally displaced persons (IDPs).

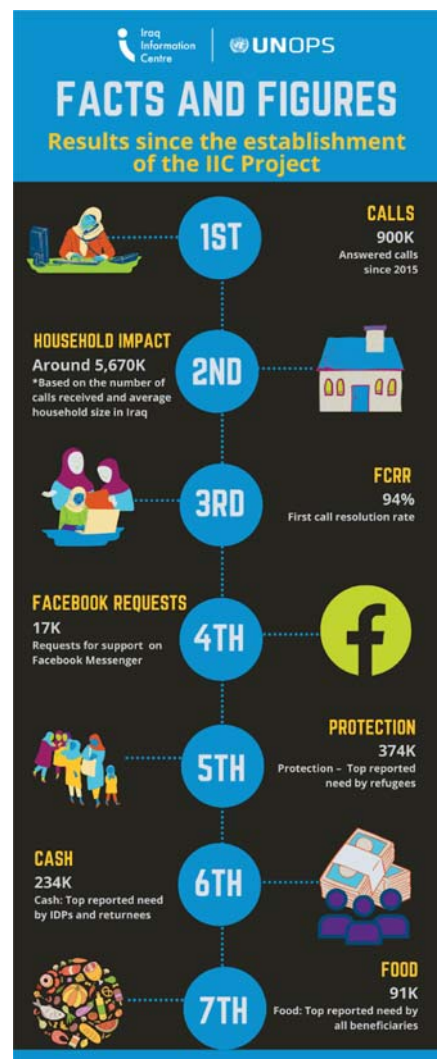
The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the health conditions in Iraq and increased the need to enhance the health centres' infrastructure and to improve their capacities in the provision of inclusive healthcare to the Iraqi people, including vulnerable and marginalised populations, returnees, and internally displaced persons.

The project directly benefited the public health system in Anbar governorate. It is estimated that 123,000 (67,365 females and 55,635 males) individuals in Al Ramadi district will also benefit from the rehabilitated PHCs and the supply of furniture and equipment.

With a total support of 35 Million EUR from the Federal Republic of Germany, through the KfW Development Bank, UNOPS will rehabilitate 1,875 war-damaged shelters and restore basic community infrastructure such as 22

water and sanitation stations and networks, 6 km of roads and 1,300 solar street lights in Anbar governorate and Sinjar district in Ninewa governorate in Iraq. The project aims at enhancing the living conditions of the conflict-affected communities through an integrated approach and improving their access to basic public services, and assists 450,000 women, men, boys and girls who have returned to the affected areas.

During 2022, UNOPS started the rehabilitation of 118 war-damaged shelters have been rehabilitated and around 6,600 individuals have received legal assistance to ensure their housing, land and property rights and obtain the legalisation of their ownership documents. Furthermore, 4 water stations have been rehabilitated, restoring access to safe drinking water for 160,350 individuals.





Iraq Information Centre closes its doors after 8 years of service

Launched in July 2015, the Iraq Information Centre (IIC) was established following an inter-agency assessment of information needs amongst displaced communities in Iraq in August 2014. It was essential to provide access to information for affected populations as a form of aid and a conflict-sensitive mitigation approach to preventing unintended conflict or feelings of inequality.

While UNOPS operationalized the project, the inter-agency foundation was at the core of the IIC's effectiveness. The IIC ensured an environment of transparency, impartiality, and collaboration between the humanitarian and development actors within the response – as an overarching accountability mechanism representing the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) in Iraq.

Throughout the project execution, the IIC mandate was to improve coordination, collaboration, community outreach, and information management with humanitarian actors by using established information gathering and referral mechanisms to identify gaps in assistance and facilitate information exchange. The IIC team continued offering an information and complaint mechanism for populations affected by the conflict to receive accurate and timely information on ex-

isting and planned humanitarian assistance and to communicate feedback on the response.

From 2019 the IIC kept involved in providing and sharing information related to Durable Solutions (DP) indicators and supporting the agenda on the humanitarian-development nexus. With the IIC's outreach expansion and working with the DP partners, the number of calls taken by the IIC had grown tremendously over the past years, with a total number of calls reaching over 776,000 since 2015. It increased from more than 98,000 to 1370,000 in 2020, over 210,000 only in 2021, followed by more than 206,000 calls in 2022.

The IIC Project was managed by the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) as implementing agency on behalf of the Humanitarian Country Team in Iraq, and fund support from different donors and partners, including the European Union (EU), the Iraq Humanitarian Fund (IHF), the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the World Food Programme (WFP), and the World Health Organization (WHO).

In line with the transition from the humanitarian response towards development in Iraq, and the subsequent deactivation of the cluster mechanism in the country on which the IIC was relying, the IIC Project ended on December 15, 2022.

Electoral support

Following the 2021 Council of Representatives election, and as a result of some of the new processes introduced for this election, further improvements of Iraq's Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) voter registry and associated information technology (IT) and data processing capacities were identified by UNAMI and IHEC as priorities.

As part of its broader operational support to UNAMI's Office of Electoral Assistance, UNOPS provided the requested IT software and hardware equipment including inter-alia laptops, servers, scanners, servers, and various licenses, for a total amount of USD 1.4 million, to make data processing in IHEC as efficient, fast, secure and modern as possible and thus further contribute to the transparency and integrity of future elections in Iraq.



WHO: Building a more resilient and robust health system

Interview with

WHO Representative in Iraq

DR. AHMED ZOUITEN

Tell us about the WHO's roles in Iraq and its partnership with the Ministry of Health.

The World Health Organization (WHO) established offices in Iraq in the early nineties and has supported the Ministry of Health (MoH) in strengthening health systems, responding to emergencies and public health priorities, preventing, and responding to communicable and epidemic-prone diseases, controlling noncommunicable diseases, and overall,

improving the health outcomes for Iraqi people including women, children.

However, in recent years, WHO expanded the scope of its work to focus on the humanitarian health response to the unprecedented displacement crisis that followed the invasion of ISIS in Mosul and other governorates. The support to IDPs and refugees was mainly in the Kurdistan region and other affected governorates like Anbar and Basra.

This partnership and collaboration with





the Ministry of health intensified significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic and led to the WHO and MoH joining forces to increase preparedness and response to the pandemic. Currently, WHO is building on the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic and is working with the Ministry of Health to strengthen both the health security apparatus and the health system at large, focusing on health information systems, service delivery, governance and health financing.

What were the most substantial contributions of WHO in supporting the Iraqi health sector in 2022?

Throughout 2022, WHO shifted its focus from responding to the humanitarian situation and the displacement crisis in the governorates affected by the ISIS invasion to building a more resilient and robust health system. We agreed with the Ministry of Health to develop a comprehensive health system development strategy to support Iraq's progress towards Universal Health Coverage and achieving the SDGs in line with the WHO quest for health for all.

We have made significant progress in advancing several health systems building blocks in Iraq, starting with health governance and prioritizing health in all policies while advocating for more changes to public health laws. The health information system was also identified as the most urgent need, as it could produce data and information for evidence and scientific-based decision-making and

would contribute to the policy-making process in the health sector.

What are the significant health challenges facing Iraq nowadays?

The most important health challenges facing Iraq are the weakness of the health system infrastructure and the inadequate distribution of health personnel, in addition to the urgent need for a fit-for-purpose and updated Public Health Law. The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the urgent need to update health security regulations.

Climate change has also cast a shadow on the health situation. It's one of the biggest health challenges in the world in general, and Iraq in particular.

Tell us more about the contributions of WHO to support the health sector with the most urgently needed medicines and medical supplies during 2022.

In 2022, WHO worked with the Ministry of Health to provide essential medicines, supplies, and medical equipment to ensure that health facilities are equipped to address health needs, including responding to epidemics and emergencies. Various medical equipment were procured and distributed to support primary healthcare facilities in conflict-affected governorates. In 2022 alone, the organization provided medicines, medical supplies, and equipment to the Iraqi governorates valued at more than US\$5 million.

In September 2022, WHO also inaugurated its new warehouses in Erbil governorate as part of its strategy to move from providing services to building the health sector's capacity to strengthen health systems, including investing in managing medicines and medical supplies and the supply chain of medical technologies.

WHO led the response to the COVID-19 pandemic in Iraq. Tell us more about your efforts in this regard.

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the WHO Iraq office team has worked closely with the Ministry of Health and different health departments and health partners to support the preparedness and response to epidemic-prone diseases and pandemics.

In 2022, the WHO team continued to provide technical support and resources to Iraq's health system to support the health interventions against this pandemic. WHO also coordinated capacity-building efforts in case management and risk communication and community engagement.

To coordinate efforts, WHO developed a strategic preparedness and response plan in cooperation with the Ministry of Health to identify public health measures to reduce the impact of the disease and control its spread. WHO mobilized rapid response teams to respond to the surge in cases and provided technical guidance, tools and supplies for surveillance and laboratory diagnosis. WHO also supported establishing vaccination teams in 102 locations across Iraq to reduce the burden on routine vaccination teams.

WHO played a remarkable role in risk communication and community engagement over the past years in Iraq. How did this help in combatting outbreaks in the country?

Over the past few years, risk communication and community engagement (RCCE) campaigns have become a cornerstone of WHO's work, seeking to enhance community participation in preparedness and response to various health issues, including emergencies and outbreaks. This strategic investment in these campaigns has been further emphasized during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In Iraq, WHO and the Ministry of Health



reached millions of people through various outreach activities and the multiple methods used to reach different societal groups in response to COVID-19, Crimean-Congo hemorrhagic fever (CCHF), cholera outbreak, and other health concerns in the country.

The risk communication and community engagement campaigns have helped build trust among Iraqi communities and strengthened their sense of responsibility and accountability for addressing health risks.

During the outbreak of CCHF, WHO worked with the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Agriculture to unify means of cooperation, coordination and response to the outbreak by reaching the most affected areas in the southern governorates and delivering educational messages to local communities on a larger scale. WHO also reached vulnera-

ble groups such as butchers, households and cattle breeders.

Also, during mass events, WHO joined forces with the Iraqi Red Crescent Society and the Ministry of Health to ensure that visitors of Arbaeen are provided with prevention methods to maintain their health and safety. WHO and partners held around 18,500 awareness sessions in 572 high-risk areas in 11 governorates, reaching 139,000 people during the last Arbaeen visit.

How does the WHO play a role in supporting IDPs and refugees in Iraq?

WHO continued to support primary healthcare services in camps for the displaced people and refugees by managing dozens of primary healthcare centres in cooperation with health offices in the targeted governorates and local implementing partners.

These centres have contributed substan-

tially to providing medical consultations, treatment of communicable and chronic diseases, reproductive health, mental health laboratory tests and health education, and medical referrals for cases requiring more specialized or surgical interventions.

In addition, more than 70 mobile clinics have been established, and about 100 ambulances have been provided to support medical referral services. And during the operations to liberate Mosul, WHO provided specialized medical care to the wounded by establishing four field hospitals to receive emergency cases.

Currently, WHO supports 21 primary healthcare centres in five governorates (Duhok, Erbil, Sulaymaniyah, Anbar and Ninawa). It also supports nine mobile medical clinics in Kirkuk, Anbar and Ninawa governorates.

Tell us more about WHO's partnership with donors to support health systems in Iraq.

Over the past years, WHO has concluded successful strategic partnerships with several partners and donors to respond to emergency health needs. The support provided by donors, including the USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA), the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM), the European Union, the State of Kuwait, Germany, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Japan, Canada, Italy and France, contributed to ensuring the continuity of the provision of basic health services and allowed WHO to strengthen the health system and provide primary health care services, medical referral and other significant interventions in Iraq.

In addition to the partnership with donors, WHO has invested in building the capacities of local non-profit organizations, especially those specialized in providing healthcare services to the displaced people and refugees in Iraq.

The Universal Health and Preparedness Review (UHPR) in Iraq was mentioned on different platforms as a major achievement. What's the importance of this review, and how could it enhance health security in Iraq?

The Universal Health and Preparedness Review (UHPR) is a governmental review mechanism led by the WHO Member





States. Through this initiative, countries agreed to undergo a regular and transparent peer-to-peer review of their national preparedness capacities and the

performance of their health system in response to the different hazards and risks affecting public health.

These efforts intend to bring together

essential stakeholders in a spirit of solidarity and trust to foster more effective national coordination and international cooperation to strengthen health security in the country.

Iraq conducted the review between December 2021 to March 2022 as the second country globally and the pilot country in the Eastern Mediterranean Region (EMR). The review targeted the national health emergency preparedness capacities using the health system approach. Iraq developed a comprehensive report endorsed by the Prime Minister in March 2022. The UHPR report contains high-priority recommendations that complement the Joint External Evaluation recommendations.

Furthermore, to end the pandemic and prevent future health emergencies, the WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean (EMRO) developed a plan of action that was endorsed in the 68th Regional Committee meeting. The plan of action also involves activities around IHR and health system capacities.





UNODC: strengthening cooperation in combating drugs and crime

In 2022, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) focused on supporting Iraq in strengthening international and regional cooperation in areas such as border management as well as national efforts to face drug trafficking, criminal networks, terrorism, trafficking in persons, and more.

Iraq and Egypt exchange expertise on addressing drug use

H.E. Dr. Hani Al-Oqabi Minister of Health and Chairman of the Supreme National Authority for the Control of Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances visited Egypt as part of the partnership with UNODC to exchange expertise and knowledge with the Egyptian counterparts with a focus on drug use prevention, treatment, rehabilitation and reintegration. Meetings included meeting with H.E. Nivine El-Kabbag, Egypt's Minister of Social Solidarity and Dr. Amr Os-

man Assistant Minister of Social Solidarity and Director of the National Fund for Drug Control and Treatment of Addiction (FDCTA). Meetings helped reach a concrete understanding of joint future steps and cooperation on the subject.

UNODC Regional Representative visits Iraq to enhance cooperation

UNODC Regional Representative, Ms. Cristina Albertin, visited Iraq to conduct a series of important meetings with the Iraqi Government to discuss current ar-

reas of collaboration and expand upcoming efforts.

The mission included meeting the Minister of Health, the Minister of Justice, and the Chairman of the High Judicial Council as well as meetings with representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, amongst other relevant national entities. The mission also included vital discussions on addressing drug trafficking, holistic drug treatment and prevention, victim support, children rehabilitation, and asset recovery as well as opening of a workshop on the role of media in countering terrorism and supporting the rights of victims of terrorism.

Specialized investigations techniques to dismantle the threat of transnational criminal networks involved in drug trafficking

The use of traditional investigative methods to combat illicit drug trafficking has proved to be ineffective as it usually leads to arresting only low-level drug dealers, not drug lords and their networks. Hence, employment of the specialized investigative tools is inevitable to counter the ever-growing threat of transnational organized criminal groups.

With generous support from the US Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL), UNODC is implementing a project titled “Strengthening the Capacities of Iraqi law Enforcement and Criminal Investigation Services.” As part of this project, UNODC, in close coordination and cooperation with the Governments of Iraq, France and U.S.A, delivered training to 15 senior Investigator Officers from the Anti-narcotics and Anti-Crime directorates at the Iraqi Ministry of Interior on “Surveillance and Investigative Skills,” which is a cornerstone element of the specialized investigation techniques.

The training highlighted the limitations of targeting the hand-to-hand street deals and simple physical surveillance of suspect drug dealers as not the most efficient use of resources and mostly not leading to the arrest of the drug lords. Alternatively, the use of informants and undercover operations is an essential investigative tool in drug trafficking cases as in any area of law enforcement.

The electronic surveillance investigative method was also discussed as a law enforcement tool to be used when an organized criminal group cannot be penetrated by an outsider, or where physical infiltration or surveillance would represent an unacceptable risk to the investigation or the safety of investigators.

In this regard, 21 officers from the anti-narcotics and anti-crimes directorates were trained on operational criminal intelligence analysis and basic and ad-

vanced use of the information analysis software “i2 Analyst Notebook.”

The use of criminal intelligence analysis will complement traditional investigative methods and enable investigators to rapidly collect, analyse and visualize data originating from disparate sources to identify, plan, prevent and/or halt criminal activities.

Iraqi Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Health enhance their forensic services to identify illicit drugs

Tackling drug trafficking brings to the forefront the invaluable role of forensic services within law enforcement. Forensic services are facing an increasingly difficult task of responding to the threat of drug trafficking, due to the challenges of identifying the large number of drugs seized and the lack of skilled forensic specialists.

In response to the needs of the Iraqi forensic services, UNODC provided two workshops, within the facilities of the Criminal Evidence Investigation Directorate (CID), Ministry of Interior, and the Medical Legal Directorate (MLD) within the Ministry of Health in Baghdad. This was part of UNODC’s project on “Strengthening the Capacities of Iraqi Law Enforcement and Criminal Investigation Services (2019-2023),” funded by the U.S. Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL).

The workshop targeted specialized technical forensic experts from within the Ministries and was provided by international expertise on the Gas Chromatography–Mass Spectrometry (GC-MS) techniques, an efficient method of choice in routine laboratory drug identification. Participants were exposed to the fundamentals of the operation and maintenance of the GC-MS equipment and the interpretation of results, through theoretical and practical work.

The trainings ensured the development of sustainable and efficient forensic expertise within the Iraqi law-enforcement services. Such effective forensic bodies achieve better results and hence help re-

store confidence in law enforcement institutions while ensuring full respect for human rights and the rule of law.

The efficient use of GC-MS systems in law enforcement forensic laboratories enables a sustainable process to identify drugs and extends to the disciplines of explosives investigations, fire investigations, and counterfeit-drug detection. GC-MS techniques are utilized by the forensic services of the Ministry of Interior in Iraq, thereby provision of training for the GC-MS devices’ operation and maintenance is of critical importance.

High-level Meeting to present assessment findings and foster national ownership to address threats posed by terrorists and foreign terrorist fighters prisoners

The Government of Iraq and UNODC are collaborating on prison reform. UNODC, as an implementer of a capacity building initiative funded by the U.S. Government, presented to key stakeholders from the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the High Judicial Council, and the National Security Advisory a review of its recent assessment of Iraqi correctional facilities. UNODC presented the findings as part of the “Returning Foreign Terrorist Fighters in Detention” programme, which enhances the capacity of countries to develop tools to address radicalization and terrorist recruitment in prisons.

The presentation focused on understanding imprisonment issues from a system’s perspective, looking at organizational functions, inmate well-being, infrastructure, and security. The report’s findings are based on comprehensive coverage of three major adult male reformatories and one female reformatory facility under the jurisdiction of the Iraqi Ministry of Justice.

The meeting concluded with detailed feedback from the participants to be considered in the endorsed report. Through this partnership, UNODC aims to strengthen Iraq’s institutional capacity to manage and mitigate the threats of

terrorists and FTF prisoners. International corrections best practices will be utilized, including classification and case management, contraband control, access control between cells and prison buildings, and the development of intake processes.

UNODC enhances the role of Iraqi media in countering terrorism and supporting the rights of victims of terrorism

The media speak to national and international audiences on the most urgent topics and have the power to fill information vacuums with credible and coherent knowledge; vacuums that otherwise could be used by terrorist groups. Media also show stories of victims of terrorism and hence have an obligation to protect the rights of victims and avoid secondary victimization. UNODC delivered a workshop on "The role of Iraqi media in combatting terrorism and supporting the rights of victims of terrorism in line with human rights" in Baghdad. The event is part of the project "Strengthening the criminal justice response to terrorism in Iraq through supporting victims of terrorism to participate in criminal proceedings," funded by the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

This workshop brought together actors from main media outlets, the Ministry of Culture, the National Security Advisory, the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers, the Media and Communications Commission, the Iraqi Media Network, the Martyrs Foundation, and Civil Society Organizations.

The workshop focused on enhancing the participants' knowledge of (i) the importance of the rights of victims in receiving accurate information, (ii) the interest and coverage of mainstream media and social media networks following terrorist attacks, (iii) the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for media in regard to identities of victims and their families and possible secondary victimization, and (iv) promoting and implementing a more victim-sensitive approach by the media.

Iraqi authorities visit Romania for an exchange visit on the operationalization of the Passenger Information Unit (PIU)

As part of the Airport Communications Project (AIRCOP), UNODC organized a study visit for Iraqi authorities to the Romanian General Inspectorate of Border Police to gain expertise in identifying high-risk passengers in airports. The visit was funded by Canada and aims at supporting the buildup of establishing Iraq's own PIU.

The visit was a fruitful opportunity to gain knowledge on the foundations of Standard Operating Procedures, methodologies, legal framework and best practices in the establishment and functioning of PIUs. The visit also allowed for the demonstration of the available software on identifying high-risk passengers.

Building the capacities of Iraqi frontline officers at Trebil land border crossing and at Baghdad International Airport to prevent cross-border movement of illicit goods

Through its Container Control Programme (CCP), UNODC trained a group

of frontline officers from the Border Ports Commission, the General Commission of Customs and the Iraqi National Intelligence service working at Trebil land border crossing and at the Baghdad International Airport (BIA). Trainings focused on building skills to undertake risk profiling, targeting, and inspection of containers and cargo with the aim of seizing illicit goods. In parallel, UNODC established a Border Control Unit (BCU) at Trebil land border crossing in which the trainees are working.

After having implemented a series of trainings for frontline officers working at BIA, UNODC and Iraqi authorities are working on the establishment of the same type of unit at the airport.

In conversation with Judge Mohammed Salman Mohammed, Criminal Court of Al-Karkh in Bagdad

"I've been a judge since 2008. My father was a judge as well. He encouraged me to pursue a law degree. I dreamed of being like him when I was in primary school, wearing his robe. "I will give you my robe once you become a judge," my father always said," Judge Mohammed Salman told UNODC.

Judge Mohammed is part of an ongoing collaboration between UNODC and the Government of Iraq within the framework of the Global Action against Trafficking in Persons – Asia and the Middle East (GLO.ACT-Asia and the Middle East) project. GLO.ACT is a four-year joint initiative by the European Union (EU) and UNODC



being implemented in partnership with IOM in Iraq, amongst other countries.

Judge Mohammed told UNODC that the role of an investigating judge in Iraq often includes “a leading role in criminal investigations, including interviewing witnesses. They are responsible for issuing arrest warrants, determining appropriate charges, weighing the evidence, issuing findings, and passing sentences. Investigating judges may receive information about a case from law enforcement and decide on the next steps. They may also have the information and direct law enforcement to investigate.”

He also noted that “collecting evidence in criminal cases can be challenging, especially in complex cases involving human trafficking. The experience and expertise of the investigating judge are important in ensuring that the evidence is collected and analyzed properly...Enforcing the laws related to trafficking in persons can be challenging, especially when cultural or societal attitudes view victims as perpetrators rather than as people who need support and protection. Law enforcement must be aware of these attitudes and approach their work with a victim-centred focus, recognizing that people who have been trafficked are victims and should be treated as such. This may require additional training and support for law enforcement officers to understand the unique challenges and needs of trafficking victims. It is also vital to ensure adequate resources, such as shelters and other forms of support, are available to assist victims and help them rebuild their lives.”

Noting the UNODC GLO.ACT project, Judge Mohammed affirmed that it “has had a significant impact on the judicial system in my country, providing information and training that has helped to improve the understanding and application of the 2012 TIP law. It is encouraging that law enforcement and judges are now more aware of how to apply this law and are taking steps to do so. I also believe that continued capacity building and training are essential to ensure that law enforcement and judges can effectively investigate and prosecute cases related to trafficking in persons. I’ve noticed that after training, trafficking investigations are much more successful!”



Building professionals’ capacity to plan for the effective rehabilitation and reintegration of children and juveniles associated with terrorist and violent extremist groups

UNODC conducted a capacity-building workshop on ‘Psychosocial Assessment Processes for Children and Juveniles associated with Terrorist and Violent Extremist Groups’ in coordination with the High Judicial Council (HJC), the Ministry of Justice (MoJ), the Ministry of Interior (MoI) and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MOLSA). The workshop represented a unique opportunity to strengthen the capacity of qualified professionals engaged in supporting the rehabilitation and reintegration of children and juveniles in Iraq with regard to psychosocial assessment.

Professionals face multiple challenges in relation to the provision of rehabilitation and reintegration services, including understanding how to prepare, conduct, coordinate and use psychosocial assessment to respond to an essential duty: that of protecting society by meeting the needs of every child.

The STRIVE Juvenile team designed a

capacity-building workshop with the aim of enhancing multidisciplinary and multi-stakeholder cooperation in this area. Throughout the three-day discussions, social workers, police investigators, and judges were able to work together on child and juvenile assessments; share their experience and knowledge and lay the foundations for future cooperation.

Cross-coordination between agencies and institutions is crucial for the implementation of a child- and gender sensitive approach to individual assessment processes that supports effective planning for rehabilitation and reintegration.

Key learning from the workshop included how to ensure that individual assessment processes promote and preserve protective factors; and recognize children and juveniles’ specific rights, developmental stages and experiences of violence.

Children and juveniles associated with terrorists and violent extremist groups must urgently be treated in accordance with their rights and supported to rehabilitate and reintegrate so that they may become constructive citizens and, ultimately, contribute to long-lasting peace and security.

STRIVE Juvenile is a five-year project supported by the European Union that aims to address child association with terrorist and violent extremist groups and its consequences for the lives of children and society at large.



IOM: How are we thinking?

IOM's response in Iraq is shifting from a humanitarian to a development approach, including stabilization and economic recovery, with a strong focus on durable solutions and supporting returnee families to reintegrate into their areas of origin.

In 2022, over 4.9 million people displaced by ISIL returned to their areas of origin, but 1.16 million remained in protracted displacement; many faced one or more substantial obstacles to durable solutions, and those who have returned to their areas of origin experience heightened levels of vulnerability. Such challenges are often linked to high levels of conflict-related damage to housing and infrastructure; lack of access to jobs and income-generating ac-

tivities; social cohesion issues; lack of access to basic services; and impediments to legal framework that require structural and institutional interventions.

Some humanitarian needs persist, and IOM continued to provide humanitarian support in camps and informal sites throughout 2022 and will do so into 2023. However, operations must focus more closely on development-oriented programming that can better respond to structural and institutional gaps, and

create conducive environments for durable solutions, while resolving root causes of vulnerability and displacement.

Such an approach promotes multi-year programming towards collective outcomes – often articulated as milestones towards national SDG targets – enhancement of local capacities for resilience, and the mainstreaming of processes that encourage Government ownership.



What are we planning?

In 2022, IOM Iraq finalized its three-year mission strategy (2022-2024), with three priority pillars: Resilience, Mobility and Governance. These pillars relate to IOM's ability to prevent and respond to drivers of displacement and forced migration; address mobility concerns of migrants; and enhance national migration governance capacity.

In 2023, IOM will continue to provide lifesaving humanitarian aid; reduce the impact of destabilizing factors that could derail Iraq's transition, recovery and reconciliation process; and contribute to a sustainable and stable environment conducive to durable solutions for all displacement-affected persons.

Supporting the returns from North-East Syria and wider peace and security processes, as well as making inroads into mobility and climate change with a special focus on the South, will also remain IOM's priorities for years to come.

What did we do?

In January and February 2022, IOM Iraq advocacy efforts brought about decisions from Ninewa and Salah al-Din governorates' Directorates of Education to allow undocumented children and children with incomplete civil documentation to continue with their schooling and obtain official diplomas at the end of the scholastic year upon submission of their civil documents.

Over the course of the year, the Government of Iraq and IOM operationalized a National Referral Mechanism to support the sustainable reintegration of returnees by linking them with key legal, administrative and psychosocial services to ease their transition. These services are free and confidential for all those returning from abroad.

IOM also continued to support the Directorate of Survivors Affairs to implement the landmark Yezidi Survivors Law. This includes the development and launch of the application portal through which survivors can apply for reparations under the law. The portal was formally launched in September.

In December, the rehabilitation of the Trebil Border Crossing Point – Iraq's only official entry point with Jordan – was

completed with support from IOM. Operationalization of this border crossing point will improve security and the cross-border movement of people and goods and revitalizing cross-border trade and the local economy.

In 2022, IOM's Enterprise Development Fund supported 794 small and medium-sized enterprises and created 1,663 new jobs in key affected areas.





UN OCHA: bringing together humanitarian actors for a coherent emergency response

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in Iraq brings together humanitarian actors for a coherent emergency response and works with partners to ensure principled and effective humanitarian response through coordination, advocacy, policy, information management, and humanitarian financing.

Five years after the conclusion of the large-scale military operations against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), significant progress has been made in Iraq and the humanitarian situation has improved considerably enabling nearly five million displaced people to return home over the past five years with the support of the Government of Iraq, humanitarian partners and the international community.

While the humanitarian context in Iraq is transitioning towards durable solutions and development, some 2.5 million people remain in need of some form of humanitarian assistance. Dur-

ing 2022, within the framework of the Humanitarian Response Plan for Iraq, humanitarian partners achieved more than one hundred per cent of the 2022 HRP targets, where they reached with at least one sort of humanitarian assistance; 180,000 of in-camp IDPs (100% of the 180k targeted), 565,000 of out-of-camp IDPs (more than the original target of 234K) and 612,000 of returnees (more than the original target of 577K). With the generous contributions from different donors, the 2022 Iraq humanitarian response plan was 67.2 per cent funded with \$269 million out of the \$400 million required.

The Iraq Humanitarian Fund (IHF) managed by UNOCHA continued its support toward the communities in need. In 2021 and 2022, the IHF received \$61.4 million in contributions. About 2.94 million people were supported in the past two years through the Fund. Focusing on localization and building the capacities of the national NGOs, 31 per cent of the funds were allocated to national NGOs, amongst are 47 women-headed organizations.

During 2022, the humanitarian community in Iraq has begun to ramp up joint efforts to transition and scale down the collective, whole-of-system, interna-



OCHA will maintain its support to the Humanitarian Country Team, facilitating humanitarian access, coordinating, and advocating with the Government of Iraq and the humanitarian community

tional humanitarian response in Iraq and deactivating the clusters system on 31 December 2022. The Iraq Humanitarian Country Team is developing a Humanitarian Transition overview for 2023

that focuses specifically on the remaining humanitarian needs.

As Iraq enters 2023, OCHA will maintain its support to the Humanitarian Country Team, facilitating humanitarian access,

coordinating, and advocating with the Government of Iraq and the humanitarian community for a principled and effective humanitarian response to the people in need.





ILO: reforming the social protection system in Iraq

The Government of Iraq, including the Kurdistan Regional Government have demonstrated their strong commitment towards reforming the social protection system in Iraq, to ensure adequate support to all those in need. The ILO is providing technical assistance, under four broad and complementary areas of work, that support government efforts to strengthen the adequacy, coverage and sustainability of the social protection system.

By **DR. MAHA KATTAA**

ILO Country Coordinator in Iraq

The ILO has been working closely with government, employer, and worker representatives in Iraq to implement the Decent Work Country Programme for 2019-2023, which supports private sector development and job creation; strengthens social protection and addresses the worst forms of child labour; and strengthens labour governance and social dialogue on employment-related issues.

In 2022, we witnessed great results in achieving the objectives of the Decent Work Country Programme’s priorities, through numerous projects, implemented closely with tripartite partners and UN

partners, and with the support of multiple donors.

One main area has been efforts to reform the social protection system in Iraq.

In Iraq, the social security system is composed of one scheme for public sector workers and one for private sector workers. The public-sector fund achieves high coverage, as almost all of the 38 per cent of the labour force working in the sector - which amounts to 3.2 million workers - are covered, but the scheme is largely unsustainable.

The fund for private sector workers covers less than 5 per cent of the private-sector



workforce and provides a limited range of benefits. This means that some 95 per cent of private-sector workers - 5.4 million workers - remain uncovered by social security. In turn, the almost 1.6 million unemployed workers receive no contributory income support, some of whom rely

instead on the Social Safety Net with inadequate benefit levels and limited employment support.

The Government of Iraq, including the Kurdistan Regional Government have demonstrated their strong commitment towards reforming the social protection system in Iraq, to ensure adequate support to all those in need. Under a European Union funded programme to reform social protection, jointly implemented with UNICEF and WFP, the ILO is providing technical assistance under four broad and complementary areas of work, that support government efforts to strengthen the adequacy, coverage and sustainability of the social protection system.

The ILO has been working with a range of partners to support the development of research papers that would help inform the decision-making processes. In 2022, the ILO, together with the Central Statistical Organization and the Kurdistan Region Statistics Office, published the first Labour Force Survey in a decade, updating key data on the status of the country's labour force. The ILO led a UN position paper on building a social protection floor in Iraq, which was later complemented by a second piece on adopting a Public Works Programme. Building on international experience and standards, these papers aim to support the Government in shaping its vision and accelerated action on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions in Iraq. Available research on challenges and opportunities with regards to social security was also expanded, with a conference and a symposium on the topic, bringing together a portfolio of research from a wide range of academics. This research agenda has opened doors for substantive discussions with tripartite partners on the priorities and direction of reform.

The ILO has been working closely with its tripartite partners to assess the comprehensiveness, coherence, sustainability and alignment of the draft social security laws in both regions, while also providing assessments of the Kurdistan Regional Government's draft labour law and migrant worker bylaws. When passed, the draft social security laws will strengthen the sustainability of the schemes, expand the range of entitlements to include maternity and

unemployment benefits, and extend the sphere of coverage of the laws to all the informal workers as well as self-employed.

The ILO is also supporting the Government and tripartite partners to strengthen their capacity to implement the new provisions of the law and strengthen the efficiency in the delivery of social security and related employment services. Multiple trainings have been conducted on themes related to social security principles, inspection, and pension reform. The ILO is supporting the government with the creation of a digital employment platform to streamline access to and provision of employment services delivered by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs to the 1.6 million workers who are unemployed.

In efforts to address barriers of accessing social security, particularly those related to the limited awareness of workers and employers of their rights and responsibilities under the social security laws, the ILO has been engaging with journalists from various media outlets to encourage more reporting on the issue. A series of trainings have equipped journalists with knowledge that allows them to analyse, monitor and evaluate public policies that contribute to the actualization of the right to social protection, while leveraging their communications channels to effectively deliver messages on social security and related benefits.

Efforts to strengthen the social protection system go hand-in-hand with other priorities under the Decent Work Country Programme to ensure there is an integrated and holistic approach to promote and mainstream decent work in programmes and activities.

Job creation remains a key priority, especially in the context of forced displacement, to help communities become more self-reliant. The ILO is supporting the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus, by working towards the inclusion of refugees and IDPs in the formal labour market and the national social protection system.

Under various projects, such as PROSPECTS, funded by the Government of the Netherlands, and other employment creation-focused programmes, the ILO has expanded its training tools to equip young entrepreneurs and



small business owners with the knowledge, skills and financial services needed to help them start or expand their businesses. We have adapted many of ILO's global tools to the Iraqi context to ensure they meet the needs of women, men, youth and persons with disabilities from forcibly displaced and host communities, targeting different sectors.

The implementation of ILO's Employment Intensive Investment Programme in different project sites, that link infrastructure development with decent job creation has ensured the mainstreaming and application of Decent Work principles through building the capacities of local contractors, union members and young engineers on its methodologies. The ILO is supporting the Government in designing and implementing a public works scheme that will promote sustainable and decent job creation, particularly for the most vulnerable, including workers of low-income and the unemployed. The scheme will also contribute to local development and sustainable green infrastructure.

In addition, the ILO continues to work with partners to strengthen the labour inspection system and improve occupational safety and health through policy development and capacity building, under an EU-supported programme. New policies have been developed this year with tripartite partners to help modernize the labour inspection system and improve working conditions for workers and their employers, in line with International Labour Standards.

In the area of addressing the worst forms of child labour, we have continued to support children in or at risk of child labour through the Child Labour Monitoring System that helps identify vulnerable children and refer them to the appropriate services, with the support of the European Regional Development and Protection Programme for Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq (RDPP II), a joint European initiative supported by the Czech Republic, Denmark, the European Union, Ireland and Switzerland. As part of the response to address the root causes of child labour, the project expanded its support to the families of working children, providing them with vocational trainings to improve their skills and employability.

UNWomen continues to be at the forefront of shaping the discourse and mobilizing efforts to further increase women's political participation and leadership in Iraq

After months of paralysis, the Government was formed in Iraq, led by Prime Minister Mohammed Shia Al Sudani. While the resumption of governmental functions provides the country with an opportunity to embark on a path towards stability and progress, Al Sudani's government still faces political and economic challenges, which are highly influenced by regional and global dynamics. The ripple-effect of the war against Ukraine has contributed to increased food insecurity in Iraq, partly due to the rise in global wheat prices. Negative forecasts for Iraq's economy include a continued high rate of unemployment. At the same time, the country continues

to experience severe effects of climate change, with desertification as a central concern. All of these challenges have disproportionate impacts on women and girls, and more so on female refugees and internally-displaced people (IDPs), making them particularly susceptible to economic, political, and environmental shocks.

Women and girls in particular were already facing deep-rooted inequalities and discrimination, in addition to the lack the resources to adapt to an increasingly fragile context. IDP and refugee women are on the frontlines of the climate emergency. They are hit the hardest, as thousands are dependent on

precarious employment in the informal economy, earning less income, and deploying negative livelihoods-based coping strategies to sustain their needs and the needs of their households.

Iraq ranked 154th in the 2021 World Economic Forum Gender Gap Index, leaving behind only Afghanistan and Yemen. Similarly, the same year, Iraqi women's participation in the labor market stood at only 12.1%, while only 6.8% of firm owners were women. These statistics were mimicked in political life, where although women make up 29.7% of elected officials in Parliament, their influence and participation in leadership and managerial positions are still limited.





Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) & 2nd Iraq National Action Plan (INAP II)



Women Political Participation (WPP)

UNWomen continues to be at the forefront of shaping the discourse and mobilizing efforts to further increase women's political participation and leadership in Iraq. In 2022, UNWomen exercised a comprehensive responsibility for planning and organizing interventions aimed at providing technical and financial support to Iraqi women's machineries. This included supporting governmental institutions to develop national strategies, such as the Second National Strategy for Iraqi Women (2023-2030).

Linked to this, UNWomen also worked on addressing the barriers, which discourage and prohibit Iraqi women from fulfilling their right to meaningfully participate in political processes. Among these are the prevalent forms of political violence exercised against Iraqi women actors, aiming to undermine and marginalize their political influence. In this regard, UN Women was able to bring together women political experts and civil society actors to start a multidimensional

debate on the various forms and practical ways forward to combat political violence against women. As a result, recommendations concluded that creating an enabling environment through tailored programmatic and advocacy interventions was essential to address this issue.

In addition, UNWomen is building on its achievements during the previous parliamentary elections to increase women's participation in electoral processes by working closely with and supporting the work of the Independent High Elections Commission (IHEC). In particular, UN Women, in close collaboration with its Iraqi partners, is convening efforts to advocate for the amendment of relevant election laws, in favor of increasing women's representation in elected bodies. At the same time, UN Women continued to foster partnerships and synergies between civil society actors and state institutions, working on increasing women's participation in electoral processes.

In partnership with official Iraqi institutions, UNWomen continued to advance the WPS agenda in Iraq, at the national and local levels. This was predominantly achieved through driving forward the implementation of the Second National Action Plan II (NAPII 2021-2024); a process that is jointly led by government actors and civil society organizations (CSOs). UNWomen helped create an enabling environment to foster the meaningful engagement and collaboration of government institutions, CSOs and women machineries to improve the NAP development processes. As a result, national systems were able to effectively monitor and implement INAP implementation, through the established ownership, formal coordination mechanisms, and monitoring and accountability frameworks.

UN Women also worked with its partners to contextualize the NAPII by supporting the development of 6 sectoral plans at the ministerial level, and 2 localized plans for the governorates of Ninawa and Thi-Qar. At the regional level in Kurdistan, a UNSCR1325 Board Committee was established, headed by the Ministry of Interior, with the technical support provided by High Council for Women's Development (HCWD), and UNWomen and with the participation of representatives from CSOs and donors to oversee the implementation of the NAPII. An action plan addressing the outcomes of the 3 main pillars of the NAPII was developed and launched to support its implementation in Kurdistan.

UN Women

United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women



Women Economic Empowerment (WEE)

Women's economic empowerment is fundamentally about basic human rights as enshrined in international human rights and labour conventions. It essentially pertains to capacitating women to become economically active, generate income and allows more agency for women over their lives. The Iraq Vision for Sustainable Development 2030 corresponds with that. The underlying objective of the Vision is to empower Iraqis in a safe country, a unified society with diversified economy, sustainable environment, justice, and good governance. UNWomen has developed its Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) programme to support Iraq in meeting its international human right commitments and achieve sustainable economic development through people-centric interventions to close the Gender gap in the World of Work. The WEE is derived from the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2020 – 2024 (UNSDCF) strategic priorities under the overall 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It is designed to tackle issues such as the lack of care economy infrastructure, the lack of access to infrastructure and skills development, and the lack of access to assets including financial assets and property in a structured manner to promote women engagement in the economy.

Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and Violence Against Women (VAW)

A series of consultations were implemented with the Department for Women's Empowerment (DWE), ministries, judicial council and parliamentarians to discuss the ratification of the Anti-Domestic Violence Law (ADV L), and the needed steps forward. A committee was formed comprised of national gender machineries where preparatory work has been done to prepare a new ADV L, which integrates the first and second drafts of the law. Recommendations from discussions and meetings on this topic resulted that more lobbying and advocacy was needed and that the new drafted law will need to be drafted in partnership with national legal experts to ensure it reflects all the required legal obligations for its endorsement by the parliament.

Humanitarian response

In this space, UNWomen is focusing on generating economic, social, and environmental results that enhance refugee and IDP women's wellbeing and resilience at the individual level, and communities at large.

In addition, at the peacebuilding front, UNWomen has focused on strengthening the capacities of local CSOs and

women's organizations covering various geographical locations in Iraq on 3 main thematic areas: conflict prevention, humanitarian response and forced displacement. Each organization focused on one of the following objectives (1) increase meaningful participation and decision-making of women in conflict prevention processes and response, (2) enhance inclusive and gender responsive humanitarian/crisis planning, frameworks, and programming and (3) promote improved socio-economic recovery and political participation of women and girls in peacebuilding contexts. As a result, UNWomen aims to ensure that women's engagement in prevention, crisis response, and peacebuilding and recovery is enhanced through civil society engagement.

Joint Initiatives and major events

UNWomen partnered with the Iraqi government, local CSOs and other UN sister agencies including UNFPA, UNHCR and WFP to implement joint activities. These included online campaigns, public key messages and joint press releases for events such as the UNSCR 1325 Anniversary, the 16-days-of-activism, and International Women's Day. Major achievements include the production of "Ana Al Iraqiya" song in partnership with the Iraqi Women Journalist Forum (IWJF), a local CSO in Baghdad. The song calls for supporting women's roles and leader-



ship in all aspects of life, including governmental positions, medicine, security, agriculture, education and sports. The song went viral and reached more than 1.9 million views.

Moreover, UNWomen, in partnership with the DWE, UNFPA and WFP held a conference in Baghdad to start the 16-days-of-activism campaign. The event was hosted under the patronage of the Iraqi Prime Minister, Mohammed Shia Al Sudani, who gave an important speech advocating for empowering Iraqi women and ending violence against women and girls. The conference highlighted the decisive role of Iraqi women in public life, through government positions, civil society, and human rights movements in preventing and eliminating violence against women and girls (VAWG). It also advocated for the ratification of relevant laws, namely the Anti-Domestic Violence Law (ADVL).

With respect to partnering with other UN agencies on joint projects, UNWomen and WFP have entered a new partnership, which reaffirms their commitment and strengthens collaboration and joint initiatives on gender equality and women empowerment in Iraq. In collaboration with the Government of Iraq, both agencies will work to leverage gender-transformative programme opportunities, and will focus on women's leadership, economic empowerment, social protection, resilience and livelihoods.



Word from Rep. Dina Zorba

" It is widely acknowledged that violent conflict affects men and women in different ways. Women and girls suffer disproportionately from violent conflict. They suffer not only from the by-products of war but are also targeted as a strategy of war. Women are also subjected to displacement, disrupted livelihoods, disrupted access to public services, additional workloads within and outside the home, and domestic violence.

Peace and security cannot be achieved without the full participation and leadership of women as clearly articulated in the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 and subsequent UN resolutions. In our global study, we have collected growing evidence that gender equality and women's empowerment contributes to the conclusion of peace talks, the achievement of sustainable peace, the acceleration of economic recovery and can also help to counter violent extremism.

The sustainability of peace depends directly on the consistency of women's engagement in peace processes, poli-

tics, governance, institution-building, rule of law, the security sector, and economic recovery. Yet the work of women on the ground remains unrecognized. To sustain both peace and sustainable development, women must be equal and strategic leaders, drivers, and engines in various areas and at different decision-making levels. Hence, the catalytic role of women as agents of change and leaders in reconciliation, peacebuilding and countering violent extremism should never be underestimated and particularly in Iraq where women continue to bear the brunt of conflict and violent extremism including sexual and gender-based violence. Nor should we underestimate the power of women coalitions and their leadership role in peacebuilding, holding the community together and maintaining the social fabric of the society.

Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much. Empowering women is at the heart of what we do and only by working together we can achieve our mutual desired outcome – which is a peaceful and secure Iraq for all. "



الأمم المتحدة - العراق
United Nations Iraq